Published in final edited form as:

Med Anthropol. 2017 January ; 36(1): 47–60. doi:10.1080/01459740.2016.1174227.

CURATING EMPLOYEE ETHICS: SELF-GLORY AMIDST SLOW VIOLENCE AT THE CHINA TOBACCO MUSEUM

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Abstract

Seen through the prism of public health, the cigarette industry is an apparatus of death. To those who run it, however, it is something more prosaic: a workplace comprised of people whose morale is to be shepherded. Provisioning employees of the cigarette industry with psychic scaffolding to carry out effective daily work is the purpose of the China Tobacco Museum. This multi-storied exhibition space in Shanghai is a technology of self, offering a carefully curated history of cigarette production thematized around tropes such as employee exaltation. Designed to anchor and vitalize the ethical outlook of those working for the world's most prolific cigarette conglomerate, the museum is a striking illustration that industrial strongholds of 'slow violence' produce their own forms of self-care.

Keywords

biopolitics; corporation; ethics; museum; tobacco

China's current building boom, often chided for effacing history, has been notably productive for at least one category of institutional memory making. During the past decade, hundreds of new museums have been built across the country (Xinhua 2012). One, on Changyang Road in the middle of Shanghai, appears decidedly out of place; its façade seems more at home in Mexico than China. Passing it initially, viewers may be lulled into believing they are seeing a replica of El Castillo, a famed site in the Yucatan. Replete with fortified grey windowless walls, a hefty external stone staircase, hieroglyphic-like carvings, and totem poles, the building is obviously a play on a Mayan temple.

Opened in 2004, this is the China Tobacco Museum. It is the largest museum anywhere celebrating the cigarette, a commercial product that during the twentieth century became one of the most widely circulated, consumed, and problematized around the world.¹ The China Tobacco Museum is more than a tribute to the cigarette, however. It is, I argue, a carefully

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ETHICS APPROVAL

Ethics approval was granted by Stanford University's non-medical IRB panel.

¹Within the Anglophone academy, Varma et al. (2005) and Wang et al. (2014) have commented on the China Tobacco Museum. Passed over in these trailblazing yet relatively short treatments of the museum is the institution's mission to cultivate a sense of ethical purpose among tobacco industry employees. Museums devoted to tobacco manufacturing can be found today in numerous countries across Europe and elsewhere, including Cuba, Australia, Indonesia, and Japan. For North American contexts, see Benson (2011: 6–7, 95–97) and Bennett (2012).

designed technology of self (Foucault 1988), a building offering tobacco industry employees space for reflection and ethical nurturance.

My style of exposition here is likewise reflexive, with its object of inquiry, the museum, prompting how the pages below unfold, as something of a ‘walking tour’. Meandering from one exhibition space to another, I point out ways that the museum communicates an ethics tailored to its intended audience, how curators deploy themes aimed at fostering a sense of personal virtue and professional morale among China’s tobacco industry workforce.²

Before our tour gets underway, a few words regarding research methodology. Here too reflexivity has had a role. I draw on research that I have conducted during the last decade. Over that span, my fieldwork frequently has taken me to China’s Southwest province of Yunnan, but it has also involved periods of study elsewhere, including Shanghai. I have spent over ten hours in the tobacco museum, to date, touring its galleries, chatting with people, and photographing exhibits. On my first visit, a colleague at Fudan University arranged for me to meet museum directors. They welcomed me with passionate handshakes, entry into their offices and library, overtures for long-term collaboration, and gifts of catalogues and other background information. Their flirtations ceased that same night, however, after a museum manager searched my academic record on the internet and ‘discovered’ that I had been funded previously by the US National Institutes of Health and that I was open to making pointed assessments of the tobacco industry in my publications. These discoveries short-circuited initial passions, my Fudan colleague explained. My academic bona fides, dare I say my professional ethics, were simply too discordant with those that the museum exists to nurture. An upshot of this aborted relationship was that my subsequent visits to the building were less encumbered. I purposely let months go by between unannounced museum trips, and the hours that I passed in galleries were uneventful.

Shanghai provides many museums from which to choose. For anyone wandering into the China Tobacco Museum for the first time, it can easily seem like little more than a blunt project of public relations, a mix of industrial triumphalism and product triage, a gambit by a rich state-run business sector to shore up the social standing of its leading and much maligned product, the cigarette. What’s at stake for this business, as many readers know, is a swelling pipeline of money resting on shifting sands. Cigarette manufacturing and sales have enjoyed meteoric growth over the last fifty years in China, generating in excess of US\$ 170 billion in profits and taxes during 2015 alone, largely free of any foreign competition (Xinhua 2016). Buffeting this juggernaut are new and ongoing market uncertainties and ethical upheavals. The biggest ethical upheavals are evidence of tobacco smoke’s toxicity

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²My analysis here—regarding the relationship between (a) the tobacco industry and (b) how its employees understand themselves and their work—differs from two other seemingly related investigations, both set in US contexts. Drawing upon interview transcripts, Roger Rosenblatt (1994) suggests that the most important mechanisms in play when it comes to tobacco executives’ thinking are psychological ones of denial, sublimation, and rationalization, and that these are facilitated by tobacco industry efforts including corporate responsibility spending. Scouring industry archives, Robert Proctor (2011: 292–299) documents ways that tobacco companies in the late twentieth century developed discursive procedures of “Internal Agnotology” to foster and police ignorance among their North American workforce. By contrast, extending Foucault’s term “technology of self,” I document ways that an institution, built by branches of the China National Tobacco Corporation, offers industry employees a set of ethical frameworks scripted within historical narratives, encouraging staff to imagine themselves as virtuous people doing important work for honorable causes.

and recent moves by Chinese health advocates to ally with global health programs to redefine cigarettes as highly pathogenic. Market uncertainties include everything from growing numbers of Chinese consumers increasingly attentive to health risks, to efforts by the party-state to restructure the competitive landscape of domestic cigarette manufacturing. Since the 1990s, Beijing has pushed for the state-run cigarette industry, partitioned by provincial protectionism, to consolidate production and to create only a few cigarette ‘megabrands’. Market shifts have also included swings in regulations, particularly regarding advertising.³

China’s domestic tobacco industry has responded to these uncertainties and upheavals through various means, including through the mass media. Regional manufacturers have hired marketing experts to devise novel messaging platforms, skirting new restrictions on tobacco advertising, to bolster the cigarette’s respectability in general and Chinese brand names in particular. The audience for these public relations moves is far more than the 300 million Chinese who smoke daily. It has also been the country’s nonsmoking majority.⁴ The industry looks to that majority, particularly its younger members, to take up smoking as replacements for those lost to death and disease, and at least, in the years ahead, to remain tolerant of others smoking tobacco. Such tolerance is far from assured, though. Even mainstream media in China regularly reports that cigarettes now kill over a million citizens annually, and that the toll will triple by 2030, if current rates of smoking persist (Xinhua 2011).

So, when I first visited the China Tobacco Museum in Shanghai in 2011, I quickly assumed I was treading upon just one more plank in the industry’s crass public relations aimed at enhancing its cash cow, the cigarette. I also assumed, after a few visits, that the museum was a costly failure. For, if the measure of the museum’s success is encouraging members of the general public to continue seeing smoking as laudable custom (rather than as state-sponsored pathogenesis), doing so requires large numbers of people entering the building. But on almost all my visits, the place was a near ghost town. Even free admission and ample air conditioning on the hottest of Shanghai days fails to attract many people off the street and into the building, perhaps explaining why the museum is now only open to unscheduled visitors two days a week.

What I have come to understand, though, is that this institution was never built for any imagined ‘general public’. Rather, it was created for a narrow spectrum of Chinese citizens, a vocational demographic that includes those who oversaw its construction. It was built for those people who most often wander its galleries, usually in groups, often at times when the museum is closed to the public. Its target audience is the tobacco industry’s largely male, well educated, urban labor force – factory line workers, managers, researchers, marketers, accountants, supply chain personnel, and technicians. This focus is expressed patently in the

³Between 1949 and the late 1970s, advertisements for cigarettes (or any other product) in China declined. After Mao’s death in 1976, China started looking much as it did in the first decades of the twentieth century, with advertisements for cigarette brands blanketing the country (Cochran 1980:30–34). Since the 1990s, however, new regulations have been promulgated, banning many forms of tobacco advertising and requiring (modest) warning labels on packaging.

⁴Currently, over 97 percent of all Chinese women and about half of all men do not smoke on a daily basis, although many are habitually exposed to second-hand smoke (Li, Hsia, and Yang 2011:2469–70).

institution's founding documents. For example, Jiang Chengkang, the Director General of the museum's supervisory agency, the China State Tobacco Monopoly Administration, when commemorating the institution's grand opening, emphasized:

The museum is to serve as a window and platform of communication, one that advances understanding of the industry ... strengthening self-awareness among industry staff (加强行业职工对自身的认识) (Wang 2004:i-ii).

Stated somewhat differently, this edifice in Shanghai was created as a grand project of self-enhancement for tobacco industry employees. It is a *technology of self*, in Foucauldian terms, a crucible of practices and logics by which a group of individuals represent to themselves their own ethical self-understanding. However, rather than a "manual of morals," as Foucault described when he coined the phrase technology of self, what we have here is a "museum of morals," a building designed by/and for an enigmatic group within the polity of the People's Republic (Foucault 1988:21).

Self-funded, self-referential industry museums can be found in many parts of the world, built on behalf of a variety of large business sectors.⁵ And among its many characteristics, the tobacco industry in China is certainly big. At current count, it produces well over two and a half trillion cigarettes, constituting over forty percent of the world's total production of rolled tobacco products. Despite automation, legions of laborers are required to feed this cigarette supply chain. Millions of farmers—growing and harvesting tobacco leaves at fixed government prices—are needed. Some 500,000 nonagricultural workers are also involved: procurement personnel, flu curers, factory line staff, and experts specializing in everything from logistics to biochemistry, engineering, finance, law, management, medicine, insurance, transportation, marketing, and accounting.

These employees are comparatively well compensated, to be sure.⁶ They have enjoyed salaries and bonuses the envy of other industrial sectors over the past fifty years. They have also started to receive something else at the turn of the millennium. As foreign business logics regarding human resource management have entered China and mixed with Mao-era pedagogies regarding labor and party rectitude, workers in the tobacco industry have received access to new forms of employee self-enhancement services. In the southwest, for example, employees now have access to new psychological counselling services to help manage mental distress (Zhang 2013). The China Tobacco Museum has positioned itself as a similar venture. It offers itself as a font of continuing education and an adult resource center for industry personnel, providing them a perk, less material than spiritual. Of utmost concern is helping employee-subjects to perceive themselves as ethically directed and highly motivated individuals, impervious to temptations such as misconduct, corruption, and self-doubt.

⁵Of the many self-referential industry museums to be found around the world, a few examples include Argentina's National Petroleum Museum in Comodoro Rivadavia, the Malaysian Natural Rubber Museum, Michigan's Iron Industry Museum, the Chemical Industry Museum of China, and France's Aviation Museum (adjacent to an Airbus factory).

⁶Here are some income data for Southwest China provided by acquaintances of mine who reside in Kunming. By year two of employment, a formal production worker in a Yunnan province cigarette factory is likely to earn an annual pre-tax income of US \$ 33,400 (about RMB 200,000). In contrast, by year four of employment, a formal production worker at Kunming Iron and Steel, also a state-owned firm, is likely to earn an annual pre-tax income of US\$ 10,000. By year five of employment, a junior civil servant for the Kunming city government or the Yunnan provincial government is likely to earn an annual pre-tax income of US\$ 13,400.

Over the last decade, I have spoken to scores of people who work in one capacity or another across China's State Tobacco Monopoly Administration, whether for local offices or manufacturing enterprises. These people have sometimes been forthright, sometimes dismissive regarding the dangers posed by cigarettes. But whatever their views on tobacco toxicity, the overarching message that they have communicated to me is that they self-identify as good, upstanding citizens who participate in making a product of great value to their country and community. And, when I have pushed any of them to defend their vocation, which many a media commentator chide as mercenary, malevolent, even murderous, they have consistently responded that, despite problems inherent to conventional tobacco combustion, they see themselves as contributing to an interwoven set of higher causes: providing consumers ever safer and more pleasurable choices through scientific innovation, building a stronger and more modern nation, and helping to finance strategic priorities of the party-state, both local and national.

How is the China Tobacco Museum designed to reinforce this ethical repertoire of self-understanding? What precisely are the curatorial strategies it deploys to prop up such a vocational subjectivity?

In this article, I offer a guided tour of the museum, describing ways that gallery designers advance an ethics of self for industry staff.⁷ From exhibition space to exhibition space, I show how specific curatorial themes are deployed to represent an industrial history as moral epoch and a workforce as manufacturing more than just consumer products. I argue that, within these galleries, it is particularly notable that the museum repetitively depicts the source of history as actors who we see not simply photographed but also named. This representational strategy of 'calling out' is not new to China, where Maoist propagandists long ago exalted model workers, naming and photographing them. Novel here is that this technique of personalization is now being used in an effort to incite feelings of self-worth and allegiance for an industry facing a biopolitical struggle over the integrity of a consumer product.

BACKGROUND TO A MUSEUM, KICKOFF TO A TOUR

Formal planning for the museum began in the late 1980s, with China's State Council approving construction a decade later. Advocating for the museum were leaders of a then new branch of the party-state, China's State Tobacco Monopoly Administration (STMA), created in the early 1980s to supervise production and sale of cigarettes nationwide. The STMA's leaders not only advocated for a national museum, but arranged for all levels of their agency to pay for it. Because they 'won' the right to host the museum, the Shanghai branch of the STMA and the Shanghai Cigarette Factory financed over half the cost of construction. An additional hundred different branches of the STMA and a large percentage of STMA-supervised cigarette factories also contributed. All told over RMB 180 million

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⁷To be clear, as I understand them, terms like *technologies of self* and *ethics of self* are related but not interchangeable. Technologies of self are discursive and material projects designed to generate ethics among everyday actors involved in (sometimes highly specific, sometimes more general) fields of social life. What are ethics within my Foucauldian-informed stream of thought? As Robinson (2015) explains it, under Foucault's pen, ethics involve a "relation of self to itself in terms of its moral agency. More specifically, ethics denotes the intentional work of an individual on itself in order to subject itself to a set of moral recommendations for conduct and, as a result of this self-forming activity or 'subjectivation', constitute its own moral being."

(US\$ 23 million) was raised by non-Shanghai entities, with Yunnan province's factories and offices leading the way, giving a total of RMB 20 million. Provinces like Hainan, where tobacco production is less prominent, gave only RMB 100,000. Tibet did not contribute at all. The museum opened in the summer of 2004, across the street from the current Shanghai Cigarette Factory, on a site where prior to 1949 a factory of the British American Tobacco Company once sat.⁸ The exhibition spaces of this new beacon of corporate self-acclamation occupy the first three floors and a portion of the basement; floors four and five are taken up by administrative offices and a reading room for the museum's archive.

Entering a museum, anywhere, always means subjecting oneself to conceptual and bodily management. The China Tobacco Museum is no exception. On each of my visits, I was required to show ID and to sign in at the front gate. Guards direct visitors to walk to the top of the external stairwell and to enter on the third floor, past the Socialist Expressionist images, engraved on stone panels, depicting muscular proletarians, wrenches and revolutionary flags in hand. At the apex of the stairs, the panels conclude with two three-meter-tall workers operating cigarette rolling machines, doves hovering above. Once inside, visitors are expected to traverse each floor's gallery spaces, traveling downwards from floor to floor, with overhead lights automatically switching on or off as you enter or exit a particular exhibit space. Guards sit in a central control room watching visitors on closed-circuit monitors, and reprimand any infractions over a speaker system (e.g., touching a display case or using flash photography).

Within this managed environment, several rhetorical lines or themes are persistently communicated. These are the organizational touchstones of the tour that I offer here. One-by-one, I walk you through the themes' curatorial deployment in the pages below.

Theme 1: Cigarettes were originally foreign but, through processes of globalization and bentuhua (本土化, "localization"), they became consummately Chinese

Before viewing anything inside the museum, the visitor must first walk through a large circular third-floor entry, seemingly providing a spatial primer on China's capacity to absorb and localize. The entry features a floor-to-ceiling mural in gold leaf. It portrays sights widely recognized as 'native' to China, such as Tiananmen Gate, and others with more exogenous roots, everything from the Buddhist sculptures of Leshan to the contemporary Shanghai skyline and Tibet's famous Potala Palace in Lhasa.

Crossing the entryway, life-sized Native American manikins greet the visitor in a darkened room surrounded by displays depicting tobacco's American origins and its trans-oceanic dissemination. The viewer is enveloped by monochrome colors, cobblestone flooring, and raw wood-framed exhibits. Maps explain the movement of tobacco out of the Americas, its arrival in Asia during the seventeenth century, and its spread across 'Old China'. Graphics portray differing 'Chinese' responses, including Ming court hostilities, Qing court praise, and public efforts to cultivate tobacco leaf.

⁸For discussion of British American Tobacco (BAT) in early twentieth century China, see Cochran (1980).

A few meters along, the exhibits get to the heart of the matter – the making of the modern cigarette. Although tobacco was introduced into Asia more than 250 years prior to the advent of machine-rolling (Benedict, 2011), the designers of the museum are interested mostly in the era of *juanyan* (卷烟, literally rolled tobacco). The first few exhibit walls to depict *juanyan* and its manufacture do so in the context of late Imperial China, as initially foreign and thus at once suspect and fascinating. Here early cigarette production is mostly depicted through black-and-white photos: of Anglo-American businessmen, factories designed, financed, and supervised by foreigners, and poorly dressed Chinese toiling on the assembly lines at the British American Tobacco Company in Shanghai. The difficulty conveyed by the photographs, if any, is not of a harmful product being manufactured, in contrast to opium, for instance. Rather the difficulty is that of a deficient local citizenry, not yet poised to govern modern machinery, not yet able to operate cigarette factories free of foreign influence.

Theme 2: Localization of the Chinese cigarette has been the result of proud human actions carried out by Chinese patriots

Several rooms of the museum offer celebratory visualizations of how precisely a once-foreign product becomes a localized commodity. Prioritized are efforts and workspaces of people portrayed as decidedly ‘Chinese’, proud and proactive. Men lead the way, with few exceptions.

In one room, we see a full-sized reproduction of the workspace in which the foreman of the Yee Tsoong Tobacco Factory (颐中烟厂) held sway. Nearby a group of photos depict two enterprises founded in 1926: the Fuxin Tobacco Company and Minfeng (China’s first domestic cigarette paper maker). Some of the photos are of building exteriors; others feature well-dressed local workers overseeing the companies’ massive machines. Portraits of Minfeng’s cofounders, Messrs. Jin Runyang and Zhu Meixian, are displayed prominently.

The next wall is labeled “Tobacco Industry’s Patriotic and Anti-Imperial Activities.” Of the many cigarettes a Chinese consumer could choose from in the early twentieth century, “Patriotic Brand (爱国牌) was warmly welcomed,” a plaque explains. Nearby, a newspaper clipping describes how, in Shanghai in 1919, 600 tobacco workers took part in strikes of the May 4th Movement, the proto-nationalist campaign that gave birth to the Chinese patriot, pitting Chinese nationalism against feudal and foreign enemies. Also prominently shown are portraits of two early Communist luminaries, Xiang Jingyu and Li Lisan. A major figure in China’s embryonic women’s liberation movement and a CCP activist, Ms. Xiang organized the first Communist Party branch inside a tobacco company and helped orchestrate a strike in Shanghai during 1924. Mr. Li was a founding leader in this same Party branch and, we are told, he went on to direct Shanghai’s Workers Trade Union during the anti-imperial May 30th Movement of 1925.

That the tobacco industry was a spawning ground of nationalism, Communism, and the rise of New China is bluntly communicated on the next wall with two displays. On the left, the display depicts the (still politically charged) Japanese military occupation during the Second World War. Here we see three images, each seemingly chosen to disturb the viewer more than the next and incite a sense of allegiance to workers who heroically embodied both

Chineseness and tobacco production. The first image comes with a caption, “British and American tobacco factory capitalists humiliated Chinese employees. Workers were subjected to bodily searches.” Guards are shown during the Japanese occupation, checking ID papers and searching workers at a factory gate. The second photo portrays Japanese Imperial soldiers brandishing bayoneted-rifles and loading domestic tobacco workers into a truck. The last photo shows a soldier beheading a man lying face up; an Imperial officer stands above, hands in his pockets. The caption reads, “Japanese invaders mercilessly butchering Chinese tobacco workers.”⁹

The display to the right offers a recuperative, psycho-political pivot, a nod to the reputed powers of manufacturing to heal and nurture the nation (Burbick 1994; Dikötter 1992; Schivelbusch 2003; Wang 2006:187). This display is devoted to cigarette manufacturing that occurred under aegis of the Chinese Communist Party’s wartime ‘Revolutionary Base Areas’. Photos show exteriors of three CCP factories in simple rural buildings. There are portraits of Messrs. Ji Bao and Song Changhe, director and vice-director of the Donghai Cigarette Factory, established in 1942 within the Third Division of the New Fourth Army. To one side of these portraits, a brightly lit plaque states that workers at another Revolutionary Base Area factory, Baojiafang, had to struggle constantly for resources to feed the factory’s hand-crank machines, but that at its height Baojiafang produced as many as 20,000 cigarettes daily for the Red Army.

Theme 3: Chinese cigarette makers have dutifully served the needs of the People’s Republic’s most important personages

If not the soldier, Mao is the embodiment of the revolutionary era cigarette consumer. The next display is devoted to the special care the CCP and the industry gave to Mao’s tobacco habit during a period of pitched Communist fervor, the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Marshal He Long, a plaque explains, proposed in 1964 that Sichuan’s Shifang Cigarette factory should set up a special enterprise to supply Mao and other top leaders with distinctive lines of rolled tobacco products. The factory sent samples to Beijing and, among these, leaders chose four. In 1971, at the height of the Cultural Revolution, the General Office of the central government assigned Shifang workers and equipment to set up a manufacturing facility at 80 Nanchang Road in Beijing, across the street from Zhongnanhai, the compound of China’s highest leaders.¹⁰ The actual physical entry to this address now stands in the museum, relocated in 2006. As if being given privileged access to an inner sanctum, we are invited to walk through the (repurposed) Nanchang Road entryway past the original set of stone lions. We are met by a large photo of Mao reclining in a rattan chair reading a newspaper and smoking a No. 2 cigarillo, his personal line. Also in this display is Fan Guorong, the Nanchang factory director; now retired, he is shown teaching young women from the Beijing Cigarette Factory how, during the Cultural Revolution, he would choose materials and roll special offerings like No. 2s for the CCP luminaries in Zhongnanhai.

⁹The translation into English of the original Chinese-language caption is mine. The English-language translation offered by the museum below the original Chinese-language caption is inaccurate.

¹⁰For more on the 80 Nanchang Road factory, see the account first published by the China Elderly Post (2008) and thereafter widely circulated on Chinese-language websites.

Elsewhere, other members of the Communist Party's pantheon loom large through visible representation. Whether simply smoking or formally administering to the cigarette industry, icons like Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Hun Jintao, Chen Yi, He Long, and Song Qingling (aka, Madame Sun Yatsen) make appearances. Special attention is given to Deng Xiaoping along with his personal line variant of Panda Brand cigarettes produced by the Shanghai Cigarette Company. Packaged in blue, these cigarettes today remain highly prized and rarely available for purchase in stores (Pandas wrapped in orange are more readily found). By emphasizing Deng's use of Pandas, the political domestication of the cigarette in China seems to be complete. This is especially evident in a section of the museum titled "Great Men, Celebrities and Tobacco," where a video clip runs on continuous loop. In this 1986 clip, Deng Xiaoping is being interviewed in Beijing by CBS News' Mike Wallace, a US journalist. Deng pulls out a pack of his trademark Pandas and asks Wallace politely, "May I smoke?" Wallace warmly approves, certainly knowing he has no option, and he entreats Deng for a cigarette. Asking a superior for tobacco is impolite, according to current custom in China, but unfazed, Deng hands over a cigarette, smiles wryly, and says something that seems to communicate his affection for the Chinese tobacco industry, for providing him a special product and for using technical mastery to build him an ostensibly 'safer' cigarette. Deng states, "To deal with me, they make these [cigarettes] especially on my behalf. The filter is long. Ha, the filter is even longer than the tobacco!"

Theme 4: Cigarette makers have contributed to the production of not simply an industry but also the vibrancy of China's party-state, economy, and culture

In almost every gallery, the museum posits a theme of historical coproduction – encompassing industry, culture, economy, and party-state. Consider the second floor gallery devoted to 'tobacco culture' (烟草文化). It starts with a plaque proclaiming: "Tobacco has been around in China for over 400 years, since its introduction from abroad. It has merged with social life and joined Chinese tradition, leading to the birth of a rich and colorful tobacco culture." The gallery chronicles the rise of the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration (STMA), with a string of photos displaying office buildings of the STMA and its predecessor. First comes a dilapidated redbrick barracks in Beijing's You'anmen area that once housed the China Tobacco Industry Corp (est. 1964). Next are photos of the ever more modern buildings of the STMA (est. 1982), keeping pace with the architectural and economic efflorescence of urban China in the post-Mao era.

What does the museum portray as the engine of this coproduction? As with localization, it is more than anonymous effort. It is the handiwork of specific actors, mostly male, who we meet by name and through visual portrayals. In the "Tobacco Culture Hall," in addition to photos of high Party officials, we are offered full-sized figurines embodying mid-century smoking personages of the revolution, from the People's Republic's most famous writer Lu Xun to the rugged soldier Yang Jingyu, someone who we are told fiercely battled "Japanese invaders."

The personification of the STMA starts with an image from 1965, just before the Cultural Revolution. We see Wang Yizhi, director of the STMA's predecessor organization, the China Tobacco Industry Corp., posing with a friendly group of cigarette factory workers, the

women in the front row tenderly holding hands. Personification continues in the next display, which treats the viewer to a red wall of fame: a 10-meter-long glass case containing large portraits of STMA's top executives (all male) from 1982 to the present. Directly across from this wall of named nomenklaturas, a plaque reads: "Party-state leaders have poured tremendous hope and concern into developing China's tobacco industry since the founding of the PRC ... They have encouraged generations of tobacco peasants to fight off poverty and march towards a good life."

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) messaging appears not far away, perhaps to convey an ethic of generosity, perhaps to dampen any alienation a viewer might feel toward the STMA's handsomely remunerated executives. Former STMA director Jiang Ming and Shanghai Tobacco executive Dong Haolin are shown in separate photos, presenting poster-board checks to the China Charity Foundation and the China Children Development Foundation.

Theme 5: The State Tobacco Monopoly Administration (STMA) is an august agency built by noble people

As should be obvious already, much of the museum is devoted not just to humanizing but also extolling the STMA/China Tobacco system. This comes across most strongly in one of the largest exhibit rooms, the "Tobacco Administration Hall" (烟草管理馆). Against a sienna-tinged background with elegant grey metal cases ringing the room, dozens of displays chronicle an origin story, wherein the STMA emerges from a seemingly logical progression of late dynastic and early twentieth century political events. Throughout, the STMA is treated as a sacred telos, offering China's tobacco industry a long-needed "unified leadership, vertical administration ... approaching perfection."

Portraiture here again is prominent. Late-Qing figures like Sheng Xuanhuai and Xiong Xiling appear as founding fathers of state tobacco monopoly 'theory'. Photos of financial administrators from the Soviet Base eras also loom large. And in a display titled "Heroes of the Day, Guardians of the Golden Leaves," contemporary photographs of named STMA employees receive awards on stages festooned with flags of the People's Republic. In military-style navy-blue uniforms and accessorized with STMA insignias, these awardees are recognized for risking their lives to break up counterfeit cigarette factories. The last case in this hall depicts the monopoly system and China's arrival onto the global stage, showing male executives of the STMA, Philip Morris, Japan Tobacco, and British American Tobacco – with mutual respect and in harmony – signing a turn-of-the-millennium contract to fund an International Tobacco Anti-Counterfeiting Alliance.

Theme 6: Leading figures within the industry have been product modernizers, making cigarettes that have been progressively cleaner and more scientific

The museum's basement houses a sentimental machinist's fantasy. It offers perhaps the largest display of mothballed cigarette manufacturing equipment anywhere in the world, progressing from hand-crank devices used during the early twentieth century to sundry apparatuses of automation decommissioned in the last decade: cutters, rollers, packers, filter assemblers, and much else. Scrubbed since service, the machines exude no lubricants or

odors, only tidy narratives of industrial advancement. The oldest ones often have neatly dressed, life-sized Chinese-featured manikins aside them, and labels acknowledging the country in which the device was originally fabricated.

Amidst this parade of hardware are photographic displays of Chinese-owned cigarette factories, helping to place the machines in grand narratives of localization and modernization. The first photos, in black-and-white, shows factory exteriors of the 1920s, the Republican Period, and before/after the founding of the PRC. The next, shifting to color photography, depicts facilities built in the 1980s–90s, ones commissioned at the turn of the millennium, and others renovated over the last decade. The final sequence, “Modern Cigarette Production,” offers exemplary interiors of China’s most recently outfitted factories, no workers in sight, only streamlined machinery. Nowhere does this sequence betray the machinery’s origins, let alone the harm they generate. Much of the newest equipment in the photographs has actually been sourced from Europe. For instance, one large photo shows one of the speediest filter cigarette makers currently available for sale in the world, a stainless-steel encased Protos-M5, fabricated by the Hauni Corporation of Hamburg, Germany, capable of producing 20 million cigarettes per day. Beneath its image, the caption only reads, “Ultra Rapid Production Equipment of the Shanghai Cigarette Factory.”

While the museum’s basement glorifies automation and a teleology of clean, modern production, the Tobacco Agriculture Hall trumpets human achievement. It starts with dioramas communicating a cheerful vision of tobacco leaf production. “Leaf Tobacco Harvesting and Curing,” for instance, is set against a blue sky and verdant, rolling hills. Here we find cleanly dressed four-inch prototypical peasants bundling green tobacco leaves, transporting tidy wheelbarrows of coal, and removing golden leaves from crisply painted white flue-curing compartments. A nearby display offers a more rustic scene, with a life-sized Bai minority woman seated in ceremonial white costume, preparing leaves to be hung over pristine clay ovens. Communicating a racialized dichotomy of Han Chinese sophistication and minority meekness (Schein 2000), these two exhibits celebrate human labor while obfuscating the risks of harvesting and curing tobacco leaf, such as green tobacco sickness and respiratory diseases triggered by exposure to coal dust and smoke (Arcury and Quandt 2006:71–81; Schmitt et al. 2007:255–64).

The Tobacco Agriculture Hall, however, is devoted less to farmers than to agronomists. Focus is given to male scientists who helped improve the ‘quality’ of tobacco used in twentieth century Chinese cigarettes. Extolled are tobacco innovators and inventors, from anonymous Chinese-looking lab coat-clad figurines working for BAT and the Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Company in the early twentieth century, to named scientific luminaries of the post-Liberation era who developed new varieties (e.g., Yunyan 98, 201 and 203) well suited to the climates of Yunnan and Guizhou. Interspersed are photos of Chinese government patriarchs – Mao Zedong in 1950 visiting Henan, Hu Jintao in 2002 touring Yunnan – inspecting tobacco fields and applauding the scientific success of agronomists. Research visionaries like Zhu Zunquan (朱尊) are pictured, celebrated for having “contributed extensively to the Chinese tobacco industry.” Born in Hubei in 1919, we are told, Zhu took degrees in agronomy from Nanjing’s Central University and University of

Kentucky, returning to China after 1949 to make important discoveries for the industry while holding posts in the Chinese Academy of Engineering and the China National Tobacco Corporation's main research institute in Zhengzhou.

Theme 7: Chinese tobacco industry staff and allies have helped the world uncover the dangers of cigarette smoking and have confronted those dangers innovatively and forthrightly

Designers of the museum do not dodge public health's twentieth century indictment of the cigarette. Instead, following the example of foreign tobacco companies (Smith 2012), this is addressed directly. Part of the museum communicates a market-friendly version of the 'problem'. A large four-sided exhibit hall entitled "Smoking and Tobacco Control" sits in the middle of the building. Here, the party-state is praised for recognizing dangerous features of tobacco; plaudits are directed at Chinese industry/academy contributions to harm reduction; and primacy is given to individual choice over industry culpability for 'risks' that smoking may pose.

In the center of this hall sits a phalanx of machines, smaller than those found in the basement. These gifts, from enterprises like the Qinghai Provincial Tobacco Corporation, Changsha Cigarette Factory, and Zhengzhou Tobacco Research Institute. are mostly tools of measurement – such as a multi-channel smoking machine, an automatic polarimeter, a gas chromatograph-mass spectrometer, and instruments to test cigarette hardness and burning speed. Why such analytical devices are exhibited in the hall is to be inferred from the surrounding wall displays, which are filled with photos, texts, and small items.

The first of the four walls tells a story in two parts. It acknowledges tepidly the existence of dangers inherent to tobacco smoke, with one plaque intoning that "Smoking is Harmful" (吸烟有害). It then pivots to showcase some responsible public health adaptations, most notably Beijing's 2005 ratification of the WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The rest of the gallery, however, takes up a different subplot. It communicates a story of Chinese science and industry joining hands during the last few decades to safeguard consumers by producing a "safer cigarette." Pride of place in the Smoking and Tobacco Control Hall (吸烟与控制馆) is given not to dangers, nor to public health experts and their techniques for limiting access to cigarettes. Instead, the emphasis is on providing consumers the choice to smoke 'light' cigarettes, with filter tips and tobacco leaf processed in ways to retain taste but with reduced quantities of tar and nicotine. The gallery's overarching storyline is one of progress by Chinese cigarette makers, fusing 'quality' and 'safety', signposted by displays featuring the 1959 trial release to government elites of China's first domestically produced filter-tipped cigarette, the introduction of brands blended with Chinese herbal medicines, industry researchers wearing white coats in laboratory settings, and a 2003 nationwide low-tar industry conference held in Kunming. The exhibit culminates with oversized images of 5mg-tar-per-pack domestic brands and exhibits of important constituent parts. Near the end of the third wall a pack of Zhongnanhai Super Lights, in airbrushed marketing copy, hangs triumphantly over glass cases of various innovations in filter designs and cut leaf formulations. There is no mention that 'light' and 'low tar' cigarettes are canards,¹¹ despite empirical studies demonstrating repeatedly that such

products can be even more dangerous than the ‘regular’ cigarettes they replace (Proctor 2011).

Several men, named and photographed, play prominent roles in the Smoking and Tobacco Control Hall. At its entryway is a portrait of Jiang Zeming, the third generation of Communist Party leaders’ preeminent figure, someone catapulted into power after the Tiananmen protests of 1989. Jiang’s portrait was taken during his plenary speech at the 1997 World Conference on Tobacco or Health in Beijing, and is accompanied by platitudes from the plenary: Jiang praising citizens for adopting healthy lifestyles and discouraging smoking among youth. A few steps away, Chinese scientists, embodied by Prof. Lu Fuhua (吕富华) of Tonji Medical University, are credited as pioneers in tobacco-control research. A foil here again is the US. On a wall display, “Why People Smoke Cigarettes,” it is explained that “in 1948, the journal of the American Medical Association reported that ... tobacco can relax mental tensions. Therefore there is no need to object to cigarette smoking.” In the next panel, Prof. Lu is credited for being one of the first scientists in the world to isolate tobacco’s carcinogenic effects, publishing his earliest findings in a 1934 German medical journal and helping establish links between tobacco tar and cancer.¹²

CONCLUSION

China’s tobacco industry has built a history museum to nurture an ethics of self among its employees, so highlighting a truism of contemporary markets. The popularity of any commercial product—the automobile, single-serving beer, or mobile phone—does not emerge in a moral or temporal vacuum. This is likely to be even more the case with products manufactured on a vast scale and extensively criticized as harmful to health. To sustain long-term market presence, certain ethical and historical groundwork must be laid; otherwise the products may be ignored, rejected, or reviled. Declarations laced with deftly chosen virtues of local cultural import must be imposed upon consumers regularly, and so, it would seem, upon production personnel.

The deployment of history and technologies of self to texture social and political life is nothing new to scholars of contemporary China. Various branches of the party-state, in particular, have devoted much effort to shape what Chinese residents know and feel about significant events of the past (Duara 2008; Fogel 2000; Mitter 2000:279–93; Unger 1993; Watson 1994). These efforts have been bound up closely with an allied set of projects, making various forms of citizen-subjects who conform to the diverse and changing needs of the Party—initially revolutionary farmers, proletarian workers, and soldiers, and more recently government-friendly entrepreneurs, netizens, home-buyers, car owners, and rural risk takers willing to provide cheap migrant labor (Anagnost 1997, Rofel 1999, Zhang 2001,

¹¹See article 11, page 9, of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which refers to such products as “false, misleading, deceptive.” <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2003/9241591013.pdf?ua=1>.

¹²Lu Fuhua’s public biography states he was born in 1904 and studied in Germany during the mid-1930s, initially working under the renowned pathologist Karl Aschoff at the University of Freiburg, where Lu reputedly helped establish the link between tobacco tar and cancer on rabbit skin, and later working in labs at University of Berlin. I have found no evidence that Lu authored research findings during this period, but in the 1930s, German medical science was at the forefront of establishing tobacco as carcinogenic (Schürch and Winterstein 1935), and it is highly plausible that Lu participated in such laboratory inquiry during his first years as an overseas student.

Liu 2002, Liu 2011). Since 1949, China's state-run tobacco industry has tailored its products to help differentiate and sustain this array of selves, manufacturing a wide selection of cigarette brands, many symbolically segmented to suit specific categories of citizen subject. It has also catered to needs of labor extraction, providing workers easy access to a highly addictive stimulant, nicotine, able to induce a wide range of behavioral effects.

Shanghai's tobacco museum also points to new tensions and social forces in China, including rising anxieties regarding dangers posed to health by industry. Industrial sectors are increasingly being called to task, not for overworking people, but for imperiling health. To appreciate the scope of this social shift, consider Chai Jing's 2015 media sensation *Under the Dome*, an online air pollution documentary viewed over 150 million times within the first three days following its release (Gardner 2015). As this shift of problematization emerges, as new questions arise about toxins generated by industrial production, the challenge of labor management is no longer simply that of sustaining a workforce immune to sloth, corruption, Party disloyalty, and discontentment. A new challenge exists: cultivating industrial employees' self-perception that they are noble individuals involved in unimpeachable work.

How successful this museum has been at boosting the morale of industry employees is beyond the scope of this article. Many galleries in the museum come across to me as blunt, even burlesque, attempts to shore up a workforce. But this is not a sentiment shared by any industry employees I have met who have toured the museum. Perhaps that is because the building is not a novel technology of self; it is one channel of a multivalent messaging program that tobacco companies and supervisory state agencies direct at employees. Other channels include intra-industry newsletters, websites, and magazines, weekend entertainment offerings and holiday pageants. Taken together, all these media outlets help industry employees feel not just sated by their supersized salaries but also embedded within an ethics celebratory of cigarette manufacturing across China.

A final implication pertains to theorization regarding mass death, a topic of increasing discussion in the Euro-American academy during recent years. In assessing how to theorize what Nixon (2011) has come to call "slow violence," Lauren Berlant (2007) has encouraged scholars along two lines. She pushes us to recognize that the power to produce mass human annihilation is frequently diffused through market mechanisms over long periods of time, generating what she calls "slow death." And she admonishes us to avoid overemphasizing the importance of intentionality and individual decision making by any national sovereign. The China Tobacco Museum allows us to add to this; it suggests that we need not just to attend to diffusion when studying slow death, but also diffusion into ethics of self. What we need is consideration of how, in cases of slow death, the power to kill is inscribed upon and maintained by broad systems of actors, networks of what Judith Butler calls "petty sovereigns" (2004). The cigarette business is a large-scale diffused machine of slow violence, one run by networks of petty sovereigns. How such sovereigns, even in the midst of public health criticism, come to feel ethically animated, and remain so, is an important and little studied question. The China Tobacco Museum, I suggest, is an apparatus designed for such ethical animation. It is a technology of self, drawing heavily on tropes of exaltation and personification to vitalize the ethical outlook of petty sovereigns who work in perhaps

the most important region for the global cigarette industry today. It is a museum of morals for a deadly business, a patent illustration that even the most harm-inducing branches of contemporary manufacturing contain forms of self-care.

Acknowledgments

FUNDING

Research for this paper was provided by a K07 award from the U.S. National Cancer Institute and a fellowship from the Stanford Humanities Center.

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Biography

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