"Flowers of the rear garden": The People's Republic of China's Male Homosexological Lexicon

Andreanna L. Downing Zheng

Aurora, NY: Wells College

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Dr. Phillip Guingona

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Abstract

This paper summarizes the historical evolution of the Chinese male homosexological lexicon (that is, terms used to refer to male homosexuality) in the People's Republic of China from the late Imperial period through the Republican, Maoist, and Reform periods to the present-day by synthesizing and discussing a number of works primarily published within the past two decades on the subject. Key terms from each era are translated, defined, and discussed alongside their English equivalents, with particular emphasis placed on the lasting relationships between the male homosexological lexicon and the historical Chinese legal, public, and scientific discourses around male homosexuality. There are several recurring themes in these discourses which negatively affect same-sex-attracted men, including state enforcement of gendered ideology, pathologization and/or criminalization of male homosexuality, and social stigmatization.

Keywords: China, discourse, homosexuality, literature, review

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> There is a tendency, in both Chinese and Western cultures, to think of sexuality as […] a uniquely private area of life, insulated from wider sociocultural influences. Critical scholarship has challenged these assumptions, drawing attention to *the sociality of sexuality, to the cultural shaping of sexual desires and practices* [emphasis added], the nonsexual motivations that may influence sexual conduct, *the social conventions governing sexual relationships* […] *the way the sexual is embedded in everyday life* [emphasis added] (Jackson & Scott 2010, as cited in Ho et al. 2018, p. 487).

The history of male homosexuality in Mainland China is understandably complex and inextricably connected to the history of the country as a whole. Depictions and discussions of male homosexuality which inform the legal, public, and scientific discourses about the topic can be found in literary works throughout Chinese history. These works use a wide variety of terms in reference to male homosexuality, a vocabulary which we will refer to as the Chinese *male homosexological lexicon.* The Chinese homosexological lexicon is highly adaptable and has changed over time in response to historical events. This paper aims to explore the nature of these changes and their relationships with the Chinese legal, public, and scientific discourses around male homosexuality from the Qing dynasty to the present by synthesizing and discussing a number of works mostly published within the past two decades on the topic alongside historical context.

The aforementioned timespan will be divided into four distinct eras for our purposes: the late Imperial period, the Republican period, the Maoist period, and the Reform & Opening period. The Revolutionary period itself will not be discussed. While it is impractical (if not impossible) to list every term in the Chinese male homosexological lexicon, I have included the most subjectively significant terms for each era. English translations of Chinese terms will be provided alongside Pinyin transliterations without diacritics. I also wish to note here at the outset that I *strongly* dislike the medicalized and pathological connotations which are often attached to

the English terms "homosexuality" and "homosexuals" and therefore the terms "same-sex attraction" and "same-sex-attracted people" will be used interchangeably throughout this paper in order to refer to the same general conceptualizations.

The Late Imperial Period

The late Imperial period is significant for its lasting and foundational contributions to both the Chinese homosexological discourses and lexicon. During the Qing dynasty, there was a great deal of literature which featured fictional depictions of male same-sex relationships. These depictions contain representations of male homosexuality "both as sexual desire and as a romantic bond" (Vitiello 2011, p. 6). Scholar Giovanni Vitiello describes the strong influence of texts from this period thusly:

> some key traits of the […] discourse on sex and love between men are already detectable in the ancient sources; the continuous use of the ancient literary lexicon of homoeroticism for over two thousand years testifies to the resilience of some basic ways […] [gay men] were perceived in pre-modern China (2011, p. 2).

One work of the era describes sex between men as "more pleasurable and harmonious" than between heterosexual couples (Kang 2009, p. 19). The many "tales of powerful men who became infatuated with a young male lover" also demonstrate that these homoerotic relationships were not strictly sexual and that "emotional bonds surely played a role in at least some of these relationships" (Mann 2011, p. 139). In some works, the young lovers are said to possess a certain feminine masculinity, reflecting the influence of the "cult of love" during this period wherein love (*qing*) was "essentially associated with the feminine" (Vitiello 2011, p. 169). These early perceptions of male homosexuality and their lasting contributions to the homosexological lexicon are described in more detail below:

> [t]he basic notion […] that a man may be attracted to male as well as to female beauty, survives in the late imperial period […] adolescent boys, like women, are legitimate objects of male sexual desire […] [t]he most common way to express a taste for sex with

> boys is […] the phrase "to be fond of male beauty" (*hao nanse*) […] [a] common synonym of "male beauty" is "male charms" (*nanfeng*), where the character meaning "male" (*nan*) is often replaced with the homophonous one for "south" […] these terms may be used to form the expressions "the way of male beauty" (*nanse yidao*) and "the way of male charms" (*nanfeng yidao*), respectively, which sum up male homoerotic desire and sexual practices (Vitiello 2011, p. 16).

However, scholars debate the degree to which male homosexuality was accepted during this era. Due to the "social and psychological pressure against [same-sex attraction]", it is possible that these works may have "distinguished homoerotic love as an exclusive gesture within reach of only a tiny minority" (McBrook 1998, p. 232, as cited in Kang 2009, p. 3).

In my view, even if these works did represent homosexuality as a practice which was primarily limited to the elite, the fact that male homosexuality was represented *at all* was a net positive for same-sex-attracted men. Since men were understood to be capable of attraction to both men and women, bisexual men also appeared in literary works such as the protagonist of the 17th-century novel "The Carnal Prayer Mat" (*Rou putuan*) who was described as "fond of female beauty and male charms alike" (Sima 125, pp. 3192–3195, as cited in Vitiello 2011, p. 16). Dramatic tales of the era might include plotlines where desirable young men were considered "as dangerous for the [emperor] and the state as beautiful [female] concubines" (Vitiello 2011, p. 2). These works were significant not only because they served as a reminder to the ruling class that homosexuality was considered acceptable, but they also presented lower-class same-sex-attracted men with an ideal to strive towards.

The relatively permissive atmosphere around homosexuality began to change dramatically once the Yongzheng Emperor came to power. Historians dispute whether the Emperor Yongzheng legitimately inherited the throne: his father, the Kangxi Emperor, may have wanted to will the kingdom to his 14th son rather than his 4th son, and given that the two characters only have a one-stroke difference between them, some theorize that the Yongzheng

Emperor may have altered his father's edict in order to gain power (L. Zheng, personal communication, 2021). In any case, the Emperor was overzealous in targeting corruption and implemented several new law codes in order to do so, including a 1740 anti-sodomy law which led to a crackdown on male homosexual behavior (Kang 2009, p. 3; Vitiello 2011, p. 10).

As described by scholars, "during this period the political atmosphere became increasingly conservative, and the state actively propagated […] a gender ideology that emphasized the distinction between male and female roles" (Williams, as cited in Vitiello 2011, p. 128). It is my understanding that the propagation of gender ideology by the state is a recurring theme in Chinese history, one which almost always negatively affects same-sex-attracted people. The negative effects of this gendered ideology will be detailed further in our discussion of the Maoist period. For now, we will note that despite these attempts to criminalize male homosexuality, it appears that the public's understanding of the practice remained more nuanced:

> opinions about sex between men ranged widely in the late [18th] century […] for most people […] the [most] worrisome thing […] was the stigma attached to men […] who were penetrated during sexual intercourse […] an elite man was always presumed to be the superior partner in any homosexual relationship […] *sexual relations between men were understood in terms of status differences rather than expressions of mutual love* [emphasis added] (Hinsch 1990, p. 21, as cited in Mann 2011, p. 139).

Interestingly, although underage sodomy was criminalized by this point, many 19th-century Chinese artistic depictions of homosexuality still include "young men […] portrayed in the company of much older gentlemen" (Vitiello 2011, p. 218). The stigmatization of anal sex mentioned in the above excerpt is another recurring theme in the historical discourse around Chinese male homosexuality. The taboo around anal sex is particularly notable for how long it has managed to persist in the realm of public opinion: even my own father was aware of the stigma (L. Zheng, personal communication, 2021).

One of the most significant literary works published during the late Imperial period was "The Cut Sleeve" (*duanxiu pian*), an anthology of homoerotic tales published in the eventful year of 1912 during which the Qing dynasty fell and the Republic of China was established (Vitiello 2011, p. 200). In many ways, "The Cut Sleeve" anthology served as a "last homage to a sexual culture soon to be identified with the old world […] evidently still healthy and alive yet […] being increasingly perceived as one of the signs of China's cultural delay" (Vitiello 2011, p. 200). The anthology's title derives from the most significant story it contains, a truly poignant tale of same-sex love between the Emperor Ai and his male consort Dong Xian (Hinsch 1992, p. 52). This story is so fundamental to our understanding of the Chinese homosexological lexicon and the Chinese literary history of homosexuality that its importance cannot possibly be understated. Scholar Bret Hinsch describes the following excerpt from "The Cut Sleeve" as "the most influential [passage] in the Chinese homosexual tradition [ever]" (1992, p. 53):

> Emperor Ai was sleeping in the daytime with Dong Xian stretched out across his sleeve. When the emperor wanted to get up, Dong Xian was still asleep. Because he did not want to disturb him, the emperor cut off his own sleeve and got up. His love and thoughtfulness went this far! (Crump 1970, p. 62, as quoted in Hinsch 1992, p. 53).

The above passage is so notable not only for the emperor's display of genuine tenderness and concern for his consort, but also because it is the source of the term "the obsession with the cut sleeve" (*duanxiu pi*), one of the earliest and most well-known euphemisms for male same-sex desire. The anthology also included a story that featured "the love of sharing a peach" (*fentaozhihao*), both of which "remained widely used [as euphemisms] for male same-sex relations in writings up to the twentieth century" (Kang 2009, p. 28).

To best summarize this period, as scholar Tiantian Zheng writes, "[b]efore Western intrusion […] [h]omoerotic romance was an integral part of society [which] spanned social classes […] not only widely accepted but also respected and admired" (2015, p. 44).

The Republican Period

As Japan invaded Manchuria during this era, so too did the West invade Chinese sexological discourse. I do not mean to mock the Sino-Japanese War with this statement; my paternal grandfather served as an air traffic controller in Yunnan during the conflict. However, insofar as I can tell, Japan's barbaric crimes during this period had no real bearing on the Chinese male homosexological lexicon and as such their influence will not be discussed further here. What *will* be discussed is the influence of the West, whose sexological theories and terms began to enter the lexicon throughout the 1920s and 1930s:

> [d]uring the first decades of the twentieth century, a major transformation took place in the Chinese discourse on sexuality […] Western sexology entered the Chinese academic and […] public discourse […] the Western concept of "homosexuality" radically differed from the traditional Chinese one, so much so that it required the coining of a new word in order to translate it, *tongxinglian'ai* (Vitiello 2011, p. 200).

The continued expansion of the homosexological lexicon during this period indicates that much like in the late Imperial era, "the issue [of male homosexuality] was not a silent one" (Kang 2009, p. 19). The lexicon grew to include phrases such as "flowers of the rear garden" (*houtinghua)*, "to use a man as a woman" (*jiangnan zuonü*), and most importantly, "homosexuality" (*tongxinglian'ai*) (Kang 2009, p. 19). I will note here that I find *houtinghua* to be a particularly beautiful euphemism, and regret that in the course of my research I was unable to find any works translated into English which included more information about the phrase or examples of its use. Luckily, the most important term from this era does have many usage examples. One notable use of *tongxinglian'ai* is in *Shanghai Tidbits*, a collection of social commentaries published in 1933:

> Mutual [heterosexual attraction is] called love (*lian'ai*) […] Love can also occur between men […] Two men together is called "sodomy" (*jijian*) […] attraction between men and women is very common, while *tongxinglian'ai* […] [whether] between men or between

> women, is simply sexual perversion (*xingyu shang de biantan bale*) (Yu 1998, p. 24, as cited in Kang 2009, p. 31).

Although homosexuality is still equated with sexual perversion in the above text, it is significant that the term *tongxinglian'ai* is also used in order to refer to the orientation in a less pejorative manner. The coining of *tongxinglian'ai* as a new overt term for same-sex desire, as opposed to the previous use of strictly euphemistic literary Chinese terms for homosexual attraction such as *hao nanse,* is one example of how the interactions between Chinese and Western sexological terminologies "not only recycled and reinforced some old [Chinese] ideas [about male homosexuality], but also produced some new meanings in the semi-colonial context" (Kang 2009, p. 39).

Scholar Tiantian Zheng adds that "[introducing] Western concepts ended the Chinese cultural context that had spawned the acceptance and admiration of homoerotic romance […] [as Chinese] intellectuals imported and accepted a scientific discourse of biological determinism that pathologized and demonized nonreproductive sexuality, including same-sex acts" (2015, p. 54). Several texts featuring scientific, sociological, and philosophical debates around the "issue" of male homosexuality were published during this time period, the effects of which were largely negative for gay men:

> [the Chinese public's] understanding [of male homosexuality] was supposedly updated to the standard of modern Western knowledge […] but in fact the two shared a similar conceptual inconsistency [pathologizing homosexuality] […] [which led to] public anxiety […] [this anxiety which was] caused by colonial powers was displaced onto [homosexual] men […] [who] were understood as *pathological, socially and politically disruptive, and detrimental to the survival of the nation* [emphasis added] (Kang 2009, p. 39).

The pathologization of male homosexuality as a psychological disorder began in this era, but unfortunately such beliefs persist in the Chinese public and scientific discourses about same-

sex-attraction even today. With this in mind, it truly warms my heart to see how some intellectuals of the era still came to the defense of same-sex-attracted people regardless of the increasingly critical coverage of male homosexuality. One such intellectual was scholar Hu Qiuyuan (1910–2004) whose 1929 article "Research on Same-Sex Love" (*Tongxing'ai de yanjiu*) promoted views that even today might be considered progressive:

> Hu redressed some common misunderstandings of same-sex love […] *arguing it was neither limited to a small minority of the population, nor a disease* [emphasis added] […] Hu advocated that love should play an important role in education […] educators should recognize the positive value of same-sex love […] instead of keeping it silent or exaggerating the dark side of such relationships […] the spirit of same-sex love should spread throughout society and […] the future world should be based on this love […] *based on love, a communist society would replace the inhuman capitalist society* [emphasis added] (Kang 2009, p. 48).

Hu's noble dream of a communist society to replace the old inhuman capitalist one would eventually be realized (albeit imperfectly) when the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, 20 years after the publication of his article.

The Maoist Period

Given the progressive ideals of the Revolution, it is unfortunate that regressive ideas about male homosexuality continued to gain traction in both legal and public discourse during the Maoist era. Laws passed in the early 1950s against "hooliganism" (*liumangzui*), a broad category of harmful behavior which included sexual harassment, underage sex, and non-consensual sodomy, implicitly positioned homosexuality among the "social evil[s]" to be rooted out and punished by the state (Zhang et al 2018, p. 2). Although China's Supreme Court ruled against punishing consensual sodomy between adults in 1957, publications throughout the decade were nevertheless harshly critical of the practice (Zhang et al 2018, footnote 1). Sodomy was described as "a physical and psychological perversion" (*biantai*) and "a violation of nature,

if not simply an abysmal crime" (Chen et al 1990, Evans 1997, p. 52, as quoted in Zhang et al 2018, p. 2).

During this era, the state once again attempted to enforce gendered ideology to the detriment of homosexual men in a manner that harkened back to the country's imperial past. As one article points out, "there were significant continuities between the Qing law and the Confucian past and the moral concerns of Mao Zedong's period and the years that followed" (Smith 1998, as cited in Worth et al 2019, p. 41). These concerns, as before, presented same-sex-attraction as a moral issue. However, these concerns also differed from their previous iterations in that same-sex-attraction was no longer seen as strictly a criminal activity nor a pathological illness but instead as a moral and ideological error to be dealt with in the same way as other contradictions which existed among the people (Clarke and Feinerman 1995, p. 136, as cited in Worth et al 2019, p. 40).

Regardless of the fact that same-sex-attraction was now framed as more of a moral or ideological issue than a criminal one, many male homosexuals were still punished for their behavior under hooliganism laws. The Cultural Revolution, which began in 1966 and continued for the next decade, served to amplify these negative sentiments towards homosexual men. Paranoia and suspicion of others reached an all-time high and led to a significant ideological backslide in the treatment of gay men as many of them were reported to the government as "hooligans" (*liumangzi*) or "bad influences" (*huaifenzi*) despite the fact that adult consensual sodomy was not illegal (Zheng 2015, p. 42). Throughout the 1970s, several same-sex-attracted men were sentenced to re-education through labor after they were targeted in harsh crackdowns "that were undertaken in the name of maintaining public order and morality" (Worth et al 2019, p. 43).

Even the homosexological lexicon could not escape state repression during this era. The many extant representations of same-sex-attracted men in Chinese literary history were now "largely absent [from discourse] in an effective erasure and exclusion of homosexual Chinese men from the picture of a healthy state" (Evans 1995, as cited in Worth et al 2019, p. 40). Anything "old-fashioned" or "bourgeoisie" was to be purged from the common vernacular, which evidently included the imperial and Republican terms for male homosexuality as one elderly gay man's account notes that "[t]he topic [of male homosexuality] was rarely talked about […] at that time, there weren't even specific words" despite the fact that terms for homosexuality had existed in Chinese literature long before then (Worth et al 2019, p. 46). It is therefore no coincidence that the term "comrade" (*tongzhi*), which originated in the 1940s as a gender-neutral classless form of address adopted from the Soviets, began to be used as a euphemism for a gay man during this era. The coining of *tongzhi* is particularly significant because it reflects both the euphemistic history and adaptability of the Chinese homosexological lexicon, as same-sex-attracted men who believed that there were no terms to describe their sexual orientation at the time simply came up with their own.

Despite all of the negative effects that the Cultural Revolution had on same-sex-attracted people, the Down to the Countryside movement which took place concurrently and sent urban youth to rural areas and vice-versa was a positive development for some same-sex-attracted men since "the dislocation from home and family that occurred when youth were sent to work […] provided the opportunity and freedom […] [to] discover their homosexuality" (Worth et al 2017, as cited in Worth et al 2019, p. 40). My father was sent to a rural area in the mountains himself during the movement and recalled meeting a few gay men there who, as far as he knew, had only experienced slight social stigmatization from engaging in the taboo of anal sex (L. Zheng,

personal communication, 2021). This anecdote also demonstrates how the social stigma attached to anal sex, albeit mild in this case, has continually been perpetuated throughout history.

The Reform & Opening Period

The legal debate around male homosexuality in Mainland China "continued into the 1990s with [the] Minister of Public Health declaring that homosexuality […] was illegal and the Minister of Justice then correcting him" (Zhang et al 2018, p. 12). Sodomy and the category of "hooliganism" were both removed from the Chinese criminal code in 1997, and homosexuality was removed as a psychological disorder in 2001 (Zheng 2015, p. 8). The broader social discourse around the homosexological lexicon is more complicated. The term *tongxinglian'ai* is rarely used by homosexual men in Mainland China today "because it carries a pathologized and medicalized notion of homosexuality" (Zheng 2015, p. 4). The generational change in attitude around the use of *tongxinglian'ai* is comparable to that around the use of the English term "homosexuality" as we have discussed. The term *tongzhi*, by contrast, has been embraced to such an extent that it has transcended its original definition and now most commonly refers to gay men. *Tongzhi* was first used publicly as a metaphor for homosexuality in 1989 "by Hong Kong organizers of the inaugural lesbian and gay film festival [who used it] to refer to an indigenous Chinese same-sex identity distinct from a global gay identity" (Chou 2000; Li 2006; Micollier 2003; Zhou 2000, as cited in Zheng 2015, p. 5).

Another new addition to the homosexological lexicon in this era is the phrase "that sort of person" (*zhefangmian de ren*), which is similar to the English terms "queer" or "fag" in that although the term is used as a negative descriptor for same-sex-attracted men, it has also become "a badge of honor" to some of those it was meant to degrade, who have reappropriated the term "in such a flirty and positive way" that it becomes "resignified […] as a powerful term of

endearment" (Zheng 2015, p. 8). Unfortunately, there are still strong societal prejudices against male homosexuals in China as Zheng describes:

> decriminalization has made it somewhat safer to be a tongzhi […] [but] the power of continuing social prohibitions and cultural constraints make it difficult for tongzhi to live their lives openly […] tongzhi are often forced to lead double lives, conforming outwardly to social norms while covertly rebelling […] [u]nlike in the West where […] gays have asserted their right to practice a gay lifestyle […] tongzhi adopt the dominant moral ideal of heterosexuality and aspire to membership in the dominant culture; in so doing, they recognize their own marginal status and are reluctant to engage the state and society in asserting their sexual rights (2015, pp. 189–190).

The most common societal perception is that of same-sex-attracted people as deviants from the aforementioned dominant moral ideal, with their deviance being the result of external forces including "pressures in life, influences of the West, or negative experiences with women" (Zheng 2015, p. 52). In Zheng's interviews, terms such as "sick," "disgusting," "abnormal," "freak" (*jixing*), and "immoral" were frequently used to refer to male homosexuals:

> [a] local man in his forties said, "They are sick. I am extremely disgusted by [male] homosexuals. They make me want to vomit. How do they even do it? I think they masturbate for each other? That sounds really dull and no fun at all […] Accepting them? Are you kidding me? They make me vomit the food that I ate ten years ago! […] Terrifying! Sickening! […] I can't understand." Others made comments such as […] "they are abnormal freaks […] [i]f they were my friends or part of my family, I would not accept them" (2015, p. 52).

Another interviewee stated that "[o]ur ancestors told us that males should repel males" and that "[h]omosexuals run against this ancient truth" (Zheng 2015, p. 52). The same interviewee proceeded to label male homosexuals as "disgusting, stupid, and [suffering from] psychological problems" and remarked that "women are so pretty and beautiful — why are [homosexuals] not interested in them?" (Zheng 2015, pp. 52–53).

With the advent of the Internet, homophobic Chinese citizens were able to be even more vicious in their remarks about homosexuals under the veil of anonymity. Zheng mentions several

horrifically violent online comments, only one of which I will include to demonstrate the sheer intensity of their hateful rhetoric:

> A normal man should kick a homosexual couple in the park into the lake and a homosexual couple in the bus off the bus [*sic*] […] [t]hose who have money can solve the problem with [sex-change] surgeries and those who do not have money can find a place to castrate themselves with a knife. Those who have neither money nor courage *should find a tree and hang themselves so that they can be reincarnated as a real man* [emphasis added] (Bao 2008, as quoted in Zheng 2015, p. 53).

The increase in online vitriol towards homosexuals is not solely attributable to anonymous commentators, however, as even ostensibly reputable health websites have posted misleading articles that unduly pathologize same-sex-attraction with titles such as "How to Correct Youth Homosexuality" (Xi 2012, as cited in Zheng 2015, p. 56). A hospital in the city of Ningbo also published an article which "called on homosexuals to use a wide array of imported cutting-edge technology to cure their disease" (Wu 2011, as cited in Zheng 2015, p. 57). These anecdotes, both from papers published within the past decade, are troublingly recent examples of the continued pathologization of same-sex-attraction in China.

Some Chinese social scientists have also promoted or perpetuated homophobic ideas in their research, "argu[ing] that homosexuals tend to feel hatred toward society and employ extreme measures to gain revenge against society for the ostracism they have received" (Ony 2007, as cited in Zheng 2015, p. 57). One national media report which featured two experts from the Chinese Medicine and Science Council and Xiehe Medical University "advised homosexuals to control themselves *and avoid any defiant behaviors against the law* [emphasis added]" (Bai 2001, as cited in Zheng 2015, p. 57). These negative depictions of same-sex-attracted people in research publications have the potential to significantly impact the Chinese public's perceptions of same-sex-attraction and the discourse around the subject as Zheng describes:

> [f]irst, the assertion that homosexuals create chaos and disorder in a society that emphasizes harmony and order suggests […] the Chinese cultural inclination for harmony plays [a role] in determining the way homosexuality is conceived. Second, even though the psychologists and doctors [posting] were trained as scientists, *they did nothing more than make simple conjectures about the causation and the harmful effects of homosexuality* [emphasis added] […] *without any kind of empirical follow-up to test their validity* [emphasis added] […] *these conjectures are clearly little more than a reflection of common prejudices in the society* [*sic*] [emphasis added] (2015, p. 57).

I share Zheng's anger at these insidious articles and statements which "for ordinary people […] both had the power of scientific validity and reflect[ed] the lowest common denominator in [Chinese] society" (2015, p. 57). It is deeply frustrating to see the poorly-reasoned ideas in these pseudoscientific papers persist all these years later.

Conclusions

In closing, I wish to return to the theory proposed by one of Tiantian Zheng's interviewees that Chinese male same-sex-attraction is the result of Western influences (2015, p. 52). I find this claim to be deeply ironic given the lengthy history of male homosexuality in the People's Republic of China which we have now discussed at length. The fact of the matter is that same-sex-attracted people have always existed in the country and the world at large, yet same-sex-attracted men in particular have predominantly faced stigma from the Republican period onward. While the issue of homophobia is by no means unique to Chinese society, it is clear that it remains present in today's China.

As perceptions of male homosexuality have evolved, the homosexological lexicon has evolved with them. Beginning in the Imperial era and lasting even until today, Chinese homosexual men and the homosexological lexicon have adapted to the differing social climates by continually adopting or inventing new terminology. Although some terms are imported from the West, euphemisms make up the bulk of the homosexological lexicon. Like Hu Qiuyuan, I

hope for the liberation of Chinese gay men, their lexicon, and a future where such euphemisms are no longer required.

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