

**Values and beliefs: Chinese seafarers in an age of
transition**

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This thesis is submitted to Cardiff University in fulfilment of the requirements for the
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ABSTRACT

China has been in a period of dramatic economic and political change for thirty years. Because human values reflect society people grew up and live, the change should have impacted on the values of the Chinese.

Exploring Chinese seafarers' values and particularly focusing on a specific value, religion perceived and practiced by them, this investigation helps us shed some light on the changes China has been through as well as the trajectory of Chinese society and culture. In particular the study provides information on the relationship between economic growth and wellbeing. A qualitative research approach was applied and Chinese seafarers were asked to attend semi-structured interviews.

The findings reveal significant differences between the implication of western writers and the values Chinese seafarers showed. Unlike the prediction for western societies, the factors of affluence at both individual and societal levels in China were not enough for Chinese seafarers to show the straightforward correspondence. The religious values Chinese seafarers revealed were far more complex than the way Christianity is perceived and practiced.

The cause of such differences was the path China has taken to reach its affluence. This route made these Chinese seafarers studied feel insecure despite an affluent society and has arguably delayed the prediction.

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Chapter one: Introduction

China is recognised to be emerging as a leading global economic power. It has risen to this position in a short time having undergone huge transformation. This thesis examines Chinese seafarers' values and beliefs in this period of dramatic economic and political change in order to shed some light on the way this transformation has been experienced by one occupational group. I turn to seafarers shortly but first it is necessary to explore some of the larger changes taking place in China which Chinese seafarers lived through. I come back to seafarers on page six. Existing theories tell us that changes in people's values occur because of the socio-economic changes taking place in their society over time (Inglehart 1971). As a developing country, China has, in its last 30 years, also achieved affluence out of privation. The Chinese had been through a variety of unprecedented and radical changes before China's Open Door Policies of 1978. Under Maoist/communist rule and the implementation of a series of extreme policies China has followed a unique and turbulent path towards the socio-economic prosperity witnessed during the last thirty years. Given its history China's economic development has been arrived at via a different route to other developed countries. It is because of this, as well as the speed of the economic and political change, that the values and beliefs of the Chinese are of particular interest.

At the outset, we must understand the kind of lives workers in China lived before the transformation, especially how limited economic opportunities were for workers in different parts of China and how the values of the Communist Party pervaded society. Despite this, prior to the Open Door Policies, Chinese workers enjoyed a variety of privileges in terms of security; for instance, their housing, and medical care etc. were paid by their working units and their jobs were safe for life. This security however came at a cost, and Chinese workers at that time compromised their labour mobility for those benefits. In fact in the past, there were few chances for the Chinese to migrate under the extreme household registration system which bonded the state's supply of food with individual Chinese. There was no other means of getting food

apart from the state's supply that was rationed out at monthly intervals. The official food supply chains in China only sold grain to people who owned local household registration in the cities.

In the rural areas of China, the peasants fared worse than the workers did in the cities. Since the cities were seen as the core of industrialization in China after the Communist take-over, peasants have been neglected in Chinese society. They were the producers of crops but they did not have free access to what they had harvested. Their harvest was collected by the state to first satisfy the needs of the Chinese urbanites. They were restricted to a village by their status of agricultural household. This status gave them the right to labour on soil as a member of a production team in order to earn working units. Those working units were calculated and handed in for exchange of grain and cash, very often in inadequate quantities. A peasant would find themselves ending up lacking subsistence if they moved out of their village without official permission. In fact peasants' work was despicable in the eyes of city dwellers due to the spartan living conditions of the peasants and the low pay of their work.

Comparing the pay of peasants, the jobs in the cities sounded better but they were not well paid in reality. Because almost every Chinese job was assigned by authorities before the economic reforms, the assigned posts became the only choice for the urban Chinese wanting a job. Among those posts, the prestigious went into jobs like lathe work, bench work, riveting, electricians' work, and welding and soldering because those jobs were hyped to be good and were secure, and paid a bit more than other available jobs. Despite the higher pay associated with such jobs, the pay was adequate only for workers to buy food and other subsistence. The three most wanted pieces of property of that time were a watch, a bicycle and a sewing machine. Most families in China were incapable of buying all the three pieces. There was little for the Chinese to chase afterwards.

When a society exits in privation, the values of its members are likely to be related to material gains and security. It was different in China because through the years of

propaganda and inculcation the Chinese did form a society where ideas counted. It took some considerable time for the early hopes of the Chinese population that Communism would rescue them from privation to evaporate. Many Chinese starved to death holding a belief in building communism through and after the Great Leap Forward movement (see section 2.1.1) and Chinese people living on subsistence were very enthusiastic about engaging themselves in defending Mao's thoughts in their interpretation during the Cultural Revolution (see section 2.1.2).

The influence of those official values was profound. As early as the early 1980s, a study was carried out at the University of Michigan to investigate value change in China and Hong Kong. The study suggested that the people of mainland China were still preoccupied with the tension between duty to the collectivity versus personal gratification - this is 'a society in which Materialist orientations are only now beginning to permeate the young' (Inglehart 1990 p. 157).

Chinese society was extensively led by Marxist ideology before the transition (see Chapter Two for a full discussion). There was a long history of marginalisation of religion and family. When the transition was underway, the country worked on minimising distractions from production and consumerism to achieve affluence. This was completely different to what the country had been through in its past. The new approach also brought problems to China. The Chinese students and worker protesters staged a prolonged pro-democracy demonstration in 1989 in Tiananmen Square. They wanted freedom of speech to be protected and the decision making of the government to involve its people (Hunter and Chan 1993). This was totally different from the years before the launch of the Open Door Policy when the Chinese were even prepared to sacrifice their material needs because they were ideologically subjugated to the state (see Chapter Two).

It has been claimed that the Chinese began to exhibit materialist values a couple of years after its Open Door Policies were implemented in 1978 (Inglehart 1997). Chinese society has been through a series of dramatic changes; from isolation and

privation to integration and affluence at an unprecedented pace and on an unimagined scale. Nowadays, living in a transitional society and being involved in the booming economy, the Chinese have stopped being modest, and have become far more ambitious (China Daily 2009; Osnos 2009; The Economist 2009). The reason is the rapid economic growth in China over the last thirty years.

A strand of research and scholarship argues that happiness cannot be found only through material satisfaction (Belk 1985; Eckersley 2005); indeed empirical research suggests that there is a negative correlation between materialism and overall life satisfaction (Richins and Dawson 1992; Sirgy et al. 1995). The reasons for materialist dissatisfaction were inflated and value-laden expectations of standards of living. Materialists were disappointed when they made social comparison with remote referents of much affluence (Sirgy 1998 p. 254). In the case of China, rapid economic growth has brought affluence, but it is worth examining whether affluence has also brought satisfaction.

It has been claimed, by the likes of Ronald Inglehart, that as societies develop economically to the point where physical security is no longer a worry, then the members of society are likely to begin to adopt post-materialist values. Inglehart's theory was developed in the 1970s when he investigated the pattern of value change in western societies. He concluded that the people of those societies shifted their values away from materialist focus due to the affluence gained over the years after the Second World War. As a result, the priority values of those people were "a set of 'post-bourgeois' values, relating to the need for belonging and to aesthetic and intellectual needs" (Inglehart 1971 pp. 91-2). In his later survey, the 'post-bourgeois' values were called post-materialist values. In the 1990s, with support of extensive survey data collected in more countries, Inglehart was certain that his value change theory usefully predicted the growth of post-materialism not only for the developed countries but also for developing countries (1997). When economic growth makes survival not a concern, 'survival begins to be taken for granted. Significant numbers of Postmaterialists begin to emerge and for them, further economic gains no longer

produce an increase in subjective well-being' (op. cit., p. 65). In the course of this thesis, I will examine whether, amongst the occupational group I have selected to study, the increased affluence brought satisfaction.

It is asserted that democracy entails a variety of free choice and this is convincingly related to subjective wellbeing (Baro 1999; Frey and Stutzer 2000 p. 92), but Inglehart and Klingemann proved the opposite with the case in China. They argue that most post-communist societies, having adopted free elections, had experienced declining subjective wellbeing in the 1990s whereas the people of totalitarian China attained a higher level of subjective wellbeing than those post-communist societies. The reason, according to them, is that 'although the lack of democracy has given rise to frustration and resistance, China's remarkably high levels of economic growth since 1978 seem to have more than offset the lack of democracy' (2000 pp. 179-81). Likewise, in another survey Chinese respondents seem a great deal more positive than respondents in other countries to show a dramatic increase in their satisfaction/confidence about the way things are done in their country, their country's current economic situations and future (Pew Global Attitudes Survey 2005).

Despite these general positive responses, given that working conditions amongst Chinese workers have diversified so greatly (i.e., large numbers of Chinese have become rich but millions still remain desperate to earning a living) there may reasonably be an equal variation in their value systems (Zhong and Wang 1999 pp. 23-9; Zhu 1998 pp. 34-8). Even for the rich Chinese, many of them were ill educated and grew up in very poor backgrounds, and as such their value systems may still reflect their humble beginnings. In the course of this work I will seek to shed some light on these issues, at least so far as seafarers are concerned.

In the past, political ideology dominated the life of the Chinese. As the changes took place in China, politics has given way to the economy and lost its core position in Chinese society. This, together with the (albeit partial) relaxation of constraints on thought and belief (see Chapter Two), opened up the possibility of a growth in

alternative belief systems including religious experimentation and observance. For example, it has been claimed by some scholars that the percentage of Chinese religious population is now as much as 95 per cent. This is a very generous estimate of religious observance given that respondents are able to define religion in whatever way they like and may include the occasional involvement of religious activities as well (Madsen 2003 p. 271). Nevertheless, given China's recent history, this figure at least suggests the very high number of Chinese engaging in some form of religious activities or practices.

Christianity dominated western societies in medieval times and its legacy still has influences on these societies today. On the other hand, Christianity was seen as foreign by the Chinese because it was brought into the Chinese society (Moise 1994). Christianity is accounted for two of five officially approved religions in China. In this thesis I have to look at the indigenous religions as well. Daoism and Buddhism which represents the other three approved religions with Islam are seen indigenous by the Chinese despite the Indian origin of Buddhism. The demarcation of the five officially approved religions 'leaves out the beliefs and rituals of the great majority of the Chinese people as practised in families and local communities' (Overmyer 2003 p. 308). For example, an ordinary widowed woman at age of 60 became the incarnation of the Silkworm Mother in a Chinese northern village. She was sought by locals for possessing shamans and performing cures (Fan 2003). Confucianism that has become the core of Chinese cultures and values is defined by Max Weber as a 'sober religion' and more Chinese scholars want to rethink it as religion. Moreover, Confucius has long been seen as a god in Daoism and community temples as his images have been used (Overmyer 2003 p. 315).

I now move on to the central focus of this thesis: the beliefs and values of Chinese seafarers in the transition of Chinese society. Chinese seafarers' work was more prestigious than Chinese land workers thirty years ago because their material acquirement was more than these three pieces of property. They owned something exotic from abroad and earned much more than the land workers did. Later, over the

course of economic reforms, they did not experience the massive redundancies suffered by land workers as they have been able to move into a growing global labour market for seafarers. This market brought Chinese seafarers to the forefront of globalisation and allowed them to experience socio-economic changes of different societies. Chinese seafarers remained better off in the past and they have not been relegated today in terms of employment. Graduates of maritime universities today still enjoy full employment whereas millions of other graduates plunge into unemployment directly after their graduation, and rural school leavers join the existing migrant worker force to labour for poor money in the cities of China. Thanks to such privileges, Chinese seafarers should be a professional cohort with things to relish and goals to fulfil.

Seafarers were at the front of the transition due to the nature of their work. Before the Open Door Policies, the Chinese were restricted to their localities by extreme surveillance practices of the socialist government. Moving around in China, the Chinese had to apply for a letter of introduction from their working units or local authorities in order to be allowed to lodge in a hostel, let alone travel out of China. Chinese seafarers were not subject to such limitations as they had to travel between their home and the ports where they signed on and off vessels. Chinese seafarers were also allowed to sail out to a world unseen by the rest of Chinese people. As we will see in Chapter Three, seafarers were also at the forefront in entering into a global labour market allowing them to work alongside foreign nationals beyond the control of the Chinese authorities. As such this group of workers has potentially been more exposed to alternative ways of life and had greater opportunity to escape the hegemonic ideology of China, as early as thirty years ago. Moreover, Chinese seafarers were an interesting case study because their career provided them with the earliest material satisfaction in comparison with the privations that other Chinese people experienced before the transition.

Chinese seafarers were chosen also because of the comparison made between them and Chinese workers on land. The state came to relax its controls over the running of

state-owned companies on land as early as the 1980s. However, the soviet pattern of Chinese centrally controlled and planned economy had made many of these Chinese companies' survival uncertain through various stages of economic reforms. As such, the closure of weak firms resulted in widespread redundancies of state-owned workers in the cities. Although economic reforms allowed Chinese people to gain materially due to the growing economy, for those redundant workers, their hope of material gain was quashed. After years of unemployment, poverty has become the life of redundant workers and forced them to compete with migrant workers in the street to sell their labour doing odd jobs (Hassard et al. 2007). Lack of prosperity and social security were unlikely to provide adequate material basis for those redundant workers to be satisfied.

Although they did not suffer in this way, Chinese seafarers faced their own set of work related difficulties. The pattern of work on board ships has not changed very much over the last thirty years, although new technology and innovations have been used on ships. Ships' officers still work round the clock shifts, seven days a week and for up to nine months at a time. Operating with minimum crewing, there are no substitutes aboard to take over the watch of the officers who are fatigued or ill. New technology has liberated Engineers and technicians from keeping continuous watch in the Engine room but they still get their hands dirty and overalls soiled in maintenance and repairing work on a daily basis. At worst emergency maintenance or repairs deprive them of rest in extreme cases for days. The new technology has yet to help get rid of the excessive noises in the engine room and the noises have been seen as an existing hazard to seafarers' health. Frequent changes of time zones and seasons associated with seafaring are thought and reported to be attributable to the mental distress suffered by seafarers (Zhou and Zhang 2008). There is also an unpredictable risk regarding seafaring under heavy weather resulting in loss of life at sea in the worst scenarios. On the other hand, modern ships are built with much technology and innovation but the ship owners do not always have their ships' accommodation areas built up to date in order to reduce the cost of the new builds. Many interviewees of

this project have given their witnesses to the poor practices of some ship owners and they told the newly built ships they boarded had worse accommodation facilities than many old ships they have worked on. As such, I investigate whether the country's increased affluence might not offset these difficulties easily when Chinese society was in the process of rapid changes.

This research project does not examine the material wellbeing of Chinese seafarers but also the less material aspect regarding Chinese seafarers in the transition of China. One of the key areas examined is the role of religion, and this allows us to look at the less material aspect of spirituality. Due to the far more religious contact Chinese seafarers get or are given sailing abroad than they live in China, it is hypothesised that their religious contact abroad might impact on Chinese seafarers. In the interviews (see findings chapters below), most Chinese seafarers who denied being religious were nonetheless physically involved in religious activities aboard or on leave. This is intriguing and will inform the less material side of wellbeing of Chinese seafarers. The religion Chinese seafarers were exposed to while sailing abroad was mainly Christianity. Religion has been in short supply in China (Yang 2009) due to a variety of reasons which will be revealed later in Chapter Two. Because of the absence of religious life in China, if Chinese seafarers were provided with (Christianity) religion when they worked on board ships, it is of interest to examine how, and the extent to which, they engaged with it. The presence or absence of religion in the thoughts and lives of Chinese seafarers may well give some indication of changes in their values systems as they experienced the new freedoms in thought and belief which have accompanied transition in China. I consider religion as an important element in understanding the levels of satisfaction and feelings of wellbeing of Chinese seafarers. Thus in the course of the thesis, I show how seafarers responded to religious encounters and the extent to which religion played a role in their lives. Hence, religious issues weigh heavily in this thesis.

This thesis revolves around two research questions:

1. How have Chinese seafarers experienced the increased affluence and new liberties (some freedom in thought and belief) which have accompanied transition in China?
2. How do seafarers feel their lives have changed over the period, in particular, how do they feel increased affluence and new liberties have affected their levels of satisfaction and feelings of wellbeing?

In theory, such a Chinese seafarer cohort of particular existence should have been the centre of academic attention. Nevertheless, it is not in reality. Due to the particular characters of seafaring, Chinese seafarers and their career have always been seen to be on the verge of society. They have been seen idling at home being on their leave and they are not seen by the Chinese while working aboard. There is also scanty literature of Chinese seafarers available for the use of academia, maritime industry, and Chinese government. It is hoped that this piece of research can be a grain of sand on the beach of knowledge.

Outline of the thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters. For the benefit of readers, the eight chapters are grouped into three parts. The first four chapters that form the first part establish the background for the analysis and discussions of the research data in subsequent chapters. Chapters Two and Three together delve into the literature review. Chapter Two reviews the values of Chinese people through contemporary Chinese history. Important historical events after 1949, when the New China was established, are incorporated so as to discuss their impact on the values and cultures the Chinese held in the past. Parallel to the explanation of the events, values and cultures, Chapter Two also focuses on the way religion was treated in the country. Chapter Three, the second literature review chapter, reviews literature on Chinese seafarers. The idiosyncratic brief history of the seafarers is introduced and the reasons for choosing them are also

discussed. The last chapter in the first part, Chapter Four, is the methodology including an illustration of my experiences during my fieldwork.

In the second part of the thesis, Chapters Five, Six and Seven provide the analysis of the empirical data of this research study. Chapter Five traces the values of Chinese seafarers when they first decided to take to seafaring. The chapter also reveals their values after years in seafaring. In addition, the chapter examines the roots of their values and investigates the outcomes. Chapters Six and Seven focus on religion. Missionary religions lie at the core of Chapter Six because of a closer relationship between missionaries and Chinese seafarers than with other foreign people while working on board ships. The impact of the relationship on the religious values of Chinese seafarers and the causes of such impact are examined later in Chapter Six. In Chapter Seven, I demonstrate the casual spiritual practices of lay and religious Chinese seafarers in order to understand their values in respect of religion. It is noted that Chinese cultures and traditional value system makes the reflection of Chinese seafarers on religion very complex.

The third part of the thesis contains only one chapter – Chapter Eight. The chapter combines the discussion of the findings and the conclusion of the thesis together. I argue that the relationship between the country's affluence and values and beliefs of Chinese seafarers are not straightforward.

Chapter two: Values of Chinese people in contemporary Chinese history

Because this thesis is about to examine Chinese seafarers' values and beliefs in a period of dramatic economic and political changes I need to discuss the changes that form the backdrop to the thesis. In keeping with the research questions, I will concentrate on the most important changes that have affected living standards, levels of personal freedom and wellbeing in China. I will limit the discussion to the period of most relevance to my later findings – the second half of the twentieth century.

Regarding aspects of personal freedom, in a long period of the country's past the state was in charge of the family and the social lives of its people. The values of Chinese people were restricted to a set of values associated with dialectical materialism revolving around Marxism and the thoughts of Chairman Mao. The Chinese were bombarded with these doctrines until the country shifted its focus on its economy with the implementation of its Open Door Policies in 1978. I am particularly interested in the effect on people's values of the dramatic economic and political changes..

Before looking at the values of Chinese people, the term 'value' is introduced. A value is a person's belief which does not need facts or evidence for the purpose of proof, but the position of a value is open to challenge. Values are also seen as 'dispositions' that incline people to specific patterns of behaviour (Ryle 1949). Basic values reflect people's needs for freedom and equity as well as those attached to more traditional conceptions of family and community. For example, one of the prominent traditional values of the Chinese was obedience to and respect for elders. Political changes very often provide a strong stimulus for a major value change. This change can be manifested by aspirations for national identity or by a break away from the past (Metais 1997). In China, the establishment of a socialist country brought a communist value to its citizens.

In the previous chapter, we have seen how the relaxation of political ideology and the displacement of politics from the centre-stage of Chinese life by economic concerns, has created the possibility of experimentation with new values and beliefs, and even religious observance, in an atmosphere of increased, but still limited, tolerance. I will therefore devote quite a lot of space to discussing one particular aspect of personal freedom – religious belief – which has received fairly limited attention in the literature. All of this will provide the necessary context to discuss the changes in the lives (feelings of satisfaction and wellbeing) of the members of a particular occupational group – seafarers.

Religion as a source of values in China's contemporary history is regularly underplayed in most literature on China; its significance is marginalised and it is sometimes forgotten altogether. I want to fill in some of the gaps by covering religion in this chapter. The Chinese tend to relate 'religion' (Zong Jiao in Chinese) to Christianity because the words imply to them a highly-organised institution with dogmatic adherents and defined congregations, policing of the boundaries between believers and non-believers, forceful missionary activity and an apparently clear link between beliefs, religious texts and values. Such a narrow definition rules out lots of other things that Western sociology and anthropology would call religious that go on in China when scholars argued that ninety-five percent of the Chinese are religious (Madsen 2003 p. 271). These might involve beliefs in the power of ancestors to intervene in the affairs of the here and now, of the effects of ritual and prayer on health, prosperity and happiness, but these beliefs are all too disorganised and eclectic to bear any of the apparent characteristics of the narrow definition of religion. Since I am interested in values in this thesis there is really no point in keeping up this distinction. Whether I am thinking of the Christianity which missionaries brought to China, folk religion, superstition (the mandate of heaven discussed later in this chapter) or the cult of Mao (Snow 1972 pp. 68-9) they can all be the source of important values that influence how the Chinese feel their lives have changed over the

period, in particular, how increased affluence and new liberties affect their levels of satisfaction and feelings of wellbeing.

As we will see later in this chapter, suspicion of organised religion and, indeed anti-religious sentiment, has arguably played a prominent role in structuring the response, and policies, of the Chinese government in shaping the lives of individuals. When the narrow definition of religion Chinese people use focuses on Christianity it sees religion as unmistakably Western as well. This is the orthodox Chinese view of limitation. If religion is a Western invention then nothing that appears in China without Western intervention can be religious. Its most obvious effect is when the Chinese Government often categorised Buddhism and Daoism as superstition (Hunter and Chan 1993) since religion means, by definition, some foreign influence so these cannot be religions at all.

At this point, I am raising the possibility that the best way to understand the nature of religion should not be tied exclusively to Christianity when the term is used for China. A scholar saw China as a 'society almost without religion' sometimes (Liang 1963). On the contrary, in China, religion also involves religion-related beliefs. Confucianism per se is not a religion but it provides a body of rituals for ancestor worship (Chu and Ju 1993 p. 252). For the benefit of understanding the entire development, I need to look back into China's current history in terms of values.

2.1 Values in the past

Most traditional Chinese values derived from or reflected the teachings of Confucius. Chinese ancestor worship not only functioned as a belief system but also reinforced a Confucian value that the young should respect the old (Chu and Ju 1993 p. 262). Seeking for harmony and the virtue of tolerance were both traditional Chinese values and direct teaching of Confucius. Submission to authority as a value was the core of traditional Chinese culture and was well explained in detail by Confucius as Three Cardinal Principles by which subjects submit to their emperors, children submit to

their fathers, and women submit to their husbands. Satisfaction of moderation was a value promoted by Confucius and adopted by ancient ruling classes. In contemporary Chinese history, traditional Confucian values were attacked even before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 because they were blamed for weakening the country. In 1919 the 'Down with Confucius' campaign was launched by Chinese intellectuals (op cit). Nevertheless, traditional Chinese values were not seriously challenged until 1949.

For much of the first half of the twentieth century China was in a state of turmoil, subject to the control of regional warlords or different factions as well as, at times, foreign occupation (for full details of this period see Hsu's (1999) book). Thus when Mao Zedong announced the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and politically reunited the country, the history of China turned a new page. The communist ideology started taking hold of the Chinese after the communist take-over of China in 1949. From its establishment to the implementation of its Open Door Policies in 1978 China was isolated from the rest of the world. Confucianism, as an institution, ceased to exist with the end of the last imperial China. In its place, came communist ideology. The literature below tells of the chaotic, difficult journey the Chinese have had during the period of communist rule. By revealing China's often turbulent 'recent' past, I want to demonstrate how this has shaped the value system of Chinese people.

2.1.1 New China

The New China was cut off from the Western world after its establishment in 1949. Its involvements in the Korean War between 1950 and 1952 brought further isolation and the Cold War extended the isolation. The New China was not recognised by the UN until 1971 when Taiwan lost its seat (Shambaugh 2009). As such, China was largely dependent on the Soviet Unions for economic aid.

In 1952 the first Five-Year Plan was introduced on the basis of the Soviet model. This prioritised heavy industry and neglected agricultural and commercial development. The Chinese, under the party's propaganda and agitation, were devoted to increasing production while expecting no individual comfort of living (Pye 1972).

Great Leap Forward in 1958 is an example. The term ostensibly meant to 'catch up with Great Britain while overtaking the USA' as well as to 'move into the stage of full communism ahead of the Soviet Unions', but its realistic purpose was to secure China's economic independence from the Soviet Unions after these two communist partners fell out in 1958. The Great Leap Forward was a policy against nature. All endeavours were possible as long as the Chinese could conjure them up. The output of steel was seen as a core index to overtake Great Britain in fifteen years. As a result, millions of improvised furnaces across China were built to produce steel in the backyards of schools, government buildings, and working units. To keep those furnaces running the Chinese were forced to work around the clock. Those furnaces did not only devour huge amounts of good quality iron but also wasted precious energy because of the shoddy design of those furnaces. The introduction of people's communes in the countryside was another disaster. Under this system peasants received what they needed such as food and gave back to their communes what they were able to offer – their labour. As the labour was mobilised on a large scale and all produce went to communes, peasants were not rewarded with individual incentives and therefore they learnt to get more from their communes with the least of their labour. The socialist enterprise in the countryside was severely damaged and the tremendous drop in crop yields was the consequence (Pye 1972 pp. 199-200; Thornton 1982 pp. 249-51). The devastating situation across China in the wake of the Great Leap Forward at the end of 1958 proved the total failure of the leap. There were at least ten million Chinese deaths because of starvation between 1959 and 1961, according to a book by the Chinese History Research Institute of the Central Communist Party (Wang 2005).

The Great Leap Forward was the bold trial of the New China to rapidly build a communist society in which the Chinese would have a society of fairness and equality. The way the communist society runs its production and distribution would be 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need' (Yang 2009 p. 15). Although the Great Leap Forward failed completely, communist China did not stop feeding the Chinese with the communist ideology.

Since its establishment in 1949, the New China never stopped utilising mass campaigns and movements to replace capitalist thoughts with Maoist thoughts in the mind of the Chinese. The Socialist Education Movement, extending from 1962 to 1966, was an exemplar of campaigns and movements (Macfarquhar 1969). Political studies became every day life of Chinese people. It was accomplished by adapting school students to work in factories or fields for half a day and to take to political studies for the rest of the day. From the spring of 1964 to May 1966, Mao unequivocally stressed the urgency in moulding the 'new men' in China through the half-work and half-study schools. The amount of political education both in schools and work places were heavily increased. On top of that, model individuals were chosen by the communist central propagandist institutes to inculcate acceptance of official values (communist worldviews) amongst the Chinese. Chinese people were encouraged to emulate model citizens by creatively applying the Party's ideas to achieve heroic or collective actions. The pursuit of physical comfort was criticised (Munro 1967). The party saw communist ideas as the driving power of creating a new socialist society for the Chinese and forced these ideas onto the people. When these ideas and traditional Chinese values crossed, it was the traditional Chinese values to be put aside. To achieve the new society, Chinese people had to sacrifice first.

In the New China, Mao wanted to make cultural and political changes cause economic change. Marx rather focused on economic determinism and he argued that the level of technology of a society decided its economic systems and thus determined the cultural and political aspects of the society (Inglehart 1997 p. 9). Unlike Marx, Mao believed in the power of revolutionary thinking of the Chinese masses and thought it did not

need the processes of urbanisation and industrialisation to transform China. The Chinese communist victory in 1949 justified his faith in the power of ideological fervour over material obstacles, but the complete and disastrous failure of the Great Leap Forward demonstrated the limitation of ideological determination of Mao and the Chinese people (ibid). The limitation was demonstrated again in the Cultural Revolution.

2.1.2 The Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution is officially demarcated from 1966 to 1976. It was so devastating that it completely changed the image of socialist edifice gained over the 17 years since the New China was established in 1949. It also toppled what the Chinese previously perceived as morality and trust.

China's youth were the major force, violently taking part in the Cultural Revolution after being intoxicated with communist worldviews and Mao's thoughts for years at half-work and half-study schools. Mao encouraged them to sweep away all things anti-socialist and destroy everything anti-Cultural Revolution. It was so chaotic that everything could be anti-socialist and everyone could be anti-Cultural Revolutionist. Severe punishment for both was real and immediate and sometimes meant death. The youth, called the Red Guards, then not only revolutionised a recovering society but sent the society into a devastating turmoil from 1966 to 1968. However, ideology did help provide reassurance to the Red Guards until they were dumped in the harsh countryside.

Bombarded by many similar clichéd directives from Mao, his associates and their propaganda bodies, the youth appeared ready to resort to any forms of violence if it was needed to alter the old society in terms of ideas, customs and behaviours. The Chinese youth had been indoctrinated in the belief that they were the future of China through years of various kinds of socialist education. The full acceptance of Mao's revolutionary thoughts by Red Guards and their active and enthusiastic involvements

in the Cultural Revolution displayed the seized values of Chinese youth at that time. This squeezed out other values of Chinese youth. The values of respect for the old and submission to authority became nonsense when the youth toppled the world of the adults. The extreme example is when the youth denounced their parents publically because of their ideological differences in the Cultural Revolution (Hayward 1974). During the Revolution, it was considered dangerous to reveal values other than those warranted by communism. The traditional values of the Chinese were thereby subsumed (Chu and Ju 1993).

The changes within the first two years of the Cultural Revolution were unpredictable (Wu 1968 p.231). The seizure of power by revolutionary students, workers and peasants almost paralysed governmental administration in the second quarter of 1967. Red Guards or revolutionary units manipulated Mao's quotations in the name of revolution to carry out faction fights. With Mao's thoughts as their fatwa, the revolutionists showed significant cruelty to their 'enemies'. The intensification of struggle by force among Red Guard battalions, worker militias, and peasants entailed increasingly bloody fights within China afterwards. For instance, it was reported in Heilongjiang province that Red Guards had been thrown over the tops of high buildings by a mob. In Zhengzhou, Henan province, hundreds of rebels were burnt alive in a multi-story building; in Chengdu, Sichuan province, about 20,000 'counter-revolutionary rebels' were reportedly arrested in one month. Tanks and artillery were used in street fighting in the spring of 1968. At the end of July of 1968 Mao finally took the side of his moderate supporters to finalise the cataclysm under the auspices of the People's Liberation Army (Johnson 1967 pp.5-11). This was all done in the name of Mao's thoughts.

The Red Guards were discarded after their redundancy from faction fighting at the end of 1968. In the following years, the city youth were told to remain and labour in the countryside for the rest of their lives. The rural life was extremely harsh. No school leavers in the cities could avoid going to the countryside if they did not have serious medical illness or not the only child. The tight vigilant social structure of

Chinese society after the first bloodshed phase of the Cultural Revolution had made it easy to accumulate huge pressure on the urban youth who planned to evade going to the countryside, and the rationing in the cities also weakened the willingness of the urban youth to escape because they could not have their ration of food if they returned to the cities (Whyte and Parish 1984 pp.39-40). For those sent to live and labour in a spartan countryside, their expectations of communist society, in which people are given what they need, were shattered completely. What the urban youth wanted was not given, but what they did not want was forced onto them.

Mao's endeavour to bring massive change to China did not consider the persistence of traditional culture in Chinese society. Although Confucianism as an institution ended in line with the collapse of the last imperial China, its teaching that individuals must commit to familial obligation and kinship's wellbeing, after thousands of years of influence, had become the basis of Chinese values. When Mao's revolutionary programmes did not communicate with the deep-rooted values of the Chinese who were subject to the programmes, massive coercion was the only option. Instead of creating a new Chinese culture, the Cultural Revolution led to human suffering.

The Cultural Revolution meant the Party displayed an erratic manner that confused Chinese people. Apart from communist values, Chinese people were too frightened to show other values in their daily life during the Cultural Revolution. Hayward noted how bewildering the social relation was among the people:

During these campaigns people are 'labelled', and the ill effects of this upon the offenders and their families remain until, if ever, such labels are officially removed. Even though labels may be removed, those who wore them are always liable to be accused afresh. Those under accusation for political offences will be obliged, in the course of repeated interrogations, to inform against their friends and fellow workers. The system soon teaches the observant the dangers of frank communication even with those who are loved and trusted - dangers for them, as much as oneself, should

they at any time come under accusation. One learns to hide one's thoughts for love's sake, as well as from caution. But this is a wound to fellowship, whether inside or outside the family (1974 pp. 114-5).

Wilson states that values serve two critical functions: the designation of desirable certain goals and the maintenance of self-esteem. These functions help organise individual behaviours; values change when conventional behaviours are perceived as inappropriate for a new circumstance and people become distressed about the condition (1979). The Cultural Revolution's widespread political persecution coupled with such concerns of the Chinese forced them to conceal their real thoughts as much as possible. The communist ideology was the safest value to hold onto. It should not have been the case if the Chinese had not been inculcated and coerced. The system of values prevalent at this time did not work to fulfil the two critical functions (identified by Wilson) for the Chinese in the extreme situation of the Cultural Revolution.

Although the Great Leap Forward movement had brought starvation and massive deaths to the populace, the havoc of 1966-68 took place and brought unprecedented damage to China again. The Cultural Revolution for the remainder of ten years faced criticism and was relegated when Mao was still alive. Despite inadequate rectification, it allowed the country to recover in terms of hierarchical structures of politics and bureaucracy. Such a recovery was essential for China's economy to recoup its losses, but the reality was still the failure of the Communist China to provide the Chinese with basic material needs. In the cultural area, the most outstanding phenomenon was a statement on the People's Daily which promulgated the use of traditional and foreign literary elements after careful selection for the cinema screens (Domes 1973).

Despite the trivial improvement, the Chinese were told by the communist ideologues to keep sacrificing before the establishment of communism in China. To prevent communist ideology from losing ground, communist China had to deal with another ideology.

2.1.3 Dealing with religion

Religion was in the way if the Chinese communists were to build a communist utopia (Marxist heaven on Chinese soil) promised to people upon the takeover of China from the Chinese Nationalists. Marx states: 'It [Religion] is the opium of the people' (1978 p. 54). The function of religion is to provide imaginary solutions to real contradictions such as pain and suffering which no mortal being can truly escape. To Chinese communists, religion did not fit into the framework of communist ideology. The purpose of communism was to build a solid society of adequate prosperity on earth for the Chinese with the power and efforts of people rather than of an imaginary god. Both religion and ideology provide people with reassurance that there have always been rules in the universe. Even in great unpredictability, those absolute rules guarantee predictability in this world or the afterlife (Inglehart 1997 p. 38). If religion was allowed to grow freely in China after its establishment in 1949, it would compete against communist ideology. As such, religion had to be kept at bay in China. Before plunging into the ways religion was dealt in China, this section provides a generic overview of Chinese religion.

2.1.3.1 Official religions in China

At the beginning of the New China only five official religions were recognised by the government, and this is still the case today. Of these five - Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Islam - only Daoism can be understood as genuinely of Chinese origin and deriving from the ancient Chinese cultures of divination and shamanism. The basis of Daoism is the belief that beyond earthly life an eternity of happiness can be achieved through the practices of meditation and alchemy. The famous Taoist saints are represented as possessing great powers, and have been seen in Chinese folklore and art for centuries. They have always signified happiness even though one saint is crippled (Ching 2004 pp. 102-11, 215). By contrast, Buddhism which was introduced into China around two thousand years ago from India had

undergone profound transformation before being identified as indigenously Chinese (Hayward 1974 p. 31). Despite its final acceptance in China, Buddhism was subject to various attacks during its long Chinese history. This was particularly the case in the Sui (AD 581-618) and Tang (AD 618-907) dynasties when its popularity was perceived as a challenge to Confucianism which was the cornerstone of Chinese tradition and imperial governance at the time (Cheng 1998 pp. 107-10). Central to Buddhist teachings was the message that human life on earth was nothing other than miseries. People would be born again in other bodies after their death as part of the unbroken cycle of miserable reincarnation, if they did not deny their desires for the material things of this world and achieve true enlightenment. In contrast, to overcome such desires would enable them to avoid the miserable life in a different body after death and instead people can remain forever in a blissful state (Moise 1994 p. 18).

These two religions, Daoism and Buddhism, have infiltrated all levels of Chinese society throughout history, and they were intertwined with ancient Confucianism. By contrast, Islam has appeared only within ethnic minority groups since it was first taught and practised in China in the seventh century (Shui and Jaschok 2005). The other two official religions - Catholicism and Protestantism - were called 'Foreign Religions' in China before the liberation. They were perceived to be closely allied to the efforts of imperialist conquest of China because of their missionary character (Moise 1994 pp. 31-2; Waung 1971 p. 20).

2.1.3.2 Other religion-like forms

Paralleling the sanctioned religions in the New China in 1949, sectarian, popular religions and superstitious practices were deeply rooted within the population. These practices were covert in the New China because of the lack of official sanction. Apart from the five institutionalised religions recognised by Chinese government, the rest were named 'superstitions' and experienced oppression after the 1949 liberation when the Communist Party sought to transform a 'semi-feudal, semi-colonial' society into a

socialist state (Stockman 2000 p. 26). Those sectarian, popular religious and superstitious practices were used by Chinese people to seek prosperity and fertility and to avoid disasters, revealing the utilitarian side of those practices.

Before the liberation (1949), China had been through many years of uncertainty in terms of the state's sovereignty, politics and economy. As a result, people tended to band collectively in terms of religious sects in order to seek spiritual and practical support. The sects had various objectives such as fundraising for pilgrimages to holy mountains, and worshipping the particular deity of a charismatic seer or healer. But most sects had local characteristics, and therefore, many of the sects remained unknown in history. A small number of these sects were known because they showed or posed threats to the then state (Thompson 1989 pp. 128-9). Before the Liberation, for example, Yiguan Dao (sometimes translated as 'Pervading Unity' or 'Way of Unity') re-structured its organisation and accepted officials of the puppet government of Japanese-controlled Northern China; hence, both the Nationalist and the Communist powers tried to terminate its activities since 1945 (Clart 2005; Dubois 2005). Some research categorises sectarian beliefs as popular religion (Ching 2004 p. 218).

Utilitarianism differentiates Chinese popular religion from Christian tradition. Christianity encourages intimate human communion with God. The purpose of Chinese popular religion, however, is to seek material security, good health, family harmony, assurance of deceased relatives' wellbeing, and good fortune for the living. The Chinese popular religion is related to the satisfaction of current life mostly in materialist terms. Additionally, syncretism is a major character of Chinese popular religion, which has incorporated many elements such as shamanism, animism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism and ancestral observances into its contents (Hunter and Chan 1993 pp. 141-3). For these reasons, clarification of Chinese popular religion is difficult.

Nevertheless, examples can be given. For instance, family religion, as a wide spread practice of popular religion with its focus on the worship of ancestors or adored domestic gods. Contrary to what Ching (2004) writes, Whyte and Parish (1984) show that popular religion also received a boost in the years of Chinese socialist construction. The worship of ancestors remained a core practice for most Chinese people. In particular, people in the South had more interests in keeping this practice. The deceased ancestors were buried in graveyards and plaques with their names were placed on altars in family houses and/or remained in ancestral temples of every village, town or city. The graves were maintained, visited by the next of kin especially the male offspring of the deceased on various occasions in a year according to the Chinese lunar festivals and the anniversaries of the ancestors' death. The plaques within houses were offered incense, food and fruit daily. These practices were believed to cheer up the ancestors above, thus good fortune would be brought upon families (Whyte and Parish 1984 pp.309-16). As people had no means of getting out of poverty in this life, they worshiped for their betterment from another life. In the case of Chinese ancestor worshiping, the reassurance of Chinese practitioners was sourced from their ancestors.

There is also a code of practices in seeking to fulfil peace for the distant dead ancestors and to bring the living a happy life in China. *Fengshui* in its Chinese pronunciation has been practiced for many years and is based on the integration of cosmology, philosophy of nature, astrology and geography. *Feng* and *shui* represent 'wind' and 'water' which are two important elements in Chinese literature. The *Fengshui* geomancers, by using their compasses and manuals, calculate the most propitious places to bury the dead and negotiate the best arrangement to homes, offices and factories. *Fengshui* remains popular in southern China and it is practiced across the country (Obringer 2005).

Like *Fengshui*, Matsu worship started in south China. The goddess Matsu was born a human over a thousand years ago in a fishing town in Putian County, Fujian. When she was alive she helped save drowning sailors according to legends. She was said to

ascend to heaven after her death based on her exemplary life. As her reputation grew, several Chinese imperial courts bestowed official posthumous titles on her to allow her to continue to be worshiped as a goddess. Thousands of temples were built along coastal China as a result. Matsu worship is mainly kept to the coastal areas of China because the deity is for the protection of people whose activities are related to the sea (Yang 2005b p. 382).

2.1.3.3 Adapting religion to socialism in the New China

When the New China came into being, all forms of religion and superstition faced new circumstances. With the New China aspiring to a socialist atheist worldview, it was difficult to transpose the religion of the past without changes.

Most Christian churches operated with the support of foreign funding and thus had close ties to foreign organizations. The Chinese Communist Party had fought for years against the Nationalist Party which was backed by America and other occidental countries, thus the Communist Party took nearly all the western countries as its enemies immediately after the liberation. Therefore, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement was introduced in the early 1950s and is still in action. The Three-Self of the New China is simply self-government, self-support and self-propagation of the five official religions. As such, no religious influences from abroad have been allowed to reach Chinese churches and believers (Hayward 1974 p. 57; Ting 1984). Despite the Government's intentions it is highly impossible to prevent foreign religious influences from reaching China as Chinese people converted to religious beliefs in the USA (Yang and Ebaugh 2001) return. Chinese seafarers could create another possibility by which foreign religious influences might reach the country when they visit different countries where missionaries make efforts to contact.

The acquisition of a large quantity of land and property was attributable to the practice of Roman Catholics in China before the liberation. As a result of this accumulation, the Catholic Church in China during the country's transformation to the

Communist regime was thereafter treated as a member of the landlord class which was supposed to be overturned by the new Communist government. In addition, in order to free China from the 'semi-colonial' setback, the new government required that Christian churches declare their independence from any foreign connection and renounce all links with the so called imperialist Occident under the regimen of the Three-Self religious policy. Most Catholics found it hard to act according to the new government's directive due to the Church's historical ties with the Holy See in Rome. Therefore, prison was often the fate of those who were reluctant to adapt. In spite of the fact that some Catholics were oppressed, other Catholics collaborated with the new government to form the Patriotic Association, alias Patriotic Church and have since ceased their communion with Rome (Ching 2004 p. 198; Hayward 1974 p. 46).

As well as the Christian missionary endeavours in China before the liberation, the Christian Church contributed to Chinese society by helping society modernise education, publishing and medical systems. Furthermore, the Church in general emphasised how important it was to contribute philanthropically to the service of society. The Church's philanthropic endeavours touched many areas of people's lives, such as opening nurseries, orphanages, schools for disabled children; offering urgent help to refugees and encouraging the cultural improvement of Chinese society. It was a British preacher who was the first in the modern history of China to organise an anti-foot binding society in Xiamen, Fujian Province (Gao and Zhou 2006; Sun 2006).

However, soon after the establishment of the New China, the impending Korean War enhanced the urgency to expel foreign influence in China. Foreign priests and preachers were asked to leave in spite of their philanthropic endeavours in China, and the subsequent withdrawal of financial support left Chinese Christians little room to eke out a living. Consequently, foreign religious influences came to a full stop in China. The following few years witnessed improvements in public health, education, and people's living standards. These achievements were accomplished with the introduction of the theory of proletarian dictatorship. Religion, according to Marxist theory, was an ideological relic of feudalism, and would die out soon in the new

socialist country which was able to provide its people with adequate materials to relish. However, a reduction in religion in the New China was not a natural process. There was a strategy orchestrated by the Chinese Communist Party in the 1950s to deal with religious bodies. The strategy was to ensure that religious institutions should support the new government (Hunter and Chan 1993 pp.21-6).

When the Great Leap Forward happened in 1958, rural families were on the verge of starvation by the end of that year. Therefore, churches struggled to carry out their service for peasants who were desperately seeking more food to feed their families. Basic needs really took precedence. In fact, the priests or church helpers themselves were in a worse condition than the peasants because they did not work for the communes and could not get work-points to exchange for food. As a result, many churches were obliged to close down during the early 1960s in rural areas. In the cities, on the other hand, churches under the banner of Three-Self Patriotic Movement hedged their bets by not only supporting the Communist Party but also keeping churches open. In spite of much effort, most city churches were closed on account of their lack of collaboration with the Communist Party's religious policy whereas; other patriotic Chinese Christians handed over church assets, including buildings, to schools or factories to help build socialism (Hayward 1974 p. 63; Hunter and Chan 1993 pp.24-6).

As Buddhism and Daoism were taken as China's own religions and were unable to generate any international effects in the New China, the government often categorised them in class of superstition. However, after the liberation the temples of Buddhism and Daoism had almost the same treatment as churches (Hunter and Chan 1993 pp. 23-6). The way religion was treated in China became worse when increasing demand for commitment to the enterprise of socialism had overridden personal and family obligations. Almost the entire population of China was driven to pursue the collective goal of uplifting the whole society into a state of the Communist Eden.

With the weakening of religion, which might have developed in opposition, the Communist Party of China was able to provide Chinese people with a new value – socialism – dubbed as the forerunner of communism. Socialism encompasses a variety of theories based on ownership of either the public or workers. It is administrated through the means of production and allocation of resources. The ideology is based on promise of material prosperity for the public or workers. In the context of the socialist history of China, this version of socialism has been hardly realised. It could be suggested that socialism provided reassurance to the Chinese when the country was in utter poverty like traditional religion does to its believers who have difficulties satisfying their material needs according to Inglehart (1997). When the whole country was in the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, religion was uprooted in China.

Superficially the Cultural Revolution concentrated on cultural changes. However, the name barely reflects the whole kaleidoscope of its meaning: power struggle; ideological division; political tactics; military reinforcement of order and many others.

With the Red Guards shouldering many tasks assigned by Mao, an intensified communist movement against 'Four Olds' was launched in 1965 and spread throughout China during the early Cultural Revolution. This campaign primarily attempted to get rid of all local and traditional religious or superstitious practices. In this campaign, the Red Guards were encouraged to attack old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits. The campaign is sometimes translated as 'Smash the Four Olds'. Red Guards forced peasants to destroy their ancestral plaques, burn religious books, smash statues of gods and symbols of good luck. In place of the removed old elements, pictures of Mao and copies of Mao's little red book adorned the peasantry households (Moise 1994 p. 161; Stockman 2000 p.167). Red Guards also attacked anything they thought symbolised and represented the influence of the Occident. The ransacking of churches was taken for granted and Red Guards' destructive action was praised by the revolutionary propaganda. The Red Guards burnt bibles, smashed pews

and insulted pastors. Some remaining priests and ministers were accused of being foreign spies and were despatched to work in factories, farms or labour camps. Those churches that survived were converted into other uses which could contribute to revolutionary production. This time closure of churches was under no order from the government. The destruction to Christianity was so enormous that the first question asked whether Chinese Christianity could do without Church buildings and clerical professionalism when Bishop K. H. Ting met the founder of the Chinese Three Self movement in Beijing in 1975. Buddhism suffered the same treatment. The only Buddhist journal that had survived years of socialist reform ceased publication. There were no foreign Buddhist delegations at all after August 1966 and the campaign against 'Four Olds' directly led to the smashing of Buddhist images in temples. Monasteries and nunneries were soon closed throughout China, and the monks and nuns were sent back to where they came from. (Hayward 1974 pp. 68-9; Ting 1981 p.55; Welch 1970 p.625; Whyte and Parish 1984 pp. 307-8).

In the Cultural Revolution, Muslims were forced to eat pork and the pilgrimage to Mecca ceased from 1966 when all public religious activities were stopped (Ching 2004 p.181-3). Even though Muslims were implacable, many mosques were damaged or destroyed. For example, among the 5,500 mosques in Kashi, Xinjiang before the Cultural Revolution only 392 were left and suitable for prayer in 1978 (Wang and Ha 2006 p.433).

At the time when religions, in line with superstition and Confucianism, were removed from China, many authors think that Mao had become a secular religion (Apter 2005; Snow 1971 p. 35; 1972 pp. 68-9). That secular religion had rooted in every corner of China and had seeped into individuals' daily life. The Chinese population in general were indoctrinated or forced to respect every thing resembling or relating to Mao in the Cultural Revolution. During the peak years of the Cultural Revolution they bowed to Mao's portraits hanging at home both in the morning and before going to bed in a manner of a religious ritual. Some of Mao's frenzied worshipers choreographed a dance for the Chinese to perform and show their loyalty to Chairman Mao. They

danced chanting odes to Mao in public, work places and at home. They recited Mao's most important writing, and quoted his words from his quotation books when they went to buy in shops or dealt with others in public. Every one, young and old alike, wore buttons of Mao on the chests of their coats (Ching 2004 p. 198).

Weber's concept of charismatic authority well explains how Mao turned into a charismatic leader as well as a secular god. Mao 'is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities' (Eisenstadt 1968 p. 48). Unlike the religious God which is invisible, this political helmsman – Mao - had forced his way into being a living god. Despite his catalogue of costly mistakes in the Great Leap Forward; his crucial abuses of Communist cadres; his massive purge of his comrades-in-arms; and his personal encouragement of bloodshed in the Cultural Revolution, he had still retained absolute power over other Chinese until his death in 1976. It seems that the history of a few thousand years in China shows how the authority of emperors overrode any rights of their subordinates. Chinese people saw emperors as sons of heaven who could never be overturned, which resembles the idea of the Divine Right of Kings in European feudalism. However, it did not guarantee longevity of any dynasty. The demise of Chinese dynasties was often caused by rebellion but new emperors were soon erected and ordained to take the lives of any subordinates. The desire, rooted in the mind of the Chinese for having an emperor controlling their life, could not totally be removed in just thirty-seven years of nationalist reform and a few dozen years of socialist pedagogy (Schram 1967 p.386-7). This time the role of absolute control was taken by the state's leader-cum-secular god.

The disappearance of religion in China did not give way to growing communist values of Chinese people, which invalidated Marx's predictions. Following the establishment of the New China, numerous political mass movements such as those during the Great Leap Forward and the Culture Revolution brought starvation and death to the Chinese. Coupled with endless political inculcation, the movements pinned the Chinese down to one system of belief – communism or its Chinese

alternative, Mao's Thoughts. In order to erect this belief system, another system – religion - had to be dealt with and scrapped. Nevertheless, the apotheosis of Mao ended after his demise in 1976, which freed the mind of Chinese people to some extent. By the end of the 1980s, it seemed the entire history of the New China was in question when the reformists in power made changes to the country. As Chinese society shifted in a different direction, it was possible for the Chinese to show their values which had been overshadowed by communist ideology and Mao's thoughts.

2.2 The values held in China as a result of its Open Door Policies

The Cultural Revolution went on for years and the Chinese soon became sick of the recycled slogans and the tall orders of socialist ambition. A riot in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1976 had ignited nationwide anti-Maoist demonstrations (Domes 1977 pp. 489-91). The death of Chairman Mao also pronounced the end of his Cultural Revolution. From then, the country started economic development which has helped Chinese people satisfy their material needs. Also as a result, China which had been one of the most egalitarian societies in the 1970s has become one of the most unequal countries in the world (Yeoh 2008 p. 157).

2.2.1 A new route for China

A new policy was introduced in the late 1970s by the post-Mao leadership reformers. The policy would have been immediately denounced ten years ago, but this time the Open Door Policies were intertwined with a strong patriotic sentiment of how to recover the country and make it rich and strong. The Open Door Policies, bearing the concept of economic reform, had been carried out through the 1980s and the earlier mass mobilisation concepts of revolution and socialism were completely replaced (Gittings 2005 pp.209-12). Prior to the Open Door policies, China was seized by radical politics and involved in a way of self-sustained development. Reflecting on

Mao's bloody revolutions, Deng Xiaoping realised that to modernise China involved government interest in the economic sector and he envisaged that China open her door to the world in 1978 (Deng 1995). The policies stimulated the growth of the Chinese economy, and were seen as the way for China to overcome poverty and backwardness. Since then China has embarked onto a trajectory of rapid economic development. Such economic development is reflected in a BBC News report that, Beijing had 2,300 vehicles on its roads when China was taken by the Communists in 1949. Forty eight years later the capital had one million cars. It took another ten years to reach three million. Just two years later, in 2009, the number reached four million (Bristow 2009).

When economic changes took place changes in people's values also occurred. The 1980s saw popularity of romantic novels and Chinese knight-errant fictions imported from Hong Kong. In addition, state television took charge of entertaining both urban and rural Chinese with sitcoms and TV dramas mostly imported from Hong Kong and Taiwan, while millions of video playing corner shops in the cities and townships entertained the Chinese with daring movies and TV series produced by Hong Kong and Taiwan too. The information emanating from these movies and dramas totally contradicted what the Chinese had been given, and they were far more interesting. As a result, the Chinese copied the characters in the movies or dramas and started deviating from monotonous pattern of life. Young Chinese dressed in flared trousers and dreamt of the life they saw in the movies and dramas. Model workers gave way to new role models, such as popular singers and drama characters (Weekly Journalist 2009). Indeed, Chinese people enjoyed unprecedented freedom in the 1980s. Unlike the late 1960s and 1970s when the socialist frenzy deprived the Chinese of private life with political rallies, mass movements, and numerous political meetings, the 1980s represented a different side of Chinese life focusing on entertainment. A then popular Chinese saying well explains the craze of the Chinese for folk entertainment, '[Among] one billion people, eight hundred million are gambling, two hundred million are dancing' (Huot 2000 p. 184).

The 1980s also saw unofficial mass demonstrations against embezzlement, corruption and nepotism. As a result, outpourings of accumulated resentment of the people were witnessed in the prolonged pro-democracy demonstration staged in Tiananmen Square by Chinese undergraduates, workers and other people in 1989 (Hunter and Chan 1993 p.157). In spite of these demonstrations, China never dropped its primary focus of boosting the economy, and building capitalism on the foundation of its socialism.

As early as in 1982, a 'two civilizations' campaign was launched to stimulate China and its citizens to achieve material and spiritual civilization. The material civilization was interpreted as the productive forces or economic growth (Bakken 2002 p. 115) and intended to underline the legitimacy of the Open Door Policies. Spiritual civilization was prized as the advanced culture of China (Gittings 2005 p. 190). Spiritual civilization is an important concept which deserves clarification. Many commentators on China have ignored this concept. The spiritual civilization was dubbed as the advanced culture of China but the campaign showed continuity of the extreme practice of the state's inculcation in the new era.

At the beginning the Open Door Policies did not prove to be open in terms of ideology. In 1979, Deng Xiaoping - the core figure of the state leadership - emphasised the Four Principles so as to keep China to the socialist road, to uphold the proletarian dictatorship, to insist on the leadership of the Communist Party and to uphold the Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. To further contain the populace's liberalist intentions brought in by the Open Door Policies, an anti-spiritual pollution campaign was carried out throughout the country from 1983. Modernism, abstract humanitarianism, pessimism, egoism and sexual liberalism in literature and art were seen as pollutants to Chinese culture and were attacked. There were incidents in which women were told not to let their hair over the shoulders; soldiers were prohibited from cherishing their girlfriends' photos; and high-heels and sunglasses were removed from their wearers in the street. Intellectuals, who had experienced the hardship of many campaigns, were so panicky that they destroyed their 'spiritually

polluted' manuscripts or paintings. However, this campaign was only a short-lived socialist recreation (Gittings 2005 pp.183, 190).

By the 1990s, a market-driven society was forming in China. Money worship started to question the whole efficacy of socialism because belief in money had made many communist officials corrupt. Hence, the theory of 'Three Presents', introduced by the then state Chairman Jiang Zemin, was forced into every sphere of people's life and work via various media. The purpose of the theory was to integrate the domestic policies within the context of the 'Three Presents' doctrine which suggested the Chinese Communist Party represents: firstly, the best interest of Chinese people; secondly, China's most advanced productive force and lastly, the most advanced culture (Chan 2007 p. 89; Dittmer 2001 p.787; Lai 2003 p.57). State materialism was emphasised once again by the Chinese Communist Party when it said that it represents the most advanced productive force of China. However, this theory might not provide Chinese people with adequate reassurance when many sought Chinese healing practices in various forms, for example, Falun Gong. A campaign against Falun Gong, which had already become the front-page news in the international media (BBC NEWS 2000), brought China into the new millennium. Falun Gong will be discussed later in section 2.2.3.

In more recent years China's leader Hu Jintao has designed a new socialist frame of reference for building a 'harmonious society' (Zhao and Tan 2007 p.99). Part of building a 'harmonious society' appears to be the process of privatisation schemes to transfer middle and small state-owned enterprises completely to the market. Nonetheless, the government has neither announced privatisation as an official policy nor given clear legislation dictating its process. In fact, the vague ways in carrying it out have showed little regard to the fairness and justice of workers as well as their wellbeing because the workers have been deprived of the right of participation in the process. The exclusion created a dire sense of unfairness and injustice among workers, and confrontation between the workers and entrepreneurs occurred. Unlike the proletarian struggle in the Cultural Revolution, this time the workers cannot beat

powerful capitalists with their inadequately consolidated bargaining-power because Chinese workers have never been independently organised after the country's communist rule began in 1949. And the workers would to this end endure anything they thought unfair (Chen 2006). For those Chinese, the state economic policies brought suffering.

For the Chinese of rural areas, they are still the poorest group of the country as World Bank estimates that 99% of the country's total poor were poor rural Chinese. The estimate did not change in accordance with whether the poverty line defined by Chinese authorities or by US\$1 per day per head (Yeoh 2008 p. 89). This resulted in a massive exodus of rural Chinese to the cities. The number of rural migrants in Chinese cities reached 1.32 hundred million by 2006. They were the people deprived of social security in both urban and rural areas when they were neither registered urbanites nor qualified rural beneficiaries of rural poverty assistance programmes. They formed a special society in Chinese cities blamed for the increase of crime and other social problems of the cities (op. cit., p. 102). The increased affluence might mean differently to rural Chinese. However, an empirical research shows that the group are not the angriest Chinese about current patterns of inequality despite the fact that they are at the bottom of the Chinese social status hierarchy.

On the contrary some research finds that the urban residents of good education are the angriest (Whyte and Guo 2009 pp 49-50). This however does not affect their levels of satisfaction when a global attitude report indicates that the high-income and well-educated Chinese are more satisfied with their current life. Besides, the younger, wealthier and more educated Chinese see a very positive future of their country. The survey data show Chinese respondents seem to be more positive than respondents in other countries and chart a dramatic increase in their satisfaction/confidence over the previous ten years regarding the way things are going in their country, which has stabilised in last five years as levels reached 85/90% (Pew Global Attitudes Survey 2005). Chinese seafarers are a group of people with good education when many are from maritime colleges and universities. They are also a group of people who can

secure higher income when they take part in the global seafarer labour market. But recent years see the influx of rural Chinese into Chinese seafarer labour market. They mostly joined the Chinese merchant navy as life-long ratings, who would never have the opportunity of promotion because of their inadequate education in the countryside. These changes are possibly related to satisfaction and wellbeing of Chinese seafarers coupled with the inequality in China as the influx of rural seafarers and the increasing inequality might make Chinese seafarers reconsider their status.

There were vast inequalities before 1949 in Chinese feudal societies. The New China established in 1949 came to attack the problem through class struggle and functions of new socialist institutions in the 1950s. A more egalitarian social order was created as a result. Later the Cultural Revolution transformed Chinese society into an extraordinary egalitarian society of little variation in styles of dress, housing quality and possession of goods (Whyte 2010a pp 2-3). Poverty as a value was accepted and even praised to be a virtue before 1976 (Chu and Ju 1993 p 279). Since the launch of China's Open Door Policy in 1978 there has been a fundamental priority shift from social equality promotion to economic growth promotion. The pursuit of economic growth made socialist institutions redundant but provided Chinese citizens with dramatic improvements in the average living standards through three decades of continuously rapid economic growth (Whyte 2010a pp 3-4).

However, the dramatic improvements in the living standards of the Chinese did not lead to gains in happiness for all the Chinese. There has been a notion that a society like China whose citizens experience income growth at low living standards are about to show the sign of increase in happiness. A survey's finding is contrary to the notion when it reports 'Over the 1990-2000 decade happiness in China plummeted despite massive improvement in material living standards.' The report explains reasons for the plummeting happiness of the Chinese by drawing on a specific version of relative deprivation theory. The concept of "frustrated achievers" defines the fact that the financial position of most Chinese was undermined when the upper income strata took most advantage of income growth and thus created increasing income inequality

(Brockmann et al 2009). Despite the plummeting happiness another survey indicates 'that the majority of respondents view most parts of the unequal, market-based (Chinese) society in which they now live as basically fair (Whyte 2010b).' This is supported by the survey data (Pew Global Attitudes Survey 2005) collected in China when 85/90% respondents agreed the following statement: Most people are better off in free market economy, even though some people are rich and some are poor. Even though the Pew surveys show Chinese respondents do not rate their current situation as highly as Americans or Western Europeans, they are much more likely to think they have made progress and to expect more progress is to come. Only 20% think they have lost ground in the last five years (ibid). Chinese seafarers earn more than average Chinese workers do ashore but they are significantly behind the upper income strata of the Chinese. Their responses to the issues of growing social inequalities are as well informative.

Given the new route taken by China to its economic growth after the implementation of the Open Door Policies, the government had been successful in switching the Maoist ideology over to pragmatism encouraged by Deng Xiaoping. Since then, the pragmatic means of achieving China's materialist goals have become the core of the life of Chinese people (Lu 1999). The term 'consumerism' was taboo in the People's Republic of China from the country's establishment in 1949 until the late 1970s before the Open Door Policies got underway (Wang 2009). There was a turn-around in the 1980s however, when mass consumption of commercial goods was encouraged by the Chinese government. Consumption has since greatly changed the lives of the Chinese and their households. Before the 1980s Chinese households could only satisfy the basic needs of their living so that bicycles, sewing machines, and watches were prized possessions. In the 1980s household status symbols were colour televisions, refrigerators, and washing machines. In the 1990s, air conditioners and personal computers had become new objects of conspicuous consumption. In the new century the Chinese have once again switched their interest in consumption to housing and its improvement. Cars are not considered status symbols if they are not expensive

and used as luxuries (Ren 2005 p. 114). These examples reflect the different material needs of the Chinese at various stages of the country's economic development.

The increasing consumerism has mirrored the emergence and development of leisure activities indicating a shift of the values of the Chinese. There was no boundary between work and rest when the Great Leap Forward forced the Chinese into working around the clock twenty-four hours, seven days a week to catch up with the West. There was also no distinction between the individual and collective in the vocabulary of the Chinese when, at its peak, the Chinese commune system broke up rural Chinese families in order to relocate the family members into various sections of a commune by genders and ages, etc. Family members met at meal times in communal canteens. This speaks of the communist state's endeavour to get rid of the families of the Chinese. It should have annihilated most traditional Chinese values had the state been successful.

The slogan 'to get rich is glorious' has been attributed to Deng Xiaoping. The saying mirrors the policy of 'letting some people get rich first' in the economic reform. In line with the advance of the reform and encouraged by the state, some Chinese have proved the accuracy of Deng's saying and have become very rich first. Many have become superrich and started flaunting their wealth with their conspicuous consumption both domestically and abroad. Their extravagant life style has been hyped by Chinese media and admired by the Chinese (Wu 2005b p. 440; Zhao 2002 pp. 116-21).

To become rich and, especially to retain wealth, depends tremendously on a Chinese form of social networking. The culture of Guanxi is embedded in the Chinese, and was seen as a practical way to gain access to materials in short supply.

2.2.2 Guanxi

One of the idiosyncrasies of the Chinese is 'Guanxi'. The term literally means social relationship or connection, and it includes a variety of social practices enabling the participants to benefit from gift exchange and reciprocity. In China the practice of Guanxi is carried out in many forms. Nepotism is resourced as a way of making Guanxi by manipulating relations between classmates, colleagues, comrades-in-arms, and relatives, etc. Throwing banquets is a normal way to build Guanxi between the unknown as well as to retain Guanxi between acquaintances. Guanxi is almost everywhere in Chinese social life. A Chinese person takes Guanxi for granted and is forced into exploiting Guanxi to live up to their expectations in life (Yang 2005a pp. 232-3).

The basis of Guanxi draws on the Confucius concept revolving around kinship obligation and human indebtedness to others' help. After the establishment of the socialist China in 1949, the ubiquitous socialist values of the Chinese did not wither until the late 1950s when the failure of the Great Leap Forward eroded those socialist values which prevented the Chinese from seeking material comfort and individual developments. When the Cultural Revolution had brought mayhem and tragedy, many started seeking individual gain in various terms, such as scarce goods obtained with the help of others, political promotion sought by some, and privileges enjoyed by a few. Such individual gains were possible through the channel of Guanxi (Yang 2005a pp. 232-3).

With economic reforms in the 1990s, more goods were produced and social services were easier to obtain. Money became the key and Guanxi started mutating. Being less involved in access to consumer goods, Guanxi has become essential for entrepreneurs or officials to get support from government officials or enterprise managers in order to start up, secure contracts, be successful in bids, be promoted, and to hold on internal information, etc. Therefore, Guanxi has been more associated with corruption

in China now that money is used for the purpose of rapid unconventional prosperity (Yang 2005a pp. 232-3).

Another Chinese idiosyncratic value is 'face'. Guanxi is based on the reciprocal exchange of favour and face saving is the underlying motive for reciprocal behaviours so that breaching this norm results in the loss of face (Lee 2001 pp. 54-5). 'Face' mirrors the social position of an individual when the individual is successful in performing a specific social role well recognized by others (Hu 1944). In Goffman, 'face work' is a kind of front-stage behaviour deliberately performed in front of others within the mixed social relationships (1955; 1959). It has to be noted that having 'face' with a social network not only boosts relative social position but also brings a variety of privileges essential for growing subjective wellbeing. As such, saving face has become a primary objective of Chinese society. Given this fact, an individual who cannot achieve something substantial to enhance others' 'face' is willing to provide the others with superficial help (Chiao 1981).

2.2.3 Qigong

Qigong is used by Chinese people to enhance spiritual wellbeing and physical health. Qigong is expressed using two characters: Qi and Gong literally meaning air and work respectively, but the collocation is hard to translate in western languages. The concept associated with Qigong is also unique. Qi is a metaphysical concept of the Chinese who use Qi to represent a cosmic power full of creativity. Qi was linked by some ancient prestigious Chinese scholars to the way of morality and righteousness. More importantly, Qi was believed by the ancient Chinese to be vital in creating human beings as one translation states 'When the material forces of Heaven and Earth come together, all things are spontaneously produced, just as when the vital forces (Qi) of husband and wife unite, children are naturally born' (Dillon 1998 p. 251).

As Gong means 'work' in English, the meaning of Qigong can be simplified as working with one's vital force of life. Nevertheless, another source offers more

complex interpretation of Gong. Accordingly, 'Gong means to practise, train, enhance and refine but it also implies enjoyment, devotion and commitment.....the idea of Gong is often associated with the martial arts. In fact, however, Gong is applicable to any practice, discipline or self development art in which a person is deeply involved.....The martial Gong enhances the strength, endurance and spirit of the warrior. The medical Gong can be used to heal diseases. Confucian Qigong is focused on self cultivation, ethical development and refinement of personal temperament. The Taoist Gong is aimed at alchemical transmutation, merging with nature, longevity and immortality. The Buddhist Gong seeks refinement of mind, transcending the world of illusion and salvation of all living things' (Jahnke 1996).

Like Chinese medicine, Qigong is beyond the concept of western science. What is seen of a Qigong practitioner is the way the practitioner's body posture, breathing, visualisation and meditation are exploited by slowly moving their bodies and limbs or by remaining motionless. What is believed by the practitioner is the result of those practices. The practices can help the practitioner gather and circulate their Qi or life force within their body to stay healthy and even to expand their Qi onto other people to heal diseases of the other (DiCarlo 2009). There are also extraordinary accounts, such as Qigong masters lighting fluorescent bulbs by pointing or starting a fire by pointing the Qi at an inflammable substance (Jahnke 1996).

Qigong had developed into many lineages over the centuries and it had been seen in Chinese parks, hospitals, temples, workplaces in the 1980s and 90s. New types of Qigong kept forming and growing. In the early 1990s, about two thousand Qigong groups were either registered with the government or at large (Chan 2004 p. 674). Qigong was an invented tradition during the beginning of communist rule of China. In order to put Qigong into the service of the health of Chinese masses, communist cadres separated Qigong from their 'feudal and religious origins' and reinvented it. Qigong was also seen as part of traditional Chinese medicine and was thus promoted by the Chinese Communist Party. However, the practices of Qigong were greatly repressed during the Cultural Revolution, like other forms of religion and superstition.

The resumption of party patronage in favour of Qigong in the 1980s helped Qigong grow into a mass fever across the nation because Qigong was believed to help with health and healing (Veer 2008 p. 817).

There was an outstanding group of Gong practitioners in the 1990s after the Qigong fever of the 80s. This type of Gong was called Falun Gong. The numbers of Falun Gong practitioners varied in the 1990s depending on which source provides the statistics. The government quoted a figure of two million, while the Falun Gong group said they had a hundred million members. Falun Gong's belief system and practices involved mixed elements of Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism and Qigong. In the 1990s, the closure of many deficient firms resulted in large numbers of redundant workers. Their social security was lost with their jobs and their sense of security went into reverse. They lacked the resources for a safety net. Falun Gong leaders and practitioners made claims about the Gong's healing capacity and the redundant workers became more likely to seek reassurance from Falun Gong. Falun Gong enjoyed an astonishing increase in membership in a very short period of time since its establishment in 1992 by a Chinese man in north-eastern China. In the late 1990s, the group had thousands of practice sites all over China (Chan 2004; Chen 2003).

Controversy followed Falun Gong because of its practices and teaching. For example, some practitioners were encouraged to stay away from medical treatment when they had illnesses. As such, some Chinese scholars tried to address the downsides of Falun Gong. When the government media published these scholars' opposing articles, it caused protests by Falun Gong practitioners. One silent protest was staged on 26 April 1999 in Beijing, outside the state leaders' residential compound by an estimated ten thousand members. It resulted in sounding the death knell for Falun Gong in China, because it had become like a growing organised religion. Several months later Falun Gong was denounced as an evil cult by the government. As a result, its sites were closed down and its practitioners had to renounce their belief in Falun Gong in fear of possible prosecution (Chen 2003).

The crackdown on Falun Gong brought collateral damage to other Qigong groups. In 1999/2000 some leaders were detained or placed under surveillance and, in the worst cases received prison sentences. In the aftermath of the crackdown on Falun Gong, Chinese authorities issued new rules to administer and organize Qigong activities in September 2000. The new rules prescribed the size of 'Qigong-practicing stations' and stated the stations must get permission from police when the number of their participants exceeded 200. Qigong groups were instructed to be dispersed and only local organizations were allowed and all Qigong coaches must be registered with government offices in charge of Qigong activities (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2001). This resulted in the abrupt disappearance of Qigong in public in China in the subsequent years. These injunctions prevented the natural growth of the culture.

The Qigong fever in China in the 1980s, on the other hand, showed the withering of the ideology of Chinese communism. The widespread popularity of Falun Gong during the 1990s in China indicated an ideological vacuum (Chan 2004 p. 677). An example bears the argument out. Chinese Communist Party members took oaths of loyalty to the Party at the ceremonies where they officially joined the Party. Since their oath taking they are not allowed to believe in anything else than Communism under the Party Constitution. According to one source, among the officially announced 2.3 million Falun Gong practitioners Party members accounted for 15.6 percent (Zong 2002 pp. 60-1). With the withering of Chinese communism, religion in China loomed large.

2.2.4 Religious restoration against new backgrounds in China

The restoration of religion in China was not an abrupt undertaking but a gradual build-up. Many changes brought in by the Cultural Revolution had failed to benefit Chinese society. Young students' formal quality of orderly conformity and high aspiration during 1950s had not been rewarded during the first three years of the Cultural Revolution and throughout the years after this period, because future

prospects of urban young people were hardly better than labouring in the countryside. Mao, after exploiting his Red Guards to accomplish his own socialist view, announced that the Red Guards should be responsible for their errors and extreme behaviours in the three chaotic years of the Cultural Revolution. The solution was for the Red Guards to go up to the mountains and down to the countryside to accept the re-education initiated this time by the peasants. The Red Guards were now supposed to become lifelong peasants to build socialism in the vast countryside. The Red Guards' disappointment accumulated through their witnessing and experiencing the erratic leadership of Beijing, when they had fought and sacrificed in the name of the leadership. Epiphany came when they were thrown into reality of harsh rural life as lifelong peasants. Their eager idealism was replaced by desperation. Not only did the Red Guards feel the loss of their ideology the Chinese were also tired of abusive political campaigns and became less interested in the state's indoctrination. Popular religion was reintroduced into people's life to fill the spiritual vacuum by some Chinese in the late 1970s (Whyte and Parish 1984 pp. 253-6).

The disaster of the Tangshan earthquake on 28th July 1976 offered a discourse about the decreasing communist ideology. The earthquake killed more than two hundred thousand people in two spasms of devastation in that single day. This natural catastrophe was sudden and unimaginable. Coupled with some other natural disasters and the death of Premier Zhou that year, the devastating earthquake had a side effect; it nourished a traditional superstition for the Chinese. The populace started to engage in spreading the Theory of Mandate of Heaven. The theory emphasises that natural disasters are seen as a sign of heaven's disapproval of a current ruler in China and also a sign of change. The Communist Party feared the spread might be very rapid and wide and the voice so loud that within a month the Cultural Revolution leadership endeavoured to launch a campaign to attack the promulgation of the Theory of the Mandate of Heaven. Nearly all figures of that leadership were arrested following Mao's death in two months (Domes 1977 pp.485-6), the Theory of Mandate of Heaven seemed to be realised.

It is indisputable to relate the cause of religious revival in China to the state's loose restrictions on open religious activities after the implementation of its Open Door Policy (MacInnis 1989 pp 1-30; Hunter and Chan 1993 pp 168-70). This allowed the religious situation in contemporary China to be drastically different from Europe and the Americas. Proposed by Fenggang Yang the situation is named as a triple-market model: a red market representing officially permitted religions, a black market representing officially banned religions, and a grey market inclusive of religions of an ambiguous legal/illegal status (2006). The latter concept is central in the model because it emphasises non-institutionalised religiosity which has been widely practiced. The legal status of religions in China after the Cultural Revolution was manifested in the implementation of the Constitution in 1982. In Article 36, 'the citizens of the P. R. China are given the freedom of religious belief. And the state protects normal religious activities as long as they do not disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the state'. The legal status of religions established in this Constitution coupled with the disappearance of fervent belief in socialism has left ample room for the revival of religion (Apter 2005 p.8).

Another reason for the religious revival in China is the downside of its Open Door Policy which has brought economic and social changes. Those changes were unpredictable and created enormous social problems when millions of state-owned workers were laid off with a loss of social security. An equal society of the past turned into an increasingly competitive world. The Chinese faced new situations such as money-worship, corruption, prostitution and the breakup of families. To provide spiritual comfort religion was sought by a population troubled and disillusioned.

The resilience of religion among some Chinese believers is also an important reason for the revival of religion in China. Because of these religious residues survived through the years of harsh treatment they were easily rekindled in favourable conditions (Lai 2003 pp. 56-7).

However, the vestige of harsh restriction on religion was common in China. For instance, the Zu Temple in Foshan, Guangdong province was reopened in the 1970s probably for tourism or cultural heritage. A stone turtle emerged at the centre of a square pond in the temple. In an attempt to prevent the tourists from landing coins on the back of the stone turtle to seek luck and good fortune, a large sign board was placed in front of the pond warning of superstition. Ironically, the fact that the pond was full of coins (Whyte and Parish 1984 pp 322-3) testified at least to one of Chinese practices that distanced them from true Communist idealism.

For several decades most Chinese people had been indoctrinated to be atheists. China has never seen an increase in the number of officially registered believers among its more than one billion people (Goossart 2005 p.16). This argument cannot be taken for granted as some other factors have been missed out in the calculation. However, domestic or popular or traditional religions formed some part of every family's daily life. These were not taken into consideration in the former calculation of the number of believers because there were many lay people who believed or practised these religions but did not see themselves as religious.

Some scholars have given a very bold figure of the religious population of China. It is argued that if religions and religious practices are all counted and the occasional involvement of religious activities is included, the percentage of Chinese religious population is as much as ninety-five per cent (Madsen 2003 p.271). This figure is extraordinary, but it at least testifies the very high number of Chinese engaging in some form of religious activities or practices. Despite this, only 1 percent Chinese people said that religion was 'very important' in their lives in 1990-93 World Values Survey (Inglehart 1997 p. 84). The figure went up to 3 percent when the survey was conducted in 2000 (Inglehart et al. 2004 figure 006). It seems contradictory when those statistics are put together, but in fact, it reveals that religion in China is complex and intriguing.

2.2.5 Conclusions

The Confucianism-centred Chinese traditional values were challenged when the New China came into being in 1949. The following years saw less emphasis of the traditional values while the New China imposed its communist ideology on its citizens with various political and mass campaigns. It was success for the New China because it mobilised millions of Chinese people in frenetic pursuit of the utterly equal society of prosperity. Although the pursuit soon resulted in massive starvation and numerous deaths after the Great Leap Forward the state pressed on with more chaotic revolution to topple what it had been building for almost twenty years.

Through the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese were on the horns of a dilemma in which people were forced to take sides of factions but were not immune from being purged or tortured, and by which people were driven into mad rivalry between colleagues, neighbours and even next of kin. The faith of the Chinese in Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought's doctrines had been so undermined by the dilemma. It seemed in the later years that the Chinese found it impossible to elaborate on what ideals, principles and values they held (Pye 1999 pp.574-5). Consequently, the Chinese traditional values were ruined to such an extent that trust and confidence in others have been diminished since the Cultural Revolution. This trauma still influences Chinese people today. Few Chinese would lend a helping hand to a person in need in public areas in today's China for fear of being trapped and cheated out of money (Qianjiang Evening News 2009).

Chinese commitment to utopian socialism and the cult of Mao-cum-secular religion faded away because of immorality pervasive among China's cadres as well as its top leaders. Widespread corruption and nepotism within lower officials also contributed to the fading commitment (Hunter and Chan 1993 p.157; Whyte and Parish 1984 p.328). For Marxism, recent Chinese history might tell a different story. In fact, Marxism seems to have made the life of the Chinese people a lot worse when I look at the destructive results of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. On the

contrary, popular religions or superstitions appeared to be favoured by Chinese people by providing a framework of meaning as popular religions told people of the way to protection, fortune and prosperity while superstitions were closer to people's life (Whyte and Parish 1984 p.330). In the communist theory, the development of communism is to announce the end of religion because communism is an Eden on the ground for the living. When communism was realised there would be no use of religion. However, religion encourages humanitarian values to be handed down to next generations. In order to retain moral values of the Chinese, the communist regime may permanently accept theistic religion in the hope of helping stabilise its social order (Lau 2007 pp. 39-40).

Today's religion in China retains its own characters i.e. state involvement, indigenisation, utilitarian trends, and entrepreneurial practices. State involvement appears in the form of the Religious Affairs Bureau and its hierarchical local governing committees. In addition, the Public Security Bureau is in charge of dealing with organisations categorised as 'evil cults' such as Falun Gong. The religious Three Self method is today organised by seven government-ordained patriotic associations of the five official religions. The state safeguards the status of the five official religions and will neglect the other forms of religious existence as long as they do not impose any threats on economic, social, political stability and development or national security (Chan 2007 pp.88-92). Chinese people nowadays can be more pragmatic in becoming selectively instrumental in religious belief and practices. In particular, the practices of folk religions or various sects are mostly attractive if the practices generate healing miracles, promise or uphold people's wealth and safeguard officials' posts. This provides a possible answer to a claim in a previous passage that 95% of the Chinese population are religious. The most phenomenal character today for Han Buddhism is that temples have welcomed billions of tourists and pilgrims. The temples have received large income both from tourist admissions and the donations of devotees. These lucrative incentives have been effective in stimulating local authorities and business people to build new temples which then have been run

by enterprising monks. The business-related temple management has become a major issue concerning the legal vocation of Buddhist clerics (Chan 2007 p.94; Chen 2003) as the temple monks drift with the tide of economy. Eventually, materialism has overridden religion in China in these cases. The Chinese entrepreneurial spirit fostered in contemporary China may, by turning religion into a tourist industry, actually cheapen rather than deepen religious faith of Chinese people, which demonstrates an ironic question that what may finally sound the death knell of religion in China might be capitalism rather than communism. This possibility outruns what Marx believes regarding religion.

The WTO accession in 2000 has brought into China not only more foreign involvement in economics and culture but also an increasing number of foreigners with a variety of unfamiliar thoughts. Many more religious faiths than the legitimate five religions of China have been brought in as well, which should not have been the case according to China's policies regarding foreign religion (Chan 2007 pp.88-92, 114; Madsen 2003 p. 284).

We see from the literature that the Chinese culture crops up in various forms. There were traditional Chinese cultures bearing Confucianism-centred values. There were also values that people expected being incorporated into Chinese society from the Communist Party. The subsequent opening up of China since the late 1970s has brought unexpected social and economic changes to the country. The changes resulted in increasing international interaction.

China's shipping industry plays a major role in bridging China with the rest of the world in terms of both economy and culture, and it depends on a large number of competent Chinese seafarers. The reason for choosing this group was detailed in the introduction. All in all, this thesis is to explore how Chinese seafarers have experienced the increased affluence and new liberties such as the freedom of thought and belief, travel and residence which have accompanied transition in China. The focus is how Chinese seafarers feel the increased affluence and new liberties have

affected their levels of satisfactions and feelings of wellbeing. The next chapter will provide a brief history of Chinese seafarers, and discuss the role the seafarers have played in China's economic, social and political changes.

Chapter three: The Recent History and Key Characteristics of Chinese seafarers

Professional groups are called ‘corporations’ by Durkheim and are characterised by group solidarity. According to him, corporations not only function economically and socially but also uphold morality. The more developed their professional ethics are, the more stability the corporations have. The ethics and norms of professional groups are difficult to be transplanted to other groups in the formation of their hierarchical structure (Varga 2006 pp.460-1). In this chapter I explain the recent history of seafarers in China, in particular the conjunction between the economic reforms in China and the significant structural changes which occurred in the international maritime industry. The latter included a new form of shipping registry that challenged the well established seafarer labour markets of the advanced maritime countries. I then describe three broad categories denoting variations in contractual status and the route they came into seafaring.

3.1 A brief history of China’s seafarers

The 1980s saw the emergence of what has been termed a global labour market for seafarers (ILO 2004). Today Chinese seafarers play a significant role in this labour market constituting 10.29% of all seafarers (BIMCO/ISF Manpower Update 2000). In 2000, according to the Ministry of Communications of China, there were around 500,000 Chinese seafarers. Among them 160,000 worked on ships trading internationally (Gong 2001; Leggate 2004 p. 6; Lloyd's List 2001). This is a very different situation to the era prior to economic reform in China.

The involvement of Chinese seafarers in the global seafarer labour market did not take place overnight. The planned scheme of the Chinese economy before the Open Door Policies required Chinese seafarers to work for Chinese state-owned shipping companies and board Chinese vessels. Even a decade after the implementation of the

Open Door Policies, it was impossible for Chinese seafarers to participate in the global seafarer labour market due to the Chinese government's delay in opening up its seafarer labour market. However, after years of economic reforms and development, many forms of Chinese seafarer labour now exist. These are attributable to the continuity of the Open Door Policies and willingness of Chinese seafarers to work on board foreign owned ships.

The period of the first ten years after the founding of the New China in 1949 has nothing to articulate about the country's own ocean shipping. This is mainly because the retreating Nationalists took most of the country's ships to Taiwan and only left behind a few ships navigable in rivers only. The other major fact is that the New China had not been recognised by most of the world and therefore could not issue legal certificates and sail under its own flag. However, the New China did recruit some seafarers who revolted on board fifteen ships owned by a China Merchants Steamship Company which was then the first modern shipping company operating during the reign of the Republic of China that retreated to Taiwan in 1949. About seven hundred seafarers announced their wishes to revolt in both Singapore and Hong Kong during a period from January to March of 1950. Most of them were designated jobs within the shipping industry of the city of Guangzhou afterwards, and some were sent to a new shipping company to become the first batch of P. R. China's ocean going seafarers (Liu et al. 2000 pp.1, 3, 11 and 38).

The new shipping company was launched in 1951 by the governments of Poland and China. This Chinese-Polish Joint Stock Shipping Company is still in operation today (2007) with 22 ships, and it was this company which trained the earliest seafarers of the New China. Because of the international economic embargo on China, coupled with threats of coercing Nationalists from the sea, the first few years of the company were extremely difficult. Refusal of bunkering (fuel refilling) and fresh water services were not the only obstacles the seafarers faced even though the company's ships were sailing under the flag of Poland. The worst incidents involved two ships, the 'Praca' and 'Gottwald' which were hijacked by the Nationalist navy and forced to sail to

Taiwan in 1953 and 1954. All the Polish seafarers were released under pressure from the Polish government. Nevertheless, almost all the hijacked Chinese seafarers were presumed killed, their whereabouts never discovered (Liu et al. 2000 pp. 5-8).

Later, China's experimental attempts to disseminate communism across South-East Asia caused resentment in many countries across the area. Chinese expatriates were about to be expelled from Indonesia because of the black mood between the Chinese government and the Indonesian government. In order to bring home these thousands of overseas Chinese, China urgently formed its own shipping company in Guangzhou in 1961. The government ordered many units dealing in cabotage and river trade to send their staff so as to supplement the small pool of the newly founded China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO) (ibid).

In the following years, when COSCO also expanded, many army veterans joined the shipping industry to become seafarers. But during the late 1960s when the chaos of the Cultural Revolution was at its peak, even though seafarers were in great shortage, some seafarers were categorised to be unsuitable for working on board ocean-going ships and thus sent to sail on cabotage ships or to work on land. Many of those who were wrongly dismissed were re-recruited into the COSCO seafarer pool in the 1970s while thousands of retired navy personnel were also transferred to become merchant seafarers. The company also took graduates of maritime colleges and universities to enlarge its pool of merchant navy officers. These recruits were typically students who did not sit the college or university entrance examinations, having instead been named as worker-peasant-soldier candidates who were selected for higher education by the revolutionary leadership of their units (ibid).

During that time, the company had to apply for a labour quota from its superior authorities. Therefore, the company could legally employ these retired navy personnel and worker-peasant-soldier graduates when the country operated under the planned economy. In 1975, towards the end of the Cultural Revolution, China started to recover the economy. The state endorsed a quota of 11,650 labourers which

comprised retired navy personnel and graduates, as well as a certain percentage of high school leavers of the cities (most rural youth did not go to high school before becoming peasants) and sent-down urban youths-cum-farmers (Liu et al. 2000 pp. 20, 38, 141-3).

In the 1980s, all seafarers of China were permanent employees of the state-owned enterprises. By contrast, in the late 1980s COSCO no longer had a monopoly of Chinese ocean-going seafarers because the forerunners of the China Shipping (Group) Company started to expand their operation out of domestic trade under the government's promotion of Economic Reform and Open-Door Policies. It began to adapt new mechanisms to recruit seafarers as many new shipping companies were not state-owned enterprises from the early 1990s. This was mainly due to the government's effort to push market policy in the economy (Shen et al. 2005 pp.77-80).

During the same period as the economic reform was taking place in China there were also significant structural changes taking place in the international maritime industry. The world trade recession in the 1970s and 1980s, and the need for ship owners to reduce operating costs, saw the emergence of a new form of shipping registry that would challenge the well established seafarer labour markets of the advanced maritime countries (ILO 2004 p. 66). Open Ship Registry allowed the ships trading under their flag to be manned by crews of different nationalities whose labour was much cheaper. Consequently, the shipping companies of advanced maritime countries started to flag out their vessels to the Open Ship Registries in order to recruit low cost seafarers from developing countries. In doing so, shipping companies were able to cut the cost of running their vessels to cope with the recession. Hence, the global seafarer labour market formed in the 1980s. Previously the advanced maritime countries had both controlled most of the world fleet and manned it with their nationals, nowadays those countries still have control over about 60 percent of the world fleet but none of them enters the top ten suppliers of global seafarers (Wu and Sampson 2005 p. 5). This transformation in crewing arrangements for the world's ships has allowed

Chinese seafarers to be more affluent by working on foreign vessels rather than for China's state-owned shipping companies. Chinese seafarers who have worked for foreign shipping companies experienced more freedom than they did on state-owned ships.

The Chinese government's market economy policy, coupled with the end of planned assignment of seafarers by the state, helped form a seafarer labour market in China so as to respond to the existence of the global seafarer labour market. The new mechanisms have gradually demarcated Chinese seafarers into the following three categories.

The first, and presumably the largest, category of seafarers is a heterogeneous umbrella group that includes everyone but the migrant and self-employed seafarers that make up the second and third groups. This category includes the seafarers from various maritime universities, colleges and training institutes who ended up contracting to various companies in the shipping sector. Most of these companies were state-owned or operated. This category also includes seafarers who have been always the employees of state-owned shipping companies and have had their life-long employment status shifted to contract labour by the same state-owned shipping companies. The second category is of migrant seafarers. The name migrant seafarer is used because these seafarers are from Chinese rural areas under the directives of the state's poverty alleviation policy and this situation shares some similarity of Chinese migrant workers in the cities. These migrant seafarers experienced two distinctive episodes of treatment by their recruiters. In the 1990s for the first time peasants were allowed to join the Chinese merchant navy, and this batch was recruited by state-owned shipping companies who were partly responsible for poverty alleviation as they were state-owned. Rural Chinese signed contracts with the shipping companies after receiving a period of training and were sent to work on board non-company-owned ships afterwards. At that stage they were called peasant-contract-worker-seafarers because they were treated differently. This practice generated resentment from this group when they had worked for a while because they

realised they were only entitled to low salaries in comparison with other seafarers of the same companies who have been entitled to a full range of social welfare and insurances. This practice was discouraged after a few years because it violated the labour law implemented in 1995 (the Eighth National People's Congress Standing Committee 1994) and brought more uncertainties to the companies.

In order to fulfil the demand for seafarers and to correct the controversial practice of recruiting peasants and managing peasant contract seafarers, a new regime was introduced. The original supplying regions of the countryside or newly joined precincts or rural regions have introduced an alternative method to reduce labour cost for the state-owned shipping companies by letting the companies hire peasant seafarers recruited, trained and managed by the local governments' labour bureaus. The method also helped the state-owned shipping companies avoid accusations of exploitation. The governmental labour bureaus established offices locally to look after peasant seafarers in terms of employment and social welfare coverage etc. Local levels of social welfare are cheaper than the standards in the cities, and the local offices are all funded by state-owned shipping companies in coordination with the local governmental labour bureaus. These precincts or regions are called 'bases' by the shipping companies. Therefore, the peasant-contract-worker-seafarers and new rural recruits are named after their bases – 'base' seafarers. They are usually employed by the state-owned companies to work for foreign ship owners.

The third category consists of the self-employed seafarers who contract out to international shipping, and so work mostly within the global seafarer labour market. This group is comprised of redundant seafarers whose contracts ended and were not renewed because they were ratings and suffered from oversupply. Former state-owned seafarer officers who have left their companies, new rating seafarers trained by various maritime institutes and some new maritime graduates are also found in this group. I am going to focus on all three categories in the rest of the thesis.

An empirical survey taken in the port of Hong Kong in the winter of 2002/3 investigated Chinese seafarers' participation in the global seafarer labour market. The survey samples revealed that 40 percent of the Chinese seafarers attending the survey worked on board foreign flagged ships while 29 percent of the samples were free-lance (self-employed) (Wu and Sampson 2005 p. 18). Working aboard the vessels of foreign flags might not mean those Chinese seafarers were not state-owned because the state-owned shipping companies had flagged out for years. However, the free-lance Chinese seafarers taking up 29 percent of the samples were comprehensibly not associated with the state-owned shipping companies. In addition, most free-lance Chinese seafarers worked for foreign ship owners so the global seafarer labour market had a huge impact on the single state employment of China's past.

A further form of demarcation within the Chinese seafaring population relates to the seafarers' origin, i.e. whether they derive from urban or rural areas within China. In line with the existing seafarer labour market in China, the origins of Chinese seafarers have changed. Research conducted by Chinese scholars suggests a geographic shift of seafarer sources. These were originally confined to the coastal areas but have moved to the poor rural areas of the interior (Shen et al. 2005 pp.77-80). In the 2002 survey of active Chinese seafarers conducted by the Seafarers International Research Centre 80 percent of seafarer participants were urban residents while maritime trainees and students were mostly from rural areas in China (Zhao and Amante 2003). Early in 2000, the maritime universities of both Dalian and Shanghai were unable to recruit local students (Shen and Zhao 2001). The two cities are important maritime centres in China. However, inland China has yet to become a leading supplier of Chinese seafarers. According to the source of the Maritime Safety Administration of China, inland areas provide 17.9% of Chinese seafarers in 2004. In two years, 32.6% of Chinese seafarers came from inland China. But the figure fell back to 25.6% in 2008 (Wu 2010 p. 9). This shift has impacted on Chinese seafarers. It suggests that seafaring in China is not seen as a sought-after career for urbanites and coastal rural inhabitants, let alone people of elite backgrounds. This might change the relative

position of seafarers in Chinese society. Indeed a recent survey of Chinese seafarers supply shows that the trainees of the few selected seafarer training facilities represent 27 of China's 31 provinces. Among those trainees, 54% of them were from coastal areas which had been the leading source of Chinese seafarer supply whereas 46% of them came from inland China (Wu 2010 p. 17). Thus importantly, in terms of values of Chinese seafarers, as their make-up increasingly contains more seafarers from rural and inland poor backgrounds, arguably this group of Chinese seafarers may hold different values and so experience sea-going life differently to their urban colleagues. This is a theme that will be picked up and examined within the course of the thesis.

The thesis will also make reference to the various changes in the state's expectations of seafarers (and their monitoring and supervision) over the years. Today China is one of the largest seafarer suppliers in the world (Shen et al. 2005 p.17; Wu 2005a). At its start, this professional group, i.e. seafarers, were required to possess very particular characters, demonstrating loyalty and commitment to the state. When COSCO was established in 1961, the company in Guangzhou began to buy its own ships and tried to expand its fleet. As a result, more seafarers were needed. In order to resist foreign capitalist influences, to struggle against Nationalists active in Taiwan and other Asian regions and to defeat anti-new China endeavours conducted by China's enemies, that cohort of China's seafarers were completely pure in political terms. The seafarers were people who had strong ideological backgrounds, who could be trusted politically, who rigorously followed disciplines and were totally loyal to their nation and the Communist Party. They underwent a series of approval procedures to be legitimated for sailing abroad on board state-owned ships (Liu et al. 2000 pp.8, 39). Furthermore, the marriage of Chinese seafarers was under scrutiny of their state-owned companies until the end of the 1970s. Before they could date Chinese girls for the purpose of marriage, Chinese seafarers had to report their dating figures to the companies who were responsible for carrying out background checks on the girls. The state did not allow Chinese girls with foreign connection to marry Chinese seafarers in order to prevent the seafarers from jumping ship in foreign ports. No girls of 'bad' background

were allowed to marry Chinese seafarers either. These measures were intended to make Chinese seafarers more committed to communist ideology than Chinese workers on land because Chinese seafarers were exposed to a variety of 'bad' elements during their seafaring tours. Ironically, those political checking-schemes raised the status of then Chinese seafarers as the checks made them different from the rank and file, and put them into a category similar to the members of the army, a much sought-after career at the time and its recruitment involved stricter political checks on candidates.

To keep constant on-board political and ideological control over China's seafarers, a policy of posting Political Commissars on its ships was adopted from as early as in the 1950s, when China's seafarers sailed on Chinese ships but flagged with Polish ensigns. Later when China started acquiring its own ships, the ships owned by the state were likely to be manned by Chinese seafarers of the state-owned shipping companies, and normally a Commissar in charge of political duties was posted on board a ship by his state-owned shipping company. This is still the case until today. The former Soviet Union was the first country ruled by communists, and China, as a new communist country, had inherited as much as the country could assimilate from the Soviets. Commissars on board ships were not a Chinese invention but a copy. It was when (before the Open Door Policies of the late 1970s) China was shut off from the rest of the world that the Commissars were to carry out their political duties on ships. These duties revolved around the upkeep of the socialist thoughts of Chinese seafarers. The Commissars held regular political studies and meetings on board ships in order to keep seafarers immune from various capitalist elements when sailing abroad. Any elements abroad not in parallel to the socialist worldview were seen as bad and deserved criticism and were categorised untouchable to Chinese seafarers. Later, the Political Commissars took charge of the management procedures on board state-owned ships. The climax of the Political Commissars' career was between 1975 and 1978 when the Political Commissar Responsibility System was introduced. These years saw the Political Commissars in control of everything on board ships as the

domestic political priority was strongly emphasised by the Chinese Communist Party (Zhao et al. 2003).

In the hope that foreign bad elements could be prevented from corrupting Chinese seafarers, a major state-owned shipping company which represented almost China's entire ocean-going seafarers implemented regulations fitting Chinese seafarers into an ideological 'straightjacket'. Even in 1991 the 'straightjacket' was not removed from Chinese seafarers of that state-owned shipping company. The importance of keeping Chinese seafarers away from bad influences might be stressed instead because of the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Demonstration. In the company's 1991 Code of Ocean-Going Seafarers Management, details about how seafarers go ashore are listed in Section One of Article Fifty-Three of the code: 'When seafarers need to go ashore in foreign ports, apart from attending collective land activities organised by international bodies or friendly denominations, the leadership of every ship can arrange landing for seafarers on the ground that the ship's operation and safety are not undermined.....[The ship's leadership] must organise seafarers in a group of more than three persons to go ashore, and a seafarer should be designated as the head and is in charge of the group. The group has to keep tight ashore. The ship's leadership can decide a time for the landing seafarers to return but the latest time to return must be before the local sunset. If the seafarers of the company want to walk on a quayside after meals they are asked to go in a group of at least two people' (COSCO Human Resource 1991 p. 74). Although the regulation had been in the code for managing the company's seafarers, implementation was hard because the seafarers turned a blind eye. However, the regulation has not been discarded in the company's 2005 Code of Ocean-Going Seafarers Management and the only improvement is that seafarers are now not asked to return before the local sunset (COSCO Human Resource 2005 p. 18). This regulation can be seen as an on-board organisational mechanism of the state-owned shipping company in order to insulate its Chinese seafarers from foreign influences, in particular bad elements categorised by the government. Religion, especially foreign religion, cannot be exempted from the bad elements.

Especially in the 1960s, ex-service men were accepted into the pool of Chinese seafarers, and they were seen as having a high level of political sensitivity and considered to be loyal to the party and its enterprises. It brought new characters to the group. Chinese seafarers were more like socialist propagandists, mostly involved in the state's political tasks, rather than merchants. In 1966, the state empowered its embassies to oversee the movements of ocean-going ships and the conduct of Chinese seafarers in a document distributed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was clearly defined in the document that the Captains and Political Commissars of China's ships must report to the Chinese embassies of the port states in order to seek the embassies' leadership after their ships arrived in port. Seamanship in those years was heavily tinted with high political awareness. In the years of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese seafarers with their socialist ideology were expected to spread Maoist thoughts to the world and, in extreme cases, boards of Mao's quotations were put out when the ships were in the ports of European countries. The seafarers' determination to promulgate Maoist thoughts generated some diplomatic disputes with the authorities of local ports. In the 1960s and the early 1970s, the ocean-going seafarers were, apart from their ship-bound tasks, engaged in carrying out emergency plans for military preparation and weapon practice in order to safeguard the state's property against any attacks from the country's enemies. In addition, the seafarers underwent as many socialist educational sessions on board ships as people did ashore in China (Liu et al. 2000 pp.28-9, 40, 100, 109-111). On top of all forms of political inculcation, it seems China's seafarers had been deprived of their own orientation in ideology or thinking during those years.

In the 1980s, along with the Economic Reform and Open Door Policies, shipping also underwent massive changes. Seafarers were looked up to if they showed their strength in technology or seafaring knowledge and skills. The introduction of the Captain Responsibility System in 1988 by the biggest shipping company (COSCO) liberated the industry from the Political Commissars and set a management example for other seafarers and shipping companies (Zhao et al. 2003 pp.17-8). As a result, China's

seafarers have since experienced decreasing external control over their personal spheres. Due to further reform and market promotion, the number of self-employed seafarers rose (Wu 2004).

Economic reform has also brought social, economic and political changes to Chinese seafarers, but those changes cannot alter the nature of seafaring. The constant isolation seafarers live with is unique. The frequent threats from nature disasters at sea bring a sense of unpredictability. While in the world's international fleets, the drive for economies and to remain competitive has led to the utilisation of new technologies. This has resulted in a number of organisational changes that have impacted upon the working lives of seafarers. Firstly crew sizes have been drastically reduced, so that ships operate with minimum crew onboard. Secondly with quicker turnaround times in ports seafarers have little opportunity to get ashore and are more reliant on the charitable work of seafarer missions that provide transport, communication and recreation facilities. As a consequence a number of studies report that seafarers working in the international fleet suffer from social isolation, long working hours and high levels of stress (Leggate 2004; Kahveci 2003; Zhou and Zhang 2008; Wu 2005a). To work in such harsh conditions and to have repeated direct contact with religious seafarer missions might cause Chinese seafarers to seek comfort in religion or alternative belief systems. These themes will be developed in the course of the thesis.

The percentage of religious population among Chinese seafarers is unknown. After consulting the most relevant official working for a provincial branch of Maritime Safety Administration (MSA), it would appear that there are no existing official statistics relating to Chinese seafarers' religious beliefs.

However a study by Kahveci (2003) of sailing chaplains who spent time sailing on internationally trading ships, reported that seafarers found positive value in having a chaplain onboard. For Chinese seafarers it would be difficult to get such an experience when they sailed, but they had more experiences with seafarer missions.

The development of global labour market for seafarers involved seafarers around the world (Wu and Sampson 2005 p. 2). The cases of seafarers of other nations are about to help establish well a research study into the values and beliefs of Chinese seafarers. A UK report reveals many aspects of seafarers who visited British ports or were British (McKay and Wright 2007). BIMSC/ISF Manpower 2005 update reported an annual wastage rate of 8.5% among officers and 9.5% among ratings in merchant navy in the countries of OECD. Despite the inclusion of the retirement, the figures suggest high rates of turnover. The rapid turnover should not conceal long terms of services of many seafarers that 65% of merchant seafarers in the UK report had served for over 20 years. Many interviewees in the UK report found it difficult to transit from ship to shore because it resulted in a decline in income. This resulted in the old age profile of the European fleets when the fleets' young seafarers and cadets did not find seafaring attractive career and left. They started out with enthusiasm but quickly become disillusioned with realities of modern seafaring life (Gekara 2008; Gould 2010).

In response to the reasons for choosing to work at sea, the respondents of the UK report listed three most important ones: growing up in a seafaring area, the good opportunities offered by a career at sea, and the perceived opportunity for travel and adventure. The view of the merchant navy being considered as providing good career opportunities was held by non-UK seafarers from countries of few alternative job prospects. The opportunity to travel may be losing its appeal because of both the increase of cheap travel for the extended population and reduced time in port that glues seafarers to their vessels. In terms of safety, the UK report shows that merchant seafarers were 26.2 times more likely to have a fatal accident at work than other British workers.

3.2 Summary

Chinese seafarers have gone through a particular route to come to their current state of increased affluence and liberties. Their original formation involved political purposes

when the New China's first batch of seafarers were revolted Nationalist merchant navy and China's first ocean shipping company was established abruptly to take home Chinese repatriates from Indonesia. Before the massive involvement of Chinese seafarers with the global seafarer labour market, through the years Chinese seafarers were carefully picked and trained to fend off any bad influences of the foreign lands. The political control over Chinese seafarers faded when the global seafarer labour market not only brought Chinese seafarers opportunities for increased affluences but also helped break the single state employment of Chinese seafarers with China's existing seafarer labour market. This Chinese seafarer labour market defines Chinese seafarers into different categories some of which, such as free-lance Chinese seafarers, fell out of the political control. Alongside the development of Chinese seafarer labour market came the rural/urban distinction within Chinese seafarers. All of which are highly relevant to the story of Chinese seafarers' values and beliefs.

Chapter four: Research methods

The introduction chapter has explained that this thesis is about the examination of Chinese seafarers' values and beliefs in a period of dramatic economic and political change in order to shed some light on the nature of this transformation taking place in China due to its Open Door Policies of 1978. As such, I have discussed the life in China before the transformation and some consequences. Following the introduction, I reviewed the values of the Chinese in the contemporary history of China with Chapter Two. Chapter Three introduced the occupational group – Chinese seafarers – who have been selected as the focus of the study designed to answer the research questions. Indeed, this thesis investigates the values of Chinese seafarers, and religion the seafarers encountered, perceived and practiced. In short, I aim to discover whether the investigation helps us to shed some light on the changes China has been through as well as the trajectory of Chinese society and culture.

4.1 Research questions

Defining and identifying research questions is an essential prerequisite of research design. I anticipated that the research questions might evolve as my ideas developed once the research was underway. I have introduced the research questions in Chapter One as:

1. How have Chinese seafarers experienced the increased affluence and new liberties (some freedom in thought and belief) which have accompanied transition in China?
2. How do seafarers feel their lives have changed over the period, in particular, how do they feel increased affluence and new liberties have affected their levels of satisfaction and feelings of wellbeing?

The first question is partly addressed in Chapter Three. It will be fleshed out by some of the things my respondents say in the later findings chapters. It deals in matters of

fact such as the relative position of seafarers in Chinese society: incomes, job opportunities, and consumption patterns. It also deals with the way in which Chinese seafarers have experienced the loosening of Chinese Communist Party control over peoples' beliefs, their expression of opinions and their behaviour. This aspect is also fleshed out in Chapters Five, Six and Seven where respondents discuss the relaxation of controls, for example the changes in the roles of political commissars on board Chinese ships. The second question is to do with attitudes, beliefs and values and is addressed in finding Chapters Five, Six and Seven. It is here that we will also find out if the evidence on levels of subjective wellbeing suggests there is the straightforward correspondence between sustained economic growth and improved wellbeing implied by writers such as Inglehart and Klingemann.

These research questions informed the fieldwork. In my searches of the relevant literature I found studies of China which utilised large-scale surveys. The difficulty of constructing a sampling frame when there are no reliable and accessible administrative records of Chinese seafarers, and the practical problems of administering a questionnaire to seafarers, might seem to rule out such methods from the start. There are, however, even more fundamental reasons why survey methods may not be appropriate for this study.

Given the tremendous differences between advanced countries and China in terms of ideology, the way their people are governed and the level of economic, political and social security, it is as well to remain sceptical about the difficulty of attaining representative samples of many sectors of the Chinese population. In addition, we must bear in mind the relative unfamiliarity of Chinese people with opinion surveys. One hundred per cent response rates are common where surveys carry the authority of an employer or other authority figure when survey conductors have access to the Guanxi (see section 2.2.2) with the employer or the authority figure but other surveys may produce very low response rates in lack of Guanxi. Moreover, scepticism about sampling might be extended to the interpretation of the results of surveys conducted in China.

Because of these differences, and particularly the fact that Chinese people may still sometimes be wary of expressing themselves freely, the case of China might not be suited to the enormous use of the quantitative methods used in developed countries. As such, I used qualitative research methods to investigate the values and beliefs of Chinese seafarers. This section has explained some of the problems which may be associated with using quantitative methods to research people's behaviour, attitudes and beliefs in China. In the next section I will explain why these problems can be minimised by using qualitative methods. Of course, qualitative methods like participant observation and semi-structured interviewing have their own drawbacks, especially the difficulties they pose to qualitative researchers trying to decide if any of their findings might be generalisable to the wider population from which their sample is drawn. Nevertheless, qualitative methods do offer positive benefits to this kind of research study which quantitative methods do not

4.2 The benefits of qualitative research methods to the project

Qualitative methods can be used to explore the meanings of social actors' life by interviews. Quantitative methods however, are more useful when gathering information about large numbers of people which can be subject to statistical analyses. Where possible, social scientists often attempt to benefit from the synergy created by integrating both methods.

The main theme of this research project is to find if the values of Chinese seafarers reflected the transition of China's economy and cultures. Under this umbrella, this research project had to go deeper and tried to investigate values and religion in respect of Chinese seafarers. The subjective wellbeing of Chinese seafarers was one more element to be studied to evaluate if there is the straightforward correspondence between sustained economic growth and improved wellbeing. Qualitative methods can be used to describe social processes in great depth and detail. Through conducting

in-depth interviews, qualitative research offers the best hope of finding the meanings which people hold in their lives (Ezzy 2002). They enable more complex aspects of a person's experiences to be studied. The participants in qualitative research are able to provide data in their own words and in their own way. This allows qualitative researchers to overcome restriction or assumptions placed on data collected in quantitative research in which participants are limited to a set of questions only. The set of author-centred questions just gives the participants freedom to weigh the level of importance or degree of their agreement regarding the questions. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research allows participants to elaborate freely on a subject an author wants to investigate.

Qualitative research is the most appropriate for this research project. It is very difficult to cover aspects of a participant's values and feelings by simply asking him to answer to a set of scale questions. Moreover, a participant's experiences are not easily quantified. It is almost impossible to discover a participant's individual experiences with quantified questions if I want to investigate Chinese seafarers' encounters with missionaries or seafarers' way of religious practices. When qualitative methods are used in this research project interviewing in particular allowed me to gain access to those things. Semi-structured interviews have certain benefits by being less intrusive to the interviewee due to the two-way communication. When interviewers initiate open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews, the interviewees are able to discover and elaborate on their perspectives and viewpoints in a relatively free manner. Therefore, in doing qualitative interviews, an understanding of the relationship between the informants and their environments can be developed using the informants' own discourses. Fine-textured information on the informants' beliefs, values and motives can be used to describe the relationships of the informants to their particular social contexts (Gaskell 2000 p.38-9). The advantages of gathering profound and wide-ranging responses from in-depth interviews are obvious in a project such as this. Subjects such as the meanings of life cannot be encompassed by a list of author-oriented questions or be measured on Likert scales. The informants'

own feelings and reflection of their every day life are what this project needs to collect if I am to answer the research questions.

In my semi-structured interviews I had to give permission, and reassurance, to my respondents to explore and reflect in a way that they might not normally do. In this way, the success of the interviews hinged on my ability to get the respondents to think more deeply than they ever would when filling in a social survey (and does so about subjects they are not necessarily used to thinking about, or talking about). In effect, the method I used is an illustration of the major focus of the research study: I am helping my respondents to explore their new freedoms in a way they may have not done before (through structured conversation in an interview).

At a more general level, there is room for qualitative sociology in the study of beliefs and values and any change in these in relation to rising prosperity. A classic study does this (Bellah 1996).

There is also the religious dimension to my work and qualitative methods have been invaluable here too, for example in Wallis's study of Scientology which would not have been amenable to quantitative methods at all (1976).

Alan Clarke suggests (2001 p.34) that a rapport needs to be established with informants in order for the researcher to extract the subjects' reflections on, and deeper feelings about, their values and wellbeing. The best way to achieve such a rapport is through an in-depth interview which involves an enormous exchange of thoughts between interviewers and interviewees. Therefore, this is one of the most commonly-used data-collection techniques in qualitative research. Because of the complexity of qualitative data collection, I had to analyse the collected data at length to extract the meaning. Rather than targeting a specific number of interviews at the outset, the decision to recruit further interviewees is determined by the level of saturation where no new or relevant data emerge from interviews. Therefore, it is not necessary for this project to recruit a large number of informants. A micro-level

perspective emphasising and exploring the social settings of Chinese seafarers and their wellbeing was adopted. This micro-level research also meant that the research focuses on individuals.

Although they are deemed to be the best way to acquire data on human meanings, qualitative methods do have limitations. Meaning can be difficult to grasp and it changes, sometimes in subtle ways, according to its various social settings and the nature of the context. Qualitative researchers need to be aware of the need to recognise nuances of meaning and to exercise skill, patience and wisdom throughout their projects (Ezzy 2002 p.3; Morse 1998 p. 66).

4.3 Interview design and pilot interview

An effective and most commonly-adopted tool of qualitative research is individual interviewing (Bauer et al. 2000 p.7; Ritchie 2004 p.36). This project used in-depth interviews with open-ended questions for informants to articulate their feelings, and experiences about their particular social setting. During the 2006/7 academic year of my MSC taught course, a trial of six pilot interviews had been successfully accomplished with the guidance of my supervisors. Sampson has argued the use of pilot interviews in qualitative research can be of considerable value (2004 p.392). This section draws on the knowledge gained from the six pilot interviews to describe the design of interviews tailored for this research project. It is apparent that a well-prepared interviewer is important for conducting interviews to meet the aims or objectives of the research project (Gaskell 2000 p.40).

4.3.1 Adapting to the semi-structured interview

Qualitative methods have been chosen for this research project and interviews are the best instrument. Ethnographic methods, such as participant observation, would not have been appropriate because the research questions require the elicitation of responses that will only occur rarely in the course of normal everyday life. In

particular, the semi-structured interview allowed me to investigate seafarers' wide-ranging responses in detail, and clarify what is less elaborated by the informants (Gray 2004 p.214). As Robert Weiss claims:

We can learn also, through interviewing, about people's interior experiences. We can learn what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions. We can learn how events affect their thoughts and feelings. We can learn the meanings to them of their relationships, their families, their work, and their selves. We can learn about all the experiences, from joy through grief, that together constitute the human condition (Gubrium and Holstein 2002 p.9).

An aide memoir helped realise the core purpose of the pilot semi-structured interviews. An aide memoir helps stimulate respondents to elaborate more on relevant topics so that the research questions are addressed. However, the components of the aide memoir should not prevent the informants from answering what the research project probes. The open questions of the aide memoir must be explicit and concise; nonetheless, they must be understandable and answerable. The first draft of the aide memoir consisted of six pages whereas the final aide memoir (see below) for the pilots had been compressed into three pages with increasing focus on the core issues. The final aide memoir comprised five parts: the background of becoming a seafarer; on board experiences; alongside activities; domestic concerns while sailing; and issues of risk, danger and belief.

Aide memoire for the conduct of the semi-structured interviews

Heading One	Please introduce yourself? + becoming a seafarer.
Supplementary Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age, Previous education & work experience • Your decision to be a seafarer • Your images about the life and work on board before joining
Remember to	Explore the <i>meaning</i> that the respondent attached to important events

	in their career and life events.
Heading Two	On board
Main Questions	Your life on board? What is it like for you?
Supplementary Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working condition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --- What do you get out of your work? --- The costs and benefits of working at sea • Relations with others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --- During working – cooperation/conflicts --- Working with multinationals and your reflection --- Your views on a religious person --- Knowledge about different religions? (food etc) --- Did the religious crew see differently to you? • Spare time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --- Social activities --- Topics – heated or desultory --- Reflect when being alone • Comments on political commissars
Heading Three	Alongside period
Main questions	Do you get much opportunity to go ashore?
Supplementary Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities ashore <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --- Specific places to visit (church going, activities) --- Your reflection after going to pub/club/ parties --- Meeting different people, your attitudes to them --- Approached by people from religious groups --- Missionaries at port; seafarers centres(language) ---Commissars' role in the reception of missionaries --- Domestic religious policies and any points about comparison
Heading Four	Domestic concerns while voyaging
Main questions	Being at sea for 9 months, is this an issue for you?

<p>Supplementary Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with family <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --- Missing family while being alone • Family <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --- Things to worry about --- Do you blame yourself? (Guilty?) --- How do you make a decision to cope with? (spiritually)
<p>Heading Five</p>	<p>Risk, danger, and belief</p>
<p>Main questions</p>	<p>Have you experienced or heard of any risk or danger?</p>
<p>Supplementary Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural & Other human related dangers; hindsight and reflection • Long working hours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --- Tired / fatigued? Do you think of your life? • Illness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --- Worry about being far from medical help on ship --- Sick on board ship? How did you feel? • Have you ever reflected on your life as a seafarer? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --- Your changes through your seafaring career? (spiritually, economically or behaviourally) --- Do you see there is meaning in life? • Religion / Values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --- Definition of religion in your own terms --- Rational or down to earth person (spiritual and social identity) --- Higher power? And what is it? --- Fortune telling, temple visits and the like --- Do you have religion? --- Your religious practices --- How do you try to live your life? --- Do you have friends who are religious?

	<p>--- Reflection on religious practices</p> <p>--- For you what makes something right/wrong?</p> <p>--- Where do you get your values / principles from?</p> <p>--- Your reflect on healing rituals, funeral rites etc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your own philosophy in life or on board <p>--- Your way to get on with people and deal with appraisal, happiness or difficulty etc.</p> <p>--- Do you think fate is in charge of life?</p> <p>--- Now I would like to ask you some final question about your thinking of your future?</p> <p>--- What do you hope to do with your life?</p> <p>--- Picture that you have decided to retire. How do you feel your time spent on board? What have you accomplished with your seafaring profession?</p>
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Before the pilot aide memoir was finalised, I conducted an experimental interview with my Chinese colleague at SIRC (Seafarers International Research Centre) while my SIRC supervisor observed. This experiment provided adequate training for the pilot interviews undertaken in China and also prompted my supervisor to alert me to some critical points in doing a better interview. One suggestion was that I should not follow the sequence of the aide memoir questions so strictly that I would lose further information relating to the research. I could be capable of grasping the meanings delivered by interviewees and furthermore exploring research-related information by asking deeper questions in respect of the interviewees' previous answers (Gray 2004 p.216). The need for flexible and adaptive practices in the pilot work would be beneficial to me (Sampson, 2004 p.393). At the same time, my application for ethical approval was underway and was approved by a letter signed by the Chair of the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee before I left for China during the New Year of 2007. With the help of my supervisors, the Consent Form (Appendix

one) and Information Sheet (Appendix two) in both languages had been prepared as well. They were later used in the main fieldwork too.

The Information Sheet is necessary to help build rapport with the interviewees. I earned the respect of the informants for giving them adequate information about the research, such as information about me, the purpose of the interview, the questions being asked and confidentiality of the informants (Ackroyd 1981 p.78). Conversely, the Consent Form is to reassure informants to show their willingness to take part in the interviews, and to make clear the informants' right to withdraw without giving a reason.

4.3.2 Sampling

Sampling was not thought to be a big problem before I went on fieldwork to launch a pilot trial. My original plan was to randomly ask seafarers to take part in interviews at the hall of the Maritime Service Centre of Dalian, a large seaport city in North-East China. I was optimistic about recruiting adequate interviewees for pilot interviews, but it was not the case in reality. The Maritime Service Centre is new and comprises many government institutions of the maritime sectors and therefore allows seafarers, shipping enterprises or maritime industrial agents to get their businesses done in one place rather than having people shuttle between different places as it was a couple of years ago. Because these were pilot interviews, a small number could have easily served the purpose if there had been willing seafarers. I chose a quiet café as the venue to do interviews. In the morning of 4th January 2007, I appeared at the entrance to the hall of the service centre at ten o'clock. I was dressed decently, and politely approached seafarers who had just finished their business at the seafarer service counters. Although I had the confidence to invite seafarers for an interview of about 45 minutes and had asked eighteen seafarers in two hours, no seafarers agreed to take part. Six were trading domestically and their ships were also in the port, two of them were going to leave for boarding their ships in a few days and the rest of them

admitted their seafarer status with reluctance to go further. They all told the same story: they did not have time. From the failure at recruiting these would-be-informants, I learnt that a back-up mechanism is essential. In addition, this lack of success in recruiting interviewees further alerted me to potential problems in accessing Chinese seafarers who work for the state-owned shipping companies; I needed to know beforehand if there were company regulations prohibiting the companies' seafarers from taking part in such an interview relating to wellbeing issues, including religion. However, the first pilot interview was accomplished that afternoon in the flat of a Political Commissar who sailed with me years ago. The number of pilot interviews was set to six with mutual agreement between my supervisors and me.

When the entire data collection for this research project had been finished, there were twenty-nine interviews (including the six pilot interviews) attended by thirty Chinese seafarers (see table below for their demographic information). Among the thirty seafarer participants thirteen were under the age of thirty-five (inclusive of thirty-five) whereas seventeen were older. I draw a thirty-five year-old line because those older seafarers experienced more of the country's transition. On the contrary the young seafarer generation lived almost in the increasing affluence of the country. There cannot be a definite demarcation but the thirty-five year-old line is relatively helpful in the thesis. There are seven seafarers of rural origin and six of urban origin in the young group. The older group has ten seafarers of urban origin and seven coming from countryside. Ratings were less presented in the sample and there were five of them among thirty. The thirty participants consist of twenty state-owned shipping companies' seafarers, seven freelancers, a migrant worker of a state-owned shipping company, a seafarer of a state-owned manning company, and a seafarer who had been working for a Taiwan company after his graduation. I will identify each respondent by their interview number in the table. I will also add a little demographic information each time – typically rank/occupation and whether rural/urban origin – when I cite their opinions.

Demographic information of interviewees

Interviews	Age & rank	Rural & urban origin	Qualification	Remarks
1	30 Engineer	Liaoning rural	Maritime college	State owned shipping co
2	40 Captain	Dalian* urban	Maritime university	State owned shipping co
3	2 x Captains 37, 39	Dandong rural	Maritime college	State owned manning co
4	37 Captain	Liaoning rural	Maritime university	State owned manning co
5	26 Chief Mate	Henan rural	Maritime university	State owned manning co
6	27 Chief Mate	Henan rural	Maritime college	State owned manning co
7	37 Captain	Heilongjiang urban	Maritime university	Former party member/Taiwan co
8	35 Chief Mate	Liaoning rural	Maritime college	State owned shipping co
9	35 Chief Engineer	Heilongjiang rural	River navigation college	Freelance seafarer
10	42 Captain	Dalian urban	Maritime university	Party member/State owned shipping co
11	45 Captain	Beijing urban	Maritime university	Buddhist & Qigong/State owned shipping co
12	2 x Oilers 44, 45	Dalian urban	Secondary school	State owned shipping co
13	36 Engineer	Hebei rural	Maritime college	State owned shipping co
14	35 Engineer	Shandong urban	Maritime university	State owned shipping co
15	42 Pump man	Liaoning rural	High school	Migrant worker of state-owned shipping co
16	30 Officer	Dalian urban	Maritime college	Freelance seafarer
17	40 Officer	Shandong rural	Maritime college	Freelance seafarer
18	42 Officer	Henan rural	Wuhan university	Freelance seafarer
19	50 Electrician	Liaoning urban	Maritime college	Buddhist/State owned shipping co
20	40 Captain	Dalian urban	Maritime	State owned shipping

			training	co
21	50 Commissar	Liaoning urban	Ex-service man	Party member/State owned shipping co
22	35 Sailor	Dalian urban	High school	Christian/Freelance seafarer
23	35 Chief Mate	Chongqing urban	Maritime university	Humanism/ Freelance seafarer
24	35 Officer	Shandong rural	Maritime university	State owned shipping co
25	35 Chief Mate	Heilongjiang rural	Maritime university	State owned manning co
26	35 Engineer	Shandong urban	Maritime university	Party member/State owned shipping co
27	36 Captain	Liaoning urban	Maritime college	State owned shipping co
28	43 Cook	Dalian urban	Chefs' college	Buddhist/Freelance seafarer
29	Repeated interview	Of 22		Christian/Freelance seafarer

* Dalian where the interviews took place is a city in Liaoning province

Given the difficulties of recruiting seafarers to interview, it was decided that I could consider including the pilot interviews in my main sample. In consultation with my supervisors, it was decided that, since there had been no material changes in the aide memoire, and since the pilot interviews were chosen from the same occupational population, there was no major objection to this. The pilot interviews are included in the table above as numbers 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26.

During the main fieldwork, there was an occasion on which a pair came to the interview and it was impossible to arrange two different interviews in a row because it would be seen as unnecessary by the informants, one of whom was invited by the other rather than by me. On another occasion, two Captains were told by their manager to come to meet me, one soon sought an excuse to leave when the interview started. Among the thirty attendees one was interviewed twice. I will explain the reason later in the thesis. All seafarer informants were male. Women only became seafarers when a few were put on board deep sea trading vessels for two years as a showcase of the Chinese government in the 1960s. However, the best informants

should be those maintaining thorough relationships with the social setting they work and live in. Those showing their enthusiasm about telling their in-depth thoughts on the questions I wanted to ask and certainly those having adequate time to participate were also amongst the best informants (Johnson 2002 pp. 110-1).

4.3.3 Knowledge from the pilots

I was not successful in recruiting any seafarer informants at the hall of the Maritime Service Centre of Dalian in the pilot trial. This reminded me of an important fact which might hinder my plan to recruit and interview Chinese seafarers, namely that the Chinese are not used to being interviewed by strangers in the street. Acceptance of interview is common in the west but rare in China. To overcome this difficulty, I adapted by recruiting seafarer interviewees through my network. This failure also shows the lack of trust between the Chinese due to unrecovered Chinese morality from the era of the Cultural Revolution (see sections 2.1.2 and 2.2.4). This might create an unnecessary barrier in interviews. Indeed, in the fieldwork, at some points I faced distrust from informants at the start of their interviews. My patience, empathy and further explanation contributed to a better ending of the interviews.

As I was also a veteran seafarer, it was tempting for me to take seafaring experiences for granted and put my own interpretation into the interviews (Johnson 2002 pp.105, 108). To overcome this problem, I became versatile in interviewing without overriding the discourse of the informants. Perseverance was a quality for me to acquire and better fieldwork was done through a series of small tasks being accomplished one after another. Keeping field notes up-to-date helped me review what had happened and could contribute some subtle clues to subsequent interviews. It became clear that 'good researchers revel in the intellectual work of making sense of their data; they thrive on living with information, on being haunted by the puzzle of their data' (Morse 1998 p.67).

Enjoying my research work showed my credibility. It is relatively easy for an enthusiastic and robust researcher to build rapport with his informants. Nobody would be open in front of a dull researcher. Being an enthusiastic researcher would also facilitate the access procedures with the gatekeepers. Nonetheless, being very enthusiastic might have negative effects, i.e. the informants might tell me what they thought I wanted to hear if I was over enthusiastic and eager. In addition, I should be aware of the 'attitude-behaviour problem', by which informants would choose answers they reckoned would satisfy me whereas they would totally disagree with their answers without my presence (Procter 2001 pp.106-7).

A voice recorder was a useful tool in the interviews and in the pilots, a digital audio recorder was used. By recording the interviews, I was not only able to keep more eye contact with the informants to encourage them to elaborate but also concentrated on what the informants said and thus I was able to follow up with supplementary questions. Moreover, a clean, tidy notepad with a pen at hand always showed the informants my respect to the interviews, my research project, and most importantly the informants themselves. Before the interviews, I needed much preparation in terms of mental and material readiness: reviewing of the aide memoir, reassuring the availability of the informants, documents to be handed out or signed and the readiness of the digital voice recorder.

Practice is the best way to improve interview skills. Weaknesses are thus found and corrected and skills are improved. After the first two pilot interviews, I understood the ways of exploring the reasons behind the social behaviours of Chinese seafarers: sticking to the focus of the research questions and adapting to relevant open-ended questions. By locating the elements of research-related interests as well as adopting conversation techniques, helped me probe the informants' thoughts in detail. The pilot interviews also trained me to be confident about my interview skills as well as my research project in general. Moreover, thinking was an essential activity while doing research and a better piece of research explored what the data represented (Knight 2002 p.17).

4.4 The preparation of fieldwork and ethical discussion

Before the fieldwork took place in Dalian, the pilot interviews were already the part of preparation as they tested the research questions. The ethical approval for pilots needed to be re-applied and thus renewed. The aide memoir used in pilot interviews was tested to be a right tool for the main data collection. Therefore, the briefing with my supervisors before the fieldwork was very important (Arthur and Nazroo 2004 p.134). Because the core meaning of fieldwork should be its intent rather than its location (Wolcott 2005 p.58), some supplementary fieldwork could have been carried out in the ports of Britain if I felt the need to investigate some further questions after the closing of my fieldwork in China. However, it did not happen.

In this project, it was planned that the seafarer informants would come from three categories. Among a proposed number of thirty informants, ten would be from state-owned shipping companies, and among them five would come from 'base worker' seafarers (a term which is cited in Chapter Three); one third would be recruited from seafarer recruitment agents and the rest would be found among the group of self-employed seafarers by the method of snowballing. Thus the access was related to two kinds of gatekeepers: shipping companies and manning agents. In China, an agreement made between me and a gatekeeper for access could be altered if the person in charge left their posts. On account of this concern, I did not negotiate access with gatekeepers until one month before the fieldwork. It was hoped that would gain access to participants through my social network so I targeted agents and companies in Dalian and then my friends who worked in or had contact with these enterprises introduced me to the gatekeepers of these units for access approval. Rather than carrying on with this method in the fieldwork, I adapted another method because I failed to negotiate the access approvals. No management teams were interested in arranging their seafarers for me to interview although I was introduced through my social network. There was one occasion when I was introduced to a manning manager in a seafarer management office at a shipping company by a friend. The manager did

not allow me to explain further, after knowing I was there for the purpose of interviewing seafarers. Instead he let me go to the office the next day to do my interviews. He had two Captains on leave meet with me the next day and the Captains did not know why they came to their company building before seeing me. This was totally against the ethics of conducting research in sociology and made Informant's Consent redundant. This could be viewed as a single occasion. However, I believed that it actually revealed reluctant attitudes of the manning management staff. I had no control over interviews I wanted to be conducted in this way. As such, I recruited informants via my network of former shipmates and thereafter recruited further adequate numbers of informants by adopting the snowball method. Nevertheless, I sought every possible opportunity for conducting better fieldwork in Dalian in a space of three months from March to June in 2008.

Because religion was chosen to explore Chinese seafarers' values, there were reasons to be cautious. Religion is still very sensitive in China and the government has never encouraged its public growth. Hence, ethical issues were given careful consideration. These have always been the prominent concern in social research, especially in fieldwork. The British Sociological Association has drafted a Statement of Ethical Practice in which a series of obligations is set for its members to adhere to. Consequently, the members can be aware of potential problems and conflicts in the course of their research. However, the main purpose of the statement is to enforce the application of ethical judgements by its members in research rather than to impose an external package of standards on its members (British Sociological Association (BSA) 2002 pp.448-9). Ethics are compulsory requirements for researchers. Moreover, the social science researchers must willingly apply ethical standards to prevent research participants, sponsors and environments from being hurt and damaged. As the researcher of this project, while trying to achieve high professional standards in research, I was fully aware of the objective of the funding institution - Nippon Foundation - an institution aiming to advance knowledge. My commitment to the

principle of the Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC), Cardiff University remains firm as I also represent the postgraduate research programme at the centre.

Ethical issues have another central role in social research for upholding the legitimacy of research activities (May 2001 p.46). Copies of both Information Sheet and Consent Form were presented to the informants at the field interviews. This had the same purpose as the pilot interviews: informing the interviewees of the purposes of the research; the use of recording; the confidentiality of the data collected and the researcher's SIRC-Nippon Foundation fellowship identity. On top of these functions, these two documents gave informants their rights of withdrawal without giving a reason for withdrawing. Sometimes when asked about religion, some Chinese seafarers felt discomfort because they had been long inculcated into atheist thoughts. Therefore, attention was paid to their non-verbal expressions (Jones 1985 p.260) and questions had to be softened and clear in order to reduce their resistance to interviews. Interviews had to be stopped if I discovered unwillingness on any occasion. I was not an adviser or counsellor to the informants. On the other hand, protecting me from harm was also taken into consideration. Risk was unpredictable, and the interview content might anger the informants. Confronted by such occurrences, I would first acknowledge the informants' anger with respect and empathy and move to other topics if necessary (Lewis 2004 pp.70-1). In addition, I was careful of my bias, with or without intention, that I might allocate less time to ratings whereas be more generous with my time talking to officers. In order to eradicate such kind of systematic error, I tried to standardise my interviewing behaviour (Gray 2004 p.220).

Above all, ethics also facilitate the quality of the research. The time spent by informants unravelling their insight, feelings and privacy in interviews, would inform Chinese seafarers in the future. Moreover, the reflection of ethical issues in the interview design, data collection, protection of participants, safeguarding the researcher, and the like were a necessary practice throughout the development of the research project (Flick 2007 p.8). Finally, in remembering the participants' rights and

not letting collective interest override individual participant's rights, I had a duty to avoid treating participants as a means to an end.

4.5 Data collection and analysis

Data are essential part of any research and their quality is paramount. The data collection took place in the fieldwork but its success was also attributable to other activities I had been doing since the project was chosen. For example, reviewing the literature contributed to what questions the thesis would address and the research questions decided what I wanted to get out of the interviews. Hence, the orchestration of research objectives and questions are an important part of data collection. The research questions helped the project focus on particular social phenomena and therefore made the research project doable.

Interviewing tactics inform successful data collection. Very rational informants might be reluctant to talk while some informants are not good at expressing their feelings in words. My approach to interviews was helpful to both problems. Being relaxed and unself-conscious, I attempted to make informants feel at ease. Furthermore, I avoided extremes: I showed interest without being intrusive. For the latter informants, I personalised general topics so as to draw more underlying content from the informants (Fielding and Thomas 2001 pp.126-7). For instance, in order to get viewpoints on the role of the Commissars of the latter informants, I investigated how well the informants get on with their Commissars. If I believed that an interview caused a problem to the data collected, I tried to invite the related informant to re-visit the data in order to retrieve relevant information (Flick 2007 p.16).

Even though researchers accumulate piles of transcripts from their data collection, such enormous transcripts might not be conducive to analysis if the data were not carefully collected in the first place. The data analysis started when I began to ruminate what data would be relevant to the research and could be collectable. During the data collection, I did not wait until all data had been collected to conduct my data

analysis. Instead I did some analysis on the data soon after I had collected, translated and transcribed them so as to discover and notice unanticipated ideas. Consequently, I put the new ideas in the data collection and made them strengthen the research project as the data collection went on. This immediate rough analysis prompted me to pursue some new ideas both in time and in depth (Ezzy 2002 p.61). In addition, it reduced the workload of the final analysis as well. At data collection, I kept close contact with my supervisors especially when I started to do analysis. Keeping memos stimulated me to frequently reflect on my data and this practice sparked many thoughts for the research.

In this research project, because the target cohort is Chinese seafarers, the interviews must be translated into English from Chinese before transcribing. This might cause problems if done carelessly. To avoid addressing language differences was inappropriate. Taking stock of language differences, I understood ‘all researchers present accounts from their own social location and there is no way to make ‘objective’ knowledge claims from outside of your position in the social world’ (Temple 2005). Therefore, the transfer of meanings between two languages is conditional. Even so, I was able to constantly evaluate the cultural meanings that Chinese and English languages carry and made a decision to pick the right words in English. During the fieldwork I made use of a professional translator to see how close I could be in deciphering a Chinese interview. Below are two versions of translation of one paragraph of the Chinese transcription. The first version is my translation and the second is the work of the hired translator.

The foreigners joined the sea worship ceremony in Chinese Spring Festivals although the oil rigs belonged to a big state-owned enterprise. Once I worked on a Taiwanese ship, they also paid their deference to sea. In every year’s Sea God Festival, the deck department worshiped the ocean while the engine department worshiped the main engine and auxiliary engines. I happened to work on an oil rig when it was Spring

Festival. They dumped pig heads etc into the sea. People kneeled down and the foreigners did follow suit (Translated by the author; Interview 2).

Although the company was a huge state-owned enterprise, sacrifice-offering to sea should be held on the Spring Festival, and the foreigners took part in it as well. The Taiwanese also offered sacrifice to sea when I worked on a ship of Taiwan. In every Neptune Festival, the crew working on the deck worshipped the sea, and those working in the engine room worshipped the main engine and subsidiary engine. We used to spend the Spring Festival on the drilling platform. I once experienced that all things like pig heads were poured into the sea. We kneeled down, and the foreigners also kneeled down like us (Translated by a professional translator; Interview 2).

By comparing my translation with the professional's work, both have fully represented the accounts of the seafarer interviewee but mine is more succinct. I have made a great deal of effort to improve my capability in academic English. In fact, I have some experience of practical translation between Chinese and English. Because I was a seafarer for some time, I can understand even the nuances of meaning articulated by seafarers. However, I was also aware of not anticipating the articulations of seafarer informants while translating.

When I translated and transcribed the recording of the pilot interviews, some themes and categories loomed out of the data and gradually became clearer. Hopefully, I repeated this good practice when I dealt with interview data in the main fieldwork (Erlandson et al. 1993 P.109; Hammersley and Atkinson 1983 pp. 167-72). Further back, when I started my project I never lost sight of the peripheral jobs that revolve around data collection and analysis. The importance of analysis lies in how the data is coded, to be reduced into simpler and general categories. But one should ensure that he/she gains all information necessary rather than losing something essential. The data in this project collected from the pilot trial and fieldwork were coded so that themes

were picked out according to the research questions, whereas new hypotheses revolving round the research questions were used as sub-categories under the themes. Coding has a heuristic function. Therefore, I trained myself along the way by interacting with and interpreting the data I had collected. I have thus conceptualised the data and investigated the relationship between the data and research questions (Coffey and Atkinson 1996 pp.27-31).

The next step was the analysis of the interview data. The computer makes quantitative analysis very efficient in social science research, and has come into qualitative methods since the early 1980s. In qualitative research, the term CAQDAS (computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software) was coined by Fielding and Lee in 1991 (Spencer et al. 2004 p.206). In my MSC taught course, I was trained to use a CAQDAS package which is abbreviated as Nvivo. I planned to use Nvivo in this project to store and retrieve the data collected in order to interpret the data for the writing up of this research project. However, in the data analysis process of the pilot interviews, the data from the six interview transcripts had not been imported into the Nvivo software, because they were not a sufficient amount of data. As the manual analysis of pilot interview data had proved an easy and successful solution, I stuck to it during the major data collection and analysis for this research project.

I adopted three steps to analyse my interview data: intensive reading, categorisation, and comparison and contrasting of data. I anticipated that these three steps would lead me out of the labyrinth of the semi-structured interview data. Data reading involves checking meticulously over the transcripts with an intention to spot phenomenal aspects as well as marking them. This reading process started at data collection and was carried through to the completion of this research. In reading data, I selected what was most promising to the research questions and became aware of recurrences in order to investigate patterns within the data. The next step was to divide the data into categories according to their similar characteristics. At the start of this stage, I generated as many categories as could be taken into account, thus reflecting the exploratory character of the analysis. I then divided those categories into five groups,

each of which reflected one cluster of open questions on the interview aide memoir. Coding and noting of theoretical interests were simultaneously done. Coding was jotted down on the margins of the transcript sheets while noting was recorded on separate sheets of paper to avoid a convoluted result.

I asked what made the informants to become seafarers. I coded their answers as 'motives' and marked 'M' beside the answers on the transcript sheet. If their answer was rational, I put an 'R' behind the 'M' to make 'MR' as a rational motive for becoming a seafarer. On a separate sheet of paper, I noted MR followed by the number of interview and the line numbers of the answer on the transcript sheet. I gave numbers to the lines of speech on the transcript sheet. A retrieval system in a mind mapping configuration was also drawn on an individual sheet of paper. Ideas were put in the notes and investigated in the retrieval system. In the end, it was possible to condense all categories to the relevant categories. After categorising, the next step was to investigate the relationship behind these data categories. This was done by comparing and contrasting all essential parts of data under the umbrella of the same category. The relationship among categories was also investigated. Whenever overlapping scenarios were encountered, I made sure the decision of choosing one instead of the other was recorded clearly in the retrieval system. For instance, the extract from lines 85 to 100 in interview 22 denotes either the sailor's multilateral identity or his practical way in terms of spirituality. I put this scenario into the Identity category while linking the scenario to Practices category in the retrieval system. There will never be a single recipe for qualitative analysis (Boulton and Hammersley 1996 pp.288-94). However, doing and thinking encouraged me to improve.

Additionally, I needed to bear in mind the plausibility of informants' accounts during data collection and analysis. In fact, the recent trends of interviewing have become detached from the old-fashioned forensic approaches in which the credibility of informants' accounts was pursued. Instead, academic efforts today concentrate on understanding the informants' accounts. The purpose of understanding informants' accounts for me is to 'embody and reflect informants' own definitions, reflecting their

particular social positions and interests,' and 'to explore the complexities of the context' (Atkinson et al. 2003 pp.119-40).

The outcome of data analysis was the basis of the findings chapters of the thesis. But following the right methods in designing this research project and collecting the data does not guarantee the success of the research project. It is essential to give your ideas a concrete form in the final research report (Ezzy 2002 pp.140-1). Reading took up an important role in the writing of the project, in almost every stage of the research, such as reading through shipping companies' documents and governmental regulations about managing and controlling seafarers and their ideological evolution. Adequate reading also informed me about the economic, political and social transitions in China. To be a successful researcher, it is necessary to explore various sources of literature to draw out fruitful and meaningful thoughts in the writing up of the thesis. The representation of social worlds and the actors within them are the core of the research writing (op. cit., pp.108-10). 'Ideas must be nurtured and developed throughout the research process in journal entries, memos, new directions in questioning during interviews, literature searches and reflective moments. Time allows ideas to be explored, to be combined, pulled apart and recombined in thought' (Ezzy 2002 p. 141). In representing the data in context, the social world and its actors are understood in new perspectives.

This methodology chapter began by introducing the research questions. To answer these, qualitative research methods were chosen. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were seen as the best tool in collecting research data because they offered the greatest hope of finding the meanings held by people in their lives. Before the interviews were done, preparations had to be completed. This chapter explained the design of the interviews and the knowledge gained from the pilot interviews. Dealing with ethical issues was part of the preparations too. Regarding the preparation of fieldwork, this chapter focused on discussing the access dilemma. In the last section of this chapter, the data collection and analysis were discussed. In the next three chapters, the results of the data collection and analysis will be described.

Chapter five: Seafaring perceived by Chinese seafarers

Chinese seafarers reported having experienced a changing sense of self over time in response to the economic changes in China. Moreover, they also experienced different financial situations between when they joined the merchant navy and after they had benefited financially from years of seafaring. The increasing affluence of the country and the betterment of their own financial situations through the years of seafaring could be considered to provide a solid basis for Chinese seafarers to undergo a shift in their values. But as was reviewed, China has achieved affluence differently from western countries. To investigate whether and how values changed during the period of socio-economic reform, I examine how Chinese seafarers perceive their relative position in society, in terms of incomes, job opportunities, and consumption patterns. To start with, this chapter looks into the values of Chinese seafarers before or when they joined the merchant navy.

5.1 Motives for becoming a seafarer

In the past, it was not necessary to look into motives for becoming a Chinese seafarer. This is because, before the economic reform in 1979, Chinese people of working age had little choice about their jobs and geographic movements. Jobs had always been assigned by the authorities. After the reform this practice was phased out within several years, and since then governments have implemented drastic changes to lift restrictions on the migration of Chinese people. Rural Chinese are allowed to move to find jobs in the cities. And in these cities, due to the changes of the state policies, recruitment and employment orchestrated by the state has been changed. New graduates in the cities however, find jobs for themselves because no governmental bodies ever assigned jobs for them. A similar change took place with regards to seafaring jobs.

5.1.1 Rational thinking

In the interviews thirteen out of thirty interviewees referred to monetary gain as their reasons for becoming seafarers but only two of the thirteen were totally driven by financial advantages in the first place. These two were both mechanics. They came to the interview as a pair and one of them was in charge of conversing with me and the other mostly followed suit when I inquired about his points of view. Their decision to become seafarers was very straightforwardly connected to monetary concerns. Their backgrounds before joining the

merchant navy prevented them from promotion to officers' posts on board ships. Therefore, as a result of their lack of career prospects, they did not see much prosperity in their future. In giving reasons why they became seafarers, the reticent interviewee nodded his consent to what the main interviewee stated:

The major consideration was of financial advantages seafaring jobs could bring [Interview 12; two motormen of urban origin aged 44 and 45].

The above comment was made after a second attempt to push the interviewee to reveal his reasons for becoming a seafarer, because the first time he was asked he said he had no particular reasons. As such, it can be inferred that the interviewee wanted financial advantages when he decided to join the merchant navy.

In order to understand the financial advantages which seafaring jobs brought, I need to look at discrepancies between the payments of seafaring jobs and work in other sectors on land fifteen years ago. In particular, this chapter discusses the privileges seafaring jobs brought at the time when the interviewees decided to join the merchant navy.

Unlike the situation today, there existed a huge gap between a seafarer's salary and the monthly salary of a more highly-educated person on land in the late 1980s, when the government stopped allocating jobs. A 37-year-old Captain gave us a vivid comparison between his earnings and those of his sister:

For example, my elder sister was then a postgraduate in medicine working for a large hospital in 1989 and her salary was around equivalent US\$30 [per month]. I felt she could not make ends meet with her paltry monthly salary. Worse than her were my parents who were workers of a state-owned farm. They got about equivalent US\$10 [monthly] When I was about to graduate from a maritime university, a high official from a big state-owned shipping company came to give us seminars. He told us that a Third Officer at this time could earn \$300 per month. In comparison with the monthly salary of US\$30 my elder sister of the postgraduate qualification in medicine earned, I knew my salary was ten times hers [Interview 7; urban origin].

Given a couple of months on leave with less pay or without pay in the case of self-employed seafarers, Chinese seafarers who used to work for over ten months on a ship still earned more

than the elite on land. With few alternatives to higher paid jobs on land during that period, the majority of Chinese workers were unable to better their life. By comparison Chinese seafarers were satisfied with their substantial earnings. As such, seafaring jobs were viewed as lucrative enough to lure young graduates into the merchant navy.

Even in the late 1990s the attraction in terms of the financial rewards was still strong. For instance, one interviewee, a maritime university graduate of 1995, told me that after working for two years as a civil servant for one of the Yangtze River Navigation Waterway Bureaus, he went to work on ships. Although part of the reason for his choice was the fact that he had acquired a Third Mate's Competence Certificate before he left a maritime university, financial advantages were still a big lure. Giving his reasons for converting to a seafaring career, he said:

At that time, my section in the bureau was better-off than other sections. Bearing in mind that I had just graduated from university and my job was good, I should have been satisfied then. But I thought that I could not broaden my views by working for the bureau. Lured by the monetary gain of seafaring jobs, I decided to leave the section and went to work on board ships [Interview 23; a 35-year-old Chief mate of urban origin].

As he had achieved what every Chinese university graduate dreamt of, a civil servant's post in a prestigious section of a government's bureau, he should not have wanted to become a seafarer. His choice to become a seafarer was beyond many people's understanding when he left his civil servant's job [Interview 23], which points to the strong attraction of seafaring careers at that time in Chinese society in terms of financial advantages.

When seafarers considered going to maritime schools, colleges or universities in the 1980s, Chinese society was still closed to the outside world and Chinese people lacked adequate commercial goods. Even though there were goods on sale, most people could not afford the high prices due to their modest earnings. By comparison, Chinese seafarers were able to smuggle exotic items into the country. Reflecting on his decision to select the seafaring job, one 40-year-old interviewee explained his admiration for his seafarer neighbour who had more exotic material possessions than the other non-seafarer people in the neighbourhood:

I lived in a community of a maritime university. My neighbour was a Commissar who worked on ships when I was in high school and his son was my classmate. It

was in the early 1980s when there were not many commercial goods on sale. In fact people could not buy many things even if they had enough money. Every time the Commissar arrived home from his ship either on leave or when the ship called into the port of the city, he would bring back various things and different kinds of foreign foods, more than enough to pack a car [Interview 20; a Captain of urban origin].

The foreign goods obtained by working as a seafarer were also reported by a Captain of 40-years-old from the city:

In 1983 and 84 when I was in a secondary school, one of my classmates had an ocean-going seafarer father. I found his shoes bought abroad by his seafarer father were better than those of other boys. I thought a seafaring job was not bad [Interview 2; a Captain of urban origin].

Why did the pair of shoes of his classmate impact on that interviewee? To understand this it is important to look at Chinese society in the 1980s. During this period every Chinese person was clothed in the same manner, for example, during winters in North China, people could not differentiate females from males because there were no differences and variations in the way they dressed. As a result of the monotonous dress code of the Chinese, a pair of foreign shoes bearing an outstanding design would attract the eyes of many people and the wearer was admired, especially by youth in school. Most importantly, seafaring careers were an easy means of helping people own such foreign objects.

Interestingly, the interviewees of rural origin did not show their admiration for foreign goods obtained by working as a seafarer when they discussed their decisions to choose seafaring jobs. The point may be that rural people, before becoming seafarers, did not have seafarers in their neighbourhood to make a comparison, because in the past seafaring jobs were taken mostly by urbanites. On the contrary, most urban seafarer interviewees were from the city of Dalian where the fieldwork took place. Because the city has remained one of the most important maritime cities in China, unlike the rural seafarer interviewees, the urban seafarer interviewees of the city had experienced a life surrounded and influenced by other seafarers from a young age.

In China, maritime universities were one of a few institutions to receive state subsidies, so that would-be mariners in the universities could complete their education at an extremely

reduced cost. This fact was taken into consideration by some interviewees. The relationship between career choice and education and training will be explored in greater depth in the next section.

5.1.2 Contingencies

Although the financial rewards of a seafaring career provided a clear incentive for many workers as a route out of poverty, for others the process was less a matter of deliberate choice.

In China it was very difficult for high school leavers lacking adequate social resources to change universities or pathways when their first choices in higher education had been rejected.

As one engineer recalled:

I was transferred from an electricity university to the maritime one without my consent because I put down ‘willing to accept other offers’ on my university application form. I did not know the maritime university at that time. I wanted to leave the maritime university after I had studied for one and half a years there. I just didn’t feel interest in the subject anymore [Interview 14; a 35-year-old Engineer of urban origin].

In his case he was forced into accepting a seafaring job at the end of his studies. The fact that he came from a town meant that dropping out of the university was possible. However, it would have been impossible for a rural candidate to leave his course because escaping from rural poverty would have been his priority.

In addition, sometimes governmental policies played a pivotal role in helping some rural populations gain access to seafarer training. It was hoped that the scheme would alleviate poverty in the areas when the rural trainees started seafaring careers and gave their earnings to their families. One petty engineer stated:

I was a farmer back at home for two years after leaving high school. Due to a poverty alleviation scheme initiated in our area by government, seafarer trainees were chosen from the countryside according to a quota.....I had heard of seafaring work before. I wanted to do it to earn some money [Interview 15; a 42-year-old Pump man of rural origin].



Poverty in rural areas has been an outstanding driving force stimulating rural populations to escape from the countryside. A rural seafarer with a strong sense of filial duty from Henan province elaborated:

At that time [2000-2001] the seafarer recruitment commercials on our local media made clear that a rating's average salary was above CNY 4000 [equivalent of about US\$500 per month]. I had a bit of this information when I was in high school. I had an opportunity to study maritime navigation when I was graduating. In order to change the situation of my family I chose to be a seafarer [Interview 6; a 27-year-old Chief Mate].

When asked what prompted him to be a seafarer, another interviewee said:

I am not very sure why. It was just that high school graduates in the countryside had to be successful in passing higher education entrance exams in order to get out of the countryside. I did not intend to go into the maritime sector for higher education but was selected [Interview 1; a 30-year-old Engineer of rural origin].

The choice of career path was sometimes complex and limited if it was made by rural high school leavers. The seafarer interviewees from rural areas knew little about other career possibilities in the cities apart from enrolling for higher education. It was easier for rural high school leavers to enrol at maritime universities or colleges for seafarer training courses than they did for other courses at universities or colleges. An interviewee of rural origin told of his dilemma at a turning point:

I really did not intend to do a seafaring job. Unfortunately I did not do well in higher education entrance exams in 1992 when I graduated from high school. Bearing in mind that I came from the countryside, I knew my future depended heavily on my performance in the exams because rural students would have no other ways to permanently leave the countryside if failing the exams [migrant workers' jobs in the cities are too harsh to be considered as an option]. As a result of my poor exam results, I had to either go to a navigation school or return to the countryside to do revision for another year. I chose a professional maritime college because I was tired of studies after many years of heavy schooling [Interview 9; a 35-year-old Chief Engineer of rural origin].

Unexpected events placed some unfortunate interviewees in difficult circumstances. Consequently, maritime studies were one of few options available to them and they started seafaring jobs at the end of their studies. However, other seafarer interviewees had rather different motives for wanting a seafaring job. The result of the Open Door Policies of China in the early years benefited only a few and most Chinese people were not granted adequate access to what the policies brought. In particular, the remote corners of China remained almost unchanged. As a result, China was closed to the outside world, and overseas travel for most Chinese was only a dream. During a period when frequent hijacking of flights to Taiwan was at its peak, a Chinese person needed the permission of a local government to buy an air ticket before their air travel in China. Thus, perhaps not surprisingly, one theme emerging from interview data was the curiosity of would-be-seafarers about the outside world which lured them to sea.

5.1.3 The lure of seafaring

As they had been deprived of commercial prosperity, cultural development and foreign contacts for years, the Chinese were excited about new things during the early years of the implementation of the Open Door Policies. Even though political structures and the party's economic oligarchy undoubtedly did not lose ground, things had changed in many aspects of people's daily life (see section 2.2.1). During the 1980s when foreign visitors were first allowed to come to China, they were sometimes besieged by hundreds of locals in the streets of big cities. That period showed that the stigma of being foreign could no longer be applied as it was before and during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) As discussed in Chapter Two foreigners in the past in China were often stigmatised. Thus, for example, the foreign missions were expelled after the liberation of 1949. Although the government at the beginning of the Open Door Policies wanted to bring the changes under their control, the Chinese continued to covet foreign prosperity and they were also fond of popular culture from Hong Kong and Taiwan whose fashion and music were the most loved (see section 2.2.1).

However, the rural Chinese were not substantially influenced by the outside world because of the governments' emphasis on urban development. In fact, the interviewees of rural origin were not keen to emphasise what the seafarer participants of urban origin relished in relation to overseas influences. More interviewees of urban origin expressed their curiosity about foreign lands as their reason for choosing a seafaring career, and they followed their curiosity

to begin seafaring jobs so as to explore the outside world. A 42-year-old Captain of urban origin, responding to questions about his motives for becoming a seafarer, said:

Seafaring was popular in 1981 in China. Little was understood about things overseas. Seafaring careers could offer an opportunity to travel around the world. It was out of curiosity [Interview 10].

These were similar accounts from urban interviewees.

I felt I could see more interesting things in the world, which seemed to be good [Interview 11; a 45-year-old Captain of urban origin].

I did not consider too much at that time. I thought that it [seafaring] should bring some benefits to me such as free travel and allow me to see the world [Interview 22; a 35-year-old sailor of urban origin].

You know during the 80s and 90s there were very few Chinese who could get chances to go abroad. I thought I could travel around the world while seeing different things to broaden my horizons [Interview 7; a 37-year-old Captain of urban origin].

The following quotation was given by a mariner with a university qualification. He had an urban background and became a seafarer in the 21st century after graduation.

It is a coincidence. I knew a bit about seafaring in my childhood because my father worked on a port tug. I sometimes went on board his tug and spent hours there. But there were differences between tugs and large vessels. It was probably because of my curiosity then driving me into seafaring until now [Interview 16; a 30-year-old Officer].

The resonance of the mariner's childhood experience of playing on board a tug sparked his curiosity about working on large vessels. In line with the curiosity of the above mariner, another seafarer was simply lured to sea in order to rise to the challenge. He went to a maritime university in the early 1990s and during several years of studies he had heard a lot of negative feedback from the returning alumni of the university. Although he knew a litany of their seafaring stories, such as boredom and the fact that it was difficult to rendezvous with a girlfriend, he decided to go to sea. He said:

And after two years, upon my graduation, I found it [seafaring] something challenging. You know, if you are a man, you have to do something challenging. And I decided to go to sea after my graduation. Actually, I had a lot of chances not to become a seafarer. I could directly go to study a master's degree [He achieved distinction so he was able to do a master's degree without exams] [Interview 25; a 36-year-old Chief Mate of rural origin].

The lure of seafaring is not particular to the Chinese as a UK report (McKay and Wright 2007) listed one of three most important reasons for choosing to work at sea as the perceived opportunity for travel and adventure (see section 3.1).

In contrast to the curiosity of the urban seafarers, the motives of a 37-year-old Captain of rural origin were slightly more practical:

My father once took me to visit a ship where we were served meals. I felt the good environment of the ship [Interview 3].

To look at why this interviewee of rural origin was touched profoundly by only one visit on board a ship at his younger age, social aspects of his early life will be examined.

5.1.4 The impact of Guanxi on decision making

It is agreed upon that social capital represents the capability of social actors to negotiate benefits from their membership in social structures. They have to invest their resources in order to generate and retain social capital (Portes 1998). Guanxi (see section 2.2.2) is the most common form of social capital in China. As admired jobs have almost always been found in the cities, this creates a paradoxical situation for rural populations when they want to seek the chance to move to cities. In the cases of the interviewees who came from rural areas, since their parents lived in the countryside and their parents' everyday life and theirs often depended on close networks of kin and friends of similar social stratifications, it was unlikely for them to extend their social network into cities. Becoming a seafarer was a way for them to move to cities for jobs if they wanted to move out of the countryside but did not want to work as migrant workers at construction sites in the cities or take other low paid jobs unwanted by city dwellers. Jobs at construction sites are seen as poorly paid, extremely tiring, dirty and thus undesirable. On the other hand, seafaring jobs gave them new opportunities as they could choose to go to maritime institutes to learn to become seafarers when they sat higher

education entrance exams or they could be selected when there was a government poverty alleviation scheme.

Assessing his strengths and weakness, a 35-year-old Chief Mate of poor rural origin stated:

I had a distant relative who was a Chief Mate and before I decided which college to attend he told me that seafarers could earn more than land workers. My overall mark in that year's university entrance exams was adequate for me to go to other universities. But I thought I did not have social relations [Guanxi] to deal with job hunting after graduating from a university that trains students to work on land [Interview 8].

In China, seafaring has been a means of allowing Chinese seafarers to earn more than the Chinese workers do on land. Nonetheless, it has not been favoured especially by the urban Chinese due to the isolation and deprivation of seafaring. Hence, maritime universities have been seen as universities of least competition to enter in comparison to schools that train candidates to work on land. Demand for seafarer officers has always existed (see Chapter Three) and to choose maritime universities or colleges obviated the worry of rural candidates whose little social capital would fail them in future competition for land jobs. Another informant reiterated a similar reason for him to attend a maritime school:

I applied for maritime study in a university in 1995 after graduation from high school. At that time I thought that being a seafarer would make me easy to find a job..... It was also due to the fact that I came from the countryside and a seafaring job was easy for me to earn my living.....I graduated from Wuhan University of Polytechnics [Interview 18; a 42-year-old Officer of rural origin].

The main mechanism of Guanxi is to maximise a person's social network in order to make important and complex aspects of the person's life less complex and more convenient. As a result, an individual may be able to circumvent standard procedures of an institution and have their needs fulfilled more easily and quickly. Otherwise the person has few chances or is not qualified. A university graduate of rural origin will have many difficulties in finding a job if their rural background does not grant them easy access to the network of Guanxi in the cities. Realising that they had no Guanxi to exploit in the cities, the two interviewees mentioned above decided on seafaring as it was less competitive. A further example given by another

interviewee referred to the way his elder sister used her *Guanxi* to find him a seafaring job in a state-owned shipping company:

My elder sister introduced me to work for the company..... [She] knew some people who were in charge and worked for that state-owned shipping company in the city [Interview 22; a 35-year-old sailor of urban origin].

Seafaring was not perceived by city dwellers as one of the best alternatives when they came to decide on a job, so seafaring was a less competitive job market in China. However, seafaring was not a free career open to everybody. With only a high school qualification in the city, the above informant lacked competence for better jobs on land. When his network of *Guanxi* functioned well and helped him become a seafarer, he took the chance.

Besides the impact of *Guanxi*, the research findings show that economic background is important to understanding why some Chinese go to work at sea. Among the interviewees, there are no seafarers coming from families of elite Chinese groups. At this point it is worth drawing attention to wider changes that have also taken place in the global seafarer labour market. As Chapman writes seafaring is no longer seen as an attractive career amongst more affluent workers in developed countries: 'It should now be clear that seafaring is increasingly becoming a career for people in poor nations. People do not want to go to sea if their living and working conditions on board will be worse than they are at home' (1992 p. 78). This is the case among countries, and it can also be true within a country, where there are enormous differences between localities, particularly the dichotomy between rural and urban areas. Rural populations are far behind their counterparts in the cities in terms of living and working conditions. In the eyes of most interviewees of rural origin, the conditions on board ships were far better than what they would have had if they had stayed and worked in the countryside. This also answers the reason for the practical motive of the Captain interviewee for wanting to become a seafarer after a visit to a ship with his father (see the last quote of the previous section).

In this section so far I have discussed a few reasons for helping answer why the informants chose to work at sea. Financial factors were found to be disproportionately stressed by seafarer informants of rural origin. Interestingly, Kahveci and Nichols (2006) study of car carrier crews found that 46% of respondents to their questionnaire identified 'better pay' as the reason for going to sea. And more recently a survey by the online organisation 'Shiptalk'

(Brown 2008) found that approximately 32% of UK seafarers were motivated to work at sea by money.

In comparison, Chinese seafarer interviewees of urban background identified the privilege and status, associated with their gain of exotic goods that were admired by other Chinese who had no access to such items in the 1980s, as motivation for becoming a seafarer. In terms of contingency, seafarer informants of rural areas faced situations out of their control when they were about to find a place for education and work. Since seafaring jobs were less competitive than decent land jobs in the cities, some rural candidates were dragged into seafaring. For informants of urban origin, in their hope to broaden their horizons, they chose to work at sea on top of financial benefits brought by seafaring.

5.2 Seafaring challenges

In the following sections I shall demonstrate how the participants referred to the challenges they faced and how they saw their sense of detachment from the rest of civil society when they discussed their seafaring life. I will see that this is significant for understanding their sense of losing ground in society.

The reasons given by most interviewees for choosing this career were largely related to the belief in the financial advantages seafaring jobs could bring. Seafaring jobs did bring the financial advantages and allowed interviewees to enjoy a lifestyle of relatively high standards for them and their families. Such a lifestyle was only valid in the eyes of interviewees when they compared it with the life of average workers on land. If they compared themselves with the newly rich Chinese the interviewees became less complacent about their status.

Consequently, the seafarer informants presented their current careers in disadvantageous terms. Seafaring characteristically revolves around extensive isolation in terms of space and social forms. As soon as vessels are put out at sea, people working on them are separated from the life on land. As such, isolation cannot be avoided. Isolation will always have a symbiotic relationship with seafaring. Since isolation stops seafarers from seeking solace in the company of friends and families, after a period aboard, seafarers often become bored, irritated and exhausted [Interviews 4, 8, 9, 12, 15, 19, 24, and 26]. Therefore, separation and the nature of seafaring can present unwanted elements on seafarers as the halo fades away. Such elements are seen by the interviewees as disadvantages.

5.2.1 Disadvantages

In order to explicitly present the downsides of seafaring, I derived three general categories after careful investigation of the interview data. Therefore, the disadvantages are categorised as: detrimental to individuals; harmful to families; and having a negative effect on social integration.

5.2.1.1 Detriment to individuals

Detriment to individuals' factors are those aspects directly relating to being aboard and working on a ship. They impact on Chinese seafarers in various ways. The detriment can be physical, such as hot and unpleasant working environments in the engine room and its constant unbearable noises [Interview 1 of a 30-year-old engineer and interview 9 of a 35-year-old Chief Engineer], or the entire accommodation area on board a ship which exposes people to unavoidable noise, not least from the ventilation [Interview 6; a 27-year-old Chief Mate]. Seafaring jobs are also associated with mental disturbance such as loneliness created by social and physical isolation on board ships [Interview 4 of a 37-year-old Captain and interview 6]. Often, a single element of detriment has physical as well as mental influences on a seafarer, and the synergy of both wears the interviewees out very easily. For example, illness on board ships is distressful, causes discomfort and bodily pain and, moreover, if the ship is far from any land, rescue is out of the question. It is too far for a helicopter to reach a ship and fly an ill seafarer back to its land base. Worst of all, the ill person does not know what is going to happen as nobody onboard is capable of treating his illness. One seafarer gave a vivid account of a dreadful passage of the days at sea during the peak of another sailor's pain:

Illness is dreadful on board ships. I have not been sick on board any ship. But more than a few seafarers experienced illnesses on board ships. It was vulnerable when they became ill at sea. I have witnessed several cases in nine years of my seafaring career. There was one case that one Chinese sailor suddenly got pain in his head four months ago. He could not get to sleep as a result of the pain. Although there were medicines on board the ship, they were limited to the treatment of normal health problems and could not cure the pain in his head. The pain was neither due to alcohol consumption nor excitement, and it was not due to

a stroke as well... As soon as the ship arrived in Japan, the sailor was sent to a hospital for a brain scan and it was an infection inside causing his excruciating pain. The sailor was signed off then. The bad thing was that it was right in the middle of the Pacific Ocean when he suffered the headache. There were two weeks before the ship could arrive in Japan. He could have died from the infection if it had progressed very badly because no helicopters could reach us. It was totally helpless at that time [Interview 23; a 35-year-old Chief Mate of urban origin].

Three other interviewees highlighted the vulnerability seafarers felt in relation to illness on board ships:

I once saw a seafarer suffering from acute appendicitis on board a ship. There wasn't a doctor to give him an appendectomy when the appendicitis was getting worse. I worry about such an issue. Even though seafarers had medical examinations done before they signed on, the medical examinations did not guarantee that the unexpected does not take place on board ships [Interview 4; a 37-year-old Captain of rural origin]

I am worried sick. At the time of acute illness, it all depends on chances. If acute illness happens near or in port, patients can be immediately sent to a hospital. [At sea] there will be no way to save the life of seafarer patients if they suffer acute illness. For instance, if a seafarer suffered acute appendicitis on board a ship at deep sea, there would be no solution to the illness. Even Masters and Chief Mates have learnt advanced medical care required by some regulation, they dread to operate on a live human body [Interview 6; a 27-year-old Chief Mate of rural origin].

Interviewer: You said in the past that you have got malaria in Africa. Was it dangerous?

Interviewee: Yeah. It was. I passed out when the ship was two days away from a port of Africa. When I woke up in a hospital a few days later, I knew that the danger had just left me [Interview 24; a 35-year-old Officer of rural origin].

Illness is truly dreadful to seafarers at sea, but it affects only one person at a time. Heavy weather and its consequences affect all seafarers. Before I look at the fear and anxiety brought

by extremely bad weather, two accounts of individual encounters with rogue waves in rough weather paint a vivid picture:

I was once buried by a giant wave when I worked on deck a few years ago. It was very easy to send me overboard as the water retreated. Fortunately there was no casualty in that incident [Interview 3; a 37-year-old Captain].

I have experienced one incident which was very dangerous. I was knocked down onto the deck by a rogue wave. We had finished the work of cleaning ballast tanks and were coming out onto the main deck collecting tools and accessories. I saw a giant wave forming besides the bow and the ship rolled into the wave adding synergy, so I dropped things in my hands and ran to the centre of the deck where the wave hit me and knocked me flat on the deck. Fortunately, the volume of seawater was not in large quantity when it thinned out reaching the centre of the deck. Otherwise, I should have been pulled into sea by the retreating seawater. A Philippine carpenter near the edge of the deck held onto a bollard to save his life [Interview 7; a 37-year-old Captain].

Including the explosion witnessed by the seafarer in interview 15 on board his first ship causing three deaths, there were three reports of life threatening situations from informants. Seafaring clearly involves severe danger.

Rather than life threatening, seasickness was experienced in less dramatic terms. Simply put, one seafarer said:

My familiarization voyages took place on a passenger ferry when I was sophomore. The first voyage was just wonderful on the ferry but the return voyage was a hell to me. There was a rough sea and the ship rolled violently. I simply couldn't help vomiting. At that time I thought seafaring was awful work and not worth trying. After I joined the state-owned shipping company I went to work on a small cargo ship of 5000 dead weight. I had gone through the same episodes of hell again. I thus went to the company to inform its manning team of my withdrawal from signing on small vessels [Interview 13; a 36-year-old Engineer].

Although bad weather caused seafarers seasickness, the real danger is the cost of life and assets. Advanced technology has made shipping safer than in the past. However, technology

cannot stop ships being caught in severe weather and rendering the seafarers in danger.

Another seafarer said:

On a tanker voyaging from Japan to Russia in winter, the ship was confronted by a winter storm of scale 11, so the ship rolled at a maximum angle of 40 degrees. The fridge in my cabin was pried out of its place and rolled back and forth across the cabin floor. The ship went on swaying madly for twenty hours. Some seafarers stayed in their cabins awake in life vests during the period. It was very dangerous. Sometime the ship rolled to one side and was reluctant to roll back for a while. There were three small ships calling for help nearby but we were in danger ourselves and therefore, they only sought mercy of the heaven. We had received their distress signals but could not offer any help [Interview 14; a 35-year-old Engineer].

This is one of many dangerous situations endured by interviewees in bad weather. Other disadvantage seafaring causes: loneliness. This is characteristic of seafaring and there is no proven solution to cope with loneliness [Interview 9 of a 35-year-old Chief Engineer].

When people have bad moods, they can mitigate their bad moods by finding friends or going some place. But on board ships, you have to bear with unpleasant things, and it is inconvenient to find kindred spirits to talk about the unpleasant things. Thus seafarers tend to keep the unpleasant things inside [Interview 26; a 35-year-old Engineer]

Since there is no conduit to release bad moods, after a period on board a ship, tension within seafarers often mounts [Interview 2 of a 40-year-old Captain]. Equally, seafarers' abstinence from sex gives them a quick temper [Interview 19 of a 50-year-old Electrician]. It is thus understandable that ennui and emptiness kicks in when seafarers have spent months at sea [Interview 6 of a 27-year-old Chief Mate]. In some cases, things can go very wrong:

I heard one incident happening on a Chinese crewed ship I boarded afterwards. In relation to handling crew's food allowances, the boatswain stabbed the Captain on the lap with a knife during a quarrel. The antibiotic drugs were soon used up in a few days after the stabbing. It was horrendous for the Captain to endure the pain and desperation at sea... Like me as freelance seafarer, there is another

disadvantage that I do not know the origin and competency of the crews I will work with before I board ships [Interview 16; a 30-year-old Officer].

In seafaring, there are many times when the inevitable takes charge. For another freelance Chinese seafarer, he is always in danger of ending up with corrupt and under trained crews. This brought him to the verge of injury a couple of times due to the lack of competence of the crews he worked with [Interview 18 of a 42-year-old Officer].

As there is no backup for any post on board ships, seafaring incurs another form of the inevitable. When in an emergency or other shipping operations, seafarers can be deprived of sleep for a couple of days because their jobs need them to be on duty constantly [Interviews 3, 6 and 17]. As there is no backup, seafarers who are ill will normally not have a break [Interview 9 of a 35-year-old Chief Engineer]. Other scattered complaints involve the detriment to individuals in terms of diet: lack of vegetables and bad food [Interviews 2, 7 and 22]. Nevertheless, now I have discussed the most prominent disadvantages which are detrimental to individuals, I can consider how seafaring jobs bring harm to families.

5.2.1.2 Harm to families

A family is the smallest unit of society or community. The fundamental components of a family are the wife and husband, and it is essential to put them under one roof. To separate one from the other violates the spirit of family. In China, almost all seafarers do not have the privilege of bringing their families aboard. Thus, separation is a big issue.

Starting a family involves finding a person of opposite sex. The two people also need time to build up the relationship before they can marry to begin a family. An unmarried seafarer worried that seafaring breaks the norm of this pre-marriage stage [Interview 6 of a 27-year-old Chief Mate]. For married seafarers, as the contracts for which Chinese seafarers work are usually long, the men have no other choices but leave their spouses and children behind for a long time. As a result, their spouses lose the company of their husbands [Interview 3 of a 37-year-old Captain and interview 17 of a 40-year-old Officer]; and the seafarers' families are not well looked after while the husbands are at sea usually for over ten months of a contract [Interviews 9, 13 and 21]. The worst consequence of the separation can be divorce:

I mean nowadays it [the hardship of a seafarer's family] happens more often than previous because the life and the quality of life are changing. Before we needed money and now we also need spiritual satisfaction. The girls need their husbands with them. But for many seafarers, they cannot find jobs on land because of their weak competences for land careers, so they cannot give up seafaring. I know one of my seafarer friends who got divorced because his wife could not endure separation any more [Interview 2; a 40-year-old Captain].

Although Chinese society is changing, basic observation of traditional Chinese practices still dominates to some extent. Filial duties were the major theme in ancient Chinese families and communities. Today Chinese people still see filial duties as a necessary part of life; to return what their parents have given to them. Seafaring means that seafarers are not physically close to their parents and family members; therefore, when something unexpected happened to their relatives, they were distressed:

I regret I did not have chances to look after my maternal grandmother well. My grandmother brought me up when I was very young. She died when I was on board a ship. My parents did not want to disturb me so that they did not inform me of her death. I had planned to buy her a good wheel chair after I signed off. Therefore, I could have wheeled her to theatre to watch traditional Chinese operas as she was fond of them. But I have never got chances to fulfil my commitment to her [Interview 5; a 26-year-old Chief Mate].

In the last two years, my grandpa died when I was on board a ship, and then on board the next ship my mother died at home. They were all alright before I signed on. In my grandpa's case, he was at the age of 75 when he died, which was not very surprising. But in the case of my mother, even though she was chronically ill, I thought she could have lived several years more when I decided to board a ship. In fact, I could not afford to wait at home for several years to see her passing away. My mother died three months after I left home to work on a ship. I was isolated of the news by all my relatives because they did not want to cause me more trouble. My cousin then was killed in a traffic accident... I had much regret but I could do nothing [Interview 17; a 40-year-old Officer].

These Chinese seafarers felt vulnerable facing such tragedies because they were unlikely to be repatriated. Equally their relatives ashore were confused about the situations, and hesitated informing them of the devastating news. Although sometimes the news arrived, it was just too late to allow the bereaved seafarers to go back. In such crises, it is difficult for seafarers to seek solace when they are on board ships.

5.2.1.3 A negative effect on social integration

Many of the skills seafarers have mastered over their career are especially related to navigation and maritime engineering. So many skills would not fit well into land jobs. However, most Chinese seafarer informants wanted a better job on land (see upcoming pages), but this is not easy:

The people on land live a life of starting at nine in the morning and finishing their jobs at five in the afternoon, but seafarers will engage in a non-stop working pattern [they have to work watch shifts day and night with no weekends] as soon as they board a vessel. In the end, like me, I can be a Captain. However, back on land we are nothing and ratings are worse. To give you an example, I would not be good at using a hoe if I returned to countryside as a peasant [Interview 8; a 35-year-old Chief Mate].

Here I confront a contradiction because, in the account of another seafarer, he told that his classmates of maritime navigation curricula from a maritime university have all moved to work ashore and most of them are thriving on land. He was the only person out of his fifty classmates who was still working on board ships ten years after their graduation [Interview 7 of a 37-year-old Captain]. How do I interpret the differences between these two informants? The interviewee exaggerated in the above quote. We all know that a Captain cannot be of such low status and a Captain does not need to wave a hoe to earn his bread. Nonetheless, I quote his point and I want to show that there is a concern about integrating into land society in the future. On top of that, by implication, I suggest that those who wanted to move on land but are still working on board ships do not have adequate strengths fending for themselves ashore. This claim is supported by a few more quotes:

I have changed [through my seafaring career]. But I do not like this career. I still work on board ships as I have no better alternatives to working on board ships.

Land work always lacks in good pay and seafarers have limitation to fit jobs outside shipping sectors. Therefore, I have been pushed to remain as a seafarer [Interview 20; a 40-year-old Captain].

This quote demonstrates that it is difficult for some Chinese seafarers to adapt to land jobs. There is another factor that contributes to Chinese seafarers' reluctance to be involved in society on land. Because of lengthy loss of contact with families, friends and communities when working at sea, seafarers' holidays at home carried the consequences. As such, they saw themselves as outsiders. A situation that has also been widely reported amongst seafarers of other nationalities (Thomas and Bailey 2006; Sampson 2005), and is thus clearly a feature of life at sea. The following comments from Chinese seafarers illustrate the point:

As a seafarer I cannot catch up with trends of society. I, lots of times, sat silently listening to conversations going on between my wife and our friends when I was on leave because I did not know much about current affairs about society [Interview 9; a 35-year-old Chief Engineer].

Their [Chinese seafarers'] thoughts have gradually become narrow. The limited physical area on board ships restricts free movements of seafarers. I feel more alien in land society talking with people because I do not know many topics they refer to. When I was off at home, I just wandered about in the street or in arcades on my own and only with my wife and son when they were available. I actually have no other activities to take part in at home... It can be said that seafarers are kicked out of the society [Interview 15; a 42-year-old Pump man].

This sense of social dislocation is starkly captured by the following comment from a freelance Chinese seafarer:

I will become nobody if I have signed off and stay at home. I do not need to report to any organization and I am not seen as a seafarer. I become jobless as I have been registered as jobless by my community authority since I left my working unit on land [Interview 23; a 35-year-old Chief Mate of urban origin].

The Chinese seafarers who work for state-owned shipping companies have their companies' trade unions to take care of some of their family chores or welfare. These seafarers on leave

are sometimes called by their companies to attend various conferences or activities. Nevertheless, those companies and their unions are seen by seafarers as less supportive than missionary centres for seafarers (see next chapter). For freelance seafarers, no support is available. They do not partake in such collective activities on leave so the Chief Mate (in the above quote) claimed that he became socially invisible, a nobody, as he did not need to report to any organization when on leave. Interestingly, years of seafaring have even changed frames of reference of some Chinese seafarers:

Because I am often away from Chinese society, my interest in making friends diminishes. I look like an outgoing person and in fact I am a bit shy. At the beginning of my seafaring I took it as a career, and later Tan [a friend of the interviewee] said seafaring at most was a way to earn money to support families. When I was in the maritime university, I was moved by those previous prominent mariners of the New China who had devoted their whole life to seafaring. However, gradually I understand that it is not the same thing to chase in me [Interview 7; a 37-year-old Captain of urban origin].

In this interview, the Captain revealed that he gave up his party membership after working for an overseas company for a few years as he had lost his interest in ideology (ibid). This might prepare him for growing new values. In the interview, he was determined to move to work on land after his next contract.

In terms of disadvantages, we have seen the adversities Chinese seafarers perceived from their occupation. I clustered the adversities into three subtitles: detriment to individuals, harm to families, and a downturn of social integration. The aspects of adversity Chinese seafarers have experienced are a feature of the globalized nature of the seafaring industry. Existing literature suggests that they are not particular to Chinese seafarers. For example, Thomas and Bailey (2006) report on the difficulties experienced by UK seafaring families due to work based separation. Chapman (1992) notes that global seafaring has become an industry in which standards and working conditions have seriously declined. Sampson and Thomas (2003) reveal the social isolation of seafarers.

Detriment to seafarers covers many aspects, such as excessive and unavoidable noises, and long time isolation. But the worst detriment is illness and extreme weather, both of which can kill. Considering families, there is much regret by Chinese seafarers when they cannot fulfil

their filial commitments. In other cases, the separation borne with seafaring even ends seafarers' marriages. Finally seafaring makes it difficult for Chinese seafarers to integrate well into land society. As a result, the seafarer informants felt some resentment against seafaring.

5.2.2 Resentment

Looking at the discussions about the privileges seafaring careers brought over the course of the 1980s and early 1990s, it is assumed that the Chinese seafarers of that period would have little resentment when they relished ownership of many exotic things the general Chinese populations were unable to possess, and when the Chinese seafarers travelled around the world visiting many foreign places represented by various peoples and cultures. Things foreign were such a curiosity to the Chinese that they laid siege to the early foreign visitors to the big Chinese cities. The privileges brought to Chinese seafarers fifteen years ago overrode the disadvantages naturally associated with seafaring. Nevertheless, the privileges started to decrease in the early 1990s when the Open Door Policies brought to Chinese people many of the things Chinese seafarers had been proud of. Some Chinese living and working on land were capable of securing ownership of enormous assets so that exotic things were no longer as attractive as they had once been. The better off Chinese started to travel around the world more comfortably than Chinese seafarers, who were confined to metal floating structures and endured weeks of isolation before seeing the next piece of land. In the eyes of the seafarer interviewees, the efficacy of their social status in the Chinese society fell in line with the growth of the wealth of the better off Chinese living and working on land. Moreover, the better off Chinese on land benefited from the increasing prospects and opportunities the affluent Chinese economy had created. This was the turning point and the resentment of Chinese seafarers began to grow. A quotation from a Captain of forty years old illustrated this point:

The seafaring jobs would have been attractive if the Open Door Policies had not been launched. It was the policies that undermined the privilege of seafaring profession. During [19]88 and 87, the seafaring careers had relative attraction in comparison with jobs on land in China [Interview 2].

That Captain later in the interview suggested the origin of his resentment:

Before I went to attend an interview for a maritime university, my father tried to put me off studying maritime subjects. My father was afraid that I would regret being a seafarer in future. Today I regret only when I make a comparison with others. On the classmate gathering of the tenth anniversary of the maritime university when I was temporarily working on land, I knew the fact that most my classmates had left the sea to work on land and they were thriving on their land life. Due to the expenditure I made to buy a new flat I returned to sea [Interview 2].

Although admitting that he benefited financially from seafaring, another Captain showed similar resentment. He said:

I felt it unfair that my maritime university classmates who had quit their seafaring jobs all have a better life. The prospects of their careers are more promising and wider than mine, so I feel I have been lost. When I started seafaring, the land jobs were paid much lesser and seafarers were looked upon.....Most Chinese seldom had chances to go abroad. But today these advantages have all gone [Interview 7; a 37-year-old Captain].

The growing amount of money earned by many Chinese living and working on land has knocked the complacency out of Chinese seafarers. Taking his sister as a comparative example, the above Captain explained the changes:

She admired me when I started working on board ships because she tried to make ends meet [a postgraduate in Medicine working for a municipal hospital] in the late 1990s with an increased salary of over one thousand Chinese Yuan. When I signed off and returned home, I was admired by her due to much more money I earned on board ships. But now she does not admire me at all because she is a lot better off than me. She told me that my salaries on board ships were fixed and when I spent my salaries at home, they shrank quickly. The feeling of former fulfilment has completely gone [Interview 7].

For Chinese ratings, their low salaries made them vulnerable because they were unlikely to accumulate savings due to the rapidly increasing cost of living in China. It could be even worse if they moved to work on land because their skills acquired onboard were not transferable to adequately paid land work. As many were not capable of moving to land jobs

for a better deal, the Chinese ratings poured scorn on their low pay [Interview 12 of a 45-year-old motorman and interview 28 of a 43-year-old cook].

The Chinese seafarers' social on-board experiences provoked resentment too. The nature of seafaring bears the most characteristics of Erving Goffman's total institution concept. Reacting to the nature of seafaring, the interviewees added their contribution to the vocabulary of total institution at sea: 'Chinese seafarers have a cliché that seafaring is like being locked up in prison' [Interview 5 of a 26-year-old Chief Mate]. Although being a Commissar whose political duty should not encourage him to be critical about his seafaring career, this interviewee gave his opinion in a contrasting way: 'I sometimes blame myself for choosing a wrong career which seems to be suitable for monks' [Interview 21 of a 50-year-old Commissar]. The interviewees considered the vessels they worked on as monasteries or prisons. Prisons represent penalty and temples symbolise abstinence. Therefore, the on-board life is abnormal at least in the eyes of the interviewees. One interviewee held his grudge against the abnormal seafaring life thus: 'This [seafaring] is not a normal life because there was a feeling of being a prisoner working on board a ship' [Interview 22 of a 35-year-old sailor]. Seafarers who were 'pressed into the crew of a ship' were not seen as ideal 'inmates' according to Goffman (1961 p. 110). Although a few decades later Chinese seafarers chose to work at sea, they are not ideal 'inmates' as they described their ships as prisons or temples.

The nature of seafaring rarely changes. However, there were several occasions when seafarers relished their on-board time because of efficient and kind Masters [Interview 5 of a 26-year-old Chief Mate]. Nevertheless, seafarers were unlucky during on-board periods as they resented dealing with bad companies or bad people. A 35-year-old Chief Mate resented the fact that Chinese seafarers were punished for breaching a rule of a state-owned company:

Chief Mate: In my point of view Commissars carry out the company's on-board policies and management by reading documents from the company. If they cross this line to interrupt the private life of seafarers, I feel that they violate human rights. Why? Seafarers often endured a long time when they had no chance to go ashore to relax. When they went ashore to let off steam, they were punished if their shore sex adventure was known by their Commissars.

Interviewer: Did you witness such a punishment?

Chief Mate: Yes. The Commissar on board the ship I worked on reported a seafarer to the company and accused the seafarer of breaching the rules of the company by patronizing erotic places [Interview 8].

The company he worked for laid off seafarer employees who had breached the rule by using prostitutes while working on board ships (Human Resource Dept 2005). On top of being dismissed, it is humiliating for the seafarers when their 'misconducts' are known by their colleagues and possibly by their family members. There will be no way for them to save their faces. The above quotation tells the story of a 'bad' Commissar on board a Chinese state-owned vessel. Does working on foreign ships help reduce the chances of meeting 'bad' seafarers? In reality, some Chinese seafarers ended up in a vulnerable situation on board foreign vessels. Another 40-year-old Captain provided me with his story of working on a foreign ship:

To spend money and then to work comfortably and receive payments regularly [were my happiest things on board ships]. Most of the time I faced unhappy circumstances, for instance, I met a Chinese Captain on board a foreign vessel and the Captain was utterly selfish.....I even had severe quarrels with him. He was so mean that he embezzled money out of seafarers' food allowances. He was in charge of every thing relating to food purchase and accounting. If \$500 worth of food was purchased in India, he logged \$1500 in the account book. He was discharged from a state-owned shipping company because of his breach of the One Child Policy. As such, when I argued with him over the issues regarding food allowances he warned me not to apply what the Communist Party used onboard to scrutinise the spending of food allowances. Because more food allowances were put into his pocket, the food was terrible and fewer kinds of food were stored on the ship. I stood up to him and went to complain about the low quality of food but he argued back that nobody else raised such complaints. Other seafarers loathed the terrible food behind the Captain but said the food was good when confronted by the Captain. The Captain represented the owner of the ship aboard and controlled all means of communication to the ship owner and manager. Therefore, nothing could prevent him from being evil. At the end of the day, I decided to leave the ship prematurely and wrote a report asking for an early sign-off. He was happy when he knew that I would leave [Interview 20].

Chinese seafarers might have prevented these disappointing incidents from taking place onboard ships if every thing had been done correctly. However, it was a leap in the dark when Chinese seafarers contracted with a company whose crew management was malicious or signed on a ship whose physical condition was very worrying. In fact, seafarers normally found out the dire truth after they had contracted to the company or signed on the ship, as illustrated here:

The state-owned company I permanently contracted with is very bad at meeting the standards of social security coverage for its seafarer employees. I heard of one case. A seafarer of the company found out that the company only put down about five thousand CNY in his Public Housing Accumulation Fund account after he had worked for ten years for the company. He wanted to use the balance of his account as a deposit to buy a flat but the account balance was not helpful at all when he bought the flat [Interview 17; a 40-year-old Officer].

The Public Housing Accumulation Fund is one of the fringe benefits that Chinese employees receive from their employers who are responsible for half of the payment. The scheme is carried out by the state-owned employers and is voluntary in the case of employers in the private sector. The state-owned company of a Chinese seafarer decides on the level of his benefit in terms of the Public Housing Accumulation Found payment. In the above case, CNY 5,000 is like nothing when a seafarer has worked for the company over ten years. The cost of an average flat was about a hundred times his current account balance. As such, the seafarer felt gravely exploited when other seafarers working for another state-owned shipping company were able to get at least CNY 5,000 in their Housing accounts only in a year [Interview 17].

Furthermore, shipping companies play a core role in deciding how its ships are built. When a shipping company ignored the wellbeing of seafarers in favour of reducing its cost on new builds, they did not bother building a ship to satisfy seafarers in terms of accommodation and other living comfort. Chinese seafarers were not exempted from boarding such vessels:

Interviewer: How did you see your living conditions on board ships?

Officer: They were not good. Even the new builds I boarded were not in good conditions because they were economically built. Therefore, I don't need to describe the old ships [Interview 17].

The physical conditions of ships concerned seafarer interviewees. Piracy has become the focus of great concern recently. In 2008, attacks on merchant vessels by Somali pirates rekindled seafarers' worry about piracy. A Captain interviewee said he would rather sign off if his ship was ordered to plough the waters infested by pirates [Interview 27 of a 36-year-old Captain]. However, it would be almost impossible for him to sign off a ship due to the complications of finding a substitute Captain and the tight schedule of the ship. Another seafarer interviewee considered a seafaring career so hard and dangerous that he would not allow his son to be a seafarer [Interview 21; a 50-year-old Commissar].

Informants reflected on a variety of awful feelings and dreadful facts associated with their seafaring life. There was no way out for two interviewees, one of whom has kept regretting since he started working at sea [Interview 13 of a 36-year-old Engineer] while the other was obliged to stay at sea although he hated his seafaring career [Interview 20 of a 40-year-old Captain]. Sometimes their dislike of seafaring was so extreme that the obliged-to-stay interviewee thought that his whole life had already been ruined by his career and another interviewee reckoned seafaring was a waste of his time [Interview 16 of a 30-year-old Officer]. Another interviewee was a complete ideologue and became a Communist member at university because he had been moved by earlier mariners of the New China who had devoted their whole life to seafaring for the country. Later he had fulfilled his pursuit of Captainship [Interview 7 of a 37-year-old Captain]. Contrastingly, he gave an extraordinary account of his change, early in his seafaring:

I felt that seafaring made people numb and not to enjoy what they should cherish in life. I realised this when I was a cadet boarding my first ship. I had been on board that ship for fifteen months which was very long. It was very hard to make it for fifteen months. It was the British Captain who was very energetic. He organized a party every week in order to inspire seafarers with activities on the ship. The horse racing was first introduced by him and all crew were cheered up. The game was to throw two dices in order to decide how many steps the thrower's house could be moved forwards. The one that first reached the finish line won a prize. Obeying the company's rules, the Captain made tokens as money. At the end of each game, seafarers got real cash from the Captain by handing in the tokens. I was very excited the first time. It was the third time when the company's engineering director came on board the ship but he did not stop the game. He

returned to the head office of the company and briefed to the company that he had never seen such an exciting atmosphere on any ships before. When our ship called into a port in Ecuador, ten girls were called to board it, which had never happened before. The next day as we sailed out and I went up to the wheel house to chat with the Second Officer. I said that it should be very happy to have such an arrangement, but I was not. I then asked him if he was happy after getting a girl. He told me that he was also not very happy. He also emphasized that the horse racing games were exciting only during the first few times and afterwards his excitement had vanished. I wondered if seafaring careers killed off those interests. On board ships if every thing was arranged well, the life would be better, but it was not the case. When I was Captain later organizing on-board activities for seafarers, I did not have enthusiasm for the activities but in order to cheer up my crew to carry out their work well. I did what I needed to do, but enthusiasm has gone from the bottom of my heart [Interview 7].

This was a dramatic turnabout in feelings about his career and his frame of reference. It seems that Chinese seafarers run short of coping methods to deal with these discouraging elements associated with seafaring.

Thousands of Chinese seafarers have worked on vessels all across the world. In the face of such harsh conditions of seafaring I may question why so many stay as seafarers. This, it is hoped, will shed light on their values.

Interviewees offered many examples manifesting themselves in traditional Chinese values. A core part of the Chinese value-system encourages parents to prepare for the future needs of their offspring, and vice versa; their sons as well as daughters are taught to be ready to look after them in future (Whyte 2004). With their families as a core part of their life, Chinese seafarers are ready to give up most of their comfort in exchange for the benefits of their families if there is no alternative. Many explained why they still work at sea even though they are no longer interested in seafaring. The informants listed a variety of their sacrifices in the hope that they were able to better their families' existence by going to the sea. Answering what he hopes to do with his life, an interviewee said:

Actually, I have a high level of responsibility. What I have done is not for myself. I do for my family as I have my son and beautiful wife. And I do plan to provide

them with a good life but only in terms of money. The life includes a better environment for my son to grow up. These are my perspectives [Interview 25; a 35-year-old Chief Mate].

Another seafarer said many Chinese seafarers sacrificed for the same purpose:

My major concentration is on my child. If I can let my child lead a better life, my life will not be important. I reckon there is a general phenomenon of Chinese seafarers that they cannot enjoy life. The only one who enjoys is their child. The spouse also suffers [Interview 15; a 42-year-old Pump man].

The Chinese seafarers wanted to make their children have a better life in the future. This is more than materialist satisfaction for the seafarers. If it happened that Chinese seafarers had delayed their shift into post-material values, their sacrifice for their children's better life would have prepared socioeconomic environments suitable for the growth of post-materialism for the future (see Chapter One). Physical segregation was seen as his sacrifice by another interviewee and it also imposed suffering on his spouse and child. He talked about Chinese seafarers in general:

Chinese seafarers have sacrificed a lot. They must leave their families behind because their work does not allow them to be close to their families. Actually their spouses really need their company and so do their children [Interview 18; a 42-year-old Officer].

We can see more of Chinese seafarers' sacrifices from the quotation below, where money is seen as a solace for the sacrifices:

Looking back I reckon [Chinese] seafarers have suffered more than what they have gained. What they have gained is perhaps only money, but what they have sacrificed are emotions, health and the like. Seafarers are vulnerable to occupational illness such as arthritis [Interview 17; a 40-year-old Officer].

Those sufferings were perhaps not seen by other occupations but they were real for Chinese seafarers. Therefore, they did not contribute to the increase of material satisfaction seafarers' money could buy.

Money was perceived as the main benefit of seafaring. For the sake of money and better life of their families, in the eyes of Chinese seafarers they had to sacrifice. As such, they believed they needed to endure the negative aspects:

My will power has been strong and I could endure many bad things bound with seafaring such as loneliness and an unpleasant atmosphere on board ships [Interview 5; a 26-year-old Chief Mate].

I endured all the discomfort to carry on my seafaring career. Otherwise, how could I survive [Interview 20; a 40-year-old Captain]!

An example of endurance was given by a Chief Mate on his last ship. The ship was infested by ants when he boarded. There was no way to stop the ants. As a result, the ant bites left a rash all over the sailors' bodies and affected their sleep as well. However, the Chief Mate was determined to ignore the difficulty and completed his contract of ten months for the sake of money [Interview 8 of a 35-year-old Chief Mate].

Again the experience of Chinese seafarers is not unique. As the global seafarer labour market has developed and seafarers have increasingly been recruited from developing nations, so the same theme of sacrifice for family is commonly heard amongst seafarers. For instance, in his recent qualitative study of health capital amongst international seafarers, Bloor (2011) writes that:

This erosion of health capital is acceded to in a Faustian pact. Faust signed away his soul in return for knowledge. The reasons for seafarers to sign away their future health are various. Seafarers from the developing nations are spending their health capital in pacts to support their families, as with this 51-year-old Filipino bosun:

Bloor: When do you think you will retire?

Bosun: As soon as my children will finish their studies [...] I have already one daughter graduated as a nurse. And two others they are going to nursing schools. So they are now in their third year and first year college. So still I have to go onboard to support.

Relatedly, others hope that the fruits of their labours will be the accumulation of sufficient financial capital to enable them to start a small business.

However, in the case of Chinese seafarers unlike their colleagues of fifteen years ago, seafarers of today have been overtaken by many better off Chinese people who work and live on land. I want to understand the impact of this factor and the effect on the values of Chinese seafarers.

5.3 Self-esteem of Chinese seafarers

When describing their sense of belonging, social relationships and their experiences of working or associating with other seafarers or peoples aboard or ashore, Chinese seafarers showed self disapproval.

5.3.1 Belonging to the past and in the future

In the first few interviews with older seafarer participants, nostalgia for the old days of seafaring was reiterated. It was the case in most of the following interviews. The interviewees considered the 1980s and early 1990s as a period of privilege because they had easy access to foreign lands and exotic things. During this period, Chinese seafarers were so admired by their neighbours for the material gains brought by seafaring especially in terms of exotic things that they were satisfied to some extent by their social status in Chinese society. This is because citizens of China had been deprived of anything foreign for nearly thirty years (from the liberation in 1949 to the official implementation of China's Open Door Policies in 1978), so anyone who had access to anything exotic, however trivial, was seen as an outstanding figure in their community and got much attention from their neighbours.

While life in China's cities today is very different, the development of rural areas has been much slower. Even today many rural people lack material satisfaction and information. As a result, the older seafarers from rural areas and still living there have not experienced the demotion of their status very much. As such, this group of participants were less likely to play back the past glory of seafaring days due to little difference between their past and present. On the other hand, the older seafarers of urban origin have experienced their neighbours' fading admiration for their seafaring, and were enthusiastic about telling their halcyon days at

sea. In the following section some points I have discussed in previous paragraphs will be repeated because I need to explain the impact of fading admiration:

Seafaring was popular in 1981 in China. Little was understood about life overseas..... Second-hand electronic appliances and white goods bought by seafarers were seen by many Chinese. I witnessed seafarers bringing back exotic food products bought by their unspent on-board food allowances. Those things were not seen in China before. Land people admired seafarers. Seafarers had a relatively high social status [Interview 10; a 42-year-old Captain of urban origin].

When I started seafaring, the land jobs were poorly paid and seafaring was looked upon... Most Chinese seldom had chance to go abroad. But today these advantages have all gone [Interview 7; a 37-year-old Captain of urban origin].

The seafaring job would have been still attractive if the Open-Door Policies had not been implemented. It was the Open-Door Policies that undermined the privilege of seafaring profession. During [19]88 and 87, the seafaring career had much attraction in comparison with jobs ashore [Interview 2; a 40-year-old Captain urban origin].

The privilege that seafaring brought in the past made seafarers believe that they were relatively well-off when the country was unable to provide enough commercial goods and better opportunities for the Chinese. In telling of their past privilege, the seafarer interviewees also implied that the status of Chinese seafarers today is not as good as it was years back. With such an implication, Chinese seafarers look into their future for solutions. Instead of a solution to regain attraction and admiration from land people, most seafarers, urban and rural alike, said they would like to leave seafaring for land jobs if possible. Because China's economic growth has churned out large numbers of newly-emerged middle class (Hodgson 2007), the prospect of a better life by working on land becomes possible in the minds of Chinese seafarers. Two engineers clearly favoured land jobs:

I just want to find a substitute job to work on land. Due to various reasons, I have kept postponing my decision to quit until today [Interview 14; a 35-year-old Engineer of urban origin].

Seafaring for me is not a long term career. I am thinking of working for five or six more years as a seafarer before I would find a land job [Interview 9; a 35-year-old Chief Engineer of rural origin].

The desire to work and live on land enormously influenced how Chinese seafarers thought about their lives on board ships. As the following comments show, many seafarers conceived of their on-board life as their preparation for their future move to live ashore.

Most of the time on a ship, I engaged in studies and wondered how to pass every exam in order to uplift me to a higher rank. This is also the thought about preparation for moving into a land job [Interview 5; a 26-year-old Chief Mate of rural origin].

I also thought about the expertise of my next higher post on board ships. In the long term I would think about what would be my better career after I have been a Captain. I may want to find a land base management job [Interview 4; a 37-year-old Captain of rural origin].

Now my purpose of working on ships is to earn money and wait for opportunities which allow me to move to a land based job [Interview 1; a 30-year-old Engineer of rural origin].

Indeed many former seafarers have successfully moved ashore. This fact greatly influences current seafarers, as one Captain stated:

There was a classmate gathering last year, and I was the only one still working on board ships among the fifty maritime university classmates [Interview 7; a 37-year-old Captain of urban origin].

The informant giving the above account has been a seafarer for about ten years. In this period all his classmates have left sea and found land jobs. In fact, most of them settled down well on land. So he was going to board his last ship a few days after the interview. And he was determined to move to work and live on land after that ship. He had previously quit a land job having worked for a company for several months with a relatively high salary [Interview 7]. Even though some Chinese seafarers have quit their seafaring jobs, in reality, dreams often don't come true. We have witnessed one Captain who could not leave seafaring because of his

fear of lack of skills of land jobs (see section 5.2.1.3). Another factor cropped up in the interview with another 42-year-old Captain:

I have been tired of this profession [seafaring]. If I was less than forty years old I would quit this job. I am forty-six so that I cannot afford changing my profession. The state-owned company has offered all welfare schemes which cover all forms of my social security [Interview 10; urban origin].

The welfare schemes implemented by this state-owned shipping company consist of insurance policies underwritten for the Captain's medical care, pension, work-related injury treatment, and redundancy compensation, and on top of these policies he can also benefit from his House Accumulation Public Fund (a fund helps employees buy houses) half of which has been paid by his company. He would lose them if he left the company, and it is hard to secure them all if he found a job on land. Therefore, his rational calculation obliged him to remain at sea. Sometimes a grudge against a failed dream can go deeper:

Now I think my whole life has already been spoiled. Now I want to say that I would not have done this seafaring job if I had had second thought at my young age [Interview 20; a 40-year-old Captain].

Seafarers who had enjoyed the privilege in various ways years ago liked to recall their past whereas most of younger interviewees looked forward to taking land jobs one day. Few interviewees showed interest in seafaring as a life long career.

Similar views have equally been reported amongst other national groups, both those from new labour supply nations, such as the Philippines (Bloor 2011), and those from the more traditional nations such as India (Anand 2011). In the case of other national groups this change in perception of the industry has been put down to changes in the way in which it has been globalised and the changing working conditions, i.e. reduced manning, longer working hours and voyage cycles, lack of time in port and minimal recreation facilities etc.

By comparison, Chinese seafarers have only recently entered the global labour market, thus it is worth investigating what makes Chinese seafarers think in this way? I look again at the interview data for an answer.

5.3.2 A cohort of diminishing status

In China 'face' building is essential factor in society. Chinese people are afraid of being looked down upon in any circumstance, and they prefer to gain face if it is feasible (see section 2.2.2).

Regarding seafaring jobs in China, 'face' building is tested by a dichotomy between the earnings of seafaring and land work. On the one hand, the gap between land earnings and seafaring salaries has been tremendously reduced compared to the situation in the 1990s when, according to one interview's account, a Third Officer's monthly salary was about tenfold of a medical post-graduate's [Interview 7 of a 37-year-old Captain]. Now an average monthly salary of a worker of the rich coastal areas in China is CNY2291 (Dalian Labour and Social Security Bureau and Dalian Statistics Bureau 2008) while an average Chinese sailor or motorman can earn up to \$650 (about CNY4550) per month during their service on board an ocean-going ship, according to the wage list of a seafarer recruitment agency in China (Yiming 2007). The Chinese ratings are able to earn more than average Chinese workers on land even if the dollar is converted at its devalued rate of one dollar to about seven CNY (XE.com 2008) rather than one dollar to eight CNY. From the numbers we know that a rating can earn over double an average land worker nowadays; however, a rating's salary will be close to equalling that of a land worker when the months of his home leave and extra expenditures are taken into account. As a result, the feeling of privilege of earning a lot more than land workers in the past has diminished in lower ranked Chinese seafarers.

On the other hand, Chinese seafarers have been overtaken by better off land people in terms of earning. Looking at their better off neighbours or classmates who have been thriving on land jobs, Chinese seafarers have increasingly found it difficult to keep their 'faces'. Naturally, Chinese sea officers and engineers do better than ratings in terms of salary: the higher their ranks the more salary they are paid. Conversely, better off Chinese people ashore earn considerably more than Chinese Captains. As long as the gap between earnings of the better off land people and seafarers increases, Chinese seafarers will not be satisfied by their seafaring jobs and some would like to quit [Interview 9 of a 35-year-old Chief Engineer, Interview 4 of a 37-year-old Captain and Interview 3 of a 37-year-old Captain].

As well as salary issues, in the interview data, other factors contribute to their wish to leave the seafaring jobs. These relate to how Chinese seafarers perceive themselves:

Chinese seafarers are a posse of fools. I worked on a shuttle ferry between Yantai and Dalian for one year. Whenever I saw our company's signed-off seafarers boarding our ferry for home, I could immediately mark them off from normal land dwellers, in particular if looking at their mental states. For example, they arrived to board the ferry and waited for going back to Dalian while we were having breakfast [the signed-off seafarers of the company that ran the ferry were allowed to board the ferry early and could mingle with the ferry crew]. They would come over asking and seeing what we were eating. They behaved very strangely as they just got off their vessels after months of isolation. Apart from this particular event, they were not well in every aspect. They responded very slowly when you talked of something to them. They did not know what was happening in our society [Interview 20; a 40-year-old Captain of urban origin].

Chinese seafarers are not formal group of people, many of who are eccentrics. Their minds are limited and they are short-sighted. I cannot pay much respect to them [Interview 2; a 40-year-old Captain of urban origin].

These comments paint a negative portrait of Chinese seafarers. Such comments were not rare in the interviews. Responding to the interviewer's question about a seafarer's spiritual need, a seafarer interviewee joked that: 'Chinese seafarers sometimes looked like fools after signing off' [Interview 9; a 35-year-old Chief Engineer of rural origin]. In answering the impact of seafaring isolation on him, the 40-year-old seafarer in interview 20 went on: 'It is detrimental to mentality. It can mount psychological pressure as we can feel being lagged behind when we sign off.' A similar account by another interviewee added: 'It would render seafarers uncomfortable ashore if they did not communicate with other people very much on board ships. In general, Chinese seafarers can be recognized ashore by people working and living on land' [Interview 27 of 36-year-old Captain]. In Chinese if a person is recognized, he or she is depicted in either of two ways. The expression can be complimentary if the person happens to be a celebrity or famous figure whereas the expression will be dispiriting when the person turns out to be an ordinary figure in society.

In the past Chinese seafarers were fortunate to visit foreign lands and bring back exotic things. At the same time, the majority of Chinese land dwellers were obliged to dress in few dull colours (black, blue or grey according to a monotonous dress code); they had little access to anything not rationed. Society then was almost in stagnation but socialist movements or

education. Chinese seafarers of that time must have been intoxicated by what seafaring brought in comparison with those people working and living on land. As such, the negative aspects of seafaring, such as isolation, were ignored because working and living conditions on land were far worse. Goffman depicts a similar situation, ‘Shetland youths recruited into the British merchant service are apparently not much threatened by the cramped, arduous life on board [ships], because island life is even more stunted; they make uncomplaining sailors because from their point of view they have little to complain about’ (1961 p. 65).

It was not only their status ashore that concerned Chinese seafarers. Although not part of the remit of this research project, through the interview data I can still have a look at how Chinese seafarers interpreted the way foreign people perceived them. One seafarer confided:

When we arrived in the USA on our ships for instance, Americans thought people from poor countries were lack of civilisation. Therefore, they had prejudice against us and they did not feel happy if we did window-shopping in their shops [Interview 23; a 35-year-old Chief Mate of urban origin].

Chinese seafarers thus felt different and believed that they were seen as uncivilised and poor by Americans. In another interview the seafarer assured me: ‘they [officers from Taiwan] looked down on seafarers from the mainland surreptitiously’ [Interview 7; a 37-year-old Captain of urban origin]. In comparison with those people from developed countries, Chinese seafarers earn much less. This might be the reason for being looked down upon, but it might be other obvious factors like their inability to speak English working aboard.

In exploring the interview data further, the barrier of English language was taken by most seafarers as their obstacles of communication aboard. Sometimes in the worst scenario, inadequate English cost their seafaring contract:

I remember my work on board a ship of a foreign company. There was a Chinese Electrician who signed on with me. We flew almost around the world to board the ship in Panama. After boarding the Master and Chief Engineer gave us an interview so as to see if we were competent for the jobs. As the Electrician could not answer in English he was asked to leave but stayed only for one voyage until the next call when a foreign substitute came to take over his post [Interview 26; a 35-year-old Engineer of urban origin].

The seafarers of a state-owned company are incapable of using English language, and they could lose many opportunities if they were sent to serve on board foreign vessels or working for foreign companies [Interview 2; a 40-year-old Captain of urban origin].

As English is a working language on board multinational crewed vessels as well as a common language between shore and ships in port, their inadequate English undermined the maritime expertise of Chinese seafarers and thus further reduced their bargain power in payments and wellbeing on board ships. Their lack of English skills makes Chinese seafarers aware of their social status.

Social statuses are related to the concern of 'face'. In talking about missionaries and their activities a seafarer stated:

Preacher Jia always visited our ship when our ship arrived in Houston. On one occasion before the Christmas time he brought onto the ship some shoe boxes full of souvenirs inside. The Captain told us that we should avoid being looked down upon as we accepted the gifts [Interview 2; a 40-year-old Captain of urban origin].

From a Chinese perspective, to receive gifts from a charity is demeaning. On the other hand, the Captain's worry can be well understood by looking into Erving Goffman's analysis about face. In the hope of maintaining face, Goffman told us:

He may want to save his own face because of his emotional attachment to the image of self which it expresses, because of his pride or honour, because of the power his presumed status allows him to exert over the other participants, and so on. He may want to save the others' face because of his emotional attachment to an image of them, or because he feels that his co-participants have a moral right to this protection (1969 p. 9).

The ship the Captain worked on was state-owned and manned by all Chinese crew. Hence, the image of his crew reflected his perception of Chinese seafarers. Why did he bother prompting his crew to be aware of not being looked down upon when his crew received Christmas gifts from missionaries? With his belief that to accept souvenirs from foreigners might worsen the image of Chinese seafarers, did the Captain believe that the image of Chinese seafarers as a whole was not as positive as he wished? When the Captain's warning is seen as maintenance

of face for Chinese seafarers, he certainly does not conceive a positive image of his crew because people do not need to maintain anything when there is no possibility of deterioration.

Another factor also affects the 'face' building of Chinese seafarers. Interviewees admitted that they did worse than international seafarers in terms of working ethic on board ships. Before the development of the Chinese seafarer labour market all ocean going Chinese seafarers were recruited by state-owned shipping companies. These companies adapted to the management methods available in Chinese domestic working units, which units, under the planned economic regime in China, did not provide their workers with incentives on top of fixed salaries earned. As a result, workers in a working unit strove to work as little as possible. The practice of sending Chinese seafarers overseas to board foreign vessels happened years after the Open Door Policies. However, that practice did not start off as it was hoped. The Chinese seafarers had inherited the Chinese working ethic when they boarded foreign ships or worked for foreign companies. Coupled with their lack of the use of English, that unfavourable working ethic held by Chinese seafarers helped create a negative image of the seafarers in the international labour market. This might backfire and affect the level of Chinese seafarers' salaries domestically and internationally. Chinese seafarers were criticised for such working ethic by themselves:

I have learnt much advanced management knowledge and gained precious experiences by working on board foreign ships. However, when I was on a ship of a large state-owned shipping company doing investigation for the company, I found the Chinese seafarers working on the Chinese state-owned ship were slack at work. There was no identifiable hierarchy between the officers and ratings. For instance, if a sailor got on well with a Master, the sailor would look down on his boson or the Chief Mate and would not bother obeying their working orders [Interview 26; a 35-year-old Engineer of urban origin].

In the above quote we also see that how the practice of social relationship – Guanxi in Chinese - on a Chinese ship was perceived by the engineer. Such a practice employed by some Chinese seafarers to better them on ships can only add unpleasant elements to the image of Chinese seafarers.

There is a historical reason for the lack of hierarchy on Chinese ships. In the past, equality had been hyped and encouraged by the Chinese government. At some point, Chinese cadres

were sent to join peasants and workers to labour on soils and in factories. This spirit of equality between cadres and rank and file has been inherited by Chinese seafarers on Chinese ships. This helps Chinese seafarers ignore orders from their indirect superiors. One more account emphasises the argument:

To Chinese seafarers an AB [Able Body - skilled sailor] is responsible for following supervision of his boatswain and Chief Mate. Therefore, he would not obey any order dictated by a Third Officer or Second Officer as he did not see these officers as legitimised to manage an AB. The quality of Chinese seafarers is not better than that of foreign seafarers [Interview 8; a 35-year-old Chief Mate of rural origin].

The good practice of seamanship requires an AB or a motorman to follow their superiors' orders at work, and the superiors certainly include all officers and engineers. However, this good seamanship can be breached by Chinese ratings when they have inherited the social impetus of the past in Chinese working places where social relationship were manipulated to take advantage of others. The insignia of their imperfect working ethic might cost the 'face' of seafarers because even a 50-year-old Commissar interviewee uttered the same opinion about how Chinese seafarers see themselves in terms of work in relation to the larger world:

They say that in general the seafarers from Europe have the highest standards in their work; the seafarers from the South-East Asia have good labour practices. In comparison with Chinese seafarers, international seafarers have a strict hierarchical system on board ships. But the spirit of their devotion to work is better than ours [Interview 21; urban origin].

With such self-critical views, it is not surprising that Chinese seafarers believe that foreigners and shore-based people look down on them. Sometimes situations between Chinese seafarers and foreign crews could grow sour and the former would lose face:

During my work [on board a foreign ship], I also found there was discrimination against Chinese seafarers. I remembered once that a Chinese sailor was rinsing the deck and water was splashed onto the trouser legs of the foreign Captain who happened to be on spot. As a result, the Captain dragged over the Chinese sailor and tucked the hose underneath the sailor's collar spraying water all over the sailor's body [Interview 26; a 35-year-old Engineer of urban origin].

That is an extreme punishment in any sense. According to that interviewee, the Chinese crew who were the majority on that ship were not unanimous in action against that evil Captain. The ship's managers never knew about the incident as the Captain simply made an apology to the sailor and covered up his malfeasance. A popular and well-known saying in China illustrates the deficient unanimity of Chinese seafarers: an individual Chinese can be a tiger while a group of Chinese can only be bears (a metaphor for cowards in Chinese language). The Chinese are very good at individual struggles to accomplish their goals and they tend to be reluctant to cater to others' needs, so they would not offer helping hands under collective circumstances. This lack of solidarity undermines the image of Chinese seafarers.

In terms of the labour division of Chinese seafarers, the origin of rural and urban seafarers is the major theme. Rural areas in China after the Liberation in 1949 were seen as resources of food supplies for cities. More recently, they have been treated as sources of cheap labour and large portions of rural populations have migrated into cities to take up unwanted jobs at construction sites, as street sweepers, and street vendors. Because these jobs are unwanted by city dwellers, migrant workers receive low pay and live in poor conditions. They appear in the streets of Chinese cities in dirty clothes and they don't own assets, so they have never been considered as a permanent part of big Chinese cities. The social imbalance between the Chinese city dwellers and those of rural areas has never been reconciled. Among Chinese seafarers, the imbalance exists as well. Elaborating on a conflict between Deck and Engine departments on board a ship, one Captain commented on his grudge against his seafarer colleagues of rural origin:

I don't know if you have the same feeling. I don't like seafarers coming out of the countryside. People can learn something if they keep close to someone of high standard. And those seafarers of rural areas are so vulgar that they are annoying. Their birth and their surroundings prevent them from holding a reasonably high social etiquette. I feel that these seafarers take up 95% of the crew pool of the state-owned shipping company [Interview 2; a 40-year-old Captain of urban origin].

His comments verge on a form of racism, but it shows how urban seafarers perceived seafarers coming from rural areas. Even worse, it also undermines the image of Chinese seafarers as a whole.

In addition, a state-owned shipping company differentiates compensation payments between a deceased contracted seafarers and a deceased migrant seafarer who was recruited from countryside by the company under a poverty alleviation scheme. The story was told by an individual who is of rural origin and now lives in a town. On board his first ship he went through a catastrophe in which three seafarers died:

The explosion in a hold near the ship's forecandle killed the Chief Mate, Second Officer and a sailor who was also from where I came from. The relatives of the dead sailor came to the company every day after the accident to argue over the compensation payment disputes. The next of kin of the dead sailor was not given equal treatment in the aftermath of the accident, which is because he was a seafarer registered by the company as a migrant worker without any social security and welfare when there was no thorough regulation that ruled such things at that time [Interview 15; a 42-year-old Pump engineer of rural origin].

Chinese seafarers of rural origin would be upset to know how badly they are perceived by their urban counterparts. Given the worst example of the above quote, that dead rural seafarer was discriminated against by the company's particular policies and its shore office staff due to inadequate regulations of labour forces in China before 1995 (see Chapter Three). As no relevant statistics were available, I cannot give the exact ratio of seafarers of urban to rural origin. But it is believed that the latter have significantly outnumbered the former as the Captain in the second interview estimated that 95% of seafarers of that particular state-owned shipping company were from the countryside [Interview 2 of a 40-year-old Captain]. The source of the Maritime Safety Administration of China also indicates an almost two-fold increase of number of Chinese seafarers coming from inland China in two years. The inland supplied 17.9% of Chinese seafarers in 2004 and the percentage grew to 32.6% in 2006 (see Chapter Three).

As part of the international seafarer labour market, Chinese seafarers have experienced the agony of being demeaned. They felt that they lost 'face' during their encounters with foreign people due to their inadequate skills of English language and in particular their inappropriate working ethic on ships. Amongst Chinese seafarers the division between seafarers of urban and rural origin exists to some extent, as the former loathed those of rural origin for their apparent vulgarity [Interview 2 of a 40-year-old and interview 29 of a 35-year-old sailor]. As

such, Chinese seafarers have to make their efforts to better their images. Some Chinese seafarers have realised the necessity:

Interviewee: In the past the title of Captain was respected by Chinese people and today people superficially respect you when they know you are a Captain.

Interviewer: How about a good Captain?

Interviewee: Yes. A good Captain can be respected but in general the holistic image of Chinese seafarers has been damaged [Interview 7; a 37-year-old Captain of urban origin].

The 37-year-old Captain in interview 7 is pessimistic about his social status as a Captain in Chinese society. However, another Captain who was complacent about his new captainship when he was interviewed gave a different view [Interview 27; a new Captain of 36 years old]. The new Captain came from a maritime college whereas the Captain of interview 7 graduated from a maritime university. The graduates of maritime colleges are seen as second class seafaring talents, behind the graduates from maritime universities in China. As such, maritime college graduates fare worse than those coming out of universities both aboard and ashore. The Captain from the maritime college has classmates who are mostly less successful than him, whereas the Captain in interview 7 - a maritime university graduate – witnesses that his classmates have successfully moved to land jobs and are thriving on their careers. The different social groups influence how the two Captains perceive of their social statuses. Despite some complacency of the Captain about his seafaring career, the data of this section show a diminishing image of general Chinese seafarers.

5.4 Summary

Here I will summarise the main data produced in this chapter but I am reserving all of my discussion of its implications until Chapter eight. This chapter is intended to collect a wide range of information from the interview data, and we now have a general understanding about the values Chinese seafarers held when they joined the merchant navy, and after years of seafaring. In doing so I have pointed to certain values that appear to be held by Chinese seafarers, I shall draw upon these data in Chapter eight. Starting with motives for choosing to become seafarers, We saw that there are motives common to Chinese seafarers and to seafarers of other nationalities. But equally, we have seen that there are factors that are specific to Chinese seafarers due to the changing socio-economic circumstances in China.

We have seen that economic factors and the desire for financial security are prominent, followed by Chinese people's contingencies in securing seafaring jobs which are not desired by most Chinese urbanites. The attraction of outside world exerts tremendous influence on some who joined the merchant navy. Scattered mostly in the coastal areas of China, different levels of maritime training institutions have educated and trained new recruits who almost all are of rural origin. I explored the thoughts of Chinese seafarers about seafaring after years working onboard ships. From the interview data, disadvantages were picked out by Chinese seafarers when the past privileges of seafaring started to diminish in the face of the social and economic transition of China. There was some compensation for general loss of status when few Chinese seafarers made a comparison with a smaller reference group of their classmates who were not striving well on land or as seafarers. Nevertheless, even though most Chinese seafarers did not feel the privileges seafaring brought, the entire professional group had difficulties maintaining their self-esteem.

Thirty years ago, Chinese people had to go through political checks to ensure they were politically accountable to socialist ideology before they were accepted into Chinese merchant navy (see Chapter Three). This is no longer the case for Chinese seafarers today and the socialist ideology has lost its grip on Chinese seafarers in the face of the Open Door Policies and consumerism. As we will see in the following chapter, change in the maritime industry has meant that missionaries provide a vital role for all seafarers when they arrive in foreign ports; by providing transport and communication facilities. Given that this group of individuals are defined by their commitment to a particular value system, i.e. Christianity, it is important to examine how these encounters impact upon Chinese seafarers. I will now look at Chinese seafarers' encounters with Christian missionaries.

Chapter Six: Chinese Seafarers' Encounters with Christian Missionaries

Having strived to understand the general values held by Chinese seafarers in the previous chapter, now I turn to look at one aspect of their values: religious values. It was explained in Chapter One that the transformation of Chinese society had created the possibility of Chinese people experimenting with alternative belief systems, including religious belief systems. The extent to which seafarers have experimented with religious belief systems can act as a case study of this process. While Chapter Seven is mainly concerned with Chinese seafarers' encounters with other religions apart from Christianity, I begin by investigating how they respond to their encounters with Christian missionaries in this chapter.

This topic contributes to the study of the Chinese response to more freedom of thought and belief but it may also allow us to learn something about the direction in which China is travelling. Their encounters with missionaries set Chinese seafarers aside from most Chinese people. While the transformation of Chinese society has increased the opportunities for people to come into contact with Christianity in China, Chinese seafarers have had such contact for a longer time. Moreover, they are probably still far more likely to encounter people who have a formal position in a Christian denomination. Despite the religious comeback in China, religion is still subject to control by the government, and therefore is distant from the general public. In this respect, then, the experiences of seafarers may give us some idea of future trends in patterns of religious belief in China.

6.1 Missionary work perceived in port

As discussed in the literature review, the domestic religious policies of China are implemented in a way that religions and their practices are constrained by law. Buddhism and Daoism and their practices can be seen in public because the Chinese have blurred the line between religion and Chinese cultures and tradition. As a result of this process of containment, most Chinese are unlikely to come into direct contact with Christianity. European and World Values Surveys Integrated Data File 1999-2002 shows that 88.9 percent of Chinese people had never attended religious services (Yang 2009 p. 11). By comparison Chinese seafarers operating internationally frequently reported that they took part in a variety of religious services organised by missionaries abroad.

A major Chinese state-owned shipping company commissioned a research project on understanding its seafarers. The project revealed that seafarers have received greater support from foreign religious denominations and international seafarers unions than from their compatriot colleagues and company (Zhou and Zhang 2008 p. 170). The Chinese refer to church-affiliated organizations, such as the Mission to Seafarers, as international seafarers unions because in their eyes these organizations perform the same function as trade unions in China. Chinese trade unions are part of the organisational structures of state-owned enterprises and they undertake a variety of activities such as holding conferences for workers and arranging funerals of deceased workers or their parents. Unlike trade unions in western countries, Chinese trade unions are not involved in collective bargain activities or wage negotiations on behalf of their members. As such, the Chinese trade unions are better construed as charities. The research commissioned by the Chinese company did not go into the reasons why its seafarers believed foreign missionaries provided them with greater support than what they got from their Chinese colleagues and company while serving on board ships. However, the findings presented in the following sections will show the different ways in which missionaries interacted with and assisted Chinese seafarers, and how this impacted upon the seafarers.

6.1.1 Missionary activities in the eyes of Chinese seafarers

It was not easy for missionaries to get contact with Chinese seafarers thirty years ago because the government wanted to protect seafarers from being contaminated by capitalist influences. Different methods of preventing them from falling under foreign 'negative' influences (including missionaries') while working on board ships included the posting of Commissars on board Chinese state-owned ships. According to an ocean-going seafarers management code of one of the largest state-owned shipping companies in China, entry three of article fifty-eight of the code states: 'When foreigners and overseas Chinese want to board the company's ships for a visit, the leaders of the ships must assign a crew member to give a reception. Without permission, it is not allowed to bring visitors to crew's cabins. Missionaries and visitors are refused to board politely if they do not have approved identification' (COSCO Human Resource 2005 p. 18). The leaders of the ships mentioned in the entry of the code are Masters and Commissars. Today, the situation aboard ship is different. Although a prevention mechanism is still found in the seafarers' manuals of state-owned shipping companies, none of my interviewees referred to the implementation of

the restrictive rules listed in their manuals. As such, more visits made by missionaries are received on board ships manned by Chinese seafarers.

At the same time, church-affiliated organizations increasingly focused on providing secular support to seafarers when their vessels called into ports (Kahveci et al. 2003). For instance in its bulletin, the Mission to Seafarers introduces the services of a new mission centre with the following: 'In addition to ship visiting, it will focus on providing transport, selling phone cards, providing access to religious services and working with the remaining [redundant] seafarers' (The Mission to Seafarers 2009). Apart from ship visits, the new mission centre focuses on the provision of transport and phone cards. This is because such provision is welcomed by seafarers who find it difficult to move around nowadays when ports are built out of town and the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code has prevented seafarers from walking freely around port areas. As a result of the growing attention of missionaries to the provision of secular services to seafarers, this help with communication deserves further investigation when discussing missionary activities. Missionaries also carry out pastoral services to religious seafarers and involve lay seafarers in religious activities. For the benefit of discussion, two categories - secular provision of help and religion-related activities - are adopted.

However, despite this categorization of missionary activities, the boundary between the two is blurred to some extent. For instance, transport offered by missionaries is seen as secular provision when seafarers used it as a means of easy and free landing, whereas it is treated as a religion-related activity when seafarers are conveyed to missionary centres or churches to attend religious services. In the face of such complication, the categorization scheme is introduced because it helps reveal the increase of welfare-related activities undertaken by missionaries.

In line with their religion-related activities on board ships, missionaries met some needs of Chinese seafarers when they visited ships that were completely or partially manned by Chinese seafarers. The needs of Chinese seafarers were addressed in fundamental ways. Gift giving was a prominent activity of missionaries and was recounted frequently in the interviews as a means of keeping up seafarers' morale. Christmas was one occasion when Chinese seafarers received gifts from missionaries when the ships called into ports [Interviews 5, 20 and 21]. For instance, a 26-year-old Chief Mate in interview 5 said: 'Missionaries came on board ships and brought books and gifts with them to seafarers during

Christmastime.’ However, Christmas was not the only occasion when gifts were delivered by missionaries as these quotations illustrate: ‘[I] sometimes accepted their [missionaries’] gifts’ [Interview 27 of a 36-year-old Captain]; ‘We were happy to see missionaries coming on board ships because they always brought gifts with them to seafarers’ [Interview 1 of a 30-year-old Engineer]. Interviewees 19 of a 50-year-old Electrician and 29 of a 35-year-old sailor also reported missionaries’ practices of gift giving. Out of reciprocity, sometimes the visiting missionaries were served with meals aboard, according to one 35-year-old Chinese seafarer in interview 14. But I also notice that some Chinese seafarers saw receiving gifts from missionaries as losing face (discussed in the previous chapter).

In addition to ship visits, missionaries are keen to provide transport for seafarers. The provision was sometimes solely to satisfy seafarers’ secular needs:

In South Africa, I met a lady who was like Mother Teresa. The mother-like lady is a Dutch. She drove in her car taking us to visit tourist sites of the area. It was back in 1997 [Interview 2; a 40-year-old Captain].

In foreign ports religious denominations did well to serve the needs of seafarers. They sent seafarers in vans to do shopping and picked them up and sent them back on time [Interview 3; a 37-year-old Captain].

In providing transport, the missionaries served to improve Chinese seafarers’ wellbeing by addressing their more immediate needs. There were more ways that seafarers used the transport provision to fulfil their secular demands ashore as more quotations illustrate:

Sometimes when our ships called into a new port about which we knew nothing, we would prefer to call missionaries to pick us up and let us visit their seafarer centres so that we could call back to China [Interview 3].

According to the same seafarer, it was easy for seafarers to gain access to the transport provision managed by missionaries in port. In his interview, the seafarer explained the method:

They [missionaries] came on board ships and gave us the addresses of their facilities and contact numbers for free transport. Seafarers could call the numbers if they wanted to go shopping or visit seafarer centres [Ibid].

The free transport was not always run for seafarers at will during port stay and there were times when Chinese seafarers needed to attend religious activities at seafarer centres before they were sent to do shopping and picked up afterwards. However, Chinese seafarers were still grateful to missionaries for the transport provision:

Many seafarers went and we could hitch a ride in missionaries' cars to shopping malls after religious activities at their places. We felt good that they would send us back to ships after our shopping [Interview 12; a 45-year-old motorman].

For instance, in South Korea there were seafarer centres in association with religious denominations. Korean missionaries took us in their cars or vans to their churches where we were given seminars. We were sent to city centres to do our shopping after the seminars [Interview 4; a 37-year-old Captain].

Alongside the religious functions of missionary facilities, missionaries allowed the facilities to become places where seafarers took a break, made calls, and were entertained with sports free of charge [Interviews 5, 7, 10, 18 and 22]. Once again the transport offered by missionaries was necessary for such land activities to take place. Missionary provision of transport was, in the eyes of some seafarers, a means of allowing them to visit somewhere easily. These seafarers had been used to their state-owned shipping companies' agents arranging transport in foreign ports in the past. Now fewer companies operate in that way, and missionary transport has filled the gap [Interview 13 of a 36-year-old Engineer and interview 27 of a 36-year-old Captain]. This was important for Chinese seafarers as the missionary transport helped them break away, at least temporarily, from the social and physical isolation created by working and living on board ships.

There was one occasion in the interviews when missionaries in Japan were asked by a Chinese seafarer to remit a large sum of money back to the seafarer's home in China because the seafarer's family was in need of the money and it was too late for the seafarer to remit the money himself before his vessel left the country. His relatives received his money in China eventually [Interview 5 of a 26-year-old Chief Mate]. The fact that a Chinese seafarer left a large sum of his salary in the missionaries' charge shows a bond of trust between them. This domestic request is an exemplar of expansion of missionary secular services to seafarers. Relative to the increasing security concerns especially in the ports of the USA after Sept.11, the expansion of secular services appeared more meaningful as one interviewee explained:

We sometimes did not have the US visas because of more restrictive regulations when our vessels called into the US ports. The fact was that we could not go ashore without visas, as such we were not able to land and buy prepaid phone cards. As such, we depended on missionaries coming on board ships to deliver prepaid phone cards. They also helped us shop what we needed [Interview 15; a 42-year-old Pump man].

With the prepaid phone cards Chinese seafarers could call home from public telephones on the quayside. There were also occasions when missionaries brought mobile handsets for the use of crews.

In parallel to their secular services, missionaries made efforts to get Chinese seafarers in touch with religion, in particular Christianity. The free provision of missionary transport for the sake of seafarers' convenience allowed missionaries to develop rapport between them and seafarers in the long run, and even a seafarer Commissar shifted his attitude of suspicion about missionaries into acceptance and appreciation because of missionaries' efforts to help Chinese seafarers [Interview 21 of a 50-year-old Commissar]; in addition, the transport provision might be seen by missionaries as a bridge linking seafarers and missionary centres, and a service that would facilitate friendly ship boarding for missionaries.

According to the interview data, predominant religious activities on board ships taken by missionaries involved distributing religious publications to Chinese seafarers. Bible copies, most of time in English and sometimes in Chinese were the major part of the publications [Interviews 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 25, and 28]. Some seafarers even received videos of the stories of Jesus [Interview 1 of a 30-year-old Engineer]. Religious publications were also given to Chinese seafarers when they were at missionaries' places [Interview 12 of a 45-year-old motorman]. The way missionaries distributed religious publications was passive engagement as seafarers needed to read or watch them before absorbing any information from the publications. There was even less chance for Chinese seafarers to read or watch them when Commissars removed the publications from the sight of Chinese crews [Interview 1 of a 30-year-old Engineer and interview 14 of a 35-year-old Engineer].

A proactive way missionaries used to religiously stimulate Chinese seafarers emerged from the interview data. Missionaries engaged Chinese seafarers in seminars, hymn singing, and sermons etc. These activities brought Chinese seafarers direct access to Christianity. The

activities took place both on board ships when missionaries visited seafarers' vessels and ashore when Chinese seafarers went to missionary facilities.

Before looking at religious activities at the missionary facilities, the activities missionaries conducted on board ships are introduced here by three interviewees:

Most of the time missionaries could board ships.....They left ships after some activities such as hymn singing [Interview 14; a 35-year-old Engineer].

A few times, they [missionaries] came on board ships.....and even held lessons for us [Interview 6; a 27-year-old Chief Mate].

Missionaries sometimes talked with seafarers about God after they came to board our ships [Interview 17; a 40-year-old Officer].

These quotations show missionaries' collective activities on board ships for presenting Christianity directly to Chinese seafarers. In addition, another interviewee told of the mission he encountered when his ship called into a port:

When I was in South Africa, a Christian came on board the ship preaching Christianity. He said that God is omnipotent and exists where light can reach.....He sometimes brought with him refreshments and some other time he took knitted hats with him for the seafarers. Later I bought a souvenir cup in Shenzhen, China and gave it to him as a gift when the ship returned to the country. He thanked me for the gift and told me that he would attach to the cup with a sticker with my name on it as a reminder of where the cup was from. He had a collection of different kinds of gifts from various seafarers. He has got names on every souvenir he received so that he could pray for those seafarers when they were at sea [Interview 16; a 30-year-old Officer].

Even though missionaries approached the Chinese seafarers with friendship and often resulted in reciprocal behaviour from seafarers, some seafarers showed indifference towards the missionaries and their endeavours. Later in this same interview, the interviewee elaborated on the different attitudes of his Chinese colleagues in respect of the South African Christian:

He talked to those Chinese seafarers who were kindred spirits. Some seafarers turned him down after he boarded the ship so he did not talk to them further. He talked to those who were interested in his preaching [Ibid].

According to the interviewees, on-board missionary activities could not reach a large audience because of different working patterns. Regarding on-board preaching lessons, a seafarer stated: ‘Only those whose jobs were not time demanding such as cooks and stewards would join the missionaries to listen to the preaching when these seafarers did not have chances to go ashore’ [Interview 6 of a 27-year-old Chief Mate]. As such, missionary centres and churches were the places where Chinese seafarers experienced more contact with religion as they integrated themselves into a new religious environment with many other seafarers of a variety of nationalities. One interviewee noted the number of the visitors:

There were once Chinese seafarers from seven Chinese vessels gathered at a missionary place in Tampa, Florida. One of the missionaries at the mission told us it was the first time when they had so many people [Interview 12; a 45-year-old motorman].

Unlike missionary activities on board ships where sporadic seminars, hymn singing and preaching took place, these activities at missionary facilities were held for seafarers more often [Interviews 4, 12, 14, 26 and 29] as more resources were available. Another seafarer described these activities: ‘In Houston and New York, I went to the missionary facilities several times. In Houston, I was asked to attend their services. People in a circle repeated what a missionary said and then we sang hymns’ [Interview 9 of a 35-year-old Chief Engineer]. Normally, Chinese seafarers were asked to take part in religious seminars and hymn singing at missionary facilities, but the elaboration of one seafarer on his experience of foreign religious contact was an exception that proves the rule:

Interviewer: Did you go to churches?

Chief Mate: Yes.

Interviewer: What did you do there?

Chief Mate: I remember that I went to churches and the churches of different countries were different. I recall that I was actually baptised in a church when the ship I worked on brought me to Japan.

Interviewer: Was it Christian baptism or Shinto?

Chief Mate: It was a Christian church. A car sent me there; we were all presented with a book and some words were read out from the Bible at a following lesson. After a priest led us to pray, we got through some rituals before we were led to change our clothing. Then we were helped to dip in water. We immersed in hot water first and got a cold shower afterwards.

Interviewer: How many seafarers were baptised there?

Chief Mate: Almost all the seafarers [the ship was manned by Chinese seafarers] apart from those keeping watch on the ship. We were given refreshments having been baptised. We could also read or entertain by watching TV or playing table tennis after the baptism.

Interviewer: Did you know who they exactly were?

Chief Mate: We were alongside the port of Kagoshima, Kyushu. They were Christians as we were given copies of the Bible to read.

Interviewer: What year was it?

Chief Mate: In 2003.

Interviewer: I understand that people need to believe in Christianity to be baptised in line with the practice of some Christian church.

Chief Mate: At that time language might be a barrier. Everybody that went was baptised. The Japanese told us that we needed to accept a ritual if we wanted to be picked up to go to their place. Nobody knew what would really happen beforehand.

Interviewer: Why did you accept baptism?

Chief Mate: At that time I thought copies of the Bible had been received on the ship so that I went and was baptised later.

Interviewer: Do you have religion?

Chief Mate: Now I have not put myself into any category of religion [Interview 23; a 35-year-old Chief Mate].

The Chief Mate revealed an extraordinarily religious accomplishment by Japanese missionaries. Baptism is seen as a major religious event and the real start of religious belief. It would not be imposed on non-believers under formal circumstances. However, in the above story, baptism was applied to a group of Chinese seafarers all of whom were apparently non-believers. As the Chief Mate admitted in his story, the barrier of language blocked communication between the seafarers and the missionaries about what would happen at the

church. By and large, the barrier of language is not a major issue because these seafarers could have refused to go any further when they were brought to the verge of baptism without knowing. The reality was that they were all baptised by the missionaries in the face of the atheist frames of mind of this group of Chinese seafarers. The reason is that the Chinese are not used to overtly rejecting others' requests. Most of the time hesitation in Chinese society is actually a 'no' answer. Such hesitation cannot be picked out by people of different culture as a refusal. On top of that, they would like to retain their 'faces' as well as safeguard the 'faces' of others by not saying 'no' (see section 2.2.2). Therefore, doing what the Chinese are not fond of doing is not abnormal in the eyes of the Chinese. A quotation from a passage in which another informant spoke of his visits to missionary centres emphasises the Chinese ethos of dealing with others:

From the bottom of my heart, I did not believe in it [religion], but I did not quit the religious services at the centres, because I did not want to dampen their goodwill of wanting to help us. Regarding other situations, we just wanted to make them [missionaries] happy with our attendances and by allowing them to tell us what to do and how to do with respect to religious issues. They gave us some publications which we did not like to read but we did not refuse what they gave in front of them. They were so enthusiastic that we did not like to say no, and otherwise we should have disappointed them [Interview 9; a 35-year-old Chief Engineer].

This quotation is a vivid picture of how Chinese ethos work. There might be more reasons of Chinese seafarers for not turning down missionaries. Having looked at the missionary activities witnessed by Chinese seafarers in this section, the next section lets Chinese seafarers explain their thoughts about missionaries and their activities.

6.1.2 Chinese seafarers' perspectives on missions

Missions were seen as predominantly present in the developed countries by Chinese seafarers. No interviewee mentioned missionary presentation in poor countries, apart from an individual missionary in South Africa [Interview 16 of a 30-year-old Officer]. When asked if he met missionaries in every port his vessel called into, a seafarer interviewee said: 'No. I almost met them [missionaries] in the developed countries. I met more missionaries in Vancouver. I cannot remember the names of some other places. However, there were no missionaries in

poor countries such as Indonesia and India' [Interview 6 of a 27-year-old Chief Mate]. Christian missions began in the industrial countries of Europe and later North America. Over the century some newly developed countries such as Japan and South Korea, where parts of their populations had been christened, allowed missionaries to preach to arriving seafarers. The current missionary work is the continuation of this history. Although interviewees claimed that such mission only exists in the developed countries, it should be noted it is also in developing countries such as Ukraine, India, Nigeria, Thailand and others (The Mission to Seafarers 2003). The reason that interviewees did not see missions in developing countries is the low level of missionary activities in these countries because of scanty resources.

Some interviewees considered missionary activities as a humane way of helping seafarers. This is revealed by various quotations, for example 'I felt their humane efforts to help us' [Interview 15 of a 42-year-old Pump man]; 'religious denominations in foreign ports did well to meet the need of seafarers especially with respect to free transport' [Interview 3 of a 37-year-old Captain], and 'I felt that missionaries were humane in a way that they did kind things for others' [Interview 10 of a 42-year-old Captain]. These interviewees did not relate missionaries and their activities to anything religious.

After he complimented the humane work of missionaries, one interviewee offered a contrasting thought: 'It seems impossible for these things [done by missionaries in order to help] to take place in China' [Interview 9 of a 35-year-old Chief Engineer]. This person's assumption about the lack of philanthropic services in China for international seafarers also concerned a few more interviewees. One Chief Mate stated:

Let us think about charity, there is no compensation for doing it. This activity is gracious from my point of view. I know there are such organisations in Taiwan. And in the mainland China we desperately need those kinds of organisations. We were welcomed and helped by missionaries when our seafarers arrived at foreign ports. So do we have any charity organisations to take care of the wellbeing of the international seafarers coming to our ports? Nobody in China does this kind of charity and it is an undeveloped areaWhen I first went to foreign countries and was welcomed and cared of by these charity organisations, I was moved because some people came to pick me up and sent me to a nice place, allowing me to have a break from my on-board life even though I felt a bit strange about the country the first time of my visit [Interview 23; a 35-year-old Chief Mate].

This is an excellent example of the influence of missionary activities on stimulating deep thoughts. The above seafarer's statement explained that these thoughts were formed and developed under the auspices of missionaries and their efforts by which he was moved. Missionary influence on Chinese seafarers is capable of stimulating Chinese seafarers to think philanthropically. Two more quotations support this argument:

Interviewer: You said you were so kind that you helped others. Is your kindness related to your experiences of working with the Buddhist Captain and meeting missionaries while working on board ships?

Chief Mate: Yes. Before becoming a seafarer I helped but only the persons closest to me such as the members of my family. Today I start helping people in the street who are really in need in China. Despite trivial things sometimes, I also give my help. I once helped two visitors find a place to eat when I passed the front of the railway station. I definitely neglected their request if it was before. I think I have been influenced by the philanthropic activities of missionaries and the Captain [Interview 5; a 26-year-old Chief Mate].

Interviewer: Have missionary activities impacted on you?

Officer: Yes. A few days ago, I talked to a Chief Mate about my thought about helping some poor children resume schooling by donating money to the Hope Foundation of China.....I would like to help others in need because I received the same treatment from missionaries [Interview 17; a 40-year-old Officer].

Again the seafarer interviewees depicted the influence of missionaries on them in terms of kindness and philanthropy. The interviewees above were willing to be philanthropic back in China but they did not speak of any spiritual impact of their religious encounters. In general, missionaries were welcomed by more Chinese seafarers because the missionaries brought conveniences, but missionaries' religious activities were not praised very much [Interviews 1, 6, 12, 18, 26, 27 and 29].

Another interviewee explained his point of view about visits to missionary centres: 'Some Chinese seafarers came to missionary places without sincerity because the missionaries picked the seafarers up and sent them to the places free of charge. The Chinese seafarers could go there for a short period of entertainment or meals besides attending the religious activities there' [Interview 5 of a 26-year-old Chief Mate]. This statement introduces some

opposite perspectives of minority interviewees on missions. A 35-year-old Chief Mate successfully prevented his ratings from going ashore with missionaries as he disclosed:

Interviewer: Did you meet missionaries in ports?

Chief Mate: Yes. We met some in Inchon, South Korea. They came to board our ship asking us to visit their church. I did not go.

Interviewer: Why didn't you go?

Chief Mate: My work was intense.

Interviewer: Did any seafarers go to the church with missionaries?

Chief Mate: No. Because I was Chief Mate on the ship, the seafarers [all Chinese] would not dare to go to the church without my permission.

Interviewer: Did you oppose the idea that the seafarers under your supervision go to the church?

Chief Mate: No. If other seafarers wanted to go, they could go. But the missionaries did not pass their notice onto other seafarers [on the ship].

Interviewer: Were you given notice by the missionaries about the church visit?

Chief Mate: Yes.

Interviewer: You did not inform other seafarers of the news of the church visit?

Chief Mate: No.

Interviewer: What made you to make such a decision?

Chief Mate: I thought seafarers would have less time for work if they had any religion. Therefore, it would affect their on-board work.

Interviewer: But seafarers could use their spare time to be involved in religion.

Chief Mate: Okay. It is alright for seafarers to spend their spare time on religious activities. In case, their religious practices ate into their working hours, [I prevented the seafarers from contacting religion]. I have heard that Muslim seafarers would stop doing anything when their times were up for prayer. They kneeled down to the direction of the sun or moon even during the time at work.

Who would work for me if the seafarers all did it [Interview 8]?

This quote shows such an opposing attitude towards missionaries and religion on board ships that the Chief Mate even sabotaged the mission of the missionaries.

To complete the discussion about the perspectives of Chinese seafarers on missions, this section ends with another insight, 'If there were two-thirds of Chinese seafarers on board

ships behaving according to what missionaries preached after having attended their preaching, it would be great help to the safety and social stability on board ships. If Chinese seafarers practiced what missionaries preached, they would correct their bad habits and their spirit would be uplifted' [Interview 14 of a 35-year-old Engineer]. According to the speaker, religion was seen as an aid to the making of a better on-board society. Interestingly, he had never been a Christian when the interview took place. This stance was taken by most participants. As such, discussion in the next section will look for an answer.

6.2 The impact of Christianity

The previous section suggests little evidence of religious uptake of Chinese seafarers. Given the belief of some Chinese seafarers that religion might improve the life and wellbeing of seafarers by possibly helping create a better on-board society, it is important to investigate if such an idea prompted Chinese seafarers to find more about Christianity. This will help answer the research question of how Chinese seafarers feel new liberties have affected their levels of satisfaction and feelings of wellbeing.

It has already been noted that Chinese seafarers engage in domestic life without ever necessarily encountering Christianity as a result of the restrictive religious policies implemented by the government. However, in addition to their work contact with foreigners in ports, Chinese seafarers might come into more contact with missionaries by both receiving their visits on ships and visiting missionary facilities over the periods of their contracts. A variety of missionary activities have been discussed in the previous sections of this chapter. In the first place these activities were designed to help seafarers in forms such as gift giving, provision of communication (providing prepaid phone cards and the use of handsets to seafarers), butler service (shopping for seafarers in the USA in the face of increasing security restrictions in port due to the implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code), and transport. In addition, missionaries provided seafarers with religious publications and held various religious activities for seafarers. Owing to the language barrier to adequate communication, whenever it was possible, missionary facilities recruited or sent Chinese speaking missions to integrate with Chinese seafarers on board ships and ashore. International Chinese students were found amongst missionaries by Chinese seafarers who saw these students helping missionaries run seminars and distribute publications, etc [Interviews 1, 3, 4, 6, 12 and 29].

Despite Chinese seafarers' religious involvement facilitated by missionaries, through all the twenty-nine interviews, when the interviewees were asked if they met or knew any Christian Chinese seafarers at work and in shore-life only one seafarer interviewee revealed that he met a Catholic Chinese seafarer in a church in Dalian (where the interview took place), where he went to find his Catholic mother-in-law [Interview 11 of a 45-year-old Captain]. Apart from this, only one interviewee considered himself as a Christian waiting for his baptism. Indeed he was the only Christian seafarer among thirty interviewees (there were occasions when two candidates came for interviews and one seafarer was interviewed twice). He was exposed to religion through his seafaring career but his initiation into Christianity was not directly associated with the efforts of missionaries [Interview 22 of a 35-year-old sailor]. There is a description of his story in Chapter Seven (see section 7.3.3). In contrast, many interviewees said that they had worked with and had heard some Chinese seafarers practicing Buddhism, and other Chinese versions of religion on board ships. The method of snowballing I applied in the fieldwork did not find any more Christian Chinese seafarers to interview. The interviewee who reported meeting a Catholic seafarer in a Church in Dalian did not know the name of the Catholic nor had his contact details. However, due to the small sample, a definite conclusion that Chinese seafarers are mostly not Christian cannot be made. Instead, it is certain that Christianity was very much less represented by this group of Chinese seafarers who came from north China. Even so, most Chinese seafarers were happy with missionary visits and some even interacted with missionaries.

The majority of interviewees were in favour of missionaries and the mission-related help. With regard to the activities arranged or organised by missionaries for the sake of preaching, the interviewees did not comment on them directly. Instead, they preferred to elaborate on how it would be if Chinese seafarers were religious [Interview 8 of a 35-year-old Chief Mate and interview 14 of a 35-year-old Engineer]. Some interviewees thought religion was better possessed by Chinese seafarers so that there would be a utopia on board ships [Interview 14, non-believer – quoted two pages before]. The hard fact is that the Chinese seafarers who had such utopian rhetoric themselves were not believers in Christianity, and they would rather repose hope in other fellow Chinese seafarers. One interviewee said: 'I think I was influenced by the missionaries and the Captain who helped strangers. I still dream that Chinese seafarers on board ships would live a better life if increasing numbers of them had religious belief. A ship is a small society of about twenty persons' [Interview 5 of a 26-year-old Chief Mate]. He was not a believer in religion. Another non-believer interviewee looked forward to the

possibility of his religious enterprise. He said: ‘After retirement, religion can be got and will be good to people’s health and spirit’ [Interview 18 of a 42-year-old Officer]. If religion could be taken after retirement as source of wellbeing for seafarers why did they not have it now? I will explore how these seafarers understood the place of religion in the following sections.

Three aspects emerged from the interview data which are worth investigation. The first is the fact that Chinese seafarers considered religion (Christianity in particular) as a distracting agent of their current life. Even though some said that religion was good for human beings, they were reluctant to believe it themselves and gave excuses. In the words of one seafarer:

Interviewer: You have encouraged your mother to believe in Christianity and she is happier with her life and role in her church. Why haven’t you started to believe in religion?

Officer: Religion can purify human thoughts. It dispels unhealthy thoughts so that people would not worry very much in life. What people think about daily are religious principles and people thus get rid of other thoughts, so religion is good from this angle.

Interviewer: Why don’t you take this benefit?

Officer: I would have taken it if I had been sure that my work was not interrupted. In middle age, work is the most important thing. Religion involves a lot of details which need much time to focus on and I cannot do it now [Interview 18].

He actually followed this statement by disclosing that religion could be taken after his retirement (Ibid), which raises questions about what lay behind his reasons for not taking religion in middle age. This seafarer was a freelance, living in a county town surrounded by rural dwellings. A freelance seafarer in China is likely to find themselves in a precarious financial position. Furthermore, their financial position will be more precarious when they live in the countryside with a large family to support. The social security in Chinese rural areas is far beyond satisfaction. And if the freelance seafarer had a few ill relatives to look after (Ibid), he might be put at full stretch. Freelance seafarers have to do everything for themselves, including: job hunting, certificate renewal or update, the coverage of their social security and their medical care, etc. In addition, they depend on the seafarer labour market for their job opportunities, which increases uncertainty about their future. As a means of earning a living as well as protection for families, seafaring work is top priority and leaves no room for religion.

Another freelance seafarer of urban origin had more complex reasons for his distance from religion. His decision to remain unreligious was attributable to his confusion over principles of different religions in parallel with the pressure from his life.

I, at one point, tried to possess religious faith. When a ship's conditions were very poor and I was depressed, I might want to believe in religion.....Between Christianity and Buddhism, which should I choose to pick up and how do I know whose teaching is true and whose is not? It is hard for me to justify. As a young person, I get more pressure because I need to get married and to build a family, so that I have no concentration on religion [Interview 16; a 30-year-old Officer].

Again religion was perceived by this seafarer as a distracting agent that might derail his life and affect his marriage and family. But this did not prevent him from using consecrated Buddhist beads to pacify his nerves while boarding a ship of poor conditions (see section 7.2).

The second aspect is continuity of the atheist ethos. Most Chinese seafarers had an atheist education and upbringing so the atheist momentum is unlikely to wither away easily even in the face of missionary efforts. An interviewee put it succinctly:

Because of my characteristics their efforts [missionaries'] were hard to convert me [Interview 1; a 30-year-old Engineer].

A few other phrases from this interview help understand his position, 'I have never believed in something. To live my own life is my principle.' Last but not least, 'I just simply pass every day. The next goal of my wife and me is buy a car after the completion of my next contract'. His rhetoric suggests that it is atheism combined with thoughts of material gain which keeps him immune from religion.

As noted in Chapter Two Christianity and its missionaries were treated as imperialist forces in China after the 1949 liberation. This negative image of Christianity might still resonate today with the Chinese who were brought up with an atheist education.

The third aspect is very different to the first two. Even though religion was seen to be potentially beneficial, I will see that it was not presented to the seafarers in a clear and consistent manner and so did not gain any substantial purchase with the seafarers. Despite the fact that they were given as many religious publications and seminars as possible by missionaries, in the eyes of these Chinese seafarers, they believed the seminars and other

efforts commissioned by missionaries were inadequate for them to understand Christianity let alone convert to it. Some interviewees offered their thoughts:

Something [preached by missionaries] was alien to our knowledge.....We could just get little knowledge in Christianity from their crash seminars [Interview 12; a 45-year-old motorman].

Interviewer: Did you ever attend missionary seminars?

Chief Mate: I attended only when I happened to be off duty while the missionaries were holding their seminars.

Interviewer: Did their lessons have influence on you?

Chief Mate: One or two lessons could not do anything [Interview 6; a 27-year-old Chief Mate]

Given the fact that the seafarers were met by one version of Christianity in one port and their limited knowledge of that religion was challenged by a different religion when their vessels called into next port, the build-up of their experiences with religion, in a way, helped seafarers cast doubt on the accountability of religion. One seafarer expressed his confusion:

Interviewer: Do you have religion?

Captain: No. It was difficult to understand the contents of the publications given by missionaries.

Interviewer: Have you read them?

Captain: Yes. I read them in both English and Chinese. They were hard to read.

Interviewer: Why do you say they were hard to read?

Captain: I just wondered why there was a Jesus from some missionaries and there was a Maria from other missionaries. Different kinds of liturgical books told different stories so as to confuse me as well [Interview 3; a 37-year-old Captain].

However, the question of the possibility of more Chinese seafarers converting to religion in future remained open, as one interviewee said: 'Perhaps one day an outstanding event will touch my soul and make me a convert. Under former and current circumstances it has been difficult to convince me to believe in religion' [Interview 1 of a 30-year-old Engineer]. Another seafarer spoke of his complex understanding: 'They [missionaries] taught me of Christianity. They said the world was beautiful and they focused on things that make me comfort. I did not thoroughly understand their belief.....There was not enough time and

chance to get it [religion] fully understood.’ However, he also added, ‘If it [Christianity teaching] was more systematically carried out, coupled with my previous knowledge, I thought it could benefit me more’ [Interview 14 of a 35-year-old Engineer]. But conversion of large number, if taking place in future, might not entirely be attributable to missionaries if my recent observations at a few missionary centres (on a different research project) in the UK and Brazil are true for most seafarers’ centres across the world. I had not observed one single case by which secular seafarers were preached during my weeks of stays at the centres mingling with visiting seafarers. The centres simply provided pastoral services upon the requests of religious seafarers.

In this section, the interview data revealed that some participants in the survey could identify benefits from Christian observance. In order to take advantage of the potential benefits, the seafarers wanted to see others getting religion for the benefit of all by creating an ideal onboard society with religious principles. While this is interesting, it does not appear to directly reveal the relationship of new liberties (in religion) and the level of wellbeing. Certainly, the data did not suggest that Chinese seafarers had only to encounter practicing Christians in order to be persuaded they should find out more about Christianity. Thus far, then, the data do not give strong indication that the seafarers will take advantage of their new freedoms of thought and belief to explore Christianity.

Like missionaries, more foreign (i.e. not Chinese) seafarers are religious because they come from either religious countries or countries where religion is free to follow. Unlike missionaries, these international religious seafarers were in constant contact with Chinese seafarers when both worked on same ships. But this contact impacted even less on Chinese seafarers than missionaries did in terms of generating an interest in religious beliefs. Chinese seafarers provided little evidence of deep integration with foreign seafarers working on the same vessels in their interviews. Regarding the question of how Chinese seafarers perceived foreign religious presentation on board ships, there was not a single case in which a Chinese seafarer told of the profound exchange of thoughts with foreign religious seafarers. The reports of the interviewees about their encounters with foreign religious seafarers on the same ships were all related to superficial facts such as food, prayer in public, copies of Bibles and religious replicas [Interviews 15, 16, 17, 20, and 23].

The language barrier might be the reason for the lack of integration between foreign seafarers and Chinese interviewees. There is one more factor for consideration. Chinese culture consists

of many elements inherited from Confucius teachings. Harmony is one of the major themes and the concept of harmony is divided into two theories; one is related to the harmonic state inside a person, and the other is the harmonic relationship between people and between people and nature. To achieve harmony, self improvement is important. Self improvement understood by Chinese people is to be harmonious and kind, not to be in conflict. To keep their opinion to themselves is less likely to put them in a position where they disagree with people.

Culture based on Confucius teachings has helped the Chinese to be more reserved, in comparison with westerners in particular. In dealing with their international counterparts, Chinese seafarers followed the same principles.

Having faced encounters with Christian missionaries during onboard services, Chinese seafarers showed levels of interest in religious belief. Nevertheless, there was little evidence of religious uptake despite their religious encounters. Are there any other social facts which led Chinese seafarers to those responses? This will be explored in the next two sections.

6.3 Long history of atheist education and totalitarian society

Looking back at the recent history of China, the socialist state was very successful in thoroughly removing religion after the communist victory in 1949. The state made tremendous efforts to impose a belief on Chinese people that caused superstition and religion to decline and finally vanish along with the developments of socialism. In the guise of socialist education, ideologies such as self-sacrifice and ‘serving the people’ were introduced into the rhetoric of daily life. The traditional pillar of Chinese values - Confucianism - was challenged and was further criticised in the mayhem of the Cultural Revolution. To maximise the absolute control over the people, the communist party utilised work units in the cities and people’s communes in rural areas which checked aspects of people’s lives, and communist party units were implanted within individual organisations. After the 1980s things changed and the state has been focusing on building a country of economic power. In line with the changes, religion started to re-emerge in China with the state’s permission and encouragement, and religion could be seen as a bridge between China and overseas Chinese. For instance ancestor worship requires most overseas Chinese to visit the tombs of their ancestors in China

(see section 7.2 in next chapter where non-Christian observance is discussed in relation to Chinese seafarers). Those wealthy overseas Chinese were especially welcome for the sake of their investments. Tourism also stimulated the restoration of religious buildings and sites (see section 2.2.4).

Chinese seafarers have more chance to encounter Christianity while working on ships than Chinese people who work and live on land. When Chinese seafarers go abroad they are met by missionaries and sent to religious seminars. However, a thirty-five year old seafarer engineer with party membership revealed his disinterest in religion:

This is because of the communist education which has been done for years. In addition, the religious environment is of another reason [in China]. Then in my view people who believe in Jesus are disadvantaged groups in society. Most Chinese seafarers had not known much about religion in China before becoming seafarers. Therefore, when Chinese seafarers first meet religious people while working on board ships, religion in the first place is new to Chinese seafarers; and even Chinese seafarers who go to churches or are sent to religious facilities for religious purposes, they still cannot be influenced too much by religion because of their communist education [Interview 26].

This quote is from an active party member who emphasised the impact of atheist education on Chinese people. Coupled with his perception of Chinese Christians as society's underdogs, it is hard for him to get religion irrespective of his foreign religious encounters. The atheist education is profound in Chinese seafarers, as other interviews suggest. A thirty-seven year old Captain of rural origin said that they had all received atheist education in childhood [Interview 3], whereas a thirty-six year old engineer said that from his education he had become an atheist [Interview 13]. In responding why he has no religion a thirty-five year old officer said in China people were educated not to be religious [Interview 24].

Chinese education is an important factor in the atheism of Chinese seafarers. There is little religious presentation in public in China, and the Chinese have little religious contact in their daily life. Chinese law is very clear that religious preaching in public is prohibited. In fact the government is so serious about prohibiting public preaching that it is very efficient in eradicating any religious presentation outside churches or religious facilities. As such, a Chinese person is hardly ever exposed to religious elements if no parents or friends have

introduced them to religion. A thirty year old engineer admitted that he did not get in touch with religion when he grew up [Interview 1]. A thirty-seven year old Captain of rural origin went further:

Interviewer: If people have religion, they often follow their religious principles in their life. What do you follow when you do not have religion?

Seafarer: For me I take myself to believe in Communism.

Interviewer: Are you a communist?

Seafarer: No. But I think my choice is determined by my living environs [Interview 4].

A non-communist Chinese seafarer would rather believe in communism when asked what principles to follow. According to him, the choice was decided by his living environs that had been deprived of Christianity in particular in public. To support the above quote, here's another similar account from a thirty-five year old Chief Mate of rural origin:

Interviewer: Did you have places to visit in port?

Chief Mate: Go shopping. In the capital of Myanmar I went to visit some temples.

Interviewer: What did you do in the temples?

Chief Mate: Sightseeing only. I had no belief. I would rather believe in Marxism and Communism.

Interviewer: Are you a member of the party?

Chief Mate: No.

Interviewer: Why do you rather believe in Marxism and Communism?

Chief Mate: I thought they are close to me [Interview 8].

Although Marxism and communism cannot be treated as forms of religion, Chinese people do not bother differentiating between communism and faith. Socialist education paid dividends in that the Chief Mate reckoned that Marxism and communism were easy for him to grasp if necessary. It is apparent that the socialist society in China worked very well in turning those Chinese seafarers to head in the direction the government wanted.

These examples illustrate the impact of socialist Chinese society on Chinese seafarers. The parents of seafarers also played a role in the making of their atheism. The thirty-five year old seafarer in interview 23 said his father had been a soldier and followed the principles of Communism and, as an atheist, his father had taught him to be atheist since he was very

young. A twenty-six year old officer of rural origin also stated: 'I have been influenced by my parents to be an atheist, and I do not have religion' [Interview 5].

Because of the secular mind-set of Chinese seafarers, some were very straightforward when they perceived the need of religion. Being asked if he needed spiritual support on board ships, a thirty-five year old Chief Mate said there was no need because he felt that entertainment was more important to seafarers, and he did not see necessity of religion [Interview 8].

The power to shape Chinese people into atheism is based on the Chinese totalitarian society. At the micro level, I see the replica of totalitarianism in the working life of Chinese seafarers of state-owned shipping companies. When I asked a forty-five year old Buddhist Captain of urban origin if he brought Buddhism to his crews, the Captain stated:

I was not proactive about telling them of Buddhism. When I prepared to sign on a ship of the company [a state-owned shipping company], a head in charge of propaganda of the company reminded me not to practice Qi Gong on the ship. I followed up by saying: 'It's not right. It should not be allowed to practice Falungong. My Gong is good for health.' I told him I would not allow the crew to practice Falungong [Interview 11].

Due to the termination of Falungong in China in the 1990s, it is also precarious to practice other forms of Gong (see section 2.2.3). That Captain applied health rhetoric to fend off a warning from his company against Qi Gong practice on board state-owned ships. The totalitarian practices in China have not only taught the Chinese Captain to be politically correct on state-owned ships but they also reflected on Chinese seafarers' frames of reference, as a thirty-five year old Chief Mate made explicit in his account:

When I started my seafaring job on board a ship owned by the state, I fought against the Chief Mate. I went to the Captain for justice. Rather than judging over who was to blame the Captain told me to learn to be sycophantic before I could become a Chief Mate. Through years of seafaring my character has been transformed into a manner of conformity [Interview 8].

This frame of reference is likely to help seafarers absorb what the government wants the general public to pick up. The government plays an essential role in dealing with religion in China. When the public tend to follow the propaganda of the state, to be atheist suits both the

government and individuals to some extent. As the state has criminalised Falungong, there was lack of sympathy for this fallen organisation in China from seafarer informants [Interviews 1, 11, 13, and 20]. The following conversation shows how this thirty-six year old engineer matched his understanding to what had been put on the state media:

Interviewer: How much do you know in terms of the country's religious policies?

Engineer: I don't know any.

Interviewer: You just told before this interview that you were stopped by two persons who passed Falungong booklets and a CD onto you when you made a short cut in woods to this place. What is your opinion on this incident?

Engineer: This is illegal and they are the people who go anti-party and anti-state. I have some sense of patriotism and I am conscious of this issue.

Interviewer: Why did you take what they gave then?

Engineer: I was lost in the woods and asked them for directions so they gave me the CD on which 'Spring Festival Gala' was written. I reckon Falungong really caused detriments to the state, for instance, suicidal burnings and sit-down demonstrations. They broke the formal orders of the country so they were doomed to be eradicated. What the Dalai Lama does should have been beneficial to Chinese people. Have a look at what his followers did, they attacked citizens, smashed and robbed properties. Their actions showed nothing beneficial to Chinese people [Interview 13].

That interview took place in March 2008 when there were protests and riots staged by Tibetans over the North-West part of China. The engineer informant referred to the rioting incidents in a way that the Dalai Lama and his supporters in China were accused of. Falungong practitioners today face prison sentences if serious offences are found, so they covertly launch their anti-propaganda attacks on the governments' heavy handling of the practitioners by surreptitiously sending out their booklets and CDs or attaching stickers in public areas. The engineer's grudge over Falungong and the Dalai Lama had much similarity to media reports by the government. Thus, I see the efficacy of the totalitarian society in shaping the thoughts of Chinese people, including Chinese seafarers. Indeed, the decline of communist ideology among the Chinese was discussed in the literature review chapters. But as long as the socialist state needs atheism to underpin its communist ethos, there will be

Chinese people who are happy to be atheist as the state is able to inculcate atheism into people's minds. According to the above quotes, Chinese seafarers are not exempted.

6.4 Influences on Chinese seafarers of domestic religion and ideology

I can further elaborate on the responses of Chinese seafarers to their encounters with Christian missionaries if I also examine the influences of Chinese domestic religion and ideology. In relation to Chinese seafarers in general, how they perceive religious people in China will be explored to help understand the lack of interest of Chinese seafarers in Christianity. The literature review discussed the revival of Christianity in China, and this allows some informants to develop views on religion based on observing the conduct of their relatives or other Chinese who happen to be Christians.

In interview twenty-six, the 35-year-old engineer judged '[Chinese] people who believe in Jesus are disadvantaged groups in society'. But what is the cause of such perceptions? The Chinese government implemented a Three Self scheme in order to prevent international religious influences from impacting on Chinese Christians, and also there were many years when overt forms of religion did not exist in China. When religion regained its legality in China after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) it was difficult to retrieve the heritage of religion in China. As a result, Christianity in China has incorporated elements from the broader society. The indigenisation of religion intensified when many older Chinese converted to and participated actively in Christianity with folk practices. A forty-two year old Officer of rural origin told the story of his mother:

My mother is popular in the neighbourhood and many people came to find her for advices. But their preaching is informal. They tried hard to instigate others to believe in it. I oppose such a practice a bit. In order to have a faith people should have calm frames of mind; to behave according to religious principles religious persons should set role models to influence others to get religion. I sometimes do not like their preaching as they said it would not be prosperous if people did not have beliefs. I reckon they did not do it right. They added superstition to religion [Interview 18].

Another seafarer spoke of his sister-in-law:

God in her thoughts can bring everything and even cure illness. My aunt caught a cold once and my sister told my aunt that she would go to God and pray to get rid of the cold for my aunt. I felt her religion unrealistic [Interview 7; a 37-year-old Captain].

The infiltration of superstition into Chinese Christianity has created a distance between Christianity and Chinese seafarers because seafarers with high education would not likely have sympathy with a religion compromising what they see as backward elements such as superstition. However, being put off by the superstition of his Christian relative, the interviewee [7] was eventually slightly superstitious himself when he dealt with missionary publications left on board ships (see section 7.2).

Apart from superstition picked out by Chinese seafarers, religion back in China is seen as the undertaking of idlers and the elderly, as a twenty-seven year old officer of rural origin stated:

[In my birth place] people went to churches to sing and pray. There were always older people going to churchThe members of my family believe in Christianity. My aunt and uncle go to church in the countryside. They do not have many things to do so going to church will keep them busy and offer them some spiritual balm [Interview 6].

The above quote makes us think of hierarchy in Chinese society in terms of people's needs. The need of religion comes behind and is only satisfied when people's basics have been taken care of.

The distance between Christianity and Chinese seafarers will increase if Chinese seafarers perceive religion back in China as a detonator to factional division. A thirty-five year old Chief Engineer of rural origin gave his views thus:

There are many kinds of religion back in my countryside and it seems to me that there are discrepancies between them. People of different factions oppose each other sometimes [Interview 9].

Whereas Chinese seafarers distance themselves from domestic Christianity because of their perception that it's for older or idle Chinese, and as a detonator to division in society, they also become disinterested in socialist ideology. Unlike their predecessors who had been politically selected and thus held onto the ideology of socialism (see Chapter Three), Chinese

seafarers of the twenty-first century are prepared to acknowledge, even if they do not share, the existence of alternative beliefs. Although the background of socialism turned him into an atheist, a forty-two year old officer was willing to buy fruits as his tribute to the Matsu statue on board ships. His reason is that:

Actually I am an atheist, but I do not oppose others' custom. It would not do me any harm by paying tribute to Matsu even though I am an atheist [Interview 18].

The interview data showed that many seafarers shared his point of view. As reviewed in Chapter Two, many Chinese people do not see their involvements in certain kinds of popular religions as religious. Here the seafarer informant saw his devotion to a Matsu statue as his respect to others' custom. It also seems socialist atheism has not worked out for all. Looking into the interview data, I see disbelief growing and the old tactics of the party to inspire the Chinese in building the socialist enterprise have been seen by Chinese seafarers as naïve. Most surprising of all is that the seafarer party members showed their indifference towards the party in their interviews:

Egalitarian society is now at a primary stage which is capitalism. Don't you think the developed countries in Europe should be the ones which can first achieve Communism in future? Looking at Marxism the theory has defined that the apex of capitalist development leads society into Socialism and the final result of socialist development is of Communism..... Communism has been seen by nobody. It is at most a simple imagination [Interview 10; a 42-year-old Captain].

I was a member of the Communist Party before joining this Taiwanese company where I did not have the party's organizational life for years. I reckon I have lost my membership due to many years of deserting the party [Interview 7; a 37-year-old Captain]

The second informant above, in his interview, explained that he grew up being inculcated with constant socialist education so that he kept longing for the ideology and became a party member when he was in a maritime university. It is very difficult for a university student to be accepted into the party. Many efforts have to be made by the student who also has to be indoctrinated by communist ideology. Given what the second informant had been through to become a party member, his change in ideology is fundamental because he actually denied his past symbolised by his communist ideology [Interview 7]. If I look further at the interview

with the first seafarer informant - an active party member, I can find out that disbelief in Communism is not an isolated incident:

Interviewer: Does your Communist party membership prevent you from having other faith?

Party member: It should not be a problem. Now do members of Communist Party and the party's leaders believe in Communism? The most worried thing is of the Communist Party's officials. If they believed in other religions, there would be something to confine their behaviours. Now they have had no religion and at the same time they have dropped their communist goals. In the end, they will have become insatiable [Interview 10; a 42-year-old Captain].

It is not allowed for communist party members to have faith other than communism, according to the Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party, but this does not deter the seafarer party member from thinking of the possibility of believing in other faith in secret. Rather than believing in it, this seafarer party member see religion as a bailout to save the officials of the party from being corrupt – this is what he means by ‘insatiable’. He, as an active party member when working on a state-owned ship, went to a famous temple in Ningbo, China where he bowed to pay his deference to saints and burnt incense for them. He went on saying that he would go to churches if there were churches within his landing radii; if there were religious teaching sessions he would sit and listen to the teaching when his time was adequate. He felt it a better thing to listen to such teachings in which people are told how human existence is [Interview 10]. In fact when the socialist ideology fails to dominate the frames of reference of Chinese people, the state is no longer able to pick up the broken pieces of its socialist ideology and reprogram them into the minds of Chinese people. There are more data to support this argument:

Communist Party members are not wrong in their belief but there is a crisis in faith in today's China. Party members are getting less convinced by their communist doctrines and ordinary people tend to focus on monetary matters. Two seafarers were caught stealing in a store in Japan..... It is unclear from the above about what the party should do on board ships. There is no workers' class or proletarian class. The Marxist theories are not working now. They are confusing before new theories can be formed. Those Commissars did not have good

competency in believing in Communism. How could they influence other crews [Interview 11; a 45-year-old Captain]?

In my view, Communism is a bit idealised. It is a kind of faith. This faith has been damaged to a great extent. The idea is beautiful but is hard to be realised. Today is not like years ago when people were so naïve that slogans could drive them [Interview 14; a 35-year-old Engineer].

‘There is no workers’ class or proletarian class;’ nevertheless, there have been changes of social structures in China. Proletarian class was the dominant majority and honourable title in the past but they have now become the underdogs of Chinese society because they are prone to redundancy due to the onslaught of economic reforms (see the introduction chapter). The failure of socialist slogans represents well the downturn of the socialist ideology in China. In line with failed slogans, honourable titles cannot be recycled by authorities to idealise Chinese seafarers either, as a Captain put it: ‘The Company always instigated ship’s leadership into earning some honourable title for the ship such as Youth League Ship or the like and I have never paid any attention to it’ [Interview 11 of a 45-year-old Captain]. Since most Chinese seafarers lost their faith in socialist ideology, they may find some other ideology to engage with but Chinese seafarers struck an attitude of indifference to religion when they were asked. On the other hand, their attitude certainly did not lead to their daily practices being void of religious elements. This will be explored further in the following chapter.

6.6 Summary

This chapter focused on Chinese seafarers’ encounters with Christian missionaries in order to help us to understand how Chinese people may respond to the opportunities for the adoption of alternative belief systems which have accompanied the social and economic changes of the last few decades.

Chinese seafarers are from an atheist country. Missionaries became the core media through which Chinese seafarers were introduced to Christianity. Despite the fact that many international crews who worked on the same vessels were religious, the influence of religious international crews on their Chinese colleagues was minimised because, as the interview data revealed, there is no frequent and close contact between them and the Chinese crews. For missionaries, they were welcomed by Chinese seafarers not because of their religious

influences, but because of the secular help provided by them, which made it easier for Chinese seafarers to break away from their isolated on-board life. This life was made more isolated after the attack on the World Trade Centre in 2001 because more restrictive maritime safety regulations prevented free movement in ports, and sometime Chinese seafarers were not allowed to land at all. Missionaries were expected to provide Chinese seafarers with access to civil society when welfare formerly taken care of by the seafarers' companies was in decline. Also because of the charity done by missionaries for Chinese seafarers, some seafarers struck a chord with missionaries and reported a wish to do charity in China.

When it came to missionary religion, most Chinese seafarers saw its benefit of creating a better on-board society. However, they would not bother getting the religion to build such a society. They pictured others doing the job with religion for them and therefore they could have taken advantage of the improved on-board society. Chinese seafarers recounted their reasons for distancing missionary religion in this chapter. They saw Christianity as a distracting agent when they were pressed to provide security for them and their families in China; they considered their atheist background an opposing force against getting religion in the first place; and they reported that missionary religion was not presented to them in a clear and consistent way. In addition, the interview data also revealed that the long history of Chinese totalitarian society repelled Chinese seafarers in getting closer to religion. Lastly, it was difficult for Chinese seafarers to see Christianity in a positive way when the Chinese government assured religious development in China in an indigenous manner which allowed backward elements to stay or grow in a domestic form of Christianity. At this point, it seems that some scholars have made a wrong estimate in relation to a 95% uptake of religious Chinese population (see section 2.2.5). In fact, the estimate is quite reasonable after I have investigated other forms of religion in which Chinese seafarers were involved.

Chapter Seven: Spiritual Practices and Religious Chinese Seafarers

It is hoped that this chapter will help further inform the later critical discussion about how new liberties impact on Chinese seafarers by focusing on different forms of religion practiced by them. The previous chapter revealed that seafaring provides Chinese seafarers with direct contact with Christianity. Chinese seafarers saw the missionaries as a means to meet their basic needs, when they sought missionary secular help in forms of transport and gift giving and so on. They professed an attitude of indifference to religion, however, when they described their encounters with Christianity while working on board ships.

If Christian religion was unable to appeal to Chinese seafarers, how do I make sense of the fact that the other forms of religion appealed to Chinese seafarers and prompted them to participate? This chapter will investigate the phenomena by looking at lay and religious Chinese seafarers who participated in other forms of religion.

Chinese seafarers are freer today to have various thoughts and ideologies than they were thirty years ago. The advance of the Open Door Policies has helped Chinese people make more sense of their life when new elements such as consumerism and Western thoughts have been introduced into Chinese society. Chinese seafarers are a sub-group who leave and come back to the country regularly because of their career. Therefore, their exposure to new elements might be intense. This exposure had influences on Chinese seafarers, for instance, the political Commissars on board state-owned ships became reluctant to carry out propaganda tasks. The Commissars' change was due to his experiences at sea which prompted him to think differently after meeting different people abroad and also because of growing resistance from Chinese seafarers [Interview 21 of a 50-year-old Commissar]. Although they mostly declared their atheist status, Chinese seafarers revealed another side of their life entangled with on-board religious existence.

Early on in this thesis, it was shown that Chinese seafarers had been freed from the imposed political tasks on board ships and at home after the implementation of the Open Door Policies (see Chapter Three). Does the decreasing external control over their personal spheres make Chinese seafarers more eclectic or does it make them superficial magpies who pick up things at their convenience? As well as investigating what religious or spiritual elements Chinese seafarers picked up, I will also see whether those elements affected their levels of satisfaction and feelings of wellbeing.

7.1 Religious presentations on ships Chinese seafarers worked on

In some cases there are up to a dozen or more nationalities to form a single crew. Unlike Philippine seafarers who are mostly involved in international seafarer labour market, Chinese seafarers usually work on Chinese state-owned ships than on foreign ships, if they are employees of state-owned shipping companies. Freelance Chinese seafarers work on ships of various ownerships. Because of the different companies Chinese seafarers work for, they end up meeting different crews on board ships. If there are all Chinese crews working on board Chinese state-owned vessels, I might think it is unnecessary to discuss religious presentations on these vessels due to the anti-religion crew management of state-owned shipping companies (see section 6.1.1). However, there are exceptions to the hypothesis.

7.1.1 On board state-owned ships

In the past, religion was quarantined across China soon after the establishment of the socialist country in 1949, so the Chinese vessels of that period were immune from religion in any forms (see Chapter Three). Things started to change during the 1980s. I have already introduced missionaries and their religions in the previous chapter. A Commissar gave a normal reception of missionaries on state-owned ships in no fear of breaching regulations of the state-owned shipping company and the government

[Interview 21; a 50-year-old Commissar of urban origin]. The Commissar's reception implied a shift on board state-owned ships, namely, that missionaries were unlikely to be turned down by the leadership of the state-owned ships when they wanted to visit.

However, there were obstacles confronting missionaries created by some Commissars who knew the rules of their state-owned shipping company and implemented the regulations of the company on board ships. Those Commissars confiscated religious publications brought on ships by missionaries and in some cases some Commissars stood guard at the gangway of their ships in order to prevent missionaries from boarding [Interview 1 of a 30-year-old Engineer and interview 14 of a 35-year-old Engineer].

Because state-owned shipping companies did not carry out control management on ships thoroughly, religion was represented in a particular way. Sometimes, the state-owned shipping companies took over new builds from foreign builders who might arrange special launch ceremonies. For example, Japanese ship builders would install shrines and religious statues on new builds. The Japanese ship builders also arranged religious professionals to board new builds to consecrate the shrines and statues in order to bring blessing to the ships. These shrines and statues allow us to see reflections from Chinese seafarers on the religious issues surrounding the new builds of state-owned shipping companies. A 42-year-old Captain of a state-owned shipping company elaborated:

But some LPG [Liquefied Petroleum Gas] tankers built in Japan had shrines and statues of saints installed on them. Nobody dared to remove them from the vessels after they were handed over. Sometimes, some seafarers came in front of the shrines to pay tribute to the statues in order to seek their protection. When boarding some of the company's ships on which shrines and statues were installed, I sometimes asked seafarers to buy fruits to place in front of the shrines and statues [Interview 10; urban origin].

This Captain was an active party member. Although his conduct expressed in the above quote was a severe and de facto breach of the party's constitution, it did not bother him when he revealed his 'misconduct'. This is because both the state-owned shipping companies and the government had not really implemented on-board regulations of thought control listed in their seafarer management manuals. Due to the lack of seafarer ideology management on board state-owned vessels, the pre-existing religious shrines and statues were left untouched. Obviously a state-owned shipping company could not punish a foreign builder for its observation of their own religious tradition, and the Chinese authorities also could not find fault with Chinese seafarers who contributed to the upkeep of the pre-existed religious replicas on the ships, but to deliberately put a shrine and statue of any religious form on a state-owned vessel had not been witnessed by any seafarer interviewee. Instead they unanimously said that it was unrealistic to think of installing a religious replica on board a state-owned ship by Chinese seafarers:

I witnessed a Taiwanese Captain coming to the bridge to bow in front of the statue after offering burning incense. The vessels of the state-owned shipping company have no such statues on board ships [Interview 2; a 40-year-old Captain of urban origin].

The rest of ships I boarded are all ships of the state-owned shipping company. It is not allowed to have these [religious] statues [Interview 14; a 35-year-old Engineer of urban origin].

This physical religious presentation could be easily wiped out by applying organizational regulations on board state-owned ships, but the Chinese seafarers of state-owned shipping companies did not remove the pre-existed shrines and statues from the ships they took over from other nationals. The issue of religion on board state-owned ships is still risky, as I have learnt the revelation of the above seafarers. Then how did they carry out religious activities if the Chinese seafarers on board a state-owned ship happened to be religious?

Interviewer: Have you met any seafarers who believe in religion?

Engineer: No. Even there were some, they were all people who practiced Fragrant Gong [a kind of Qi Gong. It is said that its practitioners can send out fragrance during their practice]. I have never witnessed their practices or met them. I heard other seafarers talking about some Chinese crew practicing Qi Gong after I signed on a ship. Furthermore, if they practiced Falungong they would not dare to let others know their practices [Interview 1; a 30-year-old Engineer of rural origin and all time seafarer on state-owned tankers].

There was Buddhism on board ships before and it still exists on board ships now, only does it appears individually instead of being in groups [Interview 2; a 50-year-old Commissar of urban origin].

It was not religious seafarers' intent to go in secret when they practiced their religion, but it was their wish to avoid any discomfort caused by exposing their religion or their practices of Qi Gong and Buddhism on board a state-owned ship. But sometimes it was inevitable to conceal their religion from other Chinese seafarers when, as a Buddhist seafarer said, the other seafarers on a state-owned vessel could guess that he was a Buddhist because he stopped consuming meat in 2002 [Interview 19; a 50-year-old Electrician of urban origin]. Although the state and its shipping companies had not strictly implemented the seafarer management regulations on board the state-owned ships, I can still see a hint of control from the interview data, as one 45-year-old Captain was told by his state-owned shipping company not to practice Gong on the ship he was signing on [Interview 11].

Falungong was demonised as an evil cult by the Chinese central government, and there has been collateral damage to other kinds of Qi Gong practice. The warning of the state-owned shipping company proved that the shipping company did not like seeing the presentation of the forms of religion on board its fleet. Contrastingly, the

rest of ships on which Chinese seafarers worked were supposed to enjoy relative freedom in relation to the presentation of religion.

7.1.2 On board other ships

The definition of other ships in this section means the vessels which do not belong to Chinese state-owned shipping companies but have Chinese seafarers aboard as crews. Because of the introduction of privatisation in China, some ships have been bought or are owned by the Chinese private sector and trade globally. Some other ships on which Chinese seafarers work are owned or operated by overseas Chinese who have roots back in China and therefore prefer Chinese seafarers, particularly from the same townships to other nationals. Ship owners and managers in Hong Kong and Taiwan sometimes also recruit Chinese seafarers to work on their ships. Due to the language barrier, fewer Chinese seafarers worked on board other nations' ships if Chinese crews were not predominant on the ships [Interviews 7, 12, and 25].

On board other ships, Chinese seafarers are often thrown into a culture or social setting decided by the constitution of crews and management styles of ships. The ships' companies and operators played a role as well. Chinese seafarers were not necessarily subjected to the regulations drawn by the Chinese state to guide their behaviours when they worked on non state-owned ships. Nevertheless, sometimes they had been obliged with religious errands on board some non state-owned ships. It seems like a new form of enforcement, which contrasts with the regulations of state-owned companies over Chinese seafarers. The interview data helps test the hypothesis:

But the rating all recruited from Putian county, Fujian province were difficult to manage because they were from a same village of the owner of the ship's company based in Singapore.....The shrine [on a marine tanker] was installed on the bridge and was inviolable, for instance, a previous [non-Chinese] Captain with Christian belief did not like the shrine of

Matsu and had it removed. As soon as the owner of the ship's company heard of the Captain's maltreatment to the shrine, the Captain was signed off. Some Chinese officers who had been working for that company since their graduation were used to the worship practices on the ship.....The Chinese Chief Mate who worked under me and had been with that company since his first ship went to the bridge to burn a stick of incense and bowed in front of the shrine every morning [Interview 27; a 36-year-old Captain of urban origin].

The Chinese seafarers working for that company were constantly taking part in or exposed to the Matsu worship practices on its ships. The Putian ratings were predominantly Matsu believers (see section 2.1.3.2), whereas the Chinese Chief Mate was not, but had assimilated into Matsu worship after a prolonged immersion in the on-board Matsu religious culture. The punishment of the uncooperative Captain was obviously for his removal of Matsu worship. I may not believe that the punishment had coerced Chinese seafarers working for that company into conformity with its requirements about Matsu worship on the company's ships. However, the Captain with no religious faith disclosed more on the Matsu worship:

Interviewer: As a Captain, what was your role in this religious ceremony?

Captain: I led my crew to carry it out on the tanker. Before the first of July on Chinese lunar calendar, the ship's company would send votive supplies on board every ship of the company in order for the seafarers on these ships to undertake a ceremony of Matsu worshipping on the poop decks within the lunar month of July [The ceremony was set to take place on a certain date in lunar July, but it could not be done if the ship was in port loading or discharging]. Incense, ghost money [yellow coarse paper cut in handkerchief size and always folded in before being bundled] and fresh fruits comprised the votive supplies. The ceremony must be underway within the month and people were allowed to miss the ceremony if they did not believe in it. As Captain I was not supposed to stop the ceremony

although the bundles of ghost money were burnt on the poop deck of the oil tanker.

Interviewer: Is the ghost money burning on the poop deck against the safety procedure on an oil tanker?

Captain: The boss believed in it and they did not care about [safety] in this case. They just asked people on their ships to complete the whole session of ceremonial worship of Matsu. According to my observation, almost every Chinese was present [Ibid].

Another 40-year-old Captain interviewee added his thoughts about that same company based in Singapore:

Captain: The owner of the ship I worked on was from Putian county, Fujian province. The ship was registered in Singapore and all the ships of the same company had Matsu statues on them and the Matsu statues were ordained by the company. Our ship even received a monk during the ceremony of its virgin voyage in order to consecrate the Matsu shrine on the ship. The monk came on board to find the Captain in order to hold a consecration ceremony.

Interviewer: Was the monk invited by the company?

Captain: Yes. The consecration was held in the wheel house.....Everybody on board the ship, Chinese and foreigners, bowed towards the statue. Actually nobody believed in it, but nobody wanted to bring trouble to the arrangement [Interview 2; urban origin].

It is clear that Chinese seafarers did not want any trouble by going against the Matsu worship arrangements on board the ships of that Singapore based company. Even though the annual ceremony of Matsu worship involved burning paper on the poop deck of an oil tanker and severely violated the safety procedure of industry, the Master in charge of the oil tanker not only allowed it to take place but also participated in the ceremony [Interview 27 of a 36-year-old Captain]. Safety should

not be compromised under any circumstances at sea, but what made the Captain interviewee give in to the ship owner's irrational order to override the ship's safety management? The Captain's answer was rational:

As Captain, I should do what the boss wants..... Whenever I am in a work place, I have to respect other people's choice [Interview 27; urban origin].

The Captain's rhetoric of 'do what the boss wants' indicates that he was not to blame for the breach of the health and safety regulation on board an oil tanker by carrying out the religious ceremony. One could argue that he is the Captain and has ultimate responsibility. However, it was unlikely for the Captain to have an alternative way to satisfy the boss in office and not to breach the health and safety procedures on that tanker. I believe the decision making by the Captain was related to the boss's heavy-handed handling of the previous uncooperative Christian Captain.

On board some other ships, the religious presentations in the presence of Chinese seafarers took place in a less structured manner:

Interviewer: Were there religious replicas on the ship owned by the Malaysian? .

Officer: There was one statue on the bridge of the ship but I did not know of what religion it was. A few ships I have worked on had such arrangements on their bridges. As Chinese seafarers did not believe in those things, flowers for a statue on a ship were dried up.

Interviewer: Did anybody remove the statues?

Officer: No.

Interviewer: Did Chinese seafarers abstain from insulting those things?

Officer: I do not know. But the ships' owners were serious about putting those things on ships [Interview 17; a 40-year-old Officer of rural origin].

Those ship owners were keen on introducing religious statues onto their ships but left the seafarers to decide if they would observe worshipping the statues or not. Therefore,

Chinese seafarers on board these ships only witnessed the physical existence of the statues rather than taking part in activities revolving around the statues. In a different interview, I see religious duties assigned to seafarers by the ship's owners:

Interviewer: Have you worked with seafarers from the southern part of China?

Engineer: Yes. I worked with seafarers from Fujian province. The ship I was assigned to work on had a Matsu statue placed on the bridge. Sometimes Chinese seafarers would go worshipping in front of it.

Interviewer: Were there seafarers who looked after the statue?

Engineer: The Second Officer and Captain were in charge of the maintenance of the statue. The ship owner required the Captain to take good care of the statue [Interview 14; a 35-year-old Engineer of urban origin].

Rather than being subjected to the regulations of the state-owned shipping companies, Chinese seafarers working on non-state owned ships could be under obligation to get involved religious undertaking. Unlike Chinese people living on land who can avoid religion as long as they do not step into a church, Chinese seafarers cannot predict whom they will work and live with for several months at sea before the moment of signing on. They also cannot foretell what they are going to encounter on the ship. Nevertheless, they did participate in the practices of religion on board ships. The following sections look at the spiritual practices of Chinese seafarers in detail. It is in two sections because there were two groups of Chinese seafarers practicing religion on board ships. The first section deals with the group who claimed to be atheist but were religious or spiritual in action. The second group of Chinese seafarers said they were religious in their interviews.

7.2 Practices of religion by Chinese seafarers

In the light of the Chinese Open Door Policies, there has been increasing freedom in many areas, such as the economy, social life, and ideology. If I look at the ideology of today's Chinese people, there is a wide diversity. Chinese people's solitary socialist ideology collapsed in the face of the damage caused by the devastating Cultural Revolution thirty years ago, and since then, the Chinese have never consolidated a unified substitute to the dying socialist ideology, although the Chinese government has tried its best to raise their socialist banner. Recently the government has initiated quite a few propaganda movements trying to inspire the Chinese to be more patriotic, respectful of honour and to detest corrupt people (see Chapter Two). However, the government have gained little empathy from the general Chinese population because the rapidly changing society has drawn the attention of the population to pecuniary gain (see section 2.2.1).

An instrumental attitude towards religion was reported by some respondents who had participated in religious observance on board and by some respondents who had observed it. For example, the Matsu worship of the southern Chinese seafarers was not seen as a serious business by the same Captain discussed in the previous section:

Interviewer: Did the southern Chinese seafarers believing in Matsu behave differently at work or in life on board ships?

Captain: Not really. The Fujian seafarers were fishermen before becoming seafarers so that they were very much in Matsu. They only worshiped and I could not tell any other differences in other aspects. There was no showing of their philanthropy or the similar generous behaviours. They were mad about drinking alcohol [Interview 27; a 36-year-old urbanite].

The main purpose of this worship is the protection Matsu is capable of bringing to its worshipers, so the southern Chinese seafarers might not observe other restriction apart from worshipping. Drinking alcohol does not go against their Matsu worshipping.

Maybe because of lack of religious background in northern Chinese seafarers, they are quite tolerant of such physical religious existences and even went to them for solace on occasion.

Interviewer: Did you work on board ships where shrines or statues of saints were installed and worshiped?

Motorman: In 2004 there was a new build being handed over to us by a Japanese shipyard. There was a Japanese saint in kimono on board ship. During the handover, some Japanese came on board the ship to sprinkle water in the Engine Room first before they went onto the bridge where they hung the statue after water sprinkling.

Interviewer: What did you do to it afterwards?

Motorman: It was there. But during festivals incense was burnt and cooked Chinese dumplings were offered in front of it to pray for good weather. Last year, I was on the ship from Zhanjiang to Guangzhou [both are Chinese ports] and we met head on a typhoon. So the [Chinese] Captain of the ship asked the cook to cook some dumplings to place in front of the statue in order to protect all the crew and the ship.

Interviewer: Did the seafarers look after the statue of the Japanese saint regularly?

Motorman: We did not take care of it regularly. There was another ship handed over to us where we found Jesus pictures on the bridge and in a saloon but nobody took them off.

Interviewer: Did the seafarers worship in front of the pictures?

Motorman: I worked in the Engine Room and did not go up to the bridge so I did not know. Chinese seafarers would not install statues or hang pictures of Jesus if they did not exist on board ships. But when they were there, Chinese seafarers would not remove them [Interview 12; a 45-year-old motorman of urban origin].

In addition to proving the tolerance Chinese seafarers showed towards external religious influences, the above quote hints at the superstition of Chinese seafarers: they did not only make oblation to the foreign saint but also sought its protection during bad weather. Some Chinese seafarers also considered superstition associated with the domestic religion as backward (see section 6.4). Furthermore, northern Chinese seafarers of non-believers were neither proactive about religion nor showed their enmity towards it. As such, some northern Chinese seafarers did join their southern counterparts to practice Matsu religion at least occasionally [Interview 2 of a 40-year-old Captain].

Traditional seafaring superstition is rarely seen on board ships among Chinese seafarers, arguments over an overturned rice bowl on board ships are unheard of. In the past, it was prohibited if a rice bowl was placed upside down on board Chinese vessels due to the fishermen's superstition which defined an upside down rice bowl on board ships as a sign of capsizing. Such superstition has been phased out on board ships because modern Chinese seafarers understand that ships are safer than fishing boats of the past. The phasing out of that traditional practice of superstition does not mean the death of superstition amongst the new generation of Chinese seafarers, however. They pick up what is convenient and handy to them instead. A young urban officer said:

It is right to have faith as boats are always at sea and in particular when there is vulnerability. I went to the largest Tibetan Buddhist temple in Beijing for pilgrimage when I was in the city waiting for a US embassy interview before signing on a ship in the USA. I requested from the temple a wrist rosary consecrated by monks because I knew, when I was told to sign on the ship, that its conditions were poor. I felt unsafe to work on the ship so I wanted to lean on something psychologically [Interview 16; a 30-year-old Officer].

The young officer was not a believer in Buddhism or any kind of religion. However, he brought aboard a string of consecrated beads not for decoration. He counted the beads of the rosary in one of his hands with fingers to calm him down when he confronted complex navigation keeping watch at night on the bridge [Ibid]. His instrumental stance towards religion also embedded in his handling of the rosary. He deserted the rosary in a corner of his flat on leave because the function of the rosary diminished as soon as he signed off the ship of bad conditions. He had not brought it with him on board ships since then [Ibid].

Whereas the young officer hoped the rosary would bring him protection on board a poorly maintained ship, one seafarer he had worked with kept observing a regular religious and superstitious ritual in order to seek protection under the auspices of the family:

When I was a sailor on board a ship, the Second Officer of the ship who is from Sichuan province said that he and his family would go to a temple to worship for his health and safety. They burnt some paper, presented some offerings and donated some money to the temple every time before he was signed on a ship. He felt unperturbed every time after he did that routine worship in the temple [Interview 16; a 30-year-old Officer of urban origin].

On land their families observed temple visiting to seek protection for Chinese seafarers. On board ships they would sometimes saw the existing religious replicas as heavenly and protective, as one seafarer told:

Interviewer: Did you work with foreign crews?

Officer: No. I worked almost on Chinese ships.

Interviewer: Have you worked with seafarers from south China?

Officer: Yes.

Interviewer: Did they have statues on board ships such as Matsu statues?

Officer: Yes. I respected their choices and I sometimes brought fruit to the statues.

Interviewer: Why did you pay your tribute to the statues?

Officer: Actually I am an atheist, but I do not want to break others' custom. It would not do me any harm if I paid tribute to Matsu even though I am an atheist.

Interviewer: But you undertook the pilgrimage to the statues?

Officer: Right. I did not only pay tribute to the statues by offering fruits but also prevented other seafarers from blaspheming them.

Interviewer: Why did you do in that way?

Officer: The statues on board ships might bring some protection [Interview 18; a 42-year-old Officer].

While the officer's stance on Matsu statues indicated that he was also looking for protection despite his non-belief, some seafarers attributed their dire on-board experiences to bad luck:

That ship was of my bad luck, and there was storing away, stealing, and quarrels among crews. There were many bad things happening when I, as a Chief Mate, was working on that ship. I also fought with the Captain [Interview 2; a 40-year-old Captain of urban origin].

The bad luck theory was rooted in the Captain as he told the case of another seafarer:

There was one case in which one seafarer signed off due to his eagerness to sit promotion exams even though he did not complete his contract. But he lied to the company that his wife was badly ill. It was not right to say his wife was ill, which would bring him bad luck [Ibid].

His bad luck theory has an undertone of superstition which is shared with others. In dealing with visits made by missionaries on board ships, a 37-year-old Captain took

religion so venerably that he had problems when he dealt with publications left on board ships by missionaries. He said:

I did not like the visits of missionaries on board ships. Actually I was careful with religion, so it was difficult for me to handle those religious publications left by missionaries. I did not believe in religion. If I dumped those publications, I thought that it would blaspheme the belief of the missionaries.....finally I asked the Chief Mate to find a spare room to accommodate those things [Interview 7].

The implication of his carefully dealing with religious publications is a sense of Chinese superstition. Regarding on-board religious statues, two cases tell us more of how superstitious thoughts influenced seafarers' attitudes:

There was a saint's shrine on board a Japanese built vessel [of a state-owned shipping company]. Nobody touched it until last shipyard repair when the shrine was removed and put in a storeroom of the ship. Although they removed the shrine, they tried to treat the shrine with respect by placing it in a well prepared box under the Captain's permission [Interview 20; a 40-year-old Captain of urban origin].

When a Japanese saint was inappropriately treated on a ship, one seafarer linked the maltreatment to a deadly accident:

There was a story of a Third Officer of our company [a state-owned shipping company]. He went to take over a new build in Japan. There was a statue of protective saint installed on the bridge of the ship. The Third Officer was so contemptible that he threw the statue overboard when there was no other on the bridge. The fellow was knocked to death by a passing car in his home town after signing off. It might not have link between those two incidents. But something should be taken care of [Interview 11; a 45-year-old Captain of urban origin].

If the Captain did not have a hunch that there was a link, why did he reveal these two incidents in sequence? Also another superstitious practice was witnessed by a 37-year-old Captain:

The second time when I was a Chief Mate, our ship [manned by Chinese seafarers] sailed into the eye of a typhoon. Some seafarers on the ship were so frightened that they even cried. The main engine very often went over speeding as its propeller went out of sea water. The Third Officer went to the engine control console at the bridge and worshiped the main engine revolution gauge by bowing his body with his hands in a praying gesture many times [Interview 7; urban origin].

At time of crisis, that Third Officer had an object to hang on for spiritual balm. The revolution gauge monitoring the working condition of the main engine was turned by him into a god of protection.

Having discussed issues relating to the way the general Chinese seafarers manifested their thoughts about religion and practiced the religion on ships, this section suggests that despite their claim about being atheist, Chinese seafarers were likely to participate in a variety of spiritual activities aboard. The way the lay Chinese seafarers participated in other forms of religion was eclectic. Most involvement in religious or spiritual practices was the continuity of Chinese culture, shamanism and superstition probably because Chinese seafarers were more used to this than missionary religions. Next I look at Chinese seafarers who said they were religious. I want to know how they incorporated their religion into their seafaring career or vice versa. I do this in order to find out whether their religious values help them with their levels of satisfaction and feelings of wellbeing.

7.3 Religious Chinese seafarers

Four religious seafarers out of the total sample of thirty took part in this research project. Among the four, one 35-year-old Christian seafarer who kept waiting for an

opportunity to be baptised in a developed country [Interviews 22 and repeated 29; a sailor of urban origin] had worked with me for a contract on board a tanker when he had no religion at all. One 43-year-old Buddhist seafarer [Interview 28; a cook of urban origin] was introduced to me by this Christian seafarer. The remaining two religious Chinese seafarers were recruited through a series of activities involving my friend-cum-colleague working for a manning agent responsible for signing on and off Chinese seafarers. In the first place, I came across the names of the latter two religious seafarers in the interviews with other participants. After the seafarer participants failed to make contact with the two religious seafarers, I decided to seek help from the former colleague who was capable of retrieving the contact information by assessing their files kept by the manning company. I always had difficulty in finding religious seafarers among the northern seafarers in this research project.

7.3.1 Buddhist seafarers

The demarcation between the Chinese practitioners of Buddhism and various trends of Qi Gong is vague. According to the interview data, one religious Chinese seafarer was said to believe in Buddhism by a seafarer participant who had actually got on well with him over the course of several months on a ship, whereas the religious seafarer in a later interview told that he was a Gong practitioner absorbing many elements of Buddhism into his Gong. In the literature review there is discussion about the origin and status quo of these two kinds of religious existence. As the two can both be used to boost people's health and perceived to better people's state of mind, they are sometimes practiced in parallel by the same person. Qi Gong practitioners like to use elements of Buddhism to shore up the authenticity of their Gong.

In the following paragraphs, Buddhist Chinese seafarers are introduced. There are two absolutely Buddhist seafarers among the four religious seafarer participants. In their interviews they told of different ways they practiced Buddhism. However, they shared a very important part of their belief: benevolence.

The fifty-year-old Electrician, when forty years old, got the book of sutras from a young Buddhist Chinese seafarer while on the same ship over a period of eleven months. He thus plunged into the everlasting climb of a mountain, his chosen metaphor for the religion. When asked by other people about religion, the Electrician stated: 'Religious people all want to get to the pinnacle of a mountain, but each has picked its unique path leading them to the summit of the mountain' [Interview 19; urban origin]. His practices are the manifestation of his climb to the pinnacle of Buddhism.

Before he got in touch with Buddhism, the Electrician shared the common understanding of most Chinese seafarers. Talking about the past, he said:

The conditions on board ships were not good. Not only did I have this feeling but also did most my colleagues. Nobody liked seafaring work. However, at that time factory salaries were very low and Chinese seafarers could buy second hand goods from abroad, so seafaring was attractive to people [Interview 19; urban origin].

He humbly called himself a learner of Buddhism during the interview and encouraged me to address him in the same way. He said he did as other seafarers did before he started to learn Buddhism. Believing in Buddhism, the Electrician stopped consuming meat in 2002. This made him confront some issue about food when working on board state-owned ships as he said: 'they did not dish out meat dishes to me and they offered me vegetable dishes [stir-fried vegetables with meat as complements] instead. The vegetable dishes always contained meat and I could only pick vegetable to eat' [Interview 19]. From other accounts in his interview datum, he said his practices of Buddhism were not about burning incense and kowtowing in front of statues. Rather they involved reading sutras and chanting Buddhist mantras instead. On board ships, he read sutras during his spare time and did the same in the mornings after getting up. In his words: 'Buddhism learners can gain enormous power to control their minds and

bodies with the help of sutra reading and mantra chanting.’ Thus he thrived both on land and at sea living on vegetarian food.

His good health and mental strength, his practice of vegetarian diet, reading sutras and chanting mantras during his spare time were a clear indication that he stood out amongst the other Chinese seafarers aboard. Consequently, some fellow Chinese seafarers came to him to cast aspersions on his Buddhist life:

Few Chinese seafarers came for a discussion about Buddhism but some did not understand me. They would inquire: ‘You don’t eat meat because you believe in Buddhism and you are ascetic in other ways as well. What you have done is very difficult for others to follow suit. You have no interest in daily life because you neither watch TV nor chat very much. You should be very lonely and it is difficult for us to understand you’ [Interview 19; urban origin].

Rather than retorting, the Electrician had much empathy for his fellow Chinese seafarers, ‘I understand why they had such questions. I do not blame them for their questions because they did not understand real Buddhism believers very much. Furthermore, vegetarian diet is not uncommon since a lot of secular Chinese people do not eat meat too’ [Ibid]. Instead of being deterred, he passed his method of how to get close to Buddhism onto his fellow Chinese seafarers:

I talked to Chinese seafarers on board ships. I said that they did not necessarily need to learn Buddhism and it could also be helpful if they could think about, at the end of the day, what they have not done correctly or properly and what they have said wrongly. They could become Buddha if they corrected what they had done and said wrongly the following day and kept these practices until they have got rid of their sinful karmas [Interview 19].

In his own words, the Electrician was a person of mild character and got on well with both good seafarers and bad ones, because in his perception, 'Buddhism learners try to seek calmness inside them. To learn Buddhism is to calm down a person from inside. In detail, it is about not arguing with other people and concession is a right thing to observe when crossing with others' [Ibid].

Contrastingly, the Buddhist seafarer cook did not follow suit despite their belief in the same religion. In this interview, the cook said that he took CDs of Buddhist chants with him to play on board ships and did not have Buddhist books because it was difficult to understand the contents. When there was a Buddhist statue installed on board a ship by the ship's owner, he worshiped the statue at night because preparation for the crew's three meals a day ate away his daytime. He burnt incense and bowed in front of the Buddha statue, but he did not have a statue in his cabin [Interview 28; urban origin]. These practices were very similar with those of millions of Buddhists in China (The activities of burning incense, bowing and kowtowing adopted by lay Chinese Buddhists are a widespread and dominant means of engaging in Buddhism).

In relation to his integration into other crews aboard, the cook was quite cynical. A few years after he started believing in Buddhism, he worked with many Chinese crews between 2005 and 2006: 'But I could not get on with the crews as I shared no common interest with them' [Interview 28]. Upon being asked of what he has got from his seafaring career, the Buddhist cook said: 'I have understood the society and got in touch with Buddhism. I have come to a conclusion that Chinese seafarers are rubbish and do not have human sensibility' [Ibid]. The cook had many reasons to demote Chinese seafarers:

Our seafarers did not have meals on land and they just went ashore to drink. Their reason was that when they had free meals on ships why they had to eat somewhere else on their cost. They did not stop eating until they were full before they landed for drinking. I became very tired of preparing food for them in Chinese ports [Interview 28: urban origin].

The cook's ship traded regularly between ports in China. Under these circumstances, Chinese seafarers would normally avoid dining on ships if it was convenient for them to land in Chinese ports. Therefore, they would relish food in restaurants. But the Chinese crews mentioned by the cook on board that ship were almost all from a disadvantaged area in a northern coastal province of China. The cook was contracted by a seafarer manning agency based in the area. As a result, he worked with crews coming from the area through his whole seafaring career. He continued:

In a port in Indonesia, I gave every seafarer an amount of local money equivalent to US\$ 10 [out of their food allowance] and told them to spend it when landing. The seafarers thought that the money was deducted from their salary accounts, so that they took it back to me after the ship was cleared from the port. The local currency would turn into scrap paper if there was no chance to go back to the country. So far, I cashed their local money and bore the loss. I still own a sum of Indonesian money equalling about US\$ 100. They were bastards [Interview 28].

His cynicism about his fellow Chinese seafarers extended to the trivial: 'The seafarers were very bad. I went to buy vegetables in ports and the seafarers coveted the two remaining spaces in a taxi because the taxi fare would be paid out of the food allowance' [Ibid].

Apart from his cynicism about Chinese seafarers, he was perceived as a controversial figure by a Taiwanese ship owner. Consequently, the cook was asked to sign off in advance of his contract. In the interview, he said he tried to be involved in on-board issues relating to handling affairs between the ship and the maritime authorities of the ports along the Yangtze River. He claimed his way of handling was efficient and cost-effective. Nonetheless, the owner of the ship did not agree and signed him off short of his contract [Interview 28].

According to the cook, he believed in Buddhism and his wife and son were also Buddhists. They had a shrine at home and they did a service to the Buddha statue every morning [Interview 28; urban origin]. Following suit, the Electrician and his wife and university graduated daughter all believed in Buddhism. Unlike the Buddhist cook on leave, the Electrician went to a nearby Buddhist temple in the mornings and he chanted sutras with other attendees in the temple. At the Electrician's home, killing live creatures was banned [Interview 19; urban origin] (Chinese families sometimes buy live animals from market and kill them at home before cooking them, for example, live fresh-water fish is sold and can be taken home alive).

Differences appear about matters relating Buddhist temples in China. Although he followed Buddhism, the cook had not been through an official ceremony to be proclaimed Buddhist because he disliked many temples' practices, such as generating revenue by charging admission fees [Interview 28; urban origin] (The increasing commercialised Buddhist and Taoist temples is discussed in the literature review). The commercialisation annoyed the cook. On the other hand, the Electrician seafarer converted to Buddhism in 2007 in a proclamation ceremony arranged by a Buddhist temple he used to visit on leave [Interview 19; urban origin].

The Buddhist beliefs of the Electrician influenced his attitude to working on board ships, because 'at work I thought I should do better than others did after I started to learn Buddhism. It cannot be the case that I let others do my part at work when I have learnt Buddhism. In conclusion, I should not ruin the reputation of Buddha' [Interview 19]. Similarly, the cook claimed that he did his best to cater for the crews he worked with. On top of that, according to him, there was no spoilage of vegetables under his care on ships because the cook looked after the storage of the vegetables. However, the cook added that the crews did not recognize his efforts [Interview 28; urban origin].

Although there were differences between the two Buddhist Chinese seafarers in terms of the ways they practiced Buddhism on board ships as well as at home, they shared

similarity regarding benevolence which is a major part of Buddhist principles. Not only was the Electrician given compliments by his fellow Chinese seafarers who had worked with him but also showed his kindness to others in need. A fellow seafarer said: 'He is a very kind Electrician. He could give us a lot of help by discussing with us about some questions incurring when we worked in the engine room. He helped us very willingly' [Interview 13; a 36-year-old Engineer of rural origin]. When asked how he saw the help from missionaries, the Electrician answered in Buddhist benevolence:

Electrician: These are good things. We should thank them for what they have done to help our seafarers. For me, I also help disabled people begging in the street by giving alms to them.

Interviewer: There are a lot of beggars in the street and how can you afford giving alms to them?

Electrician: I do it according to my finance. If a person had CNY10, he/she could not donate CNY100 to others in need.....Buddhism believers must make their families financially stable and can only help others in need when they can be better off themselves [Interview 19].

To engage in benevolence, the cook joined a charity back home. He was an active member of the Dalian Philanthropic Foundation helping the disadvantaged to overcome various problems in life by contributing time and effort, although he himself should be in need of help because of his low salary and his disabled son who was a financial, physical and emotional strain [Interview 28].

Having explored the interviews of the two Buddhist Chinese seafarers, I have an understanding of Buddhist existence on board ships and Chinese seafarers' practices of Buddhism. The two shared the same core Buddhist value – showing benevolence – but their practices were different. They engaged in Buddhism accordingly and one exerted more efforts while the other carried out his engagement in an effortless way. It became more complex when I investigated the way Chinese religion was perceived

and practiced by Chinese seafarers. Another Chinese form of spirituality and physicality – Qi Gong – has many elements that can be found in Buddhism and this is investigated in the next section.

7.3.2 The interpretation of Gong by a Chinese seafarer

Qi Gong had gone through a long period of boom in China until 1999 when Falun Gong was denounced by the central government as an evil religious cult. As a result, various kinds of Qi Gong were profoundly affected. This is evident in the account from a Chinese seafarer who practices Yuanji Gong: ‘We can look at the Master [the new founder of Yuanji Gong] who had been confined in prison for ten months in the wake of Falungong incidents. He lives well now even though he has been prevented from going out to teach his Yuanji Gong since his release’ [Interview 11; a 45-year-old Captain of urban origin]. Consequently, the enthusiasm for Qi Gong was doused across China, and there was little coverage of issues relating to Qi Gong apart from the propaganda demonising Falun Gong in the domestic media. The mass practices of various forms of Qi Gong are no longer seen often in parks (see section 2.2.3).

In this section, it is impossible to cover a variety of Qi Gong forms because it is estimated that there were about 2,000 Qi Gong groups in the early 1990s all over China (Chan 2004). As a Buddhist seafarer who was invited to an interview, a Captain turned out to have been a Yuanji Gong practitioner for years. The major function of Qi Gong is to boost people’s health. Indeed, this was the original motive for this seafarer to undertake Qi Gong practices. He suffered from a psychosomatic illness working as a Chief Mate on a ship after being bullied by the ship’s Captain because he prevented the Captain from taking home some on-board property. He was so angry with the unfair treatments initiated by the Captain that he became ill and was admitted to a hospital with an indefinite diagnosis. He was awakened to thinking about life when he saw some patients dying and being removed on stretchers. As a result of his search for the meaning of life, he felt health was paramount and bought a book about

Qi Gong because it was popular in the 1980s' China and deemed to be good for practitioners' health [Interview 11].

His rendezvous with Yuanji Gong was a coincidence, when he met a fellow seafarer on the pavement in front of their state-owned shipping company's office building. The fellow seafarer, who had worked and got on well with him, was promoting Yuanji Gong by curing people's diseases with the application of his Gong in the street. The fellow seafarer donated one thousand US dollars (equivalent to his two month on-board salaries at that time) to the Master of Yuanji Gong when his illness had been cured. He then followed the Master to learn Yuanji Gong over a period after the Master had visited Dalian to promote the Gong. Buying tickets for the classes from his fellow seafarer, our interview participant began his journey to reach his ultimate stage of cultivation [Interview 11; a Captain of urban origin].

The discussion in the previous section of Chinese seafarers' Buddhism and their practices can cast light on this section because 'Yuanji Gong's basic elements came from Buddhism and is a mixture of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism from a historical point of view' [Interview 11]. On this understanding I should expect some similarity between Buddhism and Yuanji Gong – a variation of Qi Gong. This does not mean Yuanji Gong lacks its characteristics. Eclecticism is one of its characteristics in the light of its inclusion of various traditional Chinese religions and philosophy. Besides serendipity deciding some happenings according to Buddhism, the Yuanji Gong Captain added fate as a means of making him choose maritime higher education. Assimilating elements from Taoism, the Captain's Yuanji Gong revealed the mysterious part of its Gong as the following comments demonstrate:

For these years of learning and cultivation I have come to a stage of today where I can still feel reception of information from the Master even though we have not met for about ten years [Interview 11].

Captain: There were some incidents happening on board some ships, why? Ships could not be peaceful if some ruffians [bad seafarers] boarded the ships. The ruffians brought onto ships with them some revenge and bad karmas. If nobody on the ships was capable of containing them the ships would go astray.

Interviewer: How about if you would meet such ruffians?

Captain: I could not have felt their existence if they had been on board ships. [I was lucky because] when there was a storm the ship I was on was always in port. When vegetables on ships were in shortage, we were certain to be able to buy some in next voyage.....One ship, after my signing off, suffered hull leakage. I did not return when I was asked to go back because I felt the ship in bad condition. Superstitiously speaking, it seemed that some one in secret helped me. It might be that the good people deserve good luck [Ibid].

Apart from this mysterious explanation, the way the Captain practiced Yuanji Gong is almost the same as that of the Buddhist Electrician. During their spare time aboard, they read liturgical literature as well as materials relating to their seafaring professions. Also, they meditated with legs crossed [Interviews 19 and 11. In Interview 13 an engineer of rural area witnessed the Electrician practicing Buddhism in a lotus posture]. But the Yuanji Gong Captain went further, as he stated:

Interviewer: Did you work for very long hours in a row on board ships?

Captain: It was normal without sleep for a few days on board ships.

Interviewer: How did you cope with it then?

Captain: I sat with legs crossed in order to relax. It was better than sleep. I could sit on a table meditating in a wheel house while a pilot was there because I had not slept for days. But I picked up everything going on in the wheel house and I would attend to the navigation when I was needed.

Interviewer: Did the pilot feel strange about that?

Captain: I left him alone. If I sat meditating for half an hour, I would regain the energy level I needed for carrying out the navigation supervision [Interview 11; urban origin].

Because the Yuanji Gong Captain also considered himself a Buddhist, in opposition to popular formalised practices of Buddhism such as incense burning and kowtowing, he shared a very similar point of view about Buddhist cultivation with the Buddhist Electrician. They both looked at the internal quality of human beings who practice Buddhism. The Yuanji Gong Captain perceived that cultivation indeed takes place inside human beings [Interviews 19 and 11]. He explained:

The temple visiting can be used by us to differentiate true Buddhism practitioners from false ones. Some people bow to pay their deference in front of every statue they see in a temple. To cultivate religiously is indeed the undertaking inside human beings. The statues of saints in temples are made from clay, why should people worship them? Every one is Buddha and the only difference is that normal people are called unenlightened Buddha because they have not been touched by Buddha. I am a few years early to understand it [Interview 11; a Captain of urban origin].

Upon exploring the data for the moral issues in relation to Yuanji Gong, the Captain who practiced and believed in Yuanji Gong aspired to be benevolent to a great extent. In his interview he portrayed his benevolence when he referred to helping a beggar on his trip to board a ship:

I might not do very well sometimes. Once I was buying pies at the Passenger Terminal of Dalian Port before I embarked a ferry to Qingdao to sign on a ship. A person accosted me and asked me to buy some pies for him because he had not eaten for three days. I bought him two pies and the pie seller praised me for my kindness. In retrospect after having

boarded the ferry, I felt I did not do enough in helping the person in need. He had not eaten for three days and carried a shabby bag in one hand so it was certain that he did not have any cash to return home. I should have given him money so that he could go home. This is the difference between ordinary populations and me. To help a beggar seems to show people's kindness of giving, but for me to give means to gain [Interview 11; a Captain of urban origin].

In addition to feeling regret at his imaginary inadequate help to a beggar on land, the Yuanji Gong Captain showed his high moral standards when he worked on ships. This is demonstrated below with quotes from interviews with individuals who sailed with him. His high morality had been brought about through the teachings of the Master of Yuanji Gong and had been rooted in him since then. The Gong's extraordinary influence over his morality is displayed in this statement:

I learnt after him [the Master of Yuanji Gong] then. I could feel the flow of energy after learning for a while. His ethos of being a human has changed my life. I did not have any goal before learning. Involving myself in learning ethos of being a human being and cultivation, I have experienced what I had never known before. Before the learning, I conducted good deeds only on intuition. After the learning, I have an urge to help people [Interview 11; urban origin].

According to the Captain, the principles of Yuanji Gong and its ethos provided him with constant and firm support for his conduct of good deeds with meaningful purpose. He would not have had such a manner if he had not learnt Yuanji Gong. As he put it, Yuanji Gong practitioners 'do not care very much material enjoyment such as eating, drinking and even going ashore for happy time' [Interview 11].

A seafarer informant who had worked with the Captain reported in his interview that when the Captain boarded a ship, his crew would soon find that he was different from

other Captains and he did not condescend to his crew because he took part in on-board activities that were usually done by crews [Interview 5 of a 26-year-old Chief Mate]. The Captain also said that he stood up to the management of his employer to defend a sunken ship's Captain against accusations launched by the employer in a plenary meeting [Interview 11], which was witnessed by another Captain interviewee who also attended [Interview 2 of a 40-year-old Captain]. Furthermore, the Yuanji Gong Captain fined his two crews CNY 2,000 each for their theft in a Japanese store. He would have forced them to sign off if they had refused to pay off their fines. The Captain added the money to the account of the food allowances of the ship's crew [Ibid]. Rather than judging the 'penal code' of the Captain, the above mentioned enforcement of penalty on board ship, coupled with his various on-board behaviours, suggests that the Captain had a very high moral standard.

There were enormous compliments from another interviewee:

He was very kind to his crew. He has never been involved in monetary handling of crew's additional incomes such as earnings from hold stripping and unspent food allowances. He was totally different from other Captains I have worked with. He was very patient with his crews in helping correct mistakes. Unlike him, other Captains would shout at you when you did something wrong [Interview 5; a 26-year-old Chief Mate of rural origin].

The above account, given by the Chief Mate, not only coincides with what the Captain talked about himself but also confidently shores up the image of the Yuanji Gong Captain as a role model of morality. The Chief Mate also spoke about the impact of the Captain's good behaviour on the Chief Mate himself:

Interviewer: You said the Buddhist [the Chief Mate mistook the Yunji Gong Captain for a Buddhism practitioner] Captain was very kind to others on ships. Did his kindness influence you to some extent?

Chief Mate: His kindness invisibly worked on me. I too think I, as a human being, had better be kind to others.....I knew I was narrow-minded before I worked with him. I have grown open-minded after voyages with him. He always had conversations with me and enlightened me with a lot of Buddhist knowledge when I was at watch.

Interviewer: Did he talk to other crews?

Chief Mate: Yes. He talked to nearly all of them [all Chinese crews]. He never turned out to be superior when he came to talk to other crew. He paid respect to others. I was happy to work on that ship and I felt time flying on that ship which was my second ship. I always recall the time spent on that ship.....

Interviewer: Was he good at his professional skills?

Chief Mate: Yes. Like his nice characters his professional competency is also good. Some other seafarer officers have bad characters while their professional skills are rubbish. Only few seafarers of mean characters are competent at their professions [Interview 5].

The moral standards of the Captain are also found in the interview with another interviewee who also thought that the Captain believed in Buddhism:

Seafarer: The whole company know he believes in Buddhism. He was a person who had few demands and desires.....He tried to talk to me once about Buddhism. As I was uninterested in the topic, he gave up. He was vegetarian and behaved differently.....He looked different in my eyes.

Interviewer: How do you explain he looked different?

Seafarer: He never became frantic and was honest. For instance, once in a monthly meeting attended by the company's signed off Masters, Chief Engineers, and Commissars, he stood up to a top leader of the company

and jumped to the defence of a Singaporean company because the leader made criticisms of the Singaporean company on loose grounds. He corrected the wrong criticisms made by the leader in front of the audience [Interview 2; a 40-year-old Captain of urban origin].

Taoism is one of the five official religions in China. However, after examining the entire interview data, I realised that no seafarer interviewees had ever witnessed a single case of Taoist seafarers on board any ships. Nonetheless, I cannot give a concrete judgement about this finding on these grounds because of the inadequate size of the sample. In the next section, I come back to Christianity.

7.3.3 A seafarer Christian in learning

The last interviewee among the four religious seafarers was a 35-year-old Chinese seafarer waiting for his baptism. He wanted to be baptised in a developed country. He was told by his Christian brothers and sisters when he went to churches back in China that such a baptism would be authentic. There were two interviews conducted with this interviewee over a space of one year. He revealed his wish to be baptised in a developed country in the second interview having assimilated into Chinese Christian society [Interview 29]. The government's Three-Self religion management (see Chapter Two) helps us understand the suggestion made by Chinese Christians and his determination on it. The second interview was done because he was expatriated from Australia in the wake of his acute illness. He had been in an Australian hospital for two weeks after being found in a coma in his cabin. In his first interview [Interview 22; a sailor of urban origin] it was understood that he had yet to become a Christian. It was important to try to explore how he reflected on his 'passing the entrance of Hell' with his Christian faith by conducting the second interview [Interview 29] when he was on leave.

Speaking about the impact on Chinese seafarers of missionary efforts in port, this 35-year-old sailor said: 'There is less impact on old hands and it might impact on new

seafarers because they are curious about a lot of things' [Interview 29]. However, his first contact with religion was not made by missionary visits or activities:

Interviewer: What is your knowledge of religion?

Sailor: Christianity.

Interviewer: How did you come to know it?

Sailor: Gradually, I knew the birth of Jesus etc.

Interviewer: What made you want to know about Jesus?

Sailor: Many reasons. When I went to churches on leave, I heard brothers and sisters talking about these things relating to Jesus, thus I understood more about him.

Interviewer: Did it have any connection with you being a seafarer?

Sailor: Certainly. It was my seafaring job which brought me to religion in the first place.

Interviewer: Would you elaborate on it in detail?

Sailor: In 1994, the visit to a family that you knew on an island and some Christian books taken from the family.

Interviewer: Do you know what religion they had?

Sailor: No. But it was about Jesus [Interview 22].

The sailor's above quotation involves me in the event of visiting a religious family on a small island in the Caribbean Sea. Therefore, it is my responsibility for telling the audience about the visit and its impact on the sailor. In fact the family of five were Jehovah's Witnesses, and two grown up sons were working on the island. It was me who initiated a talk to the patriarch of the family who was working for an oil refinery on the island and doing his routine check on board the tanker I worked on. After a few more calls of the tanker at the pier of the refinery, I made a friend of him. On one occasion, I went ashore with the sailor to visit him. We spent that whole afternoon visiting some places on the island including their Kingdom Hall. In the evening, we visited his family and met an elder Canadian lady in his house. She was also a Witness and just arrived from Canada. They were very kind people and talked about

their religion most of the evening. By the end of the day they gave us many religious booklets, books and even cassettes. On the way back to our tanker after leaving the family the sailor told me that he was taken by surprise by their kindness, gentle manners, and their way of life. Unwittingly in this event I played a role which was usually acted by missionaries.

There is one thing which cannot be ignored in understanding the social and cultural interaction between Chinese seafarers on board ships and different nationals they met over their stays in port: the consideration of language. This is a major factor deciding the level of Chinese seafarers' willingness to interact with other nationals both at sea and in port. With evidence collected from the interviews, it indicates that most Chinese seafarers were not able to use the English language as a means of communicating with the outside world. Not many Chinese seafarers have had the same opportunities of that sailor to immerse themselves in intense religious contact abroad due to the fact that they cannot communicate well with other religious nationals [Interviews 3, 7, 12, 16, 21, 23 and 27].

With a good image of foreign religious people through his first and profound religious contact, the sailor's interest in Christianity was ignited. But the advancement of his religious thoughts did not take place on board ships; rather when he had holidays back in China and started his regular visits to churches. In his first interview he said:

Interviewer: Do you see you as religious?

Sailor: Now I have not made my absolute obedience to Christianity and I have not become a true Christian, although I believe in God.

Interviewer: What do you do to believe in God?

Sailor: I go often to churches during my holidays.

Interviewer: Why during the holidays?

Sailor: It is very inconvenient on board ships.

Interviewer: Is your seafaring career related to the rise of your Christian awareness?

Sailor: Yes, there is relationship, but there were other things. When I attended English classes at a university after signing off one ship, a Christian foreign tutor liked me very much. He told me that even though I had been to many countries, I had not yet found a place where I could be happy. He taught me things relating to Christianity and then I went to churches to listen to priests' preaching as well as teaching [Interview 22; urban origin].

When on board ship, the sailor used praying as a means of coping with his homesickness because he had no other better ways. He prayed once every two weeks according to the first interview. He adopted a particular ritual of praying, as the sailor disclosed:

Interviewer: How did you pray?

Sailor: Facing the sun at the ship's bow, I stood alone and prayed silently.

Interviewer: Why did you go to the bow?

Sailor: [I] could not share my words with others [all Chinese crews] on this. Telling others [of this] would do nothing useful and the others could not understand me.

Interviewer: People do things out of their motives. What made you pray?

Sailor: For understanding Jesus.

Interviewer: Do you have other reasons?

Sailor: In the past, one of my friends told me that people make wishes at the sunrise in the first day of a new year and their wishes will be realised if the wishes are not very ambitious [Interview 22].

There is an external element intertwined with his practice of Christianity, which shows the sailor lacked competent Christian knowledge because of his atheist upbringing and education in China. Furthermore, the fact that the sailor went to the bow of the ship to pray due to lack of understanding of his Christian stance among other fellow Chinese seafarers shows that there had been few chances to find

Christians among Chinese seafarers, at least on board that Chinese state-owned ship. In respect of praying, the sailor said that he stopped praying on board his last ship because he did not want to conduct prayer without guidance from priests. He brought with him religious books on board his last ship and read them during his spare time [Interview 29]. His only constant practice of Christianity was his hymn singing, and he went to the surrounds of ships' forecastles to sing hymns. The hymns had been learnt in the churches in Dalian when he was on leave [Interviews 22 and 29].

Looking closely at the two interviews conducted a year apart, a change in his frame of reference is identified. A few years before accepting the invitation to the previous interview, the sailor ended his first marriage and went to board a ship. Referring back to this time he hesitated to think about going to church as a means of coping:

Interviewer: Did you have a better way to overcome your sadness?

Sailor: I found friends to chat.

Interviewer: Did you still have other means?

Sailor: Others.....Going to church [Interview 22].

In the second interview, a year later, the sailor was so confident in Christianity that he prayed and thanked God for saving his life when he woke up from a coma of half a month in an Australian hospital [Interview 29]. There was a sea change in his frame of reference in favour of a religious state of mind. This change is evident in the following quotation:

Interviewer: Does your faith help you cope with on-board life and work?

Sailor: Faith is a kind of spiritual sustenance, because it could be better if I have such a thought when I am away from my family.

Interviewer: How did you feel before you had Christian faith?

Sailor: I found myself lost.

Interviewer: How do you feel now?

Sailor: I am at peace with the world [Interview 29, the second interview with the sailor].

Although the sailor was not prompted by missionaries or their actions to get religion, the impact of his first experience with foreign religion was a direct result of his seafaring career, which allowed him access to an outside world where religion was more dominant. His chance meeting with religion while working on a tanker made him focus on Christianity. As such, on his own initiative the sailor, when having holidays back in China, found his way to Christian churches where he began to understand Jesus and was ready for conversion [Interview 22].

7.4 Final reflection

Despite most Chinese seafarers saying they have no religion, a different story is told in this chapter. While most of the participants purported to be atheist, we have seen that many have participated in religious practices. The difference is perhaps that their religious exercises were too informal to make them define their involvement as religious.

For some Chinese seafarers, their faith was neither religious nor communist. A Chief Mate explained:

Interviewer: Do you have faith?

Chief Mate: I might have faith.

Interviewer: What is your faith?

Chief Mate: As people in our country [China] do not contact too much with religion, I do not have a particular faith and I think my faith is broader. I define it as 'human spirit'. The human spirit is to satisfy the physiological and spiritual needs of people. It focuses on harmony between human beings [Interview 23; a 35-year-old Chief Mate of urban origin].

This 'human spirit' was framed by the interviewee in order to show the faith he possessed. When I have a close look at his words, they are like an essay talking about his philosophical hope for Chinese society. At the end of his expression, he concluded with 'harmony between human beings' which coincidentally matched what the Chinese government had promoted since the reign of new President Hu Jintao in 2003. 'A harmonious society should feature democracy, the rule of law, equity, justice, sincerity, amity and vitality' (Who2 Biography 2008). The promotion of a Harmonious Society had been reiterated through China by the media. As such, that seafarer's harmony between human beings theory might be attributable to the widespread propaganda of a Harmonious Society in China.

Religion was subjected to the state's control or management for half a century in China. But did this offer a different angle for Chinese seafarers utilising their frame of reference when they perceived religion? According to a 35-year-old Chief Mate:

I said that I am not a religious person. Actually from my seafaring career, I found self-discipline is very important and no religions can convince me to believe in them because the religion believers' behaviours are not better than mine. What they did, and what they are doing cannot convince me to believe in their religions [Interview 25; rural origin].

This cynical view of religion might be seen as reflection of the Chief Mate's secular thoughts. In the fieldwork the informants were reluctant to talk about religious topics at the beginning of their interviews, but they changed as interviews went on. Twenty or thirty years ago, I would not have got any information about religion out of Chinese seafarers. Now, even though they were still a bit wary, Chinese seafarers were talking more freely about religion. Part of the reason is that China as a whole has opened up to religion.

Most Chinese seafarers showed tendencies towards accepting the existence of religion on board ships and welcomed the visits by missionaries, although they did not believe

in any religion. This is because Chinese seafarers saw a correlation between religion and their health and safety. An atheist northern Captain was certain that the Matsu worshipping by his mostly southern crews was prayers for peace and safety, so he supported religious activities to take place on board an oil tanker and took part sometimes, even though an annual religious ceremony caused a severe safety breach on the oil tanker (see section 7.1.2). However, I need to acknowledge that on-board Matsu worshipping rituals were required by the tanker's owner. In this respect, religious and organisational obligations might overrule rational consideration of the Captain.

A Commissar seafarer imported elements of his communist materialism to his thoughts about religion:

Religion is a kind of faith which can not be used to get rid of threats, but it can reduce the impact of threats on people, and has an emotional cathartic function, and it reduces pressure. For instance, Buddhism in some people's thoughts will comfort them. In reality, neither the Almighty nor God can bring health and safety to people. But the Chinese believed in religion and God for a great deal of years, fishermen fired crackers and hung red flags when they commenced fishing season every year. They burnt incense and paid deference to Buddha.....On board state-owned ships every thing was more standardised but these practices [Buddhism or Qi Gong practices etc] could not be removed [Interview 21; a 50-year-old Commissar of urban origin].

There was some doubt and controversy when the Commissar commented on religion. He admitted the positive functional benefits of religion even though the long cultivation of his communist materialism made him a disbeliever in God's miracles. With his political stance, the Commissar endeavoured to refer to his communist ideology in explaining religion:

This faith [Communism] is political and it should not be put together with religion from my point of view. In fact in order to liberate the whole world and to take societies to progress. I think, from points of Christianity, it is not to tell people to go astray. The Christian brothers go on well among them, and they expand their social network through introduction of Christian brothers and thus they can help out each other, rather than through relatives to access to help [Interview 21; urban origin].

Religious essence was intertwined into the thoughts of Chinese seafarers about their life and their view of the world. One seafarer actually put religion and communism in parallel by saying: 'The Communist Party has imbedded its communism in people's minds. Actually this practice is as same as practices of religion' [Interview 20; a Chief Mate of urban origin]. Moreover, when the representative of communist or socialist ideology, a Commissar, started borrowing elements from religion to describe a better social relationship, it may be that religion has had an influence on Chinese seafarers to some extent. There were more quotes to support this argument from atheist Chinese seafarers:

Interviewer: Did you come across some family hardship when you travelled with ships?

Chief Mate: Once I was on board a ship, I heard of bad news about my family. That is the vulnerable moment seafarers felt on board ships.

Interviewer: How did you feel then?

Chief Mate: I felt guilty of not being present. Once on board a ship when I heard of my father's illness, the ship was sailing at high sea and I could call my family via the maritime satellite phone system. However, it could not help. I could do nothing apart from paying very expensive telephone bills. As his illness was getting worse, this was the moment which I found was utterly devastating.

Interviewer: Do you think that religion could help to some extent?

Chief Mate: I think it would help because the teachings of religion would tell people how to face those critical times in life, for example, Chinese religions such as Taoism and Buddhism that provide protections [Interview 23; a 35-year-old Chief Mate of urban origin].

Seafarers experience more critical times than the Chinese who work and live on land. Apart from hearing devastating news about their relatives while working on board ships, Chinese seafarers face life threatening situations very often (see section 5.2.1.1). If Chinese religions can offer protections in the eyes of Chinese seafarers, Taoism and Buddhism may bring solace at those critical times. I know from the interview data that some Chinese seafarers did not buy this religious solution to devastating experiences suffered by seafarers during critical times on board ships. However, some seafarers who spoke of indifference to religion were actually practitioners of some kind of Chinese religion. For example, the Captain in interview 10 who enjoyed colourful life and disliked religion because of its ascetic side went to visit temples and burnt incense to seek peace and safety for his crew as well as the ship. The seafarer who reiterated he could live well without religion admitted that religion may offer spiritual balm [Interview 26; an engineer of urban origin].

More importantly, a 26-year-old Chief Mate thought religion could contribute to something really big as he said:

Once we loaded lamb and cow fat in US ports and were ready to ship it to China when the Chinese government put an embargo on imports of such fat from the USA because of the alleged outbreak of mad cow disease in the country. We made a detour to Japan where documents were forged and the origin of the produce was changed. Therefore, the fat was underway to China 'legally'. I am wondering whether the Chinese Captain would coordinate such a fraudulent scheme if he believed in Buddhism and had a sense of not harming others [Interview 5].

The Chief Mate had complete confidence in the moral function of Buddhism. Although his hypothesis was not proved to be true, it showed his deep belief in the beneficial side of religion. Another non-believer seafarer had a similar view about the relationship between religion and people, he said:

People will live comfortably if they have faith. It is very shallow to just earn money. People with religion would think about the need of other people [Interview 20; a 40-year-old Captain of urban origin].

Even though the seafarers were not believers, they did not only support religious existence on board ships but also offered their empathy to religion. In the interview data, those non-believer seafarers considered religion a way for people to realise self-cultivation on board ships. They thought people with religion would be consolidated inside and have good self-control. They believed that seafarers with religion would work and behave well, which benefited all parties [Interview 14 of a 35-year-old Engineer and interview 16 of a 30-year-old Officer].

7.5 Summary

Having been cut off from the source of religion during education and growing up, religion to the Chinese is a collage. With inadequate knowledge and experiences of religion, this collage became more complex when Chinese seafarers faced unavoidable religious existence on ships and in port. When old ideas met new ideas, Chinese seafarers perceived religion from various angles. Religion caused Chinese seafarers to seek different ways to understand and interpret it. This chapter has demonstrated multiple and complex ways in which religion is lived and experienced aboard ship. This represents one consequence of the new liberties in thought and belief which have accompanied the transition in China.

The purpose of the next chapter is to discuss the ways in which Chinese seafarers' see their relative social position and any changes in that position over their careers. It will also explore their levels of satisfaction and feelings of wellbeing. In this way, Chapter

Eight will help us to understand how seafarers feel their lives have changed over the period of transformation. In particular, we will learn how they feel increased affluence and new liberties have affected their levels of satisfaction and feelings of wellbeing.

Chapter eight: Discussing the values of Chinese seafarers in an age of transition and conclusion

This thesis has investigated the values of Chinese seafarers in an age of transition. Values, although diverse in cultures, location and demography, share a common factor: they all reflect society where people grew up and live. As China has been through a major transition over the last thirty years, we could expect that the values of Chinese seafarers would be affected by it. Looking at the values and beliefs of Chinese seafarers and the transformation they have undergone, during this time of change, allows us to see how the transformation in China's socio-economic situation has impacted on this particular occupational group.

To fulfil the aim of the study, the thesis needed to answer the following:

- How have Chinese seafarers experienced the increased affluence and new liberties (some freedom in thought and belief) which have accompanied transition in China?
- How do seafarers feel their lives have changed over the period, in particular, how do they feel increased affluence and new liberties have affected their levels of satisfaction and feelings of wellbeing?

During the course of this chapter, I summarise my findings and assess their implications in relation to answering my research questions. Towards the end of the chapter, I further discuss the limitations of the thesis and present my final thoughts regarding this research study.

Industrialisation gives rise to new physical environments, fragmentation of communities, a restructuring of the economy and people's working lives, far-reaching changes in social institutions such as the family: in short, rapid social change. It can also cause a fragmentation of value-systems, whereby a single dominant ideology is threatened by a

variety of institutions, commercial interests and social organisations each offering their own ideas. Individuals, often uprooted from their childhood environment, become able to adopt some and reject others, perhaps influenced by a new socio-economic context in which they are placed (Hunter and Rimmington 1992 p. 12).

These comments on early 1990s' Chinese society, which had undertaken its Open Door Policies for the first decade, remind us of the Chinese values affected by the country's drastic industrialisation. When this research project began in 2007, Chinese society had gone through more than two decades of economic boom after its industrialisation in the 1980s and early 1990s (Teather 2010). As such we could reasonably anticipate that this would have affected the values of the Chinese.

Chinese seafarers were chosen and their values were looked at to answer the research questions. The thesis was set up firstly to find out what values the Chinese held when they decided to become a seafarer in Chapter Five. With the same chapter, the thesis also examined whether Chinese seafarers changed their values through the years of their seafaring in line with the rapid economic growth of China. Referring back to the literature, the World Values Survey data indicated the emergence of post-materialism amongst a few young Chinese in the 1990s whereas the rest of the Chinese still held onto their values of social duty inculcated by prolonged socialist propaganda (Inglehart 1990 p. 157).

To start off, I explored the reasons for the Chinese to join the merchant navy during the transition of China. The reasons revealed the values of Chinese seafarers before they started their seafaring career. The literature review showed that it was almost impossible thirty years ago for the Chinese in the cities to choose a job themselves because they were assigned by the Chinese state. If they turned down the government's offer, they had to wait for an unknown period for the next assignment of unknown jobs. As such, few would decline a state-offered job. For the young rural populations, they became peasants if they did not pass highly competitive higher

education entrance exams for entering colleges or universities. They saw it as their duty to undertake the jobs in accordance with the prevalent socialist ideology, as sustained by the numerous government campaigns discussed in Chapter Two. These elements facilitate the understanding of a survey finding on China in the 1980s as a society which noted that 'Materialist orientations are only now beginning to permeate the young'. By comparison, the old were still enthralled to fulfilling their social duty (Inglehart 1990 p. 157), as required by the state; even when prior to the 1980s they were in the midst of privation. As such there would be little value in seeking individual motivations at this time.

Things started changing in the 1980s and the Chinese gradually were able to choose their own jobs. Those who joined the merchant navy after the 1980s had reasons for doing so. The constitution of Chinese seafarers also changed in the 1980s. High school leavers in the cities, sent-down urban youths-cum-farmers, maritime graduates, and retired navy personnel were the backgrounds of most Chinese seafarers in the early 1980s. Over the following thirty years, gradually, more rural Chinese took over seafaring jobs from urbanites. So the younger generation of active Chinese seafarers were likely from rural areas.

The results of this research project show that Chinese seafarers beginning their careers in the 1980s started taking on materialist values. That period was the first decade of the country's Open Door Policies. Chinese society just came out of privation and commerce slowly emerged in China. As a result, most material goods were in demand, but in short supply in China. But there was one way reported by older seafarer interviewees to overcome those difficulties: to become a seafarer. Those older seafarer interviewees lived in the cities when they were young and looking for a job. All jobs were in the cities and so were seafaring careers. Farming then was seen as a way to survive rather than a job. In maritime Chinese cities, seafarers were seen bringing home material goods from abroad that were neither seen nor available in China at this time. Witnessing the prestigious material goods gained through seafaring, some jobless young urban Chinese were attracted to the sea. Besides this, their

rational thinking of seafaring's monetary advantage also played a role in their decision to become a seafarer. The financial advantage was reported to be a factor by the older seafarer interviewees. The interviews of Chapter five revealed that most Chinese workers of different levels in the cities earned significantly low salaries. There were not many chances to earn more at this time for the Chinese living and working on land. We have been informed in the literature review that the status symbols of the Chinese households changed from the 'three big pieces' (bicycles, sewing machines and watches) before the 1980s into a pursuit of TV sets, refrigerators and washing machine in the 1980s. Nevertheless, seafaring was reported by the older seafarer interviewees as a means of earning far more than the Chinese would do on land. The material gain and monetary advantage seafaring would bring was the priority of those young Chinese in the 1980s when they decided to be a seafarer, and such a priority can be seen as evidence of their materialist values.

The research study has also found that Chinese seafarers had experienced material scarcity before their seafaring career. Because of the material scarcity within Chinese society at this time, it is not surprising that Chinese seafarers were focused on their material condition. Since its foundation in 1949, China had been a poorer developing country for three decades. Massive political movements brought many catastrophes to its people including, in some cases, starvation and death (see sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). The Open Door Policies then brought many changes to the Chinese people. After the introduction of the policies Chinese people gradually experienced the improvement in their life. But limited by under-development of the country at this time, most Chinese still suffered from privation. Chinese people joined the Chinese merchant navy out of very rational consideration. They wanted material goods accessible by seafaring when those goods were in short supply or were not accessible at all in China because the country neither produced nor imported them.

After the 1980s, the Chinese seafarer labour market witnessed the influx of rural Chinese. In an interview in 2008, a Chinese Captain estimated that 95% of the seafarers contracted by a Chinese state-owned shipping company had been rural

Chinese [Interview 2 of a 40-year-old Captain]. Those who joined the merchant navy in the 1990s and the 21st century are referred to as the younger generation of Chinese seafarers (most of them were under 35) in this discussion and I explained the different reasons this group offered for becoming a seafarer. To call them the younger generation is only to facilitate the discussion. The change of Chinese seafarers' constitution (many more rural seafarers than urban ones) places the focus of the discussion on the rural Chinese seafarers.

Unlike the former generation who joined in the 1980s when material goods were scarce in China, the new wave of rural Chinese seafarers was less interested in seafaring as a means to access material goods. This was because by the 1990s material goods were no longer in short supply even in rural areas. Nevertheless, rural China was far behind the cities in terms of cultural and economic developments. As a result, more rural adults moved to the cities and became migrant workers seeking higher earnings. The migrant work in the cities was despicable in the eyes of the Chinese because of its strenuous nature and harsh life, but it was better than what the peasants did in the countryside (see Chapter One). Contrastingly, seafaring was considered by rural interviewees as a way of improving their position; becoming a seafarer provided them with a decent way of detaching themselves from the peasantry while avoiding some of the many drawbacks of becoming migrant workers in the cities. Like their predecessors, the younger generation of rural seafarers still saw seafaring as a means to higher earnings. Until now, a seafaring career had still been a means of allowing Chinese seafarers to earn more than the average Chinese worker ashore.

With the dawn of the twenty-first century, China's economic growth had been booming for some 20 years. The first group stopped seeing any of the advantages that they once saw in seafaring. Many of them regretted their original choice because they perceived their relative status had declined in China. Seeing themselves perching high in the Chinese social hierarchy when older urban seafarers started their seafaring in the 1980s compensated enormously for the hardships of their life at sea. Continuous

economic development of the country started dividing the Chinese society into the extremely wealthy, the still poor and those hung in the middle. Chinese seafarers' earnings were inadequate to secure them a place within the wealthy. Having been overtaken over a period of years, these older urban seafarers were not able to find a means of compensating for their hardships associated with seafaring. This was a phase well past the stage at which immediate material wants had been satisfied, when interviewees had acquired their houses and cars and for some they even wanted a second car of better quality [Interview 2].

According to theorists such as Inglehart, we could anticipate that the older seafarers would be at a stage of financial security whereby they could be expected to undergo a shift in their values. That is, we could expect that their values could be categorised as post-materialist [Inglehart 1997 p. 65]. Moreover, according to Inglehart and Klingemann, enormous Chinese economic growth offsets some adverse factors such as the lack of democracy, and therefore boosts the wellbeing of the Chinese (2000 pp. 179-80). In the case of the seafarers examined, however, it was found that neither their values nor their levels of wellbeing had been affected in quite the way we might have anticipated. For example, improvements in wellbeing associated with financial security were tempered by their recognition of their loss of status and the ongoing hardships associated with the seafaring lifestyle. Thus many of the seafarers interviewed stated that they regretted their original choices to become a seafarer after years of seafaring and reported that they started to see their time at sea as a test of their endurance.

The younger generation of rural seafarers did not show this status competition staged by the first seafarer group because they had not experienced the advantages of the first group when they started seafaring in the 1990s or the 21st century. This is because seafaring as a career had lost its status in Chinese society by then. Besides, like Shetland youths cited by Goffman in his book (1961 p. 65) (see section 5.3.2), the younger generation of rural Chinese seafarers were less likely to tell of the lack of compensation for the hardships working at sea at the beginning of their seafaring

because their rural origin was worse than on-board life. Nevertheless, many of the younger generation showed their dislike of seafaring after years of working at sea because of unavoidable difficulties. These were felt by the younger generation because the compensation experienced by their predecessors for their hardships at sea did not exist and even the increased seafaring salaries were shrinking relatively. Through seafaring their current life ashore was better than on-board life. Their growing dislike resulted in intentions to leave seafaring career.

Having discussed the younger and older seafarer generations, it is noticed that Chinese seafarers were in the forefront of the country's transition and they had well passed the stage at which immediate material wants had been satisfied. Nevertheless, despite continuing economic development within China, the interviews reveal that seafarers actually suffered a loss of socio-economic standing, a sense of status anxiety and a feeling of insecurity.

Because of the growing economy, seafarers have been overtaken by better-off Chinese on land, and furthermore the affluence of the country has created thousands of millionaires and billionaires. For seafarers, the affluence of China did not mean much to them because they were not beneficiaries apart from the increases of their salaries which, on the other hand, had dwindled to less significance in comparison with the earnings of increasing numbers of better-off Chinese. These results were found to be similar to Sirgy's (1998) findings on materialist dissatisfaction which takes place when materialists make their social comparison with remote referents of much affluence (see Chapter One).

In Chapter Five we saw that, in the years since they became seafarers, the older generation of Chinese seafarers had been quickly overtaken by many people working on land, and they no longer saw themselves as fortunate by acquiring what other Chinese had no access to twenty years ago. Even their increasing seafaring salaries dwindled when compared to the country's fast growing economy and this did not substitute for the loss of their status. As a result, Chinese seafarers experienced a loss

of face. The younger generation of Chinese seafarers did not experience the same status competition but occupational difficulties made them dislike seafaring after years of working at sea. Some of them decided to endure the rest of their working years in order to provide their families with a decent life, whereas others prepared to seek land based employment.

In both cases, seafaring stopped bringing them the sense of wellbeing. Also, some seafarers in Chapter five began reporting reduced wellbeing as a result of their loss of status: the hardships of life on board ships were harder to bear and they also felt that others must think them foolish. In the extreme, a seafarer interviewee described his seafarer colleagues as ‘a posse of fools’ [Interview 20 of a 40-year-old Captain].

Summing up the findings of Chapter five, the discussion of the chapter suggests that practical considerations influenced the decision to become a seafarer. This was the case whether the person joined the merchant navy in the 1980s, 1990s or the twenty-first century. What changed were the contents of their practical considerations in response to the social and economic changes of the country because of its prolonged economic boom. In the 1980s they joined for the access to material goods and financial advantage seafaring brought and after the 1980s the access to material goods was no longer the reason, and financial advantage seafaring brought started shrinking relatively but was still perceived as a better way of earning amongst rural Chinese.

In addition what was going to bring them to seafaring was a variety of reasons discussed in Chapter Five. Many of the reasons offered referred to purely contingent phenomenon such as the ability to get a college place, encountering a seafarer, admiration for the goods owned by seafarers such as nice shoes, or purely curiosity. What appears common to such accounts was an element of luck, misfortune or small details that made a difference. There was also the ‘manly’ challenge that attracted some individuals to seafaring. Lastly, Guanxi facilitated the seafaring career of some.

Having been seafarers for years, most seafarer interviewees reported their overwhelming resentment because of difficulties brought to them by seafaring. These difficulties were not particular in the case of Chinese seafarers but they were offset when old Chinese seafarer generation held a prestigious social standing in the past and the new wave of rural seafarers perceived seafaring life better than their disadvantaged rural life at their start of seafaring. When the increased affluence of the country allowed China to produce a large number of wealthier Chinese ashore, the seafarers studied felt the loss of their social standing; when the new wave of rural seafarers bettered their living through years of their seafaring career, onboard life was no longer better than their current shore living. As such, the common disadvantages of seafaring started becoming their concerns.

Illness became a worry; life-threatening accidents were reported; long separation led to divorces; absences when relatives were terminally sick resulted in deep regret; and seafaring isolation made seafarers hard to integrate on leave when some seafarers even labelled themselves as a 'posse of fools'. The resentment of these seafarers was emphasised when they also faced decreased welfare and less attention from their Chinese employers because the country's booming economy made the society money-centred. Those ethnographic materials of Chapter Five lead to one conclusion, that the self-esteem of Chinese seafarers was rather tarnished by the consequences of the country's affluence. This also in part answers the research questions of this thesis. Increased affluence is not a linear factor of high levels of satisfaction and improved feelings of wellbeing at least in the case of Chinese seafarers studied.

As the thesis moved into the next chapters, I paid special attention to one aspect of the values of Chinese seafarers – religion. Many of the interviewees who claimed to be atheist, were actually undertaking or involved in religious or spiritual activities on board ships or ashore. The concept of Chinese conformity helps us understand this apparent contradiction. Chinese conformity often reveals its surface meaning and can be best described as compliance without internalisation. Chinese people do not always keep their behaviour in accordance with their inner beliefs as do Westerners. One

follows the dictates of the situation so as to enable the individual to stay harmonious with the outside world. This would be considered as hypocritical or insincere by Westerners, but for Chinese people it is culturally accepted as a sanctioned mechanism (King and Bond 1985 p. 35).

Religion may provide reassurance for people and thus help provide feelings of wellbeing. The literature review suggested that this possibility was not available to the vast majority of Chinese thirty years ago when religion was marginalised by the state for much of the time and communism provided the guiding values of society. Religion came back in China when the people were less associated with communist ideology in the years of Open Door Policies and economic reforms. We were able to get some insights into whether this comeback might be associated with increased feelings of well being by asking Chinese seafarers for their values and perceptions on religion.

In addition, the literature review outlines that the comeback of religion in China was sanctioned by the state. As a result, religion in China has been supervised to the extent by which the general population is isolated from religion despite its comeback. Given the focus of this thesis on values, the presence or absence of religion in the thoughts and lives of Chinese seafarers is bound to be important. In particular, Christianity was in short supply in China (see Chapter One). In comparison, for Chinese seafarers, Christianity was brought to them more freely by missionaries when the seafarers went working on board ships.

Chapter six revealed that missionaries did not always bring Christianity to Chinese seafarers. There was also a secular side of missionary work relating to seafarers in port. The secular side was said by Chinese seafarers to be important; their basic needs were met when their ships called into a port after having been isolated for weeks at sea. The gift brought to Chinese seafarers by missionaries made the seafarers feel cared for and boosted their morale. The free transport arranged by missionaries created an easy way for the Chinese seafarers to return to land society. Prepaid telephone cards sold by missionaries met the needs of Chinese seafarers to

communicate with their families in China. These initiatives contributed to the wellbeing of Chinese seafarers. This is why Chinese seafarers praised missionary organisations more than they did to their compatriot colleagues and the Chinese state-owned shipping companies they worked for (see the introduction of Chapter Six). The Chinese seafarers did not see the immediate importance of Christianity in their seafaring life although the Christianity was scarce in their domestic life in China. Rather the secular services of missionaries helped Chinese seafarers fulfil some of their basic needs.

The interviews told of the participation of Chinese seafarers in religious activities arranged by missionaries, but their interest was focused on utilising missionaries' secular help. They saw the help as an easy way to keep in touch with land communities. Moreover, their culture of conformity made them less likely to say 'no' to missionary invitation to religious activities. Chinese seafarers would and did allow themselves to endure religious seminars and even Christian baptism in order to be granted secular help. The missionary provision of transport was the most wanted secular help. Most seafarer informants did not oppose the religions missionaries brought to them but they emphasised their apathy in interviews. Atheist values, formed during the pre-adult years of Chinese seafarers, remained firm in the face of the destabilisation by missionary beliefs.

The literature review suggested that China has taken a unique way to arrive at its affluence from its severe privation. Many aspects of the life had been marginalised, distorted or even destroyed in extreme cases such as the Cultural Revolution. During the transition, the country worked on minimising distractions from production and consumerism to reach its affluence (see Chapter One). An expert at sociology of religion and China, Chingkun Yang (known in the West as C. K. Yang) describes communism as a non-theistic 'faith'. He points out that communist ideology's religious quality is signified by the two leading aspirations of the Chinese nation: the quest for national strength and the quest for material progress. He concludes that all other concerns, such as economic wellbeing, health and life, family, aesthetic and

cognitive truth, justice and humanity, were neglected because of the overarching quests of the nation (Lau 2007 p. 53). If this is the unique way for China to reach its affluence, his argument provides grounds for thinking that China's sustained economic growth might not bring improved wellbeing for all because the Chinese way was subject to the distortion of the state in many aspects. His argument is a suggestion and the findings of this study of a group of Chinese seafarers support it.

As Yang points out, the Chinese nation's two leading aspirations overrode all other concerns. This led to the affluence of the country at a fast rate. But in the process, the Chinese experienced decreasing support from the government in terms of welfare, medical care, and pensions, etc [Interview 17 of a 40-year-old Officer] (Blumenthal and Hsiao 2005; Patience 2010). Company-wise, with revenues as top priorities, Chinese state-owned companies had started withdrawing seafarers' welfare on their ships; for example, the companies stopped paying for transport for the landing of their seafarers [Interview 13 of a 36-year-old Engineer and interview 27 of a 36-year-old Captain].

Most seafarer interviewees reported that they had raised their life standards above those of the average Chinese. Those seafarers redefined their basics and wanted cars and new houses. Where they were in their present life in terms of being able to provide for their families became a yardstick to judge the priority of their life. When a Chinese seafarer lived in the countryside with his family whose members were chronically ill without medical care from the system, he had become the bread winner of the family and the payer of the medical care [Interview 18 of a 42-year-old Officer]. He would resort to seafaring for the provision of reassurance in the form of money rather than seek solace in religion. It might be added, however, that where work is hard, dangerous and unpleasant, such as coalmining or seafaring, the workers may still seek solace in religion in the long run. All the same, the Chinese seafarers believed that religion (Christian) would be in the way when they had to provide security for themselves and their families because having religion involved much time

and more efforts in their eyes. They were able to help themselves by taking on seafaring, rather than rely on supernatural influence.

The attitude of self-preservation through hard work established under the communist system required people to be studious and serious. If Chinese seafarers engaged in Christianity they have got to engage seriously. That would eat into their time and efforts for fulfilling other important needs which should have been satisfied by the prosperity of China. In the life of Chinese seafarers, when political Commissars stopped missionaries from boarding or confiscated missionary publications on board ships, the communist system sent an obvious message to seafarers that Christianity is unwanted. There was an example that a 35-year-old Chief Mate of non-party membership literally sabotaged the visit of the Chinese crew of the ship to a missionary centre in Inchon, South Korea [Interview 8]. This shows the impact of communist rule on Chinese seafarers and indirectly on their wellbeing as told by writers such as Inglehart and Klingemann (2000 p. 181 see page 7) who believe that the number of years of communist rule seem to impact negatively on the wellbeing of those who have experienced the rule.

Culture and Confucian values played a role in the relationship between missionary religions and Chinese seafarers. One of the core values of Confucianism is not to cause turbulence and not to cause offence. Based on this Confucian value, many Chinese seafarers would like to remain harmonious with the Chinese government's wishes. Distancing from Christianity was their choice when religion was under surveillance of the state. When Christianity was thrown onto Chinese seafarers working abroad on ships, this value of pacification also worked well to help Chinese seafarers deal with missionaries and their religions. They allowed themselves to be taught with Christian knowledge by missionaries when they were not interested in the religion on many occasions. This Confucian value and the barrier of language helped Chinese seafarers remain reticent about sharing topics with international religious seafarers when they worked and lived on the same ships. Chinese seafarers who said they were not religious nonetheless participated in religious activities arranged by

missionaries because of their culture, as well as due to their other non-religious needs that were satisfied on account of attending, i.e. missionary secular services. These Confucian values and the Chinese culture allowed the seafarers to hide their true values about missionary religion in front of missionaries in order to receive secular services.

Chinese seafarers did see Christianity as civilising, imagining, for example, that the Communist Party's officials, had they believed in religion, would not have been corrupt [Interview 10 of a 42-year-old Captain]. Having experienced help from missionaries, some Chinese seafarers thought of extending such help to visiting seafarers in China [Interview 23 of a 35-year-old Chief Mate]. Many seafarer interviewees pointed out that Chinese seafarers would have had a better community working on board ships if they had practiced what missionaries preached. Their thinking showed the sign of their belief in the civilising function of missionary religion, but these interviewees did not want to practice missionary religion themselves for a better on-board community. They would like the other Chinese seafarers to get religion and use it to build an on-board utopia. This may lead to greater interest in Christianity amongst Chinese seafarers in future [Interviews 5, 8, 14 and 18].

Chapter seven, showed how Chinese seafarers reacted to religious symbolism on board ships owned by China's state-owned companies. The religious artefacts were kept and taken care of by Chinese seafarers after a new build or a second-hand ship was handed over. They were not removed from the ships after the handover because the interviewees believed in the protection they might provide. In the same chapter we saw that Chinese seafarers could sometimes go as far as observing or believing in the religion that was sanctioned by the owners of the ships of non-state ownerships. At this point I have to ask if the professed indifferent attitude of Chinese seafarers to missionary religions is justifiable as Chinese seafarers were literally involved in the religion of other forms than Christianity more willingly.

It has been found that the Chinese do not see Buddhism and Taoism as religion on the Christian model because these religions have been diffused into Chinese society and part of the practices of these religions has also become part of their daily life or at least part of their holiday activities. The Chinese seafarers might see other Asian saints in the same way. Therefore, they did not consider themselves religious when they randomly worshiped the Asian saints or took care of their shrines on board ships whereas missionary (Christianity) religion was 'real' religion.

This is also the reason that there was more willingness of Chinese seafarers when it came to indigenous religion and that more Buddhism believers and Qi Gong practitioners were reported by seafarer interviewees. Chapter seven delved into this. Despite the willingness of Chinese seafarers to engage in their indigenous religion, they did engage in a free and informal way. They could worship any saint on board the ship they worked on. When they signed onto another ship where there was another saint of different religion, they would go to its shrine to worship with little discrimination. The contents of Chapter Seven show that the engagement and worshipping undertaken by Chinese seafarers was sporadic too. Chinese seafarers very often went to the shrines of the on-board saints at the time of crisis. The interviews revealed that most practices of Chinese seafarers of other forms of religion were related to the elements of superstition. The needs of those seafarers who engaged in other forms of religion were the protection and spiritual balm from their indigenous religion or other Asian saints because seafaring is associated with higher level of unpredictable risk.

Chapter seven also incorporates the interviews of the Chinese seafarers who claimed to be religious to investigate if new liberties of thought and belief had impacted on them. There were two Buddhist seafarers among the interviewees. They both held benevolent values representing one of core teachings of Buddhism. However, their practice of Buddhism was different. The interviews showed that the Buddhist Electrician engaged Buddhism differently from the ways the public observed Buddhism in temples or religious sites of tourism in China. He studied sutras and

chanted mantras to gain inner power on ships and on leave. He observed vegetarian diet and got on well with his Chinese seafarer colleagues.

Contrastingly, the way the Buddhist cook practiced his belief was very similar to the way most Chinese people did when they visited a temple or had a Buddhist statue at home. He bowed to statues on board ships and provided the shrines with offerings. For him, Buddha meant protection and prosperity. The understanding of Buddhism itself was not on his agenda. The core understanding of Buddhism is to break the cycle of miserable reincarnation by dousing people's desire for material things in order to achieve true enlightenment (Moise 1994 p. 18). Putting aside the understanding of Buddhism, the Buddhist cook showed his pragmatic attitude when he went to Buddha for protection and prosperity. The way taken by the Buddhist Electrician who studied sutras to achieve the true enlightenment was a stricter way of learning Buddhism than experimenting. The interviews of the two Buddhism believers of different practices show how complex it is to generalise Buddhism amongst the Chinese. At the same time these two examples are a bit more like the personal, do-it-yourself religion. That pick and mix idea is relatively new to the West yet the idea has been in China for thousands of years. New liberties allowed these two Buddhist seafarers to go their own ways in terms of religious practices.

It was suggested in the literature review that the reasons for the widespread practice of Qi Gong were the difficulties those Chinese people had due to their redundancies or their diminishing or disappearing social security and medical care (see section 2.2.3). The Captain interviewee who practiced one kind of Qi Gong started his Yuanji Gong in a slightly different way. He took his Gong because he wanted to answer his fundamental question when he saw dying patients removed from his ward in a hospital. There were many elements of mystery and superstition in his practices because of indigenous elements imported into the Gong he practiced. Superstition has been seen by the Chinese as being associated with the illiterate, the poor and the old and thus backward. Many Chinese engage in superstition but they do not consider

themselves superstitious. The interview data revealed that Chinese seafarers were more superstitious at the time of crisis (see section 7.2).

The Gong Captain reported the efficient use of his Gong in coping with lack of sleep on watch. This points to a possible relationship between the practices of this particular religion and the increased wellbeing of its practitioners. His learning and practices of Gong has made him a better person who was able to bring wellbeing to his crews working under him on ships. The sense of wellbeing extended to other seafarers as they reported their satisfaction working with the Gong Captain.

However, there is a dichotomy between the cases of two Buddhist seafarer practitioners. The data showed that Buddhism practices helped to enhance the wellbeing of one Buddhist seafarer and did little in pacifying another Buddhist seafarer about the grudge against his fellow seafarers. This dichotomy helps understand the complexity and unorthodox nature of indigenous religions in China.

The one Christian seafarer in the study started getting religion when he worked on a ship but it was not via the efforts of missionaries. He borrowed Chinese folk belief or superstition when he practiced Christianity on board ships. He enhanced his Christian knowledge when he was on leave but in a Chinese way. It will be simplest to define the Chinese way he undertook as evidence of his experimenting new elements for Christianity. His Chinese way is the result of the restrictive religious policies of the state. These policies were also seen when this seafarer was not able to discuss Christianity with his Chinese colleagues on board ships, which brought more isolation to him. The state's restrictive religious policies were felt in China when he was told by his Christian Chinese brothers and sisters to get baptised in any Western developed country because of its authenticity. New liberties of thought and belief provided the Chinese with more freedom in terms of religion (see literature review). In the cases of this seafarer and the Captain of Yuanji Gong (who was told by his company not to practice Gong on a ship), the new liberties did not guarantee that religion could be freely practised in China.

That seafarers practiced their religions in an eclectic manner needs to be understood in the context of Chinese economic development but also the wider cultural and political processes. The fact is that the seafarer practitioners of the three religions included in this research study were able to incorporate anything useful or meaningful to them into their religious practices. The Buddhist cook showed how he took on the effortless aspects of Buddhism and disregarded any deeper or more difficult issues. This may lead to a lack of depth but it might give him the sense of feeling good. The Buddhist Electrician went in the opposite way and engaged the most difficult issues of Buddhism for reaching his true enlightenment. When the Gong Captain revealed much mystery in his practices of Yuanji Gong, it indicated that he developed a personal touch in developing his Gong which had already been a mixture of Buddhism, Taoism and other indigenous spiritual practices. Despite Christianity seen as orthodox, it was practiced by the Chinese Christian seafarer in an eclectic way when he mixed Chinese superstition into his prayer on board ships and waited for an orthodox baptism in an advanced foreign country because of the negative result of Chinese religious policies. Those elements of eclecticism in their religious practices demonstrate that eclecticism in Chinese attitudes towards religion can be represented in various forms, for instance in this thesis, it was what people were told of by friends or Christian brothers and sisters – the Christian seafarer was waiting for an orthodox baptism.

The interviews showed some signs of new perception of religion by some seafarer interviews. For instance, speaking of his faith as ‘human spirit’, a Chief Mate seemed to be on the way to seek for the meaning of life [Interview 23 of a 35-year-old Chief Mate]. However, his ‘human spirit’ faith was easily taken as derivative of the government’s current propaganda promotion of Harmonious Society in China (Who2 Biography 2008). There was an example in which Christianity was seen as a better social network to seek help even by a Commissar seafarer [Interview 21 of a 50-year-old Commissar]. This example does not only show the new perception of

religion by Chinese seafarers but also reveals the level of influence of religion on them despite their atheist declaration.

Nevertheless, the professed indifferent attitude of most Chinese seafarers seems to run counter to China's big growth of Christianity acclaimed by the literature review of this thesis. It does not contradict when we understand the way Christianity grew in China. The literature review explained that the reintroduction of five official religions in China was conditional. Christianity in particular was subject to the state's restrictive management. This resulted in the growth of Christianity in China by the means of the expansion and multiplication of existing congregations. Chinese seafarers had little contact with Christianity in China when they did not volunteer to join the existing congregations.

Before considering its limitations, I conclude this thesis with answers to the research questions. Chinese seafarers experienced the increased affluence and new liberties in various ways. It was not straightforward. At a time when many in Chinese Society were experiencing increased affluence, Chinese Seafarers reported a loss of status. This was in part due to a change in their reference groups, i.e. those others to against whom they compared themselves. Overall they felt their relative positions in society had declined. Moreover many felt that they were now trapped in a career that they no longer enjoyed and that there was not a way out. As such there was a degree of regret expressed at having embarked on a seafaring career.

The answer to how Chinese seafarers felt their lives had changed over the period of the transition was likewise complex. They appeared to embark upon a seafaring career in a naive and trusting manner believing that they would join the elite of society. However despite receiving material rewards in terms of owning houses and cars, seafarers saw deterioration in terms of their working conditions aboard ship, while also witnessing others in society doing considerably better than them. As such they suffered a loss of self esteem. What the thesis has shown is that, in the case of the

group studied, affluence, satisfaction and wellbeing are not linked in any straightforward way. The situation is more complex and subtle.

According to writers such as Wilkinson (2005; also see Wilkinson and Pickett 2009) greater inequality can produce a range of undesirable health and social effects including adverse effects on feelings of wellbeing. This small study of Chinese seafarers has confirmed that such adverse effects can be identified, even in the midst of startling increases in prosperity. In a more equal society, people get a bit of advantage, and they feel quite pleased with their relative position. When it becomes terribly unequal, who do the people compare themselves to? They used to compare themselves to the normal, now is it the millionaire who should be compared to? So the seafarers wonder if that was who they could be if they stayed on shore owning a factory? It is inequality that makes it so difficult to be happy with a lot of things and in China the transition from equality to inequality has been marked. The society changed quickly from where everybody was wearing the same clothes, having bicycles to a wildly unequal society.

Richard Wilkinson sees inequality as a triggering role in leading to a more self-interested, less affiliative, and more stressful society that is likely to give rise to higher levels of violence, poorer community relations, and worse health (2005 p. 23). On the basis of my findings, I would suggest that future research may be better off using this kind of theoretical framework.

Limitations of the research

It is impossible to conduct a piece of flawless research because no research can cover all aspects of its subject area. This qualitative study is no exception. Firstly, the difficulties I experienced in fieldwork did not allow me to recruit Chinese seafarer interviewees according to my original plan. As a result, it was not possible to interview seafarers of certain numbers in categories of age, origin and rank. For instance, I had recruited more seafarer officers than I expected. This resulted in the

less presentation of the Chinese ratings in the thesis. In fact, more ratings should have been recruited to the interviews because they were found unlikely to tell of what they thought during the fieldwork.

Another shortcoming of the research is the fact that only a northern Chinese port city was picked for the fieldwork. China is huge and diverse in language, culture, and geography; and people from the north may not hold similar views as Chinese do in the south. In south, massive Matsu worship is done in Fujian and Guangdong provinces (Lin 2007; Wang 2010). This could be a good reason for the inclusion of southern Chinese cities to find differences in indigenous religions and to make contact to other religions. As such, the thesis might have ended up with more informative findings if a southern city had also become the fieldwork destination.

There was another concern relating to Chapter five. As section 5.2 revealed seafarers experienced a sense of detachment from the rest of civil society. It could perhaps be suggested that this brings into question Chinese seafarers' relevance for understanding what is going on in China more generally. However what we have seen is that the seafarers drew on their sense of isolation and separation as a resource for making sense of their position in relation to the wider Chinese society.

The research set out to explore the values of Chinese seafarers in order to see if they felt increased affluence and new liberties have affected their levels of satisfaction and feelings of wellbeing. This piece of research showed their status has been lowered down Chinese social hierarchy due to the consequences of the increased affluence. They were nostalgic about the times when seafaring brought them status. They reported their satisfaction with seafaring at that time although the country was in privation. Perhaps this manifests itself in a need to conduct a research study on those Chinese who now have higher status. If future research results in a similar conclusion of this research study, I can more confidently speak of the non-straightforward relationship between the increased affluence and high levels of satisfaction and feelings of wellbeing in China.

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Appendices

Appendix one – Consent form

CONSENT FORM
确认书

A Study of Chinese Seafarers' Belief Systems

中国海员信仰系统的研究

Name of Researcher: Lin Li

研究者姓名：李林

	Please initial 请签名
1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. 我确信我已读过并已了解以上提到的研究的信息提纲。我有机会来考虑这些信息，提问题。我的问题也得到满意的回答。	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. 我明白我的参与是自愿的，我可以在任何时间无条件退出。	
3. I agree to take part in the study. 我同意参加此研究。	

Name of participant

参与者姓名

Date

日期

Signature

签名

2 copies: 1 for participant and 1 for researcher.

两份：参与者一份，研究者一份

Appendix two – Information sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (INTERVIEWS) 研究信息提纲（采访）

A Study of Chinese Seafarers' Belief Systems

中国海员信仰系统的研究

I would like to invite you to participate in my research project on Chinese seafarers' belief systems. Before you make a decision it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Do not hesitate to ask if you have any inquiry about this study.

我高兴邀请您参与关于中国海员信仰系统的研究项目。在您决定前，您有必要了解为什么要进行此研究和涉及的各项。请仔细阅读以下信息。如果您有任何关于此研究的问题请不吝提出。

Who am I?

我是谁？

My name is Lin Li and I am a research student at Cardiff University. I am studying for a PhD in the Seafarers International Research Centre within the School of Social Sciences. My studies are part of a postgraduate programme funded by the Nippon Foundation. I was a merchant navy engineering officer for over 14 years, and I have a continuing strong interest in seafarer well-being and spirituality. You will find my contact details at the end of this information sheet.

我叫李林是卡迪夫大学的一名做研究的学生。我正在大学的社会科学院的海员国际研究中心读博士。我的研究是由日本财团资助的一个研究生项目的一部分。十四年的航海使我成为一名轮机员，这允许我保持对海员福利和精神领域很大的兴趣。您可以在本提纲的最后发现我的联络信息。

Why am I doing this research?

为什么我要做此研究？

Although there have been a great deal of research studies about China, and the maritime sector in China has also been investigated, the particular focus on Chinese seafarers' spirituality has rarely been explored. I chose this topic in order to understand the function of spirituality within the lives of Chinese seafarers and the dynamics behind the changes and development of their spirituality.

尽管有大量关于中国的研究并且中国海事领域也被涉及，中国海员的精神领域却极少被研究。我选择此课题是要了解精神作用对中国海员生活的影响，和促使海员精神改变和提高的因素。

Who will take part?

谁将参加？

I am approaching Chinese seafarers who have been active in sailing on board ocean going ships for at least five years or more. The participants comprise different kinds of ranks who are on leave.

我将请在船工作五年以上，目前还继续是船员的被访者。被访者由不同层次的休假船员组成。

What would be involved?

那些话题将被涉及？

If you decide to participate I would like to talk to you about life on board and your experiences in port. I am particularly interested in the place of spiritual beliefs and practices at sea. As seafarers get to visit many different places and people, I want to find out if and how this affects the way they think about spiritual matters. For example, I would like to ask you about how you see missions and their efforts concerning seafarers when you visit foreign ports. This interview would last approximately an hour. You can say as little or much as you wish. If you are willing I would like to use a digital voice recorder so that I can have a record of what you said.

如果您同意参加我将同您谈论船上和在码头期间的经历。我特别愿意了解精神信仰和海上实施的方面。因为海员经历很多海外的地方和那里的人，我想了解这些经历是否对海员精神信仰和思维方式产生影响。例如，我会问诸如您在港期间怎样看待海员会所的传教士和他们的对船员所做的事情。本采访将持续大约一小时。您可以多说也可以少说。如果您同意，我会将采访录音。

What will I do with the information?

我将怎样使用采访内容？

I will translate and transcribe the interview and if you are interested I will send you a copy of the transcript. In any cases, the names of yourself and those people you mention in these discussions will be changed in the transcript. Therefore, you and the people mentioned will not be identifiable. I will read and use the transcript so that the information from these discussions will be in my PhD thesis, which will be assessed for me to gain the PhD degree. Selections from the transcripts might also be published in articles in academic journals.

我将翻译并将翻译的内容变成文字，我会把文字材料寄给您一份如果您有兴趣。无论怎样您的名字和在采访中您提到的名字不会在文字材料中出现。如此采访中提及的人不会被认出。我将阅读和使用这些材料，其中的一些将被引用在我的博士论文中，我的论文是我用来获取博士学位的评估文件。有的引用部分或许会发表在学术期刊上。

Will everything you say to me be confidential and anonymous?

您说的每件事都会保密和匿名吗？

I will keep the transcripts in a secure place. The transcript will only be read and used by me and my supervisors might involve in reading the transcript for the purpose of guiding my progress. Apart from these the transcript will not be used for any other purpose.

我会存放采访文稿于一安全地方。文稿只供我一人阅读和使用，我的两位导师或许会因执导我研究介入阅读文稿。除此以外任何人将不能以任何借口使用此文稿。

What if you change your mind about taking part?

如果您改变参加的主意怎么办？

As you decide to participate in this research study, it is your voluntary choice. Conversely, you are also free to withdraw from the study at any point you wish, without giving a reason.

因为您决定参加本研究采访，这是您志愿的选择。同理，不用任何理由，您可在任何时候决定退出采访。

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. I

hope you will feel able to participate in this study.

感谢您花时间来阅读本信息提纲。我希望您有能力参加本研究。

Contact details:

联系方式:

If you would be interested in or have any questions about the research study, feel free to contact me at:

如果您对任何关于本研究的问题感兴趣，欢迎使用以下方式联络我:

China 中国

UK 英国

Tel: 0086(0)13898484339

Tel: 0044(0)7726767191

E-mail: lil20@cardiff.ac.uk.

For further information please check websites:

更多信息请查阅以下网址:

Seafarers International Research Centre (<http://www.sirc.cf.ac.uk>)

海员国际研究中心

The Nippon Foundation (<http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/eng>)

日本财团

