Building a Nation

The Construction of Modern China through CCP's Propaganda Images

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Abstract

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To date, the study of Chinese propaganda photography has been limited. While some research has been made on post-1949 photography, the photographic production of the pre-1949 period has not been sufficiently explored. Focusing on the years of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45), this thesis aims at addressing this gap in the literature and at providing an analysis of how the Chinese Communist Party exploited photography for propaganda purposes during the war. Through the images taken by Party affiliated photographers and printed on the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial*, the first Communist photographic propaganda magazine, this study aims to show how this type of visual propaganda aimed not only at narrating the events of the war against Japan, but also at creating a new idea of Chinese nation.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first, *The Jin Cha Ji Pictorial: A Brief History* presents the history of the magazine and the work of the CCP affiliated photographers who contributed to its creation and popularity. Chapter two, *The Geography of a Revolution*, explores how a new cultural landscape was visually constructed to create the basis of the political legitimation that the CCP needed during wartime. Chapter three, *Becoming Modern Women*, investigates the symbolic and ideological value of the spinning wheel in 1943 in relation to women's contribution to the war effort and the thorny issue of women empowerment. Lastly, chapter four, *Moulding the Future* looks at the visual representation of childhood and discusses the issue of militarisation and masculinisation of childhood during wartime.

This study ends with few considerations on the propagandistic, historical and artistic value of Communist propaganda photography during the Second Sino-Japanese War as well as a reflection on how the symbolic and ideological significance of some of the photographs presented here are still recognisable in contemporary Chinese propaganda.

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“Mute at its inception, the photograph maintained its silence.
Such silence, which can sometimes scream to the heavens, attests the fact that it is our historic responsibility not only to produce photos, but to make them speak.”

—Ariella Azoulay

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Map of the areas controlled by the CCP in Northern China, 1945

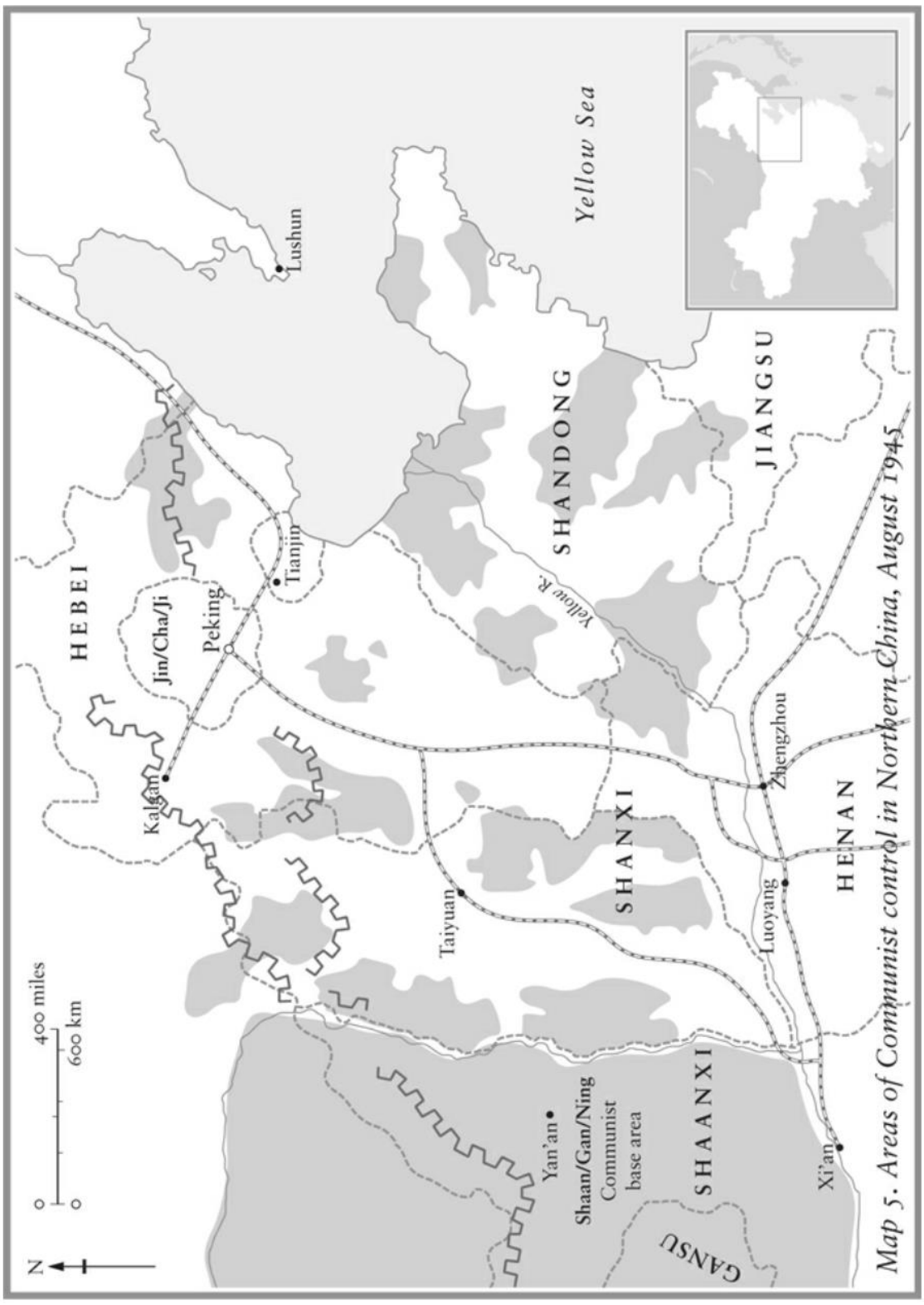

Figure 1: Map of the CCP Areas in Northern China in 1945. From Rana Mitter, China's War with Japan, 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival (Allen Lane, 2013: Kindle Edition), Part One: 2

Introduction

> In the process of persuasion photographs intentionally articulate that society's deepest concerns.
>
> —Caroline Brothers[1]

The relationship between photography, power, and propaganda in China was set in motion when Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908 CE) asked to be photographed at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to various sources, Cixi fell in love with the photographic medium after seeing the family photographs of the Russian Tsar in 1902.[2] Her personal photographer was Xunling (c.1880-1943 CE), the son of a Manchu diplomat. The images he took of Cixi were, and still are, significant not only for their historical value but "because of what they say about the wilful use of photography to shape history."[3] Aside from Cixi's personal enjoyment of being photographed, the empress embraced photography as a modern political tool and, in the early 1900s, she adopted the Western custom of giving her portraits as gifts to foreign diplomats and dignitaries.[4] While sources disagree whether Cixi had her images purposely sold to the public and printed in newspapers, these portraits had a political and cultural impact on the people.[5] In a time of great political turmoil as

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[1] Caroline Brothers, *War and Photography: A Cultural History* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 2.

[2] Heung Shing Liu, *From the Opium War to the Warlord Era* =: *Cong Ya Pian Zhan Zheng Dao Jun Fa Hun Zhan: Qing Mo Min Chu de Ying Xiang Zhongguo*, Di 1 ban (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2011), p. 193.

[3] Owen Edwards, "Presenting China's Last Empress Dowager", *Smithsonian Magazine*, http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/presenting-chinas-last-empress-dowager-73101932/?page=2, October 2011, accessed 19 November 2016.

[4] On Cixi's passion for photography and cross-dressing as divinity, see: Jung Chang, *Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine Who Launched Modern China*, 2014, pp. 330-335; Der Ling and Nöel Fletcher, *Two Years in the Forbidden City* (Fletcher & Co. Publishers, 2014); Laikwan Pang, *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), pp. 81-87.

[5] Ibidem; David Hogge, "The Empress Dowager and the Camera: Photographing Cixi, 1903-1904", *MIT Visualising Cultures*, https://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/empress_dowager/cx_essay01.html, last accessed 20 November 2016.

China had been since the Opium Wars (1839-1860 CE),[6] to embrace the modern photographic medium, as David Hogge explains, was the Empress's "strategic response to the Qing court's need to construct a more favourable public identity for its controversial sovereign."[7]

Cixi's photographic portraits can be seen as the modern version of the traditional imperial portraits that were used to associate the emperors' political plans with Chinese history.[8] The portraits of Cixi were exploited in order to establish the political legitimacy for the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) when this legitimacy was being put into question by the Opium Wars and the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901).[9] On the role of these photographs, Hogge explains that they "were part of a larger effort to maintain political legitimacy and relevance by an increasingly enfeebled and desperate Qing court."[10] The photographs aimed at disseminating a positive view of China, one that would be in contrast with what popular Western

[6] The Opium Wars (1839-42 CE and 1856-60 CE) were two wars fought in the nineteenth century between the Qing dynasty and Western powers, mainly Britain and France. In both cases the wars were won by Western powers and allowed them to acquire commercial privileges and legal rights on the Chinese territory. For more on the Opium Wars, see chapter 7 in Jonathan D Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1991).

[7] David Hogge, "The Empress Dowager and the Camera…

[8] Cixi's photographic portraits need to be seen as the modern version of the traditional imperial portraits that were used to express the emperor's connection with the Chinese historical past and his political plans. Cixi was also not the first one to dress up as Buddhist divinity or to be inspired by foreign portraits. For a brief overview, see: Wu Hung, "Emperor's Masquerade — 'Costume Portraits' of Yongzheng and Qianlong," Orientations 26, no. 7 (August 1995), https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/wuhung/files/2012/12/Emperor-Masquerade-Costume-Portraits-of-Yongzheng-and-Qianlong.pdf, last accessed 26 January 2018.

[9] The Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901 CE) was a peasant uprising that aimed at driving all foreigners and Christian missions out of the Chinese territory. The Society of the Righteous and Harmonious Fists led the uprising in northern China, where foreigners were killed, and their properties destroyed. For a more detailed analysis see chapter 10 in Jonathan D Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1991).

[10] David Hogge, "The Empress Dowager and the Camera….", *MIT Visualising Cultures,* https://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/empress_dowager/cx_essay03.html, accessed 23 November 2016.

photographs had been portraying since their arrival at the end of the nineteenth century: a backward country destroyed by opium and poverty.[11]

The relationship between images, power legitimacy, and, to a broader extent, national identity, becomes remarkably interesting when a country goes through a moment of major political and social turmoil, such as a war. The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), or Anti-Japanese War, was the conflict that saw the end of old, traditional China and the birth of the modern Chinese nation under the leadership of Mao Zedong (1893-1976) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).[12] The war deeply affected the lives of the Chinese people, from fleeing their homes and becoming refugees, to famine and poverty. Aside from these social and political changes, the war brought, as Parks M. Coble and Chang Tai-hung note, the emergence of war reporters as "some of the most important shapers of modern Chinese history."[13] Not only were written reportages in demand, fuelled by "the public thirst for war coverage,"[14] but also photographic images became a central part of the war narrative. Thanks to the appearance of the new, handheld, portable cameras, photography in 1930's-China became effortless, popular, and easily available. War reporters were not only the journalists who narrated the war in their written articles, but also those who visually presented the conflict during the 1930s and 1940s through photographs.

The aim of this study is to analyse how photographs were created and exploited by the Chinese Communist Party for its propaganda purposes during the

[11] See the photographs in Heung Shing Liu, *From the Opium War to the Warlord Era…*.

[12] This thesis will refer to the Second Sino-Japanese War also as Anti-Japanese War, following Diana Lary and Stephen MacKinnon's explanation that this was "the term most commonly used by the Chinese people and the one that most accurately described the war" (2001: xi). Some sources used in this study also use the terms Resistance War or War of Resistance.

[13] Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 151.

[14] Parks M. Coble, *China's War Reporters: The Legacy of Resistance against Japan* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 6.

Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45).[15] The social and political disruption caused by the war, the need for a new Chinese national identity, and the booming importance of photography for informative and political reasons makes the Second Sino-Japanese War an appropriate case study for the analysis of the relation between power legitimacy, national identity, and images. Specifically, CCP's propaganda photographs were chosen as the focus of this study in order to explore how and with which ideological constructs these images have contributed to the creation of modern China. As Cody and Terpak note "war images facilitated a nationalist campaign" and China came to be seen and portrayed through "a nationalist gaze [that] provided the most concrete and direct proof of foreign invasion and most effectively accelerated nationalist sentiment."[16]

While the symbolism and ideology of propaganda images, in particular posters produced after 1949, has been widely explored, it appears that pre-1949 photographs have not received the same attention. Although the literature has recently shown promising signs towards the study of photographic propaganda of the Mao era, the available sources have failed to consistently and systematically explore the socio-cultural environment in which Communist propaganda photographs were created and for which political purposes they were exploited.[17] This is to say that while it is possible to read about the photographic manipulation process or have a visual account of the events of the Cultural Revolution—for instance with the images

[15] An analysis of the birth and development of Chinese reportage during wartime was conducted in Parks M. Coble, *China's War Reporters: The Legacy of Resistance against Japan*, but also in Fang Hanqi, ed., *A History of Journalism in China. Vol. 4-7*, English ed (Singapore: Silkroad Press, 2013).

[16] J. Paul Getty Museum, *Brush & Shutter: Early Photography in China*, ed. Jeffrey W. Cody and Frances Terpak (Los Angeles, Calif: Getty Research Institute, 2011), p. 15.

[17] Eliza Ho, 沙飞, and OSU Urban Arts Space, *Art, documentary, and propaganda in wartime China: the photography of Sha fei = 沙飞* (Columbus, OH: East Asian Studies Center, Ohio State University, 2009); Wu Hung, *Zooming in: Histories of Photography in China* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2016); Dali Zhang, Reid Shier, and Roger Bywater, *A Second History*, Lynn Valley 7 (North Vancouver, BC : Port Colborne, ON: Presentation House Gallery ; Bywater Bros. Editions, 2012).

by Li Zhensheng (1940-)[18]—there is no available study on the creation of propaganda photographs during the Anti-Japanese War. This study therefore aims to address this gap, with the hope to be the first of more studies on Chinese propaganda photography.

* * *

In March 2017, the Italian journalist Pierluigi Battista wrote an opinion piece on a Chinese propaganda posters exhibition held at the Museo di Roma in Trastevere. Battista described the posters as "horrible *paccottiglia*, a museum of propagandistic horrors, a gallery of lies and bad taste."[19] *Paccottiglia* is an Italian word that describes an indefinite amount of low value, useless, and kitsch objects. Being an onomatopoeic word, it also conveys the idea of a box full of clattering, unwanted things. To describe those posters, or any type of visual propaganda, as *paccottiglia* displays a dismissive attitude towards one of the most complicated and revealing manifestations of the socio-political history of modern China. In the West, the concept of propaganda holds a negative connotation as it indicates "Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature."[20] While the original meaning of the word *propaganda*—from the Latin verb *propago*, to propagate—meant the reproduction of plants and animals, in the sixteenth century the Catholic Church adopted the term to indicate the dissemination of religious faith.[21] The term acquired a negative connotation only in the nineteenth century when American

[18] Li Zhensheng is a Chinese photojournalist born in Dalian, a city in the Liaoning province, at the time part of the Japanese puppet state, Manchuguo. His most famous book, *Red-Color News Soldier*, was published in 2003 and reveals the atrocities of the Cultural Revolution.

[19] Pierluigi Battista, "I vecchi Maoisti e l'era delle fake news," ("Old Maoists and the era of fake news") *Corriere della Sera*, 17 March 2017, available at: http://www.corriere.it/opinioni/17_marzo_20/i-vecchi-maoisti-l-era-fake-news-f6b706d0-0cd0-11e7-a6d7-4912d17b7d3e.shtml, last accessed 7 November 2017.

[20] *Oxford Dictionaries*, "Propaganda," https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/propaganda, accessed 7 November 2017.

[21] Matthew Wills, 'What Does the Word "Propaganda" mean?,' *http://daily.jstor.org*, 20 November 2015, https://daily.jstor.org/word-propaganda-mean/, last accessed 8 September 2018.

politicians began to use the word in a derogatory way to describe the revolutionary events that were taking place in Europe.[22] The term lost its religious connotation and acquired a political and economic one. Erwin W. Fellows noted that between the First and the Second World War, the negative connotation of propaganda was further enhanced because of an "increased public recognition and acceptance of the use of powerful channels of communication by special interest groups. The most striking use of these channels is in the influencing of consumer and voter behaviour."[23] Propaganda became strongly connected to the idea that a few entities could work to spread biased information in order to win the political or economic support of the people.

In the Chinese context propaganda has a different, more positive implication. According to Chang-tai Hung, Chinese propaganda is "a basic ingredient of the political process; [...] an act of persuasion, combining feelings and facts."[24] Historically, propaganda had been employed as a way to teach the people what was expected of them as members of society while providing them with role models.[25] The Chinese word for propaganda is *xuanchuan*, a term composed of the two characters *xuan*, to publicly declare, and *chuan*, to spread. Timothy Cheek explains modern Chinese propaganda as the result of the convergence of traditional Confucian practices and the modern understanding of Chinese politics introduced by

[22] Erwin W. Fellows, "'Propaganda:' History of a Word," *American Speech* 34, no. 3 (October 1959): 182–89.

[23] Ibidem, p. 188.

[24]Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 9.

[25] The author is specifically referring to posters/photographs that were made during the Korean War (1950-53), in support of the Vietnamese people during the Vietnam War (1955-75) and the ones created to celebrate labour heroes and heroines, or the achievements gained thanks to the policies implemented by the Party.

Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925 CE)[26] in the 1920s.[27] Along the centuries, the Chinese government was expected to provide the people with role models in order to morally educate them. The tools through which people could be taught how to morally behave were the Confucian classics, *The Book of Rites* (*Liji*), *The Classic of Filial Piety (Xiaojing),* and more accessible popular legends (*mengqiu*).[28] *The Book Of Rites*, for instance, prescribed the correct set of behaviours and rites necessary for the creation of a harmonious society and entrusted the emperor with the responsibility to be a moral example for the entire country. The practice of "Sacred Lectures"—government officials explaining Confucian texts and lecturing the less educated public on the Sacred Maxims of the Emperor—also contributed to this educational system. The belief behind these practices was that the people needed guidance from a morally higher entity as they did not have the necessary moral awareness to lead a harmonious life.

To these existing Confucian practices, in the early 1920s, Sun Yat-sen added the notion of "Political Tutelage." Sun believed that the people needed "a period of political education during which […] one-Party state would inculcate the masses in modern civility" before they could be entrusted with democracy.[29] In Sun's view,

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[26] Sun Yat-sen was leader of the Nationalist Party in the early 1900s. After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, he was elected as provisional president of the Republic of China, a role he kept until 1912. He is remembered as "Father of the Nation" and his political ideas (The Three Principles of the People—nationalism, democracy and people's livelihood) were employed by the Nationalists and the Communists as guiding principles for the creation of a modern China. For more on Sun's life and political legacy, see: Marie-Claire Bergère and Janet Lloyd, *Sun Yat-Sen* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[27] Timothy Cheek, "Chinese Propaganda in Historical Perspective: Five Terms to Consider," *theasiadialogue.com*, May 11, 2015, http://theasiadialogue.com/2015/05/11/chinese-propaganda-in-historical-perspective-five-terms-to-consider/, accessed 26 August 2018; Stefan R. Landsberger, "Learning by What Example? Educational Propaganda in Twenty-First-Century China," *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 4 (2001): 541–71.

[28] *The Book of Rites,* or *Liji*, is a compilation of texts of different periods and authors. Scholars believe that the *Book* was reworked by Dai De, a Confucian scholar of the Han dynasty, during the 1st century BCE. Some sections of the *Liji* are dedicated to social forms, royal regulations, the use of ritual objects and mourning rites. Other sections contain episodes from the life of Confucius and his teachings.

[29] Timothy Cheek, "Chinese Propaganda in Historical Perspective…".

the people were not ready to take the country's socio-political future into their hands because they still required a higher, more illuminated power, to guide them. Based on the convergence of Confucian tradition, the use of role models, and the modern approach of Sun Yat-sen's "Political Tutelage," Cheek defines Chinese propaganda as

> The operating system of "transforming the people through the rites" by performing correct behaviour and providing suitable images, examples, and endless orthodox lectures on what to do and why. […] Without propaganda by rectified political teachers how can the people be transformed to become free?[30]

The role of propaganda as a positive, educational tool produced what David Shambaugh describes as *proactive* propaganda: "writing and disseminating the information that it [*the Party*] believes *should* be transmitted to, and inculcated in, various sectors of the populace."[31] Because of this, propaganda in the modern Chinese environment is understood as a "legitimate tool for transforming and building the kind of society sought by the Party."[32] This was realised proactively by the Communist Party through the dissemination of role models, a practice commonly employed by all imperial governments.

The difference between Confucian role models and Communist ones is in their ability to be resilient. Stefan Landsberger explains that Communist heroes "have […] taught that by relying on human will, the concrete obstacles encountered in the physical world can be swiftly overcome."[33] In the case of wartime propaganda images, the ability to overcome physical difficulties was the message that images of the Great Wall and the Long March conveyed as chapter two in this thesis contends.

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[30] Ibidem.

[31] David Shambaugh, "China's Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy," *The China Journal*, no. 57 (January 2007): 25–58, p. 29.

[32] Ibidem.

[33] Alan P. Liu, *Communication and National Integration…,* pp. 32, 55, quoted in Stefan R. Landsberger, "Learning by What Example?..."p. 542.

Concurrently, images of wartime labour heroes and heroines—adults and children alike—were exploited as examples of the material and social achievements acquired by those who dedicated their lives to the war effort and the various production campaigns (chapter three and four). Gao and Wang explain that in the Chinese cultural context, photographs should be understood as "a process of selection [...] [*It*] is more 'Let me tell you' rather than 'The reality is there and let's take a look together.'"[34] Under this light, wartime propaganda images should be seen as one of the educational tools created by a higher moral and political authority in order to ensure the defeat of Japan, and only then to create a harmonious society under the guidance of the Party.

* * *

It is precisely this 'let me tell you' aspect that is at the core of this analysis. What the Communist affiliated photographers chose to include or exclude from their images, the reasons why certain themes were relevant in a particular year, or what symbolism was used—if new symbols were created or if old ones were reinterpreted—are the underlying questions that this thesis aims to answer. All of these aspects are then brought together and analysed in relation to the construction of a modern and socialist China by the Communist Party. Although the long-term goal of the Party was the creation of a socialist society, during the Anti-Japanese War the main aim of the Communists was to mobilise the people for the defeat of Japan. The Party aimed at involving all social categories—women, men and children, farmers and soldiers—for the success of the war struggle. From the photographs by CCP affiliated photographers, we are able to see how this socialist society was imagined by the Party.

[34] Chu Gao and Shuo Wang, eds., 'Photographic Manipulation in China: A Conversation between Fu Yu and Gao Chu', *Composite Realities: The Art of Photographic Manipulation in Asia* 6, no. 1 (Fall 2015), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0006.104.

In this context, the artistic style of Socialist Realism had a great influence in the production of images and photographs during the war. Socialist Realism was an idealised portrayal of the present with optimism for the future under the guidance of a socialist party, in this case the CCP.[35] As Ding and Lu note, the artists and writers that accepted the Party's view on the creation of a future socialist society and the consequent "inevitability of the [socialist] revolution," created a romanticised view of Communist life and labour heroes. Although embellished, this imagined society was not pure "fabrication but an actual reflection of a reality to come."[36] With this in mind, the photographs that are presented in this thesis are used as a window into the at-the-time life conditions of the people living under the Party's rule, as well as the political and social goals that the Party had in mind for Chinese society as a whole.

Lastly, this study hopes to contribute to the current literature on Chinese propaganda by expanding its scope through the analysis of the socio-cultural and political context in which propaganda photography was created during the Anti-Japanese War. This thesis aims to shine a light on the importance that wartime photographers—sometimes forgotten, sometimes purposely erased by the Party—had for the development of modern and contemporary Chinese photography in the propaganda and political environment.

Images and politics

Since the interest in the development of twentieth century nationalism and the CCP's route to power has been evident in the number of historical, cultural, gender,

[35] Sarah E. James, "A Socialist Realist Sander? Comparative Portraiture as a Marxist Model in the German Democratic Republic," *Grey Room*, no. 47 (2012), p. 43.

[36] Liu Ding and Carol Yinghua Lu, 'From the Issue of Art to the Issue of Position: The Echoes of Socialist Realism, Part I', *E-Flux* Journal 55 (May 2014), http://www.e-flux.com/journal/from-the-issue-of-art-to-the-issue-of-position-the-echoes-of-socialist-realism-part-i/, last accessed 20 November 2017.

and economic studies, one could ask why there is still the need to discuss the creation of a modern Chinese nation.[37] Through the investigation of numerous sources, it appeared that the ways in which images produced during the Second Sino-Japanese War impacted the birth of modern China have not been fully explored. CCP's propaganda images of the 1930s and 1940s have received less scholarly attention if compared, for instance, to the great amount of studies conducted on Cultural Revolution images.[38] An in-depth study on the birth of CCP's propaganda iconography through the analysis of photographs appears to be the first step for a more complete understanding of the images—photographs, posters and woodcuts—produced in China before and after 1949. Many of the symbols that were used in post-1949 visual propaganda were in fact born and then tested on the population living in the Communist occupied areas during the war against Japan. To understand how these symbols originated, what cultural and social value they had, and what purpose they served during wartime is a necessary step for a wider understanding of Chinese propaganda as a whole.

The focus of this study is on the first photographic propaganda magazine created by the Chinese Communist Party, the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial* (*Jin Cha Ji Huabao*), which made great use of images for their propaganda purposes. A fairly complete picture of the evolution of their propaganda strategies and themes from

[37] The literature on modern China is constantly growing. Among the most valid works in different areas, see Elisabeth Croll, *Changing Identities of Chinese Women: Rhetoric, Experience, and Self-Perception in Twentieth-Century China* (Hong Kong : London ; Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Hong Kong University Press ; Zed Books, 1995); Kirk A. Denton, ed., *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1996); Frank Dikötter, "Culture, 'Race' and Nation: The Formation of National Identity in Twentieth Century China," *Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 590–605; Diana Lary and Stephen R MacKinnon, *The Scars of War the Impact of Warfare on Modern China* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001), http://site.ebrary.com/id/10056050.

[38] Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald, eds., *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China: Posters of the Cultural Revolution* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); Stefan Landsberger, *Chinese Propaganda Posters: From Revolution to Modernisation* (Köln: Taschen, 2011); Zhensheng Li, *Red-Color News Soldier: A Chinese Photographer's Odyssey through the Cultural Evolution* (London ; New York: Phaidon, 2003);Stefan R. Landsberger, Anchee Min, and Duo Duo, *Chinese Propaganda Posters* (Köln: Taschen, 2015).

the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial* until the present day is available because the Communists emerged victorious from the war against the Nationalist Party, *Guomindang* (hereafter GMD) and its leader, Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975 CE). More interestingly, the images created, printed, and distributed by the CCP during the Anti-Japanese War were also indicative of their political plans for future China. Glimpses of the idealised socialist society that the CCP hoped to create once in power can be seen in many of the images printed in the *Pictorial*: well-fed children, working women, happy peasants, and brave soldiers.

While photographs are the main focus of this study, other forms of visual representation, such as woodcuts and cartoons, are used as evidence for recurring themes and iconography that were created to portray and spread nationalist and anti-Japanese feelings. A recurrence of certain themes, subjects, and symbols became evident during the analysis of relevant Communist sources, mainly the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial* and the *Liberation Daily* (*Jiefang Ribao)*, together with an exploration of the photographic production of the most important CCP's photographers, such as Sha Fei (1912-1950 CE), Li Tu (n.a.), and Shi Shaohua (1918-1998 CE).

* * *

As the corpus of images produced and distributed by the CCP in magazines and newspapers during the 1930s and 1940s is too vast to be explored in its entirety, this study focuses on three themes: landscape, women, and children. In the specific case of wartime China, the Communist Party needed to establish a connection with traditional Chinese culture. To achieve this, the Party used natural geography— the Loess Plateau, and sacred Daoist mountains—and man-made structures—the Great Wall— that traditionally symbolised the history of the Chinese nation and its people. For instance, the Great Wall was exploited to create an ideological connection from the Chinese past, periodically subjected to the foreign invasions of Mongols,

Manchus and Western powers, to 1930s China, still under threat by Japan. The fact that the Chinese geographical space was under threat fuelled the need for a new definition of nationalism, of what China should and could be. Such symbols were re-interpreted on the basis of socialist values and exploited to create a 'new' past. This 'new' past was then used in order to provide political legitimacy for the Party, while creating the ideological conditions to mobilise the masses and fight against Japan. The narrative that the CCP was creating aimed at bringing the people together through, as Friedman explains, "a historical Chinese nationalist essence, a unified and indivisible force that alone knew how to save China's people from imperialist domination."[39] The images printed in the *Pictorial* show that China was depicted as a nation under threat, as it truly was, but also as a united nation under the leadership of the CCP. The reinterpretation of the Chinese landscape is analysed in chapter two and takes its theoretical foundation from studies on cultural geography. These studies explore how landscape can become a political tool exploited in order to legitimise power. The ways in which the concepts of *border* and *frontier* played a role in the development of Chinese nationalism and the construction of the Chinese identity are also analysed.[40]

The Party needed to show the efficacy of its policies on the lives of those living in the occupied areas during the war. Although this touched all categories of people living in the communist areas, the focus of chapter three is on women,

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[39] Edward Friedman, *National Identity and Democratic Prospects in Socialist China* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), p. 70.

[40] Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, eds., *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, 10. print, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008); Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2000); Liz Wells, *Land Matters: Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity* (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011); Owen Lattimore, 'Origins of the Great Wall of China: A Frontier Concept in Theory and Practice', *Geographical Review* 27, no. 4 (October 1937): 529–49; Owen Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers 1928-1958* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962); Carlos Rojas, *The Great Wall: A Cultural History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010); Piero Zanini, *Significati Del Confine: I Limiti Naturali, Storici, Mentali*, Testi E Pretesti (Milano: B. Mondadori, 1997).

arguably the social group that most needed an improvement in life conditions. Through the investigation of the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial* since its first issue in 1942, it appeared that women were usually portrayed while engaged in activities such as farming, nursing, and weaving. Specifically, the year 1943 saw the emergence of images of women at the spinning wheel. Women at the wheel occupied the pages of the *Pictorial* and the *Liberation Daily*, and appeared on banknotes, woodcuts, and posters. While along the centuries the wheel symbolised one of the four Confucian female virtues, women's work (*nügong*), during the war against Japan, the wheel was transformed by the CCP into the symbol of women's contribution to the war effort as well as the tool necessary to achieve economic independence and emancipation. Although this strategy aimed to celebrate women's empowerment thanks to CCP's policies, the way in which women appeared in the *Pictorial* and other media raises the question of why women were portrayed at the spinning wheel and what ideological value this symbol had in the 1940s.

Lastly, the Party's propaganda wanted to provide a vision for the future of the nation. In Chinese society, children, in particular sons, always represented the hope for the continuation of a family's lineage while being seen as the chance to climb the social ladder thanks to a much-hoped success in the imperial exams.[41] At the start of the twentieth century, this view on children began to change due to the arrival of Western pedagogic theories and the understanding that children were an asset to society and not just for a family. Children and childhood became strongly linked to the future of China as a modern country and consequently, one of the main subjects in wartime propaganda. In the pages of the *Pictorial*, children were portrayed as little soldiers or little farmers in which being little *(xiao*) was only a

[41] The system of the imperial examination went through changes along the centuries. For an in-depth analysis of how the Chinese education system changed from the end of the Qing dynasty until after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, see: Laura De Giorgi, "The Modernisation of the Education System," ("La Modernizzazione del Sistema Educativo,") in Maurizio Scarpari, Roberto Ciarla, and Guido Samarani, eds., *La Cina*, vol. 3, 4 vols. (Torino: Einaudi, 2009), 663-692.

physical characteristic and not a reflection of their abilities. The representation of childhood in Communist photographs shows that children were also used as examples of dedication to the national cause not only for their peers, but also for adults. Furthermore, as Laura de Giorgi notes, the conflict against Japan created the conditions for a systematic "militarization of children life [*sic*] which would mark Chinese childhood for a long time."[42] This chapter also discusses the issue of the militarisation of childhood and the masculinisation of Chinese society. This militarisation would, later in the 1960s, lead to the explosion of violence that characterised the years of the Cultural Revolution and the phenomenon of the Red Guards.

Methodology

The analysis and study of the political and social value of Communist propaganda photographs created during the Anti-Japanese War was a challenge as there were various angles from which this study could have developed. Firstly, in regard to periodisation, the time span of the war is commonly accepted to be 1937-1945. Some more recent sources indicate the start of the Mukden Incident, September 18th, 1931, as the beginning of the Japanese advance on Chinese territories and the Sino-Japanese War.[43] In September 1931, the Japanese troops first conquered the Chinese city of Mukden in the Liaoning province, and then proceeded to invade all of Manchuria, establishing the Japanese-controlled state of Manchuguo.[44]

[42] Laura De Giorgi, 'Little Friends at War…,' p. 4.

[43] For more see: David M. Gordon, 'The China-Japan War, 1931-1945', *The Journal of Military History* 70, no. 1 (January 2006): 137–82.

[44] For a brief overview of the Mukden incident and the establishment of the Manchuguo, see: John Swift, "Mukden Incident", *www.britannica.com*, https://www.britannica.com/event/Mukden-Incident, last accessed 5 August 2018.

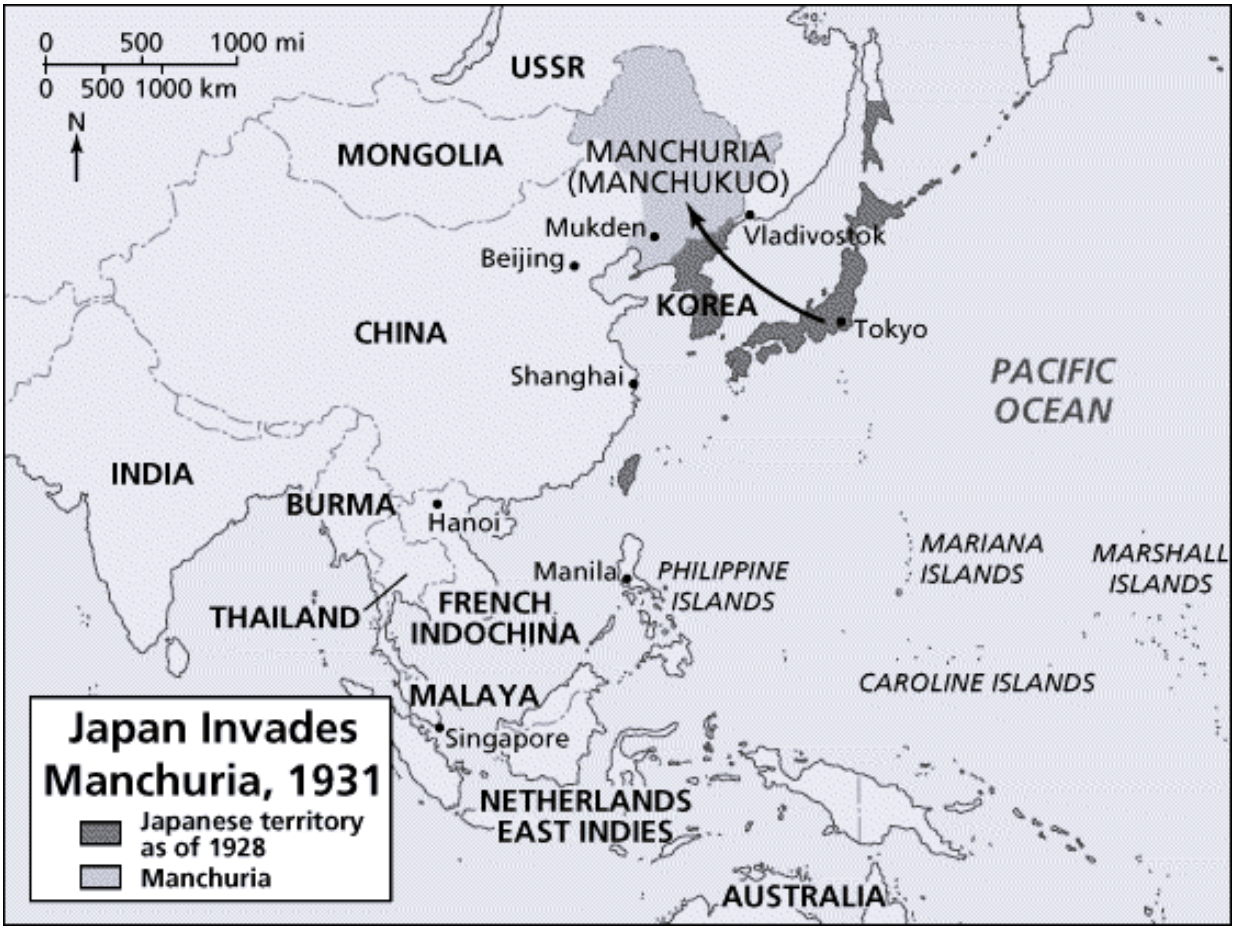

Figure 2: Map of the Japanese Invasion of Manchuria, 1931, https://worldwariipodcast.net/2017/07/23/episode-199-the-pacific-theatre-prologue-sino-japanese-relations/, last accessed 23 August 2018.

Although the author agrees with this latter periodisation of the war, this thesis follows the traditional timeline as none of the photographs chosen for this study were created or printed before 1937.

The initial approach for this thesis was chronological and aimed to analyse which battles or events had been narrated through photographs in Communist newspapers and magazines. Although this approach would have granted more temporal linearity to the thesis, it proved to be too wide in scope. Conversely, focusing on one or two years as a case study appeared too reductive, given the many events that took place between 1937 and 1945. A comparative approach between the visual construction of the war between China and Japan first, and then between China and the West, was also considered. It was felt that a Chinese-only

viewpoint would be more relevant as wartime Chinese photographic propaganda is currently under-researched.

The approach for this thesis came almost naturally after having gathered primary sources and photographic materials.[45] The *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial,* and the *Liberation Daily*, the newspaper used as mouthpiece of the Party during the war, were used as primary sources for this study. While the *Pictorial* focused on photographs and made great use of photo-essays to narrate the events of the war and life in the Communist Areas, the *Daily* was a traditional newspaper and, while less focused on photographs, made frequent use of woodcuts and cartoons to reinforce certain ideological and political aspects discussed in its columns. For this reason, the *Daily* was chosen as the primary source as its images provide support to the themes and symbols exploited by Party affiliated artists. Aside from these two printed sources, a considerable amount of information about the photographers who worked for the *Pictorial*, their life and their images was found in recently printed sources such as the Sha Fei monograph compiled by his daughter Wang Yan, the photographic book by Si Sushi on wartime photographers who worked with Sha Fei, the collection of the lives and works of wartime photographers by the Chinese Photographers Association, and the study on the *Pictorial* by Tian Yong and Tian Wu.[46]

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[45] For a more detailed account of the archive research conducted for this thesis, see Appendix A.

[46] Si Sushi, *Sha Fei and His Wartime Friends, 沙飞和他的战朋友, Sha Fei he tadezhanpengyou* (Beijing: Xinhua Chubanshe, 2012); Yong Tian and Wu Tian, *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, The birth of a Myth: A record of Chinese Wartime Photographers 晋察冀画报一个奇迹的诞生: 中国红色占地摄影纪实 Jin Cha Ji Hua Bao: Yi Ge Qi Ji de Dan Sheng: Zhongguo Hong Se Zhan Di She Ying Ji Shi*, Di 1 ban (Beijing: Jin cheng chu ban she, 2012); Yan Wang, *My Father Sha Fei, 我的父亲沙飞, Wodefuqin Sha Fei* (北京: 社会科学文献出版社, 2015); Zhongguo she ying jia xie hui, ed., *Through the Echo of History: Chinese War Photographers, 穿越历史的回声: 中国占地摄影师, Chuan Yue Li Shi de Hui Sheng: Zhongguo Zhan Di She Ying Shi (1937-1949)*, Di 1 ban, Kou Shu Ying Xiang Li Shi Cong Shu 3 (Beijing Shi: Zhongguo she ying chu ban she, 2014).

Lastly, the materials found in the Hoover Archives at Stanford—the recently acquired *Sha Fei Papers*, the *Nym Wales Collection* and the *Communist Party Issuances* (*Zhongguo Gongchandang Issuances)*, *1933-2005*—were also used for their visual and written materials. The *Sha Fei Papers* were pivotal for an in-depth understanding of Sha Fei's work as founder of the *Pictorial* and mentor to the other CCP affiliated photographers. The *Nym Wales Collection* provided an outlook into life in Yan'an and the other Communist-controlled areas through the first-hand accounts and photographs taken by Mrs Helen Foster Snow (1907-1997 CE), who reported from China in the 1930s under the alias Nym Wales.[47] Her interviews with Mao Zedong and other Communist leaders were useful in order to gain an insight into the political plans that were being created in Yan'an during wartime. The *Communist Party Issuance* collection was included for its visual materials, from posters to pamphlets, that corroborated assumptions about the dissemination and the value of certain political visual symbols employed between the 1930s and 1940s and beyond.

* * *

The photographs for this analysis were chosen on the basis of their propaganda value and their role in the Chinese cultural environment of the twentieth century. During the initial stages of this research, it was noted that the *Pictorial* and its photographers showed interest for specific themes in different years. While landscape-themed images were predominant in the initial issues of the *Pictorial*, photographs of women at the spinning wheel mushroomed in 1943. Conversely, the representation of children was not an isolated, yearly theme, but a constant one that developed in the photographic production of Communist photographers from

[47] Helen Foster Snow was an American journalist who reported from China during the 1930s. In China, she met and married Edgar Snow (1905-1972), journalist and author of the famous book "Red Star Over China." Mrs Snow interviewed Mao Zedong and other communist leaders multiple times. For more on her life, see: Kelly Ann Long, *Helen Foster Snow: An American Woman in Revolutionary China* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2006).

the 1937 well after 1949. Because of their ideological significance, the three themes are used in this thesis as spotlights into the indoctrination strategies and political plans that the CCP had during wartime. Specifically, the landscape theme presents how the re-creation of a cultural landscape was necessary for the establishment of the Party's political legitimacy. Likewise, images of women at the wheel were created on the basis of traditional symbolism which was being re-interpreted in order to spread the socialist message. Lastly, because this is an analysis on the construction of modern China through images, images of children are used as evidence of the role that children and childhood have in "the imaginary and corporeal construction of the nation."[48]

The images in this thesis are frequently presented in isolation from their original context.[49] This was a choice dictated firstly, by the low resolution and poor quality of the *Pictorial* and secondly, by the individual ideological message of the photographs. Although the ways in which these images appeared in the *Pictorial* is noted throughout this study, it was also important to delve into the specificities of the single shots. For instance, when researching the socio-political references of an image such as "Brother and Sister Pioneers," the literature revealed the existence of plays and songs with the same title and ideological message. Isolating the photograph became an effective way to underline that its existence was part of a wider net of propaganda narrative and was not limited to its appearance in the *Pictorial*. The available sources on wartime photographers revealed that, although with obvious differences, the thematic of landscape, women and children were explored by all photo-reporters, even when their images did not appear in the magazine. Moreover, several of the cultural references present in these photographs

[48] Orna Naftali, "Reforming the Child: Childhood, Citizenship, and Subjectivity in Contemporary China" (PhD Thesis, University of California, 2007), p. 1.

[49] To see the images that appeared in the *Pictorial* in their original context as they are chronologically introduced in this thesis, refer to Appendix C.

were part of the traditional social environment in which the recipients of this propaganda had grown. These references are explained in this study and are arguably the strongest evidence that the Party's wartime propaganda was a re-interpretation of traditional symbolism and the manifesto of its socio-political plans for future China.

Lastly, these themes were chosen because a considerable amount of the images created during the Anti-Japanese War maintained their political value across the decades. Wartime images and their symbolism were used or reinterpreted after 1949 to celebrate or commemorate contemporary events.[50] This temporal transcendence is noted throughout the thesis and hopes to further reinforce the value of this analysis and the choice of these three themes. This exploration is conducted on the belief that to understand modern and contemporary Communist visual propaganda it is necessary to look at how and why images were created, and which themes remained or disappeared from the Communist portfolio across the decades.

* * *

For this discussion on wartime propaganda photographs, this study embraces the definition of photography as given by Ariella Azoulay in *The Civil Contract of Photography*.

> Photography is an apparatus of power that cannot be reduced to any of its components: a camera, a photographer, a photographed environment, object, person, or spectator. "Photography" is a term that designates an ensemble of diverse actions that contain the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of the photographic image.[51]

[50] I am referring here for example to the images used to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the war in 2015. The famous image of the Eighth Route Army Soldier fighting on the Great Wall, taken by Sha Fei, appeared on stamps and posters during the commemoration period.

[51] Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 1st pbk. ed (New York: Cambridge, Mass: Zone Books; Distributed by The MIT Press, 2008), p. 85-86.

The *apparatus of power* is of crucial importance for this study because the significance of wartime photographs can be understood only by embracing all aspects of the photographic process. Wartime photographs were part of a complex ideological system in which any artistic endeavour was created in order to spread and support the political aims of the Party. The relationship between the photographer and the photographed, the objects and their symbolism, the Party and the spectators was at the essence of Communist wartime photography, as defined by Azoulay. Every image must be analysed as an *apparatus of power* to understand their socio-political message.

Yet, photographs are, in their own essence, mute, as they do not reveal more than what they show. As James A. Flath points out, a simple visual analysis is not sufficient because it would not reveal the image's historical importance nor its role as carrier of political message. During wartime the *apparatus of power* involved a carefully planned indoctrination discourse that was based on the ideological premises of Anti-Japanese nationalism and the creation of a modern Chinese nation. The diverse actions of production, distribution, and consumption of photographs were controlled and organised so that the recipients of these images would assimilate the ideological message as intended by its creators. The graphic and linguistic signs that were attached to the images contributed to their correct reading. These signs were not only the ideological symbols that could be found inside the photograph—for instance, the Great Wall as symbol of the Chinese nation—but also the ones placed on the outside, such as titles. Titles are the linguistic signs that can influence the viewer's perception of an image the most. In a context of political indoctrination, titles are crucial because they "contribute to holding the meaning of pictures, to limiting the potential range of interpretations or

responses on the part of the audience or reader."[52] The presence of these graphic and linguistic signs shows that viewers were not allowed to freely interpret such images. Moreover, the narrative that was constructed around the images—if they were created in isolation, printed as part of a photo-essay, or explained to the public—was also part of the apparatus that conferred meaning upon them. As a consequence, the photographs presented in this study are analysed as visual texts. Flath explains that

> Images are externally structured to form a narrative […] while externally the contextual, physical and social structures of the visual text control its meaning. […] Internal graphic structures and external social structures helped people in the past to make sense of what they were looking at.[53]

In the present, we are able, through the decoding of such structures, to understand how past viewers approached the photographs and how these images contributed to the creation of a particular socio-political environment.

Because Flath's analysis is centred on Chinese New Year's woodcuts (*nianhua*), the much-debated issue of photographs as evidence of truth was not addressed. In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes raised the question on the amount of truth that can be found in a photograph. He wrote: "in Photography I can never deny that *the thing has been there*." While this can be agreed upon when considering images of personal nature as Barthes did in *Camera Lucida*, his analysis did not consider propaganda photographs, a category in which variable degrees of staging and manipulation are invariably present. Because of "the apparent realism of the photographic image," [54] photographs became powerful tools in the hands of the propagandists as truth could be moulded and created according to their ideological needs. If on the one hand it is crucial to acknowledge a degree of falsehood in

[52] Liz Wells, *Photography: A Critical Introduction: Edition 5* (Routledge, 2015), p. 126-7.

[53] James A. Flath, *The Cult of Happiness: Nianhua, Art, and History in Rural North China* (UBC Press, 2011), p. 164-65.

[54] Liz Wells, *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, p. 108-109.

photography, on the other hand it is important to remember that Communist photographers were working on the basis of the ideological need of rallying the people for productive and defensive reasons. This is to say that even if images were staged, deliberately composed, and manipulated, the ideological truth was still present and was the cornerstone of Communist visual propaganda. Recognising this truth can lead us to understand how the Party imagined wartime Chinese society and on which ideological values the people were to be moulded. For the analysis of propaganda photographs, the question then becomes not *how much* truth, but *which* truth.

Gao and Wang note that: "We shouldn't judge what happened then by our current standards. Photographs of that era should be viewed with the aspirations of that era in mind."[55] The *aspirations of that era* became the guiding light for this study and the photographs were consequently analysed by taking into consideration the wider philosophical, historical, cultural, and artistic environments in which they were produced and published. As Azoulay remarks, an image analysed in isolation cannot *speak* of its relevance in a certain historical moment nor it can be read correctly.[56] If we consider the debate between essentialism, the analysis of art for its own sake,[57] and contextualism, analysing art in the social and cultural context in which it is created,[58] this study chose to follow the latter approach. As Richard L. Anderson notes, contextualism was adopted not only because it sees art as the physical manifestation of a culture and a way to communicate social, political, and religious ideals, but also because the photographs presented in this thesis were

[55] Gao and Wang, eds., 'Photographic Manipulation in China: A Conversation between Fu Yu and Gao Chu', *Composite Realities: The Art of Photographic Manipulation in Asia* 6, no. 1 (Fall 2015), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0006.104.

[56] Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography…*, p. 191.

[57] Elliot W. Eisner, *Educating Artistic Vision* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

[58] Tom Anderson, 'Toward a Cross-Cultural Approach to Art Criticism', *Studies in Art Education* 36, no. 4 (Summer 1995): 198–209, p. 200.

created with a well-defined political purpose.[59] In fact in 1942, Mao Zedong defined the purpose of art and literature in his Yan'an talks declaring that the aim of the Party was

> to ensure that revolutionary literature and art follow the correct path of development and provide better help to other revolutionary work in facilitating the overthrow of our national enemy and the accomplishment of the task of national liberation.[60]

With these words Mao stressed the importance of the role that art had in "uniting and educating the people and [...] attacking and destroying the enemy."[61] Moreover, Mao continued, wartime art would strive to achieve three goals. The first, expose the cruelness of the enemy in order to bring the masses to fight against the Japanese army. The second, criticise the Nationalist if their commitment to the United Front against Japan was to fail.[62] Lastly, praise the masses for their efforts while educating them to abandon the old, backwards ideas and embrace the new, revolutionary ones.[63]

The political and social messages that the photographs acquired were reinforced by and created in concert with other mediums—theatre plays, songs and literature—that acted together in order to ensure maximum ideological dissemination. In chapter two for instance, the images of the Eighth Route Army soldiers on mountain peaks are associated with the symbolism of Daoist immortals

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[59] Richard L. Anderson, *Calliope's sisters: A Comparative Study of Philosophies of Art* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990) qtd in Tom Anderson, 'Toward a Cross-Cultural…', p. 202.

[60] Zedong Mao, 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art,' in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. III (Foreign Languages Press, 1967).

[61] Ibidem.

[62] The First United Front between the Nationalist and the Communist Party was formed in 1923 and aimed at ending the phenomenon of warlordism that had been destabilizing China since the fall of the Qing. In 1927, when Chiang Kai-shek's purge of the Communist began, the Front collapsed. In 1937, the Front was restored with the aim of defeating Japan. As a consequence, the civil war between the Nationalists and the Communist was suspended. Even this second Front did not survive the political difference between the two sides and ended in 1941. For a more detailed analysis on the political significance of the United Front, see: Tetsuya Kataoka, *Resistance and Revolution in China: The Communists and the Second United Front* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

[63] Ibidem.

who were portrayed as entities living on mountain tops. Moreover, the military value of mountain peaks and passes during the Anti-Japanese War is linked to the cultural and political value that mountains had in Chinese cultural history. Similarly, in chapter three, the symbolic value of the spinning wheel is put into the wider context of traditional female virtue, the economic value that textiles had in Chinese society, and the symbolic role that the wheel acquired during the war as a tool of production and of women's empowerment. A collection of images on agriculture and sericulture produced during the Song dynasty (960-1279 CE)— *Images of Ploughing and Weaving* (*Gengzhi Tu*)—is used as a reference text for the traditional representation of women at the wheel. This type of socio-cultural approach, although complex and wide-ranging, was necessary for a more in-depth analysis of the propagandistic value of the photographs presented in this thesis.

The visual narrative that was constructed in the pages of the *Pictorial* and the *Liberation Daily* aimed not only at presenting the most important events of the war and the life of the common people, celebrated as heroes, but also at providing a cultural and historical foundation to the Party's political claims and their idea of a Chinese nation. With references to China's historical past, traditional culture and at-the-time current events, this type of visual propaganda exploited the emotional value of such events and their cultural references in order to appeal to all categories of people: literate and illiterate, rich and poor, farmers as well as intellectuals. The cultural references and symbols used in the photographs were easily recognisable for the people living during those years. For instance, to title the photograph of a brother and sister ploughing a field as "Brother and Sister Pioneers" (chapter four) would have reminded people of the story narrated in the famous planting folk dance (*yangge*) titled in the same way. It would consequently convey the same message: the love of labour and the importance of contributing to the war effort for the good of the nation. It is for these reasons that the photographs are

analysed by contextualising them in the historical, cultural, and political environment in which they were produced, distributed, and seen. Without this approach, it would be impossible, or substantially more challenging, to fully understand their value as propaganda tools.[64]

The photographs presented in this study fall under the category of propaganda art because the art that persuades, educates and moulds, "art in the service of social and political change—is propaganda art."[65] The purpose of these images was to be circulated in order to convince the masses about the importance of fighting against Japan and embracing the Party's directives.

Sources

Given the multi-faceted nature of this thesis, this literature review aims at presenting the overarching studies that address the history of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the development of Chinese photography, and the specificities of propaganda under a totalitarian regime.[66] Each chapter has in turn a dedicated literature review of the sources that were used specifically for the development of its theoretical foundation. While the three main chapters have different themes, they are connected by a wider scope—the role of images for the creation of a new Chinese national identity under the CCP—and by an overarching subject of Chinese propaganda photography during wartime.

[64] This methodological approach was also influenced by the conversation the author had with Dr. Sabrina Rastelli at the end of the seminar "A New History of Chinese Art History," held at The Edinburgh College of Art on September 28th, 2017.

[65] Colin Moore, *Propaganda Prints: A History of Art in the Service of Social and Political Change* (London: A & C Black Publishers, 2010), p. 7.

[66] While this last point can appear not relevant due to the fact that the Communist propaganda system properly developed only 1949, the studies chosen for this review aim at showing how, even in its infancy, the CCP was already implementing propaganda strategies typical of a totalitarian state.

The Second Sino-Japanese War was a conflict that deeply changed China, destroying the old society and building a new one. Although the literature on the military and political aspects of the war is consistent, the Second Sino-Japanese war appeared for a long time to be considered unrelated to Western history or the history of the Second World War, perhaps because of its geographical distance, perhaps because no Western power was involved in the Chinese territory in active warfare. The most well-known event of the war is the Nanjing Massacre of 1938, a tragic episode that has been the subject of various studies.[67] Yet, the importance and the historical echoes of the Second Sino-Japanese War stretch beyond the geographical boundaries of China and this single yet important event. In recent years, the literature has expanded and the available sources on the Second Sino-Japanese War tackle various aspects of the conflict, from the social impact that it had on the Chinese people, to the political environment in which the war was fought.

From a purely historical perspective, the most complete study on the war is the one conducted by Rana Mitter in 2013.[68] Mitter presents the conflict as a three-way struggle. On one side, Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Party were battling, more or less openly, against Mao Zedong and the Communist Party. On the other side, there was Wang Jingwei (1883-1944 CE), a left-wing nationalist politician who eventually sided with Japan to form a collaborationist government in Nanjing in 1938. The account that Mitter provides is less focused on the military aspect of the war and more on the complicated political situation in which China found itself

[67] For the history and significance of the Nanjing Massacre, see: Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2011); Joshua A. Fogel, ed., *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Shi Yong and Jijun Yin, eds., *The Rape of Nanking: An Undeniable History of Photographs = Nanjing-Da-Tusha*, 2. ed (Chicago, Ill.: Innovative Publ. Group, 1997).

[68] Rana Mitter, *China's War with Japan, 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival* (London: Penguin Books, 2013).

during the conflict. Mitter's analysis brings to light the human tragedy of the war and the bravery and endurance of the Chinese people. Most importantly, Mitter was able to bring together the stories of Chiang Kai-shek, Mao Zedong, and Wang Jingwei into a cohesive narrative of the conflict by presenting their individual political ambitions.[69] From this analysis it emerges that, contrary to what Communist history would like to hide, without the Nationalists and Chiang Kai-shek, the war would have had a very different outcome.

While this thesis is not an attempt to address specific military or political endeavours of the parties involved in the war, Mitter's study was the first step for the understanding of the intricate situation in which the Communist political propaganda was created. The Communists not only had to shape their propaganda strategies on the basis of their political plans while dealing with a shortage of materials. This was during a period of psychological and social disruption, where the identity of China as its people knew it, had been destroyed. Diana Lary and Stephen MacKinnon studied these social aspects and concluded that this disruption actually helped the Communists to gain power. Franz Schurmann agrees with this view and notes how the crumbling of the old traditional social system had left a void that was filled by the Communist ideology which provided a new unifying identity for the country.[70] The relation between the old Chinese identity and the new one proposed by the CCP appears in the images produced by Communist propaganda, as many of the symbolism used by the Party were a re-interpretation of traditional values under a socialist lens. The ideological strength of these symbols was in the fact that they were familiar and easily understandable by all social categories.

[69] A very comprehensive review of the book was given by Aaron Moore in February 2014. See: Aaron Moore, "China's War with Japan, 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival," *Reviews in History*, February 2014, http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1548, last accessed 14 November 2017.

[70] Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), p. 1.

Aside from the internal political and social situation, the most recent literature shows how the war against Japan had wide international repercussions. While no foreign power took active role in the military activities against Japan on the Chinese territory, both Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong worked to make sure that the international powers understood the Chinese internal situation. During the duration of the war, both leaders attempted numerous times to gain help from Western powers. These political struggles are narrated by various scholars in the volume edited in 2015 by Stephen MacKinnon, Diana Lary and Hans Van de Ven.[71] The aim of the volume is to highlight the devastation that the war caused to China. The volume also notes how, although detrimental, the war also created the conditions for China to be recognised as an important player in the international political environment of the twentieth century. What emerges from the study is that Western powers saw their influence and dominance in the Asian region gradually decline in the early 1900s. Their colonial power was first weakened by the Japanese advance, and then progressively crumbled once the war ended. The most challenging question that this volume raises is whether the actions—or non-actions—of Western powers towards China were conducted with the aim of genuinely helping China or simply to contain Communism while maintaining their influence in East Asia.[72]

The other issue that the historical literature of the war raises is the initially slow response of the Chinese government to the Japanese invasion. When in 1931 the Japanese advance began, China was taken aback and perceived the military invasion first as a cultural defeat, and only afterwards, as a military and political

[71] Hans J. Van de Ven, Diana Lary, and Stephen R. MacKinnon, eds., *Negotiating China's Destiny in World War II* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2015).

[72] Maria Caterina Bellinetti, review of *Negotiating China's Destiny in WWII*, Hans J. Van de Ven, Diana Lary, and Stephen R. MacKinnon, eds., *Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies*, Vol.5, January 2016.

problem. In his study on Chinese nationalism, James Townsend explains that "the primary Chinese identity was cultural, with no perception of a Chinese state or nation apart from the cultural heritage."[73] The clash with Japan, modern and military advanced, was therefore a heavy blow to the Chinese identity and pressured the political forces to look for new ways to rebuild China as a strong country.[74] The nationalistic, anti-imperialism feelings that emerged among the Chinese people in response to the Japanese invasion were exploited by the Communist Party for its political purposes since the early 1930s. The CCP leadership made use of these feelings to gain political consensus among the population. Park M. Coble maintains the view that the Party's propaganda apparat decided to place national unity at the centre of its indoctrination strategies in order to include those previously left out social groups such as women, children, students, workers, soldiers and peasants in the political discourse.[75]

In regard to the stupor that the Japanese advance caused, Tsuchida Akio also notes how, after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July 1937 on the outskirts of Beijing, the Nationalist government was still not entirely convinced of the scope of Japan's belligerent pursuits. It was only on August 1st of the same year that Chiang Kai-shek declared that the "whole nation must prepare for war."[76] [77] The political

[73] James Townsend, "Chinese Nationalism," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 27 (January 1992), p. 98.

[74] Ibidem, 99.

[75] Parks M. Coble, *China's War Reporters: The Legacy of Resistance against Japan* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 37, 42.

[76] Zongtong Jiang Gong sixiang yanlun zongji [Complete Thoughts and Speeches of President Chiang Kai-shek] (Taipei: Guomindang dangshi weiyuan hui, 1984), vol. 14, pp. 597-604 qtd in Tsuchida Akio 'Declaring War as an Issue in Chinese Wartime Diplomacy,' in Hans J. Van de Ven, Diana Lary, and Stephen R. MacKinnon, eds., *Negotiating China's Destiny in World War II*, p.113.

[77] When Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, Western powers did not act but stalled thinking that the Japanese advance would have not continued into China. In a speech in the House of Commons in 1933, Winston Churchill said "The League [Of Nations] has great work to do in Europe…there is no more use affronting Japan. […] On the one side they [the Japanese] see the dark menace of Soviet Russia. On the other the chaos of China, four or five provinces of which are now being tortured under Communist rule." *The Times*, 18 February 1933, quoted in David Cannadine, Roland E. Quinault, and

indecisions towards Japan, Chiang's determination to wipe out the Communists at all costs, together with the inability to maintain and improve his internal political support, steadily contributed to the weakening of the Nationalist government, not only in the eyes of Japan and the Western powers, but also in the eyes of the Chinese people. Parks M. Coble notes in fact how Chiang Kai-shek "distrusted mass mobilization, particularly of peasants, students, and industrial workers, the very groups that the Communists targeted."[78] Thanks to targeted propaganda, the Communist Party succeeded in gaining the political support of those social groups that were ignored by the Nationalists.

A more personal viewpoint on the Anti-Japanese War is offered by the personal accounts of those who directly experienced the war. The travel diary written by W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood about their journey through China in 1938 is a window into the complexities of the life of the ordinary people. Their experience was of two Western journalists who "spoke no Chinese, and possessed no special knowledge of Far Eastern affairs."[79] Besides their meetings and interviews with political figures of the calibre of Chiang Kai-shek and Zhou Enlai (1898-1976 CE),[80] the most illuminating passages in the book are the ones that describe the hardships that the common people had to endure; from shortage of food to the challenges of keeping hospitals open and functioning for the refugees. One episode in particular reveals the attitude that Chinese soldiers and civilians had during the

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Royal Historical Society (Great Britain), eds., *Winston Churchill in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2004). P. 170.

[78] Parks M. Coble, *China's War Reporters: The Legacy of Resistance against Japan* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 42.

[79] W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, *Journey to a War* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1973), p.6.

[80] Zhou Enlai was born in Jiangsu from a family of government officials. He served as premier (1949-76) and foreign minister (1949-58) of the People's Republic of China. Zhou was famous for his political and diplomatic skills. For more on his life, see: Wenqian Gao and Enlai Zhou, *Zhou Enlai: The Last Perfect Revolutionary: A Biography*, trans. Peter Rand and Lawrence R. Sullivan, First Edition (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007).

difficult years of the war. The two journalists reported a conversation with a Chinese soldier about China's chances of winning against Japan. "The Japanese" said the soldier "[...] fight with their tanks and planes. We Chinese fight with our spirit."[81] [82] Because of these insights in the life of common people during the war, *Journey to a War* is a valid example of how two not particularly extraordinary Western people came to realise the profound impact that the war had on China and for the world's political balance.

A very different, yet equally engaging, perspective on the war is given by Hsiao Li Lindsay in her memoir of her life as a Chinese woman who, after getting married to the British professor Michael Lindsay in 1941, had to flee numerous times because of the Japanese advance in northern China. In 1944 the Lindsays arrived in Yan'an where they were treated with much gratitude by Mao and the Party because of Michael Lindsay's role in setting up and maintaining the radio communications between the front lines and the Communist headquarters.

[81] Ibidem, p. 106.

[82] This positive attitude towards the limited means that the Chinese armies compared to Japan or Chiang Kai-shek was also frequently stressed by Mao in his speeches as a way to encourage and keep up the spirits of the people. In his interview with the American correspondent Anna Louise Strong, Mao said that simple rifles and millet would eventually destroy Chiang's armies. For the whole interview, see: Zedong Mao, "Talk with the American correspondent Anna Louise Strong, August 1946," *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. IV (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1961), http://www.marx2mao.com/PDFs/MaoSW4.pdf, p.101.

Figure 3: Sha Fei, Michael Lindsay teaching Red Army Soldiers how to Fix and Use Radios, 1942," Si Sushi, Sha Fei and His Wartime Friends, p. 241.

Hsiao Li's account of their time as fugitives and of their life in Yan'an contributes to the literature on the war by providing a personal viewpoint while keeping the bigger picture in sight. From the daily issues about shortage of food, goods, and lack of transportation, "there were no bicycle tires anywhere in Yenan," to the obstacles that the Nationalists created to isolate the Communists, Hsiao Li's memoir brings together her personal story with insights into the complex political

situation of the time.[83] Contrary to what could be expected, Hsiao Li was wary of what she saw and experienced in the Communist capital and this makes her observations more historically relevant. For instance, she noted how foreign correspondents had been being misinformed by the Nationalists about the Communists. The Nationalists had told the correspondents about fields of opium in the areas surrounding Yan'an and about how the Communist army had not engaged in any fighting against Japan since 1939. In the book, Hsiao Li reports that she never personally saw the opium fields, but she did not dismiss the possibility of their existence at the time.[84]

The diary by Auden and Isherwood and Hsiao Li's memoir, while very different from the historical and academic literature, are important as they present the much frequently overlooked daily, intimate experience of the people who experienced the war and its consequences. Although it is necessary to continue to assess the international impact of the Anti-Japanese War and the influence that it had, and still has, on the power balance in Asia and on our understanding of World War II, this study benefitted from a journey into the everyday world of those who lived through the conflict.

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As previously mentioned, the Chinese understanding of propaganda is not negative and is related to the need of educating people for their own benefit. Chinese propaganda therefore acquired along the centuries a constructive and positive function. One of the earliest forms of written propaganda was the placement of carved steles on mountain tops by emperors. The first record of this practice can be traced back to the first emperor of the Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE) who "put up the

[83] Hsiao Li Lindsay, *Bold Plum: With the Guerrillas in China's War against Japan* (Morrisville, N.C: Lulu, 2007), p. 259.

[84] Ibidem, p. 262-63.

steles not only to commemorate progresses but also to expand the audience to include posterity."[85] Charles Sanft notes that while is hard to establish the propaganda value of the steles as well as their messages, "they surely worked to create common knowledge of the new dynasty and its achievements."[86] With this in mind, the magazines and newspapers printed by the Communist Party during the war can be seen not only informative tools, but also educational ones.[87] The Chinese propaganda system has been analysed and dissected from many different perspectives and disciplines.[88] Although a general understanding of the creation and development of Communist propaganda was necessary, the emotional and psychological components of Chinese Communist propaganda appeared to be a more apt focus for this study as images greatly rely on and are fed by the emotions of the viewers.

Robert J. Lifton explored the aims and procedures together with the general principles and the psychological environment in which Communist propaganda and thought reform developed. Lifton argued that the Chinese version of brainwashing was different from the one created and employed in the Soviet Union. Chinese brainwashing or 'Thought Reform' was more "organised, deliberate, and comprehensive."[89] Lifton's analysis presents three cyclic stages of the indoctrination

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[85] Charles Sanft, *Communication and Cooperation in Early Imperial China*. (Place of publication not identified: State University Of New York Press, 2015), p. 92.

[86] Ibidem.

[87] Chi Yan Yu, "The Communist Propaganda of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers during the Yan'an Era (1936-45)" (Master Thesis, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, 2009), p. 5.

[88] Among the most notable studies, see: Timothy Cheek, *Propaganda and Culture in Mao's China: Deng Tuo and the Intelligentsia*, Studies on Contemporary China (Oxford [England] : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1997); Gay Garland Reed, "Moral/Political Education in the People's Republic of China: Learning through Role Models," *Journal of Moral Education* 24, no. 2 (1995): 99–111; Franklin W. Houn, *To Change a Nation: Propaganda and Indoctrination in Communist China* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961); Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968).

[89] Robert J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 17.

process: group identification, struggle, and return to the group. Beside these three stages, two crucial aspects were present only in the Chinese propaganda environment: the practice of self-cultivation and the rectification of names. Both of these aspects were taken from Confucian tradition and reinterpreted by the CCP. In the intentions of the Party, self-cultivation did not involve the practice of meditation, but asked for "active participation in the Communist movement."[90] The rectification of names instead did not require a change of term, but a change in people's behaviour in order to fit into the category of Confucianism or, in the case discussed here, Communist ideology.[91]

What clearly emerges from Lifton's studies is that the Communist Party exploited these two aspects of the Confucian tradition to mould society on the new canon of Communist principles. Self-identification and moulding one's life to the Communist ideology became crucial themes in wartime visual propaganda, in which labour heroes—men, women and children—the sacrifices of the common people, and the heroism of the Eighth Route Army soldiers were held as examples of patriotism and dedication to the national cause.

The way in which the Party pursued indoctrination and the role that the media had in the creation of the new socialist China was also explored by Alan P. Liu in *Communication and National Integration in Communist China*. In his analysis, Liu explains that two steps are necessary to nationalise the propaganda message in a totalitarian state. The first step is penetration and it involves coercion in the form of the promotion of literacy, the establishment of a common language, and a system of mass communication. During this first step, the role of the media is to spread

[90] Ibidem, p. 390-1.

[91] Ibidem.

political consciousness in order to create a common identity in the people.[92] After spreading political consciousness, the second step, identification through common symbols and values, can take place. In the specific case of wartime China, Mao recognized the need for this two-step process early in 1938, when during a speech in Yan'an, he declared: "Even after the War of Resistance began, political mobilization was very far from universal, let alone penetrating [...] The mobilization of the common people throughout the country will create a vast sea in which to drown the enemy."[93] Most importantly, Mao clarified that to achieve this mass mobilisation, the people needed a valid reason to get involved and the reason in 1938, was "'to drive out Japanese imperialism and build a new China of freedom and equality.'"[94]

Before 1949, the CCP's strategies for ideological control were tested on the people living in the occupied areas where the efficacy of these strategies was challenged by difficult wartime conditions, such as the scarcity of printing resources and transportation. Yet, as Hung explains, the CCP was able to centralise and organise different types of indoctrinations. By so doing, the Party created the conditions which allowed for the propaganda message to be unified despite the geographical distances between the various Communist clusters in northern China.[95] Both Hung and Liu support the idea that while the Communist propaganda system was still in its infancy during the war, this condition did not stop the Party from creating the basis of what became, after 1949, a full-scale propaganda system that controlled every aspect of people's lives, from education to the arts.

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[92] Alan P. L. Liu, *Communication and National Integration in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

[93] Zedong Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. II (Foreign Languages Press, 1967), http://www.marx2mao.com/Mao/PW38.html#s12.

[94] Ibidem.

[95] Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 222.

Yet, geography was not the Party's biggest enemy; it was literacy. During the war, newspapers, radio programs, films, and theatre productions were the most efficient means exploited to spread the political message as they could reach both urban and the countryside residents. While urban residents could be targeted through books and newspapers, a different approach was required for the countryside where literacy in the 1930s and 1940s was still low. Diana Lary explains that to solve the issue of communicating with the illiterate parts of the population and in order to include them in the political discourse, the Party decided to identify itself: "with peasant culture, using peasant art forms—woodcuts, folk songs, and traditional dances—to show its interconnections with the masses."[96] Alan P. L. Liu confirms the view on the importance of the emotional value of propaganda and adds that because of the low literacy present in China in the 1930s and 1940s, the political agitation that the Communist Party wanted to achieve specifically "required an oral and emotional approach to mass persuasion."[97]

The power that these popular art forms had, including photography, is found in the fact that, as Edgar H. Henderson notes, "emotions are not only more easily aroused to action but also far more easily communicated than ideas are."[98] The emotions that people could see in images and a play, or the ones experienced through songs, were powerful propaganda weapons in the hands of the Party. On this point, Hung points out that during the Anti-Japanese War the whole media environment was being fuelled by emotions while exploiting them, especially the strong feelings of patriotism, victimisation, and investment in fighting Japan for the future of the country. It was not only a top-to-bottom phenomenon in which the

[96] Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937-1945*, New Approaches to Asian History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 151.

[97] Alan P. L. Liu, *Communication and National Integration in Communist China*, p. 29.

[98] Edgar H. Henderson, "Toward a Definition of Propaganda," *Journal of Social Psychology* 18, no. 1 (1943): 71–87, p. 81.

media influenced the emotional response of the public but a cycle, in which the people and the media fed and stirred each other's feelings.[99]

The emotional dimension of Chinese propaganda has also been explored by Elizabeth J. Perry. Although Perry's analysis focuses on the long-term effects of the Party's methods of emotionally involving the masses and does not include visual propaganda, she acknowledges the Anti-Japanese war period as crucial for the development of these propaganda strategies and the "emotion work" that was done during those years. Perry discusses the cathartic power of theatre and how struggle meetings were organised by the Party cadres so that people could express their anger and resentment towards specific targets.[100] Perry notes how through techniques like "speaking bitterness," "rectification," and "thought reform," the Communist Party exploited the emotional involvement of the people for their political plans and how the "dedication born of this "emotion-raising" […] was a key ingredient in the campaigns against Japanese soldiers."[101] Yu Liu expanded Perry's study and argues that the Party worked with three main emotional themes: victimisation, redemption, and emancipation.[102] These three themes can be linked to Lifton's three steps of the cyclical process of Communist thought reform: group identification, struggle, and return to the group.

These sources on the role of emotions in Communist propaganda are crucial for the understanding of how the Party created the idea of the Chinese nation during the war. This became an effective strategy because the ways in which the CCP visually constructed the idea of modern China were deeply influenced by the

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[99] Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture*….

[100] Elisabeth J. Perry, "Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution," *Mobilization* 7, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 111–28, p. 114-16.

[101] Ibidem, p. 112.

[102] Yu Liu, "Maoist Discourse and the Mobilization of Emotions in Revolutionary China," *Modern China* 36, no. 3 (May 2010): 329–62.

feeling of being victims, violated by the *other*. But Communist propaganda was not only fuelling the feeling of victimisation, it was also working to provide a sense of belonging and unity, an awareness of the greatness of the Chinese nation and hope in a bright future under the Party's leadership.

* * *

The role that photography can have in the creation of identities has been analysed from different perspectives and in different times.[103] One of the most relevant studies for this analysis is the one conducted by Julia A. Thomas on the exhibition held at the Yokohama Museum of Art in 1995, *Photography of the 1940s*.[104] Thomas explores the issues and implications of this particular photographic exhibition in relation to Japanese history and national identity. While of course most of the analysis is centred around Japan and its way of remembering and processing the past and its post-war history, Thomas concludes the paper with interesting observations about the dynamics between photography, time, and the construction of national identity. Through the analysis of Berger, Barthes, and Krakauer's theories, Thomas centres her argument on their different approaches to photography and temporality.[105]

Thomas argues that Berger's view on photographs as instants from a linear time continuum "makes the place and mode of consumption of an image

[103] Among the most compelling studies see: Phil Kinsman, "Landscape, Race and National Identity: The Photography of Ingrid Pollard," *Area* 27, no. 4 (December 1995): 300–310; Beth Saunders, "Developing Italy: Photography and National Identity during the Risorgimento 1839-1859," PhD Thesis (CUNY, 2016), https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/1585/; Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, eds., *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

[104] Julia A. Thomas, "Photography, National Identity, and the" Cataract of Times": Wartime Images and the Case of Japan," *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 5 (1998): 1475–1501.

[105] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*…; John Berger and Geoff Dyer, *Understanding a Photograph* (London: Penguin Books, 2013); Siegfried Krakauer and Thomas Levin, "Photography," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 421–36.

insignificant."[106] While this can be agreed upon in the context of photographic exhibition where place and time definitely play a role in how the public perceives an image, Berger also noted how "photography has no language of its own. […] The language in which photography deals is the language of events. All its references are external to itself."[107] To try and understand the significance and purpose of a photograph then, we are called to research these references. We can then attempt to put the image back in the time continuum in which it initially belonged, as close as possible to the historical moment or situation in which it was taken. If Thomas is right about Berger's understanding of time for the mode and time of consumption, Berger showed that the mode and time of creation of photographs play a crucial role for the understanding of the images *after* their making. It also means that we can try and eventually succeed in the attempt to put these images back in the time continuum in the instant in which they belonged.

Roland Barthes instead saw photography as the tool that allows us to re-live a moment, while perceiving its dystopian feature of simultaneously embedding past, present and future. Barthes's view on photography is closely linked to death because in each image "I read at the same time: *This will be* and *this has been*; […] the photograph tells me death in the future."[108] This caused Barthes to perceive photographs as objects to be tamed by transforming them into art, or to be controlled through banalisation, by "consum[ing] images and no longer, beliefs."[109]

While Thomas is more focused on the public/private aspect of photography, she notices how the understanding of time and photography are differently assessed

[106] Julia A. Thomas, "Photography, National Identity…", p. 1499.

[107] John Berger and Geoff Dyer, *Understanding a Photograph*, p. 20.

[108] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Pbk. ed (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), p. 96

[109] Ibidem, p.119.

according to the viewer's personal history, identity, and nationality.[110] This point is particularly important when we look at propaganda images as their nature is to be created upon definite ideological purposes and moulded on the needs of those in power. This means that the time-photography relation is assessed and built by someone who, acting like a viewer, deliberately uses the spectators' personal history and identity in order to influence their actions and perception of the world. The viewers' personal assessment becomes therefore tainted and the relationship of "*this will be* and *this has been*" is not a private awareness but it becomes shared as the relationship between past and future is purposely created by the propagandist.

This issue was further analysed by Krakauer who based a photograph's meaning and identity upon "whether it belongs to the domain of the present or to some phase of the past."[111] This means that the more the time passes, the emptier a photograph becomes. Time is not seen by Krakauer as a continuum, but as a "waterfall, a jarring cataract of currents, each flowing at a different rate and a different temperature."[112] Krakauer therefore argued that any object or person that has been photographed will eventually lose its value as what will be left in the end will simply be a ghost, something or someone that was once alive but with no significance in the present. Because time was not linear for Krakauer, our success in unravelling the meaning of images and creating an organised history is only momentary as "history and photography are inherently provisional" too. [113] Krakauer's vision is helpful if related to the question of national identity and its construction through images. Thomas explains this relationship on the basis of the evolving, shape-shifting essence of nationhood. Just as the idea of nation is not

[110] Julia A. Thomas, "Photography, National Identity…", p. 1499.

[111] Siegfried Krakauer and Thomas Levin, "Photography," p. 429.

[112] Julia A. Thomas, "Photography, National Identity…", p. 1500.

[113] Ibidem.

fixed, the meanings of time and photography's are equally ever changing.[114] This view implies that when we approach the issue of how national identities are created through images, we need to consider the provisional character of photography, history and identity in relation to the political and social need of the time in which a specific identity was constructed.

* * *

In the case of China, the evolution of Chinese national identity in relation to photography has been analysed mostly from the perspective of the colonial gaze from the end of the nineteenth century to the start of the twentieth.[115] In the introduction of *Brush and Shutter: Early Photography in China*, Wu Hung explains how Western war photography influenced a colonialist idea of China as "the war pictures taken by European photographers […] reflect[ed] the mentality of a victorious conqueror behind the camera."[116] This view is agreed upon by Sarah E. Fraser who adds that China "became an object of spectatorship […] but its popularity was imbedded in a foreign, negative image framed through violence and submission."[117] Fraser further expands the argument saying that just how Western photography had an impact on Chinese self-perception, Chinese photographers of the 1920s and 1930s were attempting to construct a new idea of China. This new vision of China wanted to distance itself from the image of a near-death, backwards,

[114] Ibidem, p. 1501.

[115] One of the latest and most complete sources of the visual history of pre-modern and modern China is Heung Shing Liu, *From the Opium War to the Warlord Era =: Cong Ya Pian Zhan Zheng Dao Jun Fa Hun Zhan: Qing Mo Min Chu de Ying Xiang Zhongguo*, Di 1 ban (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2011). For photographs taken by Western photographers in China, see: Anne Lacoste and Felice Beato, *Felice Beato: A Photographer on the Eastern Road* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010); Leone Nani and Clara Bulfoni, eds., *Lost China: The Photographs of Leone Nani*, 1. ed (Milano: Skira, 2003); Nick Pearce, "John Thomson's China: 1868-1872" in John Thomson, ed., *China: Through the Lens of John Thomson: 1868 - 1872*, 2. ed (Bangkok: River Books, 2010).

[116] J. Paul Getty Museum, *Brush & Shutter: Early Photography in China*, ed. Jeffrey W. Cody and Frances Terpak (Los Angeles, Calif: Getty Research Institute, 2011), p. 15.

[117] Sarah E. Fraser, "The Face of China: Photography's Role in Shaping Image, 1860-1920," *Getty Research Journal*, no. N.2 (2010): 39–52, p. 39.

and violent country that Western photographers had frequently portrayed in their own images.[118] However, the initial photographic exploration of Chineseness can sometimes be seen as a re-interpretation of what had been done by Western photographers. An example of this is the photographic exploration that Zhuang Xueben (1909-1984 CE) undertook in the 1930s and 1940s in Gansu, Sichuan, Yunnan and other regions. Zhuang, a self-taught photographer from Shanghai, photographed various ethnic minorities in inner China and kept very detailed diaries of his travels from the 1930s until 1945. While his work has still not been adequately investigated, arguably because of his affiliation with the Nationalists, the available literature is divided on whether his images can be read as an attempt to show the Han ethnic superiority—a Chinese interpretation of the Western colonial gaze—or as a genuine attempt to document the peculiar characteristics of the life and traditions of those cultures.[119] However we choose to see it, Zhuang's work should be understood as part of the search for a new identity in early-twentieth century China and his use of photography not only as an anthropological tool, but also as a political one.

The search for a Chinese identity also touched the artistic environment where amateur and professional photographers and intellectuals decided to embrace a Western-born technology in order to make it their own. Since China's defeat during the First Sino-Japanese War (1873-1929)[120] Chinese intellectuals had begun to criticise the traditional Confucian socio-political system–seen as the cause of China's backwardness—in favour of a more Western-based approach. Art was also under discussion as it was felt that "the renovation of society required a revolution in the

[118] Ibidem.

[119] Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, "Review: The Complete Works of Zhuang Xueben," *Asian Highlands Perspectives*, no. 21 (2012): 471–76.

[120] The First Sino-Japanese War (1873-1929) was fought between the Qing empire and the Empire of Japan for the control of Korea. The Chinese defeat, caused by military inadequacy, brought a shift in the Asian power balance which favoured Japan.

arts."[121] The debate rapidly grew and during the New Culture Movement (1910-20 CE)[122] intellectuals invoked the promotion of vernacular language (*baihua*) instead of classical Chinese (*wenhua*), the inclusion of the common people and their stories in literature, and more realism in the arts.[123] In the photographic environment this call was answered by Liu Bannong (1891-1934 CE), a writer and photographer who after studying in Europe, had returned to China in 1925 to teach at Beijing University. Once in Beijing, Liu wrote and published in 1927 his first discussion on photography as fine art, "Bannong's Comments on Photography". His core belief was that photography should not be viewed simply as a mean to copy the world, but as a powerful tool of self-expression. Liu also believed that photography, a Western medium, had to be embraced and exploited in order to create images that followed the Chinese aesthetic tradition. His ideas were shared among the Chinese photographic community and they resulted in the creation of photographs that evoked traditional Chinese painting styles and calligraphy.

Among the many photographic associations that were founded in China in the early decades of the 1900s, the Shanghai-based *Black and White Society* was one of the most influential. Founded in 1930, the society published a magazine, the *Black and White Pictorialist (Heibai Yingji*), that presented the works of foreign photographers and publications. The *Pictorialist* also featured in its columns advertising for the major camera manufacturers at the time: Leica, Kodak, and Agfa.

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[121] Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Literary Trends I: The Quest for Modernity, 1895-1927," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 12, Republican China 1912-1949, part 1, p. 455, quoted in Richard K. Kent, "Early Twentieth-Century Art Photography in China: Adopting, Domesticating, and Embracing the Foreign," *Local Culture/Global Photography* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2013), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0003.204.

[122] The New Culture Movement—or May 4th Movement —was a movement that criticised traditional Confucian values in favour of Western science and democracy. The movement, born after the 1911 Revolution against the Qing dynasty, wanted to achieve national independence and build a new, more modern society. For a more in-depth analysis see: Kai-wing Chow, ed., *Beyond the May Fourth Paradigm: In Search of Chinese Modernity* (Lanham: Lexington Books/Rowman & Littlefied, 2008).

[123] Marco Meccarelli, *Storia Della Fotografia in Cina: Le Opere Di Artisti Cinesi e Occidentali*, 1. ed, Arte 1 (Aprilia: Novalogos, 2011), chapter 1 and 2.

Richard K. Kent notes that many European photographic publications were available in Shanghai in the 1930s. Magazines such as the *German Annual of Photography* (*Das Deutsche Lichtbild*) and the British *Photograms of the Year,* influenced the work of Chinese photographers and the layout of Chinese pictorials.[124] *The Young Companion* (*Liangyou*) and *Modern Miscellany* (*Shidai Huabao*), two of the most popular magazines in the early 1900s, were edited on the basis of Western publications such as *Vanity Fair* and German photo-montage techniques.[125] As Claire Roberts notes, it did not take long for the political environment to recognise the potential of the photographic image as propaganda tool.[126] Unlike other artistic forms, photographs could be manipulated, and shaped for ideological purposes, while retaining an essential degree of realism.

When the war with Japan broke out, many fine art photographers decided to use their skills to contribute to the numerous war-reportages or to portray the daily lives of those affected by the war. Sha Fei, a young man from Guangzhou, decided to embrace the camera as political tool in 1936 after seeing a photograph of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[127] Sha Fei described his mission as photographer in his artist's statement:

> Photography is the most powerful weapon to use for exposing reality… But most people still consider it as a "plaything" for remembrance, entertainment, and recreation. This [view] fundamentally ignores the meaning of art, and dumps photography into the deep hole of boring and meaningless aestheticism...This unfair society is the biggest shame of humanity, and it is the task of art to help humanity understand itself, reform society, and restore freedom. Therefore, art workers, especially photographers...must

[124] Richard K. Kent, "Early Twentieth-Century Art Photography in China…."

[125] Claire Roberts, *Photography and China*, p. 87.

[126] Ibidem.

[127] Sushi Si, "The Legend of Sha Fei: The War Years of War Photographer Sha Fei and his wife Wang Hui", "沙飞传奇丨战地摄影师沙飞与妻子王辉的战乱岁月, Sha Fei Chuanqi: Zhandi Sheyingshi Sha Fei yuqizi Wang Hui dezhanluan suiyue," *thepaper.cn*, 13 May 2015, http://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1330116, last accessed 17 January 2018.

> immerse themselves into every level and every corner of society to search for real subject matter.[128]

With these words Sha Fei described not only his mission, but also the role that photography had to have in China at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the eyes of the photographers who joined the ranks of the CCP, photography became the weapon through which the people were informed about the events of the Anti-Japanese War while retaining their artistic inclinations. In relation to his work for the Communist Party Sha Fei wrote in 1937 that photographers needed to work in order to disseminate meaningful photographs "for the purpose of awakening their collective actions [of helping] the national crisis."[129]

By combining Sha Fei's vision on photography as a tool to awake the nation with Krakauer's view on the provisional aspects of history and photography, a study on the construction of the idea of a nation through images will only be valid in relation to the specific historical moment chosen for such study. Despite this limitation, Benedict Anderson noted that nationality, nationalism, and nation-ness are understandable only if we "consider […] how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why [..] they command such profound emotional legitimacy."[130] A study on how photographic propaganda helped the Communists in shaping the Chinese national identity during the war against Japan, seems therefore necessary if we want to have a more thorough understanding of how the idea of China has been created and developed

[128] Eliza Ho, 沙飞, and OSU Urban Arts Space, *Art, documentary, and propaganda in wartime China: the photography of Sha fei = 沙飞* (Columbus, OH: East Asian Studies Center, Ohio State University, 2009), p. 28.

[129] Ibidem, p. 50.

[130] Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and extended ed. (London; New York: Verso, 1991), p. 48.

along the decades. Yet in this attempt we are, as human beings, "tightrope walkers across the roaring waterfall" that history is.[131]

* * *

This thesis opens with a chapter on the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial*, its history, and the photographers who contributed to making it the most important Communist visual propaganda magazine during wartime. Chapter two, *The Geography of a Revolution*, is dedicated to the analysis of how landscape and landmarks were visually interpreted for the creation of a new idea of nation under the Communist rule. The creation of this new cultural landscape also aimed at creating the basis for the political legitimation that the CCP needed during the war. Chapter three, *Becoming Modern Women*, focuses on the symbolism and ideological value of the spinning wheel in relation to women's contribution to the war effort and the issue of women empowerment in wartime. Chapter four, *Moulding the Future*, analyses how childhood and children's wartime experiences were imagined and visually constructed in the photographs of the CCP affiliated photographers. The thesis ends with few considerations on the role that photography had in shaping—or not—the idea of modern China according to the Communist Party, and a reflection on how the value that the symbols created and re-interpreted during the Anti-Japanese War might still have in contemporary Chinese propaganda.

[131] Julia A. Thomas, "Photography, National Identity…", p. 1500.

The *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial*: A Brief History

William Band, a physics professor at Yenching University during the war, welcomed the first issue of the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial* in 1942 with these words:

> The purpose of the *Pictorial*, to tell the world about the work of the Eighth Route Army in the Border District, is one which has my most enthusiastic support. The contents of the *Pictorial* seem to me to constitute an honest and fair statement—even an understatement of the marvellous achievements of the Army in this area.[1] [2]

While it could be argued that Band's opinion of the Communists was biased given that he was under the protection of the Eighth Route Army in the early 1940s, it is nonetheless quite undeniable that the *Pictorial* was an achievement in the Chinese wartime publishing environment. The history of the *Pictorial* began in 1940, when Sha Fei was appointed director of the 115th Division's Photojournalism Department. His appointment was a consequence of the success of the photographic exhibition that had been organised by him and his colleague Luo Guangda (1910 CE~) in the previous year. Luo, born in Zhejiang, Wuxing county, was another young photographer who had joined the anti-Japanese resistance movement and the Party in 1938.[3] The man who set in motion the creation of the Pictorial was Nie Rongzhen (1899-1992 CE) who at the time was deputy commander of Sha Fei's military division.

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[1] Shi Zhimin, *Jin-Cha-Ji Pictorial*, *晋察冀画报文献全集*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Beijing: Zhongguo Sheying Chubanshe, 2015), p. 3.

[2] William Band and his wife Claire were with Michael Lindsay and Hsiao Li when they escaped from Beijing and then reached Yan'an together under the protection of the Eighth Route Army. For a detailed account of Band's life see: Danian Hu, "Bridging East and West Through Physics: William Band at Yenching University"," in *Science and Technology in Modern China*, 1880s-1940s, ed. Jing Tsu and Benjamin Elman (Leiden: E.J. Brill Press, 2014), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283352917_Bridging_East_and_West_through_Physics_William_Band_at_Yenching_University, last accessed 25 January 2018; Margaret Stanley, Helen Foster Snow, and Daniel Bays, eds., *Foreigners in Areas Under Communist Jurisdiction Before 1949* (Univ. Press of America, 1987).

[3] Zhongguo she ying jia xie hui, ed., Chuan Yue Li Shi de Hui Sheng: *Zhongguo Zhan Di She Ying Shi (1937-1949) = Chinese War Photographers*, Di 1 ban, Kou Shu Ying Xiang Li Shi Cong Shu 3 (Beijing Shi: Zhongguo she ying chu ban she, 2014), p. 307.

Having understood the role that well-trained photo-reporters and their work could have for the success of the Party and the war, Nie began to lay the basis for the creation of a propaganda photo-magazine.[4] After two years, in May 1942, the *Pictorial* was born.

Figure 4: Photographer Unknown, Founding Members of the Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, from the left: Li Tu, unknown, Li Yuyin, Zhao Qixian, Zhang Yichuan, He Chongsheng, Luo Guangda, Pei Zhi (in front of the door), Xing Qishan, Zhao Lie, from Si Sushi, Sha Fei and his Wartime friends, p. 261.

Photography had already been recognised by the Communist Party as a crucial propaganda tool in the 1920s. Zhou Enlai, who in 1925 was Director of the Political Department of the Eastern Expedition Army,[5] wrote in the *Outline Propaganda in Warfare* pamphlet that

[4] Shana J. Brown, "Sha Fei, the Jin-Cha-Ji Pictorial and the Documentary Style of Chinese Wartime Photojournalism," in Christian Henriot and Wen-Hsin Yeh, eds., *History in Images: Pictures and Public Space in Modern China, China Research Monograph 66* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2012), p.73.

[5] The Eastern Expedition was part of the military campaign called Northern Expedition led by Chiang Kai-shek to unify China and end the rule of the local warlords. In 1928 China was reunified and the Nanjing government was established under the Nationalist Party. For more see: C. Martin Wilbur, *The Nationalist Revolution in China, 1923-1928* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

> [the propagation team] should bring along cameras to shoot photos of the battlefield or the gathering of soldiers and common people. Then, photos should be developed and printed as soon as possible, so that they could be displayed in parties of the soldiers and the people or be given to representatives for the many sectors.[6]

The necessity of documenting every aspect of the conflict, from the battlefield to the life of common people, remained central in Communist propaganda during the Anti-Japanese war and in 1944 the Jin Cha Ji editorial leadership sent a telegram that explaining that "newspapers photos are extremely important for their usefulness for propaganda […] [as they] increase the influence of our party […] (from occupied areas to the interior and internationally)."[7]

In the history of Chinese visual propaganda, the *Pictorial* was the first Communist visual propaganda magazine to systematically use photographs as indoctrination tools. It was published by the Political Department of the Jin Cha Ji Military District and between 1942 and its last number in 1947, thirteen issues were published, and the magazine reached a circulation of around 32,000 copies.[8] The *Pictorial* was published in Chinese and the early issues also provided an English translation that aimed at making the magazine more accessible for the American and European audience. The ideological stance and the degree of commitment to the anti-Japanese cause of those who worked for the Pictorial can be recognised in the song written by Zhang Wenlong (n.a) and Zhao Lie (n.a):

> We are the workers of culture and art,
> We are the fighters of the ideological front,
> We work with our minds,
> We fight with our pens!
> Producing food for the spirit,
> Making bullets of culture
> We open up the civilised garden of new democracy […]

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[6] Fang Hanqi, ed., *A History of Journalism in China*, Vol. 4: [...], English ed (Singapore: Silkroad Press, 2013), p. 152-3.

[7] Jiang Qisheng et at., eds., *The History of Chinese Photography 1937-1949, Zhongguo Sheying shi, 1937-1949,* (Beijing: Zhongguo sheying chubanshe, 1998), p. 80 quoted in Shana J. Brown, "Sha Fei, the Jin-Cha-Ji Pictorial…," p. 59.

[8] Shi Zhimin, *Jin-Cha-Ji Pictorial…*, p. 4.

Our song flies over the Taihang Mountains.[9]

The conditions in which the *Pictorial* was printed were quite extraordinary. Despite the shortage of materials, from paper, to cameras and film, the photographers and editors of the *Pictorial* successfully created a magazine that was both visually and ideologically powerful. The printing process was entirely handmade. To develop the photographs, cattle and chicken pens were used as darkrooms, while animal watering places were used to wash the photographs after having developed them.[10] The materials needed to produce the magazine and create the photographs were also difficult to acquire. Gu Di reports how Luo Guangda had to once disguise as a merchant to go to Tianjin and Beijing to buy printing and photographic supplies.[11] Sha Fei and his colleagues documented the development and printing process and their images show the challenging conditions in which the *Pictorial* came together during the war. Because of the frequency of Japanese attacks in the Communist occupied areas, the distribution of the *Pictorial* was often intermittent. Nonetheless, the *Pictorial* was distributed thanks to "sympathetic villagers and militia members [who] took on the task of hiding and passing on the paper."[12] Timothy Cheek further notes that the Communist leaders only wrote about the "continuous publication record" but omitted details on the distribution of the magazine.[13]

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[9] The original song version of the Chinese text can be found in: Si Sushi, *Sha Fei and His Wartime Friends* (Beijing: Xinhua Chubanshe, 2012), p. 264.

[10] Shi Zhimin, Jin-Cha-Ji Pictorial…, p. 4.

[11] Gu Di, *Zhongguo hongshe sheying lu*, p. 130-31 qtd in Shana J. Brown, "Sha Fei, the Jin-Cha-Ji Pictorial and…," p. 73.

[12] Timothy Cheek, *Propaganda and Culture in Mao's China: Deng Tuo and the Intelligentsia*, Studies on Contemporary China (Oxford [England]: New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1997), p.75.

[13] Ibidem, p. 73.

Figure 5: Photographer Unknown, "Washing Photographs in animals' watering place", c.1940s, from Tian and Tian, Jin Cha Ji Huabao, p. 121.

Figure 6: Sha Fei, Making the Pictorial, c.1940, Sha Fei Papers, Box 1, Hoover Institution Archives copyright Stanford University.

Figure 7: Photographer Unknown, "Using sunlight to Develop Photographs in a Ditch outside a House, 1944, Fuping County, Hebei," Si Sushi, Sha Fei and His Wartime Friends, p. 290.

Figure 8: Photographer Unknown, "Sha Fei chairing a meeting with other Jin Cha Ji photographers, c. 1940," Si Sushi, Sha Fei and His Wartime Friends, p. 309.

All the issues of the *Pictorial* featured coloured front and back covers and a variable number of internal pages, from almost a hundred for the first issue to an average of 30-40 pages from the second issue. The internal images, all in black and white, were on average a hundred per issue, predominantly photographs, but woodcuts and cartoons were also frequent. The photo-essays present in each edition of the *Pictorial* were accompanied by brief, propagandistic titles that helped the readers with the essay's narrative, while promoting the activities of the Eight Route Army and the Party. Titles such as "The Strong and Massive Armed Force of People" (first issue), "Our Army Has Broken through the Manchukuo Frontier and Is Now Fighting at Ancient Great Wall" (third issue), or "Heroes: Decision about Granting—Guangxiu Rong 'Mother of Our Soldiers and the Role Model of Supporting Army in Beiyue District'" (fifth issue) are just few examples of what readers would encounter in the pages of the *Pictorial*. All the contents of the magazine were anti-Japanese and nationalistic and gave ample space to the achievements of the local population thanks to the help of the Eighth Route Army soldiers.

Although written pieces such as in-depth analysis of battles, the lives of political leaders or editorials on art exhibitions were present, photographs and images were usually only accompanied by slogans and a few explanatory lines. The choice of including less text and more images was dictated by the emotional appeal that such images had and by the need of making the magazine accessible to the illiterate parts of the population. While the available literature does not mention if the contents of the *Pictorial* were read or explained to illiterate people, it is fair to assume that cadres were in charge of reading and explaining the *Pictorial* as they usually did with other publications.[14] This practice, an updated version of the

[14] Alan P. Liu explains how cadres were in charge of disseminating the political message that appeared in the newspapers and teach the peasants how to interpret it (p. 60-61). It was a frequent activity that ensured that the peasants would acquire the correct socialist language. This is also confirmed in Robert J. Lifton, "Thought Reform of Chinese Intellectuals: A Psychiatric Evaluation," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 16, no. 1 (November 1956): 75–88.

Confucian tradition of Sacred Lectures, aimed at ensuring that the population would learn how to read the images in the correct way and acquire the correct socialist language and behaviour.

The magazine was divided into a first section called 'News Photography,' followed by a section on art that included comics, woodcuts, and short stories for children, and ended with important communications, songs, and sometimes more woodcuts and cartoons. Aside from the front and back covers, every issue opened with a feature photograph. While the first issue opened with a dedication to Nie Rongzhen, "Founder and Leader of the Shanshi-Chahar-Hopei Anti-Japanese War Base" and the third issue gave prominence to the Great Wall, from the fourth issue (1943) the *Pictorial* began to print a portrait of "The Leader of the Communist Party Mao Zedong."[15]

In terms of photographic content, the first five issues are particularly interesting as the focus was on portraying the wartime experiences of the common people living in the Communist areas. From farmers reclaiming the land with the help of soldiers, to children and women going to school, the *Pictorial*'s photographers skilfully depicted the daily lives and struggles of the countryside. While some of the images that appeared in the magazine were staged, in these initial issues the genuine interest of the photographers to celebrate the endurance of the Chinese people and everyday life is evident. In the issues published after 1945, the focus shifted towards battles and the military achievements of the Communist armies. The *Pictorial* also became more modern—more photo montages, colours, and better editing—and appeared to be a Chinese edition of *Life* magazine. While this modernisation made the *Pictorial* more visually appealing and closer to

[15] *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial*, issue n. 4, September 1943; *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial*, issue n.1, May 1942; *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial*, issue n. 3, May 1945.

the refinement that Chinese visual propaganda acquired after 1949, it caused the magazine to lose the authenticity and spontaneity of the initial years.

In regard to photographic editing, Shana J. Brown notices how the viewer's gaze was controlled and directed towards the most important events and people through the cropping of an image as the size of an image would determine its importance in comparison to the other photographs in the same photo-essay. [16] Moreover, captions like "look carefully" placed next to the photographs would guide readers and focus their attention toward specific details. Contrary to Western magazines, the *Pictorial* was constructed and read from right to left, beginning with the image or text in the upper right-hand corner and proceeding downwards in a s-like motion. In reference to the photographers' visibility, Brown wrongfully argues that there were no photo credits and that even the name of Sha Fei did not appear in the pages of the magazine. This was supposedly done in order to make the viewers feel that "the photographers are everyman—they are us."[17] Given that the photographers who worked for the *Pictorial* were seen as ideological soldiers, helping China to defeat Japan, adding their names to the photographs was not a way to distance them from the public, but to inspire the people to work towards the same goal. In the *Pictorial*'s first issue, there was a regulation that invited people to contribute images and literature, from poems to short stories. These visual and written contributions aimed at involving the population and had to "reflect the struggle and the construction of this and other anti-Japanese war bases and the far rear."[18]

[16] Shana J. Brown, "Sha Fei, the Jin-Cha-Ji Pictorial and…," p. 77.

[17] Ibidem.

[18] *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial,* issue n.1, May 1942.

Figure 9: Image of the covers of the first nine issues of the Pictorial, Si Sushi, Sha Fei and His Wartime Friends, p. 266.

* * *

The person behind the success of the *Pictorial* was Sha Fei. His original name was Situ Chuan and he was born in Guangzhou in 1912. He had adopted the name Sha Fei, literally 'flying sand,' because he hoped to be a "small piece of sand [..] fly[ing] freely in the sky of his country."[19] In 1926, Sha Fei decided to enrol in a radio communication course in his city in order to support his family in a moment of financial crisis. This led him to become a telegraph operator for the National Revolutionary Army in the Northern Expedition in 1931. He worked in the radio environment until 1935 when, after discovering photography, he moved to Shanghai to enrol in a photographic course at the Shanghai Art Academy. While at the Academy, Sha Fei joined the Black and White Society and made his debut as fine art photographer at the exhibition organised by the Society in 1935. His photographs of that period were evidently influenced by the Chinese photographic environment of the early 1900s and the theories of Liu Bannong on the importance of retaining a Chinese aesthetics in the images. A year later, Sha Fei got his breakthrough as a photo-reporter with the shots he took of the famous writer Lu Xun (1881-1936 CE) just few days before his death in October 1936.[20] Because the photographs he took of Lu Xun attracted the attention and support of left-wing intellectual circles, Sha Fei was forced to leave the Shanghai Art Academy. In 1937, he decided to serve the Anti-Japanese cause with his photographic skills and he began to work for Communist news agencies. In October of the same year, Sha Fei met Nie Rongzhen for the first time and, few months later in December, he was put in charge of the

[19] "Sha Fei Biography," *Virtualshanghai.net*, http://www.virtualshanghai.net/References/Biography?ID=25, last accessed 25 January 2018.

[20] Ibidem.

Resistance Daily (*Kangdibao*) a magazine that would change its name in *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial* in 1940.[21]

Sha Fei was the cornerstone of the *Pictorial* and during the war he mentored many young photographers who would later become important for the development of modern Chinese photography and CCP visual propaganda.[22] Sha Fei's background as fine art photographer and social documentarist, as Eliza Ho notes, was the aspect that mostly contributed to his value as propagandist. His photographs were powerful not only from an ideological viewpoint, but also from an artistic one. Sha Fei in fact believed in the importance of three qualities that were needed to be a good photo-reporter: political knowledge, journalistic method of data collection, and artistic training.[23] Through his images, the people living in the Communist areas appear dignified and their resilience, optimism, and authenticity shine through thanks to Sha Fei's photographic ability.

Sha Fei's approach to photography as an ideological weapon and background as fine art photographer was shared by other young photographers who joined the ranks of the Communist Party during the war. Luo Guangda, a Zhejiang born photographer, joined the anti-Japanese resistance movement and the Communist Party in 1938.[24] Luo became famous in the early 1940s for his photographs of general Zhu De (1886-1976 CE) riding a horse in the Taihang Mountains region and for a series of images of wounded soldiers waiting to be operated by the Canadian doctor Norman Bethune. Most of Luo's photographic production is concentrated between

[21] Si Sushi, *Sha Fei and His Wartime…*, p. 29.

[22] Eliza Ho, 沙飞, and OSU Urban Arts Space, Art, documentary, and propaganda in wartime China: the photography of Sha fei = 沙飞 (Columbus, OH: East Asian Studies Center, Ohio State University, 2009), p. 10-11.

[23] Ibidem, p. 73.

[24] Zhongguo she ying jia xie hui, ed., *Chuan Yue Li Shi de Hui Sheng: Zhongguo Zhan Di She Ying Shi (1937-1949) = Chinese War Photographers*, Di 1 ban, Kou Shu Ying Xiang Li Shi Cong Shu 3 (Beijing Shi: Zhongguo she ying chu ban she, 2014), p. 307.

1939 and 1940 as, in 1942, he was appointed vice-editor in chief of the *Pictorial*, becoming responsible for the internal administration of the magazine.

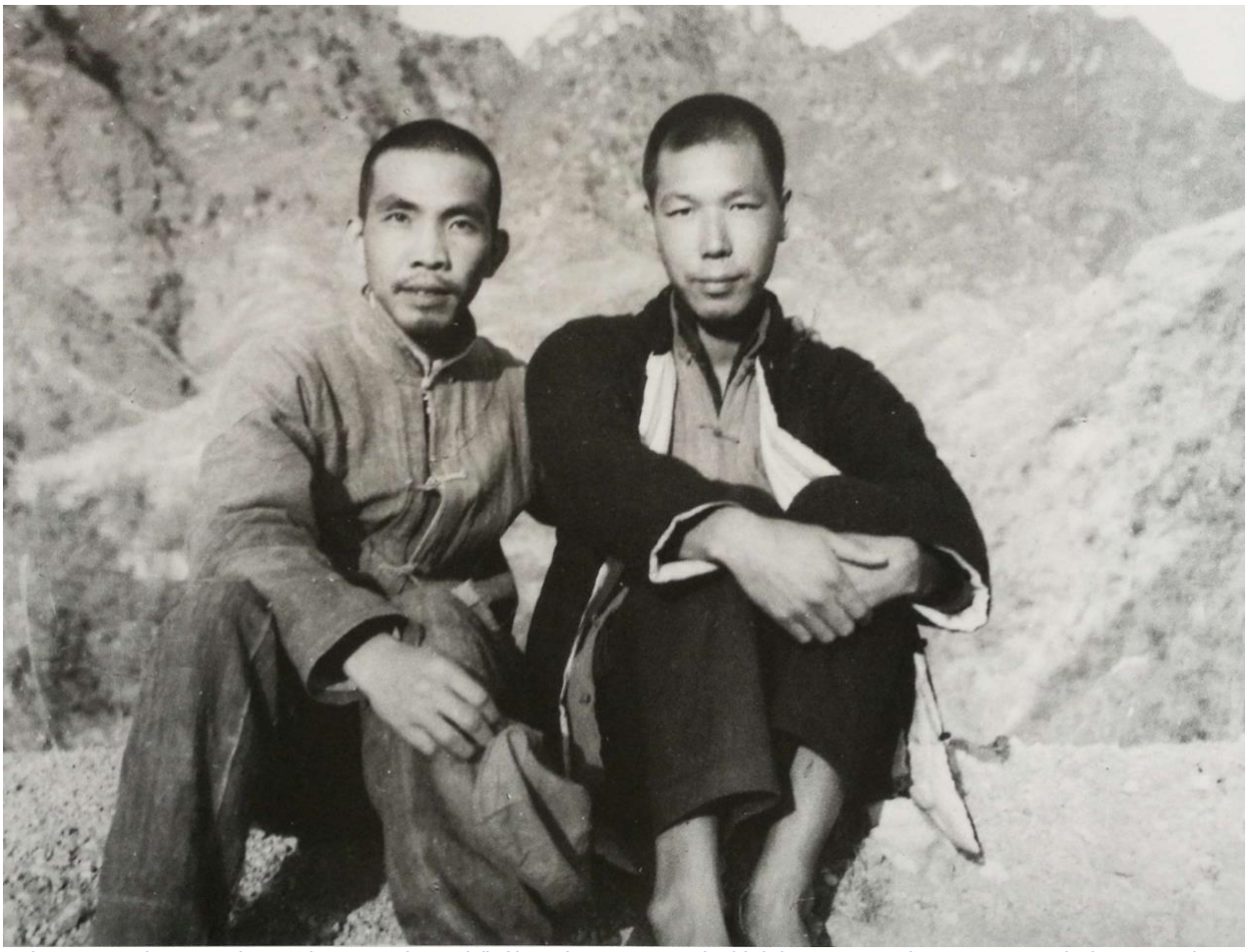

Figure 10: Photographer Unknown, Sha Fei (left) and Luo Guangda (right), 1944, Fuping County, Hebei. From: Si Sushi, Sha Fei and His Wartime Friends, p. 297.

Wu Yinxian (1900-1994 CE) was also part of the *Pictorial*'s photographic team. Wu, originally from Shuyang in Jiangsu, had started his career as a self-taught photographer in Shanghai before arriving in Yan'an in the late 1930s to work as a cinematographer.[25] His first contribution to the *Pictorial* were the photographs of Norman Bethune which appeared in the first issue as part of an article commemorating the life and work of the Canadian doctor in the Communist areas.[26] Wu's contribution to wartime photographic propaganda was based on the view that

[25] Marine Cabos, "Wu Yinxian," *Photographyofchina.Com* (blog), accessed January 10, 2018, http://photographyofchina.com/blog/wu-yinxian.

[26] Claire Roberts, *Photography and China (Exposures)* (Durrington, UK: Reaktion Books, 2012), p. 95.

photography, as an artistic expression, could play a crucial role in exposing reality as

> Art has the capacity to educate people, and the art image we shape should have the capacity to encourage people to learn and develop. Its content should be progressive and wholesome; its form should be beautiful. The photographer should strive to meet these requirements when shaping an artistic image.[27]

Another photographer who played a crucial role for the *Pictorial* was Shi Shaohua, born in Guangdong in 1918. An amateur photographer since his youth, Shi joined the Communist Party after arriving in Yan'an in 1938. A year later he was made chief of the photographic propaganda department of the Jin Cha Ji region and in 1943 he became deputy director of the *Pictorial*. One of the most praised contributions to the magazine were his photographs of the Wild Goose Plum, a waterborne military force, printed in the fourth issue in 1943. The purpose of the images was to "promote awareness of the active role played by citizens in defence."[28]

Among these photographers, the only who did not continue to contribute to the Communist cause after 1949 happened to be Sha Fei. His mental and health conditions deteriorated along the years, and in 1948 he was sent to the Norman Bethune Hospital in Shijiazhuang, Hebei, to be cured of tuberculosis. A year later, during an acute mental crisis, he shot the doctor who was treating him. In 1950 Sha Fei was executed for his crime, his Party's membership was cancelled, and his name disappeared from the Party's registries. It was almost forty years later, in 1986, that after an appeal from his family to overturn the manslaughter charge, the military

[27] Shuxia Chen, "'Shaping a Photographic Art Image' from Expression Methods for Photographic Art by Wu Yinxian"," *Translation* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2014), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0004.205.

[28] Claire Roberts, *Photography and China…*, p. 94.

court granted the reinstatement of Sha Fei's Party membership and redeemed his name.[29]

[29] Claire O'Neill, "Forgotten Chinese Photographer Resurrected," *The Picture Show,* 19 January 2010, https://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2010/01/sha_fei.html, last accessed 23 January 2018.

Figure 11: Wu Yinxiang, Yan'an Art and Literature Forum (Sha Fei is the third from Mao's left), 1942, http://gy.qq.com/original/photo/pic059.htm

The Geography of a Revolution

Landscape Symbolism in Communist Propaganda Photographs

> Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.
> —George Orwell

> Use the past to serve the present
> —Mao Zedong

Despite the consistent number of land-themed photographs that appeared in the first nine issues of the *Pictorial* between 1942 and 1945 and in the photographic production of the Communist affiliated photographers, there are only few studies on the representation of landscape in wartime Communist images. While there is no dedicated study to date, one of the most interesting contributions to the literature that tangentially deals with landscape representation during wartime is the study by Christine I. Ho. Her thesis explores life sketching and the impact that this artistic form had for Chinese ink painting in the early years of the People's Republic of China.[1] Chapter four of Ho's study appears to be particularly relevant as landscape painting is discussed in relation to the history of the Long March. In the chapter, Ho analyses how the sketches made by Chinese artists contributed to the depiction of a historical landscape that created a "work of collective memory" about the March.[2]

While Ho's contribution is relevant, in the more specific case of landscape photographs, the sources are scarce. Eliza Ho's study on Sha Fei's photographic production briefly explores the landscape theme without providing much detail

[1] Christine I. Ho, "Drawing from Life: Mass Sketching and the Formation of Socialist Realist Guohua in the early People's Republic of China (1949-1965)," *PhD dissertation*, Stanford University, 2014.

[2] Ibidem, p. 220.

about the symbolic value of the images.[3] The recent study by Wu Hung on Chinese photography instead, is a more in-depth analysis on the relation between traditional landscape painting and its influence on modern and contemporary landscape photography.[4] Mary Ginsberg's exploration of Asian propaganda is also a compelling starting point to reflect upon the importance of context, culture, and history when analysing propaganda images and their impact on the people who were influenced by them. Although the book does not specifically explore landscape-themed art, besides few considerations on the Yan'an pagoda as symbol of the "political heart of new China," Ginsberg stresses the importance of the analysis and understanding of symbols as powerful tools in propaganda images.[5]

Although these studies are a valuable and yet limited introduction for the understanding of landscape themed images during wartime, the cultural and political reasons behind the attention to landscape portrayal and its symbolism during wartime Communist propaganda are still to be thoroughly investigated. As Sarah E. James notes in regard to Soviet photographic propaganda production of the 1950s

> Each photographic genre corresponded to a specific ideological task: landscapes were meant to portray the transformation of nature by the labour of the new socialist man and woman, still lives to depict the abundance of food under socialism and portraits to represent the labour and work of the subject represented[6]

Although this refers to a later historical period, the influence of socialist realism and the genre-ideology correspondence can still be applied to the Chinese

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[3] Eliza Ho, 沙飞, and OSU Urban Arts Space, *Art, documentary, and propaganda in wartime China: the photography of Sha fei = 沙飞* (Columbus, OH: East Asian Studies Center, Ohio State University, 2009).

[4] Wu Hung, *Zooming in: Histories of Photography in China* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2016).

[5] Mary Ginsberg, *The Art of Influence: Asian Propaganda* (London: British Museum Press, 2013), p. 142.

[6] Sarah E. James, *Common Ground: German Photographic Cultures across the Iron Curtain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 103-04.

photographic production of the 1930s and 1940s as it raises the question of what ideological purpose these images served. The representation of Chinese landscapes in the *Pictorial* appeared in the form of land that was either being used for agricultural reasons by the people and the Army living in the CCP controlled areas, or in the form of territories that were coming under the CCP's control and protection due to successful military endeavours. In this second case, it was frequent to portray the Army in famous locations, such as strategic passes or portions of the Great Wall, rivers, or on mountain peaks.

These types of representations are expected in a war context—soldiers, lost/conquered territories, peasants' lives in times of hardship— and yet, the ways in which landscape and landmarks were portrayed contributed to the creation of a cultural and political landscape that was fundamental for the construction of the Chinese national identity under the CCP. Moreover, the role of traditional landscape painting and, more specifically, the symbolism of mountains should not be overlooked as it contributed to the efficacy of the landscape propaganda images that were created during the war by Communist artists. This chapter therefore aims to analyse the landscape-themed photographic production of the 1930s and 1940s that appeared in the pages of the *Pictorial*. This investigation intends to explain how the creation of a cultural and historical landscape through land-themed photographs was based on traditional landscape painting and symbolism which further contributed to the re-invention of an historical past that aimed at legitimising the CCP claim to power. In other words, the chapter wants to uncover how these images provided the historical and cultural roots for the political legitimacy of the Communist Party.

The first section of the chapter attests the influence that traditional landscape painting and the symbolism of sacred mountains and immortals had on the images created during the war against Japan. This section continues with a brief

presentation of the Eighth Route Army, a unit of the Communist Army that predominantly features in the pages of the *Pictorial*, and explores how its soldiers were portrayed in relation to landscape and famous mountains. The representation of the Eighth Route Army soldiers on mountain peaks was a reference to traditional landscape painting and mountain symbolism in Chinese Daoist and Buddhist art. According to Chinese legends, immortal deities, Buddhist and Daoist alike, lived on and guarded mountain peaks. In the case of the Eighth Route Army soldiers, their sacredness did not originate from their status as immortal deities, but from their role as protectors of the motherland and its people from the Japanese threat.

The second section of the chapter explores the concept of border in relation to the real and mythological role of the Great Wall for the creation of the Chinese national identity.[7] The Great Wall became not only the symbol of the resistance to the Japanese invasion, but also of a new historical past that portrayed the CCP and the Eighth Route Army as the defenders of the nation and the legitimate political guide to transport China into modernity.[8] While the symbolism of the Great Wall has changed along the centuries according to the political needs of the ruling power, this section explores how the mythology of the Great Wall as a symbol of the nation was created during wartime. The case study is the famous photograph taken by Sha Fei in 1937 "Soldiers of the Eighth Route Army Fighting Over the Great Wall," and published in the *Pictorial* in 1942.

The CCP visually connected the Great Wall to the Long March to highlight the potency of the people's will when faced with hardship. Just as the Great Wall had been built by the efforts and sacrifices of the people, the Long March became the

[7] Piero Zanini, *Significati Del Confine: I Limiti Naturali, Storici, Mentali*, Testi e Pretesti (Milano: B. Mondadori, 1997).

[8] Julia Lovell, *The Great Wall: China against the World, 1000 BC - 2000 AD* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006); Carlos Rojas, *The Great Wall: A Cultural History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010).

proof that people's will, under the guide of the correct leadership, could overcome any difficulty and eventually succeed. Whether the two ventures had actually been positive and successful for the people who took part in them, willingly or not, was not the purpose of the Communist attempts to re-invent and re-interpret the significance of these historical events.

This chapter ends with an exploration of how the myth of Yan'an, the Communist capital during the war, came to be visually constructed. As the end point of the Long March, Yan'an became the birthplace of the socialist revolution and of the new China. Geographically, the city is located in the Loess Plateau in the vicinity of the Yellow River and of the mausoleum of the Yellow Emperor, making it the centre of the mythical past of Chinese culture and history. For the history of the CCP instead, Yan'an was the place in which Mao Zedong wrote various political texts and made numerous speeches that laid the basis for the ideological foundation of Maoism.

The Creation of a Cultural Landscape

The political legitimation that the CCP was building during the war can be understood through the analysis of the landscape-themed photographs published in the early issues of the *Pictorial*. On this aspect, Jens Jäger notes how the creation of the idea of nation in the nineteenth century "was supported by the popularization and redefinition of all kinds of images and the nationalistic (re)interpretation of landscapes and architectural and honorific monuments." [9] Although Jäger refers to European countries, his analysis can be applied to the Chinese context as, through the field of cultural geography, it provides some

[9] Jens Jäger, "Picturing Nations: Landscape Photography and National Identity in Britain and Germany in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," in Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, eds., *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003), p. 117.

fundamental, initial considerations on the relationship between landscape, culture, and politics.

The father of cultural geography, Carl O. Sauer, wrote that: "landscape is [...] a land shape, in which the process of shaping is by no means thought of as simply physical. It may be defined [...] as an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural."[10] This study does not aim to discuss the Chinese natural landscape per se, but wants to explore the influence that Chinese culture had in shaping the perception and understanding of certain elements of the natural landscape. To use Sauer's words: "There is a strictly geographic way of thinking of culture; namely, as the impress of the works of man upon the area."[11] If human beings have an impact on landscape, it follows that according to specific needs, this same landscape can be purposely shaped, moulded, interpreted, and constructed for political and ideological reasons. In the specific case of wartime China, the Communists attempted to shape significant parts of the Chinese landscape in order to portray themselves as defendants and guides of the nation to ultimately gain the political legitimacy necessary to rule the country.

As part of their propaganda strategies, the CCP employed accurately crafted images that aimed to create a visual iconography that associated the Party to the national history. This iconography did not only link the Party and the Eighth Route Army to the territory, but also to the creation of a new national identity through specific geographical symbols. These symbols, primarily the Great Wall and the mountain peaks in the Shaanxi-Hebei region, were already known to the people. Their cultural value was associated with the role they had in traditional Chinese society. The rediscovery and consequent re-invention of landscape was a deliberate

[10] John Leighly, ed., *Land and Life, A Selection from the Writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 321.

[11] Ibidem, p. 325.

decision made by the Party with the intention of creating an even stronger connection between Chinese history and the political legitimacy that the CCP was trying to acquire during the war.

Traditional landscape painting strongly influenced the creation of these new landscape-themed images. Despite the relentless criticism of Confucian and Daoist traditions, even in the artistic sphere, the Communist Party was consciously using this same tradition in order to make its claim to power more legitimate and create a deeper sense of historical continuity.

In her study on land representation and idealisation, Liz Wells explains that

> Site and space, political and spiritual identity, are complexly interwoven. If landscape is understood as cultural representation of space as place, ways in which particular lands are pictured can be conceptualised as an arena of rhetorical struggle.[12]

This implies that through the exploration of how CCP affiliated photographers represented and constructed the national landscape, it is possible to understand how the political and national identity of the new socialist China came together during the Anti-Japanese War. On this point Don Mitchell follows Sauer's argument and adds that landscape is a type of ideology in the sense that

> it is a way to carefully selecting and representing the world so as to give it a particular meaning. Landscape is thus an important ingredient in constructing consent and identity [...] for the projects and desires of powerful social interests.[13] [14]

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[12] Liz Wells, *Land Matters*, p. 211.

[13] Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2000), p. 99.

[14] The rhetorical struggle was not just the one between Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong, but also the one between Chinese and Japanese propaganda. Although these aspects are not analysed in this study, it is important to mention that each party involved in the war was creating its own cultural landscape of China. Although not entirely dedicated to landscape-themed images, for images from the Guomindang's propaganda see: Philip S. Jowett, *China's Wars: Rousing the Dragon, 1894-1949* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013). For GMD posters that feature the Great Wall and the Chinese landscape see: "The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)", *chineseposters.net*, https://chineseposters.net/themes/second-sino-japanese-war.php, accessed 2 May 2017. For sources on Japanese propaganda see: Annika A Culver, *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-Garde Propaganda in Manchukuo.* (University of British Columbia Press, 2014); Kari Leanne Shepherdson-Scott, "Utopia/Dystopia: Japan's Image of the Manchurian Ideal" (PhD, Duke University, 2012), https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/5433/ShepherdsonScott_duke_0066D_11278.pdf?sequence=1, accessed 3 May 2017.

In wartime Communist propaganda, land was seen as "a space of symbol and myth,"[15] where the sacred Buddhist and Daoist mountain peaks and the Great Wall were being exploited and re-interpreted as symbols of the unity and strength of the Chinese nation under the CCP's leadership. However, this type of national identity was built and imagined "in terms of a Han race from the northern plains whose virtue had, time and again, unified and defended China against invaders, as represented in the sacrifice to build the Great Wall of China."[16] In other words, this way of identifying certain symbols—in particular the Great Wall—with Chineseness ignored the existence of all the other ethnic groups present in China, predominantly in the south, that hardly thought of the Great Wall as a unifying national symbol. Owen Lattimore remarked how walls had never been built in the south and that for many people across the centuries the histories of those who went north to build portions of the Great Wall were transmitted "with proverbs and legends of lament and despair."[17]

Yet, the ideological power of such symbols lies in the ability of those who construct them to bring together different histories and cultures under the same carefully crafted ideas of nation and society.[18] Richard Peet notes that

> By recreating landscapes, filling them with signs carrying ideological messages, images are formed of past and future "realities," [...] and thereby, control exerted over the everyday behaviour of the people who call these manufactured places their natural, historic homes.[19]

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[15] Ibidem, p. 12.

[16] Carlos Rojas, *The Great Wall: A Cultural History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 70.

[17] Owen Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers 1928-1958* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 311.

[18] Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, 19th pr, Canto (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr, 2010).

[19] Richard Peet, "A Sign Taken for History: Daniel Shays' Memorial in Petersham, Massachusetts," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers 86*, 21-43, p. 23, quoted in Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2000), p. 120.

In other words, the understanding of landscape as 'home' allows those who create images of landscape to control the historical narrative and the behaviour of the people living in such spaces.

The Eighth Route Army

The main protagonists of the re-invention of the Chinese cultural landscape were the soldiers of the Eighth Route Army. The Eighth Route Army was a section of the Red Army at the command of the CCP, although it was officially part of the Second United Front with the Nationalist troops.[20] It was predominantly employed in northern China, where it fought with unorthodox tactics such as infiltrating behind the Japanese lines and engaging in guerrilla warfare. The Eighth Route Army was one of the most important Communist fighting forces during the war and took direct orders from Mao Zedong and Zhu De (1886-1976), the People's Liberation Army's commander in chief and one of the most respected military leaders in modern China. In regard to the role of the Eighth Route Army, marshal Lin Biao (1907-1971 CE) said that, "[t]he heavy responsibility of combating Japanese imperialism thus fell on the shoulders of the Eighth Route Army, New Fourth Army and the people of the Liberated Areas, all led by the Communist Party."[21] Perhaps this was a slightly exaggerated positive comment given that the Eighth Route Army proved itself crucial only twice during the war. The first time was for the battle of Pingxingguan in September 1937, with the use of guerrilla warfare. The second time was in the

[20] In some photographs, the soldiers of the Eighth Route Army can be seen wearing the Nationalist uniform and using the flag of the Republic of China (red background with the top left corner in blue featuring a white sun. For more, see: Philip S. Jowett, *China's Wars*..., p. 252-53.

[21] Lin Piao [Biao], *Long Live the Victory of the People's War! In Commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of Victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japan* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1965), pp. 1-2 quoted in Parks M. Coble, "China's 'New Remembering' of the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, 1937-1945," *The China Quarterly*, no. 190 (June 2007), p. 396.

summer of 1940 during the Battle of the Hundred Regiments, with a more traditional approach to warfare.[22]

The scarce involvement of the Eighth Route Army in conventional warfare during the war was for various reasons. Firstly, the CCP troops were limited in number if compared to the Nationalist and Japanese Armies. Secondly, after the Long March, the CCP controlled and occupied specific areas in northern China and was surrounded on the one side by the Japanese Army, and on the other by the Nationalists. This problematic situation was well known to Mao who, in a 1937 letter to the other CCP leaders, remarked that the CCP should adopt: "dispersed guerrilla warfare" and not "concentrate our forces for a campaign."[23] According to Andrew Bingham Kennedy, Mao appeared confident in the ability of the CCP Army to fight Japan only in the first half of 1938 as he was under pressure from the Soviet Union who asked for active collaboration and tangible results between the CCP and the GMD against Japan.[24] However, in other letters and reports it appears how Mao was avoiding substantial engagement against Japan as his actual long term goal was to defeat the Nationalists and control the country. As Bingham Kennedy notes, "[b]y focusing on the construction of base areas behind Japanese lines, Mao knew the CCP could build up its strength and improve its position vis-à-vis the KMT."[25]

With these considerations in mind, it follows that the images of the battles and victories of the Eighth Route Army that appeared on the *Pictorial* were part of the propaganda strategies that the CCP leaders were pursuing in the controlled areas. The involvement of the Communist troops in active warfare was frequently

[22] Philip S. Jowett, *China's Wars...,* p. 240; Rana Mitter, *China's War with Japan, 1937-1945…*,Part Three: The Road to Pearl Harbor.

[23] Andrew Bingham Kennedy, "Can the Weak Defeat the Strong? Mao's Evolving Approach to Asymmetric Warfare in Yan'an," *The China Quarterly*, no. 196 (December 2008), p. 888.

[24] Ibidem, p. 892.

[25] Ibidem.

overemphasised in order to boost morale among the population and the army itself. At the same time, the limited amount of battlefield photographs in the *Pictorial* was due to the fact that general Nie Rongzhen had forbidden the photographers from going to the frontlines for safety reasons.[26] Nonetheless, many international and local reporters who visited Yan'an and the other Communist areas during the war reported the high spirit and dedication that the troops and the people had towards the resistance effort. An American colonel, impressed by the attitude of the Communist soldiers, said that: "Each man possessed the desire to do what was right, it was right to perform his duty."[27]

Aside from military duties, the Army was predominantly employed for the support of the population that lived in the Communist bases. Many images showed the dedication that the Army had towards the people and the practical help they provided for peasants, women, and children. In these images the soldiers were portrayed while helping in the fields with the crops or while ploughing the barren soil to open up the land for cultivation. Many of the woodcuts and photographs that appeared in the *Pictorial* celebrated the relationship between the Army and the people and the soldiers were usually described as brothers and sons, heroes and "chivalrous warriors."[28]

[26] Eliza Ho, 沙飞, and OSU Urban Arts Space, *Art, documentary, and propaganda in wartime China: the photography of Sha fei = 沙飞* (Columbus, OH: East Asian Studies Center, Ohio State University, 2009), p. 59.

[27] Evans F. Carlson, *The Chinese Army* (1940) quoted in Philip S. Jowett, *China's Wars...*, p. 254.

[28] Ibidem, p. 98.

Figure 12: Wo Zha, "Eighth Route Army Helping People Harvesting Wheat", Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, Issue 4, September 1943.

Figure 13: Sha Fei, "The Eighth Route Army Soldiers Turning up the Barren Soil on the Hills", Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, Issue 1, July 1942.

Figure 14: Wu Yinxiang, Reclaiming Wasteland, 1941, https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/objects/reclaiming-wasteland-yanan, last accessed 7 September 2018.

In figures 12, 13, and 14 the land was portrayed as the recipient of the efforts of the Army and the people. The ideological power of these images laid in the fact that this land was sustaining the people in a moment of hardship. Moreover, the dedication that the people and the soldiers had towards their motherland was showed not only from the sustenance this same land gave them during the war, but also by the efforts made to protect it from the Japanese advance.

Traditional Landscapes and Sacred Mountains

Contrary to Western tradition, landscapes were a major genre of painting in the Chinese artistic environment. Traditional Chinese landscapes were not the faithful representation of a place but were intended as a philosophical exercise where the purpose was not to represent reality but, as Craig Clunas explains, a: “privilege

expression by the artist [...] over the transcribing of visual phenomena."[29] Such landscapes wanted to convey the rhythm of nature and the emotions that a place, or a travel experience, would generate in the viewer. When looking at a landscape painting, the audience was expected to experience a visual journey into the mountains, lakes, waterfalls, and misty peaks painted on the scrolls. To convey these feelings of a visual travel experience, landscapes were usually constructed of three layers: the foreground, characterised by a detailed scene where objects and people would appear much smaller than in reality; the middle ground, less detailed and lighter in colour, with clouds and mist; and lastly the background, predominantly occupied by towering mountains, perceived as remote. The use of ink also played a role in conveying volumes and distances. Dark, defined brushstrokes were used for the foreground, while lighter, softer, and different ink washes were used to portray distant objects, mist, and clouds.[30]

Due to the uniqueness of the Chinese perspective, the layering of the foreground, middle, and background, together with the different brushstrokes and ink washes used, created multiple focal points in the scroll. These shifting foci compel the viewer to 'travel' inside the landscape. By getting lost in the painting, the audience was also supposed to experience a meditative, spiritual journey into another world, forgetting about the daily worries and preoccupations. The aim of these landscapes was therefore not to represent the reality of nature, but "to capture the essence of nature by being as much like nature itself."[31]

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[29] Catherine King, ed., *Views of Difference: Different Views of Art*, Art and Its Histories, bk. 5 (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the Open University, 1999), p. 125.

[30] David B. Greene, "Handscroll Landscape Paintings of the Song Period and Their Tightening Perspective," *Oriental Art* 39, no. 3 (Autumn 1993): 20–27. Matthew Turner, "Classical Chinese Landscape Painting and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2009), p. 116.

[31] Ibidem, p. 115

Figure 15: Fan Kuan, Travelers among Mountains and Streams, China Online Museum, http://www.comuseum.com/painting/masters/fan-kuan/travelers-among-mountains-and-streams/, accessed 22 January 2018.

Mountains were frequently the main feature of these landscape paintings and were depicted as towering and majestic; humans instead were portrayed as small and insignificant when compared to the greatness and strength of nature. Stephen

McDowall explains how "[m]ountains had early come to represent stability and permanence, and they were inextricably linked to the ruling house both as delineators and as protectors of the imperial realm."[32] According to Daoism, mountains were the connecting element between the human and the celestial world. For this reason, they had been venerated since the Shang dynasty (1600-1050 BCE). Kiyohiko Munakata remarks how mountains were worshipped as protectors of the communities and of the country, while also being regarded as the intermediaries between men and heaven.[33] Mountains and caves were also thought to be the home of the immortals[34] and therefore the place where one could go and meditate in order to get closer to deities, or the place to find herbs and mushrooms to create concoctions for a long life.[35] [36] As a consequence, the practice of pilgrimages to mountains became very common, and both Daoism and Buddhism considered specific mountains to be sacred.

For Daoism, the cult of Sacred Mountains developed along the centuries with the earliest mention during the Warring States (475-221 BCE), and an official worship that began during the Han dynasty (221-206 BCE). The mountains were five,

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[32] Stephen McDowall, "Landscape, Culture & Power: The View from Seventeenth-Century Yellow Mountain," *China Heritage Quarterly* 18 (June 2009), http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/articles.php?searchterm=018_huangshan.inc&issue=018.

[33] Kiyohiko Munakata, *Sacred Mountains in Chinese Art: An Exhibition Organized by the Krannert Art Museum at the University of Illinois and Curated by Kiyohiko Munakata: Krannert Art Museum, November 9-December 16, 1990, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, January 25-March 31, 1991* (Champaign, Ill.: Urbana: Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; University of Illinois Press, 1991), p. 12.

[34] The character used for the word immortal, 仙 *xiān*, reflects this belief as it is formed by the radical 亻 *rén*, person, and 山 *shān*, mountain.

[35] Stephen Little and Shawn Eichman, *Taoism and the Arts of China*, 1st ed (Chicago: [Berkeley]: Art Institute of Chicago; University of California Press, 2000), p. 17.

[36] The belief that pilgrimages to specific mountains can provide long life or an improvement for the health of a sick person is still very rooted in Chinese culture. In April 2017 an article reported how Bama county, in Guanxi province, has been attracting many sick and elderly people who believe in the healing powers of the mountains and their caves. For more see: Javier C. Hernández, "China's Aged and Sick Flock to a Hamlet Known for Longevity", *The New York Times*, April 12, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/12/world/asia/bama-county-china-longevity.html?_r=0, accessed April 12, 2017.

of which four symbolised the four cardinal points—Mount Tai, Mount Heng, Mount Hua, Mount Heng—and one symbolised the centre, Mount Song.[37] These mountains and the immortals who resided on them were seen as protectors of humanity and as channels between the earth and the heavens. For Buddhism instead, the Sacred Mountains were four—Mount Wutai, Mount Emei, Mount Jiuhua and Mount Putuo—all dedicated to different bodhisattvas, the deities who had the purpose of helping those who deserved it to reach enlightenment. In this context, the pilgrimages that numerous emperors undertook at the beginning of their ruling years became a way to legitimise their power and contributed to the construction of "an imperial sacred geography" that lasted for thousands of years.[38] Qin Shi Huang was the emperor who initiated this tradition when, between 219-210 BCE, he undertook a tour of several mountains at the top of which he left carved stones that had the purpose of recording and preserving his travels and achievements. As Dorothy Wong notes, the stones that were left on mountain tops signified "not only the emperor's political sovereignty but also his aspiration to immortality and eternity."[39]

The first source to describe immortals and their relationship with nature, and specifically with mountains, is the *Zhuangzi*, which together with the *Daode jing*, are two of the great Daoist texts. The book of *Zhuangzi* is a collection of stories, poems and anecdotes, supposedly written by Master Zhuang who lived between 370-280 BCE, during the Warring States period.[40] The Zhuangzi narrates about many spiritual entities, among which the most important are the Yellow Emperor, considered the founder of Chinese civilisation, Pengzu, who supposedly lived for

[37] Ibidem, p. 148.

[38] Susan Naquin et al., eds., *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, Studies on China 15 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 13.

[39] Dorothy C. Wong, *Chinese Steles: Pre-Buddhist and Buddhist Use of a Symbolic Form* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), p. 29.

[40] Stephen Little and Shawn Eichman, *Taoism and the Arts of China*, 1st ed (Chicago: [Berkeley]: Art Institute of Chicago; University of California Press, 2000), p. 35.

eight hundred years, and Xiwangmu, the Queen Mother of the West. The *Zhuangzi* describes them as such: "They mount on clouds and ride winged dragons to wander before the four oceans. By the concentration of their spirit, they can protect people from the plague and make crops ripen."[41]

The relationship between the spiritual realm and mountains was also frequently used in funerary art. Examples of this practice can be found on one of the coffins found at the Mawangdui site where the artist painted Mount Kunlun surrounded by clouds.[42] The shape in which tombs were built, such as the one made for Qin Shi Huang also resembled small mountains.[43] Mountains were also carved on the funerary steles that were used as grave markers and on the path leading to the tomb mounts.[44] Leslie V. Wallace notes that in tomb reliefs of the Eastern Han period (25-220 BCE), immortals were depicted "amid mountainous terrain and swirling cloudscape."[45] Moreover, as Wu Hung, Susan Naquin and Joseph Needham note, during the Han dynasty many incense burners, commonly used in religious and ritual functions, were crafted in the shape of a mountain.[46] By placing the incense inside the burner, the smoke would flow around the peaks and recreate the same mystic experience of wandering on a real mountain. The clouds that commonly surrounded the mountains were also important as they were understood to be the

[41] Ibidem, p. 36.

[42] Mawangdui is an archeological site in Changsha, Hunan. There are three tombs, created for the marquis Li Chang, his wife and a third male person believed to be their son.

[43] For an image of the Mawangdui coffin, see: Wu Hung, *Zooming in*, p. 165.

[44] Dorothy C. Wong, *Chinese Steles…*, p. 17.

[45] Leslie V. Wallace, "BETWIXT AND BETWEEN: Depictions of Immortals (Xian) in Eastern Han Tomb Reliefs," *Ars Orientalis* 41 (2011), p. 82.

[46] Susan Naquin et al., eds., *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China…, p. 13;* Joseph Needham, Gwei-Djen Lu, and Joseph Needham, "Spagyrical Discovery and Invention: Magisteries of Gold and Immortality", *Science and Civilisation in China Chemistry and Chemical Technology*, by Joseph Needham; Vol. 5 ; Pt. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), p. 133; Wu Hung, *Zooming in…*, p. 166-67.

manifestation of the *qi*, the powerful energy that resides in every human and in the universe.

Figure 16: Incense Burner (boshanlu), Western Han dynasty (206 BCE-9 CE), Bronze, The Avery Brundage Collection, http://asianart.emuseum.com/view/objects/asitem/search@/27?t:state:flow=69a3f894-0888-412b-8417-8fba168bd160, last accessed 15 September 2015.

The representation of mountain peaks was an artistic trend that lasted for centuries and became imbued with the philosophical meaning of the spiritual journey and the search for immortality. For the ruling élite instead, it became a way to legitimise its power. Moreover, funerary art was also rich in mountain and landscape symbolism and this shows the religious value of mountains and landscapes representation. Across the centuries, landscapes and misty peaks acquired the

meaning of sacred places with exceptional powers.[47] The clouds and mist that were frequently used as perspective devices by the painters contributed to the feeling of mystery and immensity of the landscape and added to the mystique and extraordinary powers of those who were believed to live on the mountains.

The New Immortals: The Sentinels of the Eighth Route Army

During the Anti-Japanese War, the major goals of the Communist Party was to "mobilize the whole body of the masses to join the war front against the Japanese, to give the people the freedom of patriotism and to give the people the freedom to arm themselves."[48] In order to achieve this, visual propaganda not only had to show the various battles and missions in which the Army took part in, but also convey the sense of the importance of their mission as protectors of the land. The mission of the Eighth Route Army soldiers was therefore to awake the minds and the spirits of the people and to spread the message that the Communists were actively fighting side to side with the people against Japan. Of the photographers who worked for the *Pictorial*, Sha Fei, Luo Guangda, and Xu Xiaobing (1916-2009 CE), created a number of images that conveyed a sense of duty in the soldiers and their mission to awaken the masses in order to defend the motherland. The photographs below are similarly composed. They were taken from behind or below and feature the same subject: an unknown Eighth Route Army soldier on a mountain top surrounded by clouds.

[47] The importance of mountains for spiritual and religious reasons is not just present in China, but in other Asian countries like Korea and Japan. For Western culture instead, the Bible offers many examples of important events that took place on mountains. Two of the most famous examples of this were the delivery of the Tables of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai in the Old Testament, and the transfiguration of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (maybe Mount Tabor) in the New Testament. For more on mountain symbolism in the Bible see: Leland Ryken et al., eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 573-4.

[48] Mao Zedong interviewed by Helen Foster Snow, August 12, 1937, Box 21, Folder 21, "Interview with Mao Tse-ting", *Writings of Nym Wales*, Hoover Institution Archives.

Figure 17: Sha Fei, 'Defend the land, defend our home', 1937, in Si Sushi, Sha Fei and his wartime friends, (Beijing: Xinhua Chubanshe, 2012), p. 29.

Figure 18: Sha Fei, 'An Eighth Route Army Sentinel Stands on Mount Heng', 1937, in http://shafei.sysu.edu.cn/firstedition/zuopin/zuopin_44.htm, last accessed 15 May 2016.

While the caption of figure 17 underlines the paramount importance of defending the nation, the caption of figure 18 draws the viewer's attention to a specific location, Mount Heng. Mount Heng was one of the sacred Daoist mountains and the visual connection between the soldier and the mountain was a way to ideologically link traditional immortal deities with the power of the Eighth Route Army. As mountain peaks were the place where immortals and spirits were believed to live, they had a strong spiritual connotation in Chinese culture. By portraying soldiers on mountain tops, the photographers were drawing a connection between the ancient Chinese spiritual and cultural traditions and the Eighth Route Army. By so doing, these sentinels were portrayed as the new immortals, not because of their immortality or spiritual powers, but because of their dedication in saving and protecting the nation from the Japanese advance. These sentinels were standing on mountain tops, surrounded by clouds and mist, guarding the mountains and the human world below from the Japanese enemy. These landscapes, as Wallace suggests, were "an outgrowth of the fusion of the cloudy motif (*yunqi*) with elements of mountain imagery popular during the Western Han dynasty."[49] This representation of the Eight Route Army soldiers strongly resembled the one used in Eastern Han tomb reliefs where the immortals were represented on mountains surrounded by clouds.

A similar photograph, taken by Luo Guangda in 1939, appeared in the fifth issue of the *Pictorial* in 1944. The title of the image was "Heroic Defender," and it was inserted as title page for the fifth issue with the slogan "Forever guarding the Jin-Cha-Ji." The source *Chinese War Photographers*, edited by the Chinese Photographic Society, features the same photograph in the chapter dedicated to Luo

[49] Leslie V. Wallace, "BETWIXT AND BETWEEN…", p. 83.

with the title "The brave sentinel of the Loess Plateau." [50] The Loess Plateau—in Chinese Yellow Earth Plateau (*Huangtu Gaoyuan)*—was historically accepted as the birthplace of Chinese civilisation. Thanks to the flowing of the Yellow River, the Plateau became particularly fertile for rice cultivation. Furthermore, the Plateau was a crucial exchange area for the goods that travelled along the Silk Road and into China. Even in the case of Luo Guangada's heroic defender, the photograph conveyed that this Eighth Route Army soldier was not only defending the Jin Cha Ji region, but also the Loess Plateau and therefore the whole Chinese population and its history. Figure 18 and 19 also feature a visible rising sun in the left corner of the image. The significance of this, as Marco Meccarelli notes, was that the rising sun, as symbol the Japanese empire, was explicit and immediate for the viewers.[51]

[50] Zhongguo she ying jia xie hui, ed., *Chuan Yue Li Shi de Hui Sheng: Zhongguo Zhan Di She Ying Shi (1937-1949) = Chinese War Photographers*, Di 1 ban, Kou Shu Ying Xiang Li Shi Cong Shu 3 (Beijing Shi: Zhongguo she ying chu ban she, 2014), p. 308

[51] Marco Meccarelli, *Storia Della Fotografia in Cina…,* p. 98.

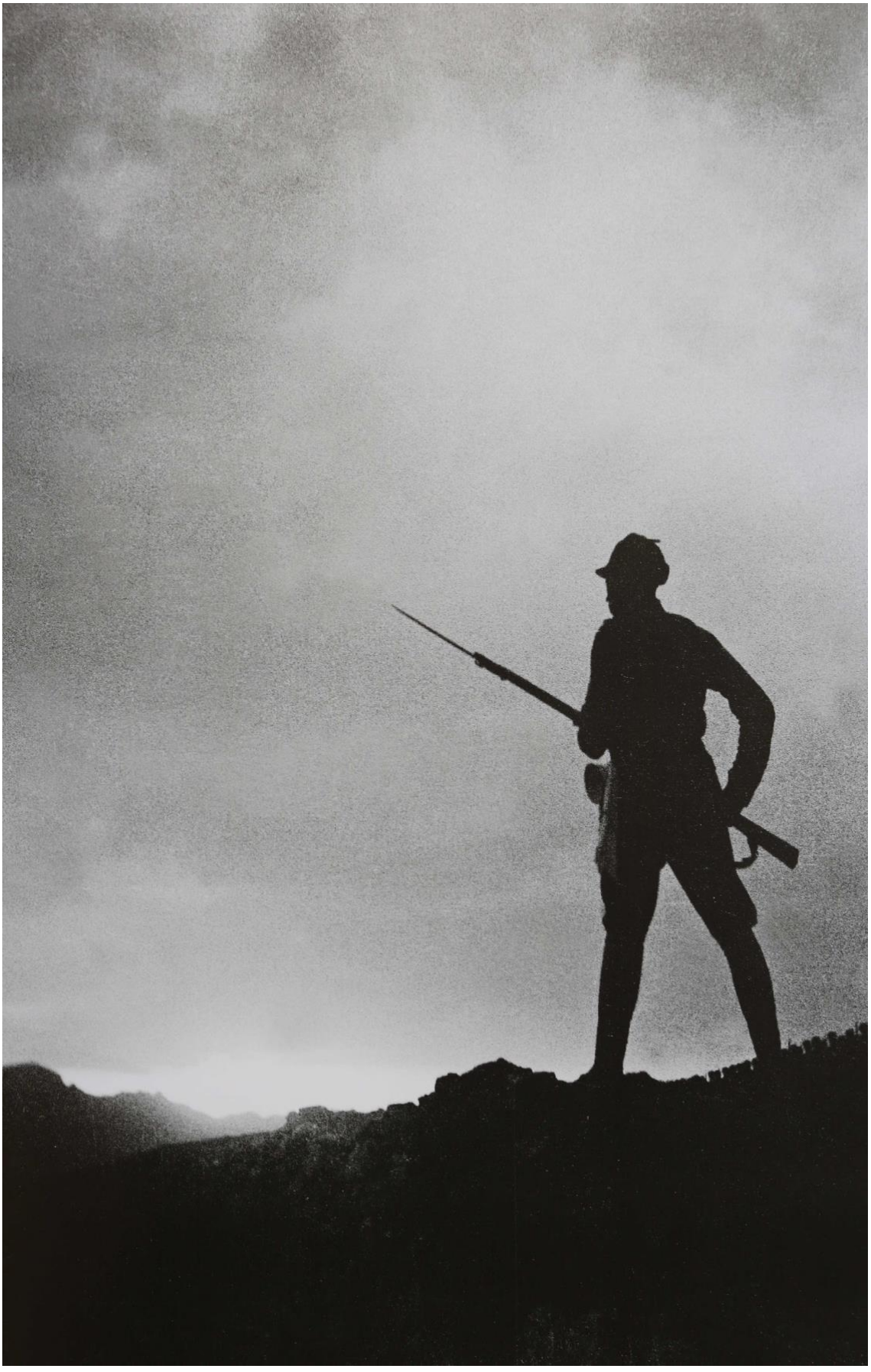

Figure 19: Luo Guangda, 'Heroic Defender'*, Jin Cha Ji Pictorial,* Issue 5, March 1944.

Xu Xiaobing followed the same theme and a year later, in 1940, portrayed another Eighth Route Army soldier on a horse blowing a horn. In this case, the caption reveals that the shot was taken on the Taihang Mountains, a mountain range on the eastern border between Shanxi, Henan, and Hebei. The mountains were part of one of the Communist bases where the 129th division of the Red Army was stationed under the command of marshal Liu Bocheng (1892-1986 CE) and Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997 CE), at the time Political Commissar under Liu.[52]

Figure 20: Xu Xiaobing, 'An Eighth Route Army Soldier Standing on Taihang Mountain Sounding the Horn', 1940, *http://news.99ys.com/news/2015/0902/9_196436_1.shtml*, last accessed 20 January 2018.

[52] Whitney Stewart, *Deng Xiaoping: Leader in a Changing China*, A Lerner Biography (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 2001), p. 43.

David S. Goodman notes that the Taihang base was one of the most important as it was the "field headquarters of the Chinese Communist Party's Eighth Route Army and of the North China Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party during the War of Resistance."[53] The importance of the Taihang base was in its location as it lay between the Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei Border Region and the Shanxi-Hebei-Shandong-Henan Border Region. Between 1939 and the early 1940s, Japanese troops had begun to move closer to the base, and between late 1940 and 1943, the Japanese hostilities had consequently increased.[54] This renewed aggressiveness can explain why Xu Xiaobing and his colleagues felt the need to portray sentinels and courageous soldiers on the mountain tops of the Taihang base. The purpose of these images was to encourage the people to join the resistance and to remind them that the Army remained vigilant.

By using famous locations—Mount Heng, the Loess Plateau and the Taihang Mountains—and brief, catching slogans such as "Defend our home" and "Heroic defender/sentinel," the photographers were exploiting the influence that traditional culture and symbolism still had on the population. Moreover, the written slogans that were paired with the images were meant to reinforce the ideological message aimed at the masses. Alan Liu clearly explains that "the peasants' illiteracy and ignorance required an [...] emotional approach."[55] Zhang Shaoqian confirms this view and claims that the effectiveness of such images was based on the already

[53] David S. G. Goodman, *Social and Political Change in Revolutionary China: The Taihang Base Area in the War of Resistance to Japan, 1937-1945*, World Social Change (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), p. ix.

[54] Ibidem, p. 47.

[55] Alan P. L. Liu, *Communication and National Integration in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 29.

present cultural perspectives and that "the galvanizing imagery and slogans were intended to mobilize of the population to join in their anti-invasion effort."[56]

By merging the iconography of the immortals on mountain tops and the traditional cultural landscape of the Yellow River, the Loess Plateau, and the Taihang Mountains with the new, dedicated Communist soldiers, the artists were entrusting the CCP and the Army with the sacredness they needed to be seen as the legitimate guides of the new China. While these images were following the traditional iconography of the sacred mountains as powerful and sacred loci, the Army sentinels lost the strictly religious aspect of the veneration for the immortals and were imbued with political sanctity. Their powers, strength, and bravery derived from the dedication they had for the resistance effort. This meant that the people would look up to the Eighth Route Army soldiers as models of self-sacrifice and devotion for the good of the nation. The unknown identity of the sentinels further conveys the message that any person could become a defender of the nation, and therefore be hailed as a divinity for the sacrifices made for the salvation of the motherland.

The Great Wall of China

The Great Wall of China is arguably the only wall in the world that holds a positive connotation in the sense that its existence is seen as the physical expression of the great history of the Chinese nation and its people. Although the Great Wall is a series of fortifications made of various materials—from bricks to simple soil—the popular perception is that it is a continuous stone-dragon that has existed since the reign of the first emperor of the Qin dynasty. The appeal and grandeur of the Great

[56] Shaoqian Zhang, "Combat and Collaboration: The Clash of Propaganda Prints between the Chinese Guomindang and the Japanese Empire in the 1930s-1940s.," *Transcultural Studies*, no. 1 (2014), p.123.

Wall are so rooted in our collective imagination that it is perceived not only to be somehow endless in space and time, but also to be the only human construction visible from space.[57]

The existence of the Great Wall and of the Chinese nation seems therefore to be mutually connected: one cannot exist and never existed without the other. This assumption is however incorrect for two reasons. First, the Great Wall was created, improved, and restored various times along the centuries and never became a unique fortification. During the Ming dynasty in particular, the Great Wall was fortified and improved to defend China from the invasions of the Mongol tribes first, and then of the Manchus, who became, maybe quite ironically, the last Chinese dynasty. After 1949, due to the consistent damage that the war against Japan caused to the Great Wall, some of its sections—the famous Badaling for instance on the outskirts of Beijing—were restored and promoted as tourist attractions.[58]

The second mistake concerns the perception of the Great Wall as a positive national symbol. This view of the Great Wall was skilfully crafted by Mao Zedong and the CCP propaganda machine as a way to legitimise their power and create the economic isolationism and mistrust towards the West that characterised the Communist regime until the 1970s. On the extent of this isolation that reached its peak during the Cultural Revolution, Julia Lowell notes that "the Chinese were locked not just within their national frontiers but within cities, towns and villages."[59] [60] It can be argued then that the Great Wall was not only the symbol of

[57] The story of how the Great Wall became to be thought as the only construction visible from space can be found in Carlos Rojas, *The Great Wall: A Cultural History*, pp. 24-25.

[58] Julia Lovell, *The Great Wall: China against the World, 1000 BC - 2000 AD* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006), p. 317.

[59] Ibidem, p. 320.

[60] The Chinese attraction to walls can be found not only in the fact that they built the Great Wall, but also in the walled compound system of the traditional house system of the walled courtyard houses, siheyuan, and Beijing's narrow alleys, hutong.

how far the Chinese empire had expanded, as Julia Lowell stresses, but the physical separation between two ways of life. One was the life of the sedentary Chinese people who lived on agriculture; the other was the nomadic life of the Mongol and Manchu tribes who lived on herding and hunting. Moreover, a project like the Great Wall was only attempted in the north of China because, as Owen Lattimore argued, wall-building was a northern phenomenon. This was because in the south of China walls in between states were never created, not only for cultural reasons, but also because of the peculiarities in the physical morphology of the southern lands and the consequent differences in social geography.[61]

One of the ways in which the Great Wall can be seen is as the physical expression of the cultural and economic differences between two societies. Lattimore further noted that: "the Great Wall was an attempt to establish a permanent cultural demarcation between the lands of the nomad tribes and the lands held by settled people."[62] While this explanation retains a degree of truth in it, it is also true that the Great Wall, and any wall by that matter, is the expression of a deliberate decision to exclude what feels or appears different from 'us'. Walls can therefore be interpreted as a statement of superiority and of the consequent attitude to perceive the 'us' as better than 'them,' a feeling that Owen Lattimore described in his studies as "special fear and dislike of all the "barbarian" country north of the Great Wall—the region of defence and fear, not of advance and hope."[63]

This interpretation of the Great Wall as a demarcation between two cultures that were seen as opposite brings this argument to the significance of borders for

[61] Owen Lattimore, "Origins of the Great Wall of China: A Frontier Concept in Theory and Practice.," *Geographical Review* 27, no. 4 (October 1937): 529–49, p. 530.

[62] Owen Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History…*, p. 58.

[63] Ibidem, p. 313.

the construction of a national identity. The cultural significance of the Great Wall goes well beyond its function as delimitation between China and the steppe. Its status as border suggests an attitude towards what lies on the inside and on the outside of this demarcation that goes beyond the Mongol and Manchu tribes. In his study on the concepts of border and frontier, Piero Zanini explains how human beings always felt the need to create visible signs in order to indicate the delimitation of the space they decided to live in.[64] Through the creation of limits, humanity defined itself and consequently, the *other*. Zanini defines the border not just as line, but as a space that makes it possible for two entities to meet: a space where their existence is endorsed and affirmed by each other's presence. The purpose of a border is therefore to "state and make evident the place of a difference, whether real or alleged."[65] In wartime China the significance of the Great Wall as a border that defined cultural and geographical differences created the conditions for a nationalism that can be described as "inward directed sentiment"[66] in the sense that it had the purpose of keeping the country together and "provid[ing] a new basis for China's defence and regeneration."[67]

The literature has greatly debated about the correct interpretation and definition of Chinese nationalism that was born and created during the twentieth century. Provided that the nationalist theories were brought into China from the West as inheritance of the Opium Wars and the Boxer Rebellion, the debate on how to create a Chinese nation was actually sparked by the fall of the Qing dynasty and

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[64] Piero Zanini, *Significati Del Confine: I Limiti Naturali, Storici, Mentali*, Testi E Pretesti (Milano: B. Mondadori, 1997), p. XV.

[65] Ibidem, p. 5.

[66] John L. Comaroff and Paul Stern, "New Perspective on Nationalism and War", *Perspective on Nationalism and War*, eds John L. Comaroff and Paul Stern, (Amsterdam: Gordon&Breach, 1995), qtd in Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 5.

[67] James Townsend, "Chinese Nationalism," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 27 (January 1992): 97–130, p. 99.

the fragmented political situation that resulted from it. There were two central questions. The first, was China to abandon the old traditions in favour of a more modern and Western approach to government, society, and technology? The second, what type of symbols did the country need to spread nationalistic feelings in the population? Among the various theories on modern Chinese nationalism, the two that are relevant for this study are the cultural and the racial perspectives.

Racial nationalism is described by Frank Dikötter as a "membership to the community by virtue of a real or imagined congenital endowment, and only secondly on the basis of cultural features."[68] The race aspect in China was built on the myth of the Yellow Emperor as the founder of Chinese civilisation "identified by its yellow skin pigment."[69] While this type of nationalism was embraced along the centuries, especially when the ruling dynasty was not ethnically Han—the Mongols (Yuan dynasty) and the Manchu (Qing dynasty)—during the war against Japan, racial nationalism was abandoned in favour of a more cultural approach.[70] Cultural nationalism claimed that China had been a nation since imperial times because of the shared culture and history. On this point, James Townsend argues that "the primary Chinese identity was cultural, with no perception of a Chinese state or nation apart from the cultural heritage."[71] Although it can be argued that the ethnic groups from the south of China had little in common with the people from the north,

[68] Frank Dikötter, "Culture, 'Race' and Nation: The Formation of National Identity in Twentieth Century China," *Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 590–605, p. 591.

[69] Su Xiaokang, "River Elegy," *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, 24, no. 2 (Winter 1991-1992) p. 9 quoted in Frank Dikötter, "Culture, 'Race' and Nation…," p. 594.

[70] While the race aspect never became paramount in China and did not create the conditions for modern imperialism in the twentieth century, Japan instead, built its imperialist claim in Asia on the belief of being racially superior to the rest of the continent. For an analysis of the race and nationalism issue in pre-war Japan see: Michael Weiner, "Discourses of Race, Nation and Empire in Pre-1945 Japan," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 18, no. 3 (July 1995): 433–56.

[71] James Townsend, "Chinese Nationalism…," p. 98.

the system of the imperial examinations and Confucian norms made it possible for those who accepted these beliefs to be included and accepted as Chinese.[72]

The issue that this Sino-centric view of the world caused was that other cultures would consequently appear inferior and unworthy of any consideration in the eyes of China. One of the most famous examples of this attitude was the letter sent from the Qing emperor Qianlong (r. 1735-1795) to the British monarch King George III (r. 1760-1820) in 1793. To the British request to open trade relations with the Qing, the emperor replied:

> Our dynasty's majestic virtue has penetrated unto every country under Heaven, and Kings of all nations have offered their costly tribute by land and sea. As your Ambassador can see for himself, we possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures.[73]

As Julia Lovell notes, the matter with China and its view of the West was characterised by a mixture of "hatred and admiration for the imperialist West, and of scorn and veneration for China and its past."[74] In the twentieth century, this Chinese approach to the 'other' caused the country to see itself as the victim of Western imperialism. Furthermore, the old Confucian traditions were felt to be the cause that made it impossible for China to fight back and preserve its territorial and political integrity. In the same way, the initial incredulity with which the Japanese imperialistic attempts were received, first with the Twenty-One Demands in 1915 and then the creation of Manchuguo, can be seen as the result of the same attitude of cultural superiority that China also had towards Japan.[75]

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[72] Ibidem, p. 99.

[73] E. Backhouse and J. O. P. Bland, *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), p. 325. https://archive.org/details/annalsmemoirsoft002081mbp, last accessed 12 March 2016.

[74] Julia Lovell, *The Great Wall…*, p.303.

[75] The Twenty-One Demands were sent to the Chinese government during the First World War by the Japanese empire. The demands aimed at gaining more territorial control in China, specifically in Manchuria, extraterritoriality for the Japanese official present on the Chinese soil, and Japanese

Despite the love and hate disposition that the Chinese people had towards their past, the Great wall became the landmark that symbolised the strength of the Chinese nation and its ability to overcome any difficulty. The idea of reviving the myth of the Great Wall came to Sun Yat-sen who, in the early decades of the 1900s, wrote that the Great Wall was "a miracle, a historical one-off."[76] The Great Wall was described as the product of the great technical skills and innovative capacity of the Chinese people. It was a defensive structure that had allowed China to become the great country that along the centuries had assimilated those who tried to conquer it, such as the Mongols and the Manchus. Although not explicitly mentioned, the implication was that even Western powers and Japan would eventually be assimilated, or more appropriately, defeated by China. While this did not exactly happen, thanks to Sun and his theories the myth of the Great Wall was reborn and both the Guomindang and the Communists exploited it for their propaganda strategies.

The humiliation that the wars against Western powers and the Japanese invasion brought to China, as Frank Dikötter notes "mobilized patriotism, promoted national solidarity, and addressed the sense of collective responsibility. [...] Communist propaganda made sure that national identity figured at the top of the political agenda."[77] The cartoonist Mu Yilong (n.a.) portrayed the feeling of being violated and attacked by Japan through a cartoon depicting a viper as it easily enters China through an unguarded tower of the Great Wall.

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control of Chinese financial and political plans. For more, see: Jonathan D Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1991), pp. 285-87.

[76] Ibidem, p. 302.

[77] Frank Dikötter, "Culture, 'Race' and Nation: The Formation of National Identity in Twentieth Century China," *Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 590–605, p. 602.

Figure 21: Mu Yilong, 'A Viper Wriggles South-ward,' from Chang-tai Hung, War and Popular Culture…, p. 102.

In the pages of the *Pictorial*, this national identity was portrayed through images of the Great Wall that was being protected or re-conquered by the Eighth Route Army. The visual, written, and oral narratives that the Communists created were the one of a nation ready to sacrifice their sons and daughters for the protection of their country. As Edward Friedman notes "the People's Army in Yan'an [...] came [...] to embody [...] a unified and indivisible force that alone knew how to save China's people from imperialist domination."[78]

[78] Edward Friedman, *National Identity…*, p. 70.

Figure 22: Sha Fei, Soldiers of the Eighth Route Army Capturing a Tower of the Great Wall, 1937, Si Sushi, Sha Fei and his Wartime Friends, p. 25.

Soldiers of the Eighth Route Army Fighting over the Great Wall

Soldiers of the Eighth Route Army appeared in the fourth issue of the *Pictorial* in 1943 as part of the two-page photo-essay "The Victories of the Jin-Cha-Ji Eighth Route Army" that reported statistics and facts on the battles in which the Army took part it during the months of May, June and July 1943. The photograph, taken by Sha Fei in 1937, shows three Eighth Route Army soldiers—two clearly visible in the foreground, one hidden by the grass in the middle ground—defending the territories adjacent to the Great Wall. The soldiers are shown in full combat gear, with their rifles and guns pointed at the enemy who, although not visible, is understood as the Japanese army. The Great Wall divides the space of the photograph but also separates the Chinese nation, protected by the Eighth Route Army, and what lies beyond it, the invisible and yet very perceivable danger of the Japanese army.

Figure 23: Sha Fei, 'Soldiers of the Eighth Route Army Fighting Over the Great Wall,' *Sha Fei Papers, Box 1,* Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

The subject of this image are not only the soldiers in the foreground, but also the Great Wall that runs along the mountains and occupies most of the image's internal space.

The feeling that the Great Wall runs endlessly along the mountains is given by the angle from which the shot was taken, and by the style chosen by Sha Fei. The composition of the photograph was influenced by traditional Chinese landscape painting techniques: the layering of the foreground—very detailed and usually darker in colour—with a less defined middle ground and a misty, almost blurred background that usually featured towering mountain peaks. This technique, which is very different from Western linear perspective, makes the viewer shift their attention from the top part of the image to the lower part.[79] By pairing this painting technique to the top-right to bottom-left construction of Chinese images, we can see how the viewers would firstly see the Great Wall and then the soldiers. Based on this, it can be argued that Sha Fei constructed the image so as to create a visual and ideological connection between the Great Wall, that always had been protecting China from the invaders for centuries, and the Communist Army that was defending China during the Anti-Japanese War.

The narratives of the Great Wall as protector of the nation since times immemorial and the Eighth Route Army being the only ones fighting for China's freedom was not historically accurate. Sha Fei, and the Party of course, were constructing a new history that wanted to place the Eighth Route Army and the CCP as the legitimate guides for the new China, the ones that, almost single-handedly, saved the nation from the Japanese advance just like the Great Wall had protected China for centuries. It follows that these types of images were constructed with a clear goal: to link the past and the future of China to the CCP.

[79] David B. Greene, "Handscroll Landscape Paintings of the Song Period and Their Tightening Perspective," *Oriental Art* 39, no. 3 (Autumn 1993), p. 20.

In the case of this specific image, an article on photographic manipulation by Gao and Wang explains how Sha Fei decided to place the soldiers on the outside of the Great Wall with the rifles pointed towards the inside, a choice that clearly contradicts the meaning the photograph wanted to convey.[80] However, thanks to this deliberate decision, Sha Fei created an image that was both aesthetically and ideologically powerful. It can therefore be argued that the value of the photograph lies not in the truthful representation of what the Eighth Route Army soldiers were doing, but in the "ideological stance" that the photographer had in mind and in how the image was consequently perceived by the viewers. [81] Moreover, as Wu stresses in his analysis on Communist photographs "the editing of the image makes it even more real" as the aim of propaganda images is not about the factual representation of a person or an event, but about the idealisation of it.[82] These images, although staged or modified, were still ideologically real as they were what people were ready to believe and relate to on the basis of their beliefs and hopes for the future.

The photograph was taken at the Xifengkou pass, a very important location in the military history of China, as it was one of the most important passes on the Yanshan mountain range in the Hebei province. The Xifengkou pass takes its name from a Qin legend that narrates the story of a father who went looking for his son after he had been sent away to work on the Great Wall. When they finally met on the hills surrounding the pass, their happiness was so great that they laughed themselves to death. The pass was consequently named Xifengkou, Happy Meeting Mouth.[83] Aside from the legend, the pass had a strategic defensive role as it was the

[80] Chu Gao and Shuo Wang, eds., "Photographic Manipulation in China: A Conversation between Fu Yu and Gao Chu," *Composite Realities: The Art of Photographic Manipulation in Asia* 6, no. 1 (Fall 2015), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0006.104.

[81] Ibidem.

[82] Wu Hung, *Zooming in…*, p. 216.

[83] D. Larraine Andrews, *Great Walks of the World* (Rocky Mountain Books Incorporated, 2014), p. 62.

location where many battles in the defence of China from northern enemies were fought. This section of the Great Wall was built in the early years of the Ming dynasty under the directions of the famous General Xuda (1332-1385). Few centuries later in 1630 the Manchus used the same pass to reach Beijing and conquer it.[84]

In modern times, the Xifengkou pass saw one of the fiercest battles of the early years of the Anti-Japanese War. In 1933, the nationalist general Song Zheyuan (1885-1940 CE) strenuously fought against the Japanese at Xifengkou, but lost the battle due to inadequate military equipment. Because of this defeat, the Chinese troops consequently retreated into the territories behind the Great Wall.[85] This battle was followed by the Tanggu Truce, an agreement between Chiang Kai Shek and the Japanese Army that was supposed to bring stability in northern China. The truce was signed in May 1933 in Tianjin and saw the creation of a demilitarised zone that ran for a hundred kilometres between south of the Great Wall and north of Beijing where the Chinese troops were not allowed to enter while Japanese troops could still fly over the area.[86]

It is in this context of territorial losses and disruption of society that the need for strong, relatable symbols became the centre of the CCP's propaganda strategies. The urgency to bring the people together to fight against the Japanese invasion, was paired with the ultimate goal of building political consent to ultimately run the country. The fact that China was being violated by a foreign invader was exploited

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[84] Wai-Yee Li, "Heroic Transformations: Women and National Trauma in Early Qing Literature," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59, no. 2 (December 1999), p. 371.

[85] The grandiosity of the battle was such that it is narrated that the Chinese troops fought even with the traditional *dadao (大刀)* swords. This weapon was so famous that inspired one of the most famous nationalist songs of the Anti-Japanese War, "The Sword March." The first line reads: "Our dadao raised over the devils' heads. Hack them off!"

[86] Parks M. Coble, *China's War Reporters: The Legacy of Resistance against Japan* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 14; Philip S. Jowett, *China's Wars: Rousing the Dragon, 1894-1949* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013), p. 197; Peter Gue Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949*, Asia's Transformations (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 268.

by the Communist leadership to draw a connection between the past foreign and the current Japanese one. This connection was created by transforming the Great Wall into the physical symbol of the past—and present—resistance against the *other*. The Great Wall also became a reminder of China's glorious history. Through this connection, the Communist Party was able to put itself at the centre of this re-invented historical narrative and appear as the legitimate and only guide for a new China. In the pages of the *Pictorial*, a consistent number of images feature soldiers on portions of the Great Wall or evocative images of the Great Wall. In the image below for instance, a group of soldiers were immortalised while celebrating after having recaptured of one of the towers that are part of the Great Wall. Sha Fei's photograph of one of the Great Wall's towers (figure 24) was used as front cover for the first issue of the *Pictorial* in 1942. Figure 26 instead was the feature photograph in the third issue in 1943. The image evoked the endlessness of the Great Wall and its political and military importance through the caption "Hebei is ours" (*Hebei shi womende)*.

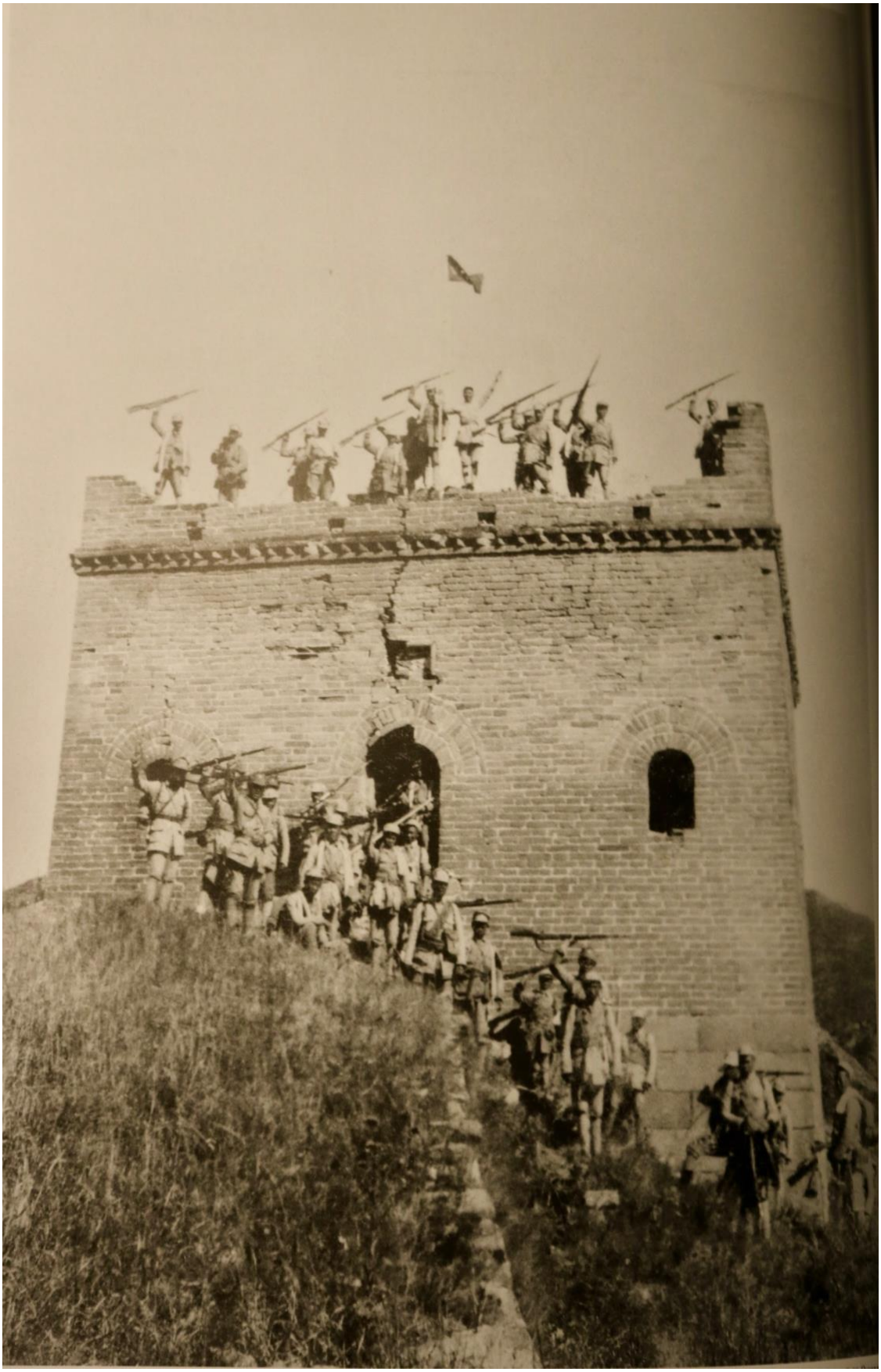

Figure 24: Sha Fei, 'Soldiers Celebrating Victory over the Great Wall', 1937, *Sha Fei Papers, Box 1,* Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

Figure 25: Front Cover of the First Issue, *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial,* 1942.

Figure 26: Photographer Unknown, "Hebei is Ours", Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, Issue n. 3, May 1943.

The emergence of the Chinese national awareness and the consequent need for national symbols can be therefore understood as the result of an external military and cultural threat. While Japanese nationalism was outward-directed as it took the form of imperialism based on the idea of Japanese racial supremacy in the Asian continent, Chinese nationalism was an "inward-directed sentiment" whose purpose was to keep the country together.[87] It is exactly in this context then that the Great Wall was chosen and used to symbolise the everlasting and allegedly always existed strength and unity of China.

The Long March

> The Long March is the first of its kind in the annals of History. It is a manifesto, a propaganda force, a seeding-machine. […] It has proclaimed to the world that the Red Army is an army of heroes, while the imperialists and their running dogs, Chiang Kai-shek and his like, are impotent.[88]

With these words from the 1935 essay "On tactics against Japanese Imperialism," Mao Zedong explained the significance of the Long March and praised the courage of those who took part in it. Aside from celebrating the success of the Long March, Mao also wrote of the practical hardships that he and the soldiers of the Red Army experienced along the way. During the twelve months necessary to reach Yan'an, they faced, he reported, "bombing from the skies," while being "encircled and pursued" by Nationalist forces.[89]

The language used by Mao to describe the Long March evidently wants to convey the heroism and unique character of the journey. It was an event so

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[87] John L. Comaroff and Paul Stern, "New Perspective on Nationalism and War", *Perspective on Nationalism and War*, eds John L. Comaroff and Paul Stern, (Amsterdam: Gordon&Breach, 1995), qtd in Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 5.

[88] Zedong Mao, "On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism," *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung/ Vol.1, The First Revolutionary Civil War Period; The Second Revolutionary Civil War Period.*, vol. 1 (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), p. 160.

[89] Ibidem.

extraordinary that could only be compared to the creation of heavens and earth by Pan Ku and the reigns of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors.[90] In the eyes of the Party the March was an exceptional propaganda weapon because it "announced to some 200 million people in eleven provinces that the road of the Red Army is their only road to liberation."[91] From Mao's essay, it appears that already in 1935 the Chairman had recognised the power that the March could have for his political plans as head of the Party and the country. While it is true that the Long March sealed the role of Mao as leader of the Party and the Army, and that the journey was incredible given the hardships that were overcome by the people who took part in it, it is however necessary to debunk some parts of the mythology associated with it.

The Long March (*changzheng*) began in the autumn of 1934 from the Jiangxi province in the southeast of China. Despite the grandeur that surrounded the event, the Long March was in fact a retreat to avoid a military defeat and possibly the total destruction of the Red Army from a major offensive that Chiang Kai-shek had launched against the Communists in 1934. The Long March began in a moment of political friction in the ranks of the Communist Party. The influence of the Bolshevik faction—ideologically closer to the Soviet Union—was still strong and while some of the participants in the Long March were killed during Nationalist attacks, others simply deserted the CCP because of its political instability.[92] Due to the strong differences between the Bolshevik faction and the Communist party members, such as Mao Zedong, who wanted to distance the Party from Moscow's influence,

[90] Ibidem.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Marianne Bastid-Bruguière, "La crisi delle istituzioni imperiali e l'esperienza repubblicana" in Maurizio Scarpari, Roberto Ciarla, and Guido Samarani, eds., *La Cina*, vol. 3, 4 vols. (Torino: Einaudi, 2009), p. 93.

leadership of the Party had weakened.[93] In January 1935 in the city of Zunyi in Guizhou, the political office decided to entrust Mao, who had the support of various generals and of the people, with the command of the military operations in the hope that his leadership would bring more stability to the Party. In few months, by taking advantage of his strong military role, Mao laid the foundation that would allow him to become the only political leader of the Party.

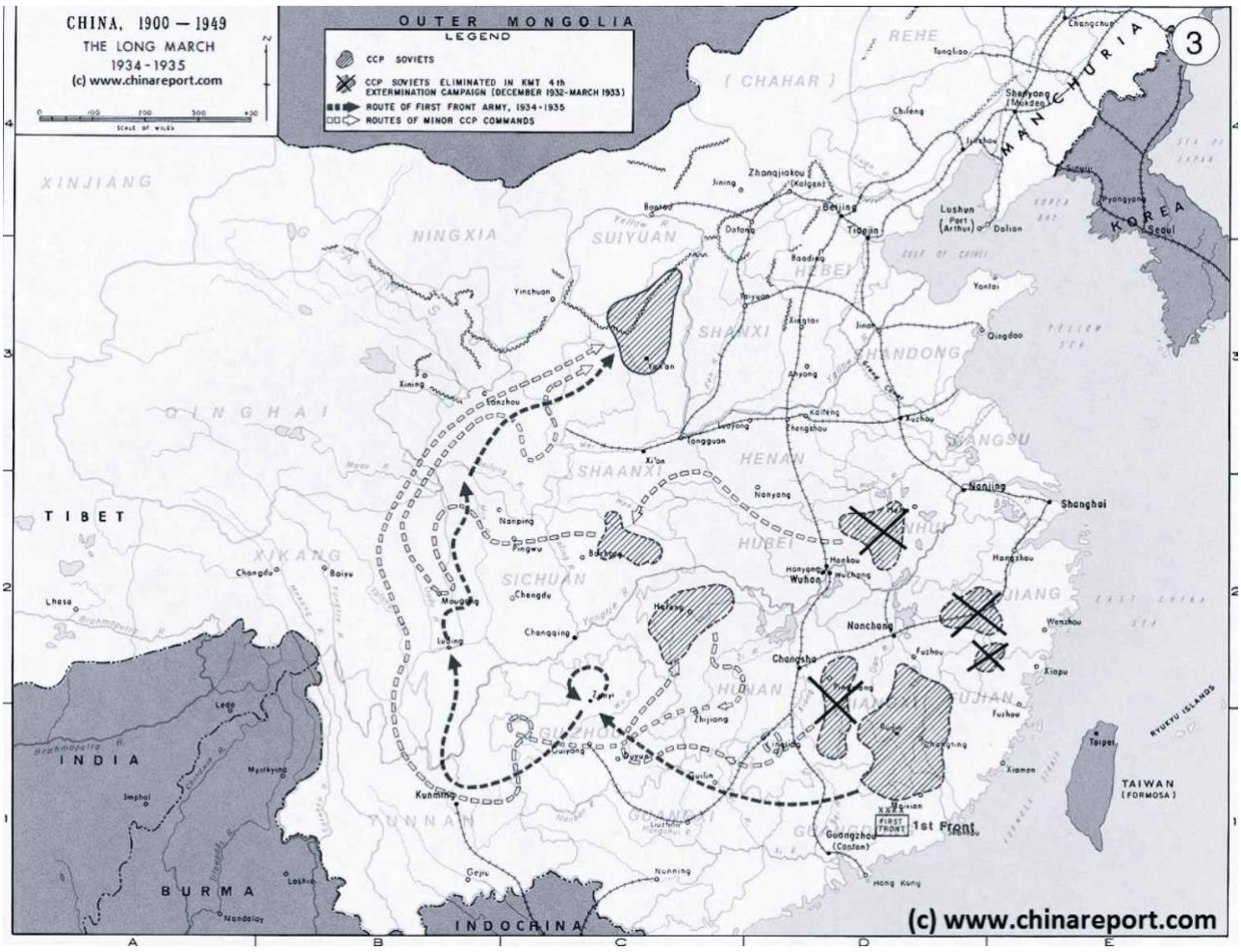

Figure 27: Map of the Long March, *http://www.drben.net/ChinaReport/Sources/China_Maps/1912-1949/Map-China-Long-March-1935-35AD-1A.html.*

Once the Communists reached Shaanxi in October 1935 with only 7,000 survivors from the initial 80,000 who joined the March, Mao, backed by Zhou Enlai and the new leadership of the Party, began to pressure the Nationalists for a new

[93] The Bolsheviks were a group of students who were formed at the Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow. The University was a Comintern school that in the span of five years, between 1925 and 1930, educated many Chinese revolutionaries. It had been founded by Sun Yat-sen as he believed that the Guomindang needed more revolutionaries. When the alliance between the Guomindang and the Soviet Union failed, the University closed.

United Front in order to fight the Japanese advance together.[94] In this new context of rebuilt strong leadership and endorsement from the people, Mao, helped by the propaganda department, also initiated the creation of the myth of the Long March. A considerable part of the myth was also shaped by foreign journalists. For instance, Edgar Snow celebrated the March by writing "However one may feel about the Reds and what they represent politically [...] it is impossible to deny recognition of their Long March – the Ch'ang Cheng [Changzheng] as they call it—as one of the great exploits of military history."[95]

In Communist propaganda, the Long March and the Great Wall were compared in terms of greatness and uniqueness as both were the result of the dedication and endurance of the Chinese people. Both ventures also became the symbol of the sacrifice done to save the nation from the invaders. The association of the Long March and the Great Wall was also visually constructed. While the Great Wall was a stone-dragon stretching along the mountains in the north of China, the March was commonly depicted as a snakelike procession of people overcoming innumerable physical and military hardships along their journey to the north of the country.

The most representative examples of how the March was depicted in propaganda sources can be found in the images created along the journey and in later years that wanted to celebrate the March. The two sketches below were gifts given to Helen Foster Snow in Yan'an in 1937 by unknown painters who took part in the Long March.

[94] The actual numbers of the people who took part in the March and of the survivors are not clear. The numbers here were taken from "The Long March (1934-35), *chineseposters.net*, https://chineseposters.net/themes/long-march.php, last accessed 4 May 2017 and Marianne Bastid-Bruguière, "La crisi delle istituzioni imperiali…", p. 85 and 93.

[95] Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, (New York: The Modern Library, 1944), p. 216.

Figure 28: Artist Unknown, 'Shieh Shan (The Great Snowy Mountain Range)', c.1935, Nym Wales Collection, Box 65, mX, Woodcut Prints, "Drawing of the Long March, 1930-1940," Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

Figure 28 “Great Snowy Mountain Range,” was created in a traditional landscape style with detailed figures in the foreground, and less detailed and lighter in colour middle ground and foreground elements. The soldiers, equipped with backpacks and rifles, are portrayed as a unique, ordinate serpentine running along the mountains. This was an embellished depiction created to convey the grandeur of the March while ignoring the many adversities and tragic losses. The caption of the image reveals that the mountain range was the one stretching between Tibet and Western Sichuan, where peaks can reach 24,000 feet high but, as the artist noted, “the spirit of the Chinese Red Army is still higher.”[96]

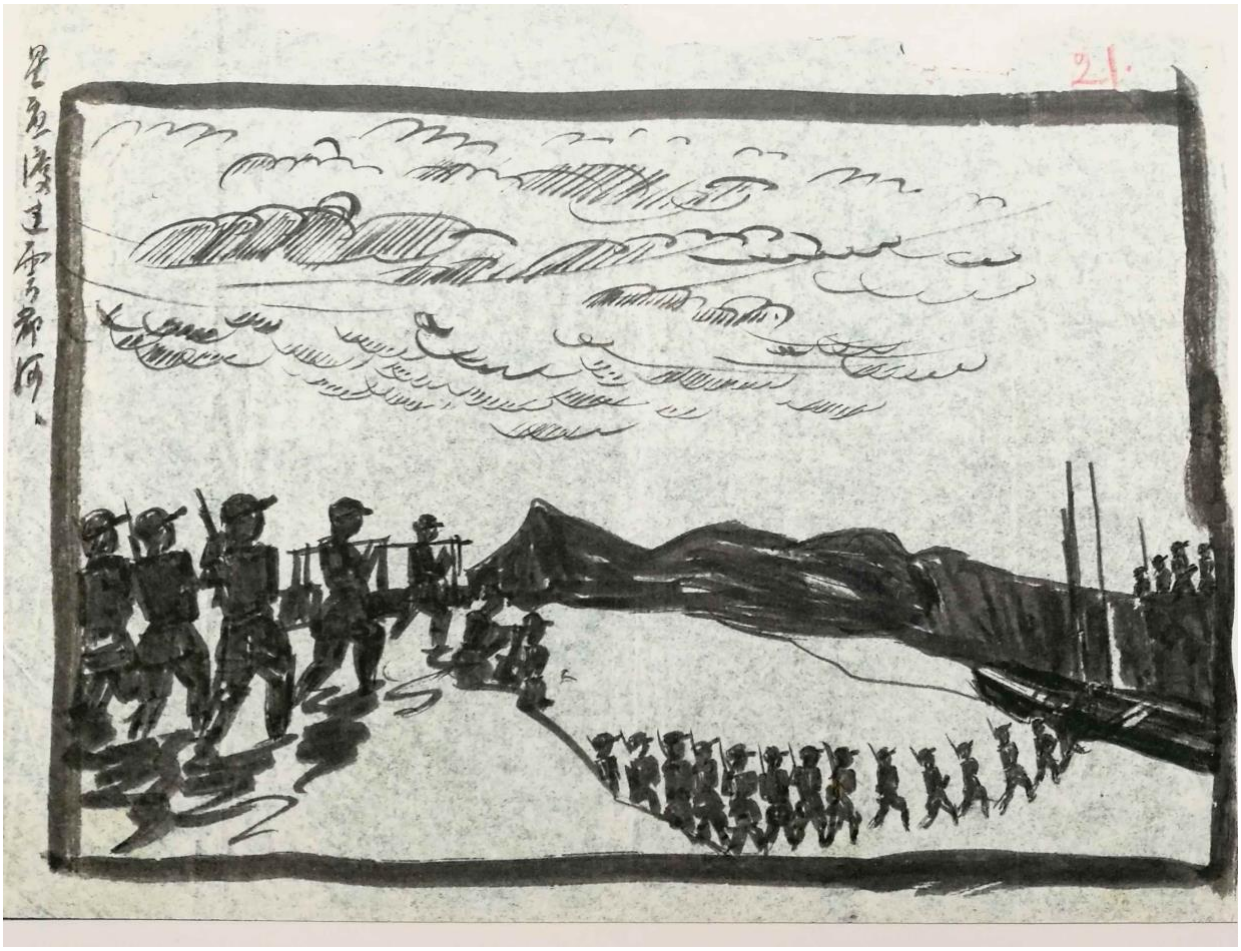

Figure 29: Artist Unknown, Crossing the Yung Tu River during late at night, c. 1935, *Nym Wales Collection,* Box 65, mX, Woodcut Prints, “Drawing of the Long March, 1930-1940,” Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

Figure 29 can appear as somehow less evocative in terms of pathos but depicts a significant event occurred during the Long March, the Battle of Luding Bridge in

[96] Ibidem.

March 1935. In this case the image is horizontally composed, with mountain peaks and clouds in the background, while the foreground is occupied by the soldiers neatly crossing the river. In the Nym Wales boxes, the caption names the river as Yung Tu, yet no Chinese river could be identified by that name. It was determined that the Yung Tu could be either the Yangtze River or the Dadu River in Sichuan, some eighty kilometres west from Yan'an.[97] While both rivers were important, the crossing of the Dadu became legendary because of the battle that took place over the Luding Bridge, a suspension bridge built during the Qing dynasty in 1701.

The Battle of Luding Bridge became part of the mythology of the March as it was one of the fiercest battles between the Communists and the Nationalist Army.[98] Philip S. Jowett notes that Mao told Western journalists about the importance of the Luding Bridge battle and that the crossing of the river had been "the single most important event of the Long March."[99] In this woodcut, the artist aimed to celebrate the bravery of the soldiers and their ablility to overcome not only the military challenges but also the natural ones. From a visual point of view, the image was constructed so the viewers could perceive the soldiers as a unique entity, walking towards its destination.

While it could be argued that landscape is not prominent in these example, the images presented above are relevant as they contributed to the creation of the mythological landscape of the Long March and of the history of the Communist Party. As proof of this, we can look at the poster series "An Arduous Journey" created by Ying Yeping (1910 CE-) and Wang Huanqin (n.a.) in 1961. The series is composed of eight posters that portray the most crucial moments of the Long March, from the

[97] Both rivers are mentioned in Philip S. Jowett, *China's Wars…*, pp. 213-14, but more attention is dedicated to the Dadu River and the Luding Battle.

[98] John M. Nolan, "The Long March: Fact and Fancy," *Military Affairs* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 77–90, p. 82.

[99] Philip S. Jowett, *China's Wars…*, p. 214.

departure from the initial CCP base in Ruijin to the arrival in Northern Shaanxi. These posters were created on the basis of traditional landscape painting, with towering mountains in the background, mist and cloud in the middle ground, and a detailed foreground.

Figure 30: Ying Yeping and Wang Huanqing, *Ruijin (left), Luding Bridge (middle), Snowy Mountains (right), 1961, https://chineseposters.net/posters/pc-1961-006.php,* last accessed 10 October 2017.

Ying Yeping and Wang Huanqin reimagined the events in an even more dramatic way, portraying the soldiers neatly following their leader across snowy mountain peaks and turbulent rivers. In these posters, the towering mountains in the background are not just a perspective device but suggest that the will and determination of those who fight for the right cause can defeat any obstacle.

Yan'an, the birthplace of the Chinese Nation

The last section of this chapter is dedicated to Yan'an and its value as the birthplace of the Chinese nation and, most importantly, as the place that sealed Mao's role as leader of the Party. Yan'an is a town in northern Shaanxi located at the centre of the Loess Plateau and close to the Yellow river. Yan'an was the final destination of the survivors of the Long March and although it was economically a relatively poor location, it was isolated enough for the Party and the Army to regain strength after the long journey. The most famous geographical characteristic of the city and its surrounding areas are the *yaodong* caves. The caves were shelters carved inside the hills so that the earth composing the walls maintained a cool temperature during the summer and a warm one during the winter. In her memories of her arrival in Yan'an, the writer Hsiao Li Lindsay remembers that "we could see the distinctive feature of Yenan, tiers and tiers of caves cut into the yellow hillside."[100] The Communist leaders, Mao Zedong included, lived in the *yaodong* during their residence in the area.[101] The photographers in Yan'an, especially Zheng Jingkang (1904-1978 CE) and Wu Yinxian, took a considerable number of images of Mao and other leaders giving speeches and reports on the war situation outside the *yaodong* caves in Yan'an at the Senior Cadre Conference in 1942.[102]

[100] Hsiao Li Lindsay, *Bold Plum: With the Guerrillas in China's War against Japan* (Morrisville, N.C: Lulu, 2007), p. 245.

[101] One of the most famous photographs of the life of Mao in Yan'an was taken in the mid-1930s and portrays a young Mao with Zhou Enlai outside a yaodong.

[102] Zheng Jingkang was the photographer who took the portrait of Mao that is visible on the Tian'anmen gate in Beijing.

Figure 31: Wu Yinxian, *Liu Bocheng (left), Ye Jianying (centre) and Zhu De (right) at the Yan'an Senior Cadre Conference, 1942, gy.qq.com/original/photo/pic059.html,* last accessed 26 August 2018.

Figure 32: Zheng Jingkang, *Mao Zedong Giving a Speech at the Yan'an Senior Cadre Conference, 1942, http://www.chinesephotography.org/?p=1316,* last accessed 7 September 2018.

The photographic portrayal of the caves contributed to the creation of the myth of Yan'an as birthplace of the revolution as well as the place where Mao asserted his leadership and wrote his socialist theories. It was only after the Communists settled in Yan'an and in the surrounding regions that Mao Zedong began to consistently appear in photographs and propaganda images.

Figure 33: Wu Yinxian, 'Pioneering Work', 1942, *from Si Sushi, Hongse Yingxiang (Beijing: Beijing Lianhe Chubangongsi, 2015),* p.126.

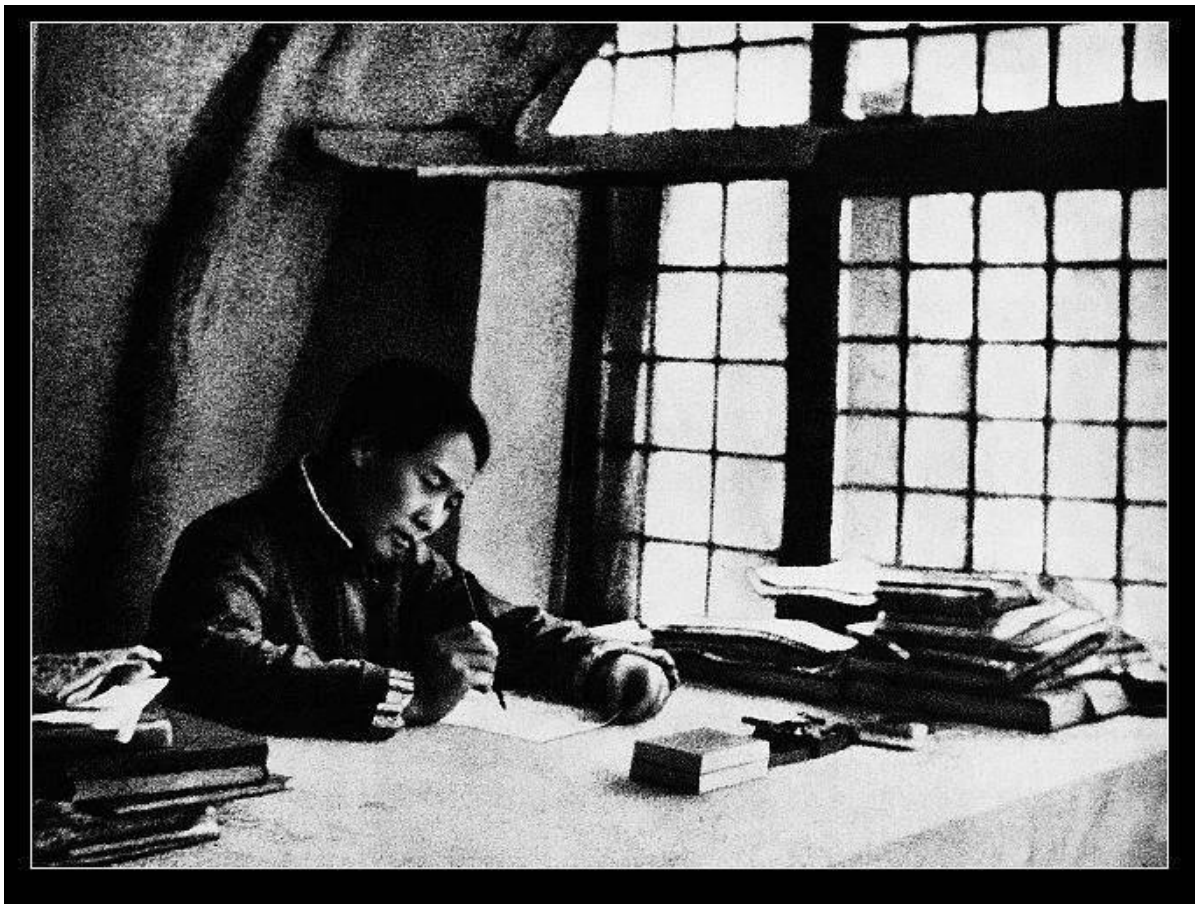

Figure 34: Photographer Unknown, Mao Writing 'On Protracted War', 1938, *https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mao1938a.jpg,* last accessed 19 January 2018.

This is of course not to say that before 1935 there were no photographs or images of the Chairman, but that the Mao cult began only after the Communists settled in Yan'an and became strongly connected with the town and its people.

As evidence of this, it is necessary to look a bit beyond the war period and consider the posters created in the late half of the twentieth century. Arguably, the most famous image of this type is the one created by Xin Mang (1916 CE-) in 1951, not long after the Party had left Yan'an.[103] In the painting, Mao is seated in a *yaodong* cave writing and looking outside in a contemplative way. The room appears to be more comfortable and adorned with an elegant desk lamp and a well ironed

[103] Kirk A. Denton "Yan'an as Site of Memory", Marc Andre Matten, ed., *Places of Memory in Modern China: History, Politics, and Identity*, Leiden Series in Comparative Historiography, v. 5 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), p.237.

tablecloth. The image strongly resembles the 1938 photograph of Mao writing "On Protracted War" (figure 34).

Figure 35: Xin Mang, *Mao Zedong Writing in Yan'an, 1951, https://u.osu.edu/mclc/bibliographies/image-archive/special/denton/#jp-carousel-8005,* last accessed 23 January 2018.

Besides the caves, the other distinctive feature of the city of Yan'an was the Baoda Pagoda, a nine-story construction built during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). The pagoda was frequently included in the photographs taken in Yan'an. The work by Zhang Dali, *A Second History*, is an analysis on the deliberate and systematic manipulation of Communist images that aims at shedding a light on the amount of doctoring that photographs went through since the 1940s until the late 1970s. One of Zhang Dali's examples is an image by Wu Yinxian of Mao walking in the fields

under the towering shadow of the pagoda. By juxtaposition, Zhang shows how the person who manipulated the original photograph deleted the people closer to Mao and added colours and shadows to make the Chairman appear taller and the Pagoda more defined. On the importance of the Baoda pagoda, Wu Hung notes that it is "standing directly behind Mao" and that "its monumentality reinforces Mao's position as supreme leader of the revolution."[104]

Figure 36: Zhang Dali, *'Chairman Mao in Yan'an, 1943,' A Second History No.30,* from Wu Hung, *Zooming In*…, p. 194.

Kirk A. Denton further notes that already during wartime, Yan'an was being used for propaganda reasons and called "a sacred land of democracy."[105] After a decline during the 1950s, Yan'an re-emerged in propaganda images during the Cultural Revolution and became the symbol of the self-sacrifice of the Chinese people for the revolutionary cause. Many posters created during the 1960s and 1970s in fact

[104] Wu Hung, *Zooming in…, p. 194.*

[105] Kirk A. Denton "Yan'an as Site of Memory…," p.233.

featured Yan'an and its pagoda.[106] For instance, the poster *Long Live the Yan'an Spirit* (figure 37) brings together the value of the Baoda Pagoda and the symbolism of the Eight Route Army soldiers as the new immortals seen at the beginning of this chapter.

Figure 37: Ha Qiongwen, *'Long Live the Yan ' an Spirit ' , 1961, https://chineseposters.net/posters/g2-53.php,* last accessed 11 October 2017.

The poster shows a peasant soldier holding a rifle and a hoe on a mountain top. He looks forward with a determined gaze in his eyes while the Baoda Pagoda, the only visible construction, emerges from the mist. This peasant soldier can be understood as a new version of the sentinels of the Eighth Route Army. While the sentinels

[106] For more posters see: https://chineseposters.net/themes/yanan.php.

portrayed in the Pictorial in the 1940s were only soldiers, the man in the poster with a rifle and a hoe represents the new socialist man. He is a peasant-soldier ready to fight for his country. The red booklet peeking out of his pocket suggests that the man is guided by Mao's teachings and is therefore following and embodying the Yan'an spirit.

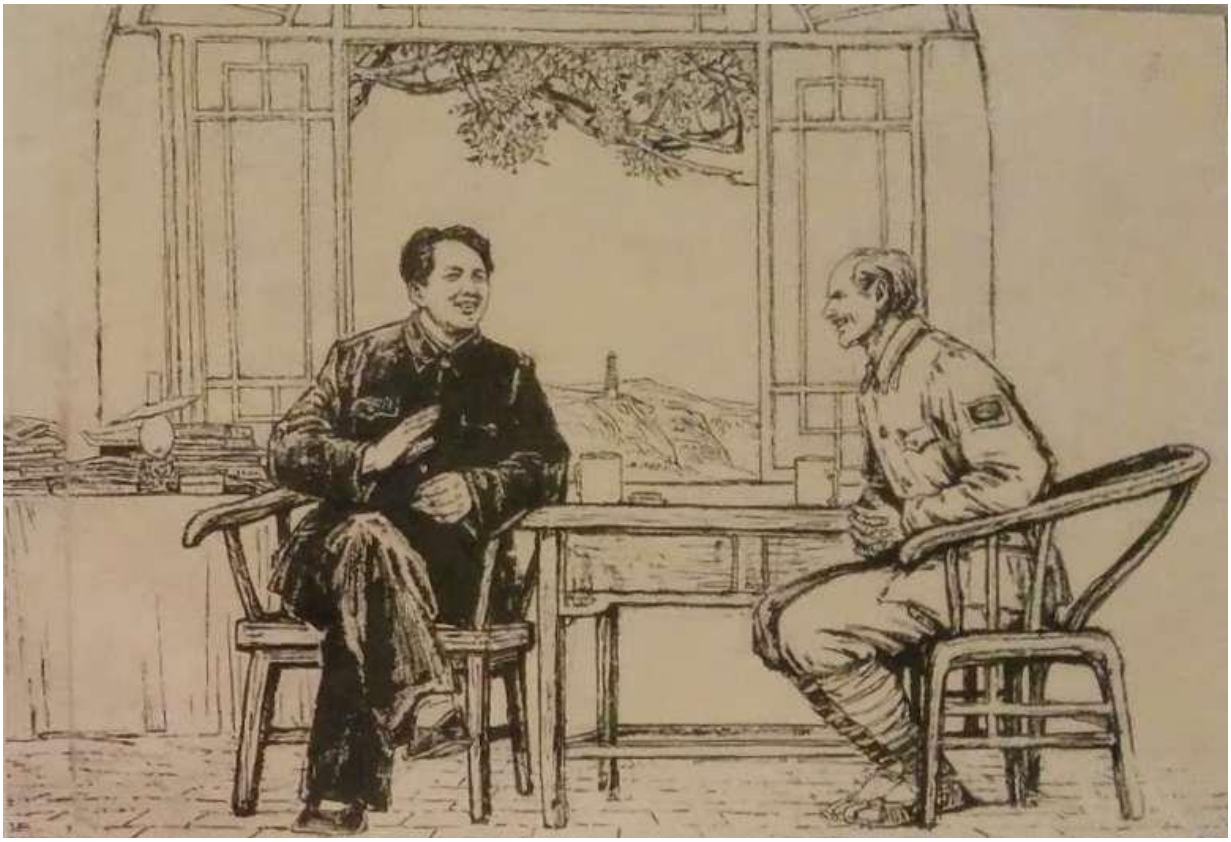

Figure 38: Xu Rongchu, Xu Yong, Gu Liantang, Wang Yisheng, *Plate 2 of the Picture-Story Book Norman Bethune in China,* 1973, National Art Museum of China. Photograph by the author.

Another image, created in 1973, shows Mao Zedong in conversation with Norman Bethune. The Baoda pagoda is visible in the background and it is purposely located at the centre of the image, framed by the window and the two men. The location is suggested not only by the pagoda, but also by the characteristic round window built for the *yaodong* caves.

The symbolic value of the pagoda endured across the decades to the point that it was included as one of the three symbols of Chinese Communism together with the Jinggang Mountains—known as the birthplace of the Chinese Red Army—and Tian'anmen, the entrance of the Forbidden City and one of the national symbols of

China.[107] An example of this are the badges that were created between 1966 and 1976 as tokens for the dedication and loyalty to the Maoist teachings. Mary Ginsberg notes that between 1966 and 1971 more than five billion badges were made. On the badge, it is possible to see Mao with his arm raised forward and on the bottom left, the three most important locations in the history of Chines Communism: Tian'anmen, the Jinggang Mountains and of course, the Baoda Pagoda.

Figure 39: Chairman Mao badge, 1969, from Mary Ginsberg, *The Art of Influence*…, p. 143.

Conclusions

"Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past," wrote George Orwell in *1984*.[108] This quote seemed the most appropriate to describe the role of landscape-themed photographs and images presented in this

[107] Mary Ginsberg, *The Art of Influence…,* p. 142.

[108] George Orwell, *1984: A Novel; Revised and Updated Bibliography*, Nachdr. (New York, NY: Signet, 2002), p. 313.

chapter. The ways in which Communist propaganda portrayed landscape and landmarks contributed to the creation of a new political and historical geography. The Communist Party controlled the past—the traditional symbolism of mountains and legends surrounding the birth of the Chinese nation—in order to plant the seeds for the socialist society that was created after 1949. This society glorified collective efforts for the good of the country, and hailed Mao as the enlightened leader who was to be followed under any circumstance. The Party also controlled the present: the events of the Long March and life in Yan'an. These events were ideologically and visually rooted in the Chinese past, therefore connecting the land to the new mythology of the Red Army, the Party, and the ideological foundations of Chinese communism.

With the advent of photography the landscape theme, popular in dynastic times, did not lose its appeal.[109] Although there were no traditional landscape paintings published in the *Pictorial*, many of the photographs that featured mountains or landscapes were clearly influenced by traditional landscape iconography and symbolism. The use of clouds as perspective devices and the representation of mountains as sacred locations were retained in wartime propaganda photographs. As there could not be Daoist or Buddhist gods living and protecting the mountains, the CCP decided to substitute these traditional and religious figures with the Eighth Route Army soldiers. During the Anti-Japanese War, to appear as defendants of the motherland and fighters for the freedom of the nation were primary concerns for the CCP. Such images were created to draw a connection between the traditional beliefs in mountain deities and the defence of the nation ensured by the Party and its army. Aside from the more informative

[109] Aside from propaganda photographs, many modern and contemporary Chinese photographers adopted a traditional style for their photographic landscapes. Among the most famous, there are Lai Aifong and his studio (active 1859-1940s CE), Lang Jingshan (1892-1995 CE), Dong Hong-Oai (1929-2004 CE), Yuan Lianmin (b.1932 CE-), and Wang Wusheng (b.1945 CE-).

images of the various campaigns in which the Eighth Route Army took part, a noticeable amount of the landscape themed photographs that appeared in the *Pictorial* were meant to encourage the people to join the anti-Japanese struggle and to portray the bravery of the Communist troops.

Through the analysis of the images printed in the *Pictorial* it also appeared that the Great Wall prominently appeared in the magazine between 1942 and 1945. Aside from the practical reasons for this subject choice—the Party and the Eighth Route Army were living and fighting in the regions close to the Great Wall—the Great Wall was used as the symbol of the Chinese resistance and national unity. Through this type of visual propaganda, the CCP wanted to achieve two objectives. The first, the Great Wall was a symbol of resistance that was deeply rooted in Chinese history. Through the exploitation of its ideological value, the Party aimed to show that it was fighting for China and its people's freedom. This type of propaganda was not centred on political plans, but on saving China from the Japanese advance. This a-political propaganda which had its roots in the ancestral feelings for the motherland and fear of the *other*, was relatable to all people and it became one of the strongest assets for wartime Communist propaganda. And yet, the second objective of landscape-themes images was indeed political. The relationship between landmarks, nationalism, and political legitimation was skilfully constructed by the CCP in the initial years of the war. Through a visual and written propaganda that associated the CCP with the idea that they were the natural, legitimate guide to guide China into modernity, the Party began to build legitimacy for its claim to power. By rooting itself in the places where the Chinese civilisation was born, the Party was building a new cultural geography that strongly contributed to add credibility and a mythical aura to its political legitimation. From the Great Snowy Mountains to the Luguo Bridge, through the Loess Plateau up to the city of Yan'an and its pagoda, the Communist Party and the Army bounded their history

with the one of the Chinese landscape in order to emerge as the legitimate guides for new China.

One last final consideration has to be made in relation to the role of gender and how landscape was portrayed in the images presented in this chapter. The fact that there were no women, whether soldiers or peasants, in these landscape-themed images raises the issue of how gender influenced the creation of the wartime cultural landscape. The majority of the photographers who worked during the Anti-Japanese War were men and their male gaze played a role in the way in which landscape was interpreted. In their photographs and in the *Pictorial*, women were never described as saviours or defendants of the nation, nor were they portrayed as sentinels on mountain tops or on the Great Wall. While this can be explained by the fact that, as David S. Goodman notes, that the CCP was mobilising women for productivity reasons, more than for military ones, it is also true that women were still seen, and therefore represented, as victims.[110]

The language used in Communist sources shows that the Chinese nation was addressed as motherland (*zuguo)* and was commonly described as being violated by the Japanese advance (see figure 21). Images of raped or murdered women were also used in order to show the disruption that the Japanese advance was causing. Conversely, when soldiers were shown as war victims, the images glorified their sacrifice for the nation. This visual and written language conveyed a view of China as victim and, in a broader sense, as a female entity in need of the protection that only fathers, brothers, and sons could provide. This view was further reinforced by how the CCP celebrated and remembered women's contribution during wartime.

[110] David S. G. Goodman, "Revolutionary Women and Women in the Revolution: The Chinese Communist Party and Women in the War of Resistance to Japan, 1937-1945," *The China Quarterly*, no. 164 (December 2002), p. 918.

The Party hailed women as mothers and daughters of the nation or as martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the defence of the nation.[111]

This male oriented understanding of society deeply influenced the iconography of the cultural landscape that the Communist were constructing during the war. In the photographs presented in this chapter, landscape is seen through a male gaze as a female entity that was being protected and safeguarded by the brave, virtuous soldiers of the Eighth Route Army. It was a military dominated, patriarchal landscape. In Don Mitchell's study on cultural geography, Phil Kinsman is used as a reference for his studies on the relationship between landscape, national identity, race, and gender. Kinsman says that when "a group is excluded from […] landscapes of national identity […] they are excluded to a large degree from the nation itself."[112] Although Kinsman was referring to race and gender in the British context, his analysis is nonetheless valid for this study as it raises the question of whether the exclusion of women from landscape representation in wartime propaganda images meant that they were also excluded from the CCP's political plans for the new China.

[111] There are many examples of women being celebrated as mothers and daughters of the nation. They can be found at http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/people/history/0/217-1.htm, last accessed 25 April 2017.

[112] Phil Kinsman, "Landscape, Race and National Identity: The Photography of Ingrid Pollard," *Area* 27, no. 4 (December 1995): 300–310, p. 301 quoted in Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*, p. 260.

Becoming Modern Women

In-between Confucian Tradition and Socialist Revolution

The most highly praised woman is the one about whom no one speaks.

—Chinese Proverb

The analysis of the *Pictorial* and the *Liberation Daily* showed that women attracted particular attention and were the subject of various photographs and woodcuts in 1943. In these images, women were portrayed while spinning and weaving, frequently in the company of their children or other women. This way of representing women had its root in the political and economic needs of the year in question. 1943 was a crucial year for China, both in the economic and the political sphere. Economically, the famine in Henan and surrounding areas was a tragedy that the Nationalist government was not fully prepared to face.[1] As a consequence, the Communists exploited the event for their own political good and portrayed life in the controlled areas in an idealized way; people were happy, well fed and under the protection of the CCP and the Eighth Route Army. Women were working and actively helping the resistance movement by participating in production campaigns; schools were organized to teach them how to read and write; their kids were taken care of in the nurseries organized by the Party.

From a political viewpoint, 1943 saw the implementation of the Yan'an Rectification Movement, launched by Mao in 1942. Not only did the movement confirm the role of Mao as head of the Party, but it also signalled the departure

[1] Rana Mitter, *China's War with Japan, 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival* (London: Penguin Books, 2013); Zhenyun Liu, "Memory, Loss", *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/30/opinion/global/why-wont-the-chinese-acknowledge-the-1942-famine.html?_r=0, 30 November 2012, accessed 16 April 2016.

from Moscow's ideological guidelines in favour of a more Chinese approach to socialism. Although it might appear that this ideological departure from the Soviet Union did not concern women, the images of women spinning had a strong political implication. A traditional activity, such as weaving, was transformed into a political message and it became part of the Communist spirit that Mao was advocating in Yan'an. To rely on 'one own's strength' (*zili gengsheng*) became the symbol of the ideological and material self-sufficiency that Mao aimed to achieve in the early 1940s.[2]

The self-sufficiency of women was also part of the Party's political agenda as it fell under the conditions necessary for the creation of a more equal society. According to the CCP, the reasons for women's backward situation was primarily due to economic reasons. In the eyes of the Party, better economic conditions would consequently ameliorate women's lives and as a result, create a more equal society. However, in the 1930s and 1940s, winning the war was the main goal of the Party as defeating Japan was considered the first step for the realisation of a socialist society. The full emancipation of women would take place only after defeating the enemy and establishing a socialist nation. During wartime, the portrayal of women at the spinning wheel was not the first step towards gender equality, but a propaganda strategy created in order to increase production by bringing women into the workforce.

From the analysis of female representation in the manual *Images of Plowing and Weaving* (*Geng Zhitu*) and the hero emulation movement to Socialist Realism, this chapter aims to place the images of spinning women into the right historical

[2] The *Zili Gengsheng* movement can be compared to the *swadeshi* movement in India, led by Gandhi during the decades 1920s up until the independence in 1947. For more on the Swadeshi Movement, see: Lisa N. Trivedi, "Visually Mapping the 'Nation': Swadeshi Politics in Nationalist India, 1920-1930," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62, no. 1 (February 2003): 11–41.

and cultural context. Out of all the images of spinning women that appeared in CCP publications in the 1940s, the ones from the year 1943 are used as case study.

The available literature on female representation in China has mostly focused on posters and films, while photographic representation appears to be of less academic interest.[3] Following the feminist ideology that the New Culture Movement launched during the early decades of the 1900s, the CCP leadership promoted women's rights in its political agenda, announced the need for a more equal society and for the inclusion of women in the political environment. Mao Zedong's speeches and articles on the injustice of Chinese society towards women reinforced the argument that it was time for women to break free from the patriarchal prison. Yet, the realization of a socialist society was the first and foremost aim of the CCP; gender equality, women's rights and feminist movements were always considered of secondary importance to class struggle and the socialist revolution. In the eyes of the Party, better economic conditions would have consequently brought better life conditions for women and as a result, gender equality.

This socialist way of approaching women's issues caused the CCP leadership to always subordinate women-oriented policies to economic reforms. As Johnson explains, "women cadres were repeatedly criticized for the tendency to 'separate the women's movement from the general revolutionary movement.'"[4] This is to say that although the Party officially recognized the need to include women in its

[3] Shuqin Cui, *Women through the Lens: Gender and Nation in a Century of Chinese Cinema*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003; Harriet Evans, and Stephanie Donald, eds. *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China: Posters of the Cultural Revolution*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999; Jennifer Lee, "Engendering Modern China: Visual Representation of the PRC." Connecticut College, East Asian Languages and Cultures Department, 2013. http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/eastasianhp/6; Lu, Xian-An, and Linda Y. Devenish. "Women in Propaganda Posters in Post-Liberation China: Portrayals of Insidious Oppression." In *Women and the Media: Diverse Perspectives*, 147-166. University Press of America, 2005; Paul G. Pickowicz, "The Theme of Spiritual Pollution in Chinese Films of the 1930s." *Modern China* 17, no. 1 (January 1991): 38–75.

[4] Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 87.

political discourse, it maintained the social status quo of women in a traditional, conservative setting, instead of actively promoting women-oriented policies. In the name of the socialist revolution and the freedom of the country, the Party delayed and dismissed the implementation of women's rights while contributing to the existence of the traditional, patriarchal society.

The life of Chinese women

The difficult conditions that Chinese women had to endure throughout their lives has been the focus of numerous studies. Scholars have directed their attention to various aspects of what being a woman meant in China. Gail Hershatter and Margery Wolf explored the role of women in Chinese society across the centuries.[5] Elisabeth Croll and Laurel Bossen examined the implications of the concepts of daughter, wife, and mother and the impact of foot binding in the economic, psychological, and social sphere.[6] Broader issues such as the difficulties in achieving a women-centred narrative, the role of women in the Chinese political environment, and the role of family as an economic unit, were also the focus of numerous studies.[7]

Two main considerations emerge from these studies. The first, if generalizations are arguably wrong in any field, to give a general picture of

[5] Gail Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: Global, Area, and International Archive: University of California Press, 2007); Margery Wolf, *Revolution Postponed: Women in Contemporary China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1985).

[6] Laurel Bossen et al., "Feet and Fabrication: Foot binding and Early Twentieth-Century Rural Women's Labor in Shaanxi," *Modern China* 37, no. 4 (July 2011): 347–83; Elisabeth Croll, *Feminism and Socialism in China* (London; Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1978); Elisabeth Croll, *Changing Identities of Chinese Women: Rhetoric, Experience, and Self- Perception in Twentieth-Century China* (Hong Kong: London; Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Hong Kong University Press; Zed Books, 1995).

[7] Paul John Bailey, *Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century China*, Gender and History (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Hugh D. R Baker, *Chinese Family and Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Christina Gilmartin, "Gender in the Formation of a Communist Body Politic," *Modern China* 19, no. 3 (July 1993): 299–329; Christina K. Gilmartin, *Engendering the Chinese Revolution: Radical Women, Communist Politics, and Mass Movements in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Peter Gue Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949*, Asia's Transformations (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005).

women's conditions in China during the twentieth century can lead to fragmented results and partial truths. This can happen not only because of differences between life in the countryside and in the cities, but also because of the different levels of access to education and work opportunities, and the economic situation and ethnic background of the family.[8] As a consequence of this fragmented environment, a focused approach appears to be the most effective way to understand and narrate the diverse conditions in which Chinese women found themselves during the 1900s. Specifically, this study does not want to address female representation as a whole but aims to point out the contradiction between the call for gender equality made by the CCP and the traditional portrayal of women in Communist sources in the early 1940s.

The second consideration deals with the difficulties faced by Chinese women brought by the disruptive transition from the traditional, Confucian empire to a modern nation. How women were included, or not, in the political discourse of the empire first, and then of the political parties after the fall of the Qing, is arguably one of the most interesting aspect of the history of modern China. The New Culture Movement sparked the discussion on the injustice of patriarchal society and the need to involve women in the country's political and social affairs. Topics such as sexuality, free marriage, and contraception surfaced and occupied a prominent role in the public discourse. Films and books began to tell the stories of those women who had refused arranged marriages in order to live a life free from traditional conventions.[9] According to the New Culture Movement, the difficult conditions faced by women were attributed to the traditional Confucian values that portrayed

[8] For more on the differences between countryside and city and women's conditions in minorities and Han, see: Gail Hershatter, *Women in China's long twentieth century*, and Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family, and The Peasant Revolution*….

[9] See: Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*; Wolf, *Revolution Postponed*; Roxane Witke, "Mao Tse-Tung, Women and Suicide in the May Fourth Era," *The China Quarterly* 31 (September 1967), p. 129.

good women as obedient, restrained, and performing activities such as embroidery or painting in a secluded environment. As Croll explains, across Chinese history women had been "insignificantly positioned at the margins."[10]

The Chinese Communist Party made female emancipation one of its most important battles, but it placed women's disadvantaged lives as the result of poor economic conditions. The reasons for the CCP's new policies towards women can be identified in the need to gain political support from the groups that were left out of the public discourse, such as students, peasants and workers. Furthermore, due to the lack of a male workforce during the war, children and women were forced to engage in the activities that men were not able to perform while at the front. These duties included tasks, such as ploughing and sowing, that were usually part of the men's domain. During the Anti-Japanese war, Communist propaganda began to portray women as the new, modern workforce, finally placing them alongside men in the economic environment. In the pages of the *Pictorial*, there were a considerable number of photo-essays featuring women working in the fields, harvesting crops, and participating in educational activities, such as theatre groups and schools. [11] This was a fundamental change in the political discourse as historically, women were never fully recognized as a workforce in the Chinese economic environment. This does not mean that women never contributed to the family business or to the country's economy, but that their economic role was rarely acknowledged, particularly because they did not receive a salary for their domestic work.[12]

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[10] Elisabeth Croll, *Changing Identities of Chinese Women: Rhetoric, Experience, and Self- Perception in Twentieth-Century China* (Hong Kong: London; Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Hong Kong University Press; Zed Books, 1995), p. 71.

[11] *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial*, issues 1-5, 1942-45.

[12] Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 180.

If on the one hand, women occupied a remarkable role in the economic life of the family, in particular in the textile sector pre-industrialisation, on the other hand a woman was socially considered a loss or a nuisance. With some exceptions, such as widows, women of all classes were inevitably subordinated to the family's male authority until death. As Wolf notes:

> In traditional society, even illiterate farmers knew about the Three Obediences by which women were to be governed: as an unmarried girl a woman must obey her father and her brothers; as a married woman she must obey her husband; and as a widow she must obey her adult sons.[13]

A woman, particularly in peasant families, was seen as a cost for the parents who had to feed her and take care of her until she would eventually marry out. A marriage meant that the time and money spent to grow and feed the girl would bring benefit only to the husband's family. Moreover, from an economic viewpoint, marrying out meant the loss of workforce in the original family. As evidence of the fact that a woman was only a liability and that families were quite prone to avoid unnecessary expenses, especially during difficult times, Hershatter quotes data on female infanticide in peasant families during the war: "In periods of social upheaval, such as the Japanese invasion and the Civil War, demographic data suggest that female infanticide or neglect of girl babies rose."[14]

As a consequence of this environment, female iconography developed along the moral requirements that women were to follow to become virtuous in order to avoid being a liability for the family. Across all levels of society, women contributed to the family economy according to the old saying "men till, women weave" (*nangeng nüzhi*). Weaving, spinning, and embroidery were women's work (*nügong*) and along the centuries these activities ascended to moral virtues. To represent

[13] Margery Wolf, *Revolution Postponed: Women in Contemporary China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 2.

[14] Judith Banister, China's Changing Population (1987) qtd in Gail Hershatter, Women in China's Long Twentieth Century (Berkeley: Global, Area, and International Archive: University of California Press, 2007), p. 27. Also noted by Francesca Bray, Technology and Gender…, p. 289.

women at the spinning wheel was therefore not only a way to teach them how to grow silkworms or weave silk for economic reasons, but also how to become virtuous women.

Gengzhi Tu: A Confucian Representation of Women and The Significance of Weaving in Traditional Chinese Society

According to legend, the discovery of silk and the consequent birth of spinning and weaving was attributed to Leizu, wife of the Yellow Emperor, around 27th century BCE.[15] While she was having tea in her garden, a cocoon fell into her cup. The hot water caused the silk to separate, Leizu unwound the thread and discovered silk. Her husband gifted her mulberry trees where to grow the silkworms. While we do not know if the legend bears any truth on how silk was discovered, China is acknowledged to be the first civilization to use silk. Sericulture and weaving became extremely important in China to the point that they were used to differentiate between civilized people, the ones dressed in silk or other textiles, and barbarians, dressed in leather.[16] Leizu's legend brought together the destinies of women and spinning, not only in the economic environment but also in the cultural one. During the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220CE), textiles were used as currency for official and commercial transactions.[17] As producing textiles was a woman's job or women's affair (*nüshi*), women were therefore highly regarded. While poorer women weaved to make their own dowry and to help increase the family income, richer women were less bound to economic reasons and more to cultural ones. In high class

[15] Yongxiang Lu, *A History of Chinese Science and Technology*, 2015, p. 382; Lihui Yang, Deming An, and Jessica Anderson Turner, *Handbook of Chinese Mythology*, Handbooks of World Mythology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 166.

[16] Bret Hinsch, "Textiles and Female Virtue in Early Imperial Chinese Historical Writing," *NAN NÜ* 5, no. 2 (2003), p. 182.

[17] Ibidem, p. 171; Francesca Bray, "Textile Production and Gender Roles in China, 1000-1700," *Chinese Science*, no. 12 (1995), p. 119.

families, clothes and textiles were passed down to the newer generations as a demonstration of wealth or kept as material currency in case of economic needs. Textiles in form of trousseau were also the capital that a bride would bring into her new family.[18]

As a consequence of the great importance that textiles had in Chinese society and economy, spinning and weaving ascended to symbolic activities and women who performed such activities were regarded as virtuous.[19] According to Confucian principles, a woman would spin not only to gain a profit, but also for moral reasons. The dedication to the spinning wheel made her "diligent, filially pious, vigilant in the household management, and frugal."[20] As an activity that could be performed inside the house while taking care of the children, women began to be seen as belonging to the *inside*. The importance of seclusion and confinement within the house for moral reasons was strongly emphasised by Neo-Confucian philosophers during the Song dynasty.[21] Moreover, the practice of foot binding played a role in relation to textile work as a physically impaired woman would be more prone to engage in sedentary activities such as spinning and weaving.[22] As Bossen et al. note the practice of foot binding can be associated to female seclusion and weaving as a moral activity.[23] These three elements—women, spinning and the *inside*—became the prevalent way through which virtuous women were represented. As Croll notes,

[18] Francesca Bray, "Textile Production…", p. 117-118.

[19] Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[20] Bret Hinsch, "Textiles and Female Virtue…", p. 175.

[21] Elisabeth Croll, *Changing Identities of Chinese Women...*, p. 14.

[22] Laurel Bossen et al., "Feet and Fabrication: Foot binding and Early Twentieth-Century Rural Women's Labor in Shaanxi," *Modern China* 37, no. 4 (July 2011): 347–83.

[23]Although many studies explain foot binding as a practice to enhance the beauty of the woman and her sexuality, the author agrees with Bossen that foot binding was also a way to physically impair the woman to make her more pliable and constrain her inside the house.

the word *nèiren* (inside person) meant woman, the person who lived confined within the house.[24] Along the centuries, artists portrayed women while spinning inside a room within the household or in an enclosed garden, where the high walls would shield them from undesired attention.[25] The old saying that the most highly regarded women were the ones no one had ever seen became part of the iconography of virtuous women.[26]

According to Joseph Needham, the first evidence of the representation of women at the spinning wheel is a painting made around 1270 and attributed to the artist Qian Xuan (1235-1305 CE),[27] yet other sources identify the painting on silk made by Wang Juzheng (active 11th CE c.) as the first painting a woman at the wheel.[28] Although it is not possible to pinpoint an exact date, the general period confirms that the iconography of virtuous women spinning was a main visual and cultural trend during the Song dynasty.

[24] Elisabeth Croll, Feminism and Socialism in China (London; Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1978), p. 16.

[25] In Western art the enclosed garden, or hortus conclusus, has a very similar symbolic meaning. Although the hortus conclusus was tied to the Virgin Mary and not women in general, it is still possible to draw a parallelism between the hortus and the Chinese enclosed garden. Both gardens had the purpose to 'hide' and protect the women inside, the hortus from sin, the Chinese garden from men and indiscreet viewers. For more on the hortus conclusus and its significance in European art and literature see: Stanley Stewart, The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in 17th Century Poetry, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966).

[26] Ida Pruitt, *A Daughter of Han: The Autobiography of a Chinese Working Woman* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974) qtd in E. Croll, Changing Identities…, p. 27.

[27] Joseph Needham et al., *Civil Engineering and Nautics, Reprint, Science and Civilisation in China Physics and Physical Technology*, by Joseph Needham; Vol. 4 ; Pt. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006), p. 101; Patricia Baines, *Spinning Wheels: Spinners and Spinning* (London: Batsford, 1977), p. 45.

[28]"Spinning", The Palace Museum, http://www.dpm.org.cn/shtml/660/@/113780.html.

Figure 40: Attributed to Wang Juzheng, *The Spinning Wheel,* 12-13 century, handscroll, ink and colour on silk, 69.3 x 26.1 cm, *https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wang_Juzheng%27s_Spinning_Wheel.jpg,* last accessed 13 May 2016.

The most relevant source to understand the importance of spinning and weaving in the artistic field and the iconography of virtuous women during the centuries, appears to be the *Gengzhi Tu*, a collection of 46 illustrations on agriculture and sericulture, compiled during the Song dynasty. The collection aimed to celebrate male activities of ploughing, sowing and growing rice together with female activities of rearing silkworms, weaving and spinning. The activities were clearly divided between outside and inside, where the outside belonged to the domain of men and the inside to women. As agriculture and sericulture were the most traditional activities that were at the foundation of Chinese civilisation, the manual praised and celebrated the essence of Chineseness and the importance of the rural communities in China. Other versions of the *Gengzhi Tu* were published during the Qing dynasty, first by emperor Kangxi (1654-1722) and then by emperor Qianlong (1711-1799). The collection, named *Yuzhi Gengzhi Tu* (*Imperially Composed Pictures of Tilling and Weaving)* was so popular that it became one of the most reproduced publications during the Qing.[29]

[29] Marcia Reed, Paola Demattè, and Getty Research Institute, eds., *China on Paper: European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles, Calif: Getty Research Institute, 2007), p. 196.

The Qing editions are interesting as both Emperors, Kangxi and Qianlong, exploited the *Gengzhi Tu* as a propaganda tool. As the Qing dynasty did not belong to the Han Chinese ethnic group but to the Manchu, first Kangxi and later Qianlong, decided to establish the legitimacy of their rule by embracing Neo-Confucian principles and maintaining the Chinese bureaucratic institutions such as the examination system. By reprinting the *Gengzhi Tu* and adding a preface, inscriptions, and calligraphy above the woodcuts, the Qing emperors were associating themselves and the new dynasty to the ancient Chinese cultural traditions that celebrated agriculture and sericulture. Moreover, the manual was also serving as a reminder that the Empire was strong and flourishing thanks to the efforts made by the people in agriculture and sericulture. The preface written by Kangxi reads

> Only by teaching the whole world to value the fundamental occupations [of tilling and weaving], to work diligently and to act frugally, can ample food and clothing be ensured, so that all can enter the realm of peace, harmony, prosperity, and longevity.[30]

Following Kangxi's preface, Bray notes that the images stressed the mutual dependence between the ruling class and the peasants, men's and women's work, but also the importance of harmony for the country's future.[31] The original Song edition of the *Gengzhi Tu* featured poems written by Lou Shu (1090-1162 CE), the official who first designed the collection.[32] The poems describe the technical aspects of agriculture and sericulture, but also the more social aspect of the life of the peasants, their daily troubles, and the passing of the seasons. Lou Shu created the manual with the aim of providing the government with the necessary ideological and cultural apparatus to effectively rule the empire: supporting the peasants and

[30] Roslyn Lee Hammers, *Pictures of Tilling and Weaving: Art, Labor and Technology in Song and Yuan China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Pres, 2011), p. 163.

[31] Francesca Bray, *Technology, Gender and History in Imperial China: Great Transformations Reconsidered*, Asia's Transformations (London; New York: Routledge, 2013).

[32] The different available versions of the Gengzhi Tu are therefore reproductions. See: Roslyn Lee Hammers, *Pictures of Tilling and Weaving…*, p. 1-7, and 9.

the traditional activities that were at the foundation of Chinese culture and economy. Lou Shu was concurrently placing himself as an intermediary between the Emperor and the people. He also hoped to be politically recognized as "talented official," the one who could understand the need of the people and advise the emperor accordingly.[33] Aside from Lou Shu's political goals, the manual showed which activities were to be performed during each month of the year and which tools were necessary. It also wanted to be the representation of an ideal harmonious life between the rulers and the peasants.[34] This type of art that wanted to praise the common people became known as *fengsu hua*, where *feng* were the customs of the common people, *su*. Roslyn Lee Hammers describes the *Gengzhi Tu* as a manual that wanted to "represent proper *fengsu*" and instruct the people on which conduct to adopt in order to create a harmonious society.[35]

The original collection created during the Song is now missing. In regard to later versions, Hammers notes that, although some manuals do not feature any poems or have different versions of them, female iconography remained consistent in the versions printed in later centuries.[36] In the specific case of sericulture activities, women were usually painted together with children, in an enclosed space such as a room or garden.[37] Figures 41 and 42 show two stages of sericulture: boiling cocoons to reel the silk and winding silk. The first scene takes the viewer inside a courtyard where women are boiling the silk cocoons to unwind the silk thread. This image is divided into two sections: on the left part, a woman chats with her

[33] Ibidem, p. 68.

[34] Ibidem, p. 2.

[35] Ibidem, p. 62-64.

[36] See chapter 1 and 2 in R. L. Hammers, *Pictures of Tilling and Weaving…* .

[37] One exception is picking the leaves of the mulberry trees. It was part of the men's duties as it was an outside activity. For an image see: R. L. Hammers, *Pictures of Tilling and Weaving…,* fig. 3.14, p. 97.

neighbours, while her boy tries to climb the wall to go outside—a possible reference to the fact that the place for men was the outside. On the right, two women and a young girl are busy boiling the cocoons and spinning the silk thread on a spool. Although the women's feet are not visible, we can assume that they were bound. To represent different generations of women working together for silk production reinforces Bosses's analysis that "household textile production [...] depended on the combined work of the mothers and young daughters, and daughters-in law."[38] Textile production was therefore not a single woman's activity, but a family one, maintained across generations also through the practice of foot binding and seclusion. Furthermore, textile making was employed in oder to set the hierarchy of the household. The mistress of the house would be in charge of the process while the other women, concubines, daughters, daughters-in-law, and servants, would be the workforce.[39]

[38] Laurel Bossen et al., "Feet and Fabrication…", p. 376.

[39] Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 202.

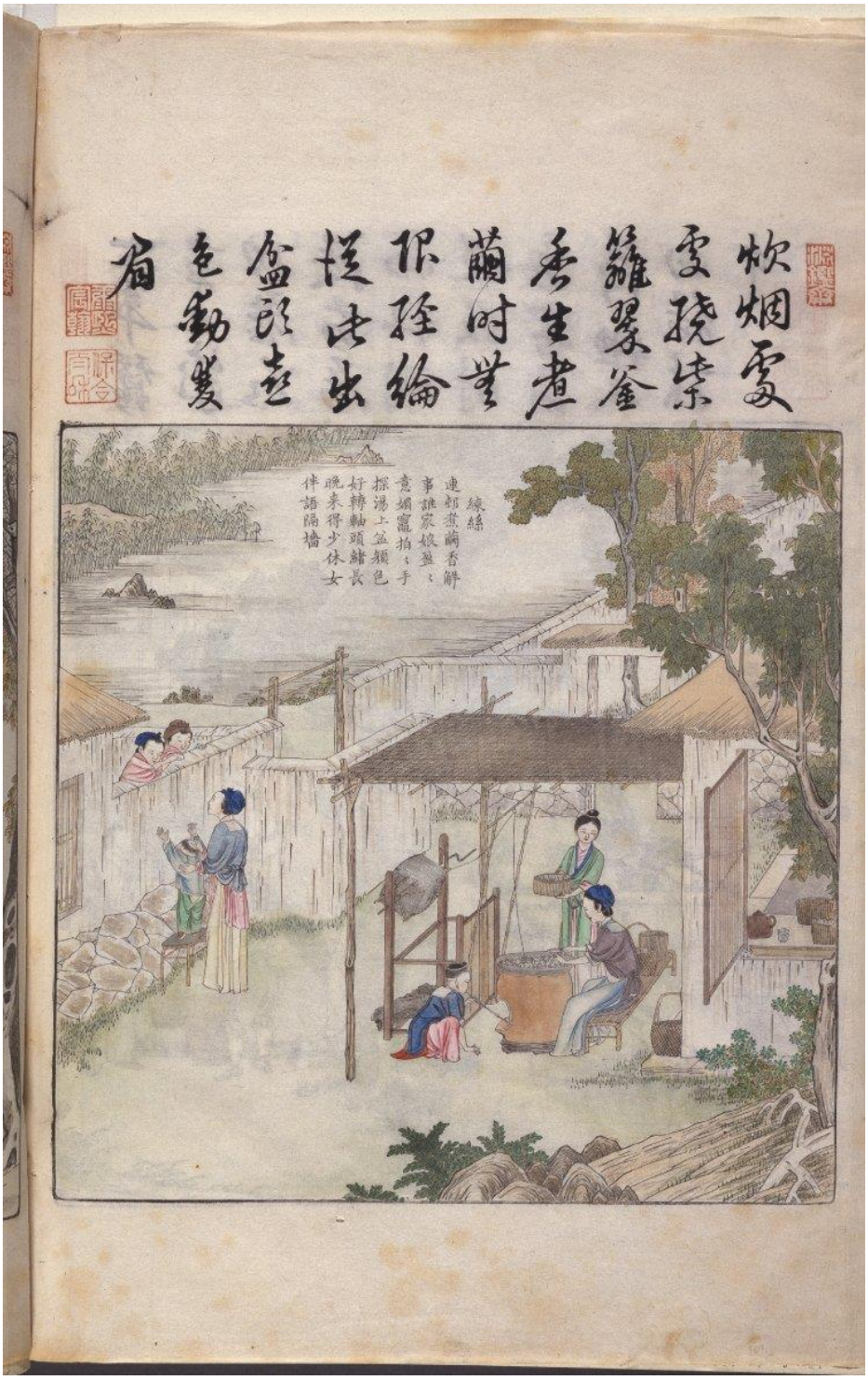

Figure 41: Jiao Bingzhen, *Women boiling cocoons, 1686, http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=279725001&objectid=184228,* last accessed 14 May 2016.

Figure 41 portrays three women: one walks with her child in the enclosed garden of the household, while the other two are inside the house weaving silk and drinking tea. The realism of the scene is conveyed by the presence of children. The boy tries to get his mother's attention by crying and pulling her robe, while the girl looks with curiosity at the two women spinning inside the room. The lamp on the wall

inside the household suggest that the scene is taking place at dusk or during the evening. The two women share the light of the candle in order to spin together and this was meant to portray their virtuosity and frugality. The poem written on the top-left side of the second image "Reeling Silk" was written by Lou Shou and confirms the importance of frugality and of the dedication that women were expected to have towards weaving. The poem also notes the hardship of farmers' lives and the importance of silk for the economy of the household. It reads:

> My husband checks the silk threads on the reeling machine, we are running against time to turn over the silk to the officials. He still bears the scars from the beating he recently took for failing to meet the deadline to pay rent. Being busy reeling the whole morning, the wrists feel dislocated. We have to keep working hard through the night without sleep, with the lamp flickering in our shabby house.[40]

To reinforce the idea that weaving was commonly expected of women, the artist placed a young girl inside the room. The girl is quiet and seems interested in the activity. This is in stark contrast with the behaviour of the crying boy in the courtyard. The two scenes shown were set in different seasons. The changing of the seasons was in fact connected the life of the farmers and the activities of tilling and weaving. To portray this seasonal change also meant that these endeavours were not bound to an annual timeframe but were passed down along the generations.

[40] "Qing Porcelain From Private Collections: 90th Anniversary Exhibition 九十周年特展 Qing Porcelain from Private Collections 私人收藏清代瓷器", April 2015, *https://www.marchantasianart.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Qing-Porcelain_Final1.pdf*, p. 18.

Figure 42: Jiao Bingzhen, *Women weaving silk, 1696, http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=279746001&objectid=184228,* last accessed 9 May 2016.

The representation of the relation between the government and the farmers, and the importance of tilling and weaving for the harmony of the empire created an iconography that lasted for centuries. If on the one hand the representation of the farmer as the good working man could inspire respect for his work from the elite, on the other hand, the iconography of sericulture became embedded with moral values and aimed to inspire emulation in the viewers. Through manuals like the *Geng Zhitu*

women were able to learn what was expected of them to become virtuous in the eyes of their fathers, husbands, and sons, and by a broader extent in the eyes of society.

During the war against Japan, and more specifically in the early 1940s, the spinning wheel made its appearance in the Party's visual propaganda. While during imperial times the *Geng Zhitu* had been exploited by the government to associate itself with the essence of Chineseness and disseminate a certain idea of society, through the spinning wheel the Party began to praise women for their productive role and contribution to the war effort. While the loom was often represented in manuals such as the Geng Zhitu, it only appeared once in the third issue of the *Pictorial*. In wartime woodcuts instead, the loom was more frequently portrayed in the background, and rarely in a predominant position.[41] While there seems to be no definite answer to why the loom was not as prominent in wartime images, Bossen et al. report how looms were still popular in Guangzhou in the 1930s, but they were difficult to operate for women with bound feet.[42] Another reason for the scarcity of looms in wartime images could be the scarcity of materials and technologically advanced machinery in the Communist regions in northern China.

The decision to re-interpret the symbolism of the spinning wheel during wartime presents various political and social implications. Was representing women at the spinning wheel actually empowering and in line with the CCP's discourse on gender equality? Or was it only a political move to increase productivity by winning the political support of the women living in the controlled areas? As seen in chapter two with the re-interpretation of the symbolism of mountains, even in the case of the spinning wheel, the Party was exploiting the old, traditional values and

[41] The only image that the author found of a loom is figure 50.

[42] Laurel Bossen et al., "Feet and Fabrication…"

symbolism for its political goals. Through the use of pre-existing values and iconographies, the CCP was making its policies and the socialist culture relatable to all segments of the population. In the countryside, where traditional family roles and the division of labour were still rooted in the peasants' mentality and way of life, the portrayal of a woman at the wheel as the new labour heroine was not significantly distant from the traditional representation of the virtuous weaving woman.

Evening in a Farmer's Home: **T**he **N**ew Socialist **W**oman

Evening in a farmer's home by Li Tu (n.a.) appeared as the back cover of the third issue of the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial* in 1943 and it was part of the photo-essay "Women and children on the front line of production." The photograph shows a young mother from the Pingshan county in Hebei working at her spinning wheel by the light of a small lamp. The tiny flame illuminates the whole room and directs the viewers' attention towards the spinning wheel and the act of spinning cotton. The room is bare and has no visible furniture. The woman's face, illuminated by the lamp, stands out from the surrounding darkness, while a boy, possibly her son, lies on the floor and looks straight at the camera. The woman, however, is too concentrated on her work to pay attention to the photographer. Her gaze towards the cotton spool conveys the dedication she has for her work and focuses the attention of the viewer towards the spinning wheel and the spool.

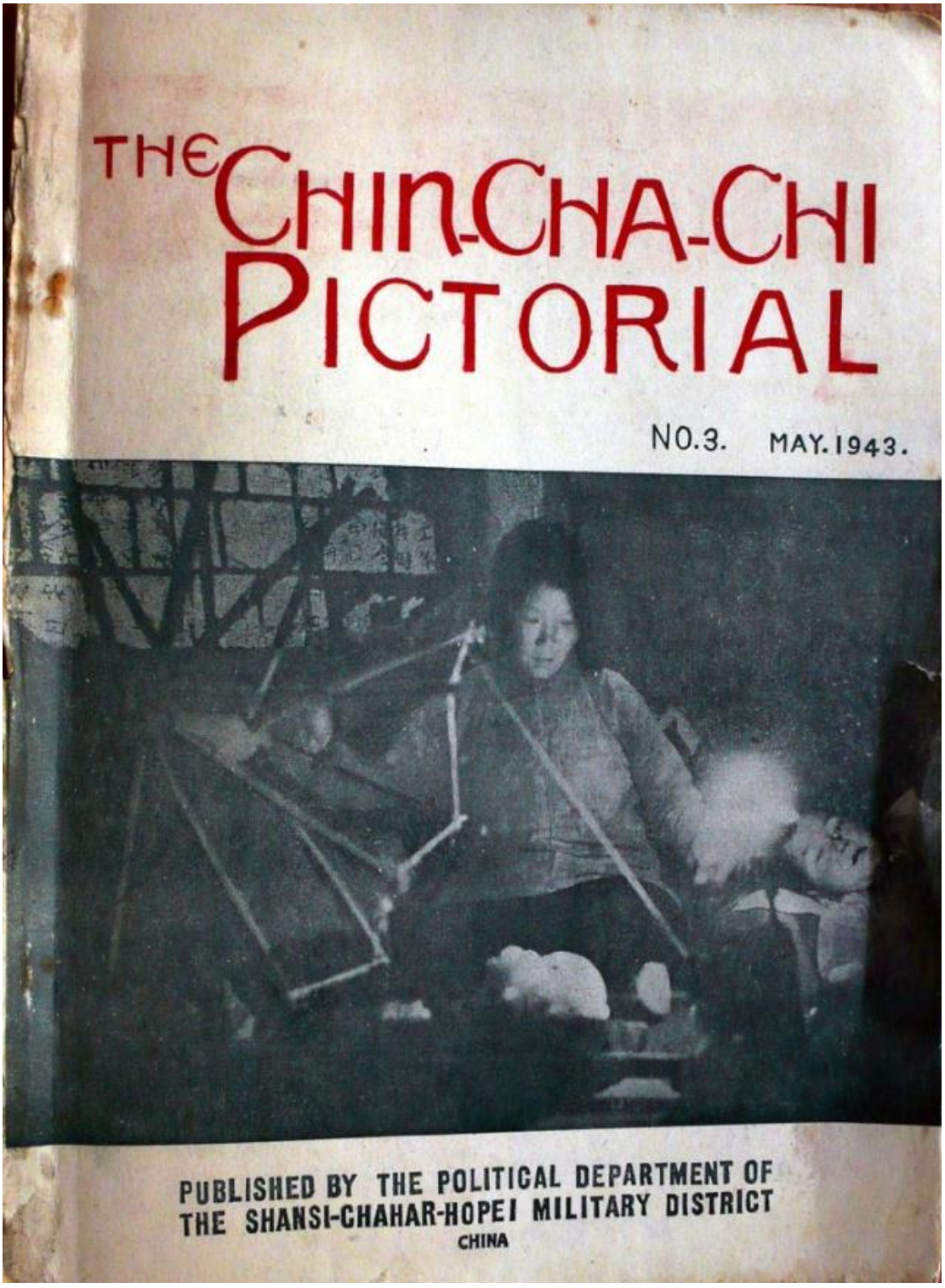

Figure 43: Back Cover of the Third Issue of the Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, 1943.

The strong contrast between the light coming from the small lamp and the surrounding darkness, enhances the dramatic aspect of the situation of a young woman who, after having worked in the fields during the day, continued to work relentlessly during the night. The decision to put the woman at the centre of the image is enhanced by an internal frame created by the lamp and the spinning wheel.

Evening in a Farmer's Home can be stylistically identified as a socialist realist photograph. The image in fact did not only portray a common, daily activity in the life of women during wartime, but also a glimpse into the future society imagined by the Communist Party. As dictated by Socialist Realism, the subject is at the centre of a triangularly-composed image, illuminated by a source of light. In the case of *Evening in a Farmer's Home*, the woman's gaze is directed downward, a unique portrayal if compared to the more common upward-looking labour heroes.[43] As Peter J. Schwartz notes the Socialist Realist workers were portrayed: "whilst gazing heroically into the symbolic dawn of a Socialist future."[44]

[43] The author wants to thank Dr. Helen Wang who noted how the downward gaze of the woman in the photograph strongly contrast with the common upward-looking gaze of socialist realist working heroes.

[44] Peter J. Schwartz, "The Ideological Antecedents of the First-Series Renminbi Worker-and-Peasant Banknote, or What Mao Tse-Tung May Have Owed to Dziga Vertov.," *Transcultural Studies* 1 (2014): 8–94, pp. 7-8.

Figure 44: Li Tu, 'Evening in a farmer's home'*, Jin Cha Ji Pictorial,* Issue n.3, May 1943.

This difference can be explained by Li Tu's intention to draw the viewers' attention towards this woman's dedication for her work in order to inspire other women to work for the Communist cause. The woman was spinning cotton that was used for the production of textiles for the people in the Jin Cha Ji region and surrounding areas. Just like how men were bravely fighting the Japanese invaders on the battlefield, women and children were contributing to the war effort by working in the fields and by making textiles for daily use. The effort that these women were putting into spinning would have contributed to the defeat of Japan and the creation of a new socialist China under the guide of the Party. Despite the dramatic light, the scene appears peaceful and is in strong contrast with the images of soldiers and warfare that appeared in the issues of the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial*. In her brief analysis of this image, Roberts describes the shot as the representation of a serene and safe life under the guidance of the CCP.[45] Roberts considers, albeit very briefly, the relation between this photo and the photo-essay in the *Pictorial*. Roberts does not address arguably the two most interesting aspects of this image. The first aspect concerns female representation in the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial* in relation to CCP's policies. The second point explores the duality of the spinning wheel, simultaneously the symbol of *nügong* for Confucian traditional society and the symbol of women's emancipation for the CCP. [46]

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The available studies on female representation in propaganda sources, predominantly posters, show that despite the frequent calls for gender equality and female emancipation by the CCP leadership, Chinese women did not fully gain the

[45] Claire Roberts, *Photography and China* (Exposures) (Durrington, UK: Reaktion Books, 2012), p. 97.

[46] Nügong, literally 'woman's work,' appeared as the fourth Confucian virtue for a woman in the Li Ji (Record of Rites) and Nü Jie (Precepts for Women) by Ban Zhao (c. 48- 120). For more, see: Grace S. Fong, "Female Hands: Embroidery as a Knowledge Field in Women's Everyday Life in Late Imperial and Early Republican China," Late Imperial China 25, no. 1 (June 2004): 1–58. http://www.columbia.edu/itc/barnard/polisci/ko/Fong_Embroidery_Paper__pdf.pdf

freedom and social recognition they were promised. Although it is undeniable that some progress was made, in particular post-1949, it is equally undeniable that the CCP and Chinese politics as a whole remained male-dominated.[47] Gilmartin analyses the situation of women in the Chinese political environment from the birth of the CCP in the 1920s until the establishment of the PRC. Her study on the patriarchal structure of the CCP reveals that, in the political environment, women were not able to acquire prominent political positions. Any type of political role that women gained since the foundation of the Party in 1921 was acquired through personal relations with a male Party member, not because of their political ability. Moreover, those few women who managed to get close to the Party lines, were primarily seen and treated as organizers and not as true politicians.[48] What emerges from Gilmartin's study is that although the CCP recognized the need to include women into the political and social discourse, albeit for productivity reasons as Bailey and Zarrow note, the Party remained male-oriented and male-dominated.[49] It therefore followed that a male-oriented Party created a male-oriented ideology and consequently a predominantly male-oriented propaganda. For these reasons the photographs that appeared in the *Pictorial* can be used as early evidence of this process.

[47] As Tina Mai Chen (2003) argues, quoting Ding Ling (1997), the entrance of Chinese women into the working environment in the 1950s was state-sponsored at first and it was only later that women began to actively liberate themselves by looking for an occupation outside their home. The state-sponsoring of women into the workplace can be traced back to the 1930s when the need for manual labour was increased by the absence of male workforce as men were occupied on the battlefield. The call for gender equality in the 1930s then, has to be understood in the light of the social and economic disruption that the Sino-Japanese War brought to Chinese society. Furthermore, as Gilmartin notes, even though there were some improvements in the women's private and public spheres, the state bureaucracy and institutions remained predominantly male-dominated.

[48] Christina Gilmartin. "Gender in the Formation of a Communist Body Politic." *Modern China* 19, no. 3 (July 1993), p.313.

[49] Paul John Bailey, *Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century China, Gender and History* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Peter Gue Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949*, Asia's Transformations (London; New York: Routledge, 2005).

The same lost opportunity, as Gilmartin defines it, to break this male-centred cycle, is explored by Lee in her study on female representation in propaganda posters. Lee shows that although there was a change in how women were portrayed in posters from the 1920s until before the 1960s, there was no corresponding change in "women's position in society."[50] Lee argues that even though women were of great importance for the CCP's propaganda machine, their representation in posters was always constructed through a male gaze, therefore bringing no true empowerment. For instance, when a woman was represented as a leader, she was portrayed in charge of other women, never men (see figure 63, appendix B). Concurrently, if a woman was learning to read and write, she was doing it as a secondary activity and as a recipient, commonly taught by her children usually her son. Her primary role was still the one of the mother as the much-criticised traditional culture expected her to be (figure 65, appendix B). The dichotomy between what the Party was attempting to eradicate—traditional, Confucian culture—and the way in which women were represented is the lens through which *Evening in a farmer's home* and similar images created during the war must be analysed.

Evening in a farmer's home is arguably one of the most interesting images that appeared in the *Pictorial* and it acquires particular importance as it was one of the only two images featuring women to be chosen as cover for the magazine.[51] The

[50] Lee, Jennifer. "Engendering Modern China: Visual Representation of the PRC." Connecticut College, East Asian Languages and Cultures Department, 2013, http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/eastasianhp/6, p. 6.

[51] The other woman to feature on the cover of the Pictorial was Rong Guanxiu (1896-1989 CE). She was portrayed together with two other decorated male war heroes, Deng Shijun and Li Yong, on the 5th number of the Pictorial in 1944. The cover photograph was taken by Yuanke Zhong and was titled "Always defend the Jin Cha Ji". Rong Guanxiu was granted the title of "Mother of Chinese soldiers" for rescuing wounded soldiers and collecting supplies during the war. It is important to notice that Rong Guanxiu was not awarded the title for actual military actions, but for typical female activities. More on her life can be found under the section "War Heroes" on the womenofchina.cn website: http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/special/women_in_war/women_in_war/1508/2998-1.htm

magazine focused on portraying the bravery of the soldiers fighting along the border, the respect shown to the captured enemies, and the improvements that the CCP brought to the region: education, art, but also material help such as reparation works in the villages. The photo-essays and articles also followed the development and the results of the policies that the CCP was implementing in the controlled areas. The photographs aimed to stir in the readers nationalistic feelings and trust in the CCP's leadership. The majority of the photographs and photo-essays in the *Pictorial* featured male soldiers and farmers. When women were mentioned, it was in relation to the access to education that the CCP was giving them, the textile production for war supplies and their contribution as nurses. In the first issue of the *Pictorial*, for instance, civilians—women, children and elderly—were described as "dead earnest in their anti-Japanese service" as they were "stitching uniforms for their brothers, sons and soldiers."[52]

Although it can be argued that during wartime weaving and stitching were activities that were also done by men, the aspect of a stereotypical female characterisation remains as there are no images in the Pictorial of men hailed as labour heroes because of their work at the wheel.[53] During the editorial life of the *Pictorial*, the only activities for which women were praised were weaving and nursing, and, in case of military actions, for their martyrdom for the nation.[54] The fact that the activity chosen for the cover was spinning, reinforces the argument that there was no clear-cut departure from the traditional Confucian idea of women

[52] *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial*, volume 1, 1943, http://sha1912.blog.sohu.com/130622684.html, p. 51

[53] The author wants to thank the anonymous reviewer who informed her about a photograph of men and women at the spinning wheel in Yan'an that appears in Israel Epstein, *History Should Not Be Forgotten*, 1st ed (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2005), p.175. Jung Chang also reports that her father became a very good spinner during the war against Japan. See: Jung Chang, *Wild Swan: Three Daughters of China*, 2016, p. 109.

[54] More on this can be found in the section "War Heroes" on the *womenofchina.cn* website: http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/women_in_war/women_in_war/1508/2998-1.htm.

and femininity and that increasing production was the main goal of the Party during the war. Nonetheless, the choice to use a common woman at the wheel was an important acknowledgment of the contribution that women were given to the war effort.

The attention and change that Mao Zedong advocated for women's life conditions during the initial decades of the 1900s was partly the inheritance left by the New Culture Movement and of his life experiences as a young man in a Confucian society.[55] In 1927, Mao called for the end of the domination of the three system of authority—politics, family and religion—and for the end of the domination of the husband on women, more broadly identified with masculine authority.[56] Later in 1955, Mao stated that the only way to create a socialist China was to

> [...] arouse the broad masses of women to join in productive activity. Men and women must receive equal pay for equal work in production. Genuine equality between the sexes can only be realized in the process of the socialist transformation of society as a whole.[57]

These words echoed what the Second Congress of the CCP already stated in 1922 that

> the Chinese Communist Party thinks that the women's liberation needs to be carried out through relying on the liberation of the labouring people as a whole, [...] only if the proletariat obtains political power will women be able to achieve full liberation.[58]

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[55] In 1919, Mao wrote the essay "Miss Zhao's suicide". Miss Zhao was a young woman who took her life in order to escape an arranged marriage with a man she did not love. Mao was personally touched by this episode as he himself had to yield to his father's will and marry an older girl in the early 1900s. His frequent calls for the end of arranged marriages have their origin in this episode. The complete essay can be found at: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/1919/miss-chao.htm (accessed 6 January 2016).

[56] Mao Zedong, "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan" (March 1927), *Selected Works*, Vol. I, pp. 44-46. For more on the traditional Chinese family and the condition of women's lives (pp. 40-48), see: Hugh D.R Baker, *Chinese Family and Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

[57] "Women Have Gone to the Labour Front" (1955), *The Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside*, Chinese ed., Vol. I., https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/red-book/ch31.htm (accessed 5 January 2016).

[58] "Resolution to the Second Congress of the CCP," 1922, qtd in Evans, Harriet, and Stephanie Donald, eds. *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China: Posters of the Cultural Revolution*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, p. 63.

In other words, by entering the production cycle, women were going to finally be able to break free from the patriarchal prison, and acquire their place in a new, more equal society. Despite Mao's frequent calls for gender equality in the workplace and society, it is necessary to ask if and how these calls reached ordinary women in the countryside. Were women ready to accept and understand these appeals? What role did propaganda images have in the Communist occupied regions, where illiteracy was high and traditional roles were a support net in a moment of hardship? The women who decided to join the CCP ranks and worked as agitators in big cities like Shanghai and Beijing were facilitated by a more malleable and modern environment. In the cities, women were able to get involved in social activities without a chaperone and were more than willing to take an active part in street demonstrations and mobilizations.[59] However, as Baker and Wolf sensibly point out, the requests made by students and young educated women during the New Culture Movement and in the CCP cells active in cities had little, if none, relevance for peasant women.[60] In the countryside, women remained responsible for traditional activities, and spinning was one of them.

Although apparently distant from Mao's calls for a more equal society, the decision to use a woman at the wheel as the new, modern, and emancipated heroine had been deliberate. Too much change in fact would have caused the loss of the peasants' political support as countryside families were still organised around

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[59] Christina K. Gilmartin, *Engendering the Chinese Revolution: Radical Women, Communist Politics, and Mass Movements in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 135-7.

[60] The calls for the end of all-male schools, traditional family system and vote rights were not the primary interests of many countryside women. Their main problem was how to survive another day, where to get food and shelter for their children. In wartime situation, voting rights were not the primary concern. Baker adds that: "Late 19th- and early 20th-century industrialization had begun to attract to the cities of China the wealthy and the intellectuals, creating a gulf between city and countryside such as had not previously existed. These new urban intellectuals did not represent majority Chinese thinking, and what they advocated and put into practice was not necessarily either followed by or even transmitted to the mass of people [....]" (p. 180).

the old values and division of work.[61] According to Confucian tradition, women's lives were based on the three obediences and four virtues. Women had to obey to their father first, then to their husband and son (masculine authority). They had to be chaste, obedient, sober in their behaviour and appearance. *Nügong*, embroidery and weaving, was the fourth virtue.[62] Not only was the spinning wheel originally invented in China, but as already explained, in Chinese art it was frequently used to portray virtuous women who lived according to Confucian principles.[63]

Weaving was not only a manual occupation aimed at increasing a family's income or valuable possessions, but also a virtuous activity that morally defined the women of the household.[64] In the case of *Evening in a Farmer's Home* and similar images created in 1943, the acts of spinning and weaving acquired a very important social value for the success of the socialist revolution. Not only were women

[61] For a brief overview on how family changed from the mid 19th century until the 1960s-70s, see: H. Baker, *Chinese family…*, pp. 176-189.

[62]Grace S. Fong, *Female Hands*[...], p. 6 and 13; Margery Wolf, *Revolution Postponed: Women in Contemporary China*, Nachdr. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 1989), p. 5. For more on women's work and the role of women in Chinese society see: Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[63] The theme of women at the spinning wheel is not only present in Chinese art but in Western art as well. For stereotypes on women and machines, including the spinning wheel, see: Julie Wosk, *Women and the Machine: Representations from the Spinning Wheel to the Electronic Age* (Baltimore, Md.; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). In Chinese art, one of the earliest representations of a woman at the spinning wheel is by Wang Juzheng, *The Spinning Wheel*, from the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), ink and colours on silk, at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wang_Juzheng%27s_Spinning_Wheel.jpg. Weaving is also listed in this collection of watercolour paintings of female activities that include playing musical instruments, game tables and weaving silk: http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-f584-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99/book?parent=664becd0-c6e0-012f-3c19-58d385a7bc34#page/23/mode/2up. Other images of early spinning wheels and the history of the wheel can be found in: Joseph Needham et al., *Civil Engineering and Nautics*, Reprint, Science and Civilisation in China Physics and Physical Technology, by Joseph Needham; Vol. 4; (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006).

[64] An example of the importance of textile work in Chinese traditional society was given by the writer Shen Fu (c. 1763-1810?) in the short story *The Old Man and The Moon*. In the novel the wife of the protagonist is frequently praised for her embroidery skills. "At first they [*the girl's family]* had virtually nothing, but as Yün grew older she became very adept at needlework, and the labour of her ten fingers came to provide for all three of them. Thanks to her work, they were always able to afford to pay the tuition for her brother's teachers." And again: "Yün alone wore a plain dress; only her shoes were new. I [*the protagonist*] noticed they were skillfully embroidered, and when she told me she had done them herself I began to appreciate that her cleverness lay not only in her writing." For the full novel, see: Fu Shen, Leonard Pratt, and Su-hui Chiang, *The Old Man of the Moon*, Little Black Classics 60 (London: Penguin Classics, 2015).

materially contributing to achieve victory against Japan by supporting the troops with shoes and textiles, but they were also working to create the future socialist society that the CCP was laying the foundation for. It is therefore possible to say that *Evening in a farmer's home* portrays a woman performing one of the most traditional and Confucian activities, and it therefore fails in distancing itself from the much-criticized tradition. Provided that it is important to point out the evolution of the symbolism of the wheel, it is also fundamental to stress once again that the CCP was attempting to substitute the old Confucian principles with the Party's new ones. By using a set of pre-existing values and adapting them to the new ideology, the CCP was simply shifting the centre of the society from the traditional Confucian family to the Party and the socialist struggle.[65] In other words, the traditional role of the family as recipient of women's work was being substituted by the Party. This reinforces the assumption that the portrayal of women at the wheel was firstly a political and economic move, while gender equality and women's freedom would be achieved only as a consequence of the creation of a socialist society.

To fully explore the issue of female representation in Li Tu's photograph, one last consideration about the influence of socialist realism in the photographic production of the 1930s must be added. Socialist realism was brought to China from the Soviet Union and it grew particularly strong during the 1920s and 1930s, touching all aspects of Chinese artistic production and incorporating the nationalist feelings that were growing in the country as a consequence of the Japanese invasion.

[65] Robert J. Lifton clearly explains this strategy in *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of 'Brainwashing' in China* (Pelican, 1961). Through the psychological analysis of 'Brainwashing' techniques and propaganda, Lifton demonstrates that the CCP did not invent a new ideology, but simply brought together the old Confucian values with the Communist ideals from the Soviet Union. The CCP realized that it was easier to modify pre-existing values and adapt or substitute them with the Party and the Socialist struggle.

As Ding and Lu clearly state: "Socialist Realism is socialist first, not realist."[66] The purpose of this artistic style was not to portray the world in the way in which it presented itself, but to create a new, more beautiful and inspiring reality based on the socialist idea of it. The realist aspect of it then, as explained by Engles: "implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances."[67] *Evening in a farmer's home* aimed therefore to represent an ideal, (stereo)typical reality: it was the generalization of a good socialist woman, fully dedicated to the national cause. As a generalisation that had to follow a typical reality, there was consequently no real empowerment for the woman portrayed nor for the women viewers. Spinning cotton to produce textiles for the soldiers who were defending the nation was only the photographic representation of the new citizens the CCP wanted to create, not an image of gender equality. After all, the photographs taken under the socialist realism style had to fall into specific ideological categories that had to fulfil a particular ideological task, in this case, emulation.

Hero Emulation Propaganda: Women at the Spinning Wheel as Wartime Heroines

Although the identity of the woman in *Evening in a farmer's home* is unknown, it is possible to define her not only as a modern socialist woman, but also as a labour heroine whose purpose was to inspire emulation in other women. The emulation factor of these heroes and their representation in newspapers and pictorials must not be underestimated, particularly in the light of the strong Confucian heritage of

[66] Liu Ding, Carol Yinghua Lu, "From the Issue of Art to the Issue of Position: The Echoes of Socialist Realism, Part I",*e-flux*, Journal 55 (May 2014), http://www.e-flux.com/journal/from-the-issue-of-art-to-the-issue-of-position-the-echoes-of-socialist-realism-part-i/

[67] Friedrich Engels, "Engels to Margaret Harkness In London", *Selected Correspondence*, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1888/letters/88_04_15.htm, last accessed 13 May 2016.

inspiring figures, such as emperors, literates, widows and soldiers, that had been portrayed and employed as models along the centuries. The importance of role models was central to the Confucian idea of harmonious society and, even though people were seen as inherently good, they still: "needed guidance and education must not be a haphazard business, but a carefully planned and directed activity."[68] This aspect of the Confucian tradition was also embraced by the CCP and frequently employed during the years to teach children, men, and women how to be heroes in the eyes of the Party and society.

Along the centuries, art had been exploited to spread role models, knowledge, and cultural values. Through various artistic forms, from painting to theatre and literature, the artists would contribute in teaching the population about the moral values necessary for the creation of a harmonious society. The role of art as teacher was recognized by the government that collected and sponsored artists to engage in such artistic pursue.[69] For the illiterate people, the visual representation of stories that praised Confucian virtues, such as morality and filial piety, was one of the ways, together with theatre, songs, and orally transmitted stories, to learn about the socio-political expectations that the government placed upon them. This didactical value was reinforced by the Confucian idea of a hierarchic society. As the traditional social structure was based on a vertical hierarchy, all relations—father/son, mother/daughter, teacher/pupil, emperor/society—had very strong emulation components. By mirroring the master, the disciple would acquire wisdom and knowledge; by following the Confucian principles of virtue, the Emperor would set the example for the whole country. By looking at positive examples portrayed in different art forms, the viewers could learn how raise their moral and political

[68] Gay Garland Reed, "Moral/Political Education in the People's Republic of China: Learning through Role Models," *Journal of Moral Education* 24, no. 2 (1995), p. 100.

[69] Julia K. Murray, *Mirror of Morality: Chinese Narrative Illustration and Confucian Ideology* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 2007), p. 1-2.

consciousness and become exemplary people.[70] [71] Mao shared this view as he believed that: "it is only through repeated education by positive and negative examples and through comparisons and contrasts that revolutionary parties and revolutionary people can temper themselves, become mature and make sure of victory."[72]

Heroes and heroines were described or represented with fixed expressions and iconography.[73] In the case of women, this terminology usually featured expressions such as mother, daughter, and sister. For instance, Rong Guanxiu, the woman who appeared as front cover photograph of the fifth issue of *Pictorial* together with two other male war heroes, was hailed as "mother of the Anti-Japanese soldiers."[74] Wartime propaganda wanted to emphasise that women's lives had been bleak before the arrival of the CCP. Thanks to the Party, these women were given the opportunity to morally grow and dignify their lives through work. In her study on female labour in Yan'an, Patricia Stranahan explains the role of female heroes and their propaganda value for the CCP during the 1940s. Labour heroines of the 1930s-40s were a-political in the sense that their heroine-status was achieved

[70] Gay Garland Reed, "Modeling as a Pedagogical Technique in the Art and Life of China," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 26, no. 3 (Autumn 1992), p. 76.

[71] The word *exemplary* holds a particular significance in Chinese society. It describes a man, *junzi* (Simplified Chinese: 君子), whose benevolence and moral superiority makes him the ideal moral example. As part of the Confucian tradition, there was of course no mention of exemplary women, but it is possible to describe such women as obedient daughters, wives, and mothers. See: Lijun Yuan, *Reconceiving Women's Equality in China: A Critical Examination of Models of Sex Equality* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), p. 5-6.

[72] Stefan R. Landsberger, *Paint it Red. Fifty Years of Chinese Propaganda Posters*, (Groningen: Intermed Publishers, 1998), p. 26.

[73] For instance, in films on the history of the Second World War and the Anti-Japanese War, male heroes are represented as brave soldiers, fearless and ideologically pure. They are also handsome and always optimistic. His morality corresponds to physical beauty. This characterisation was also present in propaganda posters and photographs. For more on socialist heroes in films, see: King-fai Tam, Timothy Y. Tsu, and Sandra Wilson, eds., *Chinese and Japanese Films on the Second World War*, Media, Culture, and Social Change in Asia Series 38 (Abingdon, Oxon [England]; New York: Routledge, 2014).

[74] Amanda Wu, "Rong Guanxiu: A Heroic Mother of Anti-Japanese Soldiers," *womenofchina.cn*, http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/special/cpc/1606/3347-1.htm, 26 August 2015, accessed 15 August 2018.

not because of their political convictions, but because of their dedication to the nation. As Stranahan notes, Yan'an heroines were "patriotic, not revolutionary, [...] motivated by the simple desire to better their lives."[75] The employment of a-political and political heroes can be seen as the watershed between wartime and post-1949 propaganda. While during the war the aim of the Party was to gain widespread political consensus and defeat Japan, after 1949, the aim became the realisation of a socialist society through the celebration of socialist, political heroes. Furthermore, as James A. Flath explains, these a-political heroes belonged to "essential categories, such as 'plowman,' 'weaver,' and 'peasant rebel,' […] that had long been reinforced through moralistic primers, agricultural treatises, novels, and popular theatre."[76] While during the Anti-Japanese War these categories were employed as educational examples of the people's dedication to the war effort, after 1949 they became "political categories."[77]

As previously stated, 1943 was a pivotal year for the development of CCP's political and economic strategies. The Border Region Labour Hero/Model Worker Assembly took place in 1943 and the Party's leadership launched a campaign that wanted to find and praise the heroes living in the Border Regions. The heroes were selected on the basis of their achievements in the anti-Japanese struggle as well as their endurance in the face of adversities. They were also praised for their productivity and the ability to "increase their standard of living."[78] For these reasons, their power of appeal was strong as people were not asked to embrace a political view, but a lifestyle in the name of the national cause. The decision to portray these types of heroes and heroines in propaganda newspapers and

[75] Patricia Stranahan, "Labor Heroines of Yan'an," *Modern China* 9, no. 2 (April 1983), p. 229.

[76] James A. Flath, *The Cult of Happiness…,* p. 148.

[77] Ibidem.

[78] Patricia Stranahan, "Labor Heroines of Yan'an…," p. 231.

magazines became one of the greatest assets of the CCP's political strategies throughout the nation during wartime. On February 26, 1943, the *Liberation Daily* reported a statement from the Central Committee that read: "Women in production will not only play a big role in developing the economy of the base areas, it will also provide women with the material conditions they need to overthrow feudal oppression."[79] This statement clearly declared that female emancipation was first and foremost an economic issue and that the patriarchal prison had developed because of disadvantageous economic condition for women. The decisions taken by the Central Committee in regard of women also stressed that the controlled areas: "[...] are faced with three necessary tasks; fighting, production, and education. Of these tasks, it is production at which women can and should particularly excel…."[80] To say that women were able to excel at production but not at fighting or learning was all but a feminist pronouncement. The statement shows that women were perceived as an unexploited productive force and consequently portrayed as such.

The representation of labour heroines was an important weapon in the ideological arsenal of the CCP as it showed a true commitment towards improving women's lives. By empowering the women and making them able to break the patriarchal prison, the Party was also working to widen its political support. The iconography of women at the spinning wheel consequently flourished in the early 1940s and women at the wheel began to appear in the photographs of the *Pictorial*, the woodcuts published in the *Liberation Daily,* and on banknotes.

[79] *Liberation Daily*, 26 February 1943, qtd in Stranahan, *Labor Heroines…*, p. 234.

[80] Delia Davin, *Woman-Work: Women and the Party in Revolutionary China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 198.

Figure 45: Banknote from the Xibei Nongmin Yinhang, 1943*, http://auction.artxun.com/paimai-56271-281353790.shtml ,* last accessed 4 April 2016.

The banknote issued in 1943 by the Northwest Farmer's Bank is an example of this iconography. [81] On the left-hand side, the artist portrayed a woman spinning at the wheel, while on the right-hand side, there is a shepherd with his flock of sheep. The spinning the wheel is the same traditional wood model that appears in Li Tu's photograph and both activities, spinning and shepherding, show no sign of technical modernization. The *Pictorial* and the *Liberation Daily* were mirroring each other in terms of visual propaganda. On July 17, 1943, a woodcut in the *Daily* by Gu Yuan (1919-1996) praised the life in the Communist areas by comparing it with the struggles of the people in Henan victims of the 1943 famine.

[81] For an in-depth analysis on the history of banknotes during the war against Japan and their political significance before and after 1949, see: Helen Wang, "Mao on Money," *East Asia Journal* 1, no. 2 (2003): 86–97.

Figure 46: Gu Yuan, 'A Comparison,' *Liberation Daily,* 17 July 1943, p. 4.

Gu Yuan portrayed the people outside the Communist areas with starving, malnourished children, whose parents kept the family alive by picking leaves from barren trees. The land in the woodcut shows no sign of life and no farm animals. The right side of the woodcut shows life under the CCP rule where fully grown vegetables and a variety of farm animals were present. The children appear dressed and well fed and the overall atmosphere is serene as the farmed walks back home after a day in the fields. The mother was portrayed at the spinning wheel in front of the entrance of the house which resembles the yaodong caves of Yan'an. Propaganda through comparison was frequently used in woodcuts to show people the difference between life under the CCP and the rest of the country. Another example is the woodcut by Zhang Wang (1916-1992 CE) that appeared on July 22, 1943, under the title "Two different worlds."

Figure 47: Zhang Wang, *'Two different worlds', Liberation Daily,* 22 July 1943.

On the left, Zhang Wang depicted a starving woman unable to feed her child, while on the background two men are being taken away by a police officer. The characters read: "In the great interior: a life of destitution, homelessness, hunger and fear. In the border region: a life of plenty, peace, and contentment."[82] The life of peace and abundance was made possible by the farmer's work in the fields and the woman's contribution at the spinning wheel. The symbols of peace and abundance were the man's hoe, the symbol of his work outside the house, and the spinning wheel, the symbol of women's work inside the house.

Hero emulation was therefore not only constructed by praising one specific person for his or her personal achievements, but also by showing the dedication of the common, unknown people who lived in the border regions. As seen in these images, the iconography of women at the spinning wheel was chosen to portray the heroines who aimed to set an example for all other women. Moreover, all the women presented so far, although fictional in the case of the woodcuts and the

[82] Chang-Tai Hung, "Two Images of Socialism: Woodcuts in Chinese Communist Politics," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 1 (January 1997): 34–60.

banknote, were portrayed as happy, serene, and content with their work and their lives. Work was therefore seen and presented not only as a way to empower a woman and allow her to break free from the patriarchal prison, but also a way to find happiness. Through the representation of women as working heroines, the Communist Party was promising independence and happiness to all Chinese women.

Figure 48: Sha Fei, 'Making clothes for soldiers', 1940s, http://www.shafei.cn/center/dataset/works/shafeiQJ/works16/content/11.s0001f000649_large.html, last accessed 4 February 2015.

Figure 49: Chi Kwei-sheng, "Spinning," in Woodcuts of Wartime China (1937-1945), Sha Fei Papers, Box 1, Hoover Institution Archives, Copyright Stanford University.

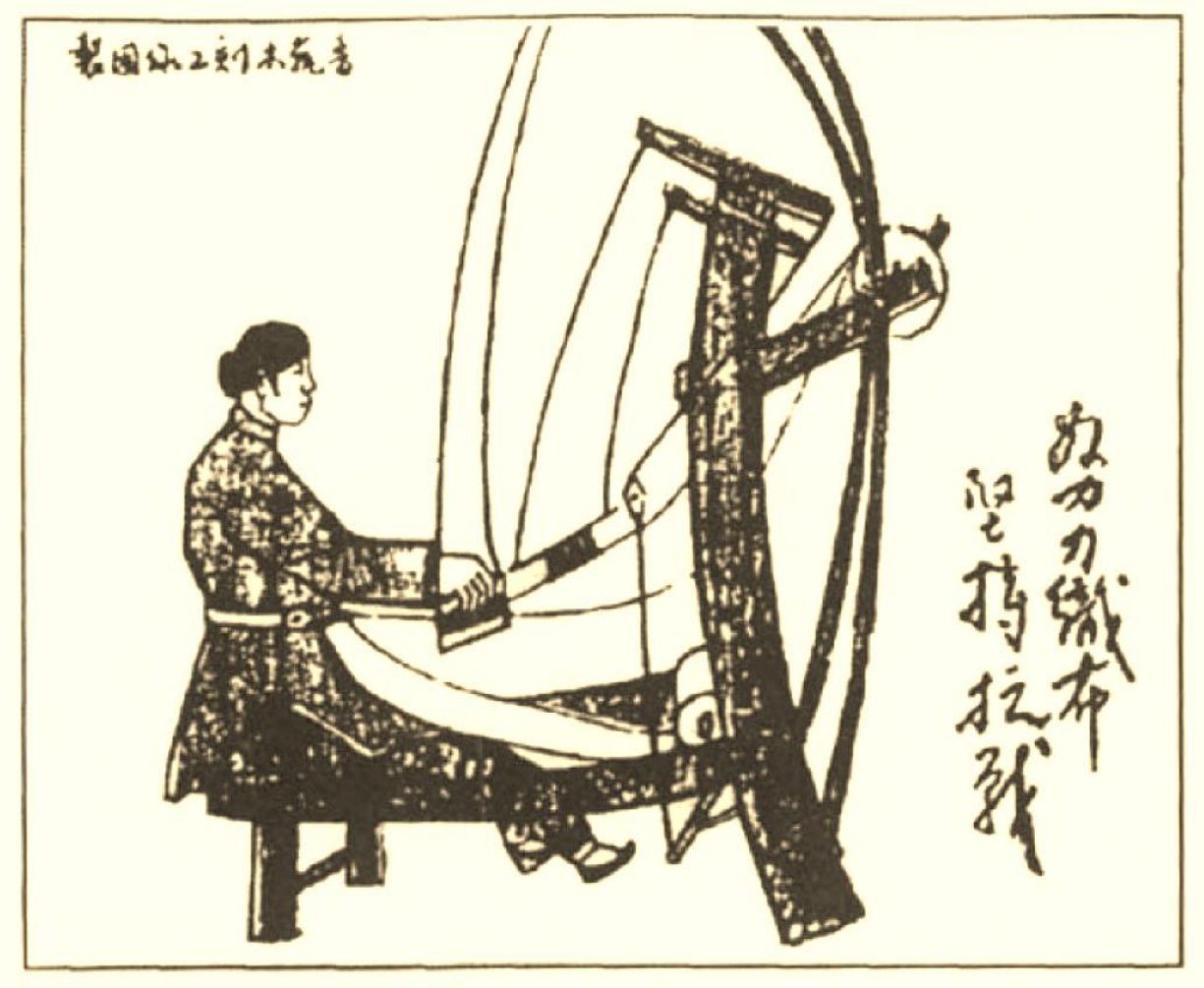

Figure 50: Yang Yun, *"Arduously Weave Cloth to Support the War of Resistance," 1939, in James A. Flath, The Cult of Happiness…, p. 149.*

One last consideration has to be made in relation to happiness. Joy and positivity were very important components for the hero emulation propaganda. Falling under the socialist realism style, these images had to represent the future while portraying the present. The heroes and heroines in the images were saving the nation from the Japanese threat, while working to create their own bright future. To foster the "desire to remake himself," viewers needed a positive and happy model. [83] This positive hero was frequently placed next to a grotesque, sad, and negative example of life without the socialist rule. The construction of the new socialist society was realised also because of the existence of heroic men and women who were passionate and fully dedicated to the cause. Happiness became

[83] Stefan R. Landsberger, Paint it Red, p. 26.

therefore an essential component of the socialist realist iconography. For example, Yu Lan (n.a.), a woman who lived in Yan'an and studied at the Yan'an University during the 1940s, remembers how she took part in knitting and weaving groups. The photograph of her and her female comrades happily sitting together while spinning was taken by Wu Yinxian around 1943. Yu Lan recalled that she had been so absorbed in her work to not notice that she was being photographed (Yu Lan is the first on the bottom right wearing the hat) and that the image would always remind her of her life in Yan'an.[84]

Figure 51: Wu Yinxian, A group of spinning women, 1943-1944, from http://www.sinotimes.com/487/up_art/p21.htm, last accessed 4 April 2016.

[84] "那期间我参加了妇女们的织毛衣工作，有一天有个同志送给我一张照片，画面上是一群围坐的妇女正在参加大生产的现场情景. 照片的前面有个带着孩子女同志在绕线团，还有正在织毛衣我. 原来这是延安的著名摄影家吴印咸拍摄的，我当时正在专心织毛衣，并不知道他拍下了这个对我十分有纪念意义的参加大生产运动的瞬间场面. 这张照片真实地记录了我在延安的生活实际，我后来一直妥善地将这张珍贵的照片保留至今". Complete interview available at: http://www.sinotimes.com/487/up_art/p21.htm.

Conclusions

While n the 1920s and 1930s, the practice of foot binding lost its importance as industrial modernization brought new freedom for women by taking them *outside*, the spinning wheel remained the subject of visual propaganda until the late 1940s.[85] As seen in the images presented in this chapter, the work of women was traditionally seen as a way to improve the family's business through textiles that were sold or kept as an asset in case of need. With the disruption that the war brought to Chinese society, the Communist Party promoted the work of women as an essential part of the "economic construction for continuing the [Anti-Japanese] War and building up the base areas."[86] The recipient of women's efforts was not the family, but the Party. During the war, exemplary women were therefore those who dedicated their lives to contribute toward the war effort and the socialist cause. The traditional *fengsu hua* genre, intended as the art that praised the life of common people, was also re-interpreted by the Party and used to portray the peasants as the true heroes of the twentieth century. *Evening in a farmer's home* and all the other images presented in this chapter perfectly embrace the traditional, Confucian style of *fengsu hua* as well as the ideological and stylistic characteristic of socialist realism.

The educational and didactic aspect of this type of art remained predominant in Communist visual propaganda. The CCP was in fact asking the artists to produce art for the masses to educate them, while in turn the artists would be educated by the masses. The necessity of learning from one another was stressed by Mao at the Yan'an talks on art and literature in 1942: "prior to the task of educating the

[85] For more on the impact of industrialization and modernisation on the practice of foot binding, see: Bossen et al, "Feet and Fabrication…".

[86] Delia Davin, *Woman-Work…*, p. 198.

workers, peasants and soldiers, there is the task of learning from them."[87] During the same speech, Mao also acknowledged the importance of learning from the past and using the Chinese artistic heritage in order to create new artistic forms in accordance with the socialist thought. He observed that:

> We must take over all the fine things in our literary and artistic heritage, critically assimilate whatever is beneficial, and use them as examples when we create works out of the literary and artistic raw materials in the life of the people of our own time and place.[88]

Despite the calls that advocated a break from the traditional, backwards Confucian practices, the CCP recognized that some of this traditional heritage could be reinterpreted and adjusted to modern times. These facts show that the hero emulation strategy was not invented or developed by the CCP, it simply was the Confucian practice of self-cultivation under a socialist name. As Lifton explains, constant repetition and the use of role models were Confucian practices, but instead of meditation, the CCP asked the people to actively participate in the activities necessary for the war effort.[89] The other Confucian practice re-invented by the CCP was the rectification of names.[90] Each person had a designated name—or role—in society that corresponded to an expected set of behaviours. By following the names, each person would behave according to their role thus ensuring the stability and development of a harmonious society. With the socialist rectification of names people were asked to be brave soldiers, productive workers, and mothers and daughters of the nation.

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[87] Zedong Mao, "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art, May 1942", *marxist.org*, accessed 4 May 2016 https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm.

[88] Ibidem.

[89] Robert J. Lifton (1961,1956).

[90] Confucius and Edward G. Slingerland, *Confucius Analects: With Selection from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co, 2003). For a concise explanation of the significance of the 'rectification of names' in Confucianism, see: http://www.britannica.com/topic/Confucianism#ref391514.

Despite the achievements in the educational and political environment that women benefitted from during wartime, they nonetheless remained subordinated to the male authority. As Lee proves with her study, female representation in propaganda sources continued to be constructed through a male gaze. This type of iconography strongly influenced society and the construction of gender roles across the decades. The socialist rectification of names caged women in defined roles that did not change substantially from the Song dynasty until the last few decades of the twentieth century. In other words, it was difficult for women to think of themselves as other than mothers, daughters, wives, or a productive force if their representation only considered these roles. Moreover, how could this iconography change if the images for propaganda use were usually created by men?

In the light of this analysis, it is possible to conclude that the images presented in this chapter, might at first appear as a call for female emancipation and empowerment, but they actually had two different purposes. The first aim was to inspire women to contribute to the salvation of the nation through textile production for the army, as this was the most immediate goal of the Party. The result of their contribution would have been a victory against Japan and would have helped the consequent creation of a socialist society. Images of working women consequently fell into the socialist realism category which aimed to "represent the labour and achievements of the socialist workers," under the guidance of the CCP.[91] The efforts made by women were recognized by the CCP leadership and publicised through posters and images. Yet, female representation remained constructed through a traditional male-gaze, a consequence of a male-oriented Party and propaganda. In consideration of the materials presented, it is legitimate to conclude that to consider *Evening in a farmer's home* as the image of female empowerment

[91] Sarah E. James, "A Socialist Realist Sander? Comparative Portraiture as a Marxist Model in the German Democratic Republic," *Grey Room*, no. 47 (2012), p. 43.

would be reductive, if not incorrect.[92] This image is representative of the real purpose of female representation in the *Pictorial*, and more broadly, of the representation of all those people who lived under the Communist rule during the 1930s and 1940s.in Chinese magazines and newspapers published during the 1930s and 1940s, women and children were primarily seen as labour force in years where the male labour force was lacking due to its deployment at the war front.

The way in which women were dressed in the images presented so far is further evidence of the understanding of women as labour force. In the areas controlled by the Communists, men's and women's traditional clothes were replaced by "a utilitarian outfit produced to emphasize the fact that society was now taking its lead from workers, peasants, and soldiers."[93] On the one hand, this type of clothing can be seen as an "erasure of gender and sexuality"[94] and scholars such as Dai Jinhua and Meng Yue argue that the degendered woman was actually an "impediment to women's achievement of a genuine gender equality that fully acknowledges gender differences."[95] Yet on the other hand, these utilitarian clothes can be seen as liberating, as such outfits did not sexualise women and actually freed them. A third option is also plausible: the change in outfit can be understood in the light of the reasons that had brought women into the political discourse in the first place: the need of labour force. Utilitarian clothing was not about gendered or

[92] Although very few achievements for women's lives conditions were made during the 1930s-40s, it is important to acknowledge that some positive changes were achieved post-1949. See: Hugh D. R Baker, *Chinese Family and Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Tina Mai Chen, "Proletarian White and Working Bodies in Mao's China," *East Asia Cultures Critique* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 361–93; Harriet Evans, "Defining Difference: The 'Scientific' Construction of Sexuality and Gender in the People's Republic of China.," *Signs* 20, no. 2 (Winter 1995): 357–94; Christina K. Gilmartin, *Engendering the Chinese Revolution: Radical Women, Communist Politics, and Mass Movements in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Christina Gilmartin, "Gender in the Formation of a Communist Body Politic," *Modern China* 19, no. 3 (July 1993): 299–329.
[93] Valery M. Garrett, *Chinese Clothing: An Illustrated Guide* (Hong Kong; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 101.

[94] Rosemary A. Roberts, *Maoist Model Theatre: The Semiotics of Gender and Sexuality in the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)*, Women and Gender in China Studies, v. 2 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), p. 17.

[95] Ibidem, p. 18.

degendered women, liberation or equality; they were clothes in which any person—man, woman, or child—could work without impediments and therefore contribute to the war effort.

This said, the achievements women were praised for were frequently, if not always, linked to stereotypical female activities, such as nursing, weaving, and the collection of food supplies. The real change was therefore not in the symbols used to portray ideal women—the spinning wheel, symbol of *nügong*—but in the reasons why these women were considered exemplary. Chinese women were transformed from exemplary women for the Confucian tradition to exemplary women for the national cause. While the traditional women portrayed in the *Gengzhi Tu* were used as examples as they showed what was expected of virtuous women according to Confucian principles, the women in the *Pictorial* and the *Liberation Daily* were praised for their frugality and dedication to the war effort. As a-political labour heroines, these figures were exploited to inspire other Chinese women to follow the same steps and achieve first, a victory against Japan, then the realisation of a socialist society and only at that point, equality. Whether the equality promised by the Party has actually and fully been achieved along the decades is an issue still open for debate. From a social viewpoint, the Party wanted to create a society where the word *woman* did not correspond to loss but to gain and where family could be "the place where women contributed to the nation by creating a comfortable and nurturing environment for husband and children."[96] Sadly, women's contribution was more economic than political and despite the calls for a clear cut from the traditional, oppressive Confucian society, the CCP decided to use the old values for its national and socialist causes. In other words, women were not asked to sacrifice their lives for the family, as Confucian values called for, but for the country. Women remained mothers, sisters, and daughters. The only difference was

[96] Glosser (1995) quoted in Gail Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*, p. 21.

that their sacrifices and their endurance were directed to the Party, for the success of the war against Japan and the socialist revolution.

The contradiction in advocating for women's rights while exploiting them for productive reasons is evident in how women were represented in woodcuts and photographs of the 1930s and 1940s. The analysis of female representation in CCP sources during wartime reveals which types of women were represented, but also *why* women appeared in such images. A correct analysis of these images can only be made by acknowledging the interdependence of politics, economic situation, and propaganda aims. The representation of women was created by considering the difficult balance between what the leadership wanted to achieve politically, i.e. defeating Japan and the Nationalists, and what women wanted—emancipation and feeling included in the making of modern China. A change in terminology, from exemplary to labour heroines, did not correspond to a substantial change in women's representation, and more importantly, did not correspond to the empowerment that was promised by the Party before 1949.

Moulding the Future

Images of Childhood in Wartime China

> In ancient times the youth of China who studied under a sage neither learned revolutionary theory nor took part in labour. [...] It is only here in Yenan and in the anti-Japanese base areas behind the enemy lines that the young people [...] are really the vanguard in resisting Japan and saving the nation because their political orientation and their methods of work are correct. That is why I say the youth movement in Yenan is the model for the youth movement throughout the country.

The "Orientation of the Youth Movement" speech was given by Mao Zedong on May 4th, the day chosen as China's Youth Day and the twentieth anniversary of the May 4th Movement. The speech aimed at presenting how the revolution against imperialism had developed since the events of May 1919 and which lessons could be learnt from the outcomes of the revolution. Mao spoke directly to the young people who were living in Yan'an and praised their choice to dedicate their lives and efforts to the national salvation by working among the peasants and fighting the Japanese advance. Although the speech did not directly mention children as Mao only refers to youth (*qingnian*) and it was directed at young adults more than children, it is nonetheless fitting to use Mao's words as insight into the expectations that were placed upon the young generations who were experiencing the war. Moreover, the speech illustrates the importance that children and young adults had for the plans for national salvation and the future of China.[1]

In this speech, the words of Mao Zedong can be considered the political and philosophical foundation of how children and young adults were to be raised and

[1] *Qingnian* is a term that is not specific to a definite age group. If we consider Socialist Youth League, established in 1920, the age group comprised 14-28 years old individuals. If instead we consider the Young Pioneers of China organisation, founded in 1949, we see that the age group comprised 6-14 years old children. Although in the speech Mao was referring to teenagers and young adults, the core message can still be applied to children. For a more detailed analysis on the concept of youth in China and its political implications during the Twentieth century, see: Fabio, Lanza. 'Springtime and Morning Suns: "Youth" as a Political Category in Twentieth-Century China'. *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 5, no. 1 (2012): 31–51.

trained under the CCP. Firstly, Mao openly criticised Confucius and the traditional way of educating the young which never resulted in any practical abilities, such as farming or ploughing, nor in any familiarity with revolutionary theories.[2] Secondly, Mao stressed how it was only in Yan'an and in the other Communist areas that young people were actively defending the nation from the Japanese advance. As proof of their dedication Mao said that, by working with the people, the young generations in Yan'an "have reclaimed thousands of *mou* of waste land."[3] According to Mao, the correct political orientation and methods of work that were employed in the Communist areas by the young generations were the necessary tools for ensuring a victory against Japan and the realisation of a modern, socialist China.

The purpose that this speech had in relation to the representation of children and childhood in wartime propaganda photographs was in the importance given to the young and the adolescents in being models for the whole nation and for all other social groups. The Party wanted to show the connection between young generations and their dedication to the national cause. Most importantly, in terms of visual propaganda the artists were asked to portray the contribution that the young generations were giving to the war effort and the *correct* way in which children and adolescents were growing thanks to the Party's leadership. Given the importance of the symbolic role that children have in the construction of the idea of a nation, an analysis of how the young generations were portrayed during the war seems the most appropriate way to conclude this study. If we refer once more to the concept of 'imagined communities' by Anderson and the role of Communist propaganda in

[2] "When a student asked him how to plough the fields, Confucius answered, "I don't know, I am not as good at that as a farmer." Confucius was next asked how to grow vegetables, and he answered, "I don't know, I am not as good at that as a vegetable gardener." In ancient times the youth of China who studied under a sage neither learned revolutionary theory nor took part in labour." Mao Zedong, "On The Orientation of the Youth Movement," May 4, 1939, available at *https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_14.htm*.

[3] Ibidem.

creating this new idea of China, it becomes apparent why children were an integral part of this imaginative process as they represented the social and political future of the nation. This is why, to use the words of T. W. Woronov, "the study of children and children's nationalism is [...] particularly important, because all nations must in some way teach children how to imagine themselves as members of a national community." [4] Moreover, by looking at how Chinese intellectuals approached the issue of children's education during the 1930s to 1940s in relation to the war and the construction of the Chinese nation, it becomes clear that children were seen as "'national assets,' whose proper education and regulation was crucial to the survival of the nation-state."[5]

From a visual viewpoint, if on the one hand children were taught, by adults, how to imagine themselves through oral, written, and visual propaganda, on the other hand this 'imagined childhood' was created *by* adults and, quite frequently, *for* adults. While this distinction is kept into consideration throughout this analysis, the photographs chosen for this chapter are part of the images published in the *Pictorial*, which targeted an adult readership, and are primarily photographs *about* children and their childhood during wartime. Therefore, this chapter aims at exploring how children were imagined in the photographs created during the war, which type of propaganda purposes did these images serve, and whether these images did somehow predict what Chinese society would become after 1949.

The representation of children and childhood had always been popular in Chinese art, but its political and social significance, together with its symbolism, have only recently, in the last two decades, attracted scholarly attention. As a consequence, the literature on the representation of children and childhood in

[4] Woronov, T. W. 'Performing the Nation: China's Children as Little Red Pioneers'. *Anthropological Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 647–72, p. 652-653.

[5] Orna Naftali, 'Reforming the Child: Childhood, Citizenship, and Subjectivity in Contemporary China,' *PhD Thesis*, (University of California, 2007), p. 95.

Chinese art has grown. Previous studies that looked at childhood representation focused on decorative art created during imperial times, propaganda cartoons in the propaganda magazine *The Resistance Child (Kangzhan Ertong*), cartoons created by the Cartoon Propaganda Corps and printed in the magazine *Resistance Cartoon* (*Kangzhan Manhua)*, posters created after 1949 and specifically during the Cultural Revolution, and drawings created by children after 1949.[6] Studies like Ann Farquhar's on children's literature from Lu Xun to Mao Zedong, Ping-chen Hsiung's on the lives of children and the history of childhood in imperial times, and Orna Naftali's research on the modern Chinese pedagogic discourse and the meaning of childhood in contemporary China, although not strictly related to iconography or visual propaganda, offer crucial insights into how the understanding of children's lives and their role as social group developed across the centuries.[7]

Previous studies on wartime photography have not covered the role of children and childhood images in relation to the political and social plans of the CCP for China. However, the studies cited above are valuable sources for understanding the significance of children and childhood in China and the role such images had over the centuries. In the context of the Anti-Japanese War, the studies by Laura De Giorgi and Laura Pozzi offer the most relevant examples of art for and about children. Both their analysis of propaganda cartoons contribute to the discussion on

[6] Marian Kuo-ching Adkins, "Children's Drawing in the People's Republic of China," *Theory into Practice, China: Education and Society*, 17, no. 5 (December 1978): 401–9; Laura De Giorgi, "Little Friends at War: Childhood in the Chinese Anti-Japanese Propaganda Magazine 'Kangzhan Ertong' (The Resistance Child)," *Oriens Extremus* 53 (2014): 61–84; Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald, eds., *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China: Posters of the Cultural Revolution* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); Laura Pozzi, "'Chinese Children Rise Up!': Representation of Children in the Work of the Cartoon Propaganda Corps during the Second Sino-Japanese War," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture* Review 4, no. 1 (May 2015): 333–63; Ann Elizabeth Barrott Wicks, ed., *Children in Chinese Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002)

[7] Mary Ann Farquhar, *Children's Literature in China: From Lu Xun to Mao Zedong*, Studies on Modern China (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1999); Ping-chen Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage: Children and Childhood in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2005); Orna Naftali, "Reforming the Child: Childhood, Citizenship, and Subjectivity in Contemporary China" (University of California, 2007).

how childhood was visually constructed in relation to the war effort, modern Chinese nationalism, and of course, for the propaganda needs of the political parties of the time.[8]

In addition to the propaganda needs of the time, it is important to ask, as Stephanie Donald does "why are there children in posters at all? Is it simply a matter of addressing child spectators [...] or does it have more to do with the potency of childhood in public imagination?"[9] While Donald's analysis focuses on children in posters of the Cultural Revolution—acknowledging the continuity aspect between posters of the pre-1968 and of later years—the question she presents is still relevant for wartime photographs of children. Donald in fact notes how images of children are very different from images of other social groups. Nevertheless, such images are important as their analysis can help uncovering the social and political role of children and childhood.[10]

In the case of the *Pictorial*, a magazine that targeted mostly an adult readership, one might ask why there were images of children. Were they connected to the "potency of childhood in public imagination" as Donald suggests?[11] And, most importantly, which purpose did they serve in the propaganda and political strategies of the Party and who were they directed at? This chapter aims at answering these questions by considering that the images of children that appeared in the *Pictorial* and in the works of various CCP-affiliated photographers were primarily created for

[8] Laura De Giorgi, "Little Friends at War…; Laura Pozzi, "'Chinese Children Rise Up...'."

[9] Stephanie Donald, "Children as Political Messengers: Art, Childhood, and Continuity" in Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald, eds., *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China: Posters of the Cultural Revolution* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), p. 79.

[10] Ibidem, p. 80.

[11] Ibidem, p. 79.

adult viewers and can therefore be categorised as images *about* children more than images *for* children.[12]

Given the considerable number of images of children that appeared in the *Pictorial* and in the works of the Party's affiliated photographers, it is apparent that children and their lives during the war were an important part of the propaganda strategies of the CCP. The interest in the representation of children's lives during the conflict and their contribution to the war effort can be identified in the Party's needs to connect the visual, nationalistic, and anti-Japanese propaganda with the political plans for the country. Provided that the overarching theme of this study is the role of images in the creation of a modern socialist China, the analysis of children and childhood images is the most revealing one in terms of how future society was imagined and visually constructed during the war. If children, and sons in particular, were traditionally regarded as the physical embodiment of the future of a family, during the Anti-Japanese War children became the future of the whole nation.[13] Childhood was not a private, unofficial period in the life of a family any longer, but instead became a national, public matter.

Children, Childhood and Nation

Children can be understood as the social group that is formed by the youngest members of a society. In the case of Chinese society, children were traditionally identified as the young people between the age (*sui)* of one to sixteen who would reach adulthood only between the age of fifteen and twenty.[14] As Orna Naftali notes, it was only after the age of seven *sui* that children were considered old enough to

[12] Ibid, p. 80.

[13] Laura Pozzi, "'Chinese Children Rise Up!'…".

[14] Anne Behnke Kinney, ed., *Chinese Views of Childhood* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), p. 1.

be aware of "their social gender, and develop a sense of shame and embarrassment."[15] According to *The Books of Rites*, the education of children had to follow certain steps at specific ages. For example, at six, children would begin to learn numbers and directions; by age seven, boys and girls would dine at different tables and by the age of nine they would start their formal education under a master.[16] The importance that children had in Chinese society can also be seen in the great development that children literature had across the centuries. Ann Mary Farquhar notes how written sources were considered the primary form of education and transmission of the moral values necessary to properly raise children. The first picture book for children, the *Daily Stories,* a Confucian text, was printed in China in 1542.[17] Images were a central part of the didactic value of children's books as "Pictorialization [...] enhanced the pleasure of reading and reinforced the educative meaning of the texts."[18]

In contrast, childhood is a term that describes, according to the definition given by Hsiung Ping-chen, "the experience of people and the philosophical, cultural, and social understanding of that phase of the human life cycle."[19] The available research agrees that childhood is socially and historically constructed. The construction of childhood varies according to the location and historical period considered, and the types of political and social expectations placed upon children by a certain society.[20] Even in the case of wartime China, the social, cultural, and

[15] Orma Naftali, "Reforming the Child….", p. 76.

[16] Hsiung, Ping-chen. *A Tender Voyage…*, p. 106.

[17] Mary Ann Farquhar, *Children's Literature in China...*, p. 16.

[18] Ibidem.

[19] Hsiung, Ping-chen. *A Tender Voyage…*, p. 15.

[20] The first study on childhood in Western literature was *Centuries of Childhood* by Philippe Ariès, published in 1962. Although Ariès had been criticised by subsequent studies due to the ways in which he constructed his theory, mainly due to the fact that the artistic examples he used were somehow arbitrary and Ariès did not take into consideration the political and social environment in which they

political environment impacted the ways in which Communist propaganda visually constructed the idea of childhood..[21] Moreover, by connecting the construction of childhood created under the CCP with the idea of nation that the Party had, the idea that children, and their representation, occupied a predominant position in wartime propaganda is further highlighted.

The relationship between the construction of childhood and the creation of a nation during a period of social disruption and change is explained by Orna Naftali as follows: "the importance of guiding and developing the actions of children has been a central concern of many modern nation-states due to the crucial role children play in the imaginary and corporeal construction of the nation."[22] In terms of wartime expectations for Communist propaganda strategies, children not only embodied the hope for a free, united China, but were exploited and portrayed as "national asset."[23] The wartime visual construction of childhood by the Communist Party was therefore the initial, embryonic stage of what the construction of China under the Party's leadership would eventually become.

Therefore, during wartime, children were not only to be moulded on the values that were important to create a modern nation but were exploited by the propaganda system as symbols of patriotism and as an inspiration across all levels of society. The propaganda value that children and childhood had was linked to their

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had been produced, his view that childhood is a social construct that changes in time and place is widely accepted. For a brief history about how childhood studies developed across disciplines, see: Mary Jane Kehily, ed., *Understanding Childhood: A Cross-Disciplinary Approach*, 2. ed, Childhood 1 (Bristol: Policy Press [u.a.], 2013).

[21] Although, as already mentioned, the approach to childhood that is too centred on the *local* and focused on underlying the differences more than the commonalities has been recently challenged (see: Allison James and Adrian L. James, 'Childhood: Toward a Theory of Continuity and Change'), for the sake of this analysis it is still useful to underline the unique circumstances, more than the global commonalities, in which the idea of childhood developed during the Anti-Japanese War.

[22] Orna Naftali, 'Reforming the Child: Childhood, Citizenship, and Subjectivity in Contemporary China' (University of California, 2007), p. 23.

[23] Ibidem, p. 24.

social and political value as "future" of a country. Moreover, children were the recipients of all the expectations that Chinese society had for a free and strong China. While in 1918 Lu Xun had addressed China at the end of his famous short story, *A Madman's Diary* (*Kuangren Riji*), with the cry "save the children,"[24] Mao Zedong reinterpreted this cry by putting China's future into the hands of the children by saying: "rise up… and learn to be free, independent citizens of China, learn how to wrest this freedom from the yoke of Japanese imperialism and transform yourselves into the masters of a new era."[25]

Children and Childhood in Chinese art

Among the available studies on the representation of children in the Chinese artistic environment, the most relevant studies appear to be the collection of essays on images of children during dynastic times edited by Ann Barrott Wicks, *Children in Chinese Art*, and the study on Cultural Revolution posters, *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China,* edited by Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald. The essays collected in *Children in Chinese Art* focus on different aspects of the representation of children. For instance, while the introductory essay is a general overview on the significance of the depiction of children for their political and social value, other essays focus on specific artistic themes such as boys playing in a garden (*yingxitu*) or pictures of a hundred boys (*baizitu*), explored by Terese Tse Bartholomew.[26] Although the volume focuses on imperial times, it is still a valid source for this study as it investigates the symbolism behind images of children and

[24] Lu Xun, 'Kuangren Riji', *Lu Xun Quanji*, Vol.1 (Beijing, 1973), p. 291.

[25] Mao Zedong, in Liu Yu, 'Jiefangqu Diuizhang Ertongbao', *Ertong Wenxue Yanjiu*, 2 (1959), p. 85 quoted in Mary Ann Farquhar, *Children's Literature in China: From Lu Xun to Mao Zedong*, Studies on Modern China (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), p. 175.

[26] Terese Tse Bartholomew, "One Hundred Children: From Boys at Play to Icons of Good Fortune," in Ann Elizabeth Barrott Wicks, ed., *Children in Chinese Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), p. 57-83.

childhood and, most importantly, the value that children, and boys specifically, had in Chinese society.

While many of the motifs that were found in traditional art lost their prominence in wartime propaganda, the value that the representation of children had for political and social purposes remained. In relation to the analysis of wartime propaganda photographs of children, the introductory essay of *Children in Chinese Art* written by Wicks is most relevant as it presents the social and political value of children's images. Socially, images of children can be read as the visual expression of the expectations that society places upon the younger generations. For instance, in Chinese dynastic times, the illustrations of children that appeared on vases, textiles, and objects of daily use, represented the importance of carrying on the patriline and the hope for women to give birth to one or more sons.[27] [28]

Politically in contrast, images of children can be read as the depiction of how politics pictured society. The values and expectations that were created around children mirrored what the ruling elite or the government deemed relevant and necessary for the whole nation. To analyse how children were portrayed is therefore one of the most insightful approaches into the study of the political and social ambitions of a country. In traditional Chinese society for example, sons were the carriers of the expectations and hopes of a family, while girls were expected to spend their lives preparing to become mothers and therefore the primary educators of the sons they would hopefully have.[29] Children were considered a blessing not only because they would continue the family line and perform the rituals of

[27] Wicks, Ann Elizabeth Barrott, ed. *Children in Chinese Art*.

[28] Ibidem.

[29] "May you have a hundred sons and a thousand grandsons," and "have sons and prosper," were the most common traditional wish to newly-wed couples in China. See: B. M Frolic, *Mao's People: Sixteen Portraits of Life in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge, Mass. [u.a.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1994), p. 97.

worshipping the ancestors, but also because they were going to be the primary carers of their parents in their declining years.[30]

In a context of great expectations placed upon the children as future and hope for the family, education played a pivotal role in ensuring that the children would grow up with the appropriate knowledge and moral values. As De Giorgi explains, education was not simply an affair of the mind, the acts of learning and studying, but most importantly a "process of moral training and socialisation."[31] While it would be incorrect to say that all Chinese children received the same education as disparities were present between boys and girls and among different social classes, it is nonetheless accurate to point out that children were seen as the greatest asset to a family's survival and, in the case of sons, the only opportunity to climb the social ladder was via the successful participation in the imperial examination. [32] Education was therefore not only a way to achieve personal intellectual growth but, most importantly, a tool for social mobility as one could become an official and achieve power and status, by passing the imperial examinations. If studying for the imperial examinations was economically hard for boys of lower classes, practical education, the ability to count, keep track of expenses and market prices, and master the family's trade and basic literacy were seen as equally fundamental for the success of a family's business.[33]

During imperial times, and in particular during the Ming dynasty (11368-1644 CE), the importance placed upon education brought families to believe that having a

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[30] Hugh D. R Baker, *Chinese Family and Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 3.

[31] Laura De Giorgi, 'La modernizzazione del sistema educativo dalla fine dell'Ottocento ai Giorni Nostri', in Scarpari, Maurizio, Roberto Ciarla, and Guido Samarani, eds. *La Cina*. Vol. 3. 4 vols. Torino: Einaudi, 2009, p. 663.

[32] For an in-depth analysis of the life of children and childhood in late Imperial China, see: Ping-chen Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage: Children and Childhood in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2005).

[33] Ibidem, p. 110.

son was not enough. Families hoped to be blessed with a noble son (*guizi*) who would excel in his studies and bring pride to the family. As Bartholomew notes in her analysis of Ming vases and artefacts, the longing for noble sons was visually manifested by many symbols such as the sweet olive tree (*guihua*), a symbol of literary success, to the mythical creature *qilin* depicted while carrying a boy on its back as symbol for the wish of a skilled son.[34] These types of depictions did not only represent the hopes of Chinese society, but were also used for the "didactic reinforcement of social values as well as the amuletic function of these artworks to encourage the birth of sons."[35]

During the last few decades of the Qing dynasty, a shift is discernible in society and as a consequence, in the visual representation of children and childhood. Before the nineteenth century, children were depicted and understood not as individuals with distinctive characteristics, but as an extension of the family. By contrast, with the advent of the twentieth century and the arrival of Western theories of childhood development, Chinese scholars and intellectuals began to view the imperial examinations and at the traditional education system as something obsolete and requiring modernisation.[36]

As children were considered the future of China, they needed to be placed in the best environment to thrive and thus bring the whole nation into modernity. Childhood therefore became to be seen and treated as a national affair, where children were not simply the hope for their individual families, but the hope for the entire country. With this shift, children became to be seen, and therefore portrayed

[34] Terese Tse Bartholomew, "One Hundred Children: From Boys at Play to Icons of Good Fortune," in Ann Elizabeth Barrott Wicks, ed., *Children in Chinese Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), p.70 &74.

[35] Wicks, Ann Elizabeth Barrott, ed. *Children in Chinese Art*, p. 2.

[36] For a complete overview of how the need for a modern education was discussed along the centuries in China see the paper by Laura De Giorgi in Maurizio Scarpari, Roberto Ciarla, and Guido Samarani, eds., *La Cina*, vol. 3, 4 vols (Torino: Einaudi, 2009), pp. 663-692.

under a different light. Moreover, thanks to the photographic medium that was becoming common in China in the last few decades of the nineteenth century, the portrayal of children in paintings became closer to photographic representation in the sense that children were not just a social group of look-alike young people whose personality was still in the making but acquired definite facial and psychological features and became seen as real individuals. This was particularly true in southern China where Western influence was stronger, photographic studios more active and, as Ann Wicks notes, where social consciousness and a particular attention to the needs and specificities of children developed.[37]

Despite the differences across the centuries, these types of children and childhood depictions had in common that they were not only the representation of Chinese society's hopes but were also used as didactical tools and amulets.[38] While this amuletic function cannot be discerned in wartime photographs, images of children and childhood retained a didactical function. During the war against Japan, the didactical function of images of children became connected to the socialist use of labour heroes and heroines that were typical of Communist propaganda. The value of child-heroes and heroines for different social categories laid precisely in the understanding of childhood as a pivotal moment in the development of a person and as future for the growth of a nation.

The Role of Children for Propaganda Strategies

In her study on the cartoons that appeared on *The Resistance Child*, Laura de Giorgi explores how, during the Anti-Japanese war, children were placed at the centre of propaganda strategies because of the "notion that children were consumers of

[37] Wicks, Ann Elizabeth Barrott, ed. *Children in Chinese Art*, p. 24-26.

[38] Ibidem, p. 2.

modern knowledge and future members of the national community."[39] This meant that children had to be engaged and involved in the political discourse with the ultimate goal of mobilising them for the defence of the nation. It follows that propaganda, in the form of images but also spoken dramas, radio, and literature, was to be implemented in a way so that it would engage the young sections of society. The goal was to create awareness in the children about what was expected of them in regard to the war effort. This lead, as De Giorgi rightly points out, to a militarisation of Chinese society in the 1930s and 1940s that lasted until the 1970s, when the Cultural Revolution ended. An example of this militarisation in literature and songs is given by Ann Mary Farquhar who notes how, during the Anti-Japanese War, children were also addressed with a language of violence and war:

> Little Red children, [...]
> Raise your skills,
> Learn to fight,
> When you grow up
> You will be like the Red Army[40]

And:

> Easter devils,
> Have cruel hearts, Oh!
> Murder men, light fires,
> [...]
> Killed my Dad, Ah!
> Raped my Mum, Oh![41]

Colette Plum explains that the peculiar political and social Chinese situation in which China found itself during wartime also lead to the emergence of the "child-

[39] Laura De Giorgi, 'Little Friends at War: Childhood in the Chinese Anti-Japanese Propaganda Magazine "Kangzhan ertong" (The Resistance Child)', *Oriens Extremus* 53 (2014): 61–84, p. 62.

[40] Tian Haiyan, 'Suqu Ertong Geyao', *Ertong Wenxue Yanjiu* I, p. 85, qtd in Mary Ann Farquhar, *Children's Literature in China: From Lu Xun to Mao Zedong*, Studies on Modern China (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), p. 177.

[41] Ping Lin, 'Nan Tongyao', *Kangzhan Wenyi*, I:2 (7 May 1938), p. 7 qtd in Mary Ann Farquhar, *Children's Literature*…, p. 178.

citizen worker," a figure that acquired the same visual and political characteristics of the labour heroes and heroines that were specific of the adult world.[42]

From a visual viewpoint, the images of children created and printed during the 1930s-40s differ from images of children and childhood produced during dynastic times. While during the Anti-Japanese War, traditional symbolism was retained for the creation of images of landscape and women, the same cannot be said for wartime photographs of children. During imperial times in fact, children, and in particular boys, were usually portrayed while engaged in activities appropriate to their age and gender.[43] Representation of traditional games and life situations had a very strong symbolic and social value. These traditional values are absent in the photographs of children taken during the war against Japan. The reasons for this lack of visual continuity are arguably the most interesting aspect of the current analysis: the relation between the role of education for political legitimation and the construction of the national identity in a moment of social upheaval.

The analysis of photographs of children who lived in Yan'an and in other Communist areas, reveals how children were instrumentalised in order to portray an idea of childhood that was meant to lay the foundation of the modern socialist society. This is to say that childhood was not only seen as the initial, most important period in a person's life but, in a more idealised way, it was considered the foundational stage of the new China under the Party's leadership. Photographs of child soldiers, child farmers and child artists were essential for the construction of this correspondence between a Party-approved, socialist childhood and the child-nation that China was in the eyes of Mao and the Party in the 1930s-40s. Both

[42] Colette Plum, 'Lost Childhoods in a New China: Child-Citizen-Workers at War, 1937-1945', *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (2012): 237–58.

[43] Ping-chen Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage*.

children and China had to be moulded on new values, so that a novel, more prosperous and equal society could be shaped.

Because of the need to model the young generations, education was going to play a very central role for the political goals of the Party. As De Giorgi notes, from the 1920s onwards, the debate on how to modernise the Chinese education system had at its centre the issue of national salvation. Thus, education and politics became linked and, as a consequence, the two main educational objectives became the promotion of national conscience and military education.[44] Both these goals were also used as the foundation of the creation of propaganda images of children in both the Nationalist and the Communist Party. The use of children for propaganda images that wanted to promote a correct approach to education and national salvation, was employed for two main reasons. The first reason was that, socially, children carried a strong emotional value as they were seen as the future of a family. During wartime, children were therefore the recipients of society's expectations concerning their capacity to improve the country. Secondly, from a political viewpoint, the portrayal of children reflected how politics imagined future society. Images of child soldiers were frequently reproduced in the pages of the *Pictorial*. In these photographs, boys and girls alike were depicted wearing uniforms, carrying rifles and learning about warfare. Even though girls did not take part in active warfare, the images were usually titled with slogans such as "defend the country" or "save the nation from the Japanese invasion." In the same way, photographs of children working in the fields aimed at exhibiting the dedication that children had towards national salvation and an understanding of their responsibilities in a time of need.

[44] Laura De Giorgi, "La modernizzazione del sistema educativo dalla fine dell'Ottocento ai giorni nostri", in Maurizio Scarpari, Roberto Ciarla, and Guido Samarani, eds., *La Cina*, vol. 3, 4 vols (Torino: Einaudi, 2009), 663-692, p. 675.

At the beginning of the war against Japan, the Nationalist and the Communist Party immediately understood the importance of targeting children with an educational propaganda that would ensure a correct understanding of the war, as well as explain the expectations that were placed on them for the military success against Japan. During the early 1930s, children's magazines and newspapers mushroomed, and so did children's literature, music and radio programmes.[45] While all of this can be classified as propaganda *for* children, there was also a significant amount of propaganda *about* children.[46] While there were pages and sections of the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial* specifically meant for children, the other sections were clearly created with an adult readership in mind. The photographs that featured children were meant to provide adult readers with an insight into the life and the experiences of children under the Communist rule. To add to this, images *about* children are relevant as they show how the Party imagined and consequently portrayed childhood during wartime and how this interpretation would influence the construction of modern Chinese society after 1949. In the *Pictorial*, children are portrayed as happy, taken care of by a well organised system that provided food, schooling, work and military training.

Children as Victims

The photograph that awoke the world to what was happening in China because of the Japanese advance was Wang Xiaoting's image of a crying baby next to the

[45] Mary Ann Farquhar, *Children's Literature in China: From Lu Xun to Mao Zedong*, Studies on Modern China (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1999); Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[46] Stephanie Donald points out the importance of differentiating between propaganda *for* and *about* children in her study "Children as Political Messengers: Art, Childhood, and Continuity" that appeared as chapter 5 in Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald, eds., *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China: Posters of the Cultural Revolution* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), pp. 79-100.

railway tracks during the bombings of Shanghai in August 1937.[47] The image shows a crying baby sitting of the railway tracks of the Shanghai railway station, surrounded by debris and covered in blood. Not only did this photograph become famous in China, but it also became iconic in the rest of the world. In fact, it was voted as one of the ten "Pictures of the Year" by the readers of *Life* in 1937 and it was estimated that it was seen by around 136 million people.[48]

[47] Wang Xiaoting was also known as Wang Haisheng, H. S. Wong and Newsreel Wong. Wang was an American-born photographer who was sent to China in the 1920s as part of an American expedition to Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang. In 1931, he was hired as director of the photographic department by the Shanghai newspaper *Shanghai News* (*Shen Bao)*. During his time in China, he worked for other Chinese newspapers and covered some of the most important battles of the Anti-Japanese War, such as the Battle of Xuzhou and the bombings in Guangzhou. For more, see: C. Peter Chen, "Wang Xiaoting", *World War II Database*, https://ww2db.com/person_bio.php?person_id=1032 , last accessed 20 October 2017.

[48] Ibidem; 'Bloody Saturday,' *Time*, http://100photos.time.com/photos/hs-wong-bloody-saturday, last accessed 10 November 2017. 'The Terror of War,' *Time*, http://100photos.time.com/photos/nick-ut-terror-war, last accessed 10 November 2017; Elle Hunt, 'Boy in the Ambulance: Shocking Image Emerges of Syrian Child Pulled from Aleppo Rubble,' *The Guardian*, 18 August 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/18/boy-in-the-ambulance-image-emerges-syrian-child-aleppo-rubble, last accessed 10 November 2017.

Figure 52:Wang Xiaoting, Bloody Saturday, 1937, http://100photos.time.com/photos/hs-wong-bloody-saturday, last accessed 19 January 2018.

The power of this photograph is in the emotional value it has for the viewers specifically because it shows the consequences of the war on the most helpless part of society: children. At the time it was taken however, it was so influential because the war in China became real because it could be seen.[49] This emotional value is also reinforced by the nature of this photograph, which was a candid shot. Borrowing Susan Sontag's argument on the difference between staged and candid war photographs, candid shots are emotionally powerful because of the truth they carry within and, consequently, they become carriers of a "moral authority" that

[49] "Something becomes real—to those who are elsewhere, following it as 'news'—by being photographed." in Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 19.

staged photographs will never have.[50] By pairing this with the emotional impact that photographs of children have on society and viewers in general, we understand why Wang Xiaoting's image became so iconic. Images of children as victims, orphans, or refugees were frequently exploited in the *Pictorial* and in other propaganda publications for their emotional impact. Given that during the Anti-Japanese War, thousands of families were broken apart and the number of orphaned or displaced children considerably grew, the first purpose of images of children as victims was, quite intuitively, to show the destruction that Japan had brought to China.

Interestingly though, the first images in the *Pictorial* of a child victim of war were photographs taken by Sha Fei of General Nie Rongzhen together with a Japanese refugee girl in 1940. The girl, around five years old at the time, was left behind by the Japanese Army after a battle for the control of the Jingxing Coal Mine in Hebei. The Eighth Route Army had won the battle and rescued the girl who was entrusted to the care of the General. The photographs had great propaganda value at the time as they showed how much the Communists valued children and the great care that the girl received from the General and his staff. The caption in the *Pictorial* reads: "She was heartily received by the General and felt very much 'at home' and was latter [sic] sent back to the Japanese together with a letter written by the General."[51] The whole photo-essay was skilfully constructed in order to illustrate the good care and "preferential treatment" that the Party provided both to the girl and other captured Japanese soldiers. Sha Fei's photo-essay in the *Pictorial* show a very fatherly Nie Rongzhen while he is holding the refugee girl by the hand or while saying goodbye to her before sending her back to the Japanese. The girl is depicted sitting in a basket filled with fruit; the General caressing her

[50] Ibidem, p.51.

[51] Zhimin Shi, *晋察冀画报文献全集 = Jin-Cha-Ji Pictorial*, vol. 1, 3 vols (Beijing: Zhongguo Sheying Chubanshe, 2015), p. 63.

head, while the basket-carrier was posing with Nie's letter for the Japanese. The girl looks directly at Sha Fei, while all the other men in the photograph were directing their attention to her. Although she occupies the lower right corner of the photograph, the viewer's gaze is directed towards her.

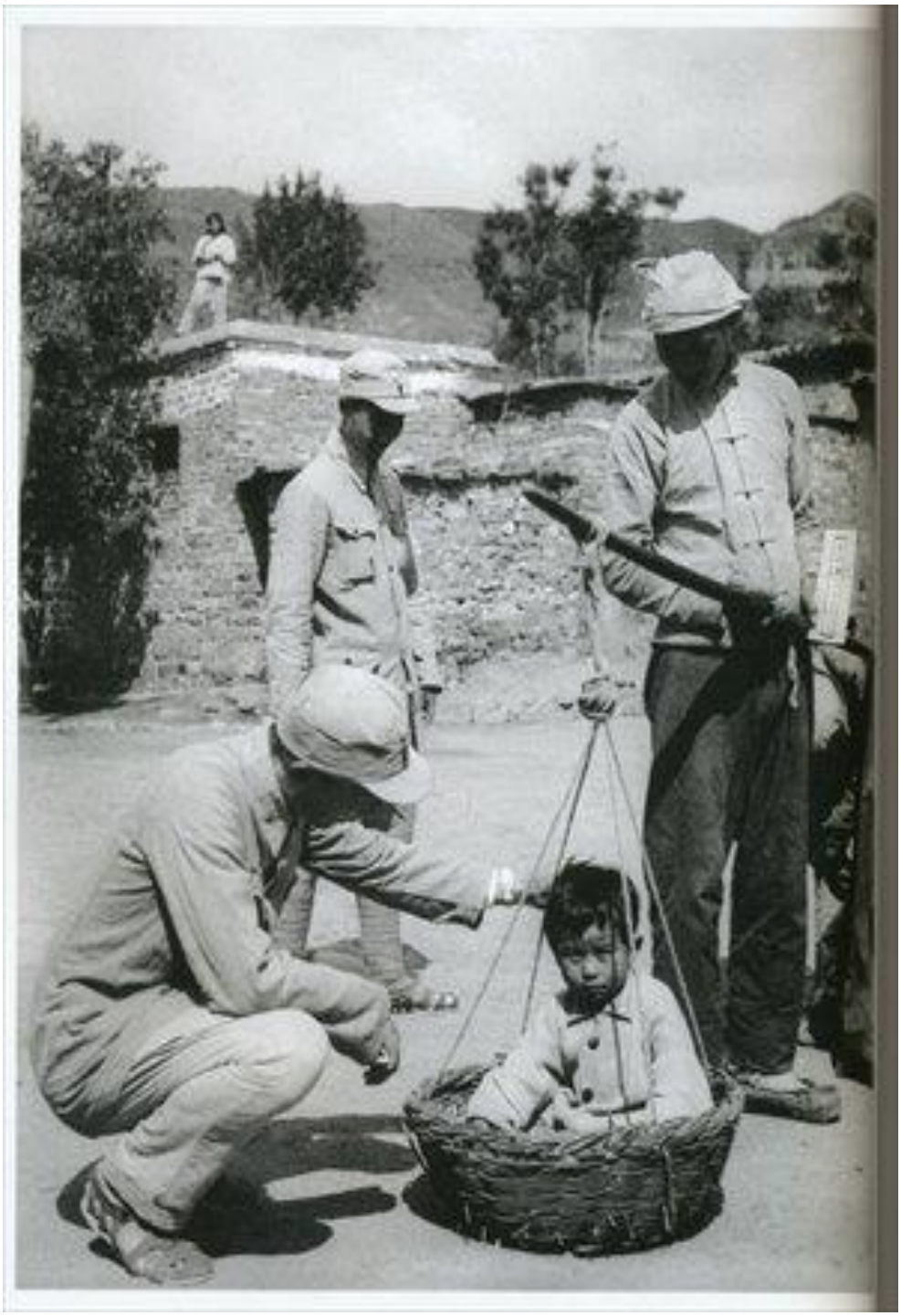

Figure 53: Sha Fei, 'Saying goodbye,' August 1940, from Si Sushi, Sha Fei and his…, p. 33.

Although it could be argued that this example is not relevant for a discussion of children as victims, Sha Fei's photo-essay aimed at showing that, despite being on

opposite sides, the Communists were respectful of the innocent children and gave priority to them and their safety. To underline the difference between the Party and the Japanese army's behaviour towards children, the *Pictorial* also printed photographs of injured or dead children to show the destruction that the Japanese were causing.

In literary and artistic production, the genre of children as victims was frequently linked to the histories of all those mothers who sacrificed their lives in the attempt to protect their offspring. This led to an analogy between China, seen as the motherland violated by the Japanese army, and the Chinese people, seen as its children, who had the duty to avenge their mother and fight the enemy.

Figure 54: Liu Feng, Save the Children, 1943, from Si Sushi, Sha Fei and His…, p. 41.

Communist propaganda began to exploit this correlation to spread feelings of victimisation in the population because, as Liu notes, "victimization is very effective in mass mobilization."[52] Images of injured or dead children, therefore, hinged their emotional power on the fact that children had always been considered helpless and innocent. During wartime, such images also aimed at urging the viewers to take action and do whatever was in their power—fight, work in the fields, sew clothes—to contribute to the anti-Japanese struggle and save the future of China.

An example of this is the photo-essay "The blood debt of the Langya Mountain" which appeared in the fourth issue of the *Pictorial* in September 1943. The photographs taken by Liu Feng (1923-1979) show the destruction that a Japanese air raid brought on the people who lived in the Mount Langya, Yi county, in Hebei.[53] The photograph above is one of the many Liu Feng took and shows two brothers who lost not only their home, but their parents as well. The style of the image above is quite similar to "Bloody Saturday": the main subjects are at the centre and destruction is all around them. The desperate expressions of the two children reinforce even more the tragedy that they were experiencing and the hardships they would have encounter in the years to come. Lastly, Liu Feng—or the editor who titled this photograph—was clearly quoting Lu Xun's cry at the end of "A Madman's Diary," underscoring therefore the idea that children were the first victims of Japanese violence and that they had to be saved from harm in order to safeguard the future of the country.

[52] Yu Liu, 'Maoist Discourse and the Mobilization of Emotions in Revolutionary China', *Modern China* 36, no. 3 (May 2010): 329–62, p. 336.

[53] Mount Langya is also famous in the history of Chinese Communism and the Second Sino-Japanese War as it was the location where five soldiers of the Eighth Route Army bravely fought against Japanese troops. The myth of "The five heroes of the Langya mountain" was recently challenged by Hong Zhenkuai, a Chinese historian. For the full story see: Kiki Zhao, 'Chinese Court Orders Apology Over Challenge to Tale of Wartime Heroes', *The New York Times*, 28 June 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/29/world/asia/china-hong-zhenkuai-five-heroes.html, last accessed 19 November 2017.

This example is valuable for the understanding of why the propaganda strategy of victimisation became one of the most effective ways to mobilise the people for the goals that the Party had in mind. On this specific point, Liu notes how different studies tried to bring attention to the emotional aspect of Communist propaganda that, according to Elizabeth Perry, was the element that differentiated the Communist approach from the Nationalist one.[54] The constant emotional and political friction that the Communist propaganda was able to create over the decades between the invader and the invaded, the landowners and the exploited farmers, the intellectuals and the common people, led in time to a great deal of bitterness in the people that was then translated into actual violence, as the Cultural Revolution proves.[55]

Little Farmers

The positive propaganda photographs of children and childhood that appeared in the pages of the *Pictorial* and in the images of the Party's affiliated photographers during the war focused on two main categories: children as farmers and children as soldiers. These types of representation were in line with the political propaganda that the CCP was spreading in the occupied areas and marked the beginning of a visual propaganda that was exploited up until the Cultural Revolution.[56] Considering that men were called to the front to fight the Japanese advance, while women and the elderly supported the soldiers with clothes and food and by nursing the wounded, it is not surprising that the same expectations were placed on those children who were considered old enough to contribute to the war effort. Whether as peasants or

[54] Elizabeth J. Perry, 'Moving the masses: emotion work in the Chinese Revolution,' *Mobilization* 7, 2 (Summer 2002): 111-128, p. 111, qtd in Yu Liu, 'Maoist Discourse…', p. 330.

[55] Yu Liu, 'Maoist Discourse….', p. 337-39; Laura De Giorgi, 'Little Friends at War…'.

[56] Mary Ginsberg, *The Art of Influence: Asian Propaganda* (London: British Museum Press, 2013); Stefan R. Landsberger, Anchee Min, and Duo Duo, *Chinese Propaganda Posters* (Köln: Taschen, 2015).

as soldiers, whether boys or girls, children were required to put their energies into saving the nation and contributing to the revolutionary cause.

From a propagandistic point of view, the actions and work of the little farmers and soldiers portrayed in the photographs were employed as an example of the whole population and as a means to show the achievements of the Party. In the *Pictorial*, the images of children were featured in the photo-essays that depicted life in the occupied areas and showed how the sections of the population who were not at the front were contributing to the war effort and how they were conducting their life during the war. The *Pictorial* described the children as dedicated to the war effort and their portrayal was usually optimistic and full of hope for the future. This positive outlook on the life conditions of the children was not arbitrary, but fell under the broader, positive portrayal of life under the Party's leadership. If on the one hand, it was common to illustrate that children were the first victims of the war and of the Japanese advance, it was, on the other hand, also politically important to show that children were protected, and childhood was cherished under the CCP. Concurrently, as Mao declared in his speech "On the Youth Movement in Yan'an," the ways in which young generations experienced the war had to become an example for the whole country. In other words, by looking at the great dedication that Chinese children showed towards the war effort and saving the nation, adults would be inspired to follow the example of the young generations' great commitment. Children were seen as "a national asset" and "the capital of a country," "on which the future of the nation depended."[57] It follows that images of children and childhood during wartime can be read as evidence of the parallelism between how young generations were represented and how the future, modern and socialist China was imagined.

[57] Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop*, no. 5 (Spring 1978): 9–65, p. 10.

Figure 55: Sha Fei, 'Golden millet, golden childhood', Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, issue n.1, July 1942.

Figure 55 appeared on the first issue of the *Pictorial* as part of the photo-essay "Harvest in Spring and Autumn: A Marching Song of Producing." The photo-essay showed soldiers of the Eighth Route Army helping civilians repairing river beds, constructing stone barriers to avoid flooding and helping farmers with the harvest. Although the English caption of the photograph in the *Pictorial* read: "Youngsters staggering under loads of heavy-headed millet," the original Chinese caption is far more interesting for the purpose of this analysis. The English translation does not provide any ideological message; on the contrary, it clashes with the smiling faces of the two children who do not look like they were staggering under loads of millet.

While it would be possible to translate the title of this image with "The value of grain, the value of childhood," a more appropriate, though less literal translation, appears to be "Golden millet, golden childhood." The Chinese word *gŭsuì* can be translated as 'ear of grain, cereal' but given the ideological purpose of the photograph, millet appears to be a better translation. As the recent discoveries in

Cishan, Hebei, and Dadiwan, Gansu-Shanxi, demonstrate, millet was in fact the grain that had provided sustenance to the Chinese people, particularly in the North, since prehistoric times—as far back as 7,500 ago.[58] Millet became a staple for the Red Army during the northern stretch of the Long March and one of the preferred grains grown by the people in northern China, given its adaptability to almost any environment, from warm to colder, drought climates, and its fast reaping time.[59] Because of its soil adaptability qualities, millet became the symbol of the perseverance and resistance of the Eighth Route Army against Japan and the Guomindang.[60] In fact in 1946 Mao told the American journalist Anna Louise Strong that: "We have only millet plus rifles to rely on, but history will finally prove that our millet plus rifles is more powerful than Chiang Kai-shek's airplanes plus tanks."[61]

In Sha Fei's photograph, the material and ideological sustenance that millet provided for the Chinese people across the centuries and its significance as precious, golden grain is compared to the value of childhood. The children in the photograph smile while carrying on their shoulders the millet and are looking forward to an

[58] Michael Balter, "Early Chinese May Have Eaten Millet Before Rice," *www.sciencemag.org*, 25 March 2009, http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2009/03/early-chinese-may-have-eaten-millet-rice, accessed 1st November 2017; Jeremy Cherfas, "Millet: How a Trendy Ancient Grain Turned Nomads Into Farmers," www.npr.org, 23 December 2005, http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/12/23/460559052/millet-how-a-trendy-ancient-grain-turned-nomads-into-farmers, accessed 1st November 2017; Jacqueline M. Newman, *Food Culture in China*, Food Culture around the World (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2004), p. 39.

[59] Juling He, "Millet: The Grain That Built China", *www.theworldofchinese.com*, 21 March 2012, http://www.theworldofchinese.com/2012/03/millet-the-grain-that-helped-build-china/, accessed 1st November 2017. Millet is also mentioned by Chen Changfen, Mao's bodyguard, as part of a dinner in Gansu during the Long March. For the story see: Alan Lawrance, *China since 1919: Revolution and Reform: A Sourcebook* (London: New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 54-55.

[60] The symbolism linked to milled has not disappeared. The now famous Chinese tech-company Xiaomi 小米 ,whose name translates into 'little rice' or 'little millet,' used the connection with the words of Chairman Mao to underline its underdog status in comparison to bigger, more established companies. For more see: Jason Shen 'Everything to know about Xiaomi, the Apple of China,' *https://blog.percolate.com*, 22 June 2014, https://blog.percolate.com/2014/07/guide-to-xiaomi-the-apple-of-china/, accessed 1 November 2017.

[61] Zedong Mao, "Talk with the American correspondent Anna Louise Strong, August 1946," *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. IV (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1961), http://www.marx2mao.com/PDFs/MaoSW4.pdf, p.101.

intangible, although imaginable, positive future life. There is no visible landscape and half of the internal space of the image is occupied by the sky. The photograph was taken from below, a vantage point that dramatises the feelings of anticipation for the soon-to-be-reached, positive future and was frequently used for this type of image. Moreover, the caption describes childhood as golden, the same adjective used for millet, therefore emphasising the connection between the value of the grain and the value of childhood.

The expression 'golden childhood' further became a fixed expression during the Communist era because of the famous song "Golden Childhood," written in 1963 by Ni Weide and composed by Yan Jin Xuan. Although the song was released twenty years later after the photograph, its creation was strongly linked to the events of the Anti-Japanese War.[62] Ni Weide was born in 1933 and lived through the turmoil and hardships of the war.[63] Thinking about his own difficult childhood during wartime, he wrote the song to acknowledge how grateful children were for the happy, golden childhood that they experienced thanks to the political and social achievements of the Party and Mao Zedong. The lyrics read: "Who gave me a golden childhood? [...] It is Mao Zedong and the Communist Party."[64]

The concept of a golden childhood linked to agricultural work was thematised in other photographs of the same period and was strictly linked to the idea that manual labour was to be encouraged as it was the physical expression of love for the

[62] For a thorough analysis of the importance of songs for propaganda and indoctrination purposes during the years 1937-49, see: Chang-Tai Hung, 'The Politics or Songs: Myths and Symbols in the Chinese Communist War Music, 1937-1949', *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 4, Special Issue: War in Modern China (October 1996): 901–29.

[63] For more on the life of Ni Weide and the other songs he wrote during the Communist era, see: 'Ni Weide 倪维德,' *www.baike.com*, http://www.baike.com/wiki/%E5%80%AA%E7%BB%B4%E5%BE%B7, last accessed 2 November 2017.

[64] For the complete lyrics of the song and more information about its history, see: 'Jinsede tongnian 金色的童年,' *www.baike.baidu.com*, https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%87%91%E8%89%B2%E7%9A%84%E7%AB%A5%E5%B9%B4 , last accessed 2 November 2017.

country. As Donald notes "children are active components of the body politic, with the narrative implication that, as such, they need to be educated into its ways."[65] If on the one hand, children had to be educated and taught about what was expected of them in accordance with the Party's political and social plans, they, on the other hand, were also used as models both for their peers and for adults. The children that we see in these images are not portrayed as victims but in a positive way instead, because they had to "encapsulate the optimism of the present and the hope for the future."[66]

Figure 56: Ye Changlin, 'Brother and Sister Pioneers', Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, issue n. 3, May 1943.

[65] Stephanie Donald, "Children as Political Messengers: Art, Childhood, and Continuity" in Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald, eds., *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China: Posters of the Cultural Revolution* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), p. 80.

[66] Ibidem, p. 86.

An example of this optimism for the present and hope for the future can be seen in the photograph taken by Ye Changlin in 1942 and published in the *Pictorial* in 1943. The image shows a young brother and sister armed with hoes while they are standing in a freshly ploughed field. The caption of the image *Brother and Sister Pioneers (Xiongmei Kaihuang)* might have referred to the at-the-time famous planting folk dance, *yangge*, with the same title.[67] The folk dance *Brother and Sister Pioneers* tells the story of two siblings who are doing their part for the war effort by ploughing the fields and therefore opening up more land for farming. In the story, the boy, with the intention of teasing his sister, begins to act lazy and stops working. The sister then scolds him and encourages him not to give up and continue working.[68] Even without knowing the story of this particular folk dance, the children's smiles towards an invisible yet positive future, convey the same idea of love of labour and dedication to the national cause that the CCP wanted to spread among the population. Moreover, the blossoming trees behind them indicate springtime, the moment of re-birth for all living things, and thus strengthens the connection between childhood and hope for the future.[69] Not only can spring, that is childhood, be understood as the initial, most promising period of a person's life, but it is also as the moment of re-birth of all living things and, by extent, of a country after a tumultuous time, as was true for China. Although China had not yet defeated Japan in 1943, this type of propaganda was meant to create a positive narrative of wartime. In spite of a decade of turmoil, disruption and loss, in the eyes of the Party the wartime period was seen as a chance for a new beginning.

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[67] For a detailed history of yangge's evolution from the Anti-Japanese War until the late 1950s, see: Chang-tai Hung, "The Dance of Revolution: Yangge in Beijing in the Early 1950s.," *The China Quarterly*, no. 181 (March 2005): 82–99.

[68] J. Norman Wilkinson, '"The White-Haired Girl": From "Yangko" to Revolutionary Modern Ballet', *Educational Theatre Journal* 26, no. 2 (May 1974): 164–74, p. 168.

[69] An example of the idea that children were the spring of the country is the poster "New Spring in Yan'an" made in 1972. See: Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald, eds., *Picturing Power…*, p. 82.

As the photographs above show, children were seen and understood as real farmers, only little (*xiao)*, due to their age and size. The most important relationship that this type of propaganda images wanted to portray was the one between farmers and soldiers. As explained in chapter two, soldiers were frequently portrayed while helping farmers with their daily activities and they were also considered as the force that brought great improvements to the life of the common people.[70] Little farmers and little soldiers were understood and consequently portrayed in the same way. The photograph below (figure 57) was taken in 1938 by an unknown photographer and portrays a young Eighth Route Army soldier carrying firewood and the remnants of millet ears. He smiles, standing tall despite the full basket on his shoulders, while his companion, a young, smiling farmer holds a big rake. The propaganda value of this photograph is evident as it portrays the successful collaboration between young soldiers and farmers.

[70] The author is referring to works like building dams, repairing river beds, and creating new arable land. Photo-essays of Eighth Route Army soldiers helping farmers were common in the *Pictorial*.

Figure 57: Photographer Unknown, 'Little Soldiers of the Eighth Route Army Helping Fellow Villagers Collecting Firewood',1938, from Si Sushi, Sha Fei and his Wartime Friends, p.193.

Little Soldiers

Figure 58: Zhao Lie, 'We are the little soldiers of the Eighth Route Army', 4 May 1940, Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, issue n.1, 1942.

> Life in the Jin Cha Ji region is so happy, the light of democracy shines on me;
> Life in the Jin Cha Ji region is so happy, I am swayed by the wind of democracy;
> Life in the Jin Cha Ji region is so happy, I am moistened by the rain of democracy;[71]

Zhao Lie (1920-1943 CE) was born in Guangdong and arrived in Yan'an in 1938. He began taking photographs under the direction of Sha Fei and was one of the founders of the *Pictorial*. "We are the Little Soldiers of the Eighth Route Army" is his most famous shot. The image was taken in May 1940 in the Tang county, Hebei, during the celebrations for Children's Day. Children's Day was on May 4th by the

[71] Caption used under the photograph in the publication The Democratic Jin Cha Ji. The Chinese text reads: "生活在晋察冀多么快活，民主的太阳照耀着我。生活在晋察冀多么快活，民主的风儿吹拂着我。生活在晋察冀多么快活，民主的雨水滋润着我。" In *The Democratic Jin Cha Ji* 民主的晋察冀, *Jin Cha Ji Junqu Zhengzhibu Chuban*, May 1946.

Youth Organisation of the Shanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border region.[72] In the photograph we see a large group of girls—a choir engaged in a singing competition—armed with rifles and wooden swords, singing under the direction of two other younger children.[73] The image was part of the photo-essay "The Strong and Massive Armed Force of the People" which presented the engagement that the local population's mass armament. The photo-essay presented facts and numbers of the battles won against the Japanese Army, how many bridges and railways were destructed, and the number of trophies acquired.[74] The people in the photo-essay are women, youngsters, and the self-defence corps. The essay included only four images and although Zhao Lie's was the smallest, it became one of the most reproduced and famous photographs of the war.[75] The interesting aspect of Zhao's image is that girls were included in an essay that presented how people contributed to the war effort. This photograph therefore conveys that age and gender did not matter in regard to contributing to the ultimate goal, saving the country from the Japanese advance. Despite their wooden swords and rifles, the viewer is compelled to take these little young soldiers very seriously.

A similar photograph was taken by Sha Fei in 1940 and shows the Third Division of the Jin Cha Ji Army theatre company performing the "Yellow River Cantata" in 1940. Yan Jinxuan (1924 CE-), the girl on the left, performs solo "Ode to the Yellow River" while being directed by Chen Geng (1923-2001 CE). The "Yellow River Cantata" was composed in 1939 in Yan'an by Xiang Xinghai (1905-1945 CE) and

[72] For more, see the footnote at: "The Orientation of the Youth Movement," *www.marxist.org*, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_14.htm, last accessed 7 November 2017.

[73] A frontal view of the same scene was taken by Zhao Lie and can be seen at: http://www.jb.mil.cn/gcww/yxjs/krzzsq/201707/t20170703_31949.html, last accessed 3 November 2017.

[74] "The Strong and Massive Armed Force of the People," *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial*, 1st issue, July 1942.

[75] The image was also published in *The Democratic Jin Cha Ji* and reprinted decades later in different albums. For more, see: http://www.jb.mil.cn/gcww/yxjs/krzzsq/201707/t20170703_31949.html.

aimed to celebrate the Yellow River, symbol of the Chinese civilisation, and encourage the people to fight the Japanese.[76] Yan Jinxuan would later become famous for composing the music of the well-known "The White-Haired Girl" opera and ballet.[77]

Figure 59: Sha Fei, 'The Third Division of the Jin Cha Ji Army Singing "The Yellow River Cantata'," 1940, Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, issue n.1, July 1942.

Although not soldiers, these girls were actively "fighting" and contributing to the war effort. The photograph below, for example, shows a girl worker from the Xinhua wooden mill in Zhangjiakou, Hebei, while she carries uniforms for the Eighth Route Army soldiers. The shot was taken in September 1945 by Liu Ying. The caption indicates that her work and her duties were directed at the Eighth Route Army. This

[76] Helen Yang, Linda Ma, 'Music and Politics in the Yellow River Cantata', *International Festival Chorus Programme*, 20 September 2003, http://www.beijingifc.org/home/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=92:xian-xinghai-yellow-river-cantata&catid=40:concerts&Itemid=150, last accessed 19 November 2017.

[77] Chris Buckley, 'White-Haired Girl, Opera Created under Mao, Returns to Stage', *The New York Times*, 10 November 2015, https://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/11/10/white-haired-girl-opera-created-under-mao-returns-to-stage/, last accessed 19 November 2017; J. Norman Wilkinson, '"The White-Haired Girl"...'.

image raises once more the issue of how women were represented in wartime propaganda and what type of expectations and plans the Party had for them, as explored in chapter three. While it is important to acknowledge that girls were represented and described as soldiers, the association between textile work and women remained.

Figure 60: Liu Ying, 'A Girl Worker of the Xinhua Woolen Mill', September 1945, from Si Sushi, Sha Fei and his Wartime Friends, p. 233.

Liu Ying adopted the photographic style that was commonly used for these types of images that aimed at inspiring viewers to look up to such examples of dedication to the war effort. By taking the photograph from below, the image conveys the idea that the viewers, whether adults or children, were expected to *look up to* the example that these children were setting with their lives.

An equally staged and propagandistic approach was adopted by Sha Fei and Shi Shaohua who both portrayed children soldiers in various shots. The image below (figure 61) was taken by Sha Fei in 1938 and shows two young boys with wooden rifles while performing military exercises. Despite their young age and the toy rifles, these two boys were portrayed so that viewers would not perceive them as two boys playing war, but as two young soldiers in training.

Figure 61: Sha Fei, Boys with Wooden Rifles, 1938, Sha Fei Papers, Box 1, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

A similar shot was taken by Shi Shaohua in 1940 in Jizhong, central Hebei. Shi Shaohua was also a Guangdong-born photographer who moved to Yan'an in 1938. In the same year, he joined the Communist Party and became one of the key figures in the history of Chinese photography. In 1940, he was appointed leader of the war photography department in Jizhong, central Hebei. The image, *Children's Corps*, portrays a boy and a girl with spears. They stand and look towards the left, with a smiling face that once again suggests hope and optimism for the future. The majority of the internal space of the image is occupied by the sky while tree branches frame the upper-left corner. The clouds in the sky convey a dream-like reality, as if war did not exist, and resembles the same structure that many propaganda posters adopted decades later. Lastly, Shi Shaohua decided to enhance the dramatic quality of the photograph by shooting from below as Sha Fei and Liu Ying did with their other images presented so far.

Figure 62: Shi Shaohua, "Children's Corps," 1940, from Si Sushi, Sha Fei and…, p. 158.

These images of child soldiers raise the issue of the militarisation of childhood and the importance of the involvement of every sector of the population for the defence of the country.[78] The military aspect was not confined to teaching children how to be good soldiers but went into almost every aspect of their lives. Songs, stories, games and activities were frequently inspired or based on war or on the sacrifices that were expected from children in order to protect their country.[79] According to Laura De Giorgi in her study on the propaganda cartoons created for the magazine *The Resistance Child* (*Kangzhan Ertong)*, children's portrayal was closer to how children were supposed to be experiencing the war, and further from how they were actually living through the disruption.[80] [81] The photographs created by CCP affiliated photographers and the ones that appeared on the *Pictorial* followed this logic and contributed to a visual construction of childhood based on the idea that children were born pure and innocent and that these qualities had to be exploited for the benefit of the nation. Little farmers and soldiers were not only examples for their peers, but also for adults who could learn from the children's dedication to the

[78] Japan was arguably the country that made of children mobilisation and militarisation one of the fundamental points of its wartime propaganda. For more on the Japanese aspect of the militarisation of children and the construction of a collective identity during the war, see: Aaron William Moore, 'From Individual Child to War Youth: The Construction of Collective Experience among Evacuated Japanese Children during World War II', *Japanese Studies* 36, no. 3 (2016): 339–60. For more on Japanese propaganda songs during World War II, see: Noriko Manabe, 'Songs of Japanese Schoolchildren during World War II', in Patricia Shehan and Trevor Wiggins, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Musical Cultures*, 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199737635.013.0006, 2012.

[79] This is explored in Mary Ann Farquhar, *Children's Literature in China: From Lu Xun to Mao Zedong*, Studies on Modern China (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1999).

[80] Laura De Giorgi, 'Little Friends at War: Childhood in the Chinese Anti-Japanese Propaganda Magazine "Kangzhan ertong" (The Resistance Child)', *Oriens Extremus* 53 (2014): 61–84, p. 69.

[81] Cartoons and photographs frequently showed how war negatively impacted the life of children and their families, especially outside the Communist areas. Whether these harsh aspects of reality were included to fulfil the artists/photographers' duty to inform or just for anti-Japanese propaganda is, of course, another matter. It is in fact rare, if not impossible, to see photographs of starving children in the Communist areas. It is common instead to have photographs that show injured or dead children because of Japanese attacks or cartoons that compare the life in the Communist areas versus the life in Nationalists' controlled regions. Examples of this were given in chapter 3 and can be seen in Chang-Tai Hung, 'Two Images of Socialism: Woodcuts in Chinese Communist Politics', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 1 (January 1997): 34–60 and Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

national cause and the revolution. As mentioned above, children were described as *little* soldiers and farmers because of their age and size, not because of their abilities or dedication to the war effort. There was nothing childish in their actions and this is evident in the photographs presented so far. Children were not portrayed while playing or in company of their parents as it was common in dynastic art, they were portrayed as labour force or as soldiers, training together or being supervised by older peers.[82] Despite their wooden rifles or swords, the viewer was, and still is, led to perceive those objects not as toys, but as training tools. All of these aspects contributed to the goal that these images had, namely to encourage admiration and emulation among the viewers, whether adults or children.

Moulding the Future

The importance of education for the development of a person and for the stability of society was a greatly discussed topic since the times of the Spring and Autumn period (770-481 BCE) and the Warring States period (480-221 BCE). Without delving too much into the philosophical argument, it is enough for this discussion to point out that the ancient Chinese philosophers debated whether human beings were born inherently good or not, and what role education should have in moulding the people and their attitudes. The philosopher Mengzi (372-289 BCE) for instance, believed that human beings were of good nature and that society and human relations within the family, played a role in shaping the development of the person. Mengzi believed that people had in themselves the seeds of goodness, but these seeds needed attention and dedication in order to develop into actual virtues (benevolence,

[82] It is important to acknowledge that images of children as labour force appeared in manuals like the Gengzhi Tu, where children were learning about rice cultivation or silk weaving by their parents and extended families. For more, see: Roslyn Lee Hammers, *Pictures of Tilling and Weaving: Art, Labor and Technology in Song and Yuan China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011).

righteousness, wisdom and propriety).[83] Conversely, the Legalists approach had its roots in the belief that people could not be trusted due to their evil nature and should be controlled by the authorities.[84] One way to exercise this control was through education. Xunzi (c. 313-238 BCE), one of the most prominent Legalist philosophers, believed in fact that "people must be transformed by teachers with the code of conduct and guided by ritual and moral principles."[85]

In regard to the issue on children and education, it was in fact during the Song dynasty that the Neo-Confucian philosophers set the parameters for what children should be taught and how they should behave[86] While the official educational line and the private one differed in some respects, children were expected to behave in a restrained way. For instance, outdoor activities were discouraged while education occupied a predominant position. Hsiung notes how from the Song onwards, the age at which children started to be taught became increasingly low, which meant the age of four or five. Moreover, during the Ming dynasty, children were taught difficult subjects, which was based on an educational trend shaped by parents' expectations of their children and their hope that their offspring would be extraordinary.[87] With the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the arrival of the new pedagogical theories from the West, Chinese intellectuals began

[83] Bryan Van Norden, "Mencius", Edward N. Zalta, ed, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/mencius/, accessed 10 August 2017.

[84] Some scholars debated the interpretation of the text where the evil nature of people is discussed. For a thorough analysis on this point and the ongoing debate, see: Dan Robins, 'The Development of Xunzi's Theory of "Xing", Reconstructed on the Basis of a Textual Analysis of "Xunzi" 23, Xunzi "Xing E" 性惡 ("Xing" is Bad)', *Early China* 26/27 (2002 2001): 99–158.

[85] Hung-Chung Yen, 'Human Nature and Learning in Ancient China', in Shihkuan Hsu and Yuh-Yin Wu eds, *Education as Cultivation in Chinese Culture* (Springer Science+Business Media Singapore, 2015), 19–43, http://140.112.142.79/teacher/upload/9789812872234-c2.pdf, last accessed 14 November 2017, p. 32.

[86] This proves once more that the period under the Song was crucial for the formalisation of the Confucian values that would shape Chinese society for the centuries to come.

[87] Ping-chen Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage*..., p. 11-12.

to question the old educational methods and the traditional view of children and childhood. At the beginning of the Japanese advance, the education and behavioural goals for children drastically changed. Mary Ginsberg notes, "Magazines and films, games and clothing brought children closer to war."[88] Children were therefore expected to contribute to the war effort; they ceased to be seen as children and begun to be seen as little adults.

In the eyes of the Communist Party, the purity that characterised children's spirits was to be moulded by an appropriate education and, from the Communist's viewpoint, the correct ways were the ones established by Mao Zedong. As Mao said in the speech "The orientation of the Youth Movement," Yan'an had to become the example for the whole country. The theories and principles taught to the young generations in Yan'an would lead to the Japanese defeat and the salvation of the nation. The wish that Mao expressed in his speech was that the young generations would: "study the lessons of the Chinese revolution in the last fifty years [...] so that the youth will be at one with the people of the whole country and the revolution will make the turn from failure to victory."[89] The major concern that was thus raised was not whether human beings were good or evil, but how to develop and implement a correct, socialist education for the salvation of the nation.[90]

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[88] Mary Ginsberg, *The Art of Influence…, p. 160.*

[89] Zedong Mao, "On The Orientation of the Youth Movement," May 4, 1939, available at *https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_14.htm*, last accessed 8 November 2017.

[90] On the specific point of education in the Communist early years, Robert J. Lifton explored the "Thought Reform" method used by the Party on young adults and intellectuals between 1948-52. Lifton focuses on the cultural aspects of Thought Reform and the work of the Revolutionary Colleges. This study allows us to draw a link between the practices adopted in the "Revolutionary Colleges" and the ones implemented for daily life in communes, villages and other kinds of institutions like universities. As Lifton notes, different and more sophisticated "brainwashing" techniques were used and developed by the CCP in Yan'an during the 1930s. For the complete study: Robert J. Lifton, 'Thought Reform of Chinese Intellectuals: A Psychiatric Evaluation', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 16, no. 1 (November 1956): 75–88.

From a visual viewpoint, images of Mao teaching the masses or of people studying Mao's thought were frequent.[91] One of the most iconic photographs during wartime was taken by Shi Shaohua in 1939 in Yan'an and portrayed Mao engaged in a conversation with two children. The photograph shows two young Eighth Route Army soldiers being addressed by Mao who writes something on his hand, a quite common gesture when describing how a character is written. The two children were probably unaware of the photographer as they focus intently on Mao's explanation with great attention. Mao is bending forward, conveying a fatherly tenderness towards the children. He does not appear to be the head of the Party and one of the most important political figures of the time, but a teacher, gently explaining a mistake to his pupils.

The story behind this photograph was told by the son of Shi Shaohua, Shi Zhimin, who recalled how his father found himself at the right place at the right time. Having heard that Mao would be in Yan'an that day to give a speech at the Chinese People's Anti-Japanese Military and Political College, *Kàngdà,* Shi Shaohua decided to wait outside and hope to shoot a few photographs of the Chairman. When Mao arrived, the two little soldiers saluted him and in response, Mao asked them if they knew who he was. They said: "Yes, you are Chairman Mao." And Mao replied: "I am not Chairman Mao, I am Mao Zedong," and proceeded to write the characters on his hand to show them the difference.[92]

[91] See for instance the images in the chapter "Study" in Stefan R. Landsberger, Anchee Min, and Duo Duo, *Chinese Propaganda Posters* (Köln: Taschen, 2015), pp. 569-573.
[92] For this and for the complete story of Shi Shaohua, see: Yong Tian and Wu Tian, *Jin Cha Ji Hua Bao: Yi Ge Qi Ji de Dan Sheng: Zhongguo Hong Se Zhan Di She Ying Ji Shi*, Di 1 ban (Beijing: Jin cheng chu ban she, 2012), p. 69-72.

Figure 63: Shi Shaohua, 'Mao teaches two little Eighth Route Army soldiers to read', 1939, from Tian Yong and Tian Wu, Jin Cha Ji Pictorial: The History of a Miracle, (Beijing: Jin cheng Chubanshe: 2012), p. 68.

The importance of a correct education that Mao stressed not only during the Yan'an period, but also after 1949, was fundamental to the creation of the society the CCP envisioned. During imperial times, political legitimation came from literary and philosophical education. The examination system was evidence of this, as one could rise in society and gain political power through a successful result in these exams. This system of course would mainly favour those who could get access to a certain type of education, that is, members of upper-middle class families.[93] The Communist Party however, wanted to eradicate this connection between literary knowledge and power to create a new social system, where political power would come from *doing* things, rather than from learning *about* things.[94] With this new system, Mao and the Party wanted to achieve two goals: the first, the support of the masses and of all those social groups that had been politically ignored for centuries because of the impossibility of gaining access to formal education. For the Communist Party, the new figures to emulate to create a more equal society would be the peasant and the soldier. This is why, as Laura de Giorgi notes, since the 1920s, the Communist Party— as well as the Nationalists—focused its efforts in promoting national awareness and military training.[95] In the specific case of the CCP and its educational programs implemented in the Communist areas, the *Pictorial* reported that: "Pupils all receive at the same time national, scientific and democratic education, with the sole purpose of strengthening national defense."[96]

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[93] Ping-chen Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage: Children and Childhood in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2005), chapter 1.

[94] This view was explained by Mao in his speech "On Practice": "The knowledge which grasps the laws of the worlds, must be redirected to the practice of changing the world, must be applied anew in the practice of production, in the practice of revolutionary class struggle and revolutionary national struggle and in the practice of scientific experiment." p. 63. For the complete text, see: Zedong Mao, *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1967): 54-69.

[95] Laura De Giorgi, "La modernizzazione del sistema educativo…" p. 675.

[96] Shi Zhimin, *晋察冀画报文献全集 = Jin-Cha-Ji Pictorial*, vol. 1, 3 vols (Beijing: Zhongguo Sheying Chubanshe, 2015), p. 85.

Images of little farmers and little soldiers therefore reinforced the understanding that, during wartime, national defence was the priority. Moreover, these images also conveyed that a more equal nation could be created only through a correct education. These two aspects—national defence and a correct education—lead the way to a society that would put militarisation as the core of its national policies. In the long run, this created the socio-political conditions for the Cultural Revolution to unfold in all its violence.[97]

The second point this analysis touches upon is the role of the propaganda that artists were creating for Mao. In the case of the above-mentioned photograph, the story behind reveals that Mao wanted to be recognised as Mao Zedong and not as Chairman Mao. It was not a question of character-writing but of perception. In the image, Mao is portrayed as a benevolent, fatherly figure, who teaches the two young boys about the correct spelling of his name. In a subtler way, it conveys the message that he, and by extent the Party, were to become the ultimate teachers, fathers, and protectors of China.[98]

Conclusions

The images presented in this chapter have been chosen as representative of the wider propaganda strategies that constructed an idea of childhood that served the political goals of the Communist Party during the war against Japan. The CCP was of

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[97] For more on the militarisation of Chinese society and its current development, see: Christopher R. Hughes, 'Militarism and the China Model: The Case of National Defense Education', *Journal of Contemporary China* 26, no. 103 (5 September 2016): 54–67.

[98] The same point was raised by Donald (*Picturing Power*, p. 84-85) in relation to poster production during the 1960s, where children were frequently portrayed as martyrs who gave their life for the nation. In these stories, children were mainly orphans—the tragic death of the mother was a common plot device to spark feelings of love for the nation especially during the Anti-Japanese War—who had found in the Party, and Mao, a new family and a new reason to be. Frequent were also the memories of those children who had grown up surrounded by these posters and stories and felt inspired by them. Anchee Min (*Chinese Propaganda Posters*, p. 5) recalls: "I wanted to be the girl in the poster when I was growing up. [...] The posters had a great impact on my life. They taught me to be selfless and to be loyal to Mao and Communism."

course not the only political organisation that understood childhood as a pivotal moment in the life of a human being and that exploited it for political reasons.[99] This is to say that, with the due differences given by time and place, childhood and children have been frequently exploited for political reasons by governments and political parties. In the specific case of the Communist Party during wartime, children were imagined and then portrayed in three central ways: as victims, labourers, and soldiers. These three ways of visualising childhood remained part of the Chinese artistic production even after 1949. Posters of children working in the fields, being trained as soldiers or falling victim to Japanese brutality were commonly produced during the Cultural Revolution to reinforce the need for mass involvement in ideological campaigns.

As victims, children were exploited during the Anti-Japanese War to show, on the one hand how respectful the Communists were of the 'sanctity' of childhood—as exemplified by the images of Nie Rongzhen and the Japanese girl-prisoner—while on the other hand, they served to uncover how the Japanese were violating this same childhood and by extent the Chinese nation. The images of dead or injured children had the purpose of spreading resentment and indignation in the population so as to create the conditions for a widespread commitment to the war effort. Children and China had to be saved and everyone was called to do their part in this venture.

As labour force, children were portrayed in order to inspire emulation in their peers as well as in adults. Childhood was not a period for games or innocence, but a moment in which the dedication for the country and the Party could and should blossom. All the activities that children were engaged in, from ploughing the fields

[99] Among the most engaging examples of childhood-focused propaganda we find Japan and Italy, where, during the Second World War, their respective governments created a visual and educational propaganda that aimed at instilling in the young generations a sense of nation and sacrifice, and where children and childhood were militarised as well as victimised. For Italian propaganda under Mussolini, see: Elizabeth Goodenough and Andrea Immel, eds., *Under Fire: Childhood in the Shadow of War*, Landscapes of Childhood (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008). For sources on Japanese propaganda during WWII, see the bibliography in Mary Ginsberg, *The Art of Influence*, 2013.

to collecting firewood, were directed towards the goal of resisting Japan and contributing to the creation of a modern society. Furthermore, thanks to the ways in which Sha Fei and his colleagues worked, it is possible to discern in these photographs the positive, optimistic outlook on life that was one of the central visual characteristics of socialist realism. Each of the photographs of these little farmers aimed at representing "the labor and achievements of the socialist worker," and "the transformation of nature by the labor of the new socialist man."[100]

As soldiers, children were being subjected to the militarisation of their childhood and, in a broader sense, also to the masculinization of it. By being trained as soldiers, whether boys or girls, children would learn about the Japanese invasion and the consequent need for their contribution in saving their native country. Childhood was therefore stripped of the innocence that should characterise it and became to be visually represented and understood as a period to be dedicated to the nation and the Party. For the viewers of such images, children were real soldiers in their own rights, even if they carried wooden rifles and swords. The militarisation of childhood went hand in hand with the inner-directed nationalism discussed in chapter two. All these aspects, together with the victimisation of childhood saw the emergence of a visual depiction of bitterness and violence towards "the other"—the Japanese Army during the war, and the intellectuals and bourgeois in the years after 1949—that strongly clashed with the typical innocence of childhood.[101]

Concerning figure 59 discussed in this chapter and the role of education in the political plans of the CCP, it is important to highlight the role that revolutionary

[100] Elena Barkhatova, 'Soviet Policy on Photography,' in *Beyond Memory: Soviet Nonconformist Photography and Photo-Related Works of Art*, ed. Diane Neumaier (Piscataway, NJ: Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum and Rutgers University Press, 2004): 47-65 qtd in Sarah E. James, 'A Socialist Realist Sander? Comparative Portraiture as a Marxist Model in the German Democratic Republic', *Grey Room*, no. 47 (2012): 38–59, p. 43.

[101] On this point, the analysis that Donald conducts on the cartoon "The Children's Corps thinks up a plan to kill devil [Japanese] soldiers" is very illuminating. See: Stephanie Donald, 'Children as Political Messengers', *Picturing Power*..., pp.82-84.

songs had during wartime. In a similar way to images, *yangge* and songs were effective indoctrination tools as they relied on emotions. No literary skills were needed; oral transmission among generations or peers was enough to spread the message. Photographs of children singing were common in the *Pictorial* and they reinforced the importance of art during the war years. Music in particular, just like images, strongly depends on the emotions of the spectators. To combine an image of a group of children with them singing patriotic songs was a way to increase this emotional appeal and bring people closer to the Party and its political views. It is not by accident that the Party stated that "music was crucial to the creation of a class-conscious revolutionary individual"[102] and that even songs were part of the militarisation of childhood and society as a whole.[103] Lastly, many of the musicians who wrote revolutionary songs that became famous post-1949 feature in the photographs taken during wartime.

To conclude, images of children and childhood were instrumental for the creation of the idea of China that the Communist Party had. For adults and for children, these images had the purpose to inspire them and show that no matter the age, everyone was called upon the ultimate duty of saving the nation from the Japanese invasion. Such photographs also aimed at drawing attention to the great progress and good life, the 'golden childhood,' that the people living in the Communist areas had thanks to the Party. Life in Yan'an was to be set as an example for the whole country because the young people living there were being educated correctly. The youth educated in Yan'an was in turn going to mould the future of China and its people under the watchful eye of Mao and the Party.

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[102] Adam Cathcart, 'Japanese Devils and American Wolves: Chinese Communist Songs from the War of Liberation and the Korean War', *Popular Music and Society* 33, no. 2 (May 2010): 203–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/03007760903143028, p. 204.

[103] Shirong Liu, 'Kangri Zhanzheng ticai Dageju' (呼唤抗日战争题材的大歌剧) ('Shouting on the Theme of Great Operas from the War of Anti-Japanese Resistance'). *Renmin Yinyue (人民音乐)* (*People's Music*) 7 (2002): 7-9 qtd in Adam Cathcart, 'Japanese Devils…', p. 205.

Conclusion

The war against Japan deeply changed China not only politically, with the coming to power of the Communist Party, but also socially. Diana Lary argues that traditional Chinese social cohesion had weakened during the early years of the Republic and that "[t]he war [against Japan] accelerated the process dramatically."[1] The war broke the fabric that had sustained Chinese society for centuries and lead the way to the violence, mistrust, and betrayal that would characterise, two decades later, the years of the Cultural Revolution.[2] During the Anti-Japanese War, the Communist Party exploited the void left by the collapse of the traditional socio-political structure to build a new idea of nation. The visual propaganda that was created during the war against Japan had to be constructed on the short-term goal of mobilising the people towards the war effort, and on the long-term goal of creating widespread political support for the Communist Party for the realisation of a socialist society. Parks M. Coble observes that "the Chinese Communist Party was far more successful in mobilizing and organizing people during the war than the Guomindang was."[3] This success was also depended by the fact that "both writers and intellectuals joined its [the CCP's] cause, and millions of villagers accepted Communist control."[4]

This thesis aimed at exploring the photographic production of the Communist affiliated photographers who worked during the Anti-Japanese War. The works of these photographers, categorised into the three themes of landscape, women and children, were employed as vehicles for analysing the socio-political changes that

[1] Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War…*, p. 197.

[2] Ibidem, pp. 194-96.

[3] Parks M. Coble, *China's War Reporters…*, p. 130.

[4] Ibidem.

occurred in China during the years of the war against Japan. The visual propaganda that emerged from this historical moment was chosen as case study because, as this thesis contends, it should be seen as the embryonic stage of the propaganda post-1949 that shaped Chinese society for many decades.

The Second Sino-Japanese War was also chosen as case study because it saw the convergence of three aspects: a period of social and political disruption, the need of a new national identity, and the coming of age of photography as tool for information and propaganda. This study has brought together the literature on different aspects of Chinese propaganda with the role that photography has in the creation of national identities.[5] This analysis was then framed into the Chinese socio-political environment which developed during the war against Japan.[6] The three themes that emerged from the analysis of the photographs that were published in the *Pictorial*—landscape, women and children—have been analysed through a contextualist approach. Two questions were at the centre of this investigation: how were photographs created and exploited by the Chinese Communist Party during the Anti-Japanese War? What role did photographs have in the creation of a new idea of Chinese nation?

This study has shown that a considerable amount of the images that appeared in the *Pictorial* and in the photographic production of the CCP affiliated

[5] Robert J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1961); Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Elisabeth J. Perry, "Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution," *Mobilization* 7, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 111–28; Phil Kinsman, "Landscape, Race and National Identity: The Photography of Ingrid Pollard," *Area* 27, no. 4 (December 1995): 300–310; Beth Saunders, "Developing Italy: Photography and National Identity during the Risorgimento 1839-1859," PhD Thesis (CUNY, 2016), https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/1585/; Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, eds., *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003); Julia A. Thomas, "Photography, National Identity, and the" Cataract of Times": Wartime Images and the Case of Japan," *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 5 (1998): 1475–1501.

[6] Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937-1945*, New Approaches to Asian History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Diana Lary and Stephen R MacKinnon, *The Scars of War the Impact of Warfare on Modern China* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001), http://site.ebrary.com/id/10056050; Rana Mitter, *China's War with Japan, 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival* (London: Penguin Books, 2013).

photographers was created on the basis of traditional symbolism. In wartime visual propaganda, this symbolism was re-interpreted through a socialist lens. This re-interpretation was not exclusive to photographs, but as Chang-tai Hung and James A. Flath note by quoting the novelist Lao She (1899-1966 CE), the practice of pouring "new wine in old bottles" was exploited for songs, folk stories and written literature.[7] On this point Flath reports a policy statement by Chen Boda (1904-1989 CE), Mao's secretary, that set the cultural policies for the decades 1940s and 1950s. It stated that: "

> This […] requires that one select the forms [the common people] have grown accustomed to over a long time, pack [new content] into the old form and give it appropriate refashioning: only then can they take delight in receiving it […] and digest it thoroughly.[8]

Traditional, popular culture was exploited to convey the message that the people had to contribute to the war effort to save the nation from the Japanese advance. This strategy was born out of the necessity to reach a vast number of people, the majority of which were illiterate. Traditional cultural expressions were therefore preferred as they conveyed a new message in a familiar, relatable way.

While the analysis of how literature and dramas were re-interpreted during the war has been conducted quite extensively, the same could not be said for photographic propaganda up until now. Moreover, while the contextualisation of ideological symbols has been done for posters, the same method has not been systematically used for the analysis of propaganda photographs.[9] If we look at sources that explore modern Chinese propaganda photography, great attention is

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[77] See chapter 5 in Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) and chapter 6 in James A. Flath, *The Cult of Happiness: Nianhua, Art, and History in Rural North China* (UBC Press, 2011).

[8] James A. Flath, *The Cult of Happiness: Nianhua, Art, and History in Rural North China* (UBC Press, 2011), pp. 149-50.

[9] Stefan R. Landsberger, "Learning by What Example? Educational Propaganda in Twenty-First-Century China," *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 4 (2001): 541–71; Jennifer Lee, "Engendering Modern China: Visual Representation of the PRC" (Connecticut College, East Asian Languages and Cultures Department, 2013), *http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/eastasianhp/6*.

dedicated to the manipulation of images and their reappearance along the years for different political purposes. Studies like Wu Hung's *Zooming In* and Zhang Dali's *A Second History*, while directing attention to Chinese photographic propaganda and its evolution, only provide partial explanations for the symbols used in photographs. These studies also focus on the post-1949 years and on how the manipulation process took place.

The first chapter of this study presented the important role that the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial* had in regard to the political and social goals of the Communist Party during the war. In 1940, Nie Rongzhen, after seeing the photographs of Sha Fei and Shi Shaohua, understood the power of photography as propaganda tool and laid the basis for the publication of the *Pictorial*. Many young photographers and artists, inspired by the belief that art could help in saving the nation, decided to put their skills at the service of the Party. Despite the material hardships, these photographers and their collaborators successfully printed the *Pictorial* for many years and created one of the most interesting photographic propaganda magazines of the twentieth century. Moreover, some of the photographers who worked for the *Pictorial* became central figures in the development of Chinese modern and contemporary photography, not just in the propaganda environment, but also in the artistic one.[10]

By looking at the initial years of publication of the *Pictorial*, this thesis argued that the first step the Party took in terms of propaganda strategy was the construction of a new, socialist cultural landscape. The landscape portrayed in the pages of the *Pictorial* through symbols such as the Great Wall, the Baoda Pagoda and the sacred mountains, played a pivotal role for the political legitimacy that the Party was striving to acquire. By ideologically rooting itself in the most important

[10] See the photographers in: Si Sushi, *Hongse Yingxiang* (Beijing: Beijing Lianhe Chubangongsi, 2015).

locations in the history of Chinese civilisation, the Party was entrusting itself with the role of a guide for a new, united, and strong China. The Great Wall became the symbol of Chinese endurance and national unity, while Yan'an, located in the Loess Plateau, was portrayed as the birthplace of the revolution. Moreover, Yan'an was the city where Mao wrote the ideological framework of the CCP and, by extent, of the new China.

The second step that the Party took for the creation of a new idea of nation was including women in the political discourse. During the 1940s, Chinese women were called to contribute to the war effort by making textiles, nursing the wounded and taking care of all the activities that the men, while at the front, could not perform. In the pages of the *Pictorial*, wartime labour heroines were the women at the spinning wheel. Even in the case of spinning women, the propagandists did not create a new symbol, but drew from the traditional representation of women at the wheel in traditional Confucian manuals like the *Gengzhi Tu*. The spinning wheel was re-interpreted: from symbol of *nügong,* woman's work*,* to the symbol of economic emancipation and contribution to the war effort. The literature shows that, along the decades, the representation of women remained strictly connected to traditional gendered themes, such as the weaver and the nursing mother. Yet, this changed during the war against Japan. Women were included in the political discourse and considered fundamental, if only for productive reasons, for the defeat of Japan and the creation of a new nation under the CCP.

Lastly, this thesis looks at children as the embodiment of the future of China. Children were imagined and taught to imagine themselves in a way that was compliant with Mao and the Party's vision for China. The exploration of how children and childhood were portrayed in wartime images was crucial as it showed the type of society the Party was attempting to create. Childhood visual propaganda was arguably the one that mostly relied on the emotional value of images. Children

were initially portrayed as victims and their salvation was a matter of national interest. In Communist propaganda photographs, little labour heroes and little soldiers were created in order to inspire adults to work and fight for the country and the Party. In wartime images, childhood lost its characterising innocence and became a time for action, a time to contribute to the war effort and the creation of a new socialist society.

The contribution to the literature that this thesis makes is in showing that Communist propaganda images were contributing to the creation of a country that glorified its past, while moulding society on new socialist values. The propagandistic re-interpretation of the traditional heritage was appealing and effective because it was based on a cultural framework that was shared by the people living in the countryside and in the city; by intellectuals and illiterate people; by soldiers and women. Moreover, the "emotion work"—the psychological involvement of people in political campaigns—that was developed during wartime through photographs "lived on in the People's Republic of China, shaping a succession of state-sponsored mass campaigns under Mao."[11] To understand how propaganda photographs were created pre-1949, their emotional and ideological value, fills the gap in the literature that has explored Chinese visual propaganda, but overlooked the wartime period. This study is necessary because, as Perry notes, the emotional and psychological involvement created during the 1930s and the 1940s had a "legacy [that] continues to exert a powerful influence over the attitudes and actions of state authorities and ordinary citizens alike."[12]

* * *

The emotional value of propaganda images opens the discussion to a number of thorny questions that this study addresses. What role did propaganda photographs

[11] Elisabeth J. Perry, "Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution," p. 111.

[12] Ibidem.

have in the creation of a new idea of the Chinese nation under CCP leadership in the 1930s and 1940s? In other words, how can we assess the efficacy of propaganda photographs in relation to the idea of nation promoted by the Communist Party? This study analysed photographs in the socio-political context in which they were created and connected them with the political goals that the Party had in the 1930s and 1940s. It can be argued that this was an analysis conducted through hindsight as the Party won the war, established the People's Republic of China in 1949, and widened the net of its propaganda strategies to the whole country. An answer to the question on the efficacy of wartime photographs can be found in the analysis of post-1949 visual propaganda. While this study only hinted at the eventual recurrence of certain themes and symbols, particularly in posters, it is the author's opinion that the themes discussed and analysed should be further investigated in photographic propaganda produced after 1949.

The use of landscape for propaganda reasons and for the construction of national identities seems to be the theme that has attracted considerable scholarly attention, not only in relation to China but also in relation to other realities.[13] In the Chinese context, the Great Wall has not disappeared from the Party's visual propaganda, it has simply been re-interpreted along the years according to the political and ideological needs of the Party.[14] For instance, the 2016 poster below shows a father and a son perform the military salute to the national flag and the Great Wall. The title of the poster is "Patriotism" and the boy wears the red scarf

[13] Among the studies already quoted in chapter 2, see: Annika A Culver, *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-Garde Propaganda in Manchukuo*. (University of British Columbia Press, 2014); Christine I. Ho, "Drawing from Life: Mass Sketching and the Formation of Socialist Realist Guohua in the Early People's Republic of China (1949-1965)" (Stanford University, 2014); Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, eds., *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*….

[14] Carlos Rojas, *The Great Wall: A Cultural History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010).

that was usually worn by the Young Pioneers.[15] The scarf is red as the national flag and as the blood of those who sacrificed their lives for the country.

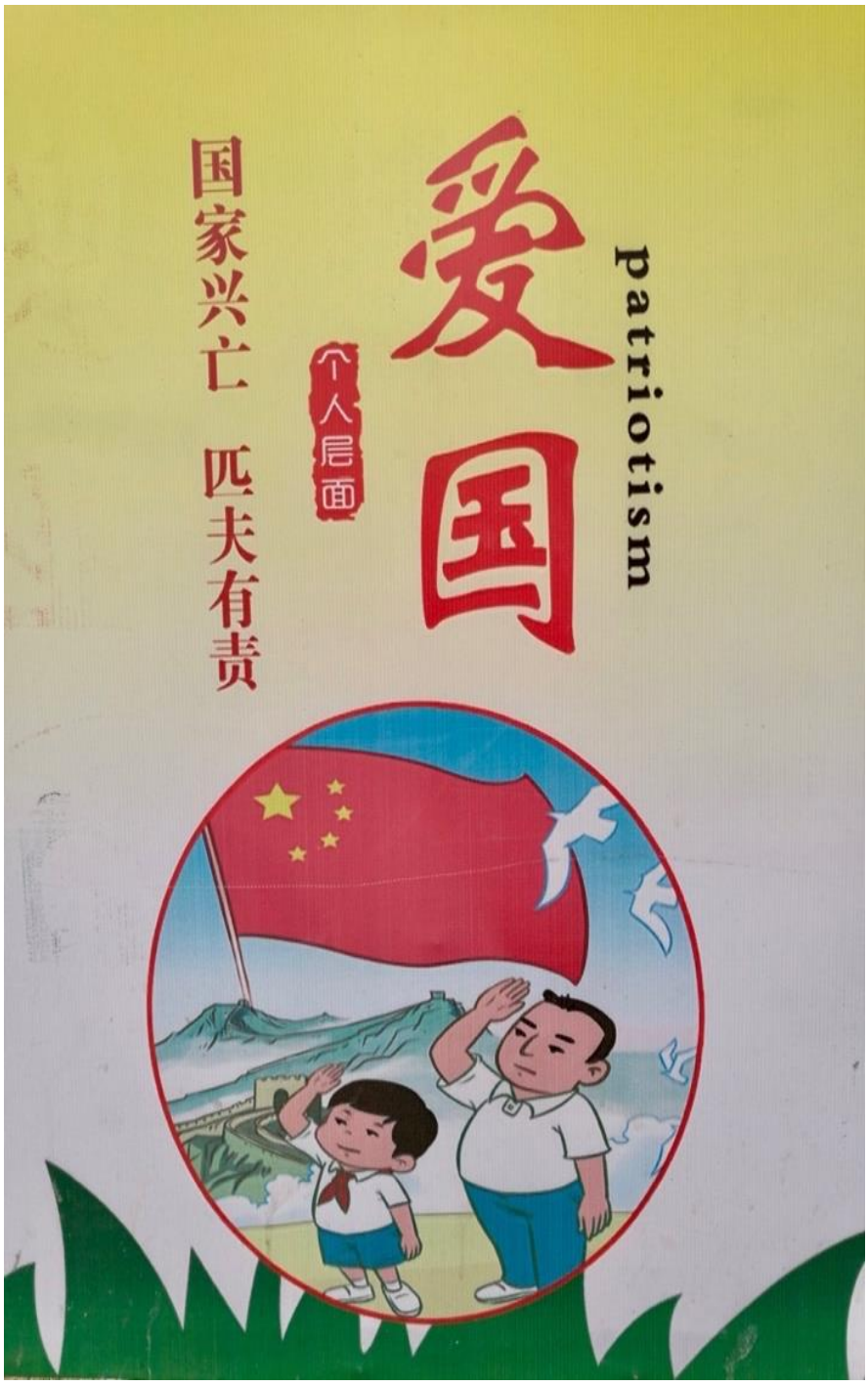

Figure 64: Poster on a wall in Chaoyang district in Beijing, June 2016, photograph by the author.

In the case of women, the spinning wheel disappeared from Communist visual propaganda in the early 1950s. Technology and the appearance of new factory-

[15] The Young Pioneers is a mass organisation composed by children aged between six and fourteen. Their symbols are the red flag, indicating the success of the Revolution, and the five-pointed star, symbolising the leadership of the Party.

based jobs made the wheel unnecessary and unappealing from an ideological viewpoint. What women-related symbols took the place of the wheel in modern and contemporary propaganda? What socio-political implications do these new symbols have for Chinese women? Mary Ginsberg notes that in post-1949 propaganda, women were frequently portrayed while driving tractors, the "symbol of agricultural mechanization […] the chariot to the future."[16] Labour heroines left the spinning wheel behind and became the "drivers of socialist construction."[17]

Lastly, this study explored the militarisation of childhood during the Anti-Japanese War. The wartime militarisation of children became one of the causes of the violence that would characterise the socio-political Chinese life of the Cultural Revolution years. Studies like De Giorgi, Farquhar, Naftali, and Moore's sparked the debate on the militarisation of childhood during wartime and on the role of children as political actors in propaganda, in China and beyond. On these aspects, much is still to be investigated in the field of childhood studies.[18] In the specific case of this analysis for instance, it would have been interesting to look at whether and how the children volunteered to be photographed and what their personal experiences as models for the nation were.

On the whole, this study hopes to have proved that by looking at how propaganda was constructed in the past, we can acquire the tools to better understand the present and be able to glimpse the future. In the current historical moment in which images and their manipulation are central components of the political discourse worldwide, this type of hindsight analysis helps when attempting

[16] Mary Ginsberg, *The Art of Influence: Asian Propaganda*, p. 99.

[17] Ibidem.

[18] Laura De Giorgi, "Little Friends at War…;" Mary Ann Farquhar, *Children's Literature in China: From Lu Xun to Mao Zedong*…; Aaron William Moore, "From Individual Child to War Youth…;" Orna Naftali, "Reforming the Child: Childhood, Citizenship…"

to understand the significance of modern and contemporary propaganda and its evolution.

* * *

There is one last, more personal, consideration to make. Diana Lary noted that because of the disruption that the war caused to Chinese society: "the optimistic, positive atmosphere of the early 1930s seemed to be lost forever."[19] While the images presented in this study fall under the propaganda domain, the photographers were able to convey part of the positive atmosphere that life in the countryside retained during the war. What Sha Fei wrote about his mission as a photographer, his belief that "art [had] to help humanity understand itself, reform society, and restore freedom" is a testament of the optimism and belief in a better future that Chinese society had in the 1930s.[20]

At the beginning of this thesis, it was argued that when looking at propaganda photographs, we need to consider and centre our analysis around the amount of staging and manipulation. What we find in these images is an ideological truth that we, as viewers, should understand in the light of the socio-political aspirations of the historical moment in which the photographs were produced. While this approach still stands, the photographs made by Sha Fei and his colleagues also show the daily truth of the people who experienced the war and tried to lead a normal, simple life. Adults played with children, soldiers ate together and smiled at the camera, women chatted while making shoes for their men. Unfortunately, the genuine interest towards the common people that can be identified in the first five issues of the *Pictorial* slowly faded as the time passed. In time, the *Pictorial*

[19] Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937-1945*, New Approaches to Asian History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 196.

[20] Eliza Ho, 沙飞, and OSU Urban Arts Space, *Art, documentary, and propaganda in wartime China: the photography of Sha fei = 沙飞* (Columbus, OH: East Asian Studies Center, Ohio State University, 2009), p. 28.

became more refined in terms of propaganda techniques with more photo-montages, colours and photographic manipulation. Less attention was given to the daily truth of the people, and more to the ideological truth of the Party and Mao Zedong. Under this light, the first five issues of the *Pictorial* can be seen a testament to the probably naïve hopes that young artists had in the Communist Party as a new force that could bring freedom and modernity to China. In the photographs of Sha Fei and his colleagues it is possible to recognise a genuine interest in the lives of the common people, as well as in the glorification of all the men, women and children who experienced the dramatic years of the war.

Appendix A

The first archive visited was the Zashuguan Library in Beijing in June 2016. The Zashuguan is a private library and is composed of two buildings: the Sinology Library (*Guoxue Guan*), holding ancient books and manuscripts, and the New Book Library which holds contemporary resources. The third floor of the Sinology Library has one room for resources published during the Qing dynasty and a second room dedicated to sources from the end of the Qing in 1911 to 1949. While the Zashuguan Library holds an impressive amount and variety of materials, its cataloguing system is disorganised and flawed thus hindering the research process.[1] While in Beijing, the author also attempted to visit the Military Museum of the Chinese People's Revolution, but it was at the time under renovation and therefore inaccessible.

The National Library of China, in Beijing, visited between July and November 2016 holds materials that were relevant for this thesis. The South Area for instance, retains microfilms of *The War Illustrated* (*Zhanshi Huabao)* and of *The Young Companion* (*Liangyou*). Although these two magazines have not been included in this study as they were not Communist publications, they were nonetheless relevant for the understanding of how layouts and images were used in wartime press. The most relevant source found at the National Library was the complete collection of the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial*, the primary source of this thesis. Every issue of the *Pictorial* had been scanned and bound together, making it accessible thus providing a more linear understanding of its development along the years. The volumes on wartime photographers and the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial* were purchased by the author while in Beijing as they were not available in the European market. These sources provided

[1] One of the most troubling issues was that the online catalogue of the *Zashuguan* provided the name of the magazine, but frequently omitted the year and month of publication. Furthermore, the books were also not catalogued by topic or language causing obvious confusion and loss of time.

more photographic materials and in-depth analysis on the development of Chinese wartime photography, the history of the *Pictorial* and wartime propaganda.[2]

The Hoover Archives at Stanford University, visited in September 2016 and July 2017, proved to be the most complete and relevant archive for this thesis. The Sha Fei Papers collection holds a considerable amount of Sha Fei's photographs, one copy of the *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial*, and a few Sha Fei's personal items such as diaries and annotations. A considerable number of the photographs in this collection was used in this study. Although some of these images did not appear in the *Pictorial*, they were employed as evidence of the ideological value and frequency of the three themes of landscape, women at the spinning wheel, and children. The Sha Fei Papers also hold a copy of *Woodcuts of War-time China 1937-1945*, compiled by the Chinese Woodcutters' Association in 1946. The book contains one hundred plates chosen from the 900 woodcuts of the exhibition that was held in Shanghai in 1946.[3] This source provided additional images that were used as supporting evidence for the chapters on landscape and women of this thesis.

The Nym Wales boxes were an exceptional source for the understanding of life in Yan'an and the venture of the Long March. The interviews conducted by Mrs Snow with CCP leaders were helpful for their insights into the political strategies of the Party during wartime. The sketches given to Mrs Snow by artists who participated in the Long March were inserted in this thesis (figures 28 and 29) for their value as primary sources. Even in this case, the images supported the argument that the themes chosen for this study were relevant during wartime and widely explored by Chinese artists.

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[2] Shi Zhimin, *Jin-Cha-Ji Pictorial…*; Si Sushi, *Sha Fei and His Wartime Friends…;* Yong Tian and Wu Tian, *Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, The birth of a Myth…*; Yan Wang, *My Father Sha Fei…;* Zhongguo she ying jia xie hui, ed., *Through the Echo of History: Chinese War Photographers….*

[3] For an in-depth analysis of the 1946 exhibition and the propaganda value of the woodcuts, see: Shaoqian Zhang, "Dark and Bright Art: Woodcuts in the Aftermath of War," *http://artinprint.org*, http://artinprint.org/article/dark-and-bright-art-woodcuts-in-the-aftermath-of-war/, last accessed 9 September 2018.

Lastly, the *Communist Party Issuances* provided additional visual evidence on the recurrence of the theme of women at the spinning wheel. Specifically, the 1946 *Renmin Huabao* poster, the late 1940s poster *Liberation!*, and the folder on Chinese Communist War Cartoons and Posters (1944-45), contributed to the author's awareness on the importance and frequency of the symbolism of the spinning wheel during wartime.[4]

[4] For the images mentioned here, see appendix B.

Appendix B

Figure 65: Wu Zhengwu, Cheng Guanfu, 'Get collective organizes on the basis of willingness and mutual benefits', 1953, from Jennifer Lee, Engendering Modern China, p. 59.

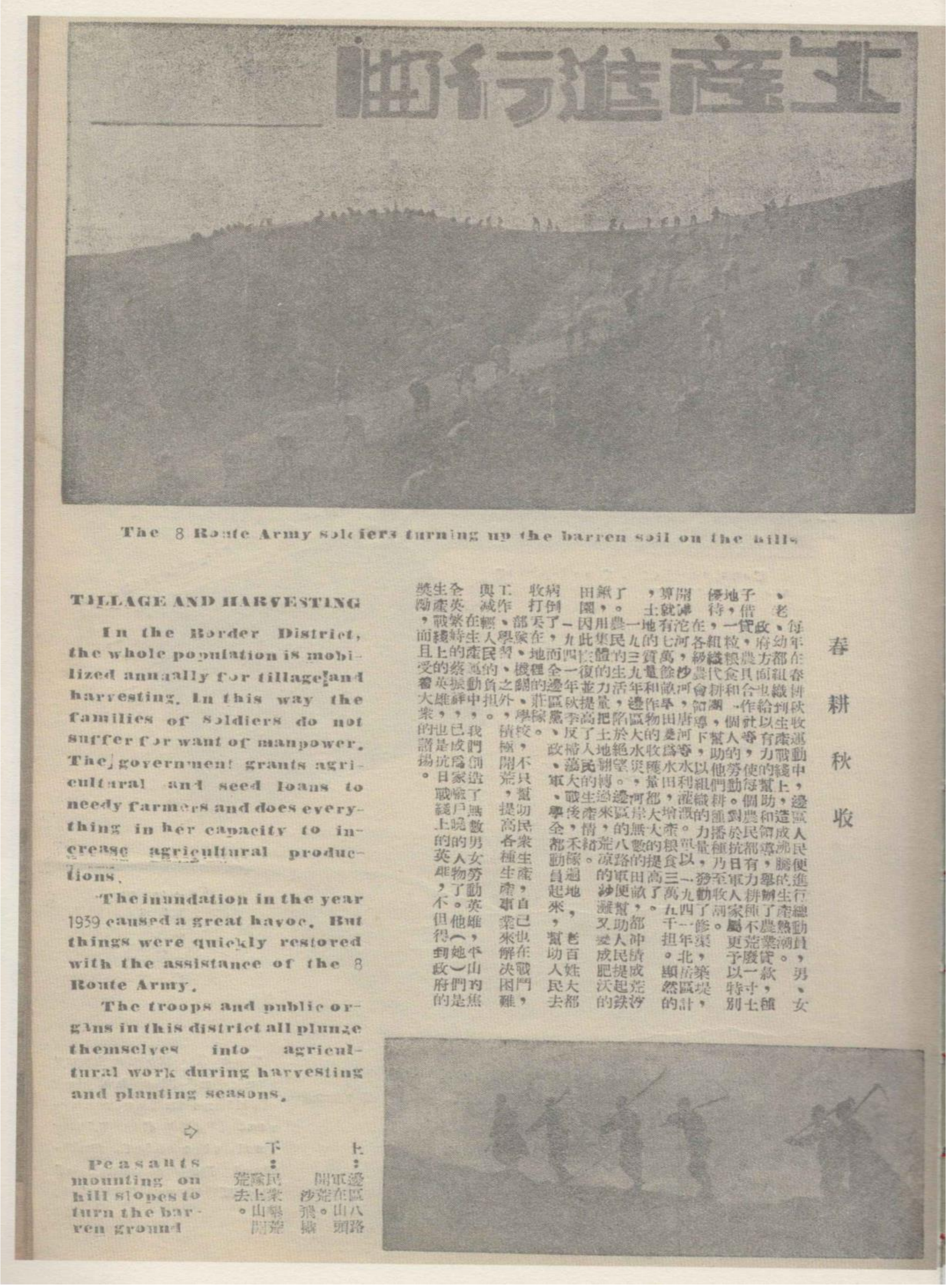
Figure 66: Wang Liuying, 'Teacher teaches me, and I teach mother', 1958, from Jennifer Lee, Engendering Modern China, p. 34.

Figure 67: Artist Unknown, The Joy of the Farmers' life, Communist Party Issuances, 1933-2005, Hoover Institution Archives, Copyright Stanford University.

Figure 68: Artist Unknown, Liberation!, Communist Party Issuances, 1933-2005, Hoover Institution Archives, Copyright Stanford University.

Appendix C

This appendix provides the pages in which the images discussed above originally appeared in the *Pictorial*. The pages are not displayed chronologically but follow the order in which they are mentioned in the main body of this thesis.



生產進行曲

The 8 Route Army soldiers turning up the barren soil on the hills

春耕秋收

TILLAGE AND HARVESTING

In the Border District, the whole population is mobilized annually for tillage and harvesting. In this way the families of soldiers do not suffer for want of manpower. The government grants agricultural and seed loans to needy farmers and does everything in her capacity to increase agricultural productions.

The inundation in the year 1939 caused a great havoc. But things were quickly restored with the assistance of the 8 Route Army.

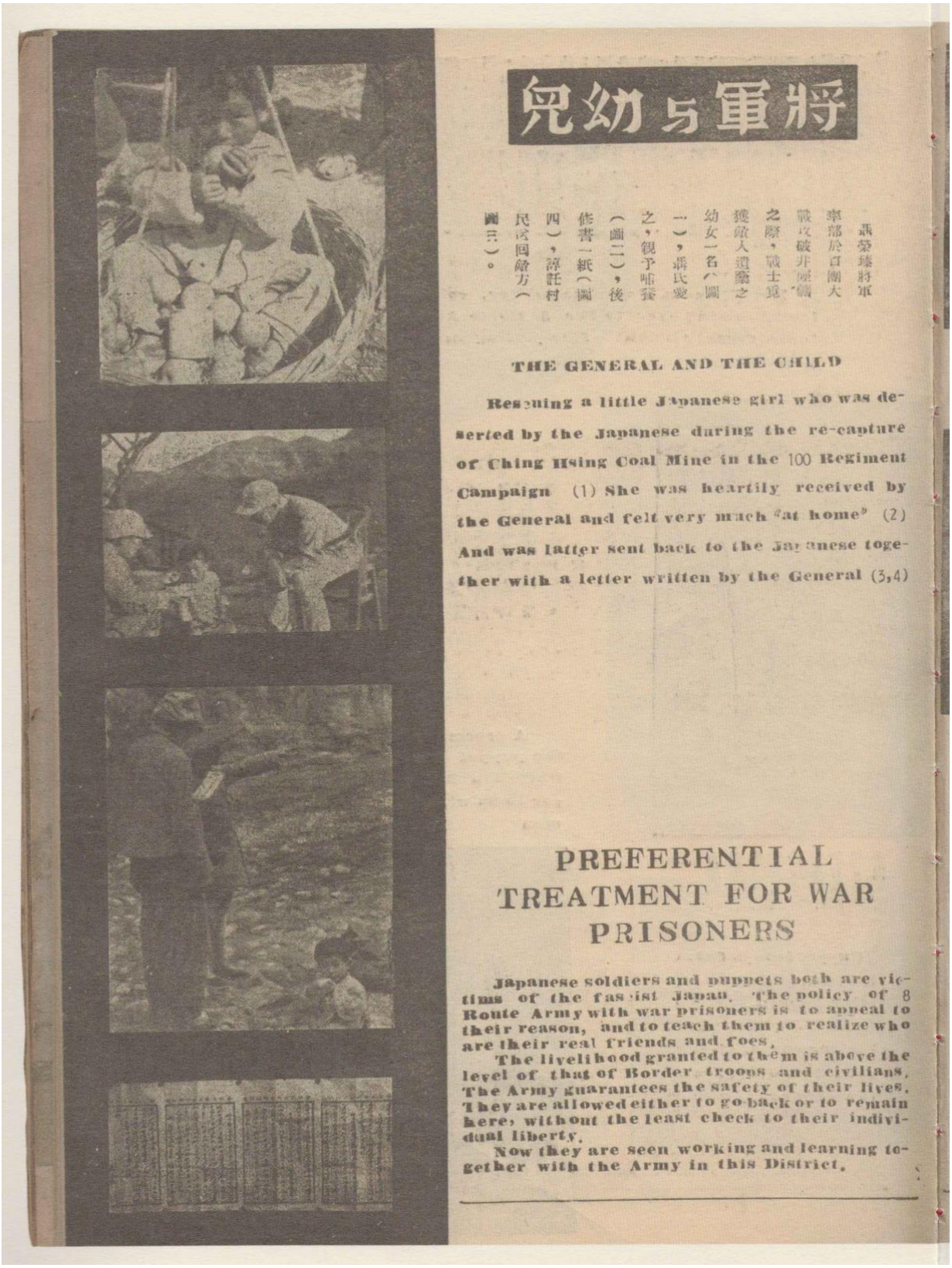
The troops and public organs in this district all plunge themselves into agricultural work during harvesting and planting seasons.

Peasants mounting on hill slopes to turn the barren ground

Figure 69: First Issue, Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, 1942.

Figure 70: Fifth Issue, Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, 1944.

Figure 71: Fourth Issue, Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, 1943.



將軍与幼兒

聶榮臻將軍率部於百團大戰攻破井陘礦之際，戰士覓獲敵人遺棄之幼女一名（圖一），聶氏愛之，親予哺養（圖二），後修書一紙（圖四），諄託村民送回給方（圖三）。

THE GENERAL AND THE CHILD

Rescuing a little Japanese girl who was deserted by the Japanese during the re-capture of Ching Hsing Coal Mine in the 100 Regiment Campaign (1) She was heartily received by the General and felt very much "at home" (2) And was latter sent back to the Japanese together with a letter written by the General (3,4)

PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT FOR WAR PRISONERS

Japanese soldiers and puppets both are victims of the fascist Japan. The policy of 8 Route Army with war prisoners is to appeal to their reason, and to teach them to realize who are their real friends and foes.

The livelihood granted to them is above the level of that of Border troops and civilians. The Army guarantees the safety of their lives. They are allowed either to go back or to remain here, without the least check to their individual liberty.

Now they are seen working and learning together with the Army in this District.

Figure 72: First Issue, Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, 1942.

Figure 73: First Issue, Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, 1942.

Figure 74: Third Issue, Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, 1943.

強壯的人民武裝

「我們是抗日的小兵」——成仿吾：邊區兒童團歌。體烈操

'We're little soldiers to fight the Japanese' ⇨

⇧ Advance of the self-defense corps

黃準滾滾人民武裝自衛隊在行進中。 沙飛攝

MASS ARMAMENT

The civilians in this Border District are now all arm ed.—children and adults, men and women stand together on the frontier against their common foe. They have smashed numerous 'mopping-up' operations through their close cooperation with the regular army and have taken the lion's share in anti-Japanese activity behind the enemy's lines.

The civilians' own forces can be well judged through the following imperfect record of exploits 1940 (covering Pinp-Shan, Ling-Shou, Hsing-Tang, Ching-Hsing, Ling-Chu, Fan-Chih, Yu-Hsien, Wu-Tai), published by the Mass Armament Committee, 1941. it is as follows: —

ENGAGEMENTS	
……Delivered over 1,000 engagements wherein participated 200,000 men	
Japanese and puppet casualties	542
Captive traitors	373
Convert puppets	47

DESTRUCTIONS		
……Delivered over 700 engagements wherein participated 500,000 men		
Thoroughfare (km.)		500
Highways	»	255
Railways	»	75
Bridges		74
Iron bridge		1
Ramparts		14

TROPHIES		
Heavy machine guns		2
Hand grenades		119
Rifles		105
Munitions	(Cases)	22
Telephone machines		4
»	wire (catties)	2,200
»	poles	2,500

(A big quantity of other materiel is not included in this table)

Figure 75: First Issue, Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, 1942.

A scene of a rural play "Our Village"

A scene in "The Mother", a great masterpiece wrote by Gorky

A style of rural dancing

Chorus band of a military dramatic art corps singing

The literature exhibition of 8 Route Army troops during the Art Festival, 1942.

Figure 76: First Issue, Jin Cha Ji Pictorial, 1942.

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