



Shopping hell: Deceased consumers are feeling the pinch

Overburning of paper money fuels afterlife inflation

by George Ding

Inflation in the Chinese netherworld jumped this week following the burning of trillions of *yuan* in paper money on Tomb Sweeping Day, exacerbating the already high inflation in the afterlife.

Official numbers from the netherworld finance ministry put the rate of inflation in April at 10.2%, far above the nether government's annual target of 4%. However, some deceased financial experts say that the netherworld government's numbers are understated, and that actual afterlife inflation could be as high as 12%.

"This issue directly impacts the netherworld's social stability and must be dealt with carefully," Liu Shuquan, the late finance minister, said at a recent press conference. He said that some ideas under consideration include printing a new "gazillion-*yuan* bill" and abolishing currency altogether in favor of a barter system. He emphasized to those present that "the netherworld government is committed to creating a peaceful and harmonious afterlife for everyone."

The Deceased People's Bank of China recently raised interest rates for the third

time in as many months in an attempt to curb inflation. Netherworld stocks dipped following the announcement, reflecting concerns about lack of liquidity and possible market stagnation. The cost of unliving has steadily increased over the past few years. In 1990, a bottle of netherworld water cost only 2 *yuan*, but today that same bottle costs several million.

The problem stems from the flood of "hot" cash that materializes in the netherworld every year as aboveground families burn stacks of fake paper money at funerals and on memorial days in the belief that the departed can use the money in the afterlife. The trend began to accelerate in 2008, when Tomb Sweeping Day was reinstated as a national holiday. As the amount of burnt offerings rises, the value of netherworld money has rapidly declined, driving inflation.

Netherworld economists agree that educating the living to slow the influx of hot money is the only way to manage inflation, but so far, no one has been able to get the message across.

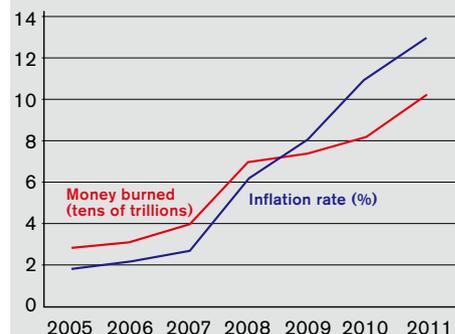
"We've tried sending ghosts to warn the

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Up in smoke

Netherworld inflation, 2005-2011



living," netherworld commerce minister Zhang Min wrote in an internal report, "but the relatives just end up getting spooked and burning more money."

As a result, few living people know the disastrous effects of burning exorbitant amounts of fake money; many still believe that they are helping the departed.

On Tomb Sweeping Day this year, Gao Mingyuan, a 73-year-old grandmother from Henan, burned ten million *yuan* in paper money for her grandson, a former Foxconn employee. Holding tears back, she confessed, "I was unable to give him a good life here, so I can only try to give him a better one over there."

But her deceased grandson, Gao Yong, was less than grateful. "I killed myself so I could be rich in the afterlife," he fumed, "but I can hardly afford anything here!" He had a message for his grandmother: "Burn me some food, burn me a Lexus, but for the love of god, do not burn me any more money." When asked what he was going to do with his windfall, he replied, "I don't know ... buy a bottle of water?"