

# The Cultural Politics of Condoms in the Time of AIDS in China

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**Through an exploration of the lively debates between the state and the alliance of health realists and condom companies, this paper argues that unless the state takes a proactive stance on the marketing of condom use, the empowering and persuading effect that condom marketing should have upon the population will not be achieved. The impediment in this case, the state's position and attitude towards condoms, can only thwart the progressive cause of HIV prevention.**

On 7 November 1998, the first condom advertisements appeared on 80 buses in Guangzhou. These advertisements were sponsored by the Wuhan division of the UK's Jissbon Global Company. The advertisement showed a messenger of love wearing a pair of sunglasses and a yellow robe, and with a sweet smile promising the public "a love without worries or anxieties," and "a condom to ensure safety" (*quebao anquan, ziyou yitao*). This messenger of love did not survive for long. The company received a document on advertisement management from the Guangdong municipal government demanding that all condom advertisements be stopped immediately. After 33 days, the advertisements were stripped from the buses.

On 29 November 1999, as part of World AIDS Day education efforts, CCTV aired a 42-second public interest advertisement featuring a cartoon baby in the form of a condom combating and finally driving away STD and AIDS viruses against a background of a newly-wedded couple entering a room. The subtitle read, "Avoid unexpected pregnancy. A condom frees you from worries." A day later this advertisement was banned by the government because it "violated the advertising law."

In 2000, a 360-square-meter-long giant advertising banner was hung from a high-rise residential block. This time the smiling messenger survived only 20 hours before it was "killed" by order of the Bureau of Industry and Commerce. On 2 December 2002, after the Durex Company had negotiated with various governmental departments, including the Chinese Hygiene Department, the Pharmaceutical

Supervision Bureau, and the Family Planning Committee for over half a year, a public interest advertisement was finally aired on CCTV. Despite all efforts, the Durex name never appeared on TV. The company had originally negotiated an agreement to show a public interest advertisement for two consecutive weeks starting on 25 November and including the Durex brand and Qingdao Latex manufacturer. On 21 November, however, the company received a notice from CCTV stating that the Industrial and Commercial Bureau prohibited the display of the Durex brand on the screen. On 26 November, the company received a letter from the Bureau to the same effect. Instead of the ad appearing for two weeks before World AIDS Day, it was limited to one week after World AIDS Day, and the name Durex never appeared on the screen. The company thought World AIDS Day would provide a chance for Durex to enter the mass media, yet it failed.

On 15-21 November 2003, CCTV broadcasted a public interest advertisement with the title: "Value Life, Prevent AIDS." Although CCTV had agreed to show the brand name Durex on TV, the effect of the advertisement was severely reduced by having the sponsor's name fly by so quickly that no one could catch it, thus violating the regulations requiring the sponsor's name to be shown for three to five seconds. This was the second time that the Durex Company encountered a setback on CCTV.

Durex and other condom manufacturers also attempted to advertise in media such as newspapers and magazines, but

the Industrial and Commercial Bureau declared such advertisements against the law.<sup>(1)</sup>

In today's world, where condom marketing is perceived as a centrepiece of AIDS education and prevention, in China, as we have seen, condom advertisements in the media have been outlawed, prohibited, and severely regulated. While globally "AIDS communication programs have changed the way that condoms are perceived and promoted in many countries, this change has not yet occurred in China."<sup>(2)</sup> The result is disconcerting: in China, according to a 2003 national survey, 17 percent of the population had never heard of HIV/AIDS, and 77 percent did not know that condom use could prevent transmission.<sup>(3)</sup> Only 18-21 percent of Beijing medical students thought condom use would protect them from HIV.<sup>(4)</sup> Only 12 percent of men from Shandong province considered condoms protective against HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS 2003). In a recent survey of sexual conduct, only 26.1 percent of respondents reported having used condoms (14.3 percent in towns and 8.4 percent in the countryside), and only 37.3 percent knew that curing other STDs could help prevent AIDS.<sup>(5)</sup> It is astonishing that such a high ratio of people did not know they could use condoms to protect themselves.

Attitudes towards condoms and nomenclature defining their use differ widely, or even conflict, depending on the agents, their interests, and their goals. For example, State Family Planning Administration documents routinely refer to condoms as "*biyuntao*", literally "contraception condoms," emphasising their contraceptive use. The alliance of local condom companies, scholars, and health realists, on the other hand, opposes this meaning and has proposed the expression "*anquantao*", literally "safe condoms," to point to condoms as a tool for safe sex. As we will see below, these clashing perspectives on condoms have crystallise into a conflict between the state and the alliance of health activists. A series of questions needs to be answered in order to better understand what is at stake: What is the state's attitude towards condoms? What impact does it have on the community and the local condom market? How does the alliance of local condom companies, scholars, and health realists respond to the state-disseminated hegemonic discourse on condoms? What are the underlying reasons behind the consistent setbacks in efforts to advertise condoms?

Through an exploration of the lively condom debates between the state and the alliance of health realists and condom companies, this paper argues that unless the state takes a proactive stance on the marketing of condom use, the empowering and persuasive effect that condom marketing

was supposed to have upon the population cannot be reached. The impediment, in this case the state's position and attitude towards condoms, can only thwart the progressive cause of HIV prevention.

Below I will first review the literature on marketing condoms, and then discuss the state's attitude in the context of the 1989 state law on condom advertisements. On this basis, it will be possible to explore the repercussions of the state's approach to condoms on local communities and the condom market. This discussion will be followed by an account of the attitude toward condoms by the alliance of local condom companies, scholars, and health realists. Finally, after a quick overview of the attitudes towards sex in the Maoist and post-Mao state, I will attempt to unravel the underlying reasons behind the state's taboo against condom advertisements.

## Marketing of condoms

The best means of preventing HIV is through education, which teaches the public to adjust their behaviour to reduce or eliminate HIV exposure. Since sexual transmission accounts for the majority of HIV infection in the developing world and condoms have proven to be an effective physical barrier to HIV infection, condom use and reduction of the number of partners, next to abstinence, have been the mainstays of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV.

Health education involves imparting medical knowledge to the public in the hope of altering their behaviour. Earlier grassroots health educators followed Paulo Freire, David Werner, and others in envisaging dissemination of medical knowledge as a source of empowerment.<sup>(6)</sup> Indeed, provid-

1. Ying Jin, "Anquantao guanggao" (Condom ads), *Xinwen Zhoukan* (News weekly), 27 November 2002.
2. Chihua Wen, "No Condoms, Please, We're Chinese Men," *Asia Times Online*, 11 April 2002. Training on condom marketing to "high-risk" groups took place in a limited number of cities in Xinjiang, Sichuan, and Yunnan, funded by the China/UK project (Quanyi Lin, "Training on Condom Social Marketing Conducted in Urumqi, Xinjiang," International Conference on AIDS, Manchester, 7-12 July 2002). The World Health Organization also started a pilot project for "100 percent condom use" in Wuhan City and Jingjiang County in 2000. The Vice Premier and Minister of Health, Wu Yi, remarked specifically on the promising results of the 100 percent CUP strategy: "The 100 percent CUP in Hubei and Hunan have proven to be measures that have significantly decreased the incidence of sexually transmitted infections and played an active role in prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, and are worthy of further expansion to other provinces." Lijuan Wang, "Condom Promotion for HIV/AIDS Prevention in China: The Role of Epistemic Community," 8th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, Colombo, 19-23 August 2007.
3. Susan S. Hunter, *AIDS in Asia: A Continent in Peril*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
4. 76 per cent of these students expressed confidence in the "one stable partner" strategy. Lijuan Wang, "Condom Promotion for HIV/AIDS Prevention in China: The Role of Epistemic Community," *art. cit.*
5. Feng Ling, "Wuzhi jiaju 'kongai zheng'" (Ignorance exacerbates paranoia toward AIDS), *Jiankang bao* (Health news), 29 November 2004, p. 1.



A models wears a hat and dress decorated with condoms to promote condom use at 4th China Reproductive Health New Technologies and Products Expo in Beijing, 11 July 2007. The expo hopes to promote condom use for family planning and the prevention of HIV/AIDS in China. © AFP

ing laymen with health information was believed to mitigate the level of ignorance and facilitate informed choices. Although many current agencies such as the Ford Foundation still operate under this mantra of health information as a form of empowerment, some researchers point out that it is difficult to measure empowerment due to the lack of research conducted in this arena.<sup>(7)</sup>

Beginning in the 1970s, there was a shift from the goal of empowerment to the goal of persuasion.<sup>(8)</sup> Market advertising techniques have been appropriated to distribute and broadcast health information in an attempt to persuade people to alter their behaviour. Since the late 1970s, a proliferation of mass media forms have been tapped into, including MTV, soap operas, and the Internet, in order to transform health behaviour.<sup>(9)</sup> The theoretical underpinning of social marketing of health information is the social learning theory that strives for behavioural change via entertainment, communication, and amusement.<sup>(10)</sup> Entertaining programs for radio, TV, movies, or music have been employed as ideal channels throughout the world to reach the public with health messages and to change behaviour.<sup>(11)</sup> A prime exam-

ple is the campaign run by Population Communication Services at Johns Hopkins University.<sup>(12)</sup>

In the current global HIV/AIDS pandemic, a combination of empowerment and persuasion has been set as the strate-

6. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York, Herder and Herder, 1970. Sandra D. Lane, "Television Minidramas: Social Marketing and Evaluation in Egypt," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1997, pp. 164-182. David Werner, *Where There is No Doctor: A Village Health Care Handbook*, Palo Alto, CA, The Hesperian Foundation, 1977.
7. Sandra D. Lane, "Television Minidramas: Social Marketing and Evaluation in Egypt," *art. cit.* p. 166.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid. Marie Birkinshaw, *Social Marketing for Health*, Geneva, World Health Organization, 1989. ICAF, International Council on Adolescent Fertility, "Media as Messengers: Shaping Programs to Entertain and Educate," *Passages: International Council on Adolescent Fertility*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1989, pp. 1-4. Everett Rogers et. al, *Proceedings from the Conference on Entertainment-Education for Social Change*, Los Angeles, Annenberg School of Communications and the University of Southern California, 1989. Arvind Singhal and Everett Rogers, "Television Soap Operas for Development in India," *Gazette*, vol. 41, 1988, pp. 109-126.
10. A Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1977.
11. A. Singhal and E. M. Rogers, *Entertainment-Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change*, Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999.
12. Sandra D. Lane, "Television Minidramas: Social Marketing and Evaluation in Egypt," *art. cit.* Patrick Coleman, "Enter-Educate: New Word from Johns Hopkins," *JOICFP Review*, no. 15, 1988, pp. 28-31.

gic goal for marketing condoms. Major surveys have revealed that television is the most common means through which people learn about HIV, followed by newspapers, radio programs, and journal and magazine articles. Indeed, forms of media including newspaper, magazines, newsletters, television, and radio have formed a vital front line in the global struggle against AIDS. It is believed that if the media position AIDS as a major concern in society's consciousness, it is easier for public health professionals to disseminate preventive messages such as safe sex and condom use.

It is the recognition of the significant role of the media that has made the marketing of condoms a dominant approach to health education. The World Health Organization's Global Program on AIDS is committed to working with mass media to enhance public knowledge about AIDS, as the organisation believes that it is an effective way to help implement its global strategies against the spread of HIV/AIDS. Many countries around the world have experimented with marketing safe sex, condom use, and reduction of sexual partners. It has been reported that frequent references to condoms and certain condom brands via media have an enormous effect on people. In fact, one of the most frequently quoted reasons for condom use by the research subjects is condom advertising. People who have been exposed to condom advertising are much more likely to use condoms than those who have not.<sup>(13)</sup> In Tanzania, five annual surveys indicated that radio soap operas had brought about a reduction in the number of sexual partners and increased condom adoption.<sup>(14)</sup> In Nigeria, Uganda, and Zaire, studies have demonstrated that media marketing of safe sex has led to a significant increase in condom use, a reduction in the number of sexual partners, and more willingness and openness toward discussing safe sex.<sup>(15)</sup>

While the literature on condom marketing has demonstrated its effectiveness in changing people's sexual behaviour, the role of the state and churches when their views clash with marketing messages in the developing world has been either ignored or inadequately studied. In his study of condom marketing in Mozambique, Pfeiffer describes in detail the contrast between the messages of religious movements and condom marketers, and pinpoints the role of churches in mobilising the community to blame condom marketing for endorsing promiscuous sexuality through images and slogans, and creating an environment for illicit sex and spread of the HIV epidemic.<sup>(16)</sup> Pfeiffer's study alerts us not only to the existence of a discourse that counters condom marketing, but also to its adverse and deleterious effect on condom marketing.

Along this analytical line of inquiry, below I will utilise a case study from China to explore the role of the state in condom marketing. I argue that unless we put the state back into the picture, condom marketing will not achieve its goal of HIV prevention.

## State law against condom marketing

The taboo against condom advertisements in China originated from the 1989 regulation entitled "Regarding the Prohibition of Advertisements of Sex-Life Related Products." This law stipulated that any medical equipment designed to cure sexual malfunction or aid sexual life, although legally produced, may not legally be advertised. This law became the root of a series of setbacks to condom advertising.

The state regulation was based on the state's interest in monitoring and regulating the sexual morality of its citizens. It was argued that during the late 1980s, the government was concerned that society was not ready for condom advertisements due to so-called "social ethics." These ethics consider

13. Peter Fajans, Kathleen Ford, Dewa Nyoman Wirawan, "AIDS Knowledge and Risk Behaviors among Domestic Clients of Female Sex Workers in Bali, Indonesia," *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 41, 1995, pp. 409-417. Lisa J. Messersmith et al, "Who's at Risk? Men's STD Experience and Condom Use in Southwest Nigeria," *Studies in Family Planning*, vol. 31, no. 3, September 2000, pp. 203-216. In Nigeria (Lisa J. Messersmith et al, "Who's at Risk? Men's Std Experience and Condom Use in Southwest Nigeria," *art. cit.*), for instance, the increasing acceptability of condoms is indicated by frequent references to condoms in the popular press and by vigorous social marketing campaigns for condom brands such as "Right Time," "Gold Circle," and others. Zambia's committee has sponsored newspaper advertisements and comic books featuring a fanged yellow blob that says: "I am the AIDS virus. I am very small. I am very dangerous." More than 500 Zambian high schools now have an extracurricular activity called the anti-AIDS club, whose members sponsor lectures, visit AIDS patients, and publish poetry about viruses and monogamy. In Zambia, for instance, the reported incidence of sexually transmitted diseases has declined 15 percent each of the last three years. Condom sales are increasing throughout Africa, especially in countries with social-marketing programs (John Tierney, "With 'Social Marketing,' Condoms Combat Aids," *The New York Times*, 18 September 1990). Jacob Adetunji et al, "Social Marketing and Communications for Health Consistency in Condom Use in the Context of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe," *PSI Research Division Working Paper*, 2003. Sohail Agha, "Sexual Activity and Condom Use in Lusaka, Zambia," *PSI Research Division Working Paper*, no. 6, 1997. Peter Fajans, Kathleen Ford, Dewa Nyoman Wirawan, "AIDS Knowledge and Risk Behaviors among Domestic Clients of Female Sex Workers in Bali, Indonesia," *art. cit.* Lisa J. Messersmith et al, "Who's at Risk? Men's STD Experience and Condom Use in Southwest Nigeria," *art. cit.*
14. P.W. Vaughan and E. M. Rogers, "A Staged Model of Communication Effects: Evidence from an Entertainment-Education Radio Soap Opera in Tanzania," *Journal of Health Communication*, vol. 5, 2000, pp. 203-227.
15. A. Bankole, "Book Reviews," *Studies in Family Planning*, vol. 30, 1999, pp. 89-92. A. Bankole et al, "Mass Media Messages and Reproductive Behavior in Nigeria," *Journal of Biosocial Science*, vol. 28, 1996, pp. 227-239. C. Katende et al, *Uganda Delivery of Improved Services for Health Evaluation Surveys 1999*, Chapel Hill, NC: Measure Evaluation, 2000. Sarah N Keller and Jane Brown, "Media Interventions to Promote Responsible Sexual Behavior," *The Journal of Sex Research*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2002, pp. 67-72.
16. James Pfeiffer, "Condom Social Marketing, Pentecostalism, and Structural Adjustment in Mozambique: A Clash of Aids Prevention Messages," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2004, pp. 77-103.



condoms a product related to sex and assert that condom advertisements encourage prostitution and promiscuity, thereby exerting a deleterious effect upon children and society. As a result, efforts to promote condoms have been stifled by the state. For instance, in 2000, the police used force to close a nightclub that offered HIV prevention flyers and free condoms provided by the Jissbon Company.<sup>(17)</sup> The police claimed that “anywhere there are condoms is surely not a good place”; that is, the presence of condoms at the nightclub indicated prostitution.<sup>(18)</sup>

This regulation was challenged by health professionals in 2001 and 2002. After lengthy appeals, the law was finally relaxed in 2003 to encourage public interest condom advertisements. This change was not implemented on the local level, however. During the time when I conducted my fieldwork in 2007, my interviews with local government officials, managers of local TV stations, and managers of local condom companies revealed that in 2007, despite the revised law of endorsement, condom advertisements on TV were still prohibited. It seems that the 1989 regulation persisted until 2007, as though the legal revisions of 2003 never took place. During my interviews in 2007, managers of local TV stations proclaimed that they had government documents directing them not to advertise condoms. When I mentioned the 2003 revised law that lifted the ban, the answer I received was, “We have government documents that prohibit condom advertisements. After 11 p.m., though, products that cure impotence and other sexual malfunctions are advertised, but not condoms.” I asked a local government official why condom advertisements were still a taboo after the law was revised. He said, “If we advertise condoms, we are issuing licenses for promiscuous sex and giving up on sexual morality. Abstinence is the best way to prevent AIDS.” Other officials in the Industrial and Commercial Department contended that condom advertisements went against the socialist construction of “spiritual civilisation.” One official said, “China is different from the US and other countries. Condom advertisements are not appropriate for China because our youth have far less sexual knowledge than their counterparts in foreign countries. The influence of condom advertisements in the media will lead them to stray from the correct path.”

This attitude is also seen in countries such as South Korea. The South Korean government strove to revive Korean values of purity and morality, and deemed condom and contraception education for the young as “an uncritical adoption of western-style sex promotion,” hence “culturally inappropriate for Asian youths.”<sup>(19)</sup>

Religious groups around the world have voiced similar anxieties about condoms.<sup>(20)</sup> In Ireland, for instance, the Catholic Church believes that the wide availability of condoms serves to heighten the problem of HIV/AIDS.<sup>(21)</sup> As a result, the Catholic teaching that sex must be confined to marriage has permeated the government’s response to AIDS. Indeed, this message has been reinforced not only in the government’s advertising campaigns, but also in their educational and informative materials.<sup>(22)</sup>

My interviews in Dalian revealed that the revised law was not made operational in local communities due to the state’s concern that condom promotion might increase immoral sexual activity and promiscuity. I argue that this concern arises from the government’s interest in controlling the sexual morality of its citizens, thus defining condoms as a contraceptive tool that should be utilised only within the bounds of marriage rather than to prevent venereal disease. Indeed, despite the state’s concern, studies conducted worldwide have consistently showed that encouraging condom use does not increase sexual activity, but only makes it safer.<sup>(23)</sup>

17. Tong Li, “Falu gaibugai gei anquantao yige mingfen?” (Should the law give condom a name?), *Beijing Qingnian Bao* (Beijing Youth News), 7 September 2001.
18. Kun Zhu, “Dang xing zaoyu aizi shashou” (When sex encounters the killer AIDS), *Xin Zhoukan* (New weekly), 2002.
19. Sealing Cheng, “Popularising Purity: Gender, Sexuality, and Nationalism in HIV/AIDS Prevention for South Korean Youths,” *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2005, pp. 7–20.
20. Fiona Smyth, “Cultural Constraints on the Delivery of HIV/AIDS Prevention in Ireland,” *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 46, no. 6, 1998, pp. 661–672. James Pfeiffer, “Condom Social Marketing, Pentecostalism, and Structural Adjustment in Mozambique: A Clash of Aids Prevention Messages,” *art. cit.*
21. Fiona Smyth, “Cultural Constraints on the Delivery of HIV/AIDS Prevention in Ireland,” *art. cit.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. Despite the assumption that marketing of condom use and safe sex would encourage sexual activity, a plethora of studies conducted worldwide have concluded otherwise. For instance, based on years of research, the 1999 policy of the American Medical Association concluded that promotion of safer sex is effective in delaying sex in teenagers, while abstinence-only programs have limited value (Gerald Stine, *AIDS Update 2007*, New York: Pearson, 2007, p. 257). In another 3-year and 10-month study in Switzerland, a public education campaign promoting condom use was found to be effective in increasing condom use, without raising the ratio of adolescents who are sexually active. The research reveals that condom use among 17–30 year-olds increased from 8 percent to 52 percent. By contrast, the ratio of adolescents from 16 to 19 who had sexual intercourse did not increase over that same period. Three other studies have likewise concluded that promotion of condom use does not boost sexual activity. A study by Deborah Sellers et al and research by Sally Guttmacher et al (Sally Guttmacher et al, “Condom Availability in New York City Public High Schools: Relationships to Condom Use and Sexual Behavior,” *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 87, 1997, pp. 1427–1433. Deborah Sellers et al, “Does the Promotion and Distribution of Condoms Increase Teen Sexual Activity? Evidence from an HIV Prevention Program for Latino Youth,” *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 84, 1994, pp. 1952–1958) have concluded that the promotion and distribution of condoms did not increase sexual activity among adolescents. In another study that measured the number of condoms students took and subsequent changes in sexual behavior, Kirby’s research of ten Seattle high schools also showed that making condoms available through vending machines and school clinics did not lead to an increase in sexual activity (Gerald Stine, *AIDS Update 2007*, *op. cit.* p. 257; Douglas Kirby et al, “The Impact of Condom Distribution in Seattle Schools on Sexual Behavior and Condom Use,” *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 89, 1998, pp. 182–187).

## The impact of condom taboos on local communities and universities

The state's attitude toward and definition of condoms as a contraceptive tool has to some extent penetrated local communities, including universities. During my research, when I mentioned the program of free condom distribution by local NGOs, people appeared alarmed, shocked, and confused. They responded to me, "Handing free condoms to everyone – how can our country allow them to do that? Doesn't that encourage and promote promiscuous sex? Giving people free condoms – doesn't that endorse illicit and random sex? Won't society fall into disorder from such immoral sex?"

Not only local communities, but also many of China's major universities are in line with the state in defining condoms as a contraceptive method for use within marriage. In 2004, when the Beijing and Hubei Hygiene Departments called for preventive measures against venereal diseases, no universities allowed them to install condom vending machines or distribute free condoms on campus.<sup>(24)</sup> During my research at two universities, one of which was a medical university, professors were very careful not to "corrupt" their students with discussions on sexuality. When I showed them my survey on HIV knowledge, they crossed out all the questions that contained the word "sex" before distributing the surveys to the students. As a result, half of the survey was deleted. When I asked for the reason, the professors looked at me as if I had come from another planet, saying, "We can't expose the students to these sexual ideas. They are too young to know this stuff. Knowledge about sex can only arouse their curiosity and encourage them to try it out. It's too dangerous for the students to know about this stuff."

Some professors at local universities rejected proposals from local NGOs to educate students about condoms. They contended that the school was different from society and that condom distribution or education on campus was inappropriate because very few students engage in sexual practices, hence the program would only initiate and encourage sexual activity. Professor Wang Wei from National Executive College spent ten years completing a book entitled *Sex Ethics*, arguing that despite the importance of condoms, they are, after all, special merchandise that should be available for purchase, but not seen everywhere in society.<sup>(25)</sup> Professors such as Wang Wei believed that using condoms to prevent AIDS had turned what should be a moral issue

into a technical issue. They argued that sexual morality, rather than condom use, should be emphasised on TV.

The stance of these university professors was sometimes co-opted and reinforced by foreign Christian groups who promoted abstinence at Chinese universities. For instance, three American "sex-education experts" arrived in Beijing on 10 October 2004 and spent a week delivering speeches on abstinence at middle schools, colleges, universities, and other community locations. They warned China not to relive the errors that the US had committed for 30 years, that is, emphasising condom use and not emphasising abstinence as the sole safe choice. They stressed that "sex is only beautiful when it happens within a marriage" and that condom use is only applicable to prostitution.<sup>(26)</sup>

The deleterious effect of condom use were also emphasised in some Chinese media. It was argued that condoms could harm a woman's health by depriving them of sperm that could reduce vaginal infections, fight ovarian cancer, boost female hormone production, and produce full breasts and smooth skin.<sup>(27)</sup>

The state's attitude towards condom use and definition of condoms as a contraceptive tool only appropriate within marriage has influenced local communities and some university professors. Indeed the Basic Requirements for Health Education formulated by the Chinese Education Ministry stipulated as early as 1990 that sexual morality and self-discipline should be taught to prevent HIV/AIDS and STDs.<sup>(28)</sup> Moreover, the National Education Department deems any sexual conduct by students as serious transgressive behaviour, and students who engage in sexual activity are either expelled or put under detention.<sup>(29)</sup> As we have seen, university professors and local communities speak the state language in associating condom promotion with sexual promiscuity and prostitution, and in defining condoms as a contraceptive method legitimate only within the bounds of marriage.

24. Feng Jing, "Fafang anquantao juefei 'fang ai' quanbu" (Issuing condoms is by no means complete AIDS prevention), *Xinhua* (Xinhua Net), 30 November 2004. Wei Zhang, "Anquantao de zhunru yiyi" (The meaning of introduction of condoms), *Beijing Yule Xinbao* (*Beijing Entertainment News*), 28 February 2006.
25. Dongyue Rong, "Anquantao daodi zenmo xuanchuan" (How we should advertise condoms), *Beijing Wanbao* (*Beijing Evening News*), 30 November 1999.
26. Yanchun Li, "Anquantao anweibuliao posuidexin (Condoms cannot comfort a broken heart)," *Beijing Qingnianbao* (*Beijing youth news*), 29 November 2004.
27. Ni An, "Anquantao yehui taozou nuxing jiankang (Condoms can strip a woman of health)," *Qianlong Xinwen Wang*, 10 April 2006.
28. Mai Chiang, "Brief Introduction of School HIV/AIDS Prevention Education in China," Paper presented at the International seminar/workshop on Learning and empowering key issues in strategies for HIV/AIDS prevention, Thailand, 1-5 March 2004.
29. Wei Zhang, "Anquantao de zhunru yiyi" (The meaning of introduction of condoms), *ibid.*

## The impact of the condom taboo on the condom market

The state's attitude towards condoms and the taboo on condom advertisements have had a great impact on society. During my research, when I asked clients what kind and what brand of condoms they would purchase, they looked confused and baffled, asking me, "What kinds of condoms are there? I don't know anything about the kinds or brands of condoms. If you know about this, could you please tell me what kind and what brand of condoms are better?" At first I was surprised by this response, but as my research progressed, I realised that people were ignorant about condoms because it was a taboo subject in the media and in private conversation.

The taboo against condom advertisements has not only left people uninformed about condoms, but also generates embarrassment in purchasing condoms, making young female customers feel like sex workers. Clients in my study told me that when they purchased condoms, they always dropped their heads, grabbed the condoms, and fled the store as if they were criminals at large. When I asked how they chose what condoms to buy, they told me it was too embarrassing to have others see them purchasing condoms. They had no idea what condoms they bought or how much they cost because they either took a random packet from the counter or asked counter staff to hand them a pack and left immediately after paying. As for women, some young women said that although they were married, their youthful appearance caused them to encounter stigmatising comments when purchasing condoms. A 28-year-old woman told me:

*Although I'm married, people always say I look like I'm 21. One day after work, I had time to stroll along the street and happened to step into a drug store. Dozens of colourful packages of condoms lying under the counter caught my eye and aroused my curiosity. I thought I should get one and try it out. After studying them for a while, I still had no idea which one I should buy. So I turned to the shopping assistant, asking: "Could you please recommend one of good quality?" She looked me up and down, then sneered at me, saying, "You don't know? You should go ask your clients!" I was dumbfounded. I was so angry with her words that I stood there and could not say a word. Tears rolled down my face. I left the store, crying the whole way home and swore that I would never buy condoms again.*

In Dalian, it is mandatory for couples of a reproductive age to bring their marriage and reproduction certificates and temporary resident cards to get a one- to three-month supply of free contraceptives from the city family planning office.<sup>(30)</sup>

The state's strict stipulations on condoms have reinforced local attitudes towards condoms. As condoms are considered appropriate only for married couples, any unmarried consumers are deemed sexually promiscuous.

Local communities elsewhere in the country also speak the state language. For instance, in 1998 when condom advertisements first appeared on buses in Guangzhou, many citizens called 110 (the emergency number) or filed complaints against the condom company, claiming that their advertisements corrupted the souls of young people and damaged social morality.<sup>(31)</sup> In Suzhou, on World AIDS Day in 2001, a local woman called 110 and reported to the police that she saw people distributing free condoms on the street. In 2006, citizens of Chongqing criticised the pilot program of 100 percent condom use in adult entertainment places, contending that the program condoned and encouraged extramarital affairs and prostitution.<sup>(32)</sup>

The taboo against condom advertisements has not only spread the state's view of condoms throughout society, but has also led to a lack of competition in the condom market, fuelling the problem of counterfeit condom brands. Although family planning offices distribute free condoms, local people told me that those condoms were of such low quality that they had to revert to the market in hopes of purchasing products of better quality and in a greater variety of styles and colours.<sup>(33)</sup>

I visited several local adult health product shops and interviewed the owners about their products. One of the owners told me that she used to be the leader of the city's family planning office during the Mao era. She told me many stories about condoms during that time:

*People at that time came to me complaining that condoms did not work because their wives continued having babies. So I asked the guys how they had used*

30. Couples, upon marriage, are given a CD that contains knowledge on sexual activities, including sex postures, contraception, and how to initiate and conduct sex. Yu Lao, "Tantao jinji biyunyao de daodewenti" (On the moral issue of emergency contraceptives), *Xin zhoubao* (New Weekly), 2 November 2005.
31. Dongyue Rong, "Anquantao daodi zenmo xuanchuan" (How we should advertise condoms), *art. cit.*
32. Chengxi Yin, "Bieyaomohua chongqingde anquantao xiangmu" (Don't demonise Chongqing's condom program), *Xiandai Kuaibao* (Modern Express Newspaper), 7 September 2006.
33. Tong Dong, "Xingbaojianpin dadande xianqi gaitoula" (Lifting the veil on sex health products), *Beijing chenbao* (Beijing Morning News), 30 November 1999.

*the condoms. The men put the condoms on their thumbs and said that was how they had used them, just the way it was demonstrated to them when condoms were distributed. Others used condoms as balloons rather than as a contraceptive tool... Tons of unused condoms were stored during the 1950s and 1960s. These include condoms from the family planning office, expired and saved from free distribution. After they expired, officials in the office privately sold them cheaply to individual vendors. Vendors then recycled and repackaged them in brand new and sexy boxes, and bribed managers of supermarkets and pharmacies to sell the products at a high price. They looked new, but they were not really new at all. They were either expired condoms from the family planning office, or old items that had been stored for decades.*

As stated by the store owner – a leader of the family planning office during the communist era – people were ignorant of how to use condoms and the cadre's demonstrations were vague and confusing. Apparently, even back then the condom was an embarrassing topic because of its connection with sex. This points to a historical continuity with the post-Mao era, which I will elaborate on later in the paper.

The store owner also referred to the proliferation of expired and fake brands in the condom market, some of which were repackaged old products that had been stored for decades. This story was confirmed by other store owners of adult health shops and drug stores. I talked to the manager of a local condom manufacturer about this story, and he said it was illegal for the family planning office to resell expired products left over from free distribution. Illegal as it was, those products were indeed on the market, and some were not even repackaged. Window-shopping at some adult health shops, I found it quite easy to spot un-repackaged, expired condoms for sale. The words "Not for sale" (*fei mai pin*) were printed on the old packages. There was no information about the expiration date or the production location. It was obvious that they came from the family planning office. Other expired condoms were repackaged in boxes with images of naked Western women.

Store owners told me that 70-80 percent of these condoms tore very easily due to expiration and poor durability. According to the owners, people favoured these condoms all the same because of their relatively low price of six *yuan* for a box of ten. As discussed earlier, some of my research subjects told me they were too shy to inquire about the quality

of condoms. Rather, they asked for a recommendation, purchased them, and left immediately. In recommending condoms, would the sales assistant consider the well-being of the customer? My research indicates that suppliers bribed shop managers and sales staff, who pushed the products of those from whom they had received the largest bribes, and prominently displayed their products at the centre of the sales counter.

As mentioned above, the taboo against condom advertisements and the lack of competition have resulted in a market filled with poor-quality, expired condoms.<sup>(34)</sup> In Wuhan, for instance, it was reported in 2001 that 70 percent of abortions were caused by faulty condoms.<sup>(35)</sup> In the same year, a national survey conducted by the National Quality Control Bureau reported that a plethora of packaging businesses purchased obsolete or discarded condoms, wrapped them in colourful and pornographic packages, printed the names of famous international brands on them, and sold them in the market. This led to a rapid growth of brand names from ten at the beginning of reform to more than 1,000, including counterfeits. In 1998, more than 5 million fake condoms were discovered, confiscated, and burned in Futian and Shenzhen.<sup>(36)</sup> Such a market leaves consumers confused and unable to choose condoms intelligently.

## The alliance of condom companies and health professionals

In contrast to the state's definition of and attitude toward condoms, the alliance of condom companies, scholars, and health professionals defined condoms as a disease control tool, a personal hygiene product, and a health product. In so doing, they de-sexualised condoms and pushed for endorsement of condom advertisements.

The 1989 law and the series of setbacks to condom advertising ushered in a lively debate initiated by health profes-

34. According to China's State Quality Inspection Bureau, 30 percent of China-produced condoms failed to meet industry standards – 15 of the 50 condom brands surveyed failed strength tests (Shuquan Qu et al. "The Potential for Rapid Sexual Transmission of HIV in China: Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Condom Failure Highly Prevalent among Female Sex Workers," *AIDS and Behavior*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2002). Researchers in China reported a condom slippage rate of 20 percent and a breakage rate of 13 percent among female sex workers, much higher than the respective 2 percent and 1.9 percent reported in the U.S., and the 0.8-1.9 percent and 0.8-4.7 percent reported in Mexico, the Philippines, and the Dominican Republic (Shuquan Qu et al. "The Potential for Rapid Sexual Transmission of HIV in China: Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Condom Failure Highly Prevalent among Female Sex Workers," *art. cit.*, p. 274).

35. Wei Lin, "Biyuntao nengzuo guanggao ma?" (Can condoms be advertised?), *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* (China Youth Daily), 4 December 1998.

36. *Ibid.*



sionals, scholars, and condom companies.<sup>(37)</sup> The Deputy Secretary of the Sexology Committee, Li Jihong, considered it crucial to encourage condom companies to support the dissemination of HIV information by endorsing condom brands in public interest advertisements.<sup>(38)</sup> The manager of the Jissbon Company stated that condom advertisements would help establish brand names, increase condom sales, and push “progressive ideas.”<sup>(39)</sup> The President of Wuhan Jissbon Company, Xuehai Wang, also expressed his determination to continue advertising efforts so that in the future, buying condoms would be no different from buying shampoo; that is, there would be no embarrassment or humiliation involved in condom purchases.<sup>(40)</sup>

The alliance showed the urgency of the matter from three perspectives. First, the average Chinese male uses no more than four condoms each year, and unprotected sex is still an important conduit for HIV transmission.<sup>(41)</sup> Second, pre-marital sex has become prevalent in society, even in schools.<sup>(42)</sup> Third, China is facing an HIV epidemic, and only a few people know that condoms are an effective tool against STDs and HIV/AIDS.<sup>(43)</sup>

They contended that condom advertisements could improve this pressing situation. Health professionals and scholars believed that condom companies’ financial support was indispensable for disseminating prevention education.<sup>(44)</sup> Indeed they pointed out that many companies had already issued prevention booklets and provided free condoms on World AIDS Day. Because they lacked media support, they had to take to the street to issue HIV flyers and free condoms, or install condom vending machines in neighbourhoods and campuses.<sup>(45)</sup>

The alliance of condom advocates considered the ban on condom advertising counterproductive to social progress and civilisation, and criticised the state policy as an “ostrich policy” that avoided sexual issues and demanded purity.<sup>(46)</sup> They compared their cause to that of cutting off queues in the Qing dynasty, ending foot binding, and allowing girls to study at universities. To them, the debate was about the choice between life and ethics, but unlike other such debates, lives were actually at stake.<sup>(47)</sup>

The alliance was committed to having the 1989 law revised. In March 2002, Li Honggui, the Vice President of the Chinese Population Association, forwarded a plea to the National People’s Congress to lift the ban on public interest condom advertisements under the condition that the ads were under government supervision. Li contended that defining condoms as sex equipment and banning con-

dom advertisements prevented consumers from obtaining information through normal channels, thwarted the enhancement of condom quality, and hindered the establishment of superior condom brands.<sup>(48)</sup> The plea was signed and supported by more than 100 representatives of medical and other professions. In June, the Industrial and Commercial Bureau agreed to lift the ban and allow condom advertisements “under special conditions and with limitations.”<sup>(49)</sup>

After long appeals for condom advertisements by health professionals and scholars, June 2003 witnessed a change in regulations whereby *limited* condom advertising was granted. In July 2004, a regulation entitled “Regarding Condom Use for HIV/AIDS prevention” was promulgated, encour-

37. Ibid.

38. Ying Jin, “Anquantao guanggao (Condom ads),” *Xinwen Zhoukan* (News weekly), 27 November 2002.

39. Ming Yi, “Anquantao chulu hezai” (Where is the outlet for condoms), *Keji Ribao* (Science Daily), 30 December 2001.

40. Jiali Chen, “Yangshi anquantao guanggao beipo linshi genggai (CCTV condom advertisements forced to be changed at the last minute),” *Zhongxinwang* (Chinese News Net), 5 December 2002.

41. Ming Yi, “Anquantao chulu hezai” (Where is the outlet for condoms), *art. cit.*

42. Some university students point out that sexual behaviour does exist on campus. They argue that it is normal for college students to engage in sex and that they should not suppress desires released within reasonable restraints. To them, access to condoms on campus is indispensable as protection against disease and pregnancy. Condom distribution would not only educate students about risky behaviours, but would also dissipate curiosity about contraceptives and direct students to purchase the appropriate types. These students consider it social progress and a sign of civilisation to introduce condoms into schools as a means of promoting safe sex. (Wei Zhang, “Anquantao de zhunru yiyi” (The meaning of introduction of condoms), *art. cit.*)

43. Shunlai Li, “Anquantao guanggao women zai dengdai” (We are waiting for condom ads), *Zhongguo Funu bao* (Chinese women newspaper), 11 April 2000. Tong Li, “Falu gaibugai gei anquantao yige mingfen?” (Should the law give condom a name?), *art. cit.* Wei Lin, “Biyuntao nengzuo guanggao ma?” (Can condoms be advertised?), *art. cit.*

44. Ming Yi, “Anquantao chulu hezai” (Where is the outlet for condoms), *art. cit.*

45. Yong Liang, “Anquantao guanggao shang yangshi shiguanniande jinbu” (It is ideological progress for condom ads to be on CCTV), *Xinhua wang* (Xinhua Net), 28 November 2003. Jian Zhao, “Yufang AIDS xuanchuan yu ganga” (Embarrassment of advocating AIDS prevention), *Beijing Qingnian Bao* (Beijing Youth News), 30 November 2004.

46. Shunlai Li, “Anquantao guanggao women zai dengdai (We are waiting for condom ads),” *art. cit.*

47. The advocates believed that condom advertisements should not be prohibited as long images and texts are supervised, and obscene content is avoided. Young people should be educated in both sexual morality and condom use because it is more pressing for youth to learn how to protect themselves from disease. Lifting the ban will usher in new ideas and promote social progress. Although they recognised that there is a conflict between moral education and practical education, they insist that condom use does not loosen moral education. Rather, both types of education should be emphasised. While students receive education in morality at school, youth outside of school are deprived of any sort of education, especially because condom advertisements are prohibited (Zhongfeng Li, “Wuyouwu lu de ai diaocha: Anquantao guanggao (Love without worries: Condom ads),” *Shichang Bao* (Market Newspaper), 11 July 2004).

48. Anonymous, “Anquantao tuxian anquan wenti” (The issue of safety of condoms), *www.jynk.com*, vol. 32, August 2002.

49. Hui Fan, “Anquantao guanggao mingnian zhengshi fangkai? (Will condom ads be opened up next year?),” *Zhongguo Xinwen Wang* (China News Net), 6 December 2002.

aging public interest condom advertisements for disease prevention.<sup>(50)</sup>

As mentioned earlier in this paper, although the revision of the 1989 state law was a victory for the alliance of condom companies, health professionals, and scholars, my research in 2007 revealed that the taboo against condom advertisements persisted at the local level. Despite allowing condom advertisements “within limitations,” social stigma continued, associating condoms with prostitution.<sup>(51)</sup>

## Behind the taboo against condom advertisements

What has caused the state to prohibit condom advertisements? What are the reasons behind the taboo?

Chinese sociologist Li Yinhe explains that because the state construes sex as essentially bad, officials are concerned that people might fantasise about sex while watching condom advertisements. Such fantasies are deemed criminal, debased, and indecent.<sup>(52)</sup> Li contends that dynasties prior to the Song regarded sex as natural and healthy, as it facilitated the coalescence of yin and yang as the principle of life. Sexual desire was only demonised and criticised as against nature after the Song Dynasty. Li points out that the dearth of sexual discourse during the Mao era persists in present society. Once we change our ideas about sex, she argues, it will be easy to deal with the issue of condoms.<sup>(53)</sup>

I agree with Li that the issue lurking behind the regulation is the state's concern over citizens' fantasies about sex. But what accounts for such a worry? Why does the state consider sex so dangerous? Why does the state monitor and regulate citizens' sexual morality?

To understand the post-Mao state's attitude towards sex, we have to recognise that the Maoist legacy has persisted into the current era. During the Mao era, sexual desire was demonised and criticised as capitalist love, which degraded love to animal instinct and reduced it to prostitution. In 1954, the journal *Women of China* published an article on Lenin's speech on sexual ethics.<sup>(54)</sup> The article quoted Lenin deriding and criticising “a glass of water-ism” – the attitude of treating sex the same as drinking a glass of water. According to Lenin, it is dangerous to favour sex because sex is lowly, decadent, and corrupt. Sex is so pernicious that it robs people of happiness and strength.

Revolution, Lenin says in his talk, requires a focus of strength and concentration of energy, not intoxication and stimulation from sex or alcohol. It does not tolerate degenerate lewdness. Sex is incompatible with revolution, so there

is no future for people who favour sex. Lenin states that he would never trust those who seduce women or fall in love numerous times. He calls upon people not to weaken, waste, or destroy their strength through sex. Rather, energy should be reserved for revolution, and sexual desire should be sublimated for the revolution.

Lenin was cited during the Mao era to emphasise self-restraint and self-discipline because the family was the basic cell of society and the state, and marriage and love were not personal but social in nature, as they produce new lives and new responsibilities. Marriage was considered such a serious matter that people who did not marry or produce children were acting irresponsibly toward the future of humankind, and it was extremely important to choose a spouse who was patriotic and supported communist construction. Careless divorce and remarriage were not forgiven by society because there was a need to guard social morality. Healthy love and a happy family could stimulate creative work for the communist state.<sup>(55)</sup>

The Mao era exhibited a single, monolithic state voice that underscored the absolute conflict between sex and state. That is, sex saps, weakens, and debilitates people's energy that should be devoted to the state, and hence sexual desire should be sublimated to construct socialism and contribute to the state. In other words, sex is only legitimate when producing the next generation for society.

Limiting sex for the purpose of procreation resonates with Foucault's concept of “alliance” rather than “sexuality.”<sup>(56)</sup>

The Mao era's emphasis upon “alliance” restricted sex for the purpose of reproduction as it benefited society and helped build the state. Sexual pleasure was castigated as a feature of the decadent and degenerate capitalist lifestyle. Hence there was an emphasis on policing and disciplining sexual activity that was considered uncondusive to state building.

While the Mao era reviled sex as dangerous and antithetical to state construction, the post-Mao era witnesses a cacophony

50. This regulation was issued by six government departments, including the Hygiene Department, Family Planning Committee, Food and Medicine Supervision Bureau, Industrial and Commercial Bureau, Broadcast Bureau, and Quality Supervision Bureau. Zhenhua Wang, “Anquandai yu anquantao (Safety belt and condoms),” *Shandong Qingnian Bao* (Shandong Youth News), 22 February 2003.

51. Hushi Yu, “Pinglun: Woguo anquantao guanggao jiejin xiaoxiao de yige jinbu (Comments: Small progress for condom ads),” *Fazhi Ribao* (Legal Daily), 3 December 2002.

52. Yinhe Li, “Anquantao lunzheng de beihou” (Behind the debate on condoms), *21 Shiji Huanqiu Baodao* (Report Around the World in the 21st Century), 26 December 2002.

53. Ibid.

54. Qinghuai Ma, “Lenin Talks About the Issue of Women, Marriage and Sex,” *Xin Zhongguo Funu* (New Women of China), vol. 51, no. 1, 1954, pp. 6-7.

55. Ibid.

ny of conflict between the state and alliance of health professionals and condom companies. The post-Mao state inherited and perpetuated the Maoist state's stance that sex is only legitimate within marriage. Cohabitation is rejected and prostitution is outlawed. The government stages a series of "anti-vice" campaigns annually aimed at eradicating the "ugly phenomenon" of prostitution. Western sexual liberation is debunked, and books that are deemed to reflect this theme are banned, such as *Shanghai Baobei* (Shanghai Baby) and *Fei Du* (A Decadent Capital). The ban on condom advertisements is one of myriad examples of the state's denial of sex beyond the boundaries of marriage.

However, unlike the Maoist state that prohibited discussion of sexual pleasure, the post-Mao state recognises the importance of sexual pleasure *within* marriage, as it maintains marital harmony and discourages extramarital affairs.<sup>(57)</sup> A "socialist sexual morality" is emphasised to ensure the harmonious conjugal family critical to secure social stability and state control.

What also differentiates the post-Mao state from the Maoist state is the cacophony from the alliance. As the condom debate reveals, while many local communities are influenced by the state and speak the state language in insisting on abstinence and sexual morality as the ultimate weapon in disease prevention, the alliance of condom companies and health professionals recognises the prevalence of unsafe sex and employs the discourse of "social progress" and "civilisation" to promote condom advertisements. Some even rebel against the state's "repression of sex" by subscribing to the concept of "natural" sexual desire.<sup>(58)</sup> Posing a direct challenge and menace to the state, illicit sexual pleasures are the main target of state control.

## Conclusion

The taboo against condom advertisements spanned more than 15 years and was only relaxed as recently as 2004, after years of debate and appeals from hundreds of health professionals, scholars, and condom companies.

The condom debate crystallises two opposing definitions of condoms driven by multiple-positioned interests. The state defines condoms as a contraceptive method associated with sex within the confines of marriage, and believes that condom advertisements will encourage prostitution and promiscuity. The alliance of condom companies, health professionals, and scholars, however, desexualises condoms by defining them as a personal hygiene item, a health product, or a disease control tool.

Medical professionals and scholars believed that condom companies could provide the financial support necessary for HIV information and more prevalent condom use. Guided by their interest in ameliorating the pressing HIV issue in China, they appealed for an overhaul of state law and supported condom advertisements as an emblem of social progress and civilisation. Driven by commercial interests, condom companies allied with medical professionals and scholars in promoting the cause.

The state's stance towards condoms has impacted and to an extent penetrated local communities and universities, and has fuelled the sale of substandard, expired condoms in the market. Taboos against condom advertisements and the social stigma associated with condoms have contributed to popular ignorance about condoms and the prevalence of unsafe sex.

The post-Mao state has exercised many strategies to negate, silence, and police extra-marital sex. These strategies include prohibiting condom advertisements, banning books with sexual content, and cracking down on prostitution through anti-

56. Foucault, in his book *The History of Sexuality*, depicts two ways of governing – "alliance" and "sexuality." Alliance is "a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions" (Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. I, New York, Random House, 1978). In the system of alliance, reproduction is the ultimate goal. The transformation of alliance to sexuality began in the last third of the eighteenth century in Europe when modern science recognised a fundamental, biological difference between the male and female sexes (Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1990).<sup>57</sup> This naturalised and essentialised view of sexual difference with a biological basis led to the state's concern with "the sensations of the body, the quality of pleasures, the nature of impressions" in the system of "sexuality," and enabled the state to penetrate families and private bodies "in an increasingly detailed way" (Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, op. cit., pp. 106-107). Rather than centring on reproduction, "sexuality" focused on "the exploitation of the body" that "produces and consumes" (ibid., pp. 106-107). According to Foucault, in modern Europe, "sexuality" was superimposed on the old system of "alliance" and reduced its importance. In late imperial China, it was social roles that gender was anchored upon, and women were defined by their roles as mother, daughter, and wife. Reproducing the lineage was the meaning and purpose of sexuality. The May Fourth Movement initiated a biological definition of male and female in 1919 (Tian Gao, "Xing zhi sheng wu xue" (Biology of sex), *Xin Qing Nian* (New Youth), vol. 8, no. 6, 1919, pp. 1-12). The biological and unitary category of women – *nuxing* (female sex) was created during this time in place of *nu* (daughters), *fu* (married wives) and *mu* (mothers) (Tani Barlow, "Theorizing Woman: Funu, Guojia, Jiating," in Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow, *Body, Subject and Power in China*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994). For the first time in Chinese history, there was a word meaning biological woman (Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, "From Gender Erasure to Gender Difference: State Feminism, Consumer Sexuality, and Women's Public Sphere in China," in Mayfair Mei-hui Young, *Spaces of Their Own: Women's Public Sphere in Transnational China*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999, pp. 35-67). The Maoist state suppressed and obliterated this biological difference between male and female and created an ostensibly androgynous gender model where men and women wore unisex clothing and femininity was rejected as bourgeois.

57. Gary Sigley, "Keep It in the Family: Government, Marriage, and Sex in Contemporary China," in Margaret Jolly and Kalpana Ram, *Borders of Being: Citizenship, Fertility, and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 2001, pp. 118-153.

58. Tiantian Zheng, "Cool Masculinity: Male Clients' Sex Consumption and Business Alliance in Urban China's Sex Industry," *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 15, no. 46, 2006, pp. 161-82.

vice campaigns. The state also propagates sexual morality and satisfaction of sexual desire within marriage to secure its stability,<sup>(59)</sup> and laws and regulations stipulate which sexual activities are permitted and forbidden. As Foucault observes, “What is peculiar to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the secret*.”<sup>(60)</sup> Like Freud, the Chinese state believes that the price of civilisation is repression. The state’s obsession with sex and its control is seen as necessary to achieve what the state envisions as a harmonious society, one in which citizens are obedient and the state is in complete control. The state’s prohibition against condom advertisements is one of the interventions aimed at concealing and suppressing non-marital sex to ensure the stability and harmony of marriage and family upon which the state establishes and maintains its power and control. •

#### Glossary

quebao anquan, zi you yi tao	確保安全，自有一套
biyuntao	避孕套
anquantao	安全套
feimaipin	非賣品
nuxing	女性
nu	女
fu	婦
mu	母
shanghai baobei	上海 寶貝
fadu	發都

59. Gary Sigley, “Keep It in the Family: Government, Marriage, and Sex in Contemporary China,” *art. cit.*

60. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.