

Abstract PhD project: May Jennifer

Quotation in Modern Propaganda Texts

My research focuses on the meaning and function of quotations in propaganda texts written by the Chinese Communist Party. I argue that the use of quotations has been an effective means for the CCP to promote its ideas and values even until today.

From 1949 latest onwards, the CCP channeled its efforts into establishing a new set of canonical texts which consisted mainly of the Marxist classics and the works of Mao Zedong. The Chinese population was (re-)educated through studying this new canon, memorizing it and using quotations from it in everyday life. Adding to that, the press further infiltrated the masses with Marxist quotations. Generally speaking, it used quotations either to add extra weight to its own arguments or else to prove the quotes' practical value. In the history of Marxist quotation in China, the Cultural Revolution may be seen as the most outstanding period. The personality cult of Mao Zedong further advanced the quotation of Mao's words as an important form of worship. However, this worship must be divided into at least two very different styles; that is official and popular worship: Medias employing the "official style" would blend Mao's words and quotations so perfectly into their own that it would have been impossible to recognise them had they not been printed in bold characters. The common people, on the other hand, used Mao's words and quotations to do such trivial things as argue about the quality of tomatoes. After the Cultural Revolution the number of quotes employed dropped sharply, but Mao was still called on to sanction Deng Xiaoping's strategy of Reform and Opening Up. Even today Marxism is anything but dead in China: only recently, the Party announced in the press that it would dedicate unlimited funds to the revival of Marxism in China. The first step has already been taken: 3,000 top Marxist theorists have been invited to Beijing to compile a hundred new Marxism textbooks.

In my dissertation I am analyzing the use of quotes in the People's Daily from 1949 up to the present: Which different functions did quotations (still) have in the People's Daily? How do these functions change over time? Which principles of style and content guided and continue to guide journalists' choice of quotations? In an introductory chapter I try to address such questions concerning journalistic work through the study of three sources: propaganda directives, journalism handbooks and biographical material from journalists. In four hermeneutical studies I will then look into the function of quotations. Generally speaking, quotations may be seen as defined by four factors: (I) the wording of the quotation itself, (II) its original source, (III) its author, (IV) the quotation's new context. By holding one of these factors constant, I will try to answer the following questions: How does the meaning of a quotation change over time? When and how does it lose its connection to the source text and become proverbial? By quoting different parts of a source text, can its meaning be changed? How important is the authorship of a quotation? Does a certain context always demand certain quotations? Can we still speak of an authoritative "canon" if its meaning is constantly changed through the adaptation of its quotations into new contexts?