

Legitimation and the Masses

From Mass Movements to Consumer Culture

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Abstract

No state can do very well without perceived as legitimate. While the state's efforts to legitimate its power is well covered in the literature, the ordinary people's role in legitimacy is less investigated. This study is informed by the notion that legitimacy is a relational concept. Legitimacy is created in the interaction between ruler and ruled. The power structure is dependent on the people's active legitimation. The early years of the Cultural Revolution serves as example how popular legitimation works in a context of Chinese socialism. By analysing the consumer culture that has arisen recently around the territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas, I argue that political consumerism has become a new mode for legitimating the Chinese political system for ordinary citizens.

Key words: Legitimacy, Beetham, Cultural Revolution, territorial disputes, Diaoyu/Senkaku

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1 Introduction

Xisha, Xisha, Xisha,
The treasure of the Motherland, my beloved home,
The treasure of the Motherland, my beloved home.

Xisha is the Chinese name for the Paracel Islands, the small island group that are the subject of territorial dispute between many countries of the South China Sea. The above lines makes up the refrain of the lead motif to the 1976 Chinese movie “The South China Sea Turmoil” [*Nanhai Fengyun*]. It is a movie that depicts the heroic defence of the islands by the local inhabitants and the brave sailors of the People’s Liberation Army’s naval forces against South Vietnamese invaders.

The lines of this song could also be heard sung in a resent coverage in Swedish radio, sung by a Chinese woman who had just returned from a cruise to the disputed islands. Apart from swimming and deep sea fishing, she had also partaken in a flag-ceremony organised by the traveling agent on one of the islands (Carlquist, 2015).

In a time when the huge mass campaigns of the Mao-era have become obsolete, the legitimation of the Chinese regime must rely on other expressions. Like in Western democracies, political consumerism pose a new way for citizens to act politically, even in China. The example of the cruise to Paracel Islands can be one new way through which the political system in China can be legitimated.

1.1 Aim

The durability and stability of political regimes and government performance are questions that interests many students of political science. Why do some regimes fall and why do some remain? And why do states crumble at a specific moment? Why does subjects comply with the laws of a state?

One way of addressing these questions is through the concept of legitimacy. Legitimacy is frequently used about various phenomena, but in this thesis the matter of interest is states. A legitimate regime is more likely to enjoy the support of its subjects. With that follows political stability and compliance with laws and norms. On the other hand, a regime that is considered to be illegitimate by its subject are more likely to suffer from social unrest, protest or even revolution. To be considered legitimate has its obvious advantages for any regime. Legitimacy seems to work like a “resource” for effective governing. It greases the governmental machinery. Therefore, governments put a lot of effort into appearing legitimate. This makes the concept of legitimacy determine many of the

activities that is central to government behaviour. Legitimation is thus fundamental to what it is to govern. To analyse and problematize the concept of legitimacy therefore seems like a fitting task for the political scientist.

However, the focus of this thesis will not be on the legitimation activities undertaken by states or governments, but on the citizens subordinate to governmental power and their role in legitimation. As will be evident in the theoretical chapter, both theoretical and empirical research of legitimacy tends to focus on the state, institutions or other power holders. But on the occasion when the subordinates' role in legitimacy is discussed, the focal point is often their views or opinions about the legitimacy of an institution or government (see Levi et al., 2009, and contributions to Erman & Uhlin, 2010, for an account of the global perspective), and empirically, these attitudes can be mapped through surveys or interviews. In this thesis I will work towards a slightly different approach. I want to turn the focus to the governed, the subordinates and their role in legitimacy and the actions they undertake to legitimate the power-relation they are living under. This side of legitimacy is more thoroughly researched in liberal democracies where the relation between ruler and ruled is legitimated through elections, or where political demonstrations is held for legitimating a cause. But are all non-democracies viewed as illegitimate by their population? If the answer is no, which I think is the case, how then are such regimes legitimated by the people living under it? To uphold a system of governance solely through coercive force and suppression is extremely costly. While that form of rule of course is present in China, it is hard to claim that the Chinese society is only upheld by sheer force.

Weber famously equated legitimacy with people's *belief* in legitimacy (Abromeit & Stoiber, 2007). I argue that there is more to legitimacy than just people's belief in it. Because of that, I will more often use the word legitimation than legitimacy. Legitimation is the actions that people undertake that conveys legitimacy to their government. Again, in a liberal democracy, this works for example through open and free elections to representative institutions and other official offices. But in an authoritarian society, legitimation cannot take this form for obvious reasons. It is also harder to conduct surveys about the people's attitudes towards the government in China and other authoritarian societies because of the question's sensitive political nature. But the need to study legitimacy in these societies does not go away. So, what kinds of evidence is needed for determining the legitimacy of a regime if the possibility to conduct surveys are closed? What kinds of data are suitable to look at from a legitimacy perspective? It is the task for the student of legitimacy in China to identify these legitimating actions and analyse them as such.

When acknowledging the subordinates role in legitimation one is informed by the notion that it takes two to do legitimacy. Legitimacy is in this view a relational concept. When talking about legitimacy we do not mean the private opinions of the subordinate, but on the "thing" that is created in the interaction between governor and governed. The question that leads this investigation is: *How is the political power structure legitimated in China?*

By looking at carefully selected data I aim to support the argument that even non-democratic regimes like China relies on popular legitimation for its legitimacy. And by closely investigating this material I try to show how this can be done.

The aim of this investigation is thus twofold. I seek to understand the relational concept of legitimacy and legitimation from a perspective of the governed, which hopefully can contribute to a theory of legitimacy. The theoretical contribution lies in a coupling of legitimacy-theory and theories of political consumerism. I also seek to understand legitimacy aspects of politics under “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” through this perspective of popular legitimation.

To make my argument clear I will exemplify with an analysis of two very different examples. The first case is the early years of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which might seem odd at first from a legitimacy point of view. While the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was targeted under the revolution by Mao, his followers and “the revolutionary masses”, and were suffering a legitimacy crisis, we can still observe powerful legitimating activities undertaken by ordinary citizens that are conveying legitimacy to Mao Zedong.

The other exemplification of legitimation practises are the consumerism that is related to the nationalistic discourse around the disputed areas of the East and South China Sea. Consumerism, which often is associated with the post-industrial, late-modern West, is here analysed in the Chinese context as a form of political participation.

1.2 Previous research

Research about the legitimacy of the Chinese regime is often focused on the state and party’s efforts at legitimating its rule. Robert Weatherley (2006) has studied the legitimation of China’s authoritarian rule during the period since the creation of the People’s Republic in 1949 till the modern day regime. Weatherley applies a loose theoretical framework inspired by Weber for analysing Chinese politics as constant shifts in legitimacy and legitimacy crises. He convincingly argues that especially during the Mao era, 1949-1976, the Chinese regime relied heavily on legitimating its rule through amassing popular enthusiasm and engagement in huge mass mobilisation efforts. But in Weatherley’s account, the Chinese masses are mainly taking a passive role in legitimating the process. More in-depth accounts of for example the Cultural Revolution paints a more complex picture. As we shall see, under that time the Chinese people enjoyed more freedoms than before, and the grassroots spontaneously organised themselves to show support for Mao and his policies.

Two main themes crystallises in the literature on legitimacy in China. Since the country is a strict authoritarian society there is a focus on the regime’s efforts to create legitimacy through propaganda. The propaganda of the Cultural Revolution is described as preaching a “personality-cult” of Mao. Participation in

mass campaigns and political movements are explained through a religious lens with terminology like “cult”, “worship” and “political religion” (Zuo, 1991; Leese, 2007; 2011). In later years, there has been an increasing attention paid to the government’s nationalist propaganda. Nationalism has become an important base for creating legitimacy when the appeal of ideology is waning and the economy has slowed down (Liu, 2006; Liu, 2012; Hyun & Kim, 2014). However, the CCP is still relying on its Marxism-Leninism heritage and its own ideological innovations for creating legitimacy through propaganda (Holbig & Gilley, 2010).

Another perspective is to view legitimacy as created by the regime through its provision of public goods. If the material needs of the Chinese population is provided for, they are assumed to accept the party’s rule as legitimate. Weatherley characterises the post-Mao-era legitimacy as being performance-centred and the CCP became “the party of economic performance” (2006:164). Zhu contends that the party has taken a very pragmatic stance towards a strategy of “performance legitimacy”, by basing its right to rule on providing economic growth (2011:124).

Events like the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games to has been analysed as “mass distractions”; state efforts to lead the people’s attention away from societal problems (Brady, 2008; 2009; 2012, Brady & He, 2009, Brady & Wang, 2009). Other focus on the regimes appropriation of Western commercial models for controlling public opinion through mass media; turning the media into an even more powerful propaganda machine for creating legitimacy (Stockmann & Gallagher, 2011; Stockmann, 2013;). To sum up, what the Chinese regime is described as doing is a form of *panem et circenses* by providing economic growth, propaganda and “mass distractions”.

While it is undoubtedly true that the Chinese Communist party is making efforts to legitimate its rule, both through propaganda and by providing better services, to solely focus on the government’s view and efforts on legitimation is to miss out on some interesting aspects of legitimacy. In this perspective the Chinese people are taking a passive role in the legitimacy of the power relationship. To be a bit blunt: they are portrayed as lacking agency, either deceived by propaganda or bought by promises of a materially comfortable life. However, in research where citizens are granted agency the focus is often on liberal resistance, like humorous regime critique and witty satire (Nordin & Richaud, 2014). This perspective is so pervasive is because China is (of course rightly) considered a strict authoritarian state and that the citizens lack the opportunity to partake in elections and other practises that are usually deemed legitimating. But, it is hard to imagine a description of legitimacy in a liberal democracy where the subjects were excluded from the legitimacy equation. What will be done in this thesis is a conceptual broadening of legitimation that includes practises that not traditionally has been seen as political participation, but that still are loaded with political significance.

However, it is important to raise a crucial point early on in this thesis to avoid misunderstandings. In the political science tradition, legitimacy can be both a normative and a descriptive concept. It is the descriptive aspect of the concept that will be analysed in this thesis. I will not make any arguments concerning whether the current Chinese regime is legitimate or not in any normative sense. This thesis

will not make any claim to ascertain to what degree the Chinese regime is considered legitimate.

1.3 Disposition

In the following chapter the concept of legitimacy and legitimation will be discussed. Following that is a chapter on methodology where methods and materials, their selection and how they are analysed are elaborated on. I then turn to discussing the legitimation practises that were flourishing during the Cultural Revolution. Political consumerism in relation to legitimacy and how that works in practise is discussed in the chapter called “Consumer Legitimacy”. The thesis ends with some short concluding remarks.

2 Legitimacy and Legitimation

We use the word legitimacy in everyday language, and it is often very straightforward what we mean by calling something legitimate or illegitimate. However, if one starts to think more deeply about the concept one finds that it is a quite complex and rich one. Since Thucydides, and probably much earlier still, people have thought long and hard about what legitimacy is and which states that are legitimate and which are illegitimate (Zelditch, 2001).

The reader will find that I am talking more about legitimation than legitimacy. In this chapter the concept of legitimacy and legitimation will be discussed through various important contributors to the concept. In the section “The role of consent” I discuss legitimation more thoroughly in relation to consent and why it is so important for my argument to focus on actions. The section ends in a concept of legitimation that is useful for understanding legitimacy under two different historic periods in modern China.

2.1 Legitimacy

Legitimacy is an utterly contested concept and there is much confusion and disagreement on how to conceptualise it (Morris, 2008:15). The state is essential as an ordering principle for modern political life, and legitimacy is thought to be vital for the ability of states to maintain social order (Morris, 2008:16). This is because the high costs and limitations for the state in producing order through sanctions, coercion and brute force. Legitimate regimes can rely less on those and focus on governance because they can count on the compliance of the subordinates.

It seems hard to treat the subject of legitimacy without mentioning Weber. He is still widely cited and his model of different types of legitimacy is still used for analysis of power relations. Weber defined legitimacy as being no more or less than people’s belief in it (Abromeit & Stoiber, 2007). He famously defined three types of legitimate authority: traditional, rational-legal and charismatic. A power relation can be legitimate through the belief in the sanctity of traditions, or the justness and correctness of the system of rules, or the charismatic qualities and persuasive abilities of a ruler (Beetham, 1991:23-24). However, while still applied by scholars, this typology has been targeted by severe critique.

A lot of intellectual effort has also been put into analysing the concept of legitimacy by political and moral philosophers. Often, legitimacy is seen as a normative concept, a quality that some regimes enjoy, while others do not. A power relation that is considered legitimate is satisfying a set of criteria

constructed by the observer, like Barker (2007) and Abromeit & Stoiber (2007). The respect for human rights, procedural justice and the just exercise of power is often viewed as vital elements of legitimate government (Barker, 2001:9). The importance of normative theory lies in its prescriptive nature. However it lacks explanatory power. When discussing legitimacy of power relations in other times or places than our own, it is unfair and very unhelpful to discuss legitimacy in relation to normative values of our specific context and apply it elsewhere and elsewhere. But as I will show below, to theoretically separate normative assumptions from the concept of legitimacy is easier said than done.

2.1.1 Legitimacy as a descriptive concept

As established above, a legitimate government can rely less on coercion and expect their subjects to voluntarily contribute to public cooperation. There are huge costs for a regime to rely mainly on coercion and to uphold their rule through force. A legitimate rule can rest on domination without solely depend on sanctions or incentives. They do so by conveying arguments to the public about their just authority by arguments that are deemed normatively appropriate by the populace. For this kind of definition it matters little if the norms are “objectively” good for the nation (or even humanity). What is important is whether these norms which legitimacy rests on are valid within the society.

A strand of literature tries to treat legitimacy without universal moral or normative content. In the tradition of Weber, legitimacy is defined as the people’s belief in the normative appropriateness of a ruling regime. Central to this understanding of legitimacy is the belief that rules should be observed on the basis of who enacted them and how it was made (Levi et al., 2009:354). Morris places this legality or lawfulness of the notion of legitimacy as fundamental and identifies legitimacy as mainly a property or status of states (2008:17). But he continues investigating what legitimacy is by establishing that legitimacy is a status determined by its “rights”. The rights a legitimate state are bestowed with determines if it is legitimate or not. First he identifies the right to exist as a fundamental trait of a legitimate state. Next comes a territory that is bound to that state and a right to do things in that territory; to rule exclusively (2009:18-19). But what Morris seems to be describing is sovereignty and sovereign states. If applying his conceptualisation of legitimacy on the modern state, then all sovereign states that exists are legitimate. But here Taiwan and other states with complex sovereignty status raise problems. By stripping legitimacy of beliefs and values of people it seems like we end up with a concept of legitimacy that is not very fruitful for the aim of this thesis, as it is to actually focusing on the different values that relate to legitimacy in different societies.

What is common for these different conceptualisations of legitimacy is that they focus on the *input* side of governance. The questions are: are the rules of power perceived as just, are the processes where these rules come about just and are the based on just principles? Bo Rothstein challenges the view that legitimacy is created at the input side. He criticises the notion that democratic institutions

create legitimacy, even in the stable Nordic democracies. Instead Rothstein argues that legitimacy is created, maintained and destroyed at the *output* side; that is to say the capacity of a regime to produce goods and services for the population (2009:312-313, 316). This view, that legitimacy can be created by providing services and goods, has been embraced by scholars who researches legitimacy in authoritarian states where legitimacy certainly not can be created on the input side of the power system through democratic processes. However, Rothstein's theory appears controversial to some because it suggests that non-democratic regimes could be legitimate.

Levi, Sacks & Tyler combines the input/output-theory to provide a formal model for how legitimacy is produced under a certain power relation. A mix of government performance, the ability of leaders to persuade and administrative competence leads to what they call "trustworthiness of government". This, together with perceived procedural justice feeds the "value-based legitimacy" of the regime. If a regime enjoys value-based legitimacy, they can expect compliance, i.e. "behavioural legitimacy" (2009:357). But these authors fail to theoretically place compliance in relation to legitimacy. Are compliance and legitimacy to be seen as parts of the same concept, namely legitimacy, as the name "behavioural legitimacy" seems to imply? Or is compliance simply caused by legitimacy? If compliance is a part of the legitimacy concept, and not a consequence, one cannot infer compliance from legitimacy and at the same time give compliance as evidence of legitimacy.

Rodney Barker criticises some theories of legitimacy, like the above, for being somewhat circular. The circularity of the argument stems from the attempt to rid legitimacy of normative content and make it into a purely empirical matter. He tackles this issue by taking a different approach to the concept of legitimacy than the above mentioned scholars. Barker criticises that legitimacy is sometimes used tautologically when invoked as an explanation to the question: Why do people comply with the laws of the governor? The problem occurs when legitimacy is bereft of all normative content and when legitimacy is derived from the behaviour of subordinates. This approach risks to collapse compliance and legitimacy into each other so that they cease to be separate things.

If legitimacy is not attributed by putting regimes to the test of normative criteria, but is said to exist when the rightfulness of government is as a matter of observable historical fact acknowledged, then, it is argued, legitimacy is merely being inferred from observable compliance with commands. Because people obey, they are assumed to regard the command as legitimate. But in that case, the concept is of no use, because it is no more than observation of compliance, masquerading as an account of independently observable belief (Barker, 1990:56).

The consent of subjects is inferred from obedience to the regime, and then when explaining obedience, consent is invoked as cause. Legitimacy can thus be used as a *deus ex machina*-explanation when all others fail (Barker, 2001:10-11).

To work around that problem Barker suggests a rejection of "legitimacy/legitimate", instead focusing on "legitimation" (2001:23). He reserves "legitimacy/legitimate" for normative inquiries into the morality of a power

relation, whilst “legitimation” points to the measures that regimes undertake in order to legitimate their rule. In this thesis I will try to follow Barkers invention. Legitimation is to be understood as observable human actions, vital for political life, rather than beliefs about some abstract quality harboured in people’s minds. Legitimation is a characteristic that describes what it is to be a ruler and not a condition of successful rulers. Asking whether a regime is legitimate can be tautological, while asking in what way and to what success a regime claim legitimacy is on the contrary an important question for political scientists. But where Barker is interested in the self-legitimation of rulers, this thesis seeks to investigate how citizens and subordinates legitimates power relations. If we are to avoid being circular, we cannot observe actions that are mere compliance.

2.1.2 Three levels of legitimacy

David Beetham shares Barkers agenda to address legitimacy without making universal moral or normative claims. But contrary to the above author, he offers a thorough critique of Weber, and his widely influential taxonomy of legitimacy. Beetham claims that Weber misunderstands the concept of legitimacy when equating it with people’s belief in legitimacy (1991:8). To contend that a regime is legitimate because its subjects believes it to be legitimate is to misunderstand the relationship between legitimacy and the beliefs of people. A power-relation is not legitimate because people believe it to be so, but because legitimacy can be *justified* by beliefs, values and norms, according to Beetham (1991:11). A seemingly small difference, one might think, but it has big implications for how Beetham continues his investigation of the concept. Beetham’s states that power that is “acquired and exercised according to justifiable rules, and with evidence of consent, we call [...] legitimate” (Beetham, 1991:3). This definition is more detailed and complex than the Weberian definition that only gives us “belief” as ground for legitimacy. This definition of legitimacy will therefore be used throughout the thesis.

Beetham’s definition hints to his three-levelled analysis of the concept. The first level is that of rules. A power-relation can be said to be legitimate if it follows established rules and laws within a given society. These can be informal customs, conventions and norms, or formalised into legal codes. Illegitimate power is exercised where these rules are broken or circumvented (1991:16). However, legitimacy cannot be established by solely complying with rules. If the rules themselves are considered unfair or against norms, just following them will not make the regime legitimate. This observation forms the second level of legitimacy and asserts that a rule must be justified in terms of shared beliefs by both rulers and subjects. The valid source (or sources) of power varies across societies but are based on beliefs about the appropriate exercise of power and the acquisition of it (1991:17).

Beetham’s third level of legitimacy “involves the demonstrable expression of consent on the part of the subordinate to the particular power relation in which they are involved” (1991:18). The fact that subjects in some way express consent

to the power relation they are subjected to is vital for its legitimacy. But consent is a complex and difficult concept. Especially when coupled with legitimacy. This is so because legitimacy is thought to entail normative obligations on the subjects (Morris, 2008:17). And consent as a concept is tightly connected with voluntariness. If consenting to something entails the assumption of a voluntary agreement, what then does voluntary mean, and what kind of evidence is needed in order to prove something is done voluntarily? And, how can the researcher know the true intent of an actor? Even if the researcher has the opportunity to ask about the intent, there is no way of knowing if the respondent is actually telling her true intention for many reasons. The respondent could be lying, or is simply afraid or otherwise reluctant to tell her intent. But there is also the possibility that one is acting without being completely aware of one's intent and any retelling of an intent is a rationalisation in hindsight. The problem of the role of consent in legitimation is so complex it deserves a separate section.

2.1.3 The role of consent

It is tricky even for scholars in the liberal tradition to once and for all establish what consent is, and what kind of obligations it produces. Edmundson even goes so far as to rule all attempts to theoretically justify power on the basis of consent derived from individual will, as deemed to fail (Edmundson 2011:353).

Liberalism is a failure only insofar as it embraces the faulty notion that political theory can be liberal all the way down—making the individual's will not only a value to be protected and promoted but the very foundation of legitimate political authority (Edmundson 2011:353).

If basing legitimacy of democracy on free will and the individual's consent is doomed to fail, then the same must be even truer for authoritarian societies. But since the concept of consent is so vital for the legitimacy of liberal democracy, consent is an important feature of legitimacy wherever it is applied. There is a strong sense that consenting must be done voluntarily in order for it to be seen as genuine. Consent forced from under gun point can hardly be considered as valid. It gets even harder if we try to rid legitimacy of normative claims and at the same time keeping voluntary consent in the liberal sense of individual will, especially so in an authoritarian context. Can anyone really consent to living in a dictatorship? A tempting question to pose. But on the other hand, can anyone *really* consent to living in a democracy? Where does the socialisation of values end and where does genuine will begin? What can be determined as genuinely voluntary? This rabbit hole can prove to be infinitely deep.

Beetham solves the problem of consent by concluding that what is important is not its underlying intention, but the *actions* that express consent. It is important because these actions *produce* legitimacy, not because it gives us evidence about peoples' true beliefs. Actions that express consent are important because of the symbolic power and normative force they create which binds the subject to the ruler (Beetham, 1991:91). These actions carry with them the notion of

commitment on behalf of the one acting, and these actions publicly validate the relationship to those external to it. Beetham's approach is also sensitive to the contingency of values through history and space. What consent is and who can give it varies over time and between places. If the goal is to establish an empirically founded theory of legitimacy one needs to be sensitive to this fact.

Beetham differentiates between two types of actions that express consent. The first of these, which is not going to be extensively covered because of the aim of this thesis, is the liberal approach that has crystallised into democratic elections of representational democracy. Central to this type of consent is the possibility to freely choose between different candidates, and the individualist notion that consent cannot be given on behalf of another (Beetham, 1991:91-92).

In non-liberal societies, both past and present, legitimacy must be conferred through other types of actions than free elections. For obvious reasons, mock elections in dictatorships and the elections in the early republics of Europe and America cannot be sorted under the liberal label because they either lack choice between valid candidates other than the ruler, or that suffrage was determined by sex and property. However, even that kind of election can prove legitimating in the right context.

There are three different kinds of modes that Beetham identifies as conferring legitimacy in non-liberal societies. The first is swearing an oath of allegiance, like a vassal would have done to his liege lord in medieval times. The second type of consent that is legitimating is partaking in negotiations and consultations with the ruler that result in some form of agreement. In this kind of action there is no choice of who the superior will be, but still carries with it both that the subject is committed to the agreement and simultaneously acknowledging the superiority of the ruler. The third mode is public acclamation by a monarch or a popular leader through mass rallies or coronation ceremonies. This mode will take an important role in the analysis in this thesis. Beetham calls this kind of mass expression of consent for the "mobilisation mode" (Beetham, 1991:92-94). Huge numbers, sometimes larger parts of the population, as in revolutionary movements, are mobilised into collective actions, like campaigns or public rituals that legitimates the power relationship.

Lane (1984) has investigated the role of rituals and ceremonies for creating legitimacy in the Soviet Union. She argues that rituals and ceremonies, both great public spectacles but also more personal rituals that referred to the socialist ideology and tradition became an important practice for maintaining legitimacy under late-socialism. This theory of ritualistic practises complements Beetham's concept of legitimation under the mobilisation mode well to understand how legitimation practises work in a Chinese context.

In the mobilisation mode of consent popular participation in politics is divorced from the process of appointing office-holders. Instead, Beetham stresses that legitimation is established from participation in execution of policy and point to the fact that citizens in Soviet-style societies are more politically active than in liberal democracies. Beetham characterises the constituencies under mobilisation mode as being more concerned with "low" rather than "high" politics (Beetham, 1991:156).

The effectiveness of the legitimating process is dependent on the commitment of the people involved. The ruler's ability to mobilise people around a cause or a belief system is central to the mobilisation mode of consent. The lack of democratic elections or freedom of speech etc. is not what poses challenges to legitimacy under the mobilisation mode. But rather if the belief system or belief in the cause is eroding. If the beliefs and values that justify the system are worn down or become obsolete the system will only be one where the few are privileged and the majority is repressed (Beetham, 1991:157). An erosion of confidence in the cause is of course much harder to map than restrictions of democratic freedoms, but amassed over time such developments should be detectable to the attentive observer.

Again, the critic of this approach could claim that it is not a legitimate form of expressing consent since the subjects maybe coerced into partaking or that they lack a choice of whom to legitimate. But then one misses what is important about these actions. As stated before it is not the underlying intention of the act that determines if it is legitimating or not. It is the act in itself. The act is still legitimating whether the subject feels enthusiastic about the cause, are partaking willingly or if one is not. It is also near impossible to assess this from outside a society. Again, how consent is understood and expressed thus varies over time and between societies and cannot be absolutely determined in a universal way.

However, there is one similarity between the liberal mode and the mobilisation modes of legitimation. They both depend on a form of mass mobilisation, and thus in this case mass legitimation. Like modern liberal democracies, the communist regime in China is based on the fundament of popular sovereignty (Zhu, 2011). Rather than being an anomaly or exception to modernity, mass dictatorships that relies on voluntary mass participation and support is a type of modernity (Lim, 2013:13-14). The level of mass mobilisation of course takes various forms depending on the type of government. But the notion that the ruler in some way should represent the people has been a powerful norm since the 19th century and structures modern political life. Since The People's Republic of China is sprung from a communist revolution, the mobilisation mode of legitimacy will take an important role in the analysis.

In order to appear legitimate a power relation must satisfy the criteria mentioned above: compliance to established rules, that the rules are based on accepted norms and that the subordinate shows demonstrable expression of consent. These criteria can of course be met to a varying degree. In all societies there are people who do not agree with the rules and norms of the majority and rulers who exceed their authority. In order to determine whether power is exercised legitimately one must only ascertain how extensive these deviations are. According to Beetham, the analytical tools that he offers are universally applicable over time and space (Beetham, 1991:21). I find his analysis of the concept of legitimacy very useful and especially his third level, popular demonstrable expression of consent, will inform the analysis of the Chinese case.

There is one further point to be made that has great significance for our understanding of legitimation practises. Beetham means that when people agree to subordinate position in a power relation they also confirm the rules that determine

the necessity of their subordination (Beetham, 1991:96-97). This means that the established forms of rules of power structures the incentives for people to enter into power relations where they are subordinate. The peasants in Fanshen village during the Chinese revolution exemplifies this dilemma. “If the landowners did not let us rent the land, we would starve” (Hinton quoted in Beetham, 1991:83). By submitting to this logic, the established forms of power are reconfirmed and entrenched. Since the powerful set the rules of the game, the established form of power can remain. This is even the case, but maybe less rigid, in liberal democracies because of the ways that for example gender and class structures the political domain. Such power structures makes the system resistant to change, which also has effects for how power relations are legitimated by subordinates and must be taken into account in the analysis of legitimacy. Established power structures are laying down the possible ways for how the regime can be legitimated. This is also true for liberal democracies e.g. by electoral rules or how contracts between employer and employee are structured. The point that Beetham makes is even more important to consider when analysing legitimacy in an authoritarian setting. In this case, the powerful can almost exercise monopoly on how the citizens can legitimate the power relation. But this is not to say that authoritarian states can do without legitimacy.

Regardless of being in a democratic or authoritarian setting, Beetham shows that legitimacy is a relational concept. It is created in the *interactions* between ruler and subjects through a complex web of values. If legitimacy is understood as a relational concept we cannot simply focus on the “output” or “input” side of legitimacy; the public “goods” that governments create or the following of established rules, justness of the acquiring of power etc.

2.1.4 Consumption as legitimation

While truly comprehensive, Beetham’s approach misses out on one dimension of political behaviour that has gained increased interest by researchers in recent decades, namely political consumerism. Even though political consumerism is not a new way of achieving political goals (Stolle, et al., 2009:246), it is probably unfair to say that Beetham neglected or forgot to theorise consumerism since it is such a new research topic. However, I would like to add the aspect of political consumerism to Beetham’s model for popular legitimation and discuss consumption as a form of “expression of consent”.

There has been a notable decline of civic participation in political parties, voluntary associations and other forms of conventional political participation in Western democracies. The decline is attributed to what is referred to “post-materialism” or “post-modernism”¹. That is the rise of individualism, lack in faith

¹ Even though I am sceptical towards the concept post-modernity, because it implies that the world somehow has transcended modernity (and the need to satisfy material needs) as historic period, which I think is wrong, I still refer to it here because it is widely used in the literature on political consumerism.

in traditional political institutions, identity politics etc. But instead of lamenting this as the death of democracy, some scholars has turned to identify other forms of political participation and activism, where political consumerism being one of them (Stolle et al., 2005; Marien et al., 2010; Willis, 2012).

Survey data shows that an increasing amount of people in Western democracies turn to the market to express political or moral concerns. And studies have shown that this practise also can be effective in achieving political goals (Stolle et al., 2005). By doing so, they create another sphere for political action that is separated from the more traditional spheres of political life.

Consumption of certain products is also important for political identities of citizens. Actors who want to set a political agenda can draw on these identities for mobilisation to their cause. “Narrative storylines” of a political or ethical cause are created that gives consumers a sense of political agency. (Clarke et al., 2007:234-5). The “narratives” that surround actions of consumption or boycott makes it more than just an act of buying something or not. Buying a product or refraining from doing so can thus be loaded with political meaning. That is also the case with legitimacy and legitimation. By purchasing (or boycotting) a product, the consumer activist commits an actions that is conveying legitimacy to the cause which is represented in the narrative.

However, the studies mentioned above are focusing on democracies and the concept of democracy. Is political consumerism also relevant in a discussion on legitimation in an authoritarian society? The studies cited above state that traditional forms of political participation is declining in Western democracies and that political consumerism is one of the other many forms of political participation that has come to replace them to some extent. In societies where traditional liberal forms of political participation are not part of political life, or are thwarted by the state, other forms and fora, like the marketplace, can be an opportunity for political action. This argument should not be confused with the modernisation-theory’s argument that liberal market economy leads to democratisation. The point is that the market can allow for forms of political participation for citizens, without meeting any criteria of democracy or liberalism, or that democracy is the goal for such actions. Marien et al. (2009) stresses that it is important to acknowledge that not all citizens are acting as equals under political consumerism. People with higher education and income are more influential in this domain, which is the case in both democracies and autocracies.

Chinese society has also experienced what has been described as “post-modernisation”; the effects of globalised economy, increased individualism and disinterest in the politics of the government. But this does not make them politically passive. Liu (2012) argues that political activism and participation among young people takes similar form in China as it does in the “post-modernised” Western countries. This assertion demands a broader concept of political participation in China, as has already happened in the West. Studying how political consumerism works as a form of political participation in an authoritarian society such as China can show us how legitimation can function in a non-democratic setting.

Buying a consumer product thus functions as a way of conveying legitimacy to that product's brand, but also to a political cause that the product is connected with through narrative. The opposite is of course true for a boycott. The fact that the decision to buy something is "voluntary" also makes it appealing to analyse it as an action of "expression of consent". It is a practise that can have both symbolical and practical consequences.

2.2 From theory to data

What kind of material allows itself to be read as legitimations? China has almost no kind of process that legitimises the rule of the party in any way that would qualify as legitimating in democratic societies. Therefore we have to look for other types of legitimating actions. But what type of actions can be viewed as legitimating in the context of China? This thesis will approach this question with Beetham's categories of "demonstrable expression of consent" and use them to identify practises that can be understood as legitimating. Consent, as was discussed above, should not be understood as a concept that has a universal definition but varies across time and space.

In the modern age, since the introduction of the concept of popular sovereignty, mass expressions of consent is perhaps the most important form of legitimation. That is the case in all democratic societies and most authoritarian states. Since the People's Republic of China was created from a revolutionary movement, popular mass movements and rallies has been an important part of everyday political life in China for both subjects and rulers. The rallies and campaigns that engaged huge numbers of people are therefore easily read as actions conferring legitimacy to the party and Chairman Mao. These kinds of activities will play an important part in the analysis.

Beetham's three modes of expressing consent and thus conferring legitimacy to the power-relation as a subject/citizen are swearing an oath, forming agreements with the ruler, and mass mobilisation. Focus will be on the mass mobilisation mode in this thesis, especially in the section on the Cultural Revolution. The characteristics of mass mobilisation is easily found during the Mao era. Mass mobilisation involves large parts of the population in different campaigns and events. Mass rallies where the ruling part is celebrated is the obvious "operationalisation" of the mobilisation mode of expressed consent. But Beetham also stresses the importance of the people's participation in the implementation of policy. It is not only the state officials that are called upon when something needs doing. Where large parts of the population is encouraged to participate in policy campaigns, the actions of the people will be read as actions of demonstrable expressions of consent in the analysis, and thus a form of legitimation.

But since mass mobilisation has lost much of its importance in contemporary China, other modes of expressions of consent must be identified for analysing legitimating practises in present day China. These practises can be such that are

part of everyday life but that still carries political connotations. Commercial tourism to and citizen activism concerning territorially disputed islands in the East and South China Sea can be read as examples of legitimation through political consumerism.

In the case of political consumerism it is important to separate it from normal consumption when analysing as legitimation. What is typical for political consumerism is that the act of buying or boycotting certain products has become a part of a broader political narrative. To buy something or boycotting it can be loaded with political meaning and presents a form of political agency. The consumption or boycotting of politicised wares is thus a form of popular legitimation. It is on the author to argue for which products are a part of a narrative and how the connections are established.

The practises that Beetham identifies as legitimation in the non-democratic setting, are often surrounded by ceremonials heavily laden with symbolic meanings. Political rituals that can be included in an legitimacy analysis must be public in some way, refer to official ideology or doctrine and be held at times or on places of heightened significance. These criteria should be met if an event can be categorised as legitimation under the mobilisation mode.

However, it is important to note that simply living in a society and complying with its laws cannot suffice as evidence for demonstrable expressed consent and therefore it cannot be legitimating. The examples above can be viewed as legitimating because they are the result of government policy; not as binding law but as an opening up of a space for action and activism. This is not compliance, since that is unable to produce full legitimacy, but it is an opportunity for action that none the less has been made possible by the communist party. The subjects are not forced to partake in legitimating activities. As such, according to Beetham, they contain more powerful legitimating force than if they were involuntary (1991:95).

3 Materials and Methods

In this section the method of analysis and materials will be discussed. Some meta-theoretical positions concerning meaning and action will be discussed in order to (hopefully) make the analysis of the material clear and transparent. The point that are made in the very abstract section are then followed by a more “hands-on” approach to method.

In this thesis I will discuss some islands that are the focus of territorial disputes between China and other South East and East Asian countries. I make no claim of determining the rightfulness of any territorial claim, but since the names of these islands are a part of these disputes they demand a comment. In Chinese quotes I will transcribe the name into pinyin, which has become the standard transliterating Chinese into the Latin alphabet. Otherwise I will call these places by their English name but for the case of Pinnacle Islands that will be called Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands because it is more familiar to the general reader than its English name and because Pinnacle is a direct translation of the Japanese Senkaku. The ordering of the names into Diaoyu/Senkaku is alphabetical and nothing else. In the case of Chinese personal names the family name comes first, followed by the personal name.

3.1 ... but first some meta-theory

In the theory section I tried to grapple with the concepts of intention and action in relation to legitimacy. With Beetham’s help I argued that it is not the *intention* of the acting subject that is important for legitimation, but it is the *action* in itself. In this section I will go deeper into that argument. Legitimacy is not something that is material or measurable in an unproblematic way, but it is something that is created in the social world, in the relation between governor and governed. In that sense it can be seen as a form of meaning that is neither private nor totally objectively determinable. To legitimate can be seen as a form of politically meaningful behaviour. And to do actions that are legitimating is a way to create political meaning.

Is meaning something that is subordinated to subjective intentionality? And how is the relationship between subjective and objective meaning? These questions scholars of the “interpretivist”² school have tried to grappled with for a

² I choose “interpretivist” here before post-positivism/post-empiricism that are also common in the literature. I agree with Yanow (2003:228) that the underlying philosophical arguments of the interpretivist school of political

long time. Hendrik Wagenaar identifies it as the problem of how to connect subjective consciousness with the world in a convincing manner (Wagenaar, 2011:57). How can inner experience be connected with the outer social structure, and on the other hand, how can one retain agency within a discursive framework without falling into naïve realism or determinism, are questions that Wagenaar tries to solve.

Wagenaar proposes an approach which he calls interventionist. When we are acting the world “talks back”, it has impact on us and it is something we must handle. “*That is reality*” he states (2011:60, italics in original). In this approach to meaning, structures or discourses are an emergent property of the interactions between individual actors. They are not so much the intentional outcomes of the actors but more the contingent and unintended consequences that emerge from the actions. In this way actors are producing structure but they cannot choose them. The interventionist approach acknowledge that agency and structure are ontologically different but they are not uncoupled (2011:61). Structure is thus both working as opportunity and constraint for agency. And meaning comes about when actors act in structural settings.

To approach legitimacy and consent through intention produces more questions than answers because its assumptions about voluntariness and meanings behind actions. It views the acting subject as distinct from discourse, where the meaning of an action and its intention exists prior to discourse. But, all actions take place in relation to a context or discourse. In the meeting between action/utterance and discourse meaning is created. That means that the meaning of an action is *not* determined before it takes place in discourse. The meaning of utterances and actions and discourse are created and reproduced simultaneously. We can thus not claim that meaning cannot be a meaningful concept in any private sense, which is also then true for legitimacy.

Legitimacy can thus be seen as created in the interaction between individual actions and structure. The structure both presents opportunities and limitations for how legitimacy is created. At the same time, actions that are analysed as legitimating in this thesis are not limited or closed to meaning only as being legitimating, but can contain various meanings.

3.2 Materials and Methods

The method of this thesis is tightly coupled with the theory. Rather than being treated as a mere tool, separate from theory and picked from the methodological “toolbox”, the method, theory and meta-theory (ontological and epistemological presuppositions) form parts of a whole. The methodological choices are thus

science stands on its own, without any reference to positivism or formulating itself in an antagonistic relationship to it.

grounded in these presuppositions rather than forming a separate part (Yanow, 2003).

Since the aim of this thesis not is to determine whether the Chinese regime is perceived as legitimate or not by its populace, I do not make any claim as to present the two examples as representative of a general Chinese experience of legitimacy. By looking at carefully selected data I aim to support the argument that even non-democratic regimes like China relies on popular legitimation for its legitimacy. And by closely investigating this material I try to show how this can be done.

In this thesis two separate examples will be investigated. The first is the early years of the Cultural Revolution. The other is what I will call the political consumerism that has developed around territorial disputes. The reasons for exemplifying a theory of legitimation with two such fundamentally different phenomena are many. The Cultural Revolution, well covered by historians, has been somewhat ignored by political scientists. This is a strange fact because it is such an important period of Chinese modern history. The same is true for political consumerism that has been widely studied and theorised in democratic societies but otherwise forgotten in the study of dictatorships and their like.

To compare a society historically with itself also has the advantage that one can observe continuities and shifts over time. By doing so we can hopefully trace a development of how legitimation is expressed in China and compare different expressions with each other and understand them better in relation to their historical context.

Moreover, the Cultural Revolution is often described as a deep legitimacy crisis for the Chinese regime. As such, it functions as a “hard case” for showing how legitimation still was important during that time. At the same time, the period of the Cultural Revolution may also let us touch the limit of what can be deemed as legitimation through “expression of consent”. The fact that some of the practises that we will look at became so all permeating part of daily life potentially causes it to lose its legitimating force.

The two examples have different function in my argument. The selection of these examples is based on the theoretical argument I want to make. The Cultural Revolution’s early years exemplify how a Beethamian theory for analysing legitimation works in practise. I am thus applying Beetham’s theory to a new material. The example of consumerism connected to territorial disputes functions as a way to show how political consumerism is a new way for legitimating a power structure. It is in this part my theoretical contribution lies.

The selection of data is also of course dependent on the argument I wish to make in this thesis. Since it is the activities of subordinates that are the focus here, the material that is chosen should have emanated from the people themselves rather than being a product of the regime. The material is only public material and the aim is to present material that is representative for the general context. I will not focus on the abnormal or extravagant. For the contemporary example of consumerism I have chosen to rely on internet material because it is public for all who has an internet connection. The material must be public in order to qualify as legitimating. Private texts like diaries cannot have any legitimating force. I have

looked at user generated content on blogs because it has the advantage of being made by ordinary people, and not produced and edited by an editorial board.

The content is of course also vital. I have chosen material that in some way express positive sentiment about the government or government policy. In the case of political consumerism, I have chosen to look at a material that is connected to the nationalist discourse around the territorial disputes with Japan and other of China's neighbours. When analysing the practises during the Cultural Revolution I have selected material that also is generated at the grassroots level, like Red Guard newsletters. But I am also analysing mass rallies and rituals that was created by the people to express loyalty to Mao and his cause. Both form and content can thus be analysed as conveying legitimacy to the power structure.

The material is analysed in relation to the political environment it is present in. The political discourse forms a background against which the potential legitimation is formulated. In the beginning of the separate sections, where the theory is exemplified, the political discourse is explained to give the reader an understanding of what kind of background that structures the meaning of the legitimating actions analysed.

In the analysis I look on whose voice is heard in the material and in which forum this is expressed. The analysis is also concerned with what kind of form the legitimation action is expressed in. The spatial aspect is also included in the analysis. The places where legitimating actions are committed that have a heightened political significance adds even more power to the legitimating force of the action.

Some of the material that is analysed in this thesis is in Chinese and the translations will mainly be by the author if nothing else is indicated. A part of the material is made up by newspaper articles and other forms of traditional text media. But the focus of this thesis also allows analysis of materials that are not so often included in political science research. Examples of that are Red Guard newsletters and reports, travel guides and travel agents' webpages, online material like "tweets", blogs etc. Hopefully, these types of material can add interesting perspectives to the analysis. However, for the section on the Cultural Revolution I am greatly indebted to the work of Daniel Leese (2011) and Rodrick MacFarquhar & Michael Schoenhals (2006). This means that much of the material that is analysed in the chapter on the Cultural Revolution is already selected by these authors.

The relationship between the Chinese citizen as agent and the context illuminates the tensions of structure and agency that was discussed above. The structure, or objective meaning, is both set up by the government's laws, rules and policies, and the unwritten norms of Chinese society. The agent that acts in this context experience both restrictions and affordances, either perceived or unconsciously. And meaning, in this case legitimation, arises in that interaction. Legitimacy is not formed prior to its enactment as separate from discourse. It is constructed in the interplay between discourse and action. In that way, meaning is both open-ended and provisional.

4 Revolutionary legitimation

To include an example like the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976 for an analysis of legitimating practises might seem odd, or even possibly provoking to some. The decade during which it occurred was marked by political chaos, extreme violence and utter destruction of party legitimacy. It was such a politically significant event that it has been called “the most extraordinary event in China’s post-revolutionary history” (Weatherley, 2006:58), and a “watershed, the defining decade of half a century of Communist rule in China” (MacFarquhar & Schoenhals, 2006:1). Even though the CCP suffered a crisis in legitimacy and chaos reigned in many parts of the country, I argue that legitimating practises by ordinary people was still conducted. These practises will be analysed as what Beetham calls “expression of consent” according to the theoretical discussion above. The masses took a very active role, which was the aim of the movement, especially students, and they were not merely passive recipients of Mao’s policies.

This chapter will begin with a brief summary of the twists and turns of the first years of the turbulent decade. I rely on the detailed work by MacFarquhar & Schoenhals *Mao’s Last Revolution* to give an historic overview of the early years of the Cultural Revolution. The reader should keep in mind that this summary is very brief and selective. I have selected events that form a relevant backdrop for understanding the legitimating practises that are discussed in the analysis following the historic summary. Leese makes a useful periodization of the Cultural Revolution by splitting it up in the Red Guard phase from 1966 to 1968, followed by a period of People’s Liberation Army (PLA) dominance between 1969 and 1971, the year that Lin Biao died, and the period of the years 1972 up until 1976 which has been dubbed “twilight of the Cultural Revolution” (2011:23-4). This analysis will be focused on the Red Guard phase of the revolution because at that time grassroots engagement in the movement was highest and most enthusiastic.

4.1 “Bombard the Headquarter”

The initiation of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution must be understood through complex domestic and foreign developments and Mao’s reactions to these. MacFarquhar & Schoenhals (2006) gives an account of the main reasons for Mao, who was indeed responsible for its enactment, to start a revolution that proved to be modern China’s greatest political disasters. One of these was Mao’s obsession with revisionism and the ideological developments he observed in Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin. Mao’s heir apparent Liu Shaoqi, who was to

become the main target of the Cultural Revolution, had differing opinions on how the famine and economic chaos of the Great Leap Forward should be handled. The Socialist Education Movement campaign, that was restore China's economy by ridding the party of corrupt rural cadres and regain the peasant's confidence, was led by Liu in a too revisionist way for Mao's taste. The course the campaign took was opening up a door for the restoration of capitalism and the abolishment communal farming Mao thought (2006:3-8). MacFarquhar & Schoenhals also suggests that Mao feared that he would face the same fate as Stalin, to be defamed after death, or even Khrushchev, who was toppled in 1964 by his colleagues (2006:9). This gave Mao the reason to turn outside the party, where Liu had a strong base, to rid himself of his potential rival.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution began in late 1965 as a seemingly just another run-of-the-mill academic dispute in party press. Beijing academic Wu Han, who enjoyed the protection of Beijing party boss Peng Zhen, were accused for spreading contra-revolutionary ideas in his plays. But the attack was secretly instigated by Mao, and when Peng failed to denounce Wu he too was targeted and unseated (2006:15-20, 32-34).

The PLA Chief of staff was also criticised and dismissed from office on grounds of political incorrectness and was replaced with Lin Biao, who was to become Mao's closest ally during the Cultural Revolution. By doing this the Beijing party apparat was incapacitated and PLA ties to the CCP was severed and Mao could use it as a powerbase to attack his rivals in the party. Mao then turned to the educational institutions for carrying out the next phase of his revolution.

Leftist academics in Beijing University who earlier had been attacked by Peng Zhen sensed that the Beijing party top was in trouble. They produced the Cultural Revolution's first "Big Character Poster", the media which was to become the main way for the masses to attack the establishment, in which they criticised the school's party secretariat. When Mao expressed liking toward the poster it was published in People's Daily with a praising comment (2006:58). Posters like this was by then plastered all over campus and at other schools, and students started to make their own posters. The Red Guard movement started in Beijing's elite schools where students took upon themselves to defend the Chairman and Mao Zedong-Thought. MacFarquhar & Schoenhals suggests that the reason for that the Red Guard movement started in elite schools was that the children in these schools, being the daughters and sons of top party cadres, had access to classified party documents at home. They therefore had a direct insight into Mao's directives that other people lacked (2006:104).

The commotion that the ousting of Peng Zhen had caused made many schools to be suspended, and after the publication of the Big Character Poster all Beijing schools cancelled classes. Noisy demonstrations in support of Mao was held all over the city and the enthusiastic masses soon turned a bit too rowdy for the taste of the CCP leadership. However, the military and police were forbidden to intervene by Lin Biao. This irritated Liu Shaoqi who dispatched so called work teams, which was standard procedure when problems of implementation occurred, to the campuses and schools to control the revolutionaries. Of course, the work teams was not popular with the Red Guards and they were in constant conflict.

At this initial phase of the Cultural Revolution, Mao was not in Beijing and was seldom reachable by his colleagues. Therefore his position on the unruly Red Guards and the direction that the Cultural Revolution had taken was unfamiliar to Liu Shaoqi and others, which probably was Mao's intention. Upon return to Beijing he condemned the work teams and the ones who had dispatched them. At the same time he lauded the Big Character Poster from Beijing University and its commentary in *People's Daily*. Early opposition to the work teams were celebrated as heroic rebels, and the supporters were branded as conservatives (2006:85). It was then clear that Mao was going to use the work teams as excuse for purging the party top with help from the Red Guard movement (2006:91). He declared his declaration of war on the party elite in an article that was to be published in *People's Daily* and was titled "Bombard the Headquarter – My Big Character Poster". When Mao had given the Red Guards his support, the Red Guard movement really took off (2006:106).

Beijing Red Guards travelled the country and the movement spread to wider parts of China. Students and teachers who now were free from school also flowed to the capital to learn from their revolutionary peers. It became official policy to encourage people to come to Beijing and huge mass rallies were held in Tiananmen Square where they could behold Mao and other prominent leaders in the party top.

The main aim for the Red Guards was the destruction of the "four olds", namely "old ideas, culture, customs, and habits of the exploiting classes" (2006:113). The Red Guard took to this task with great fervour. Temples, relics and other invaluable cultural objects and places were smashed and burned. In Beijing, by the end of the Cultural Revolution 4,922 of about seven thousand officially designated "places of cultural and historical interest" had been destroyed (2006:118). But the Red Guards' revolutionary enthusiasm were not limited to mere symbolical destruction. In the summer of 1966 Red Guards began looting and destroying the homes of people with "bad" class background, confiscating valuables and humiliating, or worse, its inhabitants.

But the destruction of cultural relics and sacking of bourgeoisie homes were not the most horrifying violent acts during the Cultural Revolution. Red Guards started to organise their own mass meetings where alleged class enemies and other bad elements were "struggled"; a form of public humiliation. Many of those who were targeted by the ire of the Red Guards committed suicide. Others were simply beaten to death. In Beijing alone, 1,722 were murdered in August and September 1966. The violence was probably enabled by the fact that the police were forbidden to intervene with the Red Guards, but were actually told to support them (2006:124-5).

Different Red Guard factions also started to conduct lethal gang warfare against each other in the streets and on campuses. The situation had turned too violent and unmanageable even for Mao's liking. In October 1967 classes were resumed but the Red Guards were less than willing to give up their newly gained freedoms and position as the revolutionary vanguard; the chaos continued. In an attempt to quell the unruly students Mao utilised the same tactic that he earlier had condemned, namely work teams. However, these were met by violence upon

entering the campuses, and at Tsinghua University five members of the work team sent there were killed (249). The leaders of the university Red Guards were summoned to a meeting with Mao and other party officials where he charged the Red Guards with alienating the population. PLA units moved into campuses to restore order. The Red Guards were dispersed and sent to the countryside to toil together with the peasants and workers in the fields, mines and factories. In total, 12 million young people from the cities were sent out to labour and become “educated youths” (251). This marked the end of the Red Guard era and their “red terror”.

4.2 “Political power grows out from the barrel of a gun”

However chaotic and violent, the policies of the Cultural Revolution, Mao’s person and leadership, and his theories were legitimated by large amounts of the populace. It probably right to assume that many of these practises were committed in fear of being branded as counterrevolutionary, and that has effects on the quality of the legitimating action, as Beetham argues. But there were also phenomena that were not necessarily structured through intimidation and fear. These need to be separated from each other. When Mao said that “political power grows out from the barrel of a gun” he was only partly right. To be able to enact his policies, he had to rely on its perceived legitimacy. By simple gun-pointing the Cultural Revolution never would have gone that far. However, this quote was to become very popular during the Cultural Revolution as a way of justifying the revolutionary violence that was committed.

For Beetham’s concept of legitimacy, the third dimension, that of a “demonstrable expression of consent”, is very important as discussed above. Being faithful to Beetham, we cannot deduce genuine voluntariness from any action of legitimation, but that is not our goal. What is analysed is the action’s potential legitimating force as an action of an “expression of consent”. However, I think it is appropriate to discuss the Red Guards’ relationship to the party state and what role the government had in orchestrating their activities. If taking action is forced upon someone then it is hard to argue that it qualifies as an “expression of consent”. The legitimating power that such actions produce are anyhow weak and the ruler then solely relies on coercion. But the various institutionalised expressions of loyalty, or the information gathering and disseminating efforts were not forced upon the ambitious Red Guards. A space was opened for them, by the government, which gave them the opportunity, and they spontaneously occupied that new space.

Because Mao used the Red Guards to purge the party of his rivals, the movement’s autonomy can be questioned. However, Xing (2011:213) argues the fact that they were called upon to initiate the Cultural Revolution is not enough to claim that they were totally manipulated and controlled (See also Zhao,

2008:197). What is really interesting here is their degree of relative autonomy. Schoenhals stresses the importance of acknowledging this, lest our understanding of the Cultural Revolution be distorted (Schoenhals, 2015). In the following sections I will provide two examples of what can be argued to qualify as legitimization actions by the Red Guards, students as well as workers. I will first discuss the newsgathering and disseminating activities that cropped up in the very early stage of the Cultural Revolution. I then turn to examine some legitimization actions in the sphere of popular culture (here “popular” as *of the people* rather than culture suited to or intended for the general masses of people). The purpose being to say something interesting about legitimacy as a theoretical concept and how that concept works in political life of ordinary people in an unordinary historical setting.

4.2.1 A Great Proletarian Information Revolution

Michael Schoenhals has called the phenomena of Red Guard newsletters and information networks “Chinas Great Information Revolution” (Schoenhals, 2015). The “information revolution” was that the young Red Guards could “independently collect, process, internally disseminate, and exchange information” in a way that for a brief period of time challenged the communist state’s information and propaganda monopoly in an unprecedented way (Schoenhals, 2015). Before the year of 1966, such organisation was branded contra-revolutionary and illegal.

To their disposal they had hand-cranked mimeograph machines, motorcycles and sometimes even access to switchboard telephones. For example, the Red Guard faction called 3rd HQ in Beijing had a network of “liaison-stations” in about fifty cities around the country, that relayed news about what was going on in the country and the progress of the revolution; and sometimes even abroad. But even less sophisticated organisations like the East Wind Revolutionary Rebel HQ consisting of staff and workers in the machine industry in Beijing had its own internal newsletter which provided members with important news on what was going on both domestically and, on rare occasions, internationally. But the professionalism of the Red Guard organisations should not be exaggerated. The people working in the field were more like activists with a nose for gossip than true journalists and often they had to rely on personal connections to get hold of interesting information (Schoenhals, 2015).

However, not only students produced and disseminated newsletters and journals. The “Headquarters of the Revolutionary Revolt of Shanghai Workers” published their own newspaper called *Workers’ Rebellion*. The circulation was 30,000 copies in the beginning, but by the early 1970s it reached an impressive 6,400,000 copies, exceeding the local party press organ (Xing, 2011:214).

The purpose of the Red Guards and other revolutionary factions was to rid the party state apparat of “hidden representatives of the bourgeoisie” and “persons in power taking the capitalist road”, so in what way were their publications legitimating? The Cultural Revolution entailed a splitting of the CCP from Mao

and his clique of people who were supportive of the Cultural Revolution. This means that while the CCP was delegitimised, Mao's person, his revolutionary movement and its leaders were legitimised by ordinary people. The fact is, had not the people conveyed legitimacy to Mao, and had Mao not been able to utilise that resource, the Cultural Revolution probably never would have taken place. This observation points to the reciprocity inherent in the concept of legitimacy. It is a fundamentally relational concept since the ruler relies on the legitimation from the people. The Cultural Revolution is a schoolbook example of Beetham's definition of mass mobilisation mode of legitimacy. The people were relied on to carry out the policies. They are thus not merely receivers of policy. The Red Guard's newsletters took the informational aspect into the legitimation movement. It is a form of legitimation under the mass mobilisation mode because the legitimation relies on the masses. The masses are publicly acclaiming the rulers right to rule and participate in the enactment of policy.

Many of the newsletters had a box in the top right corner with "supreme instructions", i.e. a Mao quote. By putting in quotations from Mao's speeches and works in the text a kind of quotational legitimation. This practise is derived from that Mao Zedong-thought should direct all your actions, and all problems could be solved by applying his theories (Leese, 2011:198).

The publication *Red Peak Newsletter (Hong Feng Tongxun)* was issued by students in Shanghai and to read it offers an interesting insight into what a rather professional looking newsletter could contain. On the first page of issue 19 from 27 June 1967 there are news of the progress of the revolution around the country. The newsletter gives a glimpse of what was important for the revolutionaries at that time. In Lhasa, capital of Tibet, the newsletter reports that the "situation is very good, the area's Party Committee Secretaries Zhou Renshan and Hao Pingnan have been exposed [as counter-revolutionaries] by Red Guards". However the situation was described as more bleak in Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang province.

Hangzhou has been struck by a white terror, the Big Character Posters that Red Ferocity-faction³ put up were instantly torn down. The Big Character Posters that 'smashes Liu and criticises revisionism' are extremely few, and all [other posters] are targeting Red Ferocity-faction (Hong Feng Tongxun, 1967).

But the newsletter also had updates on the struggle in the cultural sphere. "The Mao Zedong-Thought Propaganda Group in Beijing is setting up the play 'The First Salvo'. The play is about the country's first Marxist-Leninist Big Character Poster, [the play is written] by a new Beijing University playwright" (Ibid.).

The short-lived newsletters, like this one, were conveying legitimacy to Mao's cause in principally two ways which both can be seen as actions of "expression of consent". For clarity I have divided them into form and content.

³ Names alluding to violence, like these were certainly inspired by Mao's recommendation to the young Red Guard Song Binbin to change her name from Binbin (suave) to Yaowu (be martial) (MacFarquhar & Schoenhals, 2006:108).

In form they were part in implementing Mao's policies during the Cultural Revolution. The people's engagement in implementing the policy is a crucial feature of legitimacy in the mass mobilisation mode as characterised by Beetham. By circulating newsletters with information about Mao's theories and views, and also the general development of the revolution, revolutionaries could be kept *a jour* and act according to the new developments. Information is thus an important element in legitimation. The subordinate must have some idea as to how the cause or system can be legitimated. The spontaneously organised newsletters filled this function. The form of newsletters are also functioning as actions of legitimation because they validate the relation between the ruler and the ruled to those external to it.

The second way it functions as legitimating is through the views and the language in the newsletters. This is not necessarily separated from the first aspect of popular implementation above, but allows for deeper discussion about the content. The newsletters constructs the different factions that are struggling against each other as either enemies, crooks and villains or heroes and revolutionaries. This is done through a set of terms and association with certain people in the leadership. The Shanghainese Red Guards who reported on the "white terror" in Hangzhou makes a telling example. "White terror" is a phrase that refers back to the violent suppression of communists in 1927. By using it, one invokes historic wrongdoings to create a sense of that the enemy is on the move and "we" have to strike back. The newsletter is painting up a picture of enemies of the revolution against the heroic resistance of the Red Ferocity-faction. The enemies are the supporters of Liu Shaoqi, the greatest crook of the Cultural Revolution according to the Red Guards; a typical "capitalist roader". By attacking Mao's rival, at least verbally, the Red Guards could show their support of Mao, and thus legitimating the movement against "people in the top taking the capitalist road". The popular denunciation of Liu in its various forms was one way in which the masses could implement Mao's revolutionary policy. Bereft of popular support and his power base in the party undermined, Liu was the first in the senior leadership to fall victim to the movement.

Red Peak Newsletter reports enthusiastically about the developments in Lhasa, where the CCP secretariat has been "exposed". From the revolutionaries' point of view, this is very encouraging. The sole purpose of the Cultural Revolution was to attack the party establishment. To report on these news, and in that particular way, is a powerful way of showing where one's loyalty lies. It was probably also important for the Red Guards to report on events that indicated that the revolution was on the right track. In this way the news reporting becomes a legitimating action in itself. By describing the events that are understood as taking the Cultural Revolution forward as positive, and at the same time describing the party's efforts to curb the revolution as bad, even as "terror", Mao's policy is legitimated. This view is then easily proliferated among Red Guards who are hooked up on this information network. By being distributed, the newsletters contributed to bring the "mass" into "mass mobilisation".

The Shanghai Red Guard newsletter also points out that posters that "smashes Liu and criticises revisionism" (*da Liu pi xiu*) were extremely few in Hangzhou.

The ideological battlefield, when it did not materialise into actual armed clashes, was the walls of universities, schools and other public places. Big Character Posters became a very important medium for revolutionaries during the Cultural Revolution.

To report on the Big Character Posters can be seen as a way of creating a community and a way of sharing inspiration nationally. Because the newsletters reported on the fact that Big Character Posters were put everywhere, they reprinted their content, and exchanged experiences of resistance, the community that was created could legitimate Mao in a more efficient way. The newsletters can be seen as having the function of spontaneous coordination between likeminded Red Guards and other revolutionaries. Because of this coordination, the legitimating force was greater than if the groups would have been separated by information blackouts. The fact that the newsletter outfits, their publications, form and content were not dictated by Mao or any other in the CCP also makes the legitimating force of the revolutionaries more potent. That is probably why the people who stood to lose from the Cultural Revolution were very hostile towards them.

4.2.2 Ritualistic revolution

The Cultural Revolution saw the birth of what often is described as a personality cult of Mao, complete with rituals, exegesis, followers and worshipping. While dressing the plethora of loyalty expressions towards Mao in religious terminology can be helpful for understanding the seemingly irrational and blind worship of Mao during these years, it simplifies some of its more complex aspects.

The thing with the “cult” that makes it interesting from a legitimation perspective is that it did not have its origin in state initiatives but emerged at the grassroots level (Leese, 2011:135-6). Before the Cultural Revolution, Mao had strictly forbidden all expressions of excessive reverence and worship of his person; even celebrating his birthday (2011:145).

But under the summer of 1966 that was about to change radically. Because students and teachers were free from school, many took the opportunity to travel to the capital, the centre of the Cultural Revolution and had been coming in large numbers since June. The Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG), the loose institution that was charged to conduct the revolution with Mao, did not like this very much, but Mao disagreed and in August the masses were urged to come to Beijing to meet the leader. (MacFarquhar & Schoenhals, 2006:106-7). This was the overture to what MacFarquhar & Schoenhals describes as eight “Nuremberg-style rallies” held in Tiananmen Square (2006:107). But the Nazis would probably been consternated by the anarchic character of these events. For instance, on National Day rally when 1.5 million people attended, ten people were trampled to death and many injured (2006:109). The mass rallies gave an unprecedented chance for ordinary people to see the Chairman in the flesh. The eight rallies were totally attended by twelve million people (Leese, 2011:132).

But for most Red Guards who attended, the rallies were a very special occasion and a day to remember. A letter to his colleagues from twenty-six year old teacher Bei Guangcheng⁴ from Shanghai gives an insight into what kinds of feelings that were awoken when attending a mass rally and able to catch a glimpse of Mao himself.

Let me tell you the great news, news greater than heaven. At five minutes past seven in the evening on the 15th of September 1966, I saw our most most most most most dearly beloved leader Chairman Mao! Comrades, I have seen Chairman Mao! Today I am so happy my heart is about to burst. We're shouting 'Long live Chairman Mao! Long live! Long live!' We're jumping! We're singing! After seeing the Red Sun in Our Hearts, I just ran around like crazy all over Beijing [...] How can I possibly go to sleep tonight! I have decided to make today my birthday. Today I started a new life!!! (Bei, 1996 [1967]).

The account of the star-struck young Red Guard shows how these mass rallies were very important for legitimating the Cultural Revolution. By attending, Mao gave the Red Guards his blessing in implementing the revolution, and by attending with their outmost fervour, the Red Guards conferred legitimacy to Mao and his cause. It was a very powerful display of public acclamation towards the leadership. These events were of course broadcasted around the country and showed to all how great popular support Mao enjoyed.

But all legitimating rituals were not as grand a spectacle as the Beijing mass rallies. A curious practice developed to show one's loyalty toward Chairman Mao was the "loyalty dance" and "quotation gymnastics". This was a way to "thoroughly eradicate the revisionist sports line and to establish a revolutionary Mao Zedong sports line" (Shanghai Sports Headquarters Rising Corps "Chairman Mao Quotation Gymnastics" Creation Group, quoted in Leese, 2011:202). The different movements in the gymnastic choreography represented a word or a series of words making up a full story line. But the words to the choreography was not made up by the group. It was consisting of popular quotations from the *Quotations from Chairman Mao* (also called *The Little Red Book*) which all true revolutionaries carried on their person. The same group also created a "Wishing Chairman Mao Zedong Eternal Life Taijiquan" programme (Leese, 2011:204).

The "cult" also started to become commodified. Kitschy Mao portraits or plastic red hearts with the character for "loyalty" imprinted on them, and even Mao-quotes collector cards could be bought. But the most common product associated with the cult was the Mao badge. Both public and private organisations produced these badges in absurd quantities (Leese 2011:211-5). To wear a badge became synonymous with revolutionary conviction. By wearing a Mao badge one could show one's loyalty towards the Great Helmsman. Maybe this can be seen as an early form of political consumerism, anachronistically popping up at a time of greatest communist frenzy. The practice of wearing Mao badges gained popularity

⁴ Upon return to Shanghai Bei Guangcheng was accused for being a contra-revolutionary, severely beaten and humiliated by his student and colleagues which caused him to commit suicide that same day ("As We Saw Them Beat Him...", 1996 [1967]).

since July 1966. Buying and wearing a badge, like political pins today, shows your dedication to a cause. As such it works as legitimating for Mao's person and his politics. The badges are very tightly connected with the Cultural Revolution narrative and it creates a political community, identifiable through visual properties, around the cause.

Lane (1984) and Yurchak (2006) has argued for the role of socialist ritual for maintaining the regime's rule and creating legitimacy in the Soviet Union. These socialist rituals embodied the Soviet official ideology. They varied from huge mass rallies to initiation rituals for individuals and were developed during the sixties and seventies (Lane, 1984:208). Lane argues that these rituals were created in order to gain acceptance for the soviet regime's claim to authority by referring to tradition (1984:217). But the fact that the rituals that cropped up during the Cultural Revolution was created at the grassroots level makes them different from the top- down created rituals in the Soviet Union. The rituals that surrounded Mao were in many instances not created by the leadership but by ordinary citizens, like the quotation gymnastics.

A report produced by "the Red Guard General Headquarters at Beijing Middle School No.64" from 13th April 1968 tells about the activities they are planning to implement a "Loyaltyfication of the whole day" (*Yi ri zhongzihua*). These young Red Guards are employing various kinds of rituals that were popular at the time to show loyalty towards the Great Helmsman (Beijing liushisi zhong hongweibing zongbu, 1968).

The report begins with "Supreme Instructions", as the newsletters also did: "The Chinese Communist Party governs the nuclear force of our undertakings. Marxism-Leninism guides the logical base of our thinking". Supreme Instructions was always referring to a Mao quote; that went without saying. Following that is "instructions from Vice-chairman Lin Biao" which indicates that Lin Biao still was seen as Mao's closest supporter at the time.

The report addresses "Little Generals of the Red Guards, revolutionary teaching staff and fellow students" and begins with expressing that "we hold boundless warm love towards Chairman Mao", and continues in the same tone half through the document before going on to the plans for implementing the "Loyaltyfication of the whole day".

The young Red Guards are proposing a creation of their own rituals around the starting and ending of the school day. "Upon entering the classroom: Salute Chairman Mao (When entering the first time)". At the end of the last lesson, "when leaving the classroom: Salute Chairman Mao, sing "Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman" (*Dahai Hangxing Kao Duoshou*). When roll calling in the morning, instead of answering with "here" the Red Guards propose that it is changed to "I wish Chairman Mao eternal life", "Long live Chairman Mao" or "Serve the People". When answering a question one should "first ask Chairman Mao for instructions, and when in the process of answering one should use quotations from Chairman Mao" (Ibid).

This little report shows what absurd proportions these legitimation practices took at the end of the Red Guard-era. Mao was supposed to be present in every aspect of everyday life. The system of "asking for instructions and reporting

back” had been in use for a long time but it was a report of the experiences of a PLA unit who used it to unify two competing factions at a factory that started this ritual during the Cultural Revolution. They had added that one should look in Mao Zedong’s writings and speeches for instructions and to the system. 1967 the CCP Centre had issued *Zhongfa*⁵ [67] 350 that endorsed the new ritual as a model work strategy, and it became an officially backed formalistic worship of Chairman Mao (Leese, 2011:198). The ritual was thus initially formed as a disciplinary tool to pacify two factions, but because of “embedded” journalists at factories, the ritual was popularised and spread without direct directions from the Party or CCRG (2011:201).

The way that the young Red Guards at Beijing 64th Middle School used the ritual of “asking for instructions” is a form of spontaneous public acclamation of the leader which then functions legitimating. They even could refer to a policy document from the highest instance to justify their practise. This points to the relational aspect of legitimation and legitimacy.

But Leese points out that by 1968, to wear a Mao badge or not became a question of loyalty. This was in a time when appearing as not loyal to Mao could prove very dangerous. Of course, everyone wanted to wear a badge. What happens to the potential legitimating force then? If a practise becomes so widespread that it becomes almost compulsory that practise stops to be legitimating. It is so because it is harder to sort under the category of “demonstrable expression of consent”. If one needs to conform to some practises just to be able to live normally, it becomes a form of compliance, not legitimation. The hollowing of the legitimating force of the “asking for instructions”-system faced the same development. If it is compulsory to utter a set phrase whenever one opens one’s mouth to speak it becomes a sort of formalisation of normal language rather than proving ones dedication to a cause. To merely live in a society and abide by its norms cannot qualify as “demonstrable expression of consent”.

⁵ *Zhongfa* means simply “issued by the party centre”.

5 Consumer legitimacy

In the beginning of this thesis the rise of nationalism in China was mentioned. The increasingly harsh nationalist discourse has been one way for the Chinese government to build legitimacy (Holbig & Gilley, 2010). The accounts that focus on nationalism among Chinese citizens has been mainly interested in nationalist expressions and activism online (Liu, 2006; Zhang, 2013; Liu, 2014). In these accounts, overly enthusiastic nationalists is portrayed as a problem for the Chinese government. And it is a fact that the CCP censorship apparatus effectively removes all calls for nationalist demonstrations from the web, even though it supports state policy (King et al., 2013); a fact that support the view that it is seen as a problem for the leadership. However, that might not be because of the nationalist content but out of fear that people will learn collectively how to mobilise public protests in general. But, the particular legitimisation aspect on the behalf of the people is unfortunately neglected. While anti-Japanese riots and similar phenomena are posing a challenge to the government's goal of a "harmonious society", there are other, less drastic forms of popular nationalism and patriotism that can be analysed from a legitimisation perspective.

A lot of nationalistic activism, both on- and offline, revolves around China's territorial disputes in the East and South China Sea. It is particularly the islands Diaoyu/Senkaku, the Paracel Islands and Spratley Islands.

With this nationalistic discourse of territory as background, there has cropped up various different kinds of products and merchandise. In a mix of capitalism and nationalism, this patriotic consumerism can be seen as offering the Chinese people an alternative route to participate in national politics. Through consumption and boycott, the Chinese citizen is again given the opportunity to help enact the government's policy; one of the important aspects of mass mobilisation. But this is a mass mobilisation of the late-modern society where Mao-style mass campaigns and rallies have become obsolete.

5.1 Territorial tourism

China has long asserted sovereignty claim over the tiny islands and shoals in the South China Sea, the so called U-line, of which Paracel Islands make up its western part. The Paracel Islands are also claimed by Vietnam. The sources that China has brought to the table is old texts that try to describe the islands and its location in order for captains to avoid the danger the islands and shoals pose to their ships, rather than mentioning them as a part of China or Chinese. During the 19th and 20th century the islands has been either totally ignored, or at sometimes

claimed by various regional and colonial powers as its strategic value has fluctuated. Since 1974, when South Vietnam's military expedition to the islands was fought down by the PLA Navy⁶, China has exercised military control over the Paracel Islands. But the issue has not yet been settled internationally (Tonnesson, 2002:6-16).

The claim to the islands in the South China Sea, the military activity there, and the building of new islands in the area makes up an important part of Chinese foreign policy (Sanger & Gladstone, 2015). Not only in relation to its regional neighbours, but also in relation to the US which has allies in the region. The Islands were for long closed off for civilians and the waters were only visited by military vessels. However, the islands were opened to tourists in year 2013, making this a quite new phenomena and adding interesting features to the politics surrounding the disputed archipelago. (Tian, 2013)

It is quite expensive to buy a five day cruise to the Paracel Islands. Prices range from 4.000 yuan to 15.000 yuan (Xisha Lüyou). Given that the annual average income of urban resident in China was about 51500 yuan (National Bureau of Statistics of China), it must be considered an expensive five day leisure trip.

Out of the five day cruise, only two days are spent on the islands since it is quite far from Hainan where the tours depart from. The tourists sleep every night on board and eat all their meals on the boat. However, the program is intense so that the tourist can make the most out of their trip. On the third day of the cruise they reach the first island in the archipelago called Yinyu. On the travel agents webpage you can read a detailed program of the tour. After breakfast the tourists disembark on the island and conduct "patriotic activities", consisting of "raising the flag and singing the national anthem, swearing an oath of allegiance and collecting souvenirs together" (Xisha Lüyou).

The "patriotic activities" makes up an important part in the selling of the cruise. This fact makes this kind of consumption tightly coupled with political significance. Swimming, deep sea fishing and other traditional tourist activities, which could be done in and around Hainan, a popular resort in China for Chinese tourists, seems to be secondary feature of the cruise. Actual time spent ashore is also quite low in comparison to the time spent on board the ship. Furthermore, it is an expensive journey with Chinese measures. This seems to point at that both the feeling of exclusiveness and political significance of being on the Paracel Islands are the main attractions of the cruise.

It is not only the outspokenly "patriotic activities" that carries important political implications. Just the fact that you in person can be on and around the disputed islands carries political significance. This becomes clear if we compare with the activism concerning the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. One of the main goals of the League for the Defence of Diaoyu Islands is to go to the island and disembark. When they managed to accomplish this it was seen as a huge feat

⁶ These events make up the plot of the 1976 movie *South China Sea Turmoil* mentioned in the introduction.

(Zhongguo Minjian Baodiao Lianhehui). To be on the islands as a Chinese citizen is symbolically very important.

When turning away from the travel agent's sales pitch toward someone who has experienced the cruise first hand, more interesting aspects of the political significance of this practise emerge. Travel blogs gives an interesting insight to what Chinese tourists experience themselves when going to the Paracel Islands. One woman's post on a travel blog is mainly made up by pictures taken by her and her partner during the trip. Most of the photos are uncommented and shows the ocean and beach scenery. The photo of the flag ceremony on Yinyu Island is one of the few photos that are commented in some length. The photo shows some of the participants grouped together in front of a Chinese flag flying in the wind from a tall flagpole. The tourists are smiling towards the camera and are waving small Chinese flags. The travel company had provided the participants with flags to wave and to pose in front of the camera with. The woman writes about her experience that

Yinyu Island left the most beautiful impression, there were a few families of fisherfolk on the island [...] After we disembarked on the island we raised the flag [...] When the flag was being raised I felt very excited. We chanted slogans like 'I love the Motherland, I love Xisha'. After that we sang the national anthem. The organisers had arranged for some of the kids in the tour to raise the flag, which was very meaningful for them. (Xisha youji, 2014)

The woman tells us that her experience on the Yinyu Island was "the most beautiful" and that she felt "very excited" as the Chinese flag was raised. Through her account of the cruise, we can see how important rituals and ceremonies still are for legitimating power.

Both Lane (1984) and Yurchak (2006) shows how Socialist ritual was crucial for legitimating the Soviet regime during its later decades. Lane points out that rituals and ceremonies were used to create consensus and solidarity. The rituals represented the values of the current dominant ideology and they spoke to the emotions rather than the intellect of the participant. Effective rituals should also be conducted during "occasions of heightened significance" (Lane, 1984:208). The flag ceremony on Yinyu Island is conducted at such an occasion. But it is an occasion that is of heightened significance for the participating individual and not for the nation as a whole. It is not like other flag ceremonies that are conducted during national holidays which has a collective meaning. But the private nature of the ceremony does not make it less meaningful. Going to the Paracel Islands is an exclusive experience, making it an important moment for the individual. Partaking in patriotic rituals during such an occasion boosts the significance of the ritual. It is an interesting picture of the individualisation and commercialisation of mass dictatorship; seemingly fitting well into the late-modern/post-industrialisation narrative of the 21st century.

But even more meaningful than the temporal aspect of the ritual is in this case its spatial element. The rituals on Yinyu Island are taking *place* on a *location* of "heightened significance". The place of rituals is very important for its emotional appeal (Lane, 1984:213). In the case of the Paracel Islands, because of the specific

position it holds in Chinese foreign policy, it is a powerful symbol of how China no longer will allow itself to be bullied by other states. All parties seem to be aware of the symbolisms that the Paracel Islands entail. By partaking in a ritual such as this, the participant confers legitimacy to the ruling party. And by sharing these experiences, ones hopes of going, or publicly stating ones opinion on the sovereignty issue online, the action creates legitimating force even outside the relation between participant and ruler. To show support in this way legitimates the relationship externally. By not being a strictly personal experience it gain legitimating function.

A visit to the few local fisher families is also on the program. From a legitimation point of view it seems to be an important part of the expedition. This is a way of acknowledging that there are Chinese nationals inhabiting the islands and thus justifying the claim to the area. Their presence lends justificatory power to the Chinese claim. By making a visit to these fishers the participants can see for themselves that there is Chinese presence on the islands. By retelling this through blogs and other media, the notion that the islands are inherently Chinese is amplified.

The participants are also swearing an oath during the “patriotic activities” on the island. According to Beetham’s understanding of legitimacy, oath swearing is one of the ways through which legitimacy is conferred to a ruler. Such an action is important in two ways for the contribution it does *to* legitimacy. Swearing oaths to a superior part in a power relation has “subjective binding force for those who have taken part in them, regardless of the motives for which they have done so” (Beetham, 1991:18). Even if an oath has been sworn out of self-interest, a normative commitment is introduced to the relationship. Secondly, swearing an oath, as in the case of the tourist cruise, is form of public expression of acknowledgement on the part of the subordinate of the position of the superior. It functions as a confirmation of the legitimacy of the power relation that is made in public (Beetham, 1991:18;91-92). In this case the ceremony has a wider audience than the participants through both the travel agency’s webpage and the blogs and photos that circulate online.

But can consumption really be seen as a form of legitimation? It is not an action that traditionally has been understood as political. Nor Beetham or other legitimacy theoreticians are discussing consumption. However, a trip to the Paracel Islands is loaded with political meanings. The islands are part of an international dispute between sovereign states; a dispute that causes tensions that can have effects for the stability and security of the region according to analysts and scholars (see contributing authors in Kivimäki). The islands are also symbolically important in the military history of China who can boast few other military successes against other states, than the confrontation with the South Vietnamese navy outside Paracel Islands. The fact that the movie *South China Sea Turmoil* and its main theme is still occurring in today’s cultural sphere hints in that direction. Pictures from the movie are being spread online when Paracel Islands is discussed (Jimi Xiaoxian, 2014).

By buying an expensive cruise to an island group in the South China Sea that plays a leading role in the foreign policy of the Chinese government is to justify

that political agenda. Through everyday tourism one has the opportunity to legitimate the politics of the government. An opportunity that many is ready to grasp despite the high price. But it should also be acknowledged that Paracel Islands boasts intriguing opportunities for diving and seeing beautiful coral reefs. A fact that of course contributes to making it an attractive tourist destination. Because of its position in foreign policy and its position in nationalist discourse, the trips to the Paracel Islands works as a powerful kind of political consumerism that legitimates the foreign policy of the government and the government in itself.

The tourism can be analysed through Beetham's third level of legitimacy: demonstrable expression of consent on behalf of the ruled. And it is especially interesting seen through a mix of the policy implementing role of the people under mass mobilisation mode of legitimacy and political consumerism. By partaking in a cruise and being a part of the economic activities surrounding the islands one is also making the claim stronger for China. The more *de facto* control China can boast, economically and militarily, makes it gradually harder for the opposing parties in the conflict, and the international community, to act against China's claim. The costs for solving the dispute against the favour of China seems to be increasing the more China invests in the little archipelago. The stronger the *de facto* control that China has in the South China Sea, the *de jure* aspect of the issue will be less and less significant in the outcome or settling of the dispute. Tourism to the islands can thus take a not insignificant part in the dispute. Tourism also helps bringing the Paracel Islands closer to the Chinese people's consciousness, making them aware of its existence and significance.

The tourism to the Paracel Islands tap into the wider nationalist discourse in China that is partly fed by the government. Nationalist and patriotic values are used to legitimate government foreign policy. This discourse is then a facilitator for legitimating actions. It opens up certain spaces for popular legitimating activities, giving political agency to the subjects. But in this case, only for those who can afford it.

5.2 Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute

Not all uninhabited islands of territorial dispute are as paradisiacal as the Paracels. That is certainly true for Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, a group of mostly barren rocks in the East China Sea. But that does not diminish the fervour that some activists engage in the conflict.

The uninhabited islands called Diaoyu in Chinese and Senkaku in Japanese are the focal point of a controversial territorial dispute between People's Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan) and Japan. The Japanese government has exercised power over the islands since 1890, except during the period after Japan's defeat in World War II, when the islands were under US control for a time. Mostly the islands has been uninhabited but fish processing has been conducted there and fishers from Taiwan and Japan has landed on the islands and

shared the resources of its surrounding waters up until the sixties (Kawashima, 2013).

In 2010 there also had been an incident regarding the sovereignty of Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands when a Chinese trawler that were fishing close to the islands were confronted by Japanese coastguards and its crew arrested. The Chinese government issued a number of protests and demanded an apology (Hagström, 2012). The question of the territorial status of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands has been an infected issue for some time and its political significance has increased in China with rising nationalist sentiment.

During August 2012 a crew of activists left Hong Kong in a fishing boat with the aim of landing on one of the islands and enforce China's territorial claim. They managed to get ashore and put a Chinese flag on the island. The leader of the activists, Yeung Hong told the press that he cried of joy and pride after they had successfully raised the flag on the island (Li & Li, 2012).

Despite the occasional sharpened tone in the diplomatic exchange between the countries when incidents as those mentioned above, the diplomatic relations between China and Japan had been stabilising since 1972. During September 2012 the 40th anniversary of this normalisation was to be celebrated. But the Japanese government's purchase of the islands from a private person that year angered the Chinese leadership and led to the cancellation of the celebration. Beijing said that it was a "gross violation of China's sovereignty over its own territory" and that they "would not yield an inch" and take "necessary measures to protect its territorial sovereignty", while also sending two military vessels to the vicinity of the islands (Przystup, 2013:110).

Only the day after this official outburst, protests started outside the Japanese embassy in Beijing and soon spread to other cities where Japanese cars, stores and restaurants were vandalised. The protesters urged a hard line towards Japan and a boycott against Japanese goods (2013:111).

5.2.1 Boycott

Reilly argues that the 2012 protests and activism was more individualised than earlier anti-Japanese protests (Reilly, 2014:213). Academics urged the public to use the market as a tool for their political goal. According to Reilly, the boycotts "represents a potent extension of the public's role in Chinese foreign policy". He suggests that the Chinese public and the government formed a coordinated relationship to pressure Japan economically. While ordinary citizens engaged in the boycott and discussed it vividly online, the government encouraged the boycotts and also took some economic measures that targeted Japan (Ibid). As a result Japanese car sales in China plummeted and overall import from Japan to China dropped with 14 percent (Przystup, 2013:112).

The 2012 boycotts shows how important political consumerism is for legitimating a cause even in an autocracy as China. To partake in an action such as a boycott can be seen as a form of demonstrable expression of consent; Beetham's third level of legitimacy. It is a type of action that lends political

agency to the individual. In Western democracies, political consumerism seems to be a form of political participation that is gaining in significance. It also seems like consumerism is being acknowledged as more significant.

When the anti-Japanese riots turned a bit too unruly, with great material destruction as result, the Chinese government turned the public's anger into the boycott by condemning violence and promote an economic boycott (Reilly, 2014:211). People then consented to this turn into non-violent protest by airing support for it online and discussing how it best should be conducted for greatest effect (2014:212-4). By consenting and then acting accordingly people effectively legitimated the official policy, and in extension the government. In this way, the government's non-violent policy still was legitimated, and their actions could be seen as more effective than the smashing of Japanese shops.

The anti-Japanese boycott clearly points out the relational aspect of legitimacy between ruler and ruled. It is an interplay between initiatives and responses not only top-down but also from the bottom-up. The value system that justifies the power relation, in this case nationalism, is mobilising people around the cause. By participating in the boycott they are granted political agency. Political agency that is given through consumerism also translates into actions of "expression of consent". In the mobilisation mode of legitimacy, the role of the broad masses in implementing policy is vital. Even though the Mao-era and its huge mass movements seem long gone, this mode of mobilisation for legitimacy is not yet outdated in China. A boycott that engages many parts of society can pose as a typical image for how mass movements have travelled into the age of consumerism and "post-modernity".

5.2.2 Sovereignty souvenirs

But the activism surrounding the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute is not only focused on not buying stuff. Recently, a small industry of products focused on the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands conflict has emerged.

The 17th December the first "Defend Diaoyu Island Store" in the city of Baoding, Hebei province opened its doors. The Chairman James Soong of Taiwan's First People's Party, a pro-mainland political party, gifted the store with a calligraphy scroll with the store's name. The owner, Mr. Chen, explains that all merchandise is connected to the protection of Diaoyu islands and he sells foods, drinks and books like *Protect Diaoyu Islands* and *The Diaoyu Islands has always belonged to China*, but also other kinds of souvenirs. Mr. Chen explains "that he opened his shop to carry on the goals of patriotism and protection of Diaoyu Islands, in order to pass on the feeling of patriotism and to strengthen the unity of the people. At the same time, the solemn statement of the store is to use the profits for Diaoyu-propaganda and other types of charity that benefits the society". (Li, 2014).

The pictures featured in the article on Chen's store shows t-shirts with slogans printed on their chests in red. One reads "we are angry! Japan must apologise". The Chinese flag that activists brought to one of the islands 2012 is on display in

the shop. You can also buy cups with a picture of the largest island printed on the side with an immensely oversized Chinese flag mounted on the highest point of the island. A sign next to the cups reads “Stern statement! The Diaoyu Islands are China’s inherent territory!” in Chinese and in English it reads “Diaoyu Islands BELONG to China! They are NOT called Senkaku Islands!” (Ibid).

Some people who want to show their support for China’s claim over Diaoyu/Senkaku take a more savoury approach. A “Defend Diaoyu Islands”-themed restaurant in Beijing gained media attention when they were forced by the landlord to take down their big sign because the landlord was nervous that it might be too provoking. The owner dresses in camouflage clothes and the bar is resembling the pride of the People’s Liberation Army Navy: the aircraft carrier Liaoning. Among the dishes served are “Diaoyu Islands Grenades” which is deep fried banana, and sweet potato “Diaoyu Islands Rockets”. The walls of the restaurant are hung with Chinese flags, patriotic posters, slogans and replicas of machineguns. The owner, Mr Lu, says that “we welcome everyone, including Japanese, we are just pledging our standpoint that Diaoyu Islands are Chinese and expressing our patriotic sentiments.” Mr Lu’s wife Zhang, clad in navy uniform, says that “Diaoyu Islands are Chinese. This sentence has been imprinted on our brains since we were small. So for me and other Chinese and Beijingers this is a very important matter.” Mr Lu comments the fact that he had to take down the sign with “But it was not like we had a sign that said ‘no Japanese or dogs allowed’ like other restaurants have had” (Diaoyudao malatang, 2015). The owner’s remark about the anti-Japanese sign is probably alluding to the restaurant that had a sign that said “This shop does not receive the Japanese, the Philippines, the Vietnamese and dog[s]” and provoked both anger and amusement from targeted groups (Racist Beijing restaurant, 2013).

Not all Chinese can board a ship and set out to resist the Japanese occupation of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands one day. But through buying a t-shirt with a political message on, or eating “Diaoyu Islands Grenades” it is a way to participate. Consumerism flavoured with nationalism entrenches the nationalist discourse around these islands. While the tourism to Paracel Islands can have more direct consequences for international politics, the merchandise and food that surrounds the Diaoyu/Senkaku conflict is more of a symbolic nature. But the symbolic consumerism still is conveying legitimacy to the government’s policy. However, this kind of political consumerism must be deemed to be of the weaker kind. Even though the shop owner of the “Defend Diaoyu”-store claims he is going to donate money to the cause it can probably not be as effective as a full-blown boycott. The interesting thing about this kind of consumption is that it can foster collective political identities (Willis 2012:166). To consume according to a political narrative creates a political identity and gives the feeling of political agency. By taking presence in the public sphere, this issue is something that people can relate to politically. By buying products that are associated with the Diaoyu/Senkaku issue one affiliates with the cause. It conveys legitimacy to the ruling party since it publicly validates and governs the policy and at the same time it acknowledges the relationship between rulers and governed. Like the boycott, it is an image of where political agency is situated in today’s China.

6 Conclusion

What is the role of the citizens or subjects for the legitimacy of a power structure? How can this role be understood and researched in an authoritarian society? In this thesis I have argued that popular legitimation is vital for the overall legitimacy of state power. Legitimacy is more than just the actions of governments, their performance and propaganda. For a regime to appear legitimate it needs to be legitimated by its people in publicly demonstrable ways. In liberal democracies the citizens can legitimate their government by casting their votes in open and free elections. That cannot be done in an authoritarian society. But non-democratic societies cannot last without legitimacy and therefore they cannot be without popular legitimation.

The question posed initially in this thesis was: How is the political power structure legitimated in China? During the Cultural Revolution during the end of the Mao-era, legitimacy was secured by orchestrating huge mass rallies where the masses were received and they could salute the Chairman. But people also spontaneously organised other ways of publicly expressing legitimation and created new media to facilitate the information flow to help the grassroots' activism. Advanced rituals emerged as ways of showing ones loyalty towards Mao.

Today, those kinds of mass rallies and curious practises like “Mao Zedong-Thought quotation gymnastics”, are stuff for historians, and Mao-cult objects and replicas are sold to tourists at flea markets. If mass rallies no longer pose an option, how is power in post-Mao China legitimated? I have argued that since market economy has been introduced, political consumerism has opened a new space for political agency. The theoretical contribution this thesis aims to make to the concept of legitimacy is to connect it with political consumerism. I have argued that political consumerism has become a complement to other legitimating practises. For legitimation, political consumerism works in two ways. By buying a product that is connected to a political narrative, like the territorial disputes, one is conveying legitimacy to that cause by publicly showing support. The effect is stronger in the case of Xisha-tourism than Diaoyu/Senkaku-merchandise because by partaking in strengthening China's foothold on the islands helps the government's foreign policy goals. The same is the case with a boycott. Political agency is given to the consumer, and in the case of anti-Japanese boycott the government encouraged the citizen's methods; forming a relationship that legitimates in both ways.

Can we use consumer data in assessing the legitimacy of regimes? A more systematic investigation of for example user generated internet content concerning consumerism, such as microblogs, could provide interesting insights in the perceived legitimacy of China.

But is mass mobilisation mode of legitimacy totally obsolete in present day China? Pak (2011) has argued that voluntarism has become more and more important for governing in China. In a legitimacy perspective, the huge voluntary efforts in the Sichuan earthquake, the Beijing Olympics and the Shanghai Expo hints to that mass mobilisation is not totally outdated as a way of legitimation. A systematic investigation into these kinds of efforts could show how the Chinese regime still needs to be legitimated by the broad masses.

When investigating legitimacy, both theoretically and empirically, it is important not to only focus on the power holders in a society. An inquiry into legitimacy also must account for the people. A theory for legitimacy that is sensitive to the shifting forms and norms of political participation, in democracies and autocracies alike, must also take political consumerism into account.

7 References

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