

**Reimagining Heroes and Villains: Contested and Changing Representations of the  
Republican Historical Figures in Mainland China**

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## **Declaration**

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Siyi Du

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## Summary

This thesis examines the diverse and contested representations of Republican historical figures in mainland China. This research project was designed to discuss public history in mainland China, particularly how histories of the Republican era have been represented and generated responses from the public, and shaped national identities. To achieve this goal, this thesis turns to biographical stories, a form of history most relatable to individuals and has proven its power in providing moral lessons to and evoking emotional responses from the public. It is also one of the most inviting and inclusive narrative forms; stories about a historical figure, if told strategically, can create the impression that they are living among us in the present and that public opinions matter to these departed personalities.

The case studies selected by this research are among the most well-known historical figures in the Republican era, and their fame or notoriety continues to be remembered in the PRC. The common impression is that stories of these historical figures inevitably classified these protagonists into the binary categories of heroes or villains, when it was assumed that they played a pivotal role in history. However, analyses of the representative historical heroes and villains reveal that even the most conclusive narratives of the most symbolic historical figures embody pluralistic views. This thesis argues that top-down commemoration of the selected historical events, combined with the ongoing hidden discussions and contradictory historical assessments in the public sphere, created a historical consciousness among Chinese people that has gone largely unremarked in the scholarship. Although academic history takes a leading role in changing historiography, the agendas proposed by academic historians does not always translate into the public domain, especially when a historical “villain” is the centre of the narrative. Each of the different case studies in this thesis, from the celebrated national hero, Sun Yat-sen, to the notorious hanjian, Wang Jingwei, reinforces this argument.

This thesis evaluates modern Chinese history from a public history perspective, focusing on historical representations and public consciousness in China. The thesis is divided into six chapters, each presenting case studies that explore the depiction of critical figures and events. The first part of the thesis focuses on the symbolic heroes and heroines associated

with establishing the Republic of China, including Sun Yat-sen and the Wuchang Uprising. These chapters analyse widely commemorated historical episodes and the construction of collective memory. The second part of the thesis shifts the focus to the portrayal of historical “villains” in Chinese history, namely Yuan Shikai and Wang Jingwei.

These chapters investigate the oversimplified representations of these political leaders and the influence of Chinese biographies and media depictions. By examining the changing narratives and public engagement with history, this thesis sheds light on how historical figures are remembered and understood in mainland China, highlighting the complexities and challenges in presenting and interpreting history for diverse audiences. Analyses in this thesis demonstrate that a narrative does not disappear in the public discourse; even when the government tries to demolish some older narratives, they can cluster together in some hidden corners of the public realm, in stories, sites, and people’s memories. This thesis argues that heroes and villains persist in the public understanding of the republic era even though the state has tried to shift the narrative to the century of national humiliation, because narratives providing value judgments on individuals are inherently appealing to people. Moreover, public history does not always follow trends in academic historiography, especially regarding a historical villain, and individuals can reach diverse conclusions about the past despite close state control of historical narratives.

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## Introduction

As Alun Munslow famously stated: “The past is a changing present.”<sup>1</sup> Historians in China compile the officially approved historical accounts less freely compared to some of their North American and European colleagues. They must adhere to the changing political agenda of the nation state and face increasingly strict censorship.<sup>2</sup> In the early years of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) under Mao Zedong’s leadership, history, as a public record of the past co-written by historians and theorists, largely shaped contemporary historical interpretations through its close association with politics.<sup>3</sup> However, in recent years the public representations of the constructed knowledge of the past have become more diverse than ever.<sup>4</sup> The shaping of public representation in China is influenced not only by the personal experiences of writers and artists but also by the diverse population and regional variations. This means that a single grand narrative, a predetermined approach to remembering and forgetting, or a fixed viewpoint towards the

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<sup>1</sup> Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1997), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Suyoung Son’s book explores the earliest printed works and censorship in the late eighteenth century China: Suyoung Son, *Writing for Print: Publishing and the Making of Textual Authority in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Centre, 2018), 1–14. Nonetheless, the practice of censorship is a common phenomenon globally, Nicole Moore’s editorial volume studies the issue from a global perspective: Nicole Moore, ed, *Censorship and the Limits of the Literary: A Global View*. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 1-7. With Lynda Ng’s chapter focusing on the Internet Age of China: Lynda Ng, “China’s Elusive Truths: Censorship, Value and Literature in the Internet Age.” In *Censorship and the Limits of the Literary: A Global View*, edited by Nicole Moore (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 233–246. For a case study of academic regulation in China, see: Margaret Sleeboom-Faulkner, “Regulating Intellectual Life in China: The Case of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.” *The China Quarterly*, no. 189 (2007): 83–99.

<sup>3</sup> Denise Y. Ho’s work focuses on how exhibitionary culture in Mao’s China was a mean to create revolution by teaching the masses to attack and to condemn: Denise Y. Ho, *Curating Revolution: Politics on Display in Mao’s China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 4-5.

<sup>4</sup> For a newly published volume on the storytelling representations of the past in China, see: Katherine Swancutt, *Crafting Chinese Memories: The Art and Materiality of Storytelling* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2021), 1-24.

past will not prevail. Meanwhile, the official narrative in China also underwent transformations and transmissions.<sup>5</sup> Some stories were regenerated while others disappeared from authoritative historical accounts.

This thesis shifts the focus away from the interaction between official regulations and scholarly works. Instead, it focuses on the display or representation of the recent past, through public channels such as state-sanctioned textbooks, media, memorials, or commemorations, with the aim to form collective narratives and interpretations of historical events or figures that are shared and disseminated among a group of people. The term “public memories” encompasses two phenomena: Firstly, it refers to the state’s endeavour to assimilate specific memories into a mythologised version of history, shaping public consciousness and even national identity. Secondly, it encompasses the outcomes of this effort, which can manifest as public exhibitions of textual or visual artefacts. These public memories are fluid and multifaceted, defying a unified interpretation and, as Chris Berry describes, can be seen as a discourse composed of disparate elements that resist being understood as a coherent text.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, to investigate how the past is represented to the public is to deal with a chaotic body of materials, one that is even more disordered than the archival sources historians normally work with and find themselves buried in.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, it is essential that a researcher can grasp order from disorder when dealing with public histories. This research project was designed with the intention of discussing public history in mainland

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<sup>5</sup> Prasenjit Duara defined “narrative transmission” in his work: Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 80.

<sup>6</sup> Chris Berry, “Jia Zhangke’s Memory Project, 24 City: Rewriting History, Rethinking Historiography,” in *Crafting Chinese Memories: The Art and Materiality of Storytelling*, edited by Katherine Swancutt (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2021), 63.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfgang Ernst, *Stirrings in The Archives: Order from Disorder*, translated by Adam Siegel (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 94-95.

China, in particular, how histories of the Republican era have been represented and generated responses from the public, and shaped national identities. To achieve this goal, this thesis turns to biographical stories, a form of history that is most relatable to individuals and has proven its power in providing moral lessons to and evoking emotional responses from the public.<sup>8</sup> It is also one of the most inviting and inclusive narrative forms; stories about a historical figure, if being told strategically, can create the impression that they are living among us, in the present, and that the public opinions matter to these departed personalities. The case studies selected by this research are among the most well-known historical figures in the Republican era, and their fame or notoriety continues to be remembered in the PRC.

In Gotelind Muller's article on popular/public history in China,<sup>9</sup> he quoted Link, Madsen, and Pickowicz's definition of the "popular":

This is a book about the people of China, not the abstract People as defined by the government of the People's Republic, not the imagined subjects of a socialist state, but actual living, desiring, struggling people trying to make sense of who they are and how they should act in the rapidly globalising economy and culture of the early twenty-first century.<sup>10</sup>

The definitions of the "public" are fluid. This thesis proposes one definition of the "public" as the consumers of historical narratives, including readers, viewers, and those who engaged in conversations regarding the past while also recognising that publics can also work to construct and create histories. The chapters pay more attention to certain elements of the public, such as youth perspectives particularly those living in urban areas.

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Rotberg, "Biography and Historiography: Mutual Evidentiary and Interdisciplinary Considerations," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 3 (2010): 305.

<sup>9</sup> Gotelind Muller, "Some thoughts on the problem of 'popular/public history' in China," *Rethinking History*, 15, No. 2, (2011): 229–239.

<sup>10</sup> Link, E. Perry (Eugene Perry), Richard Madsen, and Paul Pickowicz, eds. *Restless China* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013), 1.

However, the public is wider. There are differences between the “public” and the “masses”, as well as “public” and “popular”. The masses, stressed in the Mao era, refer to the multitude that could be combined in a singular. The masses are unified and are the opposite of the public this thesis has chosen to explore because the latter contains a diverse body of individuals and groups of people.

“Popular”, on the other hand, is an adjective with subtle nuances and aligns slightly closely to the notion of the “public” or the people. Because something popular is widely accepted among groups that “may not be typical of the population as a whole.”<sup>11</sup> Under this definition, commonalities surpass differences. Nonetheless, the difference between popular and mass culture is also stressed by researchers such as John Fiske; for example, Fiske’s definition of popular culture concerns products created by the people, rejecting the more top-down theory of mass culture study, which relied more heavily on economic and political effects.<sup>12</sup> This thesis sees “public” as the overlap of “popular” and “mass”, through the engagement with different cultural forms, such as museums and graphic novels. These forms of cultural products were initially by-products of state-led economic or political engagement with the masses; nevertheless, the public, either as communities or individuals, participated in the re-interpretation of the stories being told in these forms of culture.

Chinese public historian Li Na addresses the different interpretations of the masses and the public as the former being “mindless” and the latter being “a socially stratified public with the capacity for critical thinking.”<sup>13</sup> This thesis, however, intends to widen the definition of the Chinese public to individuals who encountered historical representations

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<sup>11</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*. (London: Routledge, 2010), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Jenkin, “Why Fiske Still Matters,” in John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*. xii–xxxviii (London: Routledge, 2010), xiii.

<sup>13</sup> Li Na, *Seeing History: Public History in China*. (Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2024), 19.

at some point in their lives and (whether intentionally or not) produced historical narratives or interpretations which fed back into the society where history is affecting people's identities and (personal or collective) memories. The public may still be restricted to the "educated, thoughtful, and socially responsible citizens", as Li describes,<sup>14</sup> but it has the potential to expand. Although there are places in the thesis where "public" and "popular" are used interchangeably, the author's definition of the "public" aligns with the Chinese term "gongzhong 公众", in which "gong" means shared instead of official, and "zhong" stresses the plurality of the public instead of the "public/private" differences.<sup>15</sup> And the Chinese term for "popular" is "gonggong 公共"; the difference is in the second character *gong* 共, which stresses its mutuality. Therefore, in my definition, "public" in the Chinese context refers to a plural society with shared historical knowledge. The "public" as the collective audience of narrative history can cover several generations of the population from various backgrounds.

The common definition of the "masses" in a communist society, on the other hand, is not the subject of study in this thesis. Mao Zedong's ideas about the loosely defined "mass line (群众路线 *qunzhong luxian*)"<sup>16</sup> were one of the "the Party's most important narratives in early PRC period."<sup>17</sup> The masses are based on a united cohort in the PRC, which was diverse but was dismissed in practice to suit the political needs. In the "mass line" narrative, errors of the cadres were expected to be corrected, sometimes followed by

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<sup>14</sup> Li, *Seeing History*, 19.

<sup>15</sup> Gotelind Muller's interpretation of the Chinese terms stresses the "public/private" differences, and through this interpretation, Muller argues that the Western notions of "popular" and "public" are not applicable in the Chinese context. Muller, "Some thoughts on the problem of 'popular/public history' in China," 229–239

<sup>16</sup> Edward Hammond, "Marxism and the Mass Line," *Modern China* 4, no. 1 (1978): 3–26.

<sup>17</sup> Aminda Smith, "Long Live the Mass Line! Errant Cadres and Post-Disillusionment PRC History," *Positions: Asia critique* 29, no. 4 (2021): 788.

executions and incarcerations.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the imported idea of “public history” should be differentiated from the Chinese discourse of the “masses.” The “public” comprises numerous social groups and remains diverse and changeable.

Public history, similarly, embodies multiple definitions and has been used as an umbrella term. David Glassberg’s 1996 article provides some possible definitions. From the 1980s to the 1990s, public history was considered “a collection of career paths, not a coherent subject of study” in its academic development.<sup>19</sup> Simultaneously, historians in the 1990s enriched the scholarship which examines “the images and uses of history in Western culture,” and explores “the various ways that memory of a society is created, institutionalised, disseminated, and understood.”<sup>20</sup> Glassberg illustrates separation of public history (as a subfield of history in universities) and growing study of memory in the 1990s.<sup>21</sup> What were considered two different subjects back then are more integrated now in the English-speaking scholarship. However, in the international context, the noticeable gap still exists, and debates surrounding the definition of public history are heated:

This international popularity raises questions about the history and development of public history. However, international discussions on public history are confronted with diverse and unstable definitions of the field. The disagreements on the definition of public history have led to constant debates—that are part of the history to the field—among historians and practitioners.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Smith, “Long Live the Mass Line!” 796.

<sup>19</sup> David Glassberg, “Public History and the Study of Memory,” *The Public Historian* 18, No. 2 (1996): 7.

<sup>20</sup> Glassberg, “Public History and the Study of Memory,” 7.

<sup>21</sup> For example, see: Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994; Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French past. European Perspectives*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996; Jay M. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, London: Cornell University Press, 1998.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Cauvin, “The Rise of Public History: An International Perspective,” *Historia Critica*, 68 (2018): 3.

Li Na's newly published book also shed light on the debates surrounding the difference in defining "public history" in English-language and Chinese academic sources. Li's definition of public history sees various phenomena under the umbrella of "public history," calling it "an infinite web of meanings" which is fluid, non-linear, emergent, and ultimately complex.<sup>23</sup> Li emphasises the separation pointed out by Glassberg in 1996, by describing academic history and public history as "two cultures". One is the group of "traditional historians" who are "busy writing for academic journals and monographs for tenure-promotion." Li acclaims another group (the public historians) as the one that "is actively engaging in all sorts of historical activities," but stresses that both are missing out creative opportunities and losing out.<sup>24</sup> Li's read of the difference between the two "types" of historians was once common among public historians. However, there is a growing trend among academic historians, particularly in America, to function as "activists" or actively engage with communities.<sup>25</sup>

While the gap may persist in the field of public history in China, this thesis approaches the issue differently, proposes to see through the existing boundaries, and suggests a plural definition allowing researchers and anyone who approaches history with an analytical mindset to practice public history and enrich the meanings behind this term. One definition of public history provided by Hilda Kean and Paul Martin defines the process in which public history can develop:

We see public history as a process by which the past is constructed into history and a practice which has the capacity for involving people as well as nations and communities in the creation of their own histories.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Li, *Seeing History*, 4-5.

<sup>24</sup> Li, *Seeing History*, 5.

<sup>25</sup> For some examples, see: Denise D. Meringolo ed. *Radical Roots: Public History and a Tradition of Social Justice Activism*. (Amherst, MA: Amherst College Press), 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Hilda Kean and Paul Martin, *The Public History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2013), xiii. Cited in *The Oxford Handbook of Public History (Oxford Handbooks)*, Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition, 15.

Therefore, throughout the thesis, the works of public historians and scholars of other fields will be treated equally for their intellectual contributions to the chosen subjects. This thesis also contributes to proposing a broader and more international approach to discussing the idea of public history, from engaging the narrative development and public consumption of history in the PRC to the analysis of History in the public sphere in the Chinese context. The definition of public history used throughout the thesis is distant from the public history movement in North America and Europe in the 1970s, as the movement itself may be considered an institutionalised field rather than a concept incorporating the process by which history in the public sphere has been created and diversified.

To identify the significant difference between the definition of public history in America and China, one must answer the following question: “Has history ever been disconnected from the general public in China?” Historians in China have long taken up the responsibility to offer comments and opinions about the past and educate the public with stories of the past. Facts and events mattered but were dissimilar to how they did in Western historiography. On the other hand, moral evaluations<sup>27</sup> have always centred on the historical narrative in China, which has always been put in the public sphere instead of confined within the so-called Ivory Tower. Objectivity became a concern of Chinese historians towards the end of the twentieth century; however, this trend in scholarship had limited, if not minor, impacts on history in the public sphere. The public uses of the past in the Chinese context have never been forgotten as it was suggested to be in America.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Yu Ying-Shih discusses the importance of morality in Chinese culture in Ying-shih Yü, Josephine Chiu-Duke, and Michael Duke, *Chinese History and Culture: Sixth Century B.C.E. to Seventeenth Century, Volume 1*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 181-202.

<sup>28</sup> Rebecca Conard, “The Pragmatic Roots of Public History Education in the United States.” *The Public Historian* 37, no.1 (2015): 105-120, cited in Thomas Cauvin, “The Rise of Public History: An International Perspective,” *Historia Crítica*, no. 68 (2018): 6.



Cases and analyses in the thesis demonstrate a continuity of the practices, which could be defined as “Chinese public history.” Public history in China is not solely about historians reaching out to the public because historians were not wholly removed from the general public but were considered representative members of it, a tradition traceable to the Grand Historian Sima Qian (c. 145 BC – 87 BC). Public history means different things in the Chinese context, for historical narratives, although done mainly by professionals, always see the public as their readers.

One of this thesis’s goals, though not without challenges and shortcomings, is to provide a way to study the past and its various interpretations through the lens of public history. After all, what fascinates all historians is the multiple possibilities for interpreting the past; with the methods, principles, and training of public history, a historian is open to more diverse interpretations of the shared human experiences and the stories being shared with a broader audience.

The chapters in the thesis loosely follow a chronological narrative order to investigate the depiction of the past figures and events in the late Republic and the PRC. The first four chapters, Part 1 of the thesis, are devoted to public memories of the symbolic hero or heroine whose legacy is associated with the establishment of the Republic of China. Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the revolutionary hero Sun Yat-sen (孙中山 1866-1925), while Chapter 3 focuses on the Wuchang Uprising of October 1911 with which he was closely associated, although he was abroad when it broke out. Chapter 4 examines other celebrated figures of the revolutionary period, notably the heroine Qiu Jin (秋瑾 1875-1907), martyred in 1907, and the 72 martyrs (黄花岗七十二烈士 *Huanghuagang qishier lieshi*) of the failed March 29 Uprising of 1911. This part takes up more than half of the thesis because these are some of the most widely commemorated

and continuously depicted historical episodes, often associated with a site or location, and evoke local memories during annual commemorations.

In Part 2 of the thesis, the focus shifts from examining heroic figures to exploring the portrayals of historical “villains” in Chinese history: Yuan Shikai (袁世凯 1859-1916) in Chapter 5, and Wang Jingwei (汪精卫 1833-1944) in Chapter 6. These two political leaders from the Republican era are complex figures, yet their representations in public discourse often become oversimplified. Their names, at times, are equated with terms like “the thief of the nation” (窃国大盗 *qieguo dadao*) or “the national traitor” (汉奸 *hanjian*) due to the influence of their Chinese biographies and media depictions.

The common impression is that stories of the most well-known historical figures inevitably classified these protagonists into the binary categories of heroes or villains, when it was assumed that they played a pivotal role in history. In the Marxist narrative adopted in communist China, they either progressed or hindered the development of history.<sup>29</sup> The analysis of the representative historical heroes and villains, however, reveals that even the most conclusive narratives of the most symbolic historical figures (盖棺论定 *gai guan lun ding*) embody pluralistic views. Each of the distinct case studies in this thesis, from the celebrated national hero (民族英雄 *minzu yingxiong*), Sun Yat-sen, to the notorious *hanjian*, Wang Jingwei, reinforces this argument.

Recent publications, such as You Ziyang’s 2020 book on Chinese folk literati, indicate that post-1949 local officials in China intentionally adopted storytelling methods to “spread the Socialist Education Movement and to influence the common people in a

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<sup>29</sup> For an implementation of a similar narrative in the latest communist theories, see: Zhao Zhouxian 赵周贤 and Li Zhijun 李志军, “人民要论: 人类历史发展大势不可阻挡 [People’s Commentary: The Unstoppable Trend of Human History],” *人民日报 People’s Daily*, 31 August 2020, 9.

structured way.”<sup>30</sup> From the 1990s onward, historical representation in China has integrated with both state propaganda and commercial activities.<sup>31</sup> The idea of a mainstream (or Main Melody, 主旋律 *Zhu Xuanlü*) narrative has been reshaped in post-1980s China, which is a phenomenon picked up by many Chinese and international observers.<sup>32</sup> The definition of “mainstream” (主流 *zhu liu*) in China is flexible; however, a cultural product carrying the mainstream idea or narrative is noticed easily, as it is usually associated with either historical or military storytelling purposefully triggering nationalist sentiment. The materials analysed in this thesis overlap with what can be defined as mainstream narrative but are not restricted by it. The thesis delves into the chosen historical topic through a variety of perspectives in each chapter. However, it should be noted that certain materials only allow for the analysis of one historical figure

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<sup>30</sup> You Ziyang. *Folk Literati, Contested Tradition, and Heritage in Contemporary China: Incense Is Kept Burning* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 188. The New Story (新故事 *Xin Gushi*) Movement took place between 1962 and 1966.

<sup>31</sup> For studies on how the past has been represented in different mass media in China, see: Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 5-7; Cai Shenshen, *State Propaganda in China's Entertainment Industry* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 38-58; Yingzi Wang and Thoralf Klein, “Representing the victorious past: Chinese revolutionary TV drama between propaganda and marketisation,” *Media, Culture & Society* 44 no.1, (2021): 105–120; Wang Yi and Matthew M. Chew, “State, market, and the manufacturing of war memory: China's television dramas on the War of Resistance against Japan,” *Memory Studies* 14 no.4, (2021): 877–891.

<sup>32</sup> For example, see: Kirk Denton, “China's ‘mainstream’,” *Modern Chinese Literature And Culture Resource Centre*, 8 October 2019, <https://u.osu.edu/mclc/2019/10/08/chinas-mainstream/>, accessed on 1 May 2023; China Media Project (CMB), “Mainstream 主流,” *CMB*, 13 May 2021, [https://chinamediaproject.org/the\\_ccp\\_dictionary/mainstream/](https://chinamediaproject.org/the_ccp_dictionary/mainstream/), accessed on 1 May 2023; Xiao Yang 肖扬, “走过十年路 主旋律电影进阶为‘新主流大片’ [After Ten Years, The Main Melody Film Has Evolved Into ‘New Mainstream Blockbusters’],” *北京青年报 Beijing Youth Daily*, 20 October 2022, <https://news.cctv.com/2022/10/20/ARTIns2FL4dxFmFO27b8aDoP221020.shtml>, accessed on 1 May 2023.

Stephen Yiu-Wai Chu's 2022 volume studies the role of Hong Kong directors in the making of the Main Melody Films in the 2010s: Stephen Yiu-Wai Chu, *Main Melody Films: Hong Kong Film Directors in China* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 1-28.

and not the other, making direct comparisons between the chapters difficult to draw. Nonetheless, the following themes will be analysed across all chapters: the role of political parties, the influence of media, and the impact of commemorating historical figures or events.

This thesis explores the history of the Republican era (民国史 *Minguo Shi*) presented in mainland China, highlighting diverse and conflicting narratives from different time periods. Some myths, such as the one presenting Sun Yat-sen as the “father of the nation” (国父 *guofu*) persisted for over a century; the subtle changes in how the state commemorated such a vital figure to modern China nation-building reflect other changes of the political climate. While the details of state-organised commemoration were made known to newspaper readers and through word of mouth within communities, other mediums, such as textbooks, biographies, and memorial exhibits, further carry out the task of transforming constructed myths into what Maurice Halbwachs define as “collective memory”.<sup>33</sup> This research investigates the stories about lives of remarkable people and the pivotal moments they played a part in. Both biographical history and history as events (or as “personal life experiences”)<sup>34</sup> have been prominent in narrating the past in Chinese historiography, from the Grand Historian Sima Qian<sup>35</sup> to Qian Mu (錢穆 1895-1990).<sup>36</sup> The research concerns not only Chinese historiography but also public

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<sup>33</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On collective memory*. Edited and translated by Lewis Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> Paul Cohen’s work delves into narrating one historical event through the dual lens of experience and myth; see: Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> Sima Qian, *Records of the grand historian of China*. Translated by Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

<sup>36</sup> Qian Mu, *Traditional Government in Imperial China: A Critical Analysis*. Translated by Chün-tu Hsüeh and George O. Totten. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1982).

history in China. The former has been extensively studied, while the latter is still a developing and debated topic.

Taiwan scholar Huang Chun-Chieh argues that there are several unique elements of Chinese historical thinking: One is an analogical historical consciousness developing since the imperial era of which historians use historical cases to impose moral judgement, or “take a part for the whole (*pars pro toto*)”; the other is that “Chinese historical thinking is something like a shuttle between the past and the present for mutual enrichment,” and past experience is “alive and interactive like the library in which present-day readers may engage creative dialogues with historical figures.”<sup>37</sup> In modern China, it is no longer the case that Chinese historians would “sacrificed their lives in opposition to their rulers’ pressures on them to write otherwise than what they believed to be true.”<sup>38</sup> However, other situations discussed by Huang largely remain as they were, in which Chinese people uphold the significance of the past and use it to inform the present, and the present reshapes the historical accounts.

The traditional “take a part for the whole” approach to history further justifies this research project’s selective case studies – the process of selecting these representative case studies was intuitive and systematic. It was intuitive because the selected historical figures, from Sun Yat-sen to Wang Jingwei, were the individuals who first appeared in one’s thoughts when searching for the typical republican “heroes” and “villains”; each can act as one aspect to “comprehend all”.<sup>39</sup> It was systematic because each case study was thoroughly considered, and their life stories have been extensively depicted (or deliberately ignored, in the case of Wang Jingwei) to emphasise the diverse and changing

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<sup>37</sup> Huang Chun-Chieh, “The Defining Character of Chinese Historical Thinking,” *History and Theory* 46, no. 2 (2007): 186-188.

<sup>38</sup> Huang, “The Defining Character of Chinese Historical Thinking,” 181.

<sup>39</sup> Huang, “The Defining Character of Chinese Historical Thinking,” 187.

messages being conveyed. Although there are other cases and different perspectives from which researchers can draw the conclusion that history consists of multiple pasts and the past mediated through the lens of personal reflection, these case studies showcase complexities and differences in the most prevailing historical narratives.

Revising approaches to the past has, itself, a long history in China. In 1926, Chinese historian Gu Jiegang published his book entitled *古史辨* *Gushibian* (*Debates on Ancient History*) and started the scholarly movement of re-evaluating ancient Chinese history. Although it now becomes clear that imperial states were the leading force in the creation of national histories and traditions, Gu is one of the first modern Chinese historians who openly doubted the content of ancient historical works in China and argued that these ancient myths were created purposefully and went through revisions and forgeries over the past two to three thousand years.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the recent revival of the linear dynastic narrative and the emphasises on Confucian-centred heritage also played a role in shaping the cultural identities among Chinese people.<sup>41</sup>

In the European context, historical consciousness is firmly associated with the formation of national identity.<sup>42</sup> Since the 1990s, the tension between national and

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<sup>40</sup> Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚, *古史辨* *Gushibian* (*Debates on Ancient History*) (石家庄 Shijiazhuang: Hebei Education Press, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> The representation of the imperial past is not covered in this thesis; for a selection of relevant case studies, see Carol Ludwig, Linda Walton, and Wang Yi-Wen, *The Heritage Turn in China: The Reinvention, Dissemination and Consumption of Heritage* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020).

<sup>42</sup> Strongly argued by the leading authors of the European Science Foundation programme entitled “Representations of the Past: The Writing of National Histories in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe”. Stefan Berger, “The Power of National Pasts: Writing National History in Nineteenth- and Twentieth Century Europe.” In *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective*, edited by Stefan Berger (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 30-62. Stefan Berger and Christoph. Conrad, *The Past as History National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Modern Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). The definitions of nationalism were discussed by several leading historians in the 1980s and 1990s, including Eric Hobsbawm. Benedict Anderson contributed to the discourse with his famously discussed idea of “imagined communities.” Benedict Richard

transnational histories has become noticeable in academia.<sup>43</sup> In the public sphere, a dual identity became possible among a group of transnational elites (as Robbins observed in Britain).<sup>44</sup> However, nationalisms were not dismissed; in the case of the UK, “a semi-educated and resentful underclass... takes as its symbols the national flags abandoned by the elites.”<sup>45</sup> Throughout the imperial period in China, the debate over the formation of a Chinese (华 *hua* or 夏 *xia*) identity was present.<sup>46</sup> Nowadays, Chinese historians on the pre-Qin (先秦 *Xian Qin*) period have been looking for evidence of a unified Chinese identity from the oldest extant written narrative history in the Chinese language – 左傳 *Zuozhuan* (*Zuo Tradition*).<sup>47</sup> Many argue, based on the textual evidence of the concept

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O’Gorman Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

<sup>43</sup> For example, see: Keith Robbins, “National Identity and History: Past, Present and Future.” *History* 75, no. 245 (1990): 369–87. Recent scholarship argues that the mode of the nation-state is unsuitable for political development or analyses in Africa. John Markakis, Günther Schlee, and John Young, *The Nation State: A Wrong Model for the Horn of Africa* (Berlin: Edition Open Access, 2021).

<sup>44</sup> Robbins, “National Identity and History,” 385. For political and economic analyses, see: Ken’ichi Ōmae, *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1996); Alice Teichova and Herbert Matis eds. *Nation, State and the Economy in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>45</sup> Sir Michael Howard, “Ideology and International Relations,” *Review of International Studies*, xiii (1) (January 1989), 9, quoted in Robbins, “National Identity and History,” 385.

<sup>46</sup> Xu Shen 許慎 (c. 58 – 148), *說文解字 Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, 1368-1424, Vol. 15, microfilm, 广东省立中山图书馆 Guangdong Zhongshan Library, 第五下 5-2, 14. “夏, 中國之人也 [Xia, people of the middle kingdom].” The “华夷之辨 *Huayi zhibian* (difference between Chinese and foreigners)” has been a long debated discourse in Chinese text; in 1907, Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 discussed the issue in “中華民國解 *Zhonghua mingo jie*”: Taiyan 太炎, “中華民國解 [The Meaning of the Republic of China],” *民報 Min Bao* vol. 15 (1907): 1-17.

<sup>47</sup> The actual time that *Zuozhuan* was compiled remains a debated topic, although most historians agree that it was produced around the Warring States period (approximately 481 – 221 BC). 左傳 *Zuozhuan* had no available English translation until 2016; see: Stephen Durrant, Wai-yee Li, and David Schaberg. *Zuo Tradition Zuozhuan: Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals”* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2016). Authors of this translation project see *Zuozhuan* as a layered text of which the origin is malleable and rigid to pinpoint but acknowledge its usefulness for a historical understanding of early China (“of both the years it purports to chronicle

“大一统 *Da yitong* (The Great Unity)”, that a national identity, determined by a shared Chinese culture instead of other ethnic characteristics, was formed since pre-modern China.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, in search for a strong national spirit,<sup>49</sup> modern Chinese historians and nationalist thinkers have been on a constant mission to reimagine the nation’s past since the early twentieth century.<sup>50</sup>

The nation is a specific cultural object. It exists in and through the language we speak, the public symbols we acknowledge, the history and literature we were taught at school, the music we listen to, the currency we use, the sporting activities we enjoy, and the news bulletins on the television. These cultural artefacts enable us to recognise that our way of life has an objective external existence, and they constitute the social environment which we recognise as ours and in which we are “at home”. The national culture is subject to change, and at any given time aspects will be subject to debate and criticism. Elements which were central may become marginal, and national rituals may change their meaning. The process of transformation and contestation is the process by which the nation is produced and reproduced.<sup>51</sup>

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and the era defining its textual formation.” Durrant 2016, xxxi). On a recent reassessment of the importance of *Zuozhuan*, see: Ma Weidong 马卫东, “《左传》叙事成就与中国古典史学的诞生 [On the Narrative Achievements of *Zuo Zhuan* and the Birth of Chinese Classical Historiography],” *社会科学战线 Social Science Front* 2020(08): 91-103.

<sup>48</sup> Ma Weidong’s widely cited article (in Chinese) discusses the possibility of dating the origin of the concept “大一统 *Da yitong* (The Great Unity)” from the Western Zhou Dynasty (approximately 1050 - 771 BC); see: Ma Weidong 马卫东, “大一统源于西周封建说 [A Discussion of the Great Unity Originating from the Feudalism of the Western Zhou Dynasty],” *文史哲 Journal of Literature, History and Philosophy* 2013(04): 118-129.

Other Chinese studies on the topic include: Liu Zhengyin 刘正寅, “‘大一统’思想与中国古代疆域的形成 [The Idea of ‘Great Unity’ and the Formation of Ancient Chinese Frontiers],” *中国边疆史地研究 China’s Borderland History and Geography Studies* 20, no.2 (2010): 13-17; Cheng Nina 程妮娜, “从‘天下’到‘大一统’—边疆朝贡制度的理论依据与思想特征 [From ‘All Under Heaven’ to ‘Great Unity’ - Theoretical Basis and Ideological Characteristics of the Frontier Tribute System],” *社会科学战线 Social Science Front* 2016(01): 88-102.

<sup>49</sup> This study defines national identity or culture, sometimes being referred to as “national spirit” (民族精神 *Minzu Jingshen*) in the Chinese discourse, in a looser way as Ross Poole sketched out in his 1999 publication. Ross Poole, *Nation and Identity* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1999), 13-14.

<sup>50</sup> For a detailed discussion on the emergence of nationalist ideas among Chinese thinkers in the early 1900s, see: Julia C. Schneider, *Nation and Ethnicity: Chinese Discourses on History, Historiography, And Nationalism (1900s-1920s)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 67-269.

<sup>51</sup> Ross Poole, “The Coming of Nationalism,” in *Nation and Identity* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1999), 13-14. For the relationship between national and linear histories in



National identity, which Ross Poole defines as the fruit of a cultural object, has been discussed widely in the growing body of public history scholarship.<sup>52</sup> Despite the academic interest in world history globally and the critique of nation-centred research,<sup>53</sup> the trend of writing national public history persists and has become more visible in recent years, as shown in works concerning the national identities in United States, Ireland, Finland, New Zealand, Poland, Canada, and many more.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, since the 1950s, projects in North America, Australia, and Europe have shifted attention onto developing a more diverse and versatile public representation of the past. For example, in America,

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the Chinese context, see: Prasenjit Duara, “The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China,” *History and Theory* 37, no. 3 (1998): 287-308.

<sup>52</sup> For example, see: Lisa Maya Knauer and Daniel J. Walkowitz, “Introduction: Memory, Race, and the Nation in Public Spaces,” in *Contested Histories in Public Space: Memory, Race, and Nation*, edited by Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 1-30; Jeremy Black, *Contesting History: Narratives of Public History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 21-32, 135-166. Both works take the state or nation as the unit of analysis; while acknowledging the danger of doing so, Jeremy Black argues that the focus on the state is appropriate in terms of looking at how the public discussion of history has been shaped and drawing comparisons across nations.

<sup>53</sup> For example, see: Anna Amelina, Devrim D. Nergiz, Thomas Faist, and Nina Glick Schiller. *Beyond Methodological Nationalism Research Methodologies for Cross-border Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>54</sup> For example, see: Michael Kammen, “Public History and National Identity in the United States.” *American Studies* 44, no. 4 (1999): 459–475; Maeve Casserly and Ciaran O’Neill, “Public History, Invisibility, and Women in the Republic of Ireland,” *The Public Historian* 39 no.2 (2017): 10-30; Sirkka Ahonen, “The construction and deconstruction of national myths. A study of the transformation of Finnish history textbook narratives after World War II,” *European Politics and Society* 21, no. 3 (2020): 341-355; Liana MacDonald, Kim Bellas, Emma Gardenier, Adrienne J. Green, “Channelling a Haunting: Deconstructing Settler Memory and Forgetting about New Zealand History at National Institutions,” *Public History Review* 29 (2022): 142-155; Adrian Dominik Wójcik and Maria Lewicka, “Between discovery and exploitation of history: Lay theories of history and their connections to national identity and interest in history,” *Memory Studies* 15, no. 6 (2022): 1497–1516; Cecilia Morgan, *Commemorating Canada: History, Heritage, and Memory, 1850s-1990s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

scholars sought to look beyond the glorification of “the nation-building role of elite males.”<sup>55</sup> Studies on China are no exception to the trends above.<sup>56</sup>

Nonetheless, the research landscape in mainland China has distinctive features that need to be treated differently. Chinese world historian Zhang Xupeng, one of the earliest Chinese scholars who paid particular attention to the field of memory studies in the 2010s,<sup>57</sup> summarised the historical writing that developed in post-1978 China in his 2013 article and stressed the paradigm shift from “revolutionary history” to “global history”.<sup>58</sup> Zhang divided the post-1949 historical studies in China into three periods: from 1949 to 1966, from 1966 to 1978, and 1978 onwards, with the ten years of the Cultural Revolution separating the first and the third periods, for in that decade “[n]ot only were historical standards destroyed or otherwise laid aside, historical facts were deliberately and comprehensively twisted and altered.”<sup>59</sup> This periodisation, and the assessment of the

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<sup>55</sup> Kammen, “Public History and National Identity in the United States,” 463.

<sup>56</sup> Studies from a different perspective include the following: Robert A. Bickers and R. G. Tiedemann, *The Boxers, China, and the World* (Lanham, Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Cao Qing, *China under Western Gaze: Representing China in the British Television Documentaries, 1980-2000* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2014); Paul Gladston, Beccy Kennedy, and Turner Ming eds, *Visual Culture Wars at the Borders of Contemporary China: Art, Design, Film, New Media and the Prospects of “post-west” Contemporaneity* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

<sup>57</sup> Zhang Xupeng 张旭鹏, “史学的个体化与记忆研究的兴起 [The Individualization of History and the Rise of Memory Studies],” *史学理论研究 Historiography Bimonthly* 2012(3): 12-15. The concepts of memory studies have attracted more scholarly interest in the past few years in China; in 2022, Tu Hanzhang’s article discussed the meaning of “historical memories” and the subtle differences between the English and French terms. Tu Hanzhang 屠含章, “历史记忆、历史-记忆或历史与记忆?——记忆史研究中的概念使用问题 [‘Historical Memory’, ‘Histoire-Mémoire’, or ‘History and Memory’: The Use of Concepts in History of Memory],” *史学理论研究 Historiography Bimonthly*, 2022(01): 71-81, 159.

<sup>58</sup> Zhang Xupeng. “Historical Writing in The People’s Republic of China Since 1978,” *Revue Tiers Monde*, no. 216 (2013): 89–110.

<sup>59</sup> Zhang, “Historical Writing in The People’s Republic of China Since 1978,” 90.

Cultural Revolution period, are adopted and supported by many scholars.<sup>60</sup> However, not all historical narratives were twisted nationwide nor were all individuals' memories of the past completely disrupted during the whole period between 1966 and 1976.<sup>61</sup> It is common to periodise in this way because not only the society in China underwent major shifts after 1966 but also the Cultural Revolution has been a taboo in China for decades, an episode “languish in zombie half-life, uncommemorated in public culture despite their incalculable impact.”<sup>62</sup> This thesis does not solely focus on historical memories of a certain period, and deliberately includes various time periods when traces of public commemoration or remembering (alongside forgetting) are the most visible.

This study contends with the challenge of sourcing unconventional materials: while figures like Sun Yat-sen and events like the Xinhai Revolution receive widespread recognition, the narratives of Yuan Shikai and Wang Jingwei, often villainised in official discourse, are less accessible. Counter-narratives, by their nature, circulate more subtly and are typically not available in conventional historical sources. This thesis argues that top-down commemoration of the selected historical events, in combination with the ongoing hidden discussions and contradictory historical assessments in the public sphere,

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<sup>60</sup> Some scholars in contemporary Chinese historiography dedicated their works to the development of the “Seventeen years of historical studies (十七年史学 *Shiqi nian Shixue*), 1949 – 1966.” For example, see: Luo Zhitian 罗志田, “文革前‘十七年’中国史学的片断反思 [Fragments of Reflection on Chinese Historiography in the “Seventeen Years” before the Cultural Revolution],” *四川大学学报 (哲学社会科学版) Journal of Sichuan University (Humanities & Social Sciences)* 2009/05 (2009): 5-15.

<sup>61</sup> For example, see: Li Li, *Memory, Fluid Identity, and the Politics of Remembering: The Representations of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in English-speaking Countries* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Frank Dikötter, *The Cultural Revolution: A People's History, 1962-1976* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016). Writer and journalist Tania Branigan's newly published book explores the topic further: Tania Branigan, *Red Memory: Living, Remembering and Forgetting China's Cultural Revolution* (London: Faber & Faber, 2023).

<sup>62</sup> Margaret Hillenbrand, *Negative Exposures: Knowing What Not to Know in Contemporary China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 1.

created a historical consciousness among Chinese people that has gone largely unremarked upon in the scholarship. Such historical consciousness shares a similar function to personal memory. Individuals exposed to diverse historical perspectives might choose a particular narrative to share with others.<sup>63</sup> However, those narratives not chosen are not forgotten; instead, they continually shape our understanding of related events.

Investigating the representation and reception of modern Chinese history presents the challenge of integrating theories into empirical studies. The majority of conceptual frameworks and theories applied to historical studies have been developed in Europe and North America, often discounting or excluding Chinese historical concepts, especially those pre-dating the nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup> Narrative and representation have been central to postmodernist discourse, a field dominated by French and North American thinkers. Contributing to this theoretical development is challenging and not the aim of this thesis, as it could necessitate a dedicated thesis. This work, however, aims to deconstruct textual sources and contest interpretations of the commemorated past, thereby engaging with

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<sup>63</sup> A similar theory has been explored in the study of narrative therapy, such as: Jill Freedman and Gene Combs *Narrative Therapy: The Social Construction of Preferred Realities* (London: Norton, 1996), 42. “People are born into stories; their social and historical contexts constantly invite them to tell and remember the stories of certain events and leave other unstoried.”

<sup>64</sup> There are, however, niche but constant dialogue among theorists and philosophers who are keen to break away from the research framework emerged from the colonialist approach and searching for a way to discuss Chinese epistemology. For example, see: Jana S. Rošker, *Searching for the Way: Theory of Knowledge in Pre-Modern and Modern China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2008); Q. Edward Wang, “Is There a Chinese Mode of Historical Thinking? A Cross-Cultural Analysis,” *History and Theory* 46, no. 2 (2007): 201-209; Huang, “The Defining Character of Chinese Historical Thinking,” 180-188; Zhang Xupeng. “In And Out of The West: On the Past, Present, and Future of Chinese Historical Theory.” *History and Theory* 54, no. 4 (2015): 46–63. The Chinese academic journal *Historiography Bimonthly* (史学理论研究 *Shixue Lilun Yanjiu*) has also been contributing to the discussion since 1992.

these theoretical issues.<sup>65</sup> As in Hayden White's theory of narrative discourse,<sup>66</sup> one should look at the "figural dynamics of texts as objects of discourse"<sup>67</sup> when investigating historical narrative. This thesis applied White and Alun Munslow's theory to the study of public history. Like Munslow rightly critiqued, historians' attempt to produce interpretations and historical explanations through "a value-free inductive and/or deductive method", or "the craft of history",<sup>68</sup> is with many challenges, some embedded in the narrative form; therefore, it is valuable to explore the process of creating historical writings (or histories) without devaluing its explanatory power.<sup>69</sup> It is especially true in the discussion about history in the public domain and for the diverse and complex public audiences.

Therefore, this thesis uses a range of materials but fewer archival sources than other historical works. Hilda Kean adjusted the question concerning public historians from "What is Public History" to "Where is Public History," pointing researchers to less definitive and static responses to the question, and less conventional places to search for the traces of public history.<sup>70</sup> Kean used poem and scratched words on walls as the starting points and followed the trails from the landscape and commemorative artworks to social knowledge on the internet.<sup>71</sup> All these places witnessed the interplay between the

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<sup>65</sup> Details of the research practice are illustrated in: Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History* (Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 1997).

<sup>66</sup> Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

<sup>67</sup> Karyn Ball, Ewa Domańska, "Hayden White," In *Oxford Bibliographies in Literary and Critical Theory*, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780190221911/obo-9780190221911-0084.xml>, accessed on 13 March 2023.

<sup>68</sup> Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 35, 57-58.

<sup>69</sup> Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 67-69.

<sup>70</sup> Hilda Kean, "Where is Public History?" in *A Companion to Public History*, edited by David M. Dean (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 33-44.

<sup>71</sup> Kean, "Where is Public History?" 34-40.

institutional efforts to create national histories and the public audiences' responses and exchanges of ideas.

Using the selected historical figures as examples, this thesis draw upon materials from the pre-Republican era to the 2020s. In Chapter 1, the published personal correspondences between Song Qingling (Soong Ch'ing-ling 宋庆龄 1893-1981) and her friend Li Zhaohuan (黎照寰 1898-1969), the regional Party newspaper *Nanfang Daily* 南方日报 published in Guangzhou, the Communist leaders' speeches given in commemoration of Sun Yat-sen and the Xinhai Revolution, and the TV broadcast of the ceremony of Sun's birth anniversary in 2016. In Chapter 2, a graphic biography of Sun Yat-sen published in 1981, the Ministry of Education version of history textbooks compiled in 2016 and implemented in all junior secondary schools across mainland China afterwards, and the exhibition and architecture of the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (Guangzhou). In Chapter 3, a booklet about the history of the Xinhai Revolution published in 1923, various writings recording or recounting personal experiences of the Revolution published in Youths' or Women's magazines in the 1930s, traces of remembering Qiu Jin from the 1910s to the late-1940s. In Chapter 4, the newspapers reports of ritual ceremonies carried out in the Huanghuagang Mausoleum in Mao's era, Sun Yat-sen's preface to Zou Lu (Tsou Lu 邹鲁 1885-1954)'s account of the 72 martyrs of Huanghuagang, published in 1922 and incorporated into Chinese (语文 *yuwen*) textbooks in the 1980s, the creation of Pan Dawei's heroic myth in the 1920s and the re-interpretation of it after 2000, and the landscape and visiting experiences of the Huanghuagang Park, the latter shared on the virtual communities Douban.com (豆瓣网 *Douban wang*).

The last two case studies, equally important as the previous ones but less widely represented, are explored through sources and means such as Chinese historians' debates

over how to portray a “bad” (坏 *huai*) figure to the public, biographical and textbook narratives in mainland China, book reviews of some of the popular history books, the influence of foreign concepts and opinions, poetry, a communist workers’ journal in the 1920s, “self-criticism” (思想检讨 *sixiang jiantao*) accounts in the 1950s, the use of statues in the public sphere, internet users’ debates about and self-identification with the *hanjian* figures. The last case study on narratives about Wang Jingwei includes an analysis of the popular perceptions of history through an online question thread posted on the website Zhihu.com (知乎 *Zhihu*) that attracted answers and views from 2014 to 2023.

Together, these chapters seek to address some of the fundamental questions in public history studies: What are “the ways that history was presented to popular audiences”?<sup>72</sup> And, how did those audiences understand, make use of, or connect to the history they read?<sup>73</sup> This thesis also adapts the definition of public history provided by Hilda Kean and Paul Martin, seeing public history as “a process by which the past is constructed into history”, and “a practice which has the capacity for involving peoples as well as nations and communities in the creation of their own histories.”<sup>74</sup> In this context, public history in China will be further discussed in the rest of this introduction and throughout the thesis.

It is worth noting that different databases and sources were available while this research was conducted, resulting in different approaches to interpreting the sources. The earlier drafts of Chapters 1 and 2 were completed before September 2020, when the author was based solely in Dublin. During this period, the majority of the English sources

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<sup>72</sup> Janelle Warren-Findley, “Public History, Cultural Institutions, and National Identity: Dialogues about Difference,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Public History*, edited by James B. Gardner and Paula Hamilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 313.

<sup>73</sup> Warren-Findley, “Public History, Cultural Institutions, and National Identity,” 313.

<sup>74</sup> Kean and Martin, *The Public History Reader*, xiii.

were provided by The Library of Trinity College Dublin and its online databases, and the Chinese materials were extracted from the off-site electronic resource of the Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province, in particular, the newspapers in the Full-text Microfilm Database System (微缩文献全文数据库 *weisuo wenxian quanwen shujuku*) of the Sun Yat-sen Library and the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) online database of Chinese research articles and theses. The research for Chapter 2 predominantly relied on the digital sources from the two libraries above because of the pandemic lockdowns and the travel restrictions in 2020. Because of the ways that newspapers were presented and digitised by the Full-text Microfilm Database, there was a lack of search and find function for *Nanfang Daily*, the newspapers used for the analyses of Sun Yat-sen's commemoration in the PRC in Chapters 1 and 2. Therefore, the author adapted a different methodology due to the accessibility of sources. For sources obtained from the Full-text Microfilm Database System of the Sun Yat-sen Library, instead of using the keyword search method, the author reviewed the newspapers page by page, after selecting the significant dates of the year when news reports on Sun Yat-sen and other heroic figures were most likely to appear.

For the later chapters, the Chinese Republican Periodicals Database (1911-1949) are used more extensively to evaluate the continuity and changes in historical narratives from the Republican era to the PRC. From 2021 to 2023, the author was able to make use of several other libraries, including Shanghai Library, Guangzhou Library, Edinburgh University Library, and Cambridge University Library, as well as some of their electronic resources open to external researchers. While new research was conducted by the researcher, with the resources available after 2021, in the last stage of the doctoral study for the earlier chapters, the restrictions imposed during the planning and writing of the first two chapters leave trackable marks on the thesis. This thesis was written in various



locations, including during periods of Covid-19 lockdown in Ireland and China, and chances to spend time in the UK to access more Chinese-language publications, including the paperback biographies of Yuan Shikai and Wang Jingwei published between the 1930s and 2010s, and the digital database for the History of Contemporary Chinese Political Movements. Furthermore, although not pre-planned, each location and the resources and perceptions it made available to the author were unique. These factors inevitably shaped the thesis in its own way. However, it is difficult to make explicit the exact impact of geography, which would take a different study to reveal. Besides the impacts that geography and accessibility have on the ability to do the research for this thesis, it was perhaps the research design (including source selection) that reflects most significantly the positionality of the author.

Having grown up and received education for more than two decades in China, the thesis topic was not alien to the researcher. Moreover, cultural memories (whether collective or personal) and personal aspects of past interpretations have informed the design of this research. For example, as a child and young person, the author was exposed to the public history narratives in the PRC in various source materials selected for this thesis, including textbooks, graphic novels, and historical exhibitions. Meanwhile, the author noticed contradictions in these narratives and the unchallengeable nature of authority, which provided official interpretations of the past in China. The MPhil in Public History and Cultural Heritage brought me to approach and analyse public displays of the past in China from an academic perspective, resulting in a study merging historical representation, national identity, and public history in China, addressing relevant questions from a Chinese perspective.

In the Chinese tradition of story-telling, there has been a need to place villains and heroes side by side and provide moral lessons to the general public. In the contemporary

era, the diversity of means to represent the past made it possible to feature only the good (or the bad) historical figures in a narrative. Therefore, different sources are available for different figures analysed in this thesis, and the distinction is significant between heroes and villains. Sites of commemoration, graphic novels and some other sources used in the sections analysing heroic figures were not available for the analyses of villainous figures. Although the author selected a diverse array of sources to uncover the official myth-making process and the public responses where available, it is less likely to discover any public understanding that contrasts with official narratives of the heroic figures, which is more prominent in the case of villainous. Such a difference also illustrates how official history may penetrate into popular understanding of history more in China than in other countries because the message is drilled in at school and in other settings so much. Furthermore, to strike a balance between the sources reflecting official history and public reception and to provide samples of public opinion, there are some other noteworthy sources of history in the public sphere which were not selected for this thesis, such as the vast number of Chinese history television dramas and films produced in the past few decades. The fragmented use of sources is intentional for this thesis to uncover a broader range of audiences of narrative history instead of focusing disproportionately on television viewers and the entertainment industry.

***From History of Republican China (民国史 Min Guo Shi) and Propaganda to Public History in China***

There was a lag regarding the studies of the history of the Republic of China in the PRC. Although the idea of compiling a grand narrative was proposed as early as 1965, it was not until 1972 that fifty Chinese historians were convened as The History of

Republican China Research Group to work on relevant publications.<sup>75</sup> Shortly after its establishment, this Research Group decided to focus on the narrative history of Republican governments and their leaders. It sought to separate the History of Republican China (民国史 *Min Guo Shi*) from the already well-developed History of the Communist Party of China (党史 *Dang Shi*) and History of the Chinese Revolution (革命史 *Ge Min Shi*). In the past decades, the Research Group (renamed the Research Office in 1978) has been the leading body studying Republican history in China and has produced much scholarly literature on the subject.<sup>76</sup> Initially, this project proposed limiting the research scope to the post-Mao era, as it was only after the 1970s that mainland historians began producing works representing the official historical narrative of the Republican past in the PRC. However, the materials and analyses soon revealed that interpretations of the past in China are not directly tied to contemporary historians' works. Instead, they emerge from multiple sources and exhibit continuity with discourses predating the 1970s.

Scholars studying propaganda in socialist China have examined how Chinese people responded to the social transformations of the 1950s. Their investigations focus on positive attitudes towards the state's cultural and political propaganda, and the enduring influence of these messages.<sup>77</sup> C. P. FitzGerald's 1956 observation noted that while

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<sup>75</sup> Li Xin, "The Project on the History of the Republic of China: A Brief Introduction." *Modern China* 5, no. 4 (1979): 531-532. Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Modern History, ed, *中华民国史研究三十年 Zhong Hua Min Guo Shi Yanjiu Sanshi Nian, 1972 – 2002 [Thirty Years of Studying the History of Republican China, 1972 – 2002]*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2008), 5.

<sup>76</sup> For example: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Modern History, ed, *民国人物传 Minguo Renwu Zhuan [Biographies of Republican Figures]* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shu Ju, 1978); *中华民国史 Zhonghua Minguo Shi [History of the Republic of China]* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shu Ju, 1981); *孙中山全集 Sun Zhongshan Quan Ji [Sun, Yat-Sen]* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shu Ju, 1981).

<sup>77</sup> Recent studies including James Farley and Matthew D. Johnson, eds, *Redefining Propaganda in Modern China: The Mao Era and Its Legacies* (London: Routledge, 2021).

Western observers may have found it unreasonable, a generation of Chinese people who only had access to information provided by the authorities genuinely believed in the national propaganda, regardless of their actual living conditions.<sup>78</sup> More recently, Yan Li's 2017 book discusses how, in the 1950s, Soviet culture captivated "the hearts and minds of millions" in the PRC.<sup>79</sup> Jessica Chan explored how cinematic representation created the heroes and heroines who permeated public discourse during the Maoist era (1949-1976), a period once considered the "missing years" in anglophone scholarship on Chinese film studies.<sup>80</sup> Chan's analyses of cinematic representations reveal that the genre in Mao's era was the combination of propaganda and aesthetics and heavily engaged with international trends and debates, and the film production translated into depictions of revolutionary heroes and heroines to evoke national sentiments. Other forms of historical narratives of symbolic figures analysed in this thesis, ranging from biographies to textbooks, are largely consistent with Chen's account, but there is less evidence of an aesthetic emphasis. Moreover, this thesis further explores the multiple layers of history storytelling, which are often contradictory and do not follow a linear narrative.

The Central Propaganda Department in China did not cease operation in the post-Mao era. Anthropologist Ann S. Anagnost and political scientist Anne-Marie Brady have made notable contributions to this subject in their respective works.<sup>81</sup> Brady's work evaluates the role of the propaganda department in post-Mao China, with a particular

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<sup>78</sup> C. P. FitzGerald, "Persuasion and Propaganda in China," *The Australian Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (1956): 35.

<sup>79</sup> Yan Li, *China's Soviet Dream: Propaganda, Culture, and Popular Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2017), 2.

<sup>80</sup> Jessica Ka Yee Chan, *Chinese Revolutionary Cinema: Propaganda, Aesthetics and Internationalism 1949-1966* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2019), 9-10.

<sup>81</sup> Ann Anagnost, *National Past-Times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

focus on how the party influences internet use.<sup>82</sup> Anagnost's work engages more heavily with social theories and the constitution of power, by using a wide range of examples from the revolutionary practice of "speaking bitterness"<sup>83</sup> (that is, individuals recalling in public meetings their suffering at the hands of class enemies in pre-Communist China) to the state's population control.<sup>84</sup> Anagnost identifies what she calls the "doubleness in narrative practices of the nation" in the PRC party-state's accounts of its recent past (spanning from 1949 to around 1992). Although her chosen method of "focusing on a series of moments rather than writing a continuous narrative"<sup>85</sup> has been considered more of a weakness than strength by her fellow anthropologists in the US,<sup>86</sup> this study proposes that such an attempt is valuable. As Prasenjit Duara states:

...history has many stories to tell – stories that are related but not unified in a single story. There are old and new stories, and the relationships between them tell still other stories. Stories seep into each other across national and temporal boundaries. Some stories are complicit with dominant stories, other contest them, and there are later stories that frame complicit stories as those of contestation. Private stories become public in other stories, and there are always stories that will try to subsume other stories. There are also different ways of telling stories. New modes of historical production through movies, fiction, or museum exhibitions link historical understanding to other networks of knowledge, pushing the boundaries of the historical object still farther.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship*, 125-150.

<sup>83</sup> Anagnost, *National Past-Times*, 9-10.

<sup>84</sup> Anagnost, *National Past-Times*, 117-137.

<sup>85</sup> Anagnost, *National Past-Times*, 2.

<sup>86</sup> Liu Xin, "Review of *National Past-Times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China* by Ann Anagnost," *American Anthropologist* 101, no. 1 (1999): 200-201; William Jankowiak, "Review of *National Past-Times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China* by Ann Anagnost," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 4 (1999): 1098-1100.

<sup>87</sup> Prasenjit Duara, "Why is History Antitheoretical?" *Modern China* 24, no. 2 (1998): 111. Duara's theoretical approaches and his practice of searching for a bifurcated history to replace the traditional model of writing modern Chinese history, in which the historian studies different layers of narrative to discover stories behind the repressions and reconstructions, are more clearly defined in his following books: Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*; ---, *The Crisis of Global Modernity: Asian Traditions and a Sustainable Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 16-48.

Despite originating from different disciplines and investigating distinct subjects and materials (neither author's studies delve into the history of the Republic of China), this thesis shares some of the questions posed by Brady and Anagnost. These are particularly in terms of narrative and representation within a national framework. It is hoped that this thesis can provide additional insights into this elusive topic. Ultimately, to "tell such complex stories with simplicity and power"<sup>88</sup> is the shared goal of historians.

Rana Mitter also draws attention to the evolving attitudes in China towards the past, especially regarding the history of the Second World War. Mitter suggests that the post-1978 reform and the trauma of the 1989 Tiananmen uprising compelled the Chinese government and public to revisit the experiences of the 1930s and 1940s. This retrospection was aimed at understanding China's place in the world as it entered the twenty-first century.<sup>89</sup> Over several articles and publications, Mitter theoretically and empirically underlines the relationship between the past and the present, as well as the public consciousness of them.<sup>90</sup> As he argues, the dichotomies of good and evil exist in

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<sup>88</sup> Duara, "Why is History Antitheoretical?" 111.

<sup>89</sup> Rana Mitter, "Old Ghosts, New Memories: China's Changing War History in the Era of Post-Mao Politics," *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 1 (2003): 117-118.

<sup>90</sup> For books, see: Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth Nationalism, Resistance and Collaboration in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); ---, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) ---, *China's War with Japan, 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival* (London : Penguin Books, 2014); Sheila Miyoshi Jager and Rana Mitter, eds, *Ruptured Histories: War, Memory, and the Post-Cold War in Asia*. (London: Harvard University Press, 2007); Rana Mitter, *China's Good War: How World War II Is Shaping a New Nationalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020).

For articles, see: Rana Mitter, "Behind the Scenes at the Museum: Nationalism, History and Memory in the Beijing War of Resistance Museum, 1987-1997," *The China Quarterly* 161 (2000): 279-293; ---, "Old Ghosts, New Memories," 117-131; ---, "Modernity, Internationalization, and War in the History of Modern China," *The Historical Journal* 48, no. 2 (2005): 523-543; ---, "Writing War: Autobiography, Modernity and Wartime Narrative in Nationalist China, 1937-1946," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 18 (2008): 187-210; ---, "Research Note Changed by War: The Changing Historiography of Wartime China and New Interpretations of Modern Chinese History," *The Chinese Historical Review* 17, no. 1 (2010): 85-95; ---, "1911: The

both academic literature and popular historical myths. Nonetheless, further analyses will benefit the study regarding the connection and disconnection between academic or state-sponsored history and the public understanding of the nation's past.

In the 1990s and later, a short history book (less than 200 pages) entitled 中国近代史 *Zhongguo Jindai Shi* (*Chinese Modern History*), first printed in 1938 and authored by historian Tsiang Ting-fu, became popular and was reprinted several times in mainland China.<sup>91</sup> Tsiang continued to serve as an influential diplomat of Republican China even after the Guomindang (GMD) retreated to Taiwan. Therefore, the author's reputation was controversial in the mainland, largely due to his affiliation with the Nationalist government. The revival of Tsiang's work, despite his political controversy, was a sign that Chinese readers were dissatisfied with the previously standard narrative of Republican Chinese history based on communist interpretations. In 2008, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) published numerous reviews that evaluated past and present research on modern Chinese history and the history of Republican China, as well as reflections on the future direction of these fields.<sup>92</sup> Some of these CASS publications

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Unanchored Chinese Revolution," *The China Quarterly* 208 (2011): 1009-1020; ---, "Imperialism, Transnationalism, and the Reconstruction of Post-War China: Unrra in China, 1944-1971," *Past & Present* 218, no. suppl\_8 (2013): 51-69; ---, "presentism and China's Changing Wartime Past," *Past and Present* 234, no. 1 (2017): 263-274.

<sup>91</sup> Tsiang Ting-fu 蒋廷黻, *中国近代史 Zhongguo Jindai Shi [Chinese Modern History]* (Shanghai: 上海古籍出版社 Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2001).

<sup>92</sup> Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Modern History, ed, *中华民国史研究三十年 (1972-2002) [Thirty Years of Research on the History of the Republic of China (1972-2002)]* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academy Press 2008); Li Xin 李新, ed, *中华民国史 [History of the Republic of China]* 3 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2011); Zeng Yeying 曾业英, *古调新弹: 民国史事及其他 [Historical Events in Republican China and Beyond]* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academy Press 2010); Chen Hongmin 陈红民, "回顾与展望 中国大陆地区的民国史研究 [Review and Prospect: Studies on the History of Republican China in Mainland China]," *Anhui Shixue* 1 (2010); Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Modern History, *中国近代史研究回顾与展望 (2009-2011) [Review and Prospect of the Research on Modern Chinese History (2009 - 2011)]* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academy Press 2016).

shifted away from propaganda writing and aimed to search for the reality that was hidden in narratives of the past, which suggested a shift in academic censorship and implied a potential for researchers in mainland China to explore new themes and methods of writing modern Chinese history, with fewer restrictions. Rana Mitter's assertion that Chinese academia is where the initial sign of a changing historiography often shows, could be tested in this context. Mitter states: "Where the academics are given licence to be the first to tread softly in new fields of research, popular history aimed at a mass audience follows behind, taking the agendas of academic history and expanding on them."<sup>93</sup> This thesis concludes that although academic history takes a leading role in changing historiography, the agendas proposed by academic historians does not always translated into the public domain, especially when a historical "villain" is the centre of the narrative.

Over the past few decades, China has established numerous museums showcasing a wide range of exhibits. This expansion necessitates a more robust reflection by historians on the historical representation within these public sites. A recent generation of historians, who recognise the importance of memory studies, ideology formation, and political mobilisation, believe that popular historical representation is the source that can provide answers to their questions.<sup>94</sup> The recent publications of Kirk Denton and Denise Y. Ho demonstrate that this trend is now emerging in the field of Modern Chinese History.<sup>95</sup> Denton's examination of different kinds of museums in contemporary China

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<sup>93</sup> Mitter, "Old Ghosts, New Memories," 122.

<sup>94</sup> For recent examples of international studies on the topic, see: Arnold-de Simone, *Mediating Memory in The Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Simon Ward, *Urban Memory and Visual Culture in Berlin: Framing the Asynchronous City, 1957-2012* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016); Jennifer Wellington, *Exhibiting War: the Great War, Museums and Memory in Britain, Canada and Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>95</sup> Ho, *Curating Revolution*; Kirk A. Denton, *Exhibiting the Past: Historical Memory and the Politics of Museums in Postsocialist China* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2014). Denton and other scholars also examine the exhibitions of historical memory in Taiwan, see: Kirk A. Denton, "KMT Martial Memory: War of Resistance and Cold War



(including History, Military, Literature and Ethnographic museums) sets an example of a well-rounded demonstration and discussion of Chinese museology (which Denton argues is mainly inspired by the state's political agenda).<sup>96</sup> Martin T. Fromm's work on the compilations of the official oral history project nationwide, 文史资料 *Wenshi Ziliao* (Fromm focuses on the part concerning the northern borderland), investigates the memories being constructed through the state's actions of collecting historical sources representing the border regions and other forms of "cultural production and expression".<sup>97</sup> Li Huaiyin's book delves deeper into the production of grand historical narratives in China, both before and after the 1950s.<sup>98</sup>

These historians' attentive analyses support Vera Schwarcz's observation in 1989 in which she stressed that the official commemorations in China had suppressed personal memory and identity and that national commemorations might eventually replace personal (or intellectuals') memories.<sup>99</sup> Schwarcz's analysis of the role of intellectuals highlights the tension between the political authorities and scholars in Chinese society, both of whom shape the presentation of the past by continually using history as a tool to disseminate their ideas. Findings in this thesis suggest that in the case of Sun Yat-sen and the Xinhai Revolution, the impact of large-scale national commemoration in shaping memories is evident. However, due to the multi-layered nature which can be found even

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Memorial Sites." In *The Landscape of Historical Memory: The Politics of Museums and Memorial Culture in Post-Martial Law Taiwan*, 113–42. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2021).

<sup>96</sup> Denton, *Exhibiting the Past*, 67-74.

<sup>97</sup> Martin T. Fromm, *Borderland Memories: Searching for Historical Identity in Post-Mao China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 25-29.

<sup>98</sup> Li Huaiyin. *Reinventing Modern China: Imagination and Authenticity in Chinese Historical Writing* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012).

<sup>99</sup> Vera Schwarcz, "Memory, Commemoration, and the Plight of China's Intellectuals," *The Wilson Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1989): 126.

in the supposedly conclusive state-supported historical accounts, personal identities are not completely lost.

Arif Dirlik focuses on the narratives of modernisation and revolution in modern Chinese history, and how these have influenced intellectual work and public perceptions of China.<sup>100</sup> Dirlik quotes warnings of historical theorists such as Hayden White which call for close examinations of narrative strategies and the relationship between the historian and his or her times.<sup>101</sup> Other scholars of Chinese history are also intrigued to discover how the state uses the past to change the public consciousness. The creation, alterations, and the influence of historical memory become the key subjects of studies conducted by political scientists who are interested in China's foreign policy and how it is related to the interpretations of the past.<sup>102</sup> For instance, Zheng Wang focuses on how collective historical consciousness can affect Chinese national identity and the nation's diplomatic decisions. Wang highlights several narrative changes in modern Chinese history textbooks. He notes that, in the post-Tiananmen (1989) era, the Communist government opted to replace the old "heroic and victor narrative" with the narrative of "one hundred years of national humiliation," emphasising the party's pivotal role in the establishment of a modern or new China.<sup>103</sup> The Party's public presentations of the

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<sup>100</sup> Arif Dirlik, "Reversals, Ironies, Hegemonies: Notes on the Contemporary Historiography of Modern China," *Modern China* 22, no. 3 (1996): 243-284.

<sup>101</sup> Dirlik, "Reversals, Ironies, Hegemonies," 247.

<sup>102</sup> For example, see: William A. Callahan, "National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 29, no. 2 (2004): 199-218; He Yanan, "Remembering and Forgetting the War: Elite Mythmaking, Mass Reaction, and Sino-Japanese Relations, 1950-2006," *History and Memory* 19, no. 2 (2007): 43-74; Mitter, "Old Ghosts, New Memories," 117-131. Zheng Wang, "National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (2008): 790-793; Niv Horesh, "'One Country, Two Histories': How PRC and Western Narratives of Chinese Modernity Diverge," *Journal of Global Faultlines* 7, no. 1 (2020): 114-125.

<sup>103</sup> Wang, "National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory," 790-793. Wang's 2012 book builds on the theory he developed in the article,

selective past is indeed influential or even dominant in China, as Wang argues, and most historical topics are carefully regulated in public discourse; however, there are always different versions of the past circulated in various forms of public discussions which scholars should not overlook. Robert D. Weatherley and Zhang Qiang approach a similar topic by examining how historical memory is used to boost nationalism in China, and these authors pay more attention to some public views that dissent from the officially promoted historical narrative.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the extensive literature mentioned above, there is a relatively small number of studies that merge historical representation, national identity, and public history in China. Even fewer English-language publications seek to address these questions from a Chinese perspective.<sup>105</sup> In the *Oxford Handbook of Public History*, James B. Gardner and Paula Hamilton refer to the concept of the “Asian Century” and believe that it is necessary for the shift in geopolitical power to be reflected in international arenas of public history studies.<sup>106</sup> Chinese historian Qian Maowei argues: “The disciplinary construction of Chinese public history has its own historical resources and practice.”<sup>107</sup> Qian appeals to today’s Chinese historians to establish a public history

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see: Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

<sup>104</sup> Robert D. Weatherley and Qiang Zhang, “History and Legitimacy in Contemporary China: Towards Competing Nationalisms.” In *Religion and Nationalism in Chinese Societies*, edited by Cheng-tian Kuo, 143-178 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017).

<sup>105</sup> Li Na is one of the scholars who works on establishing public history as a sub-field of history in Chinese universities and published several articles on different aspects of doing public history in China. See: Li Na, “Public History in China: Is It Possible?” *Public History Review* 21 (2014): 20-40; ---, “Going Public, Going Global: Teaching Public History Through International Collaborations.” *Public History Review* 22 (2015): 1-7; Li Na and Martha A. Sandweiss, “Teaching Public History: A Cross-Cultural Experiment.” *The Public Historian* 38, no. 3 (2016): 78-100.

<sup>106</sup> Gardner and Hamilton, “Introduction The Past and Future of Public History,” 2-5.

<sup>107</sup> Qian Maowei 钱茂伟, “中国公众史学的本土性 *Zhongguo gongzhong shixue de bentuxing* [The Localised Identity of Chinese Public History],” *Journal of Liaoning University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 43, no. 4 (2015): 15-22.

discipline with “Chinese characteristics.”<sup>108</sup> While universities in Shanghai have begun training their students in the theories and methods of public history, the establishment of a field of Chinese public history is not yet fully realised.

Although “seeking the whole truth” has proven to be an impractical endeavour for historians, we still strive to attain this aim, at least partially. It is true that deeply engaging with the present situation or stressing the context where narratives are produced and promoted while analysing the past will inevitably cause biases; however, it also allows historians to see how different versions of histories appeared and why certain narratives overbore others and became dominant. Nevertheless, “all historical writing is conditioned crucially by the place from which it is written” and “by the place from which it is taught and practised.”<sup>109</sup> Given that histories may never achieve the level of objectivity a historian might desire, identifying the inevitable “biases” and investigating how these biases shape the construction of historical narratives and evolve over time is a worthwhile direction for our efforts. The bias is in both the state-sponsored or the alternative narratives and the historians investigating them, which has its traces in the materials and analyses in this thesis.

This thesis evaluates modern Chinese history from a public history perspective, with a focus on historical representations and public consciousness in China. It builds upon existing literature in both modern Chinese history and public history studies. The sources for this thesis encompass traditional historical data, including newspaper articles, personal letters, correspondences, and government documents and announcements. In addition, other types of sources, such as published interviews, television broadcasts and programs, and web content, including media reports and personal blogs, will also serve as

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<sup>108</sup> Qian Maowei 钱茂伟, *中国史学通论 Zhongguo Gongzhong Shixue Tonglun [the General Theory of Chinese Public History]* (Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press, 2015).

<sup>109</sup> Gardner and Hamilton, “Introduction The Past and Future of Public History,” 4.

primary sources for this project. This thesis will also take into account the physical structures of as well as textual and visual representations in history museums and memorial sites to investigate the constructed historical narratives. Finally, this thesis will employ products of popular culture, which has experienced a boom in China over the past few decades, to examine various types of popular representations of the Republican era.<sup>110</sup> In the realm of modern Chinese history, instant and close communication between Chinese and Western scholars has been limited due to differing cultural and political backgrounds, as well as distinct research methodologies. This thesis seeks to fill a gap between official historical accounts, commercialised popular culture, and public responses in contemporary China.

The analysis of this thesis requires knowledge and investigation of two different historical periods in Chinese history: the Republican era and the post-1949 period marked by the establishment of the PRC. In mainland China, the two periods are collectively called “Chinese modern and contemporary history”. However, it crosses a century during which Chinese society and the state’s structure both changed dramatically, which makes it challenging to study the whole century in a linear time model. This thesis aims to address the problem by exploring how the presentation of the past has evolved in a contemporary setting, by integrating two different dimensions. This approach can assist historians in comprehending the connections and changes across distinct historical periods. Furthermore, historical representation, state commemoration, and memory studies, three of the essential topics in the field of public history, are undergoing constant change and require the regular renewal of data and analyses. This thesis aims to contribute to this process by providing up-to-date results on Chinese historical representation and

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<sup>110</sup> As previously listed.

demonstrating a potential approach to conducting public history research for understanding China's past and present.

### *Thesis Outline*

Chapter 1 starts with the mythical stories of Sun Yat-sen. Stories of how Sun Yat-sen established the Republic of China and freed tens of millions of Chinese people from the dark and inhuman imperial rule in the late Qing dynasty have been told continuously since the Xinhai Revolution in 1911. Different forms of narrative history about Sun Yat-sen have been presented in Chinese everyday life. Based on them, people gradually formed their understanding of this figure. This chapter looks at popular narratives of Sun Yat-sen in mainland China and how these stories were spread after the end of the Cultural Revolution. This chapter aims to use sources that are accessible to most Chinese to analyse myths and popular opinions of Sun Yat-sen circulating in the PRC and to answer what are the reasons behind and methods for creating and reinforcing a national legend. The chapter analyses the state's method of creating a single-version narrative of Sun Yat-sen in events like national commemoration and, on some occasions, by using the influence of Sun's widow Song Qingling. Speeches given by CCP's leaders in celebration of the anniversaries of Sun Yat-sen's birth are highly similar, and there are some identical sentences in expressions ten years apart.

After analysing the standardised narrative of Sun Yat-sen promoted by the state, Chapter 2 looks into other versions of the stories, which are less unified and contain more details and background, including Sun's personal life and his revolutionary experience. Compared to commemoration organised by the government, these popular narratives are more familiarised by the general public - as either a part of the public education syllabus, children's leisured reading materials, or a city's well-known attraction – and, therefore,

can be more influential in changing people's memories. This chapter will use Sun Yat-sen as a case study to see how popular historical accounts of the Republic became memories and affect our historical interpretation and national identity. Three widespread means of historical representation are selected to be the subject of analysis: history textbooks, graphic biographies, and local museums. Each involves the combination of textual and visual narrative, each was either influenced or determined by the tone of the communist propaganda, and each reaches a broad audience of different age groups and educational backgrounds and is open to individual interpretations.

Building on the previous chapters on the state's commemoration of Sun Yat-sen and public responses to the stories of Sun, Chapter 3 turns its focus to the Xinhai Revolution, a series of revolutionary activities against the Qing government across the country initiated by the Wuchang Uprising in 1911, which eventually overthrew the last imperial dynasty, the Qing, and established the first Chinese republic in 1912. This chapter first examines personal memories of the Xinhai Revolution collected or published in the 1930s, including memories and interpretations of the Revolution coming from intellectuals who lived through the Revolution as children and became republican citizens, some of whom were notable writers of the New Culture Movement. The second section of this chapter looks into how Qiu Jin's story was promoted and omitted by different parties who advocated remembering her. Each representation serves a different purpose and pays attention to different parts of her life (or her death). The findings of this chapter support the main argument of the thesis by showing that the collective memory of the Republic of China is multi-versions and ever-changing. The renewal of specific memories often accompanies by selective amnesia.

Chapter 4 uses the analysis of Huanghuagang Mausoleum as a case study to show the outlook of commemorative activities carried out by the state and demonstrate how it

changed from the Republican era to the present. It first analyses the commemorative activities, the remembering and oblivion of martyrs, and the creation of non-martyr heroes surrounding the Huanghuagang Mausoleum, all of which emerged in the republican era, endured continuing attention with slight adjustments of the narratives in the PRC. Then, the author argues that the commemoration has been at the centre of the narrative to the extent that when the Xinhai martyrs were no longer meaningful symbols to the Chinese public, new heroes were created simultaneously as figures who contributed to the initial stage of the commemoration and helped set up the memorial site. The last part explores the visiting experiences of the Huanghuagang Mausoleum in recent years.

Chapter 5 concentrates on the stories of Yuan Shikai, the military commander of the late Qing dynasty who then became the president of the Republic of China and later on attempted to restore the monarchy with himself as emperor. Moreover, one of Yuan Shikai's most well-known tags was "Father of the warlords". While the Republic of China represents the awakening and modernisation of China, the Warlord Era was in a state of chaos. This chapter investigates Yuan's biographies and the public condemnation of the *Junfa*, the group of diverse military strongmen personified by Yuan, the most infamous among them. Furthermore, the contemporary representation of the warlord figures, which underwent some waves of restoring their contributions in history as strongmen in the 1980s and 1990s, will be discussed in the last section, followed by a brief analysis of the current trend of disdaining these characters while the state is tightening the space for negotiating history once again.

Chapter 6 focuses on the changing reputation of Wang Jingwei. Wang played a significant role working alongside Sun Yat-sen during Sun's lifetime. However, he later became one of the most famous *hanjian* (the traitor) in the Republican era due to the collaboration between his puppet government and the Japanese during the Second Sino-



Japanese War. This chapter starts with a brief analysis of the formation of Wang Jingwei's popular image in the Republican era, following which it is divided into two main sections; each of them integrates different types of sources produced in the PRC to analyse the continuously changing historical account of Wang Jingwei in popular discourse. In addition to examining the narratives surrounding Wang Jingwei, this chapter also explores the reception and response to these narratives, going beyond a mere examination of their presentations. In the popular sphere, narratives featuring Wang Jingwei are more complicated (although less prevailing) than those of other figures discussed in this thesis. Such a complexity provides a lens into analysing the historical figure whose posthumous reputation was thought to be definite yet is still in the process of being collectively constructed.

## Chapter 1: Contested Interpretations of a National Hero: Reimagining Sun Yat-Sen, from 1956 to the 2000s

As the starting point of investigating the process of “history-making”<sup>111</sup> in contemporary China, this thesis chose the most potent public narrative of Republican history that is available and widely spread today – the symbolic figure of Sun Yat-sen (孙中山 Sun Zhongshan). Stories of how Sun Yat-sen established the Republic of China and freed tens of millions of Chinese people from the dark and inhuman imperial rule in the late Qing dynasty have been an ongoing myth circulating among Chinese-speaking communities since the revolution of 1911. This chapter first outlines the state of the field on the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP’s) claiming and promoting of the legacy of Sun Yat-sen, then examines how his widow Song Qingling was used by the Party to promote a particular image of him, before seeking to assess popular responses to the portrayal of Sun Yat-sen in the media during the Mao period, reform era and under Xi Jinping.

Scholars have debated whether Sun Yat-sen represents the origin of the Chinese revolutions; for example, Marie-Claire Bergère argues that Sun’s popular image as “the heroic myth created by Chinese historiography [...] has not stood up to the systematic critical analysis undertaken by Western authors.”<sup>112</sup> Nonetheless, Sun’s mythical or cult image was constructed earlier than any other party leaders in modern China; some Republican accounts praised Sun extravagantly and credited him with the establishment of the Guomindang (GMD, 国民党), the Republic of China (ROC, as its first provisional

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<sup>111</sup> Anna Clark and Carla L. Peck, “Historical Consciousness: Theory and Practice,” in *Contemplating Historical Consciousness: Notes from the Field*, edited by Anna Clark and Carla L. Peck, 1-18 (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018), 2.

<sup>112</sup> Marie-Claire Bergère, *Sun Yat-Sen*. Translated by Janet Lloyd. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998): 146.

president), and the modern Chinese nation.<sup>113</sup> However, in the first few years of the ROC, although a renowned figure, Sun's reputation was not as distinguished as in the later decades. In 1912, an article published in the Shanghai-based journal *Progress* 进步, which was sponsored by the Chinese YMCA, reviewed Sun Yat-sen and Yuan Shikai (also known by the names Yuan Xiangcheng 袁项城 and Yuan Weiting 袁慰亭) side by side and used their characters to encourage Republican citizens to pursue ambitious careers for the sake of China's development (see Figure 1).<sup>114</sup> Similarly, in 1913, the political journal *Zhendān* 震旦, funded by Chinese politicians supporting constitutional democracy for the Republic, also published half-length portraits of Sun below Yuan and next to Li Yuanhong 黎元洪 (1864-1928).<sup>115</sup> His reputation was thus established even before the GMD came to power.

Sun's reputation eventually surpassed his political peers; after his death in 1925, commemorative articles by authors with different backgrounds calling Sun "the Father of the nation (國父 *Guofu*)" appeared in Republican newspapers and journals. The then Guangzhou Nationalist Government participated in the reinforcement of the mythical and heroic name of Sun, and similar activities persisted in the later years of the Republican era, mainly by the Guomindang but also by other political parties and Chinese nationalists. Through various agents, the deification and idealisation of Sun became more and more intense.

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<sup>113</sup> Du Yue, "Sun Yat-sen as Guofu: Competition over Nationalist Party Orthodoxy in the Second Sino-Japanese War," *Modern China* 45, no. 2 (2019): 203.

<sup>114</sup> Bi 甯, "时评: 雄心与成功: 孙中山先生: (照片) [Commentary: Ambition and Success: Dr. Sun Yat-sen: (photograph)]," *进步* *Progress* 3, no.1 (1912): 36-37.

<sup>115</sup> Li served as president of the Republican government after Yuan's death in 1916.



Figure 1: Mr Yuan Xiangcheng and Mr Sun Zhongshan.<sup>116</sup>

Figure 2: The Three Great Men of the Republic: Mr Yuan Weiting, Mr Sun Zhongshan, and Mr Li Songqing (Li Yuanhong).<sup>117</sup>



Figure 3: “The 12th of November is the birthday of our Founding Father, Mr Sun Yat-sen.”<sup>118</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Bi 韶, “时评 [Commentary],” 36.

<sup>117</sup> “民国三伟人合影: 孙中山先生: (照片) [The Three Great Men of the Republic: Mr Sun Yat-sen: (photograph)],” 震旦 *Zhendān* no.1 (1913): 6.

<sup>118</sup> “十一月十二日，是我們的國父孫中山先生的生日 [The 12th of November is the birthday of our Founding Father, Mr Sun Yat-sen],” 兒童畫報 *Ertong Huabao* 3 (1932): 8.



Figure 4: “The 12th of March is the anniversary of the death of our Founding Father, Mr Sun Yat-sen”<sup>119</sup>

Joseph W. Esherick’s 1976 article reviewing the 1911 Revolution challenged the orthodox historiography in the Anglophone scholarship, which had tended to consider Sun as the originator of the Chinese Revolution.<sup>120</sup> Further evidence has revealed that Sun Yat-sen’s symbolic significance to the revolutionary movement and the construction of modern China was intentionally crafted by those seeking to claim his legacy. Henrietta Harrison’s work illustrates how Sun’s followers tried to control his funeral for political propaganda to gain legitimacy over their political rivals in 1925.<sup>121</sup> “In the aftermath of his death Sun Yat-sen became a national hero. Alive he had been a controversial politician; dead he was to become the Father of the Country. Alive he was the sponsor of definite, if changeable, government policies; dead he became a symbol open to multiple

<sup>119</sup> Wu Lizhen 吳麗真, “三月十二日, 是我們的國父孫中山先生的逝世紀念日 [The 12th of March is the anniversary of the death of our Founding Father, Mr Sun Yat-sen],” *將來的中國 Jianglai de Zhongguo* 2, no.9 (1936), 10.

<sup>120</sup> Joseph W. Esherick, “1911: A Review.” *Modern China* 2, no. 2 (1976): 144.

<sup>121</sup> Henrietta Harrison, *The Making of the Republican Citizen, The Political Ceremonies and Symbols in China, 1911-1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 133-160.

interpretations.”<sup>122</sup> The changing meanings of Sun Yat-sen, in Harrison’s account, were evident in “the multiplicity and variety of memorial services held” all over the country, and how these services were broadly attended resulting in “the widespread acceptance and promotion of Sun as a national hero.”<sup>123</sup>

Furthermore, in searching for the author of *Kidnapped in London*, a booklet promoting a mythical story of Sun internationally,<sup>124</sup> J. Y. Wong quoted Harold Schiffrin for the argument that, even when alive, Sun was “capable of tailoring his stories to suit different audiences.”<sup>125</sup> While scholars doubt the extent of Sun’s success in modernising and democratising China, it is undisputed that the fame of Sun Yat-sen played a major role in the creation of a Chinese national identity. In reimagining the past of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen remains one of the first few historical figures being discussed and represented. It is rare to have a symbolic figure like Sun, who has been appropriated by multiple governments with distinct ideologies and social backgrounds to serve as the origin of a new era in their respective narratives of the past.

Therefore, the image of Sun Yat-sen has been a popular topic among researchers in mainland China and abroad. Li Gongzhong and Chen Yunqian each focuses on a different aspect when studying the creation of Sun’s posthumous image in the Republic of China: Li looks at the making of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, and Chen examines the phenomenon of worshipping Sun Yat-sen across the country (in Chen’s analysis, the biggest political agent for change in the country was the GMD);<sup>126</sup> both authors try to

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<sup>122</sup> Harrison, *Making of the Republican Citizen*, 144.

<sup>123</sup> Harrison, *Making of the Republican Citizen*, 144-149.

<sup>124</sup> Sun Yat-sen, and China Society, *Kidnapped in London*. China Society (Great Britain) Reprints, (London: China Society, 1969).

<sup>125</sup> Harold Z. Schiffrin, *Sun Yat-sen and the Origins of the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 349-350, quoted in J. Y. Wong, “Sun Yatsen: His Heroic Image A Century Afterwards,” *Journal of Asian History*. 28, no. 2 (1994): 160.

<sup>126</sup> Li Gongzhong 李恭宗, *中山陵: 一个现代政治符号的诞生 [Sun Yats-en Mausoleum: The Making of A Political Symbol in Modern China]* (Beijing: Social Sciences Literature

illustrate the complexity of the political and cultural transformations in modern China.<sup>127</sup>

Tian Hailin and his co-author Li Junling pay special attention to the National Sacrifices for Sun Yat-sen by the Nanjing National Government;<sup>128</sup> Koji Ichikawa investigates the ceremonial activities that took place in Beijing.<sup>129</sup> Su Pengpeng looks at the “Father of the Nation” image shown in stamps produced in the Republican era,<sup>130</sup> and Zhou Jingcheng, making use of the collections of souvenir badges featuring Sun Yat-sen in the National Museum of China, traces the symbol “Sun Yat-sen” from the early years of the Republic to the grand funeral ceremony (奉安大典 *Fengan Dadian*) in 1929.<sup>131</sup>

Ma Kefeng’s 2016 article studied GMD’s efforts in honouring Sun’s memory by giving him various titles including “Guofu 国父 (The Father of the Nation)” and argues that this honourable title only gained recognition within the Nationalist Party and that the origin of such a title should be considered China’s “erstwhile emperors (昔日帝王 *Xiri*

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Press, 2009); Chen Yunqian 陈蕴茜, *崇拜与记忆: 孙中山符号的建构与传播 [Worship and Memory: The Construction and Transmission of the Symbol of Sun Yat-sen]* (Nanjing: Nanjing University Publishing House, 2009).

<sup>127</sup> Li Lifeng 李里峰, “孙中山形象建构与政治文化史研究——评陈蕴茜《崇拜与记忆——孙中山符号的建构与传播》” 李恭忠《中山陵: 一个现代政治符号的诞生》 [The Construction of Sun Yat-sen’s Image and the History of Political Culture],” *Review of Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum: The Making of A Political Symbol in Modern China*, by Li Gongzhong, and *Worship and Memory: The Construction and Transmission of the Symbol of Sun Yat-sen*, by Chen Yunqian, *近代史研究 Modern Chinese History Studies* 2012/02 (2012): 137-144.

<sup>128</sup> Tian Hailin 田海林 and Li Junling 李俊领, “仪式政治: 国民党与南京国民政府对孙中山的祭祀典礼 [Ceremony Politics: the National Sacrifices for Sun Yat-sen by GMD and the Nanjing National Government],” *史学月刊 Journal of Historical Science* 2007/04 (2007): 19-38.

<sup>129</sup> Koji Ichikawa, “Study on Memorial Activities for Sun Yat-Sen in Modern Beijing,” *Journal of Architecture and Planning (Transactions of AIJ)* 83, no. 751 (2018): 1791-799.

<sup>130</sup> Su Pengpeng 苏芃芃, “从民国邮票看孙中山的‘国父’形象 [Sun Yat-sen’s ‘Father of the Nation’ Image from the Republican Stamps],” *西南科技大学学报 Journal of Southwest University of Science and Technology* 32, no.2 (2015): 42-38.

<sup>131</sup> Zhou Jingcheng 周靖程, “中国国家博物馆藏民国时期孙中山像纪念章研究 [A Study on Souvenir Badges with Sun Yat-sen’s Likeness Collected in National Museum of China],” *馆藏文化研究 Journal of National Museum of China* 167 no.6 (2016): 145-156.

*diwang*)” (similar to the imperial cult of filiality) instead of the founding father of modern nation-states.<sup>132</sup> Guo Hui interprets the constructed image of “Sun Yat-sen” during the Second Sino-Japanese War as a means to promote nationalist sentiment and mobilise the nation.<sup>133</sup> Du Yue’s 2019 article published inquiries into the same topic and argues that the timing of the formalisation of Sun’s “Guofu” title on 28 March 1940 by the GMD government in Chongqing came in the same week as Wang Jingwei was set to be inaugurated as the head of state in Nanjing: Lin Sen 林森 (1868-1943) and Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975)’s act to promote Sun Yat-sen was to counter the “shameless traitors’ who exploited Sun Yat-sen’s legacy for their collaborationist schemes.”<sup>134</sup> While this thesis does not focus on the representation of Sun Yat-sen in the Republican era, it is worth noting that for Republican leaders, the meaning of the title “Guofu” represented political legitimacy resembling the “father-son” relationship in imperial China. This father image of Sun also become popular among non-elite Chinese, in particular children and teenagers. This thesis will investigate how the multiple layers of Sun’s symbol were transmitted into the PRC’s historical narrative.

One of the reasons that studies of Sun Yat-sen’s image thrive in Chinese scholarship is closely linked to how Sun’s image has been reinforced as a national hero in the narrative of the People’s Republic of China. Such reinforcement is reflected, for

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<sup>132</sup> Ma Kefeng 马克锋, “先生、总理与国父—孙中山尊称的历史考察 [‘Sir’, ‘Premier’ and ‘Founding father’: A Historical Survey of the Honorific Titles of Sun Yat-sen],” *华南师范大学学报 (社会科学版) Journal of South China Normal University (Social Science Edition)* 2016/05 (2016): 21.

<sup>133</sup> Guo Hui 郭辉, “国家纪念日与抗战时期‘孙中山’形象的塑造 [Analysis on the National Memorial Day and the Image-shaping of Sun Yat-sen during the counter-Japanese Invaders War],” *湖北大学学报 Journal of Hubei University* 44, no.2 (2017): 72-78.

<sup>134</sup> Du, “Sun Yat-sen as Guofu,” 213-216.



example, in the Preface of the PRC Constitution, which begins by highlighting Sun's historical importance.

China is one of the countries with the longest history in the world. The various ethnic groups of China have jointly created a brilliant culture and have a glorious revolutionary tradition.

After 1840, feudal China gradually became a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country. The Chinese people have made continuous and heroic struggles for national independence, national liberation, and democratic freedom.

In the 20th century, China underwent tremendous historic changes.

In 1911, the Xinhai Revolution led by Mr Sun Yat-sen abolished the feudal monarchy and established the Republic of China. However, the historical task of the Chinese people to oppose imperialism and feudalism had yet to be completed.

In 1949, under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong, the Communist Party of China, together with the various ethnic groups of China, after long-term and arduous armed struggles and other forms of struggle, finally overthrew the rule of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism, won the great victory of the new democratic revolution, and established the People's Republic of China. Since then, the Chinese people have held the power of the state and have become the masters of the country.<sup>135</sup>

The first four paragraphs of the Constitutional Law attribute China as a nation to its history, and place Sun Yat-sen in the initial position of contributing to the "tremendous historic changes" in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The quoted Preface of the PRC Constitution is the current version of the Constitution adopted on 4 December 1982,<sup>136</sup> and the extracted part remains unchanged despite the amendments made over the decades. In earlier versions of the Constitution, the name of Sun was not included. Instead, the previous legislators focused only on highlighting the accomplishments of the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> "中华人民共和国宪法 [Constitution of People's Republic of China]." *Xinhua News Agency*. 22 March 2018 [http://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2018-03/22/content\\_5276318.htm](http://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2018-03/22/content_5276318.htm), accessed on 17 January 2020. The translation was generated by ChatGPT, provided by <https://chat.openai.com/>, on 24 April 2023 and edited by the author of this thesis.

<sup>136</sup> "中华人民共和国宪法 [Constitution of People's Republic of China]." *Xinhua News Agency*. 22 March 2018 [http://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2018-03/22/content\\_5276318.htm](http://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2018-03/22/content_5276318.htm), accessed on 17 January 2020.

<sup>137</sup> See: "中國人民政治協商會議共同綱領 [The Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference]," <https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/中國人民政>

This reflects the shift towards a greater celebration of Sun's legacy under Deng Xiaoping's leadership. Deng reinforced the Party's aim of achieving reunification with Taiwan, which was still ruled at this time by the GMD, and is still formally styled the Republic of China.

In 2001, Zhang Haipeng summarised the state-organised commemorative events of Sun Yat-sen in mainland China since the 1950s, focusing on the ceremonies attended by the PRC leadership every ten years; in the article, Zhang states: "There have been many political changes in the mainland over the past 50 years, but the commemoration of Sun Yat-sen has been consistent and unchanged."<sup>138</sup> Zhang's article was initially submitted as a paper for the symposium held by the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taiwan. Even though Zhang presented merely a brief analysis with a simplified conclusion, his work was one of the first few Chinese articles on how Sun Yat-sen was remembered in the PRC and remained the only scholarly work until 2016.

Xiong Qiuliang, a Marxist theorist and historian, provides an elaborated account of the decennial commemoration of Sun Yat-sen in the PRC from 1956 to 2006 and describes the commemorative activities as the embodiment of political ceremonies and historical memories.<sup>139</sup> Based on the quantitative analysis of news reports on the

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治協商會議共同綱領, 29 September 1949; "中華人民共和國憲法 (1954 年) [Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1954)]" [https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/中華人民共和國憲法\\_\(1954年\)](https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/中華人民共和國憲法_(1954年)), 20 September 1954; "中華人民共和國憲法 (1975 年) [Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1975)]," [https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/中華人民共和國憲法\\_\(1975年\)](https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/中華人民共和國憲法_(1975年)), 17 January 1975; "中華人民共和國憲法 (1978 年) [Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1978)]," [https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/中華人民共和國憲法\\_\(1978年\)](https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/中華人民共和國憲法_(1978年)), 3 May 1978, accessed on 27 April 2023.

<sup>138</sup> Zhang Haipeng 张海鹏, "五十年来中国大陆对孙中山的纪念与评价 [Commemoration and Evaluation of Sun Yat-sen in Mainland China for Fifty Years]," *党的文献 Literature of Chinese Communist Party* 2001/5 (2001): 58-62.

<sup>139</sup> Xiong Qiuliang 熊秋良, "论大众传媒对历史记忆的表达——以建国后孙中山“逢十”诞辰纪念活动为考察对象 [On the Expression of Historical Memory by Mass Media - An Investigation on the Commemoration Activities of Sun Yat-sen's 'Multiple of Ten' Birth Anniversaries after the Founding of the People's Republic of China]," *江苏社*

celebrations of Sun's birth, Xiong concludes that the mass media's reports on commemoration were "to form a new public memory and to reinforce the public's approval of the status quo."<sup>140</sup> Xiong also analyses the so-called "Sun Yat-sen Culture," and predicts that the "revolutionary spirit and patriotism" carried in this Culture will eventually become a part of the Chinese cultural identity.<sup>141</sup> The idea of promoting "Sun Yat-sen culture" was believed to be initiated by the officials in Guangdong province.<sup>142</sup>

In 2010, Chinese officials and experts who participated in the preparation of the centenary of the 1911 Revolution gathered to discuss the topic. One of the leading experts in the meeting, Zhang Lei, voiced the concern that Sun Yat-sen has become a less popular topic among Chinese scholars; Zhang and others' proposal for creating a Sun Yat-sen culture representing Guangdong, all of China, and even the world was summed up in a journalist report after the meeting.<sup>143</sup> This extravagant vision is nonetheless just a top-down approach that has struggled to make an impact either nationwide or internationally.<sup>144</sup>

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会科学 *Jiangsu Social Sciences* 2016/5-6 (2016): 215-220; ---, "新中国成立以来孙中山诞辰“逢十”纪念活动研究 [Research on Sun Yat-sen's 'Multiple of Ten' Birth Anniversaries Celebrations Since the Founding of New China]," *马克思主义研究 Studies on Marxism* 5 (2016): 131-138.

<sup>140</sup> Xiong 熊, "论大众传媒对历史记忆的表达 [On Mass Media's Expression of Historical Memory]," 217.

<sup>141</sup> Xiong 熊, "论大众传媒对历史记忆的表达 [On Mass Media's Expression of Historical Memory]," 220.

<sup>142</sup> Huang Lianjie 黄廉捷, "'国家命题'是怎样炼成的——中山市'孙中山文化'十年探索实践侧记 [How did the 'National Proposition' Come To Be - A Ten-Year Exploration and Practice of 'Sun Yat-Sen Culture' in Zhongshan City]," *同舟共进 Tongzhou Gongjin* 372 no.6 (2019): 89.

<sup>143</sup> Li Huayan 李华炎 and Xie Lisheng 谢力生, "孙中山文化应成为国家命题 [Sun Yat-sen culture should become a national proposition]," *Nanfang Daily 南方日报*, 13 July 2010, A18.

<sup>144</sup> The Sun Yat Sen Memorial Week was first held in Zhongshan City back in 2007; in 2020, the authorities were discussing strategies to promote the "Sun Yat Sen Culture Festival (孙中山文化节)" and hoping to attract tourists like Qufu International Confucius Culture Festival (曲阜国际孔子文化节). Zheng Jinde 郑金德, Wu Xuefen 吴雪芬 and

Guo Hui provides a more detailed analysis of the Communist State's narration of Sun Yat-sen and argues that Sun Yat-sen has been used as a "narrative repository" since 1949.<sup>145</sup> Guo's study identifies that the changing and selective focuses on commemorating Sun Yat-sen and promoting Sun's ideas can indicate the change of political environment in China.<sup>146</sup> Guo's studies identify the following sets of Sun Yat-sen's thoughts which the State had emphasised and promoted since 1956: "Learning from the Soviet Union (以俄为师 *Yi E Wei Shi*)", "National prosperity (国家富强 *Guojia fuqiang*)" and "People's Happiness (人民幸福 *Renmin Xinfu*)", "Rejuvenate China (振兴中华 *Zhenxing Zhonghua*)" and "Peaceful development (和平发展 *Hepin fazhan*)."<sup>147</sup> Guo points out that the image of Sun Yat-sen had been politicised and weaponised in the early years of the PRC. In 1956, the commemoration of Sun's birth anniversary was used by the authorities to establish Sun's personal and political connection with the Communist Party and the Soviet Union and to stress how this relationship saved the Chinese nation.<sup>148</sup> Sun Yat-sen's anti-imperialism was also heavily represented during this period. During the dramatic stand-off between the CCP and GMD in the 1950s, Sun's principles of anti-

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Min Xiangxiao 闵祥晓, "粤港澳大湾区背景下孙中山文化节发展策略研究 [A Study on the Development Strategy of Sun Yat Sen Culture Festival in the Context of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area]," *现代商贸工业 Modern Business Trade Industry* 41, no.31(2020): 19-22.

<sup>145</sup> Guo Hui 郭辉, "新中国成立以来纪念活动中的 '孙中山' 叙述 [On the narrative of 'Sun Yat-sen' in Commemoration since the Founding of New China]," *南京社会科学 Nanjing Journal of Social Sciences* 2016/7 (2016): 140-147; ---, "新中国成立以来孙中山纪念话语的时代演变 [The Change of Sun Yat-sen's Commemorative Discourse since the Founding of New China]," *党史研究与教学 Party History Research & Teaching* 255 (2017): 11-18.

<sup>146</sup> Guo 郭, "新中国成立以来纪念活动中的 '孙中山' 叙述 [On the narrative of 'Sun Yat-sen' in Commemoration since the Founding of New China]," 140.

<sup>147</sup> Guo 郭, "新中国成立以来纪念活动中的 '孙中山' 叙述 [On the narrative of 'Sun Yat-sen' in Commemoration since the Founding of New China]," 140-147.

<sup>148</sup> Guo 郭, "新中国成立以来纪念活动中的 '孙中山' 叙述 [On the narrative of 'Sun Yat-sen' in Commemoration since the Founding of New China]," 140.

imperialism were underlined in contrast to GMD's "wrongful" cooperation with the US government. The discussion about "learning from the Soviet Union" disappeared after the Sino-Soviet split (1956–1966). Both the Soviet Union and the US were described as China's enemies during the 100th anniversary of Sun Yat-sen's birth in 1966.<sup>149</sup>

In the post-reform era, the narrative line about Sun shifts its focus to advancing the development of the country. In 1980, Sun Yat-sen's idea of "Catching Up (赶超 *Gan Chao*)" was re-discovered and was believed to be the principle that suited the nation's situation the most.<sup>150</sup> Communist leaders in this period called for the development of national identity, national pride, and national confidence under the name of Sun Yat-sen. Sun's desire for the unity of China was also borrowed by the Communist leadership to support its demand for uniting the Chinese mainland and Taiwan. In 1986, a *People's Daily* article in commemoration of the 120th anniversary of Sun's birth called for the government in Taiwan to put an end to the separation and argued that the situation was not only opposed to Sun's final wish but also against all Chinese people's best interests, including the Taiwanese.<sup>151</sup> Guo's research finds that the name "Sun Yat-sen" has become a divergent and changeable political symbol when used by different parties or in different periods. Zhang Haipeng and others note that for the fifty-two years between 1949 and 2001, the commemoration of Sun Yat-sen has been performed at the highest standard in mainland China, and Zhang draws similar conclusions as Guo Hui after examining the

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<sup>149</sup> Guo 郭, "新中国成立以来纪念活动中的 '孙中山' 叙述 [On the narrative of 'Sun Yat-sen' in Commemoration since the Founding of New China]," 142; 周恩来 Zhou Enlai, "在孙中山先生诞生一百周年纪念大会上周恩来总理的讲话 [Speech by Premier Zhou Enlai at the Centennial Anniversary of the Birth of Mr. Sun Yat-sen]," *解放日报 Jiefang Daily* 13 November 1966, 1.

<sup>150</sup> Guo 郭, "新中国成立以来孙中山纪念话语的时代演变 [The Change of Sun Yat-sen's Commemorative Discourse since the Founding of New China]," 143

<sup>151</sup> *人民日报 People's Daily* 1986-11-12.

messages delivered during the commemoration.<sup>152</sup> Zhang's work skips the commemoration in 1976 by saying that "it is not characteristic and thus it is not worth discussing" and provides no further explanation.<sup>153</sup> Nonetheless, the later discussion in this chapter discloses that mass commemorative events were being held in the 1970s. The messages contained in these events also characterised the social transformation in the final year of Mao's life.

Since 1986, the CCP has shifted the focus of its work to achieving "socialist modernity (社会主义现代化 *shehui zhuyi xiandai hua*)" which emphasises economic development. During this period, the unity of Chinese territory became a core concern once again.<sup>154</sup> In the ceremony of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sun's birth on 11 November 2016, President Xi Jinping emphasised the CCP's commitment to Sun's revolutionary career, stating that "Chinese Communists will always be the most reliable and most faithful supporter, collaborator, inheritor of Sun's revolutionary career."<sup>155</sup> Other leaders and historians of the PRC have also used the same terms or similar versions of this narrative to define the role of Sun Yat-sen in the history of China, which has been the trend of representing Sun in both the public and academic domains.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> 张 Zhang, "五十年来中国大陆对孙中山的纪念与评价 [Commemoration and Evaluation of Sun Yat-sen in Mainland China for Fifty Years]," 58-62.

<sup>153</sup> 张 Zhang, "五十年来中国大陆对孙中山的纪念与评价 [Commemoration and Evaluation of Sun Yat-sen in Mainland China for Fifty Years]," 60.

<sup>154</sup> 张 Zhang, "五十年来中国大陆对孙中山的纪念与评价 [Commemoration and Evaluation of Sun Yat-sen in Mainland China for Fifty Years]," 62.

<sup>155</sup> 习近平 Xi Jinping, "在纪念孙中山先生诞辰 150 周年大会上的讲话 [Speech at the 150th Anniversary of Dr Sun Yat-sen's Birthday]," *人民日报 People's Daily* 2016-11-12 Page 002 (Beijing), 2016.

<sup>156</sup> Other Chinese articles exploring the topic include: Yang Ningcong 杨柠聪, "党和国家领导人纪念孙中山诞辰讲话的三个特点 [Three Features of Party and State Leaders' Speeches to Commemorate Sun Yat-sen's Birthday]," *南方论刊 The Southern Journal* 11 (2017): 21-52; Zhang Wei-ming 张卫明, "言中山而伸政见: 近百年中国共产党纪念孙中山的政治意蕴演变 [Pushing Political Agenda in Name of Sun Yat-sen: Changes in the Political Implications of the CCP's Commemoration of SUN Yat-sen in the Past 100

In the contemporary era, Sun Yat-sen's name has been held as a flag and, as a shared collective memory, it has been entrusted with the potential power to bring together Chinese people across borders.<sup>157</sup> Sun's international background and nationalist callings have become an advantage for multiple interpretations, and to attract different audiences.<sup>158</sup> The cult image of Sun Yat-sen was undoubtedly a successful product and has been constantly re-imaged in the contemporary era. On the one hand, he is perhaps one of the few non-Marxist figures being treated this way in the PRC. On the other hand, the attempt to produce a "Sun Yat-sen Culture" in recent decades demonstrates the difficulty in promoting a top-down narrative in post-Mao China. The existing Chinese

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Years],” *深圳大学学报: 人文社会科学版 Journal of Shenzhen University (Humanities & Social Sciences)* 36, no. 2 (2019): 146-160.

<sup>157</sup> The constructed image of Sun in Taiwan experienced a different shift from that in the mainland; for relevant studies, see: Gao Hua 高华, “孙中山在两岸的‘境遇’ [Sun Yat-sen's 'Situation' on Both Sides of the Taiwan Strait],” *同舟共进 Tongzhou Gongjin* 2009/04 (2009): 28-30; Chen Yunqian 陈蕴茜, “光复初期台湾的孙中山崇拜 [The Cult of Sun Yat-sen in Taiwan in the early days of the Restoration],” *江苏社会科学 Jiangsu Social Sciences* 2010/05 (2010): 198-207; Wei Wenxiang 魏文享, “孙中山‘国父’形象在台湾的历史形塑与记忆解构 [How Was the History Figure of Sun Zhongshan as the Father of the Republic of China Constructed and Deconstructed in Taiwan],” *学术月刊 Academic Monthly* 43 no.6 (2011): 148-154; Zhou Xingliang 周兴樑, “台湾地区孙中山研究述评 [A Review of Sun Yat-sen Studies in Taiwan] (1950-2012),” in *孙中山宋庆龄文献与研究 (第四辑) Sun Yat-sen & Soong Ching Ling: Archives & Research (Volume 4)* Edited by 上海市孙中山宋庆龄文物管理委员会 [Shanghai Sun Yat-sen Soong Ching-ling Cultural Relics Management Committee], (Shanghai: 上海书店出版社, 2013), 113-136; Zhao Libin 赵立彬, “台湾光复初期孙中山形象的民间塑造 [The Public Portrayal of Sun Yat-sen's Image in the Early Period of Taiwan's Restoration],” *广东社会科学 Guangdong Social Sciences* 2018/02 (2018): 99-109.

<sup>158</sup> For studies focusing on the depiction of Sun Yat-sen among overseas Chinese, see: Huang Jianli and Hong Lysa. “History and the Imaginaries of ‘Big Singapore’: Positioning the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies (Singapore)* 35, no. 1 (2004): 65-89; Chinese Heritage Centre, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Lai To Lee, and Hock Guan Lee. *Sun Yat-Sen, Nanyang and the 1911 Revolution* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011); Patrick Anderson, “A Re-Investigation of the Mystery of Sun Yatsen's Hawaiian Birth Certificate,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 52, no. 1 (2018): 57-87; Xu Xueqing and Hua Laura Wu, “Portraying Sun Yat-Sen in The Vancouver-Based Chinese Times: A Trans-Local Perspective,” *BC Studies*, no. 216 (2023): 99-170.

literature provides a strong foundation for analysing the tactics employed by the state and the messages conveyed in them; however, the role of political parties is the sole focus in most studies, and the gap between personal interpretations of the historical figure and the myth-history is yet to be fully addressed.

- *Song Qingling's Role in Making the Public Memories of Sun Yat-Sen*

Perfecting the image of Sun Yat-sen has long been a crucial part of PRC propaganda, especially in the early years of the nation's establishment. Song Qingling (宋庆龄, Soong Ching-ling) was a symbolic contributor to the early stages of the myths surrounding Sun Yat-sen in the PRC. As the widow of Sun Yat-sen and the vice-chairperson of the newly established PRC, Song Qingling was the person closest to the late founding father of the ROC among the key political figures of the new China. While studies of Song Qingling have primarily focused on her relationships with Sun Yat-sen, other political leaders in the ROC, and the Communist leaders who founded the PRC,<sup>159</sup> it is important to acknowledge that some of Song's contributions to various sections of Chinese society should be considered her achievements in their own right. However, this thesis will not focus on the life nor historical portrayal of Song Qingling.<sup>160</sup> Instead, the

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<sup>159</sup> For example, see: Meng Hong 孟红, “宋庆龄与中国共产党要人的情谊 [Song Qingling's friendship with Chinese Communist Party dignitaries],” *党史文苑 Party History Literature* 2023/02 (2023):28-36..

<sup>160</sup> For example, see: Shang Baoxuan 尚明轩 and Tang Baolin 唐宝林, “宋庆龄述论 [On Song Qingling],” *近代史研究 Modern Chinese History Studies* 1989/06 (1989):144-164; Liu Junfeng 刘俊凤, “宋庆龄女性角色的生活史解读—基于宋庆龄‘私人书信’的审视 [An Interpretation of Song Qingling's Life History as a Female—An Investigation Based on her 'Private Letters'],” *陕西师范大学学报 Journal of Shaanxi Normal University* 41 no.2 (2012):129-136..



chapter first briefly looks at Song's efforts and impacts on portraying her late husband after 1949.

Song Qingling's role in presenting the image of Sun Yat-sen was unique and not to be overlooked; Song's role in the Communist regime after 1949 made her private memory of her late husband a legitimate source for the making of the public memories. Moreover, the perspectives Song inserted into the remembering of Sun presumably would have a long-lasting influence in Chinese society. However, by analysing the personal correspondence between Song and her friends, this section shows that Song's narrative about Sun Yat-sen was sometimes contested by the rest of the PRC leadership and, therefore, provided an ambiguous root for the commemoration of Sun in the contemporary era.

As Sun Yat-sen's second wife, Song Qingling continued to exert influence on Chinese politics after his death in 1925. In the aftermath of the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949), Song sympathised with the Communist Party rather than the GMD,<sup>161</sup> which Sun Yat-sen had helped found, and became a key political figure after 1949. It is widely acknowledged that the CCP elevated Song's position in the newly formed national government, largely due to her connection to her deceased husband. Therefore, in the PRC, Song's remembering of Sun was the most "authentic" memory of the national hero. Chu Xiuhong (a researcher at The Museum of Dr Sun Yat-sen - 孙中山故居纪念馆 *Sun Zhongshan Guju Jinianguan* - in Sun's hometown Cuiheng Village)'s article on the image

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<sup>161</sup> He Yuan's recent article illustrates the conflicts between Song Qingling and Chiang Kai-shek after 1927; see: He Yuan 贺渊, "从'孙夫人'到'孙宋庆龄'—以武汉国民政府时期宋庆龄人际关系的角度 [From 'Madame Sun Yat-sen' to 'Sun Song Qingling': From the Perspective of Song Qingling's Interpersonal Relationship in the Period of Wuhan National Government]," *广东社会科学 Guangdong Social Sciences* 2020/01 (2020):90-101.

of Sun Yat-sen in the PRC from 1949 to 1966 argues that Song Qingling “developed a framework for the construction of... the memory of Sun Yat-sen.”<sup>162</sup>

The relationship between Sun and Song has been a well-developed area of study in Chinese academia. The Shanghai Sun Yat-sen Soong Ching-ling Cultural Relics Management Committee, which oversees the management of Sun Yat-sen and Song Qingling’s residences and graves, was formally established in 1997 after operating as separate branches since October 1981.<sup>163</sup> In 2010, the Committee arranged the publication of the *Shanghai Sun Yat-sen Soong Ching-ling Cultural Relics Management Committee memorabilia (1981-2010) (Chinese Edition)* and the yearly academic journal titled *Sun Yat-sen Soong Ching-ling Literature and Research*. In the 1990s, Chinese scholars such as Song Ge argued that most of Sun Yat-sen’s thoughts were the result of his constant communications with Song, and she continued to fight for Sun’s political goals after his death.<sup>164</sup> Song Ge extolled Song Qingling for her decision to ally with the CCP and “fight bravely against reactionaries like Jiang (Chiang Kai-shek) [her brother-in-law] and Wang (Wang Jingwei) who had betrayed Sun Yat-sen’s revolutionary calling and last will.”<sup>165</sup> This position of Song Qingling was re-enforced in writing by Xi Jinping in 2022 in

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<sup>162</sup> Chu Xiuhong 楚秀红, “中华人民共和国成立后 ‘十七年’ 孙中山政治文化形象的演变 [The Evolution of the Political and Cultural Image of Sun Yat-sen in ‘Seventeen Years’ in New China —From the Perspective of Mainland Chinese Authorities],” *学术研究 Academic Research* 2018/8 (2018): 142.

<sup>163</sup> 上海市孙中山宋庆龄文物管理委员会 Shanghai Sun Yat-sen Soong Ching-ling Cultural Relics Management Committee, ed, *上海市孙中山宋庆龄文物管理委员会大事记 Shanghai Sun Yat-Sen Soong Ching-Ling Cultural Relics Management Committee Memorabilia (1981-2010)*. (Beijing: Beijing Book Co. 2016).

<sup>164</sup> Song Ge 宋戈, “试论孙中山与宋庆龄研究 [Research on Sun Yat-sen and Song Qingling],” *社会科学研究 Social Science Research* 1994/3 (1994): 63-67.

<sup>165</sup> Song 宋, “试论孙中山与宋庆龄研究 [Research on Sun Yat-sen and Song Qingling],” 65.

commemoration of the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Song's birth, in which Xi describes Song as "Forever with the Party (永远和党在一起 *Yongyuan he dang zai yiqi*)."<sup>166</sup>

Although Chinese-language studies of Song Qingling's relationship with Sun Yat-sen have served a political purpose, the publication of archives and literature about Song has supported further research on the couple's relationship.<sup>167</sup> These publications provide a better opportunity to closely examine the ways in which Song Qingling influenced the ongoing commemorations of Sun Yat-sen.

The first issue of *Sun Yat-sen Soong Ching-ling Literature and Research* published seventy-five letters Song wrote to her friend "Dr. Ly" (黎照寰 Li Zhaohuan), former president of Shanghai Jiaotong University, and his wife, Dorothy, ranging from 1952 to 1974.<sup>168</sup> These materials were analysed by Zhang Jieming in an article presented in the conference on "Soong Ching Ling and Her Times" in 2011; Zhang's analysis focused on the connection between the couples and how the letters reveal Song Qingling's "Love and admiration" to Sun and how "her commemoration of Sun Zhongshang disclosed her wish for the nation to be prosperous and the people to be happy (祖国强盛和人民幸福 *Zuguo qiangsheng he renmin xingfu*)."<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Central Institute of Party History and Literature 中共中央党史和文献研究所, "永远和党在一起—纪念宋庆龄同志诞辰 130 周年 [Forever with the Party - Commemorating the 130th Anniversary of the Birth of Comrade Song Qingling]," *党史文汇 Party History* 2023/02 (2023):12-16.

<sup>167</sup> Zhao Libin 趙立彬: "進展與局限:2000 年以來中國大陸的孫中山研究—以幾部標誌性作品為例 [Progress and Limits: Sun Yat-sen Studies in Mainland China since 2000-Examples from Several Iconic Works]," *孫學研究 Sun Studies* no.20 (2016): 59.

<sup>168</sup> Song Qingling 宋庆龄, "上海交通大学档案馆藏宋庆龄致黎照寰夫妇函 [Letter from Song Qingling to Li Zhaohuan and His Wife in Shanghai Jiao Tong University Archive]," Selected Archival Materials, *孙中山宋庆龄文献与研究 (第一辑) Sun Yat-sen Soong Ching-ling Literature and Research Volume 1* (2009): 200-283.

<sup>169</sup> Zhang Jieming 张洁明, "从宋庆龄致黎照寰函看宋庆龄对孙中山的纪念 [Song Qingling's Remembrance of Sun Yat-sen from her Letter to Li Zhaohuan]," in *宋庆龄及其时代学术研讨会论文集 [Proceedings of International Conference on 'Soong Ching Ling and Her Times']* (上海: 上海宋庆龄研究会, 2011), 545-558.

The letters were translated into Chinese by the journal editors; however, this chapter uses the original English version for the analysis. These letters reveal Song's deep concern for maintaining Sun's reputation in the newly developed PRC. On 31 October 1956, she wrote to Li to correct his report to a newspaper stating that Sun used to work eight hours a day. She wrote: "That was perhaps so when he was sick but he always worked from 8 AM TO 11 PM, and he never had time for an afternoon nap either."<sup>170</sup> Song's attention to such details here is not an isolated case; for example, she also consulted on a desirable translation for the two phrases once used by Sun, "No reverence for the throne" and "the solid truth to vain glory", both of which she planned to include in the commemorative article for the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sun Yat-sen's birth in 1956;<sup>171</sup> on a different occasion, Song expressed concern about whether the correct residences were recorded as places Sun had lived.<sup>172</sup>

On 23 November 1956, Song wrote to Li about a potential Revolutionary Research Institute conducting studies on Sun Yat-sen's past work and activities, and the possibility of finding someone to write a film showcasing Sun Yat-sen's life and career as well as his "selfless and resolute personality", both of which Song had proposed to Zhou Enlai in a writing note. In the correspondence to Li, Song requested her recipient to keep the information confidential. "Before this has received Peking's approval, please do not mention this to people." In 1986, three decades after the film proposal and five years after Song's death, the biographic film "Sun Yat-sen," directed by Ding Yinnan, was screened

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<sup>170</sup> Song 宋, "上海交通大学档案馆藏宋庆龄致黎照寰夫妇函 [Letter from Song Qingling to Li Zhaohuan and His Wife in Shanghai Jiao Tong University Archive]," 242.

<sup>171</sup> Song 宋, "上海交通大学档案馆藏宋庆龄致黎照寰夫妇函 [Letter from Song Qingling to Li Zhaohuan and His Wife in Shanghai Jiao Tong University Archive]," 196, 242.

<sup>172</sup> Song 宋, "上海交通大学档案馆藏宋庆龄致黎照寰夫妇函 [Letter from Song Qingling to Li Zhaohuan and His Wife in Shanghai Jiao Tong University Archive]," 243.

and received multiple Chinese film awards.<sup>173</sup> Similarly, many of the cultural projects about Sun's legacies which Song Qingling initiated were not carried out under her supervisions. Song's private account of her late husband only influenced the narrative of Sun Yat-sen within the limit of her political power, which was further disrupted during the Cultural Revolution.

The letters also reveal Song's role, or lack thereof, in commemorations of Sun Yat-sen's 90<sup>th</sup> and 100<sup>th</sup> birth anniversaries. She wrote to Li on 20 November 1956: "I was never consulted on anything & in fact when I left Peking, I had no idea they've decided to commemorate Dr. Sun's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary." She also talked about her sickness and tiredness to her old friend in many of the correspondence, one of which says:

I beg you to tell those people who ask for my life with Dr. Sun, that I cannot accede, for whenever I try to recall my life with him, it opens fresh wounds. I am not going to attend any of the memorial meetings for this reason. While others celebrate the occasion, I suffer instead.<sup>174</sup>

Although these letters were published selectively, they suggest that Song was well aware of the fact that any accounts she or her friends gave of Sun's life would be of historical and political importance and thus should be carefully considered and reviewed; mistakes and discrepancies should be corrected without delay, whenever there were any.

Based on the correspondence, it is evident that the shift in the political atmosphere during the 1960s also impacted Song. She became anxious upon hearing rumours of her promotion (she was already the first vice-chairperson of the PRC at the time) and expressed a desire to retire.<sup>175</sup> During this period, she cared more about the confidentiality of what she wrote and only asked the trusted person to return her letters to Li; sometimes

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<sup>173</sup> Ding Yinnan 丁荫楠, "《孙中山》影片制作构想的美学原则," *当代电影 Contemporary Cinema* 1986/5 (1986): 57-64.

<sup>174</sup> Song 宋, "上海交通大学档案馆藏宋庆龄致黎照寰夫妇函 [Letter from Song Qingling to Li Zhaohuan and His Wife in Shanghai Jiao Tong University Archive]," 244.

<sup>175</sup> Song 宋, "上海交通大学档案馆藏宋庆龄致黎照寰夫妇函 [Letter from Song Qingling to Li Zhaohuan and His Wife in Shanghai Jiao Tong University Archive]," 255.

Song asked Li to destroy messages she sent, although he kept some of them after all. Moreover, she mentioned a few times that there were friends who wanted her to help them go to Hong Kong in the 1960s, but she had no power nor motivation to do so.<sup>176</sup> Despite Song's intention to distance herself from the political changes in the 1960s, she actively participated in the preparation of Sun Yat-sen's 100<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, during which she helped organise the Committee and collect historical accounts of Sun's activities.<sup>177</sup> In 1965, before the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, some people started to question the legitimacy of Sun and Song's marriage, the integrity of Sun, and the couple's religious beliefs, which Song was angry about and defended her and her husband against such accusations and criticisms with detailed stories from traceable records and her memories.<sup>178</sup>

On the one hand, Song's efforts to commemorate her late husband through creating popular visual and literal representations in the 1950s and 1960s were not as effective as she would have hoped, largely due to the unstable political environment domestically and internationally;<sup>179</sup> after all, "eating comes first" when the famine struck China in 1959 and even before that.<sup>180</sup> On the other hand, the national hero persona of

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<sup>176</sup> Song 宋, "上海交通大学档案馆藏宋庆龄致黎照寰夫妇函 [Letter from Song Qingling to Li Zhaohuan and His Wife in Shanghai Jiao Tong University Archive]," 246, 256-259.

<sup>177</sup> Song 宋, "上海交通大学档案馆藏宋庆龄致黎照寰夫妇函 [Letter from Song Qingling to Li Zhaohuan and His Wife in Shanghai Jiao Tong University Archive]," 257, 260.

<sup>178</sup> Song 宋, "上海交通大学档案馆藏宋庆龄致黎照寰夫妇函 [Letter from Song Qingling to Li Zhaohuan and His Wife in Shanghai Jiao Tong University Archive]," 262-266. Song's anger can also be noted in a letter she wrote on 10 April 1966: "I know certain persons are always spreading slanders against me, even before your presence. You should slap their faces if they do so again!" (266)

<sup>179</sup> It was also the time that Mao Zedong's cult was redefined and promoted; for more analyses on Mao's cult, see: Daniel Leese, *Mao Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual in China's Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>180</sup> For a recent study on the social history during Maoist China, see: Felix Wemheuer, *A Social History of Maoist China: Conflict and Change, 1949-1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 120, 142-147.

Sun Yat-sen persists in mainland China and, in the post-Mao era, transmits to a broader population through the education system and various mass media in ways similar to what Song Qingling had proposed. However, although many Communist historians described Song as the person who “truly inherited Sun Yat-sen’s revolutionary goal” and therefore had the right to commemorate Sun as his rightful successor,<sup>181</sup> she hardly ever had the power to control the narrative of Sun, neither the ones presented by the state nor the folktales circulating in society. Moreover, Song privately expressed her unwillingness and incapability of recounting her memory of Sun. According to herself, it is not only because it would bring her emotional suffering but also because she had lost a box of materials about her husband’s activities, which she had collected since 1931.<sup>182</sup> It is thus hard to assess that how much of the collective remembrance of Sun has actually been Song’s account, while the government uses the words of Song Qinglong to promote the communist image of Sun Yat-sen all the more after she passed away. For example, Song refused to associate the origin of Sun’s anti-imperialist work as an outcome of meeting members of the Communist Party (Li Dazhao 李大钊 and Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白) and asked Li, who was the president of the Shanghai Jiaotong University, to stress Sun’s earlier political works during late-Qing events such as the Opium War and the Taiping Rebellion in a public speech. Song wrote: “I am not belittling their [The Communist Party’s] contribution, only as we value truth and facts, we must record them truthfully even if the

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<sup>181</sup> For example, Li Shijun 李世俊, “宋庆龄对孙中山思想和事业的继承与发展 [Song Qingling’s Inheritance and Development of Sun Yat-sen’s Thought and Career],” 探索 *Tan Suo (Probe)*, 1993/3 (1993): 65-68; Zhao Qingyun 赵庆云, “论宋庆龄对孙中山事业与思想的阐述 [On Song Qingling’s Exposition of Sun Yat-sen’s Cause and Thought],” 兰州学刊 *Lanzhou Academic Journal*, 2015/9 (2015): 61-69.

<sup>182</sup> Song 宋, “上海交通大学档案馆藏宋庆龄致黎照寰夫妇函 [Letter from Song Qingling to Li Zhaohuan and His Wife in Shanghai Jiao Tong University Archive],” 244, 256-257.

facts are not what some people wish to see.”<sup>183</sup> Despite the disagreement Song Qingling held towards the authorities’ preferred way of interpreting Sun’s life, in most Chinese official and even scholarly accounts, Song Qingling was the lady who carried on the revolutionary spirit of her late husband and was delighted to witness the dramatic development in the “New China.”<sup>184</sup>

In the early years of the PRC, Sun Yat-sen was indeed upheld as a national hero, but his promotion did not reach the extent of a full-fledged cult of personality.<sup>185</sup> In Mao Zedong’s *In Memory of Mr Sun Yat-sen* (1956) addressing Sun Yat-sen’s (and China’s) achievements, it wrote:

Mr Sun was a modest man. I have heard him speak many times and feel that he has a grandiose spirit. I know that he is modest in terms of his attention to the study of the historical situation and current social situation in China, and in terms of his attention to the study of the situation in foreign countries, including the Soviet Union.

Like many of the great historical figures who have stood up to guide the zeitgeist have had their flaws, Mr Sun also had his flawed aspects. This is to be explained in terms of historical conditions, so as to make people understand, and not to be harsh on the predecessors.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Song 宋, “上海交通大学档案馆藏宋庆龄致黎照寰夫妇函 [Letter from Song Qingling to Li Zhaohuan and His Wife in Shanghai Jiao Tong University Archive],” 269-270. The year in which this letter was written was not recorded; it was dated 8th November, just a few days before the anniversary of Sun’s birth. This letter was among those that Song requested Li to “kindly destroy.”

<sup>184</sup> Song Qingling 宋庆龄, *宋庆龄选集 [Anthology of Song Qingling]*. (Beijing: 中华书局 Zhonghua Shuju, 1966); 上海宋庆龄故居纪念馆 Soong Qingling Memorial Residence in Shanghai, ed, *宋庆龄往来书信选集 [Selected Song Correspondences]*. (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Press, 1995).

<sup>185</sup> For an international perspective of the development of personality cults, see: Anita Pisch, “The Phenomenon of the Personality Cult – a Historical Perspective,” In *The Personality Cult of Stalin in Soviet Posters, 1929–1953*, (Canberra: ANU Press, 2016), 49-86.

<sup>186</sup> Mao Zedong 毛泽东, “纪念孙中山先生 [In Memory of Mr Sun Yat-sen],” in *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 12 November 1956, 1.



Sun Yat-sen's legacy and historical role were selectively portrayed to fit the narrative of the CCP as the rightful successor of Sun's revolutionary goals. The more challenging question is what happens when narratives surrounding Sun Yat-sen's life and legacy, inherently ambiguous from their inception, are promoted and presented to a wider audience in a later era in the PRC. It is generally difficult to grasp the reception of Sun Yat-sen's legacy by the broader Chinese public in Mao's era. The following section uses *Nanfang Daily* to conduct more in-depth analyses of the state's commemorations of Sun and the information being communicated to the public through the daily reports on newspapers, as a base to explore the public opinions that came after.

- *Nanfang Daily on Sun Yat-sen's Anniversary Celebrations*

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of how Sun Yat-sen as a pivotal historical figure has been represented in the PRC from the 1960s to the post-Mao era, the following section will analyse newspaper articles dedicated to celebrations of Sun Yat-sen's birth anniversary from 1966 till the late 1980s. This section primarily utilises *Nanfang Daily* (南方日报 *Nanfang Ribao*) as its main source. Established in 1949, *Nanfang Daily* is a communist newspaper in Guangdong, serving as one of the official media outlets in southern China under the direct supervision of the Party. However, the majority of the journalists who worked for *Nanfang Daily* were intellectuals who had been ordered to return to the mainland from Hong Kong after 1949.<sup>187</sup> As a result, although controlled by the state, *Nanfang Daily* had the potential to showcase the Chinese

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<sup>187</sup> Wu Zili 吴自力 and Zhang Ranni 张冉妮, "南北交互: 中共两地办报风格的激荡与融合—以《南方日报》创刊为中心的考察 [The Interaction of Different Styles in Running a Newspaper by the Communist Party of China in Yan'an and Hongkong Respectively: An Investigation of the Starting of *Nandang Daily*]," *新闻春秋 Journalism Evolution* 2015/2 (2015): 23-32.

public sphere,<sup>188</sup> and through analysing how the commemorative events were constituted in the newspaper pages for both the elites and public readers in the past, this chapter section also seeks to comprehend the political and social significance of these representations.<sup>189</sup>

The reports carried by this newspaper has dual characteristics. It not only represented the position of the central government in Beijing and continuously published the latest articles from the *People's Daily* but also selectively reported and discussed local events in Guangzhou and other cities in Guangdong Province. *Nanfang Daily* is thus a source of information covering both national and local reports and discussions. Moreover, *Nanfang Daily* distributes beyond Guangdong Province (with fewer pages in cities outside Guangdong); for years, its circulation ranked first among all provincial party newspapers nationwide, making it one of the most widely read newspapers in China.<sup>190</sup>

Although Sun Yat-sen's birthday has never been recognised as an official holiday in mainland China, commemorative ceremonies have been performed almost every year since the establishment of the PRC. Articles documenting these events can be found in *Nanfang Daily* and *People's Daily*, typically appearing on 13 November, the day after Sun Yat-sen's birthday. In 1956, 1966, 1986, and 1996 (for the 90<sup>th</sup>, 100<sup>th</sup>, 120<sup>th</sup> and 130<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of his birth respectively), the newspaper pages on 12 and 13 November

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<sup>188</sup> Rudolf Wagner studies the late-Qing and Republican Chinese newspapers and how they influenced the public sphere in China: Rudolf Wagner, "The Early Chinese Newspapers and The Chinese Public Sphere," *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2001): 1-33. For another case study on this topic, see: Natascha Vittinghoff, "Readers, Publishers and Officials in the Contest for a Public Voice and the Rise of a Modern Press in Late Qing China (1860-1880)." *T'oung Pao* 87, no. 4/5 (2001): 393-455.

<sup>189</sup> Thum Ping Tjin, "Chinese Newspapers in Singapore, 1945-1963: Mediators of Elite and Popular Tastes in Culture and Politics." *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 83, no. 1 (298) (2010): 53-76. Tjin's article focuses on the cultural history aspect of the Chinese newspapers in Singapore.

<sup>190</sup> Li Mengyu 李孟昱, "《南方日报》自办发行一炮打响 [Nanfang Daily Hits the Market as an Independently Published and Distributed Newspaper]," *报刊管理 Newspaper Management* 1999/02 (1999): 17.

were predominantly dedicated to commemorating Sun Yat-sen. These reports were absent between 1968 and 1971 and in 1976. Brief reports and articles chronicling official commemorations of Sun Yat-sen were published even during the decade of the Cultural Revolution, both before 1968 and starting again in 1972.



Figure 5: Nanfang Daily (Guangzhou), 12 November 1956, 1.

In 1956, the commemoration of Sun Yat-sen dominated all pages of *Nanfang Daily* on 12 November and three of the four pages on 13 November. The grand ceremony of Sun Yat-sen's 90<sup>th</sup> Jubilee celebration took place in Beijing on 12 November 1956, attended by a long list of high-ranked government leaders, including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, and more (Song Qingling did not participate in this ceremonial gathering but published a commemorative article in the newspapers).<sup>191</sup> This

<sup>191</sup> “孫中山先生誕辰九十周年紀念大會主席團名單 [List of the Board of Committee for the Commemoration of the 90th Anniversary of the Birth of Dr Sun Yat-sen],” in *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 12 November 1956, 1, 4.

event was an effort by the CCP to claim Sun Yat-sen as a national hero and emphasise their connection to his legacy, despite ideological differences between the CCP and Sun's own political philosophy. There were a total number of 1600 participants at the event in Beijing, according to the news report.<sup>192</sup> Similar events also took place in Guangzhou, Zhongshan, and Nanjing. The reports show that the remembrance of Sun was imposed by the state and the Party's mass media in 1956.

The next large-scale commemoration of Sun Yat-sen happened in 1966, a few months after the Cultural Revolution was launched. Aside from a brief report on Mao Zedong inspecting active groups contributing to the Cultural Revolution, the entirety of *Nanfang Daily's* front page on 13 November 1966 was dedicated to commemorating Sun Yat-sen's centenary. The front-page article's subtitle featured a quote from Zhou Enlai, who emphasised that the success achieved by the Chinese people under Mao's leadership had far exceeded Sun Yat-sen's expectations for China. Zhou went on to state: "To commemorate Mr Sun Yat-sen properly, one should without exception follow the great supervisor, leader, commander, and helmsman Chairman Mao, always stay with the people and learn new things, and always remember to examine oneself and keep marching forward in the fire of the Socialist Revolution."<sup>193</sup> Thus, Zhou connected the positive image of Sun Yat-sen to the emerging cult of Mao. Mao's cult, like that of Stalin, did not exist or emerge in isolation but coexisted and was supported by other figures,<sup>194</sup> some in the present and many from the past. Zhou Enlai's speech given in 1966 demonstrates that, in the state's narrative, the portrayal of Sun Yat-sen cannot deviate from Mao's cult, dissimilar to Song Qingling's intended narrative (in which Sun's legacy should be seen as

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<sup>192</sup> "纪念孙中山先生诞辰九十周年 北京各界人民隆重举行大会 [People from all walks of life in Beijing held a grand assembly to commemorate the 90th anniversary of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's birth]," in *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 12 November 1956, 1.

<sup>193</sup> *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 14 November 1966, 1-4.

<sup>194</sup> Pisch, "The Phenomenon of the Personality Cult," 50.

independent from CCP's achievements). Moreover, the commemoration of Sun, like that of other revolutionary leaders and events internationally, has been a political appropriation of national memory.<sup>195</sup>

Sun Yat-sen's historical image conveniently embodies both the nation's traumatic and triumphal memories, which could evoke national pride and indignation simultaneously and promote appreciation towards the communist leaders. Sun's intimate association with the 1911 revolution evokes the successful overthrow of imperial China and the idealism of the revolutionaries, but also the disappointment inherent in the Republic of China. The Republic failed to deliver the ejection of foreign imperialists (notwithstanding the ending of extraterritoriality in 1943) and the provision for the welfare of the people required by Sun's own Three Principles of the People. It is also remembered for its corruption and incessant warfare. Commemorating Sun can be seen as a means of shaping and constructing a particular version of Chinese national identity. Sun's revolutionary ideas and their supposed alignment with Mao Zedong's own ideology were emphasised.

Commemorating Sun at this stage in Guangzhou was thus inflected with Cultural Revolution themes like the cult of Mao but was not prevented by the disruption that the Red Guards were causing to the activities of officials further north in this period. According to a US Intelligence Agency's report of the situation in Guangdong province (Canton) in late 1966 and 1967, "in early January [1967], there were relatively few Red Guards in Canton. The number steadily decreased until 15 January, when an influx of Red Guards from Fukien [Fujian] and Kwangsi [Guangxi] provinces swelled their

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<sup>195</sup> Guy Beiner, "Between Trauma and Triumphalism: The Easter Rising, the Somme, and the Crux of Deep Memory in Modern Ireland." *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 2 (2007): 366.

numbers.”<sup>196</sup> This information provides the context that in late 1966, when Sun Yat-sen’s centenary was celebrated in Guangzhou, the Cultural Revolution had not yet hit the city as strongly as it had other parts of China. In other words, the official commemoration of Sun Yat-sen, a persisting historical figure, reflects the social dynamic on a regional level.

Nonetheless, besides the state’s efforts, in 1966, the Red Guards in Guangzhou also organised a public rally commemorating Sun Yat-sen; the rally took place at the square of the Sun Yat-sen Memorial. On 14 November, *Nanfang Daily* reported this event. The setting and the agenda of the ceremony were nearly identical to the one that took place in Beijing the previous day. Both started by playing the national anthem, followed by a long speech given by the highest-ranked official present and a few short comments provided by other influential politicians. Both events ended with “The East is Red (东方红 *Dongfang Hong*)” and “Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman (大海航行靠舵手 *Dahai Hangxing kao Duoshou*)”,<sup>197</sup> two Red songs praising Mao Zedong.<sup>198</sup> Lei Ouyang Bryant’s research (conducted between 2001 and 2003) uses interviews and public opinion surveys to examine how revolutionary songs, an element forming collective memories of the Cultural Revolution, are remembered with emotional attachments by individuals.<sup>199</sup> In Lei’s theory, music serves as a vehicle for memory and

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<sup>196</sup> *Situation in Canton Detailed*, (United States: Central Intelligence Agency, 2 Feb. 1967), 3. *U.S. Declassified Documents Online*, accessed on 1 May 2023.

<sup>197</sup> For the lyrics of the song, see “Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman,” <https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/music/lyrics/zh/sailing.htm>, accessed on 30 April 2023.

<sup>198</sup> Gregory Lee, “The ‘East Is Red’ Goes Pop: Commodification, Hybridity and Nationalism in Chinese Popular Song and Its Televisual Performance.” *Popular Music* 14, no. 1 (1995): 95–110; Lei Ouyang Bryant, “Music, Memory, and Nostalgia: Collective Memories of Cultural Revolution Songs in Contemporary China.” *China Review* 5, no. 2 (2005): 151–75; Chen Xiaomei. “Performing The ‘Red Classics’: From The East Is Red to The Road to Revival.” In *Red Legacies in China: Cultural Afterlives of the Communist Revolution*, edited by Li Jie and Zhang Enhua, 151–183, (Cambridge, MA Harvard University Asia Centre, 2016).

<sup>199</sup> Lei, “Music, Memory, and Nostalgia,” 152-153.

nostalgia, creating sites of memory.<sup>200</sup> The use of the Cultural Revolution songs in Sun Yat-sen commemorations, however, integrated the memories of Sun's commemoration and the Cultural Revolution era, further attached Sun's legacy to Mao's cult in Chinese people's collective memories. The commemoration of Sun Yat-sen in the 1960s and the later years was more about creating memories of the social context at the time of the commemoration rather than remembering any of Sun Yat-sen's activities or evoking any nostalgia for the Republican period.

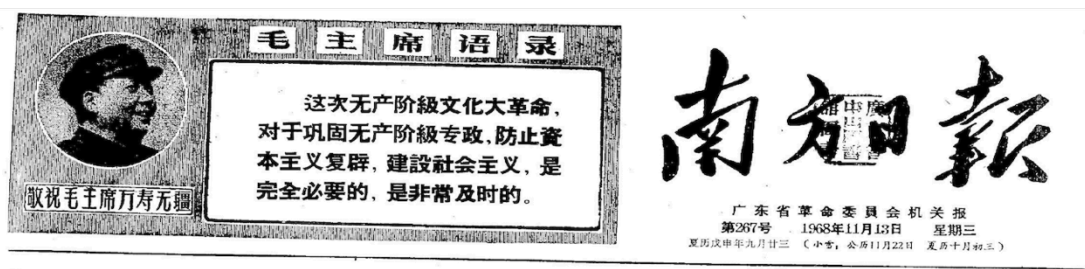


Figure 6: *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 13 November 1968, 1.

According to *Nanfang Daily*'s reports, the events celebrating Sun Yat-sen's birth in 1967 shrunk significantly in scale compared to all the years that came before. There was only a short report, which takes up approximately one-tenth of the page, outlining the provincial commemoration of Sun Yat-sen's birth. In 1968, 1969, and 1970, *Nanfang Daily* changed from a party newspaper to the "Newspaper of the Guangdong Provincial Revolutionary Committee (广东省革命委员会机关报 *Guangdong sheng geming weiyuan hui jiguan bao*).” On the newspaper's daily front page from 1968 to 1977, one line from the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong* (毛泽东语录 *Mao Zedong yu lu*) took up the position next to the newspaper name (南方日报 *Nanfang Ribao*), edition number, and the date to demonstrate the newspaper's adherence to Cultural Revolution

<sup>200</sup> Lei, "Music, Memory, and Nostalgia," 161-162.

orthodoxy.<sup>201</sup> There was little scope to report on activities not directly linked to making Cultural Revolution, or indeed for such activities to take place.

In 1972, reports on the memorial ceremony of Sun Yat-sen resumed. Commemorative activities took place in several cities (Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Nanjing) on 12 November 1972.<sup>202</sup> These ceremonies were attended by different groups of officials in each city. The event in Beijing was led by the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Guomindang (RCCG or 民革 *Mingge*), one of the registered minor political parties<sup>203</sup> in the PRC founded by members of the left-wing Guomindang in 1948; in Guangzhou, representatives from different governing bodies attended the commemoration, including people from the Provincial Revolutionary Committee, the Guangdong Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), and the Committees of the CCP.<sup>204</sup> During the Cultural Revolution, Provincial Revolutionary Committees replaced the party committees and state organisations in almost every level of the country's administration.<sup>205</sup> There were scholarly debates over whether these local committees acted as "the agent of central control," a reflection of the decentralisation of political and military power, despite claims made by the Revolutionary Committees that they represented the masses and carried "the power from below".<sup>206</sup> Moreover, these

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<sup>201</sup> See Figure 3 for an example.

<sup>202</sup> "纪念孙中山先生诞生一百零六周年 [Commemorating the 106th Anniversary of the Birth of Mr Sun Yat-sen]," *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 13 November 1972, 1.

<sup>203</sup> Alan Donald Pauw provides an early analysis of the Chinese Democratic Parties as mass organisations: Alan Donald Pauw "Chinese Democratic Parties as a Mass Organization." *Asian Affairs* 8, no. 6 (1981): 372–390.

<sup>204</sup> "纪念孙中山先生诞生一百零六周年 [Commemorating the 106th Anniversary of the Birth of MR Sun Yat-sen]," *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 13 November 1972, 1.

<sup>205</sup> For studies of the establishment of the Revolutionary Committee, see: Jürgen Domes, "The Role of the Military in the Formation of the Revolutionary Committees, 1967–1968," *The China Quarterly* 44 (October 1970): 112–145; David S. G. Goodman, "The Provincial Revolutionary Committee in the People's Republic of China, 1967–1979: An Obituary," *The China Quarterly*, no. 85 (1981): 49–79.

<sup>206</sup> Goodman, "The Provincial Revolutionary Committee in the People's Republic of China," 50.



committees varied from region to region and the power structure of a committee changed rapidly after military interventions or other incidents due to central and local factionalism at the time.<sup>207</sup>

The co-organisation of the commemoration of Sun Yat-sen in 1972, which included representatives from both the CCP and the Provincial Revolutionary Committees, demonstrates a more stable local and national political environment and suggests a shift to re-evaluate and re-appropriate Sun's legacy for contemporary political purposes. Even though details of the commemoration of Sun Yat-sen, such as the speeches and rhetoric of the participants, were not recorded in *Nanfang Daily*, the occurrence of multi-cities commemoration in 1972 represents a crucial moment in the ongoing negotiation of political memory and identity in post-revolutionary China.

From 1972, commemorations and veneration of Sun Yat-sen resumed as an annual fixture in November in cities with strong ties to the revolution. The number of participants and the amount of space devoted to the event in newspapers increased year on year.<sup>208</sup> The political environment shifted again in 1976 after a series of events, including Mao's death, the rise of new Communist leadership, the 1976 Tiananmen Incident, and the arrest of the "gang of four (四人帮 *Si ren bang*)."<sup>209</sup> In November 1976, there was no report related to any state-organised gatherings to commemorate Sun Yat-sen, and *Nanfang Daily* appeared to be a dedicated propaganda machine promoting the cult image of the new president Hua Guofeng.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Dong and Walder's article draws on local sources that became available in the post-2000s to investigate the case of Jiangsu: Dong Guoqiang and Andrew G. Walder. "From Truce to Dictatorship: Creating a Revolutionary Committee in Jiangsu." *The China Journal*, no. 68 (2012): 1–31.

<sup>208</sup> *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou),

<sup>209</sup> Frank Dikötter's recent publication provides a detailed narrative account to the political shift in 1976; see: Frank Dikötter, "From One Dictator to Another (1976-1979)," in *China after Mao: The Rise of a Superpower* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 1-33.

<sup>210</sup> *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 13 November 1976, 1.

In the 1980s, the once standardised annual reports on celebrating the anniversary of Sun's birth changed in form and were published along with short reviews of the commemoration written by local journalists. On 13 November 1980, a review reported that from January to September 1980, more than 130,000 people visited Sun Yat-sen's former residence in his hometown Cuiheng (翠亨), including over 67,000 visitors from overseas, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan: the largest number of visitors since 1949.<sup>211</sup> The early 1980s witnessed the rapid development of tourism in China, particularly the growth of revolutionary tourist destinations, including the development of Red Tourism. Social scientists have considered these sites as propaganda tools that reflect the state's preferred ideology.<sup>212</sup>

In 1981, during Sun Yat-sen's 115th birth anniversary, the RCCK and the Guangzhou municipal government organised a forum that blended political and academic events, demonstrating openness to collaboration and engagement with their Taiwanese counterparts, while also showcasing the continued influence and relevance of Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary theories in shaping contemporary political and academic discourse.<sup>213</sup> Throughout the period between 1967 and 1987, the fluctuating number of participants in Sun Yat-sen's memorial services reflected the changing political and social dynamics in China. *Nanfang Daily* reported a particularly notable event in 1983, attended by over 2,000 people, including Sun Yat-sen's granddaughter Sun Suifang 孙穗芳 (who returned from America to attend the ceremony), for the opening of the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall,

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<sup>211</sup> *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 13 November 1980, 1.

<sup>212</sup> For example, see: Edward Vickers, "Museums and nationalism in contemporary China," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 37 no.3 (2007): 365-382; Lin Chunfeng, "Red Tourism: Rethinking Propaganda as a Social Space," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 12, no. 3 (2015): 328-346; Hung Chang-tai, "Communist Tradition and Market Forces: Red Tourism and Politics in Contemporary China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 27, no.114, (2018): 902-923.

<sup>213</sup> *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 13 November 1981, 1.

emphasising the international influence and legitimacy of the commemorations during this time.<sup>214</sup> Sun Suifang was also interviewed in Kobe, Japan (神戸市) by *Xinhua News Agency* a year later, on 12 November 1984. According to the report, she addressed her hope for the reunification of the motherland, a view that was consistently expressed by all Chinese leaders but remained a controversial topic internationally.<sup>215</sup> This statement highlights how Sun’s legacy was linked to the reunification of Taiwan.<sup>216</sup> Using Sun Yat-sen’s granddaughter to channel what might have been her grandfather’s view, echoing CCP dogma, is also reminiscent of Song Qingling being used to present the CCP perspective as another representative of the so-called Father of the Nation.



Figure 7: Commemoration of the 117th Birth Anniversary of Dr Sun Yat-sen and the Opening Ceremony of the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall<sup>217</sup>

<sup>214</sup> *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 13 November 1983, 1, 2.

<sup>215</sup> Zhu Tieying 朱铁英, “孙中山的孙女说祖国统一大有希望 [Sun Yat-sen’s granddaughter says there is great hope for the reunification of the motherland],” *人民日报* *People’s Daily*, 13 November 1984, 6.

<sup>216</sup> See Jiang Zemin, “Continue to Promote the Reunification of the Motherland,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People’s Republic of China, 1995, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/ljzg\\_665465/3568\\_665529/t17784.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ljzg_665465/3568_665529/t17784.shtml), accessed on 6 January 2020,

<sup>217</sup> “紀念孫中山先生誕辰 117 周年暨孫中山紀念堂開幕典禮 [Commemoration of the 117th Birth Anniversary of Dr Sun Yat-sen and the Opening Ceremony of the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall],” *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 13 November 1983, 1.

A brief news flash appeared in the *Nanfang Daily* on 13 November 1984.

Although tucked away in the lower-left corner of the newspaper, the announcement reported on the Sun Yat-sen Special Stamp Exhibition held in Zhongshan City.<sup>218</sup> Its significance to historians of China should not be underestimated. In the mid-1980s, commemorations of Sun Yat-sen began to reach beyond a small group of elites, engaging a wider audience that included citizens of Guangdong and visitors from other regions, in this case, particularly stamp-collecting enthusiasts. This development prompts us to consider whether remembering Sun Yat-sen became a more diverse and less politically constrained practice in the 1980s.

In 1986, Sun Yat-sen's 120th birth anniversary was marked by various events across the country, highlighting the continued significance of Sun Yat-sen's legacy in reform-era China. *Nanfang Daily* dedicated three out of its four pages on both 12 and 13 November to reporting these events. The ceremony in the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Guangzhou had over 5,000 attendees,<sup>219</sup> while more than 1,000 people attended the commemoration in Shanghai, over 2,000 in Nanjing, and 10,000 in Beijing, attracting participants from all over the world.<sup>220</sup> The official speeches given during these events focused on presenting crucial stages of Sun's life in chronological order.<sup>221</sup>

One of the narratives thriving during this period emphasised that Sun (along with other intellectuals in the republican era seeking to address social issues in China through a combination of reform and revolution) believed that the only way to save China was to

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<sup>218</sup> *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 13 November 1984, 1.

<sup>219</sup> *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 12 November 1986, 1.

<sup>220</sup> *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 12 November 1986, 2-3.

<sup>221</sup> For example, see: Ye Xuanping 叶选平, “为振兴中华、统一祖国而奋斗 发言孙中山先生崇高的爱国主义精神 [Strive for the revitalisation of China and the reunification of the motherland. To carry forward the spirit of Sun Yat-sen's lofty patriotism],” *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 12 November 1986, 1-2.

destroy the previous order entirely and establish a new one. The iconic *People's Daily* Editorial (人民日报社论 *Renmin Ribao Shelun*) on 12 November 1986 served to reinforce this narrative. On the one hand, the narrative could help establish the legitimacy of the Communist Revolution; on the other hand, it supported the ongoing Reform and Opening policy, which Deng Xiaoping launched in 1978 and which profoundly impacted Chinese society in the 1980s. Deng's other key policy, "One Country, Two Systems (一国两制 *Yi Guo Liang Zhi*)", was also referred to during the speeches and in the Editorial article.<sup>222</sup> Between 1949 and 1975, there were two *People's Daily* Editorials commenting on Sun Yat-sen's legacy: "In Commemoration of Sun Yat-sen, the Great Democratic Revolutionist" on 12 March 1955 (on the 30th commemoration of the death of Sun Yat-sen) and "Sun Yat-sen Lives Forever" on 12 November 1956.<sup>223</sup> The 1986 *People's Daily* Editorial marks the government's intention to associate the ongoing social and economic changes with Sun's revolutionary ideas and to reinforce the historical continuity between Sun's revolutionary vision and the policies of the Communist Party. Wu Guogang, Chief Editor in the Commentary Department of the *People's Daily* in the 1980s, states in a research note the significance of the *People's Daily* Editorials as "unquestioned representations of the will of the leadership."<sup>224</sup> The 1982 revision of the PRC Constitution, which incorporated Sun Yat-sen into the Preface in the context of China's

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<sup>222</sup> *People's Daily* Editorial 人民日报社论, "复兴中国人民的伟大先驱 [A Great Pioneer in The Revival of The Chinese People]" in *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 12 November 1986, 1 and 3.

<sup>223</sup> Michel Oksenberg and Gail Henderson. "I. Chronological Listing of the *People's Daily* Editorials," In *Research Guide to People's Daily Editorials, 1949-1975* (United States: Center for Chinese Studies Publications, 1982), 1-84.

<sup>224</sup> Wu Guogang, "Command Communication: The Politics of Editorial Formulation in the *People's Daily*." *The China Quarterly* 137, no. 137 (1994): 194-211, 195.

historical development as noted above, further reflects the agenda of the reunification of Taiwan.<sup>225</sup>

In 1986, Chinese authorities were holding out an olive branch to Taiwan and hoping for a positive response. Peng Zhen, leader of the CCP Central Political and Legislative Committee and one of the party's "revolutionary elders",<sup>226</sup> made a statement about inviting representatives from Taiwan to exchange opinions about relations between the two states at an appropriate location.<sup>227</sup> Another special feature of the commemoration in 1986 was that it, for the first time, reported the memorial activities in Taiwan.<sup>228</sup> This demonstrated an at least partially shared political culture on both sides of the Taiwan Straits.

Moreover, the *People's Daily* Editorial on 12 November 1986 established a framework for future party leaders' speeches commemorating Sun Yat-sen. Both the 1986 Commentary and Jiang Zemin's speech delivered a decade later on 12 November 1996 began by hailing Sun Yat-sen as a "Revolutionary Pioneer." These addresses proceeded to chronologically highlight Sun Yat-sen's contributions, emphasising his Three New People's Principles of nationalism, democracy, and people's livelihood. They acknowledged the tremendous transformations in new China and underscored Sun Yat-sen's role as an advocate for the motherland's reunification. It should also be noted that, both 1986 and 1996 articles' narrative and format are an inherited and expanded version of Mao Zedong's "In Memory of Mr Sun Yat-sen" speech delivered in 1956.<sup>229</sup> The

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<sup>225</sup> "中华人民共和国宪法 [Constitution of People's Republic of China]." [http://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2018-03/22/content\\_5276318.htm](http://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2018-03/22/content_5276318.htm), accessed on 17 January 2020.

<sup>226</sup> Political relationships between party elders and leading figures of the Reform see: Chung Yen-Lin, "The Ousting of General Secretary Hu Yaobang: The Roles Played by Peng Zhen and Other Party Elders," *China Review* 19, no. 1 (2019): 89-122.

<sup>227</sup> *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 13 November 1986, 1.

<sup>228</sup> *Nanfang Daily* (Guangzhou), 13 November 1986, 2.

<sup>229</sup> Mao 毛, "纪念孙中山先生 [In Memory of Mr Sun Yat-sen]," 1.

Editorial (1986) and Jiang (1996) both cited Sun Yat-sen's statement: "If China becomes a stronger nation, we will not only restore the national status but also bear a great responsibility to the world,"<sup>230</sup> and Mao Zedong's exhortation that "China should make a greater contribution to humanity."<sup>231</sup> The conclusion of both articles appealed to Chinese people worldwide to unite and collaborate for a greater China. Similarly, Hu Jintao's speech during Sun Yat-sen's 140th birth anniversary in 2006 followed this established structure, reflecting its lasting influence on commemorations of Sun Yat-sen's legacy.<sup>232</sup> These speeches are widely reported, reaching a large public audience.

The year 1986 marked a significant shift in the methods used to commemorate historical figures in China, as evidenced by the diverse activities surrounding Sun Yat-sen's 120th birth anniversary. The importance of Sun Yat-sen as a prominent political leader and the founding father of modern China made these commemorations significant cultural events. Newspaper reports from 12 and 13 November 1986 detailed a wide range of public outreach activities in Guangzhou: an archival exhibition held in the new building of the Sun Yat-sen Library; the reopening of the Exhibition Hall of Historical Relics of Sun Yat-sen next to the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall; the Exhibition of Chinese and Foreign Calligraphers' Works Commemorating the 120th Anniversary of Sun Yat-

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<sup>230</sup> "中国如果强盛起来，我们不但是要恢复民族的地位，还要对于世界负一个大责任。" in People's Daily Editorial 人民日报社论，"复兴中国人民的伟大先驱 [A Great Pioneer in The Revival of The Chinese People]," 1; Jiang Zemin 江泽民，"在孙中山先生诞辰一百三十周年纪念大会上江泽民的讲话 [Speech at the 130th Anniversary of Dr Sun Yat-sen's Birthday]," *统一论坛 Reunification Forum* 1996/6 (1996):1.

<sup>231</sup> "中国应当对人类有较大的贡献。" in Mao 毛，"纪念孙中山先生 [In Memory of Mr Sun Yat-sen]," 1; People's Daily Editorial 人民日报社论，"复兴中国人民的伟大先驱 [A Great Pioneer in The Revival of The Chinese People]," 1; Jiang 江，"在孙中山先生诞辰一百三十周年纪念大会上江泽民的讲话 [Speech at the 130th Anniversary of Dr Sun Yat-sen's Birthday]," 1.

<sup>232</sup> Hu Jintao 胡锦涛，"在孙中山先生诞辰 140 周年纪念大会上的讲话 [Speech at the 140th Anniversary of Dr Sun Yat-sen's Birthday]," *时政文献辑览 Shizheng Wenxian Jilan* 2006/3 (2006): 205-8.

sen's Birth; unveiling ceremonies of several bronze statues of Sun Yat-sen;<sup>233</sup> and the use of tourism and sports activities as means to commemorate Sun Yat-sen.<sup>234</sup> The boom of popular media and public entertainment in China was also reflected in historical commemorations during this time. In November 1986, the newly produced Chinese film *Sun Yat-sen* was screened in major cinemas in Guangzhou, and a TV series based on Sun Yat-sen and Song Qingling was broadcast on a local channel.<sup>235</sup>



Figure 8: “Television Program Preview – Channel Eight 20:20 TV Drama *Sun Yat-sen and Song Qingling* (EP 3 and 4)

Figure 9: “Colour feature film – Sun Yat-sen”

The profound wave of reform (改革 *gaige*) in the 1980s resulted in economic and social changes in China so significant that some observers have labelled it a “miracle”.<sup>236</sup> Scholars argue that the material improvements of this era provided Chinese citizens with

<sup>233</sup> *Nanfang Daily (Guangzhou)*, 12 November 1986, 1-3; *Nanfang Daily (Guangzhou)*, 13 November 1986, 1-3.

<sup>234</sup> 李迪生 Li Disheng, 罗宝雯 Luo Baowen, 吴竞龙 Wu Jinglong, “今日翠亨村 [Today's Cuiheng Village].” [Travel notes of the Cuiheng Village] In *Nanfang Daily (Guangzhou)*, 1986-11-13 Page 2; “Three hundred athletes ran from Huanghuagang to Zhongshan Medical University yesterday: Expressing nostalgia and admiration for Sun Yat-sen by long-distance running. (三百运动员昨从黄花岗跑向中山医科大学: 以长跑表达对孙中山的怀念和敬仰).” in *Nanfang Daily (Guangzhou)*, 13 November 1986, 3. For a case study on the relation between sports and commemoration: John Kelly, “Popular Culture, Sport and the ‘Hero’-Fication of British Militarism,” *Sociology* 47, no. 4 (2013): 722-38.

<sup>235</sup> *Nanfang Daily (Guangzhou)*, 12 November 1986, 3.

<sup>236</sup> For example, see: Dikötter, *China after Mao*, 1-33.



reasons to accept, rather than question, the authoritarian political status quo.<sup>237</sup> To conclude this chapter with a comprehensive account of the state's commemoration of Sun in the PRC, the following section will investigate the most recent official commemoration: the 150th anniversary of Sun's birth in 2016, led by the current leader, Xi Jinping. The subsequent chapter will then shift the focus to the various other media representations of Sun Yat-sen in post-Mao China.

- *Broadcasting the Commemoration in 2016*

In 2016, Sun Yat-sen's 150th birth anniversary ceremony took place at the Great Hall of the People and was live-streamed on China Central Television General Channel (CCTV-1) and International Channel (CCTV-4). The live footage of this commemorative event is available in English on YouTube and was also broadcast by several channels in Taiwan. There has been a tradition of inviting representatives from different social and ethnic groups to attend commemorative events; records of these participants can also help us understand the scale and the targeted audience of these events over the years.

Stephen Hutchings and Vera Tolz's 2015 book examines how post-Soviet Russia responds to ethno-social difference through state-aligned television, with the intention to "form a sense of belonging among its citizens."<sup>238</sup> Focusing solely on television broadcasts, Hutchings and Tolz explore the successes and failures of these broadcasts in mediating conflicts within Russian society and shaping public opinion, based on comprehensive research and detailed data collected between 2010 and 2012.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Teresa Wright, *Accepting Authoritarianism: State-Society Relations in China's Reform Era* (Redwood City, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), 162.

<sup>238</sup> Stephen Hutchings and Vera Tolz, *Nation, Ethnicity and Race on Russian Television: Mediating Post-Soviet Difference* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 1.

<sup>239</sup> Hutchings and Tolz, *Nation, Ethnicity and Race on Russian Television*, 41.

Concurrently, Bai Ruoyun and Song Geng's 2014 editorial volume on China's national television devoted five chapters to how television programs reconfigured "history, memory, and nationalism" in China.<sup>240</sup> Both volumes contribute to the previously understudied topic of television representations in states where the governments closely supervise their media outlets. The authors argue that even though these television programs are used as the authorities' "mouthpiece and ideological instrument",<sup>241</sup> the diversity within television programs, which "played an aggressive role in contesting and remoulding collective memories and imaginations" about the nation,<sup>242</sup> and the changing subjects addressed in some of the most widely broadcast and popular recordings, reflect national sentiments and provide analytical values. As such, these materials warrant continued scholarly attention.<sup>243</sup>

This section, through a closer analysis of the national broadcast of the CCP's commemoration of Sun Yat-sen's 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, further demonstrates how Sun Yat-sen became a myth of the PRC's history, and how some of the ambiguities embedded in his remembrance was dealt with during and after the ceremony. This internationally available footage, recording the CCP's commemoration of the mythical founding father of the ROC, also triggered debates and conflicts within communities in Taiwan. It showcases the possibility for cross-strait dialogues (although mainly critical and argumentative) at the public level through a state-organised commemorative event.

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<sup>240</sup> Bai Ruoyun and Song Geng eds, *Chinese Television in the Twenty-First Century: Entertaining the Nation* (London: Routledge, 2014), 105-191.

<sup>241</sup> For example, see: Hutchings and Tolz, *Nation, Ethnicity and Race on Russian Television*, 15; Bai and Song, "Introduction" and Shuyu Kong and Colin S. Hawes, "The New Family Mediator: TV Mediation Programs in China's 'Harmonious Society,'" in *Chinese Television in the Twenty-First Century*, 2, 49.

<sup>242</sup> Bai and Song, "Introduction," 10.

<sup>243</sup> Hutchings and Tolz, "Introduction: A Clash of Two Russias, a Tale of Two Cities," in *Nation, Ethnicity and Race on Russian Television*, 1-18; Bai and Song, "Introduction," 5-6.

The celebration that took place at the Great Hall of the People on 11 November 2016 is of great significance to the Chinese authorities. The ceremony sought to commemorate Sun Yat-sen while sending out messages that represented the vision and demands of the CCP. Several compromises were made to ensure a singular narrative of the event while avoiding controversies. One of these was the avoidance of addressing the ROC directly.

During the fifty-minute speech made by President Xi, the term “Republic of China (中华民国 *Zhonghua Minguo*)” was not mentioned.<sup>244</sup> Instead, terms such as “Chinese nation (中华民族 *Zhonghua minzu*)”, “China (中国 *Zhongguo*)”, and “the motherland (祖国 *zuguo*)” were used to describe the land and the people which both Sun Yat-sen and the Communist leaders longed to represent, to save, to liberate, and to “rejuvenate (复兴 *fixing* or 振兴 *zhengxing*).” The same approach can be seen respectively in speeches commemorating Sun’s birth anniversaries given by Jiang Zemin in 1996<sup>245</sup> and by Hu Jintao in 2006.<sup>246</sup> In these three decades, the commemoration of Sun Yat-sen has increasingly become an official stage targeting international audiences as well as Chinese audience, and the issue concerning the international status quo of Taiwan has been the central, though unspoken, concern of the staged performance.

Such avoidance of the term “republic” or “Republic of China” is prevalent among official accounts of the history of the republican period in mainland China. Chinese leaders seek to avoid confronting this troubling term directly because it persists in the

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<sup>244</sup> Xi Jinping 习近平, “在纪念孙中山先生诞辰 150 周年大会上的讲话 [Speech at the 150th Anniversary of Mr Sun Yat-sen’s Birthday],” *人民日报 People’s Daily* 12 November 2016, 002 (Beijing).

<sup>245</sup> Jiang 江, “在孙中山先生诞辰一百三十周年纪念大会上江泽民的讲话 [Speech at the 130th Anniversary of Mr Sun Yat-sen’s Birthday],” 1.

<sup>246</sup> Hu 胡, “在孙中山先生诞辰 140 周年纪念大会上的讲话 [Speech at the 140th Anniversary of Mr Sun Yat-sen’s Birthday],” 205-208.

official name of Taiwan, so to use the term Republic of China would legitimise the existence of Taiwan as a political entity. Liu Jiayan, a researcher from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences focusing on Taiwan Studies, discusses the issue of using “Republic of China” in the contemporary era and addresses the controversy it raised.<sup>247</sup> Liu elaborates on the correlation between the “New China” and the “Republic of China” in the following manner.

From 1949 to 1988, Taiwan’s leaders saw the ROC as the sole legitimate government of the Chinese nation, including both mainland China and Taiwan. Over time, the government of the PRC gradually replaced the former ROC on the international stage, as the UN (from 1971), US (from 1979) and other nations and organisations switched from recognising Taipei to Beijing as the seat of the government of China.<sup>248</sup> In 1991, Li Denghui (李登辉 Lee Teng-hui), then president of the ROC in Taiwan, officially recognised the legitimacy of the PRC in the mainland. Since then, the “ROC” no longer represents the whole of China but merely Taiwan. From 2000, when the Taiwanese nationalist party the Democratic Progressive Party won the presidential election, authorities in Taiwan have accelerated the publicity of Taiwanese nationalism and sought to break the link between Taiwan and China completely.<sup>249</sup> Policies to the achievement of this goal are accused of “*Tai Du* 台独 (Taiwan independence)” by the CCP government and people in mainland China; moreover, “*Tai Du*” is used solely with negative connotations in mainland Chinese.

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<sup>247</sup> Liu Jiayan 刘佳雁, “日渐异化的 ‘中华民国’ 论述 [The Increasingly Alienated ‘Republic of China’ Narrative],” *现代台湾研究 Modern Taiwan Studies* 2017/3 (2017): 62.

<sup>248</sup> Liu 刘, “日渐异化的 ‘中华民国’ 论述 [The Increasingly Alienated ‘Republic of China’ Narrative],” 62.

<sup>249</sup> Chai Winberg, “Taiwan’s 2008 Elections and Their Impact on U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations,” *Asian Affairs* 35, no. 2 (2008): 83-92.

People could therefore face political consequences if they publicly discuss “*Minguo*” or the Republic of China without solely referring to its historical meaning. Meanwhile, in both Taiwan and mainland China, the definition of *Minguo* is unsettled and can occasionally be controversial. Most CCP historians align with the narrative that the ROC was demolished when the PRC was established in 1949. Liu Jiayan suggests that recovering the historical meaning of “ROC”, which stands for a whole “China” from 1911 up to 1949, is the most suitable way to deal with this issue.<sup>250</sup> This conclusion provides no resolution to the problem as the contemporary definition of the term continues to be ambiguous and conflicting. Nevertheless, the Chinese authorities have adopted a strategy of avoidance, which is observable in commemorations of Sun Yat-sen. In 2022, scholars studying Chinese foreign policies reviewed the uncertainty of the “one China principle” vaguely agreed by the authorities in Beijing, Taipei, and Washington since 1972.<sup>251</sup> Researchers argue that the “one China” framework inherently contains ambiguity, providing flexibility for international consensus – as “a tacit agreement to disagree”<sup>252</sup> – but at the same time “planted seeds for worsening contestation and friction” under different circumstances.<sup>253</sup> The evolving image of Sun Yat-sen celebrated in the PRC embodies similar ambiguity, combined with strategic avoidance and enhancement of certain elements.

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<sup>250</sup> Liu 刘, “日渐异化的 ‘中华民国’ 论述 [The Increasingly Alienated ‘Republic of China’ Narrative],” 62.

<sup>251</sup> For example, see: Adam P. Liff and Dalton Lin. “The ‘One China’ Framework at 50 (1972–2022): The Myth of ‘Consensus’ and Its Evolving Policy Significance.” *The China Quarterly* 252 (2022): 977–1000; Chen Yu-Jie. “‘One China’ Contention in China–Taiwan Relations: Law, Politics and Identity.” *The China Quarterly* 252 (2022): 1025–1044.

<sup>252</sup> Chen, “‘One China’ Contention in China–Taiwan Relations,” 1025.

<sup>253</sup> Liff and Lin, “The ‘One China’ Framework at 50 (1972–2022),” 992.



Figure 10: “The 150th Anniversary of Dr Sun Yat-sen’s Birth Held in Beijing”<sup>254</sup>



Figure 11: The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Sun Yat-sen’s Birth”<sup>255</sup>

Sometimes events commemorating Sun Yat-sen’s legacy have led to conflicts with Taiwan rather than smoothing cross-Strait relations.<sup>256</sup> The Beijing ceremony for Sun’s

<sup>254</sup> Xinhua News Website 新华网, “The Commemoration of Sun Yat-Sen’s 150th Birth Anniversary.” Xinhua News, 2016, <http://www.xinhuanet.com/szs20161111/xctj.htm>, accessed on 3 January 2020.

<sup>255</sup> “孙中山诞辰一百周年 [Sun Yat-sen’s 100<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary],” *Renmin Huabao [China Pictorial]* 人民画报, 12 November 1966.

<sup>256</sup> Julia C. Strauss produces a fruitful comparison study between the state formation in PRC and Taiwan and argues the two regimes have more in common than scholars previously recognised; see: Julia C. Strauss, *State Formation in China and Taiwan*:

150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary gained Taiwan's attention immediately after the broadcast on CCTV-4. From 12 November 2016 to 30 November 2016, *The Liberty Times* (自由時報), one of the four major newspapers in Taiwan,<sup>257</sup> published over 50 short articles and news reports as responses to the commemoration in Beijing. None of the articles published in Taiwan focused on the ceremony itself nor the speech given by Xi Jinping; instead, the event became controversial to Taiwanese viewers because a group of retired generals from Taiwan were spotted at the broadcast of the ceremony among the over 3000 attendees.

The core of the debate focused on whether these retired military personnel had sung the national anthem of the PRC – “March of the Volunteers”.<sup>258</sup> The song was written in 1935 and was popular even among some members of the GMD during the Sino-Japanese War. However, since it has become a crucial symbol of Chinese nationalism in the PRC, singing it or merely showing respect for it by standing up would be seen as a betrayal of Taiwan's nationalism. Hence, some Taiwan politicians accused these former generals of being traitors.<sup>259</sup> Some other officials in Taiwan expressed concern over

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*Bureaucracy, Campaign, and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 9-12.

<sup>257</sup> While being a DPP-supporting newspaper, *The Liberty Times* (自由時報) is a leading media in Taiwan and has been a research depository for Taiwanese discourse. For example, see: Chen Ya-mei, “The Ideological Construction of Solidarity in Translated Newspaper Commentaries: Context Models and Inter-subjective Positioning.” *Discourse & Society* 22, no. 6 (2011): 693-722; Daniel C. Lynch, and Cody Wai-kwok Yau, “What Exactly Is It That the Taiwan Greens Want? Extracting ‘Taiwan Subjectivity’ from *the Liberty Times* Newspaper.” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 22, no. 1 (2022): 23-44.

<sup>258</sup> “唱膩中華民國頌？王炳忠赴中唱中國國歌被認出 [Tired of Singing the Anthem of Republic of China? Wang Bingzhong Was Recognised Singing the Chinese National Anthem in China].” *Liberty Times Net* (Breaking News / General Report), 2016, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/1887796>, accessed on 12 November 2019.

<sup>259</sup> For example, “在台要十八趴，到中國軟趴趴 [Shiba Pa in Taiwan, Ruan Papa in China].” *Liberty Times Net*, 2016 (Liberty Review), <https://talk.ltn.com.tw/article/breakingnews/1887507>, accessed on 12 November 2019.

whether the connection between CCP leaders and GMD's retired high-ranked generals would endanger Taiwan's military security.<sup>260</sup>

Not only did the live stream of the commemoration attract immediate attention and lead to a series of heated discussions about nationalism in Taiwan, but it also caused the reoccurrence of debates on whether “The Republic of China” on official paperwork and promoted in the PRC and Taiwan. Taiwan today is facing a dilemma: how to balance Chinese patriotism, which is held by some older generations who have a strong belief in and respect for the ROC, and the newly emergent Taiwanese nationalism. Yu Muming (郁慕明 Yok Mu-ming), chairman of the minor nationalist New Party in Taiwan between 2003 and 2020, is one of the politicians who radically believe in the concept of ‘One China’ and condemns those who show disrespect to Sun Yat-sen.<sup>261</sup> The diverse and changing attitudes to Sun Yat-sen have been one of the indicators of the governments’ current political agenda in both Beijing and Taipei. Thus, it is unrealistic to form a standard image of Sun Yat-sen neither nationwide nor internationally, despite the effort the authorities have made. Although grand ceremonies were held in Beijing to portray Sun Yat-sen in a way both governments would approve, the commemoration echoes more disputes than agreements among one of its targeted groups during the three decades since the 1980s– the Taiwanese.

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<sup>260</sup> “退將赴中參加官方活動 國防部：不恰當[Retired Generals Went to China to Participate in Official Events Department of Defence: Inappropriate].” Liberty Times Net, 2016, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/1887066>, accessed on 12 November 2019.

<sup>261</sup> “新黨主席郁慕明：始終如一追求兩岸和平統一 [New Party Chairman Yu Muming: Consistently Pursue Cross-Strait Peaceful Reunification].” Xinhua Net, 2019, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/tw/2019-08/17/c\\_1124888320.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/tw/2019-08/17/c_1124888320.htm), accessed on 13 November 2019; “唱中國國歌惹議 郁慕明這樣回嗆... [Singing Chinese National Anthem Causes Controversy Yu Muming Replied...]” Liberty Times Net, 2016 (Breaking News / General Report), <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/1888373>, accessed on 13 November 2019.



In the post-Mao era, as Rana Mitter argues, the historic legacy of the ROC remains influential in both China and Taiwan; however, this legacy has, at times, been drawing the two states away from each other instead of bridging the geographic and political divide.<sup>262</sup> Mitter compares the narratives of the Second Sino-Japanese War in the Chinese mainland and Taiwan; while China has continued to maintain an official narrative with variations over the years, the development of democracy in Taiwan since the 1990s has generated divergent interpretations of the past produced by different cultural and political groups within the islands.<sup>263</sup> In 2019, Professor Zhu Songling accused the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) leadership of manipulating the narrative about the mainland and Hong Kong to generate trouble and, therefore, jeopardising cross-Strait relations.<sup>264</sup> Nevertheless, dialogues have occasionally been proposed by both sides of the Strait, and the CCP considers its commemorations of Sun Yat-sen's legacy as opportunities to initiate such conversations.

The issue between the Mainland and Taiwan has always been of primary concern to the PRC when it is curating the commemoration of Sun Yat-sen. In 1996, although there was no direct message addressed to "Taiwan" or the "Taiwanese People" in Jiang Zemin's speech, the ending of the address signalled that Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits should get together to achieve national unity.<sup>265</sup> However, no specific approach to this goal was suggested in 1996.

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<sup>262</sup> Rana Mitter, "Old Ghosts, New Memories: China's Changing War History in the Era of Post-Mao Politics," *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 1 (2003), 127.

<sup>263</sup> Mitter, "Old Ghosts, New Memories," 129-30.

<sup>264</sup> Zhu Songling, "Is China's Mainland Tightening Its Policy toward Taiwan?" *China-US Focus*, 2019, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/is-chinas-mainland-tightening-its-policy-toward-taiwan>, accessed on 20 October 2019.

<sup>265</sup> Jiang 江, "在孙中山先生诞辰一百三十周年纪念大会上江泽民的讲话 [Speech at the 130th Anniversary of Mr Sun Yat-sen's Birthday]," 1.

In 2006, the unification of China and Taiwan was one of the main themes of Sun Yat-sen's commemoration and other relevant activities. Hu Jintao's speech in November 2016 quoted two different sayings of Sun's, addressing a separatism in the past, to emphasise the importance of China's unity. "The Chinese government," Hu stated, "is firmly against the separatist force of 'Taidu (Taiwan independence)'<sup>266</sup> and their activities."<sup>267</sup> This speech came in the context of new legislation against all secession from the country; the new Anti-Secession Law was adopted in March 2005.<sup>268</sup>

In the celebration of Sun's birth anniversary in 2016, Xi Jinping stated: "Mr Sun Yat-sen always firmly upheld national unity and maintained a clear-cut opposition to all speeches and actions that split the country and nation."<sup>269</sup> While reinforcing the idea that the unity of China is an "unstoppable historical trend", Xi also announced: "We are willing to connect to any parties, groups, and individuals in Taiwan, despite their former position, as long as they acknowledge the 1992 Consensus and support that the mainland and Taiwan belong to one China."<sup>270</sup> Furthermore, Xi censured "any individuals, organisations, and parties" that intend to "separate any pieces of Chinese territory from China in any form."<sup>271</sup> These speeches clarified Xi's agenda. By remembering Sun Yat-sen, he aims to emphasise the importance of reuniting Taiwan and mainland China. The

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<sup>266</sup> Also translated as "Taiwan secessionists".

<sup>267</sup> Hu 胡, "在孙中山先生诞辰 140 周年纪念大会上的讲话 [Speech at the 140th Anniversary of Mr Sun Yat-sen's Birthday]," 205-8.

<sup>268</sup> "反分裂国家法 [Anti-Secession Law]." Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China, 2016, [http://www.mod.gov.cn/regulatory/2016-02/19/content\\_4618044.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/regulatory/2016-02/19/content_4618044.htm), accessed on 20 December 2019,

<sup>269</sup> Xi 习, "在纪念孙中山先生诞辰 150 周年大会上的讲话 [Speech at the 150th Anniversary of Mr Sun Yat-sen's Birthday]."

<sup>270</sup> Xi 习, "在纪念孙中山先生诞辰 150 周年大会上的讲话 [Speech at the 150th Anniversary of Mr Sun Yat-sen's Birthday]."

<sup>271</sup> Xi 习, "在纪念孙中山先生诞辰 150 周年大会上的讲话 [Speech at the 150th Anniversary of Mr Sun Yat-sen's Birthday]."

message targeted the domestic population and was also intended to reach overseas audiences, primarily the Taiwanese.

While focusing on the effectiveness of its propaganda, the CCP also made painstaking efforts to initiate conversations with Taiwan through these ceremonies. For instance, Xi has proposed to form alliances with individuals or parties in Taiwan on the basis of acknowledging the 1992 Consensus. Moreover, it is essential to understand that the commemoration of Sun Yat-sen is of strategic importance for the CCP government to achieve its pre-set political agenda, which determines to reclaim the former territory of China. Recovering historical accuracy is rarely on the agenda and, therefore, is often sacrificed. Thus, disagreements between China and Taiwan on the issue of modern Chinese history, particularly the history of the ROC, persist despite some dialogues between the two governments and people across the Taiwan Strait.<sup>272</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

Through analysing the public image of Sun Yat-sen produced and promoted in the PRC between 1956 and 2016, this chapter illustrates that, as a constructed national heroic image, Sun Yat-sen's representation has been ambiguous from its early interpretations in the 1950s. The private history of Song Qingling, who shared a life and goals with the late republican president, was meant to empower the CCP narrative, placing the new PRC leadership as the rightful successors of Sun's legacies. However, it has been demonstrated that Song's personal memories contradicted some aspects of the communist party's idealised portrait of Sun Yat-sen, thus creating a foundation of ambiguity in public memories. In the 1960s and later, Sun Yat-sen continued to be commemorated in the

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<sup>272</sup> See studies such as Hardina Ohlendorf, "The Taiwan Dilemma in Chinese Nationalism: Taiwan Studies in the People's Republic of China," *Asian Survey* 54, no. 3 (2014): 471-91.

mainland and was associated with Mao's cult during the Cultural Revolution decade. The continuous remembering ensured that Sun Yat-sen's name was incorporated into the national memory of the new People's Republic, transcending the *Guofu* myth from the ROC (and carried on in the island of Taiwan). After the mid-1980s, the transformations of China's reform and opening policy impacted the historical representation of Sun Yat-sen, resulting in divergent images displayed through various media. However, the state's attempt to use the internationally popularised myth-history and heroic image of Sun Yat-sen to advocate for national unity was flawed. As the chapter demonstrated, the flexibility of Sun Yat-sen's reimagination is tied to its historical ambiguity and results in contested interpretations of popular narratives. The case of Taiwanese newspaper's responses to the commemorations of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sun's birth that took place in Beijing shows voices of protest from outside mainland China. Nonetheless, public opinions in the mainland are far from being unified, as will be examined further in the following chapter.

Although the public events discussed above represent "top-down" commemoration structures, they invite citizens to participate in the process of remembering through various media outlets accessible to almost everyone. These media served not only as channels for information exchange but also as tools for facilitating communication and enabling more diverse interpretations. Sylvie Kleinman, in the context of studying Irish and French commemorations, argues that "political propaganda was historicised in turn as elites sought to legitimise themselves by trying to monopolise the lineage and direct inheritance coming down from the hallowed age of revolution."<sup>273</sup> This concept historicising political propaganda is equally applicable to the CCP's commemoration of Sun Yat-sen. However, as studies of European history have increasingly focused on analysing diverse and sometimes conflicting viewpoints, it

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<sup>273</sup> Kleinman, "Revolutionary Commemoration and the Mythologisation of History," 39.

becomes evident that Chinese historical interpretations can hardly remain under the sole control of one party. Despite this complexity, the promotion of key heroic figures from the past and present remains a common practice in China.

## **Chapter 2: Constructing National Memory: The Evolution and Impact of Sun Yat-sen's Image in Post-Mao China, from 1980 to the present**

In the first chapter, this thesis delves into the myth surrounding the image of Sun Yat-sen, the renowned *Guofu* (“Father of the Nation”) and well-known historical figure from Republican China (1912-1949). Chapter 1 examines the nuances in the official accounts of Sun from 1956 to the present, analysing various materials that communicate the leadership’s desired representation of Sun Yat-sen, and illustrating the contested interpretations from the origin of the public memories. The materials analysed in Chapter 1 include correspondences showing efforts by Song Qingling (Sun’s widow and the first vice-chairperson of the PRC) to guard the public representation of Sun and the influential regional Party newspaper *Nanfang Daily*, which has consistently reported on the commemoration of Sun’s birth anniversary since 1956. The first chapter also explores the changes in Sun’s image during the 1980s and how his portrayal in the Reform era reflects a narrative identity in the PRC that deviates from socialist beliefs. Nonetheless, Sun Yat-sen has been widely represented through various media since the 1980s. The second chapter looks at Sun’s evolving image in the PRC as presented in more diverse media, a cultural product inherited from the rich legacy of narratives and agendas before the 1980s, and the impact of these narratives on contemporary Chinese society and politics.

Sun’s heroic image embodies the narrative history of the Republic of China. Although the CCP, the Chinese democratic parties (民主党派 *Minzhu Dangpai*) as organisations within the government, and some other international political bodies, including the Guomintang in Taiwan, have attempted to make use of the once-cult image of Sun Yat-sen to inspire a sense of national unity and emotional connection within the Chinese community, the outcomes of these efforts have been varied. In a state ruled by a highly centralised government, various forms of mass media play a crucial role in

transforming a designated narrative history into collective memories and, ultimately, shaping national identity.<sup>274</sup> However, since the 1980s, Chinese people have in some ways come to terms with personal and collective traumas, notably the Cultural Revolution, while there have been dramatic social changes, such as the large expansion of internet users. The emergence of new forms of media resulted in what Stephen Bann calls “a generosity of representations in diverse popular genres and artefacts.”<sup>275</sup> This phenomenon has arguably made it more difficult for the Chinese government to shape a shared Chinese identity, posing challenges for the implementation of nationalism and standardised interpretations of the past and the present. Despite that, history-related narratives remain popular among diverse audiences. While the next two chapters continue to examine heroic figures from China’s Republican revolution, Chapters 5 and 6 will explore the historical “otherness” or “enemies” that emerged from within the Republic of China.

The concept of multiple pasts has been central in some historians’ work on national histories globally. Stefan Berger, Chris Lorenz, and Billie Melman’s work on popularising national past from the nineteenth century demonstrates a framework using nations as the unit to study the spatial dimension of history and its temporality. They highlight in the Introduction:

The discovery, resurrection, and uses of nations’ pasts were not limited to History with a capital ‘H’, that is professional history, but thrived outside it in a vibrant historical culture that found expression in a rich grid of forms – literal, visual and

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<sup>274</sup> Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 1-27.

<sup>275</sup> Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1-2, quoted in Stefan Berger, Chris Lorenz, Billie Melman, eds, *Popularizing National Pasts: 1800 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 4.

material – in institutions, in the marketplace, and in groups’ and individuals’ social lives and their imaginary.<sup>276</sup>

Despite the abundance of literature on the subject of multiple national pasts or plural histories—much like public history studies—the discourse has been primarily restricted to European and North American history, with scant attention paid to modern Chinese history.

This chapter examines three case studies, each exploring different narratives presented through various means of representation, designed for distinct target audiences. The first case study investigates a 1981 graphic biography of Sun Yat-sen. Widely circulated, these graphic books were the primary reading materials for children, adolescents, and some adults in China during the 1980s. These books provided one of the most accessible forms of visual representation prior to the Internet’s widespread availability in China. The second case study scrutinises the latest national history textbooks in the PRC, a new version compiled by the Ministry of Education from 2016. As compulsory materials, these textbooks significantly influence the historical understanding of generations of citizens in the PRC. The final case study centres on the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Guangzhou. This location is one of several physical sites honouring Sun Yat-sen. It functions as a tourist attraction, a venue for official ceremonies, a leisure space for local residents, and a site of memory. The chapter will probe whether the image of Sun Yat-sen remains consistent across these virtual and physical spaces.

These popular representations of Sun Yat-sen incorporate more details and background information about his life and revolutionary experiences, compared to the references in speeches and commemorations examined in the previous chapter. In comparison to government-organised commemorations, popular narratives—embedded in

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<sup>276</sup> Berger, Lorenz, and Melman, “Introduction,” in *Popularizing National Pasts*, 2.



public education syllabuses, children's reading materials, films, or city attractions—are more familiar to the general public and thus can exert a more decisive influence on collective memory. The chapter will analyse the focal points of these longer narratives about Sun Yat-sen's life, investigate the motivations behind these representations, examine their similarities and differences, and consider the impact of these historical representations on collective memory.

In his seminal work, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, philosopher Paul Ricoeur classifies the process of creating historical narrative into two distinct stages. These stages are represented by the divided chapter titles: “The Documentary Phase: Archived Memory” and “Explanation/Understanding.”<sup>277</sup> In the second phase, historians inevitably employ what Ricoeur refers to as the “scientific imagination,” transcending proof and documentary evidence to engage with personal and public memory.<sup>278</sup> Undoubtedly, the general public also engages in historical explanation when encountering historical materials, similar to the process undertaken by historians. Often without a conscious commitment to treating history as a discipline, the public may potentially utilise memory and imagination more freely than historians. As a result, their narratives may appear less logical and consistent, yet these narratives continue to shape an individual's understanding of the world around them.

Upon studying the representation of history in Chinese media,<sup>279</sup> Gotelind Müller raises a question about the problem of “public/popular history” in China. Müller highlights the central role of the state in shaping public history and identity formation, emphasising the tight control over history education and state-sponsored media and

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<sup>277</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 146, 182.

<sup>278</sup> Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 182.

<sup>279</sup> Gotelind Müller, *Representing History in Chinese Media: the TV Drama Zou Xiang Gonghe (Towards the Republic)* (Berlin: Lit, 2007), 1-23.

museums. Non-state actors are allowed to participate in the history “market” only if their contributions do not challenge the state’s interpretative monopoly.<sup>280</sup> Müller concludes by suggesting that the Chinese case serves as a reminder that the “Western” market system and public sphere are not universally applicable. In this thesis, the terms “public” and “popular” are used mostly interchangeably.<sup>281</sup> However, this thesis acknowledges that both terms reflect a diverse body of population in China, whose cultural awareness is largely shaped by the state’s propaganda and typical education but who can actively and independently respond to the received information.

The case studies in this chapter each involve a combination of textual and visual narratives, are influenced or determined by the tone of communist propaganda and reach a broad audience of different age groups and educational backgrounds while being open to individual interpretations. As Serhy Yekelchuk states in his research on historical memories in Soviet Ukraine, individuals can develop personal or shared understandings of the past that differ from the prescribed interpretation, based on their personal experiences of learning.<sup>282</sup>

In the case of Russian-Ukrainian relations, the collapse of the Soviet Union revealed that Stalinist memory politics in non-Russian states were not successful, as individuals tended to generate alternative readings when presented with state-approved historical narratives (or, as Yekelchuk points out, “audience could read differently even the most impeccable cultural product”).<sup>283</sup> Intellectuals also evidently deviated from the prescribed course,<sup>284</sup> despite the social context. During the imperial period, China had

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<sup>280</sup> Gotelind Muller, “Some Thoughts on The Problem of ‘Popular/Public History’ in China,” *Public and Popular History* 15 no. 2 (2013): 231.

<sup>281</sup> Muller, “Some Thoughts on The Problem of ‘Popular/Public History’ in China,” 237.

<sup>282</sup> Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin’s Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 8.

<sup>283</sup> Yekelchuk, *Stalin’s Empire of Memory*, 12.

<sup>284</sup> Yekelchuk, *Stalin’s Empire of Memory*, 12.

already developed its method of (re-)interpreting historical figures to spread political information, and cults of individuals were an essential element bridging the empire and its ruling subjects.<sup>285</sup> The PRC, influenced by Soviet Union policies during the early years of the state, has also been working to achieve a “coherent community of memory.”<sup>286</sup> This chapter examines how Sun Yat-sen’s legacy, an apparently “impeccable cultural product”, has been received through the lens of contemporary representations.

- *The Imaginary Childhood of Sun Yat-sen in his 1981 Graphic Biographies*

The graphic narrative, particularly graphic books as a means to represent history, has garnered attention in the fields of history and education.<sup>287</sup> *The Cambridge History of the Graphic Novel* defines the graphic novel as “a specific medium of the comic form, which displays a number of prototypical features that can be read, compared and analysed.”<sup>288</sup> However, historians tend to underestimate the value of graphic publications or comic books in shaping historical perspectives.

The graphic book this chapter selects to analyse is a graphic biography of Sun Yat-sen, published by Shanghai People’s Fine Arts Publishing House in 1981, as a part of the series called “Stories of Modern Chinese History (中国近代史故事 *Zhongguo jindaishi gushi*)”. This graphic biography or comic strip (连环画 *Lianhuanhua*) uses a

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<sup>285</sup> Ronald C. Po, “Shi Lang: hero or villain? His evolving legacy in China and Taiwan,” *Modern Asian Studies*, (2017): 5.

<sup>286</sup> Yekelchik, *Stalin’s Empire of Memory*, 12.

<sup>287</sup> For example, see: Alicia C. Decker and Mauricio Castro, “Teaching History with Comic Books: A Case Study of Violence, War, and the Graphic Novel,” *The History Teacher* 45, no. 2 (2012): 169-87; Michael Cromer and Penney Clark, “Getting Graphic with the Past: Graphic Novels and the Teaching of History.” *Theory & Research in Social Education* 35, no. 4 (2007): 574-91; Aaron Humphrey, “Beyond Graphic Novels: Illustrated Scholarly Discourse and the History of Educational Comics.” *Media International Australia* 151, no. 1 (2014): 73-80.

<sup>288</sup> See Jan Baetens, Hugo Frey, and Stephen E Tabachnick, *The Cambridge History of the Graphic Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1-3.

combination of text and images to represent Sun Yat-sen's life story, including his childhood and adolescence, combining features of Chinese woodcut and medieval woodcut tradition and is influenced by early American graphic novels.<sup>289</sup> The publisher, Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House, was established in 1952 and, after 1958, aligned with the political atmosphere closely until 1981 when Qian Daxin<sup>290</sup> announced that the publisher "will no longer one-sidedly stressing coordination with politics as it did after the Great Leap Forward in 1958."<sup>291</sup> There are other graphic and non-illustrated biographies of Sun Yat-sen in the Chinese book market; nevertheless, the one this chapter selected to analyse was arguably the most representative comic version of the storytelling because it was published at the peak of the development of Chinese comic books (1981) and by one of the largest graphic-related publishers in the country.

Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936) and Zheng Zhenduo 郑振铎 (1898-1958),<sup>292</sup> two of the most influential intellectuals in modern China, both advocated for the promotion of Chinese graphic books for children and beyond, including for the art community in China. Lu Xun was a committed supporter of using visual media to teach students History and other subjects. In the early years of the republican period, most Chinese intellectuals

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<sup>289</sup> For some English studies on the graphic books in the PRC, see: Julia Frances Andrews. *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); John A Lent. *Illustrating Asia: Comics, Humor Magazines, and Picture Book*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001).

<sup>290</sup> Qian Daxin 钱大昕 joined the Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House in 1952, and was one of the active propaganda poster designers since the 1950s. See: "Qian Daxin (钱大昕)," *Chinese posters.net*, <https://chineseposters.net/artists/qiandaxin>, accessed on 1 May 2023.

<sup>291</sup> Qian Daxin 钱大昕, "让小人书发挥更大的作用—上海人民美术出版社钱大昕同志的发言(摘要) [Let Little People's Books Play A Greater Role – Speech By Mr. Qian Daxin of Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House (Abstract)]," *出版工作 Publishing Work* 06 (1982): 13-17.

<sup>292</sup> 中国现代美术全集编辑委员会 The Editorial Committee of the Complete Collection of Modern Chinese Art, *中国现代美术全集: 连环画卷 [The Complete Collection of Modern Chinese Art: A Volume of Comic Books]*, (Beijing: 中国连环画出版社 Chinese Comic Books Publishing House, 1988).

considered comic strips as inferior literature mainly used for propaganda. To oppose this opinion, Lu Xun compares comic strips to frescoes in Italy featuring stories from the Bible, the Ajanta cave murals presenting the birth and rebirth of Buddha, and Chinese *Kong Zi Sheng Ji Tu* (孔子圣迹图 *Kongzi Shengji Tu*) reflecting the life stories of Confucius.<sup>293</sup> Lu Xun argues that all of these were created for propaganda purpose but had significant educational meaning and later were considered as invaluable fine arts; therefore, one should not underestimate the value of comic strips and, he further stresses, the masses will appreciate this type of literature.<sup>294</sup> He believes that comic can exaggerate certain features of the events or characters and reflect the reality in the meantime.<sup>295</sup> Zheng Zhenduo emphasises the relationship between graphics and text in comic strips and started to publish graphic novels (图画故事 *Tu hua gu shi*) and comic strips in the magazine *Children's World* (儿童世界 *Er tong shi jie*) for which Zheng acted as the chief editor from 1922 to 1941. Zheng contributed to not only the development of Children's literature in China but also the scholarly research on the traditional woodcut.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> “The ‘孔子圣迹图 [Picture of Confucius’s Sacred Signs]’ in the Ming Dynasty is a comical picture reflecting the life stories of Confucius” <https://www.alamy.com/the-in-the-ming-dynasty-is-a-comical-picture-reflecting-the-life-stories-of-confucius-image243417452.html>, accessed on 10 May 2020.

<sup>294</sup> Lu Xun 鲁迅, “‘連環圖畫’辯護 [Defending the Comic Strip],” *文學月報 Literature Monthly* 1 no. 4 (1932): 33-35; ---, “‘文藝的大眾化 [The Popularisation of Arts and Culture],” *大眾文藝 Public Art* 2 no. 3 (1930): 285-286.

<sup>295</sup> Lu Xun 鲁迅, “‘漫談’漫畫’ [Talking about Comics]” (28 February 1935), <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/reference-books/luxun/19/017.htm>, accessed on 1 May 2023.

<sup>296</sup> For example, see: Zheng Zhenduo 郑振铎, *中国古代木刻画选集 [Selected Ancient Chinese Woodcuts]* (Beijing: People’s Fine Arts Publishing House, 1999).



Figure 12: The magazine *Children's World* (儿童世界 *Er tong shi jie*)<sup>297</sup>

Figure 13: Comic strips of Lu Xun's novel, *Blessing* (祝福 *Zhufu*), by Feng Zikai in 1939<sup>298</sup>

Artists like Feng Zikai answered the writers' call (See Figure 12) and further developed the style and content of graphic narratives in China.<sup>299</sup> After 1949, graphic novels and comics continued to be one of the dominant forms of popular literature. Comic books were also called "little people's books" (小人书 *Xiao ren shu*) and presented longer stories of which the topics range from romance and *Wuxia* (武侠 martial heroes) stories, which were popular since the Republican era, to stories featuring the Red Army and Chinese peasants during Sino-Japanese War.<sup>300</sup>

<sup>297</sup> "[The Cover Page]," *Children's World* (儿童世界 *Er tong shi jie*) 28 no. 5 (1931): 1.

<sup>298</sup> The Comic books of the Republic of China provided by the National Library of China. <http://www.zhlhh.com/ReadRoom/aamglhh/article/yj/83.jpg>, access on 12 June 2020.

<sup>299</sup> Barmé Geremie, *An Artistic Exile: A Life of Feng Zikai (1898-1975)*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 236-269.

<sup>300</sup> A'ying 阿英, *中国连环图画史话 [The history of Chinese comic books]* (Beijing: 北京: People's Fine Art Publishing House, 1984), 20-25.

The development of graphic books or comic strips in the PRC has been unique. These visual-based narratives catered to the needs of the newly established PRC, seeking to popularise socialist ideologies among the less literate population. Therefore, Chinese comic strips in the 1950s served as a vital form of entertainment for both elite and non-elite communities. On 5 June 1949, an article in *People's Daily* advocated for the use of “comic strips (小人书 *Xiao Ren Shu*),” which is “a simple form of pictures” with plots and has advantages in “portraying the richness of real life content and conveying ideas and emotions in a detailed and specific way,” as an extracurricular reading for primary school students and a source of knowledge for “non-literate or moderately literate masses and soldiers.”<sup>301</sup> Comic strips had been popular among the working class in Republican China, especially in cities such as Shanghai and Beijing outside of the communist regime; but pictures from the Republican era were considered “toxic old content (含有毒素的旧内容 *Hanyou dusu de jiu neirong*)” in the early PRC.<sup>302</sup> Consequently, comic strips in the PRC underwent a transformation (改造 *gaizao*) into a medium of mass entertainment for the socialist state since the 1950s.

After the repression of various forms of literature and publications over the period of the Cultural Revolution, a slow but steady revival of Chinese printing presses emerged

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<sup>301</sup> Wang Xianyue 王先岳, “思想改造与宏大叙事—1950–1960 年代连环画的演进与艺术特质 [Thought Reform and Grand Narrative — Evolution and Artistic Characteristic of 1950-1960's Picture-story Book],” *Journal of Xinjiang Arts Institute* 10 no.4 (2012): 36-42.

<sup>302</sup> Li Wenqiu 李文秋, “中华人民共和国成立七十年来连环画之演变 [The Evolution of Comic Strips in the Seventy Years since the Founding of the People's Republic of China],” *荣宝斋 Rongbaozhai* 2019/05 (2019), 164-193. For a timeline of the development of Chinese comic strips, see The National Art Museum of China 中国美术馆, “中国连环画发展大事记 [A Chronology of the Development of Chinese Comic Books],” June 2016, [http://www.namoc.org/xwzx/zt/lhh/dsj/201605/t20160531\\_298904.htm](http://www.namoc.org/xwzx/zt/lhh/dsj/201605/t20160531_298904.htm), accessed on 1 May 2023.

in the 1970s and reached a peak in the beginning of the 1980s. In 1980, over 1,000 comic strips were published nationwide, with more than 400 million copies printed. In 1982, the number of new publications increased to over 2,100, totalling 860 million copies.<sup>303</sup> During this period, each comic strip typically had more than one million copies printed. After 1985, Chinese comic strip creation and reading declined drastically, replaced by new forms of media and the increasing readership of Japanese-style comic series (Manga or 动漫 *Dongman*)<sup>304</sup> among younger generations in Chinese cities.<sup>305</sup> As a result, Chinese comic strips become a cultural product from the past which influenced a particular generation of Chinese readers (including the cosmopolitan and rural population) from 1980 to 1985. The study of graphic narratives in history is revealing, as they provide insights into the ways historical events and ideologies are represented and disseminated. The unique development of graphic books or comic strips in the PRC highlights their potential as valuable sources for historical research and understanding the broader social and political context.

In most popular materials shaping the public memory of Sun Yat-sen, biographical writings, including those adapted into graphic narratives, serve as the centrepiece of the narrative. Scholars have studied the role of biographies in international constructions of

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<sup>303</sup> Wang Yuxing 王玉兴, 连环画收藏指南 [A Guide to Collecting Comic Books] (Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publishing House, 1999), 47, cited in Li 李, “中华人民共和国成立七十年来连环画之演变 [The Evolution of Comic Strips in the Seventy Years since the Founding of the People's Republic of China],” 183.

<sup>304</sup> For studies of Japanese history presented in Manga, see: Roman Rosenbaum ed, *Manga and the Representation of Japanese History* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012); Nissim Otmazgin and Rebecca Suter eds, *Rewriting History in Manga: Stories for the Nation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

<sup>305</sup> Li 李, “中华人民共和国成立七十年来连环画之演变 [The Evolution of Comic Strips in the Seventy Years since the Founding of the People's Republic of China],” 185; Li Zhengyu 李振宇, “文化转型时代的连环画兴衰 [The Rise and Fall of the Comic Strip in an Era of Cultural Transition],” *南京艺术学院学报 Journal of Nanjing Arts Institute (Fine Arts & Design)* 2015/01(2015): 107-108.



leaders' and revolutionaries' cults. Katerina Clark argues that Stalinist biographical representations were not modern inventions; the root can be found in radical fiction and mythical writings in the nineteenth century and as early as the medieval period.<sup>306</sup> In the PRC, Sun is defined as the revolutionary pioneer whose ultimate goal of a strong, independent Chinese republic was finally achieved by the Chinese Communist Party. Sun's biographies circulating nowadays also share features of Soviet-style writing, in which the "great man" was portrayed as the person who changed the development of society and guided the masses toward a new era.

In a typical communist leader's biography, as argued by Balázs Apor, the individual character is abstract, and there are rarely descriptions of his private life; instead, the person's experience related to the revolution is highlighted and idealised. In most cases, Sun's literary biographies, film adaptations,<sup>307</sup> history textbooks and exhibits in Sun Yat-sen's memorial hall follow this phenomenon. However, graphic narratives and biographies targeting younger readers have taken a different approach by including some aspects of Sun's private life, such as his childhood and family, to make the narrative more engaging. Discussing the implications of incorporating these private life details offers insights into how this approach impacts the perception and understanding of Sun's life and contributions to Chinese history. By comparing and contrasting different portrayals of Sun Yat-sen in various media, we can better understand the nuances in historical representation and the role of graphic narratives in shaping public memory.

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<sup>306</sup> Balázs Apor, *The Invisible Shining* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2017), 97; K. Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 15-16.

<sup>307</sup> In particularly the 1986 film "孙中山传 Sun Zhongshan Zhuan [Sun Yat-sen]" directed by Ding Yinnan 丁荫楠, in which four failed uprisings and the deaths of four of Sun's close allies make up the plot of the biographical film. Ding Yinnan 丁荫楠, "我的追求 [My Pursuit]," *电影艺术 Film Art* 1987/02 (1987): 3-4.

Since the last peak of Chinese comic books in the 1980s, they gradually disappeared from the younger generation's view and are now one of the most popular collectable items.<sup>308</sup> However, this form of storytelling did not entirely disappear, as picture books for children and other works of contemporary illustrators continue to be made. In 2008, China attempted to make traditional Chinese comics a national intangible cultural heritage.<sup>309</sup> The Chinese National Art Fund supported the digitalisation of Chinese comic books, making them accessible to all Internet users in China, which is also the source of materials for this analysis.<sup>310</sup> In 2019, the exhibit "A Century of Chinese Comic Strip History Exhibition" was held at the National Library of China in Beijing and various municipal libraries in other major cities.<sup>311</sup> Since 2014, under Xi Jinping's instruction, the publishers of comic books in Beijing published hundreds of newly printed comics as a series of reading materials for primary school students in the capital.<sup>312</sup>

Sun Yat-sen's childhood was described in detail in the graphic biography authored by Chi Sen 迟森 (Text) and Wang Zheng 王征 (Pictures), showcasing a the upbringing of a long-lasting public role model, a national hero. The focus on Sun's childhood also made him more accessible and relatable to children reading about Sun.

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<sup>308</sup> Zhang Zhongmin 张忠民, "中国连环画的发展历程及收藏价值 [The Development of Chinese Comic Books and Their Collecting Value],"

<http://www.zhlhh.com/ReadRoom/aamglhh/article/yj2.html>, accessed on 12 June 2020.

<sup>309</sup> ChinaNews.com, "传统连环画有望成为国家级非物质文化遗产 [Traditional Comic Strips are now Expected to Become National Intangible Cultural Heritage]," 30 September 2008, <https://china.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnJl0I2>, accessed on 13 June 2020.

<sup>310</sup> Chinese National Art Funds,

<http://sso.gzlib.org.cn/interlibSSO/goto/45/=fixrii9ygkkg9bnl/>, accessed 13 June 2020.

<sup>311</sup> CCDY.com, "'中国连环画百年历史展' 在国家图书馆举办 [A Century of Chinese Comic Strip History Exhibition' held at the National Library]," 2 January 2019, [http://www.ndcnc.gov.cn/zixun/yaowen/201901/t20190102\\_1401284.htm](http://www.ndcnc.gov.cn/zixun/yaowen/201901/t20190102_1401284.htm), accessed on 13 June 2020.

<sup>312</sup> He Yulin 何玉麟, "关于中国连环画出版的思考 [Reflections on the Publication of Chinese Comic Books]," *出版参考 Publishing Reference* 2022/06 (2022): 27-30.

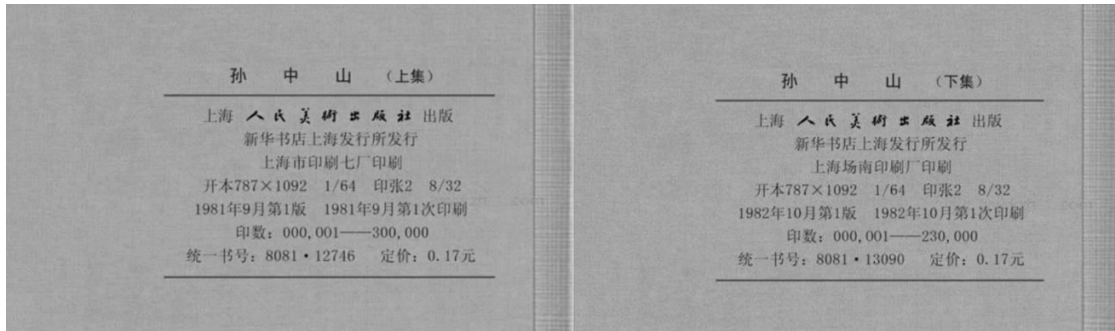
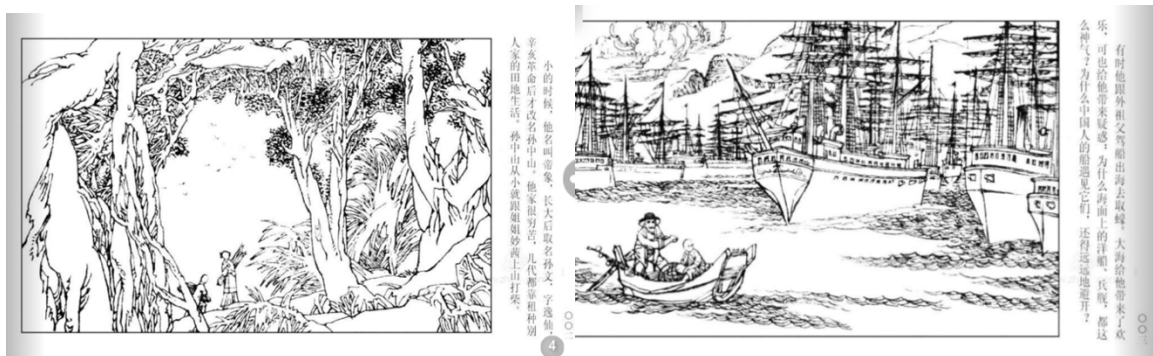


Figure 14: Sun Yat-sen (Episode 1)

Figure 15: Sun Yat-sen (Episode 2)



Figures 16 and 17: Sun Yat-sen was cutting wood in the mountain with his sister and collecting oysters in the sea with his grandfather.<sup>313</sup>

The text accompanying the graphic storytelling of Sun Yat-sen's life was adopted from earlier biographies of Sun with the author's modification.<sup>314</sup> This book starts by introducing Cuiheng Village, Sun Yat-sen's hometown, following his experience of cutting wood in the mountain with his sister and collecting oysters in the sea with his grandfather (See Figures 15 and 16). The scenery and the romantic portrayal were not featured in biographies of Sun from the Republican era, nor were Sun's idealised childhood surrounded by mountains and the sea.<sup>315</sup> Despite being an adaptation of earlier

<sup>313</sup> Chi Sen 迟森 (Text) and Wang Zheng 王征 (Pictures), *Sun Yat-sen (孙中山)* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 1981), 4-5.

<sup>314</sup> The graphic book does not state the sources of the biography; for example, see: Shao Zhuanlie, *孙中山 Sun Yat-sen* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1980).

<sup>315</sup> For example, see: Zhao Jingyuan 赵景源, *孙中山 Sun Yat-sen* (Beijing: 商务印书馆 Commercial Press, 1936); Huang Chaoxiong 黄超雄, *孙中山 Sun Yat-sen* (Beijing: 中华书局 Zhonghua Book Company, 1935).

works, Chi Sen and Wang Zheng's graphic book differs from text biographies in the 1980s. For example, Shao Zhuanlie's biography (1980) took a different approach when describing Sun's childhood: "Sun Yat-sen's childhood was full of hard work and suffering without happiness."<sup>316</sup> The textual biography's claims exaggerated or arguably fabricated the childhood of great hardship so that the image of Sun conforms better to communist expectations that heroes must be from the working class. Although Sun was born into a modest family, he later had access to a privileged foreign education between 1879 and 1883<sup>317</sup> through his family's connection (Sun's elder brother Sun Mei immigrated to Hawaii with their uncle who had a business there).<sup>318</sup> American and European historians often do not draw conclusions regarding the significance of Sun's earlier years of life, due to the lack of record, except stating that that he experienced the coastal civilisation of maritime China through his childhood and adolescence living in Canton, Hawaii, Hong Kong and Macao.<sup>319</sup>

However, in the graphic biography, a causal link is drawn between Sun's childhood life and the origin of his revolutionary thoughts: "The sea brought him joy, but it also brought him doubts: Why are the foreign ships and warships on the sea so complacent? Why do Chinese ships have to avoid them when they encounter each other?"<sup>320</sup> Furthermore, this 1981 graphic book devoted twenty pages to illustrating the first thirteen years of Sun's life (the years that Marie-Claire Bergère's biography of Sun

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<sup>316</sup> Shao, *孙中山 Sun Yat-sen*, 2. "孙中山的童年, 没有快乐, 没有幸福, 充满了辛劳与苦难。"

<sup>317</sup> Lorenz Gonschor, "Revisiting the Hawaiian Influence on the Political Thought of Sun Yat-sen," *The Journal of Pacific History* 52 no. 1 (2017): 52-67.

<sup>318</sup> Marie-Claire Bergère, translated by Janet Lloyd, *Sun Yat-sen*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 11-13.

<sup>319</sup> Bergère, *Sun Yat-sen*, 13, 20-23.

<sup>320</sup> Chi and Wang, *Sun Yat-sen (孙中山)*, 2. "大海给他带来了欢乐, 可也给他带来疑惑: 为什么海面上的洋船、兵舰, 都这么神气? 为什么中国人的船遇到它们, 还得远远地避开?"

spent merely one paragraph on due to the lack of materials).<sup>321</sup> More stories present in the 1981 graphic book feature little Sun Yat-sen as the saviour who questioned the nation's plight and determined to change it, using the detailed narrative and the characters' dialogues showing how Sun responded to his sister's foot binding and the takeover of a mansion in the village by some Manchurian officials. These stories set two enemies for little Sun – the old Qing society and the Western bullies. Chi Sen and Wang Zheng, as well as other biographies of Sun published in the 1980s, use Sun's experience in Cuiheng from 1866 to 1879 to show readers problems that China was facing at that time; furthermore, they tend to credit him with diagnosing China's problems at a young age.<sup>322</sup>

Chinese authors in the 1980s and later utilise Sun Yat-sen's childhood experiences to highlight the early development of his revolutionary thoughts. The description of his observations of Chinese and foreign ships, and their interactions on the sea, serves as a metaphor for the broader context of China's subjugation and humiliation by foreign powers during that period. By evoking these powerful images, the authors of the graphic biography aim to create an emotional connection with the readers, while also showcasing Sun Yat-sen's growing awareness of the inequalities and injustices faced by China at the time. This portrayal simplifies the complexities of Sun Yat-sen's life and ideological development.

Besides historical figures, graphic books published around the same time also adapted subjects such as Chinese classical literature, folk tales, and myths.<sup>323</sup> Sun Yat-sen

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<sup>321</sup> Bergère, *Sun Yat-sen*, 24.

<sup>322</sup> Shao Zhuanlie, *孙中山 Sun Yat-sen* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1980), 2-3; Li Fengyu, *孙中山 Sun Yat-sen* (Nanjing: Jiangsu Wenyi Publishing House, 1999), 4-6; Chi and Wang, *Sun Yat-sen (孙中山)*, 2-4.

<sup>323</sup> Zhu Liwen 朱丽雯, "1949-1989 年传统题材连环画创作研究 [Study on the Creation of Traditional Subjects Comic Strips from 1949-1989]," MA Thesis, (北京印刷学院 Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication, 2017), 18-19.

was elected to be included in this genre of writing, targeting children and creating an emotional and personal connection between the readers and the subject, making the young readers inclined to identify with and care about the historical figure.

The question lies in how the publication of this graphic biography has influenced its readers' "national identity" in a fragmented way. It is also worth noting that none of the narratives embedded in the media discussed in the chapter existed or worked in isolation. In the case of the graphic biography, researchers can benefit from the works of sociologists collecting qualitative data on picture books, which "provide equality of access to narratives and ideas that would otherwise be denied to young readers."<sup>324</sup> After working with children to discuss their reading of selected picture books, Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles conclude: "Children frequently used personal analogy to try to understand the feelings of characters or animals in the books and their responses were often sympathetic and thoughtful," and, furthermore, "moral issues held the children's attention."<sup>325</sup>

Combining the case study of the representations of Sun Yat-sen's childhood in the graphic book/comic strips with the finding of Arizpe and Styles, one argues that it is through rewriting and drawing life of the subject that the authors (in the case of *Sun Yat-sen*, possibly the Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House from which the job was assigned to the authors) communicate with their readers. Through the fictional details and dialogues of little Sun Yat-sen's life in Cuiheng village, the person reading and engaging with the materials sees life in the coastal village in the late nineteenth century, seemingly representing the rest of China under Manchurian rule at a time when the nation was weak, and the people suffered. The text and pictures also encourage moral judgements, which,

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<sup>324</sup> Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles, *Children Reading Pictures: Interpreting Visual Texts* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), 223.

<sup>325</sup> Arizpe and Styles, *Children Reading Pictures*, 225.

as illustrated, Sun did at a young age, as readers identify with young Sun's sense of injustice.

The narrative in Chinese comics, like the graphic biography of Sun, lost its readership after the mid-1980s. Since then, young people in China have had more and more options to explore historical topics or narratives that interest them. Among all sources of historical knowledge, few have the influences and geographical coverage of geographic areas like a nationwide standardised textbook. In the latter textbook narrative, Sun's childhood no longer takes up the length and body of the text as it did in the 1981 graphic biography. History class syllabuses feature the legend of focus on Sun's adulthood, and middle school pupils in the 2020s were expected to comprehend the revolutionary activities Sun participated in during the late-Qing period. Graphic narratives were thus unique in seeking to help children sympathise with by focusing on his own childhood. The genre gave license to invent scenes from Sun's childhood to fill the gap in the historical record, whereas textbooks are driven more by the findings of historians.

- ***Sun Yat-sen, as the Symbol of the Chinese Revolution, in the 2016 History Curriculum***

Sun Yat-sen's image as the symbol of modern China opposing the corrupt Qing government and aggressive foreign powers is vividly depicted in school textbooks. Since 2004, the People's Education Press (PEP) textbook series has been the most extensively used curriculum in China.<sup>326</sup> However, the curriculum reform in 2016 replaced the order version of PEP textbooks and other regional curriculums in middle schools with a nationwide version called "The Unified Version Composed by The Ministry of

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<sup>326</sup> “全国各地高中历史使用的教材版本 [the Versions of Textbooks Used in High School History Teaching Throughout the Country]”, Wenku.baidu.com, <https://wenku.baidu.com/view/a874163f10661ed9ad51f361.html?re=view>, accessed on 16 April 2017.

Education” (shortened to “部编版 *Bu Bian Ban*”). This reform aims to unify all school textbooks on three critical subjects, Ethics and Law (道德与法治 *Daode yu Fazhi*), Chinese (语文 *Yuwen*), and History (历史 *Lishi*).<sup>327</sup> The nationwide implementation, encompassing both urban and rural schools,<sup>328</sup> was scheduled for completion between 2019 and 2022.<sup>329</sup>

Textbooks, as Gerdien Jonker describes, are “the bottom line of what society knows.”<sup>330</sup> In the 2010s, research on Chinese history textbooks show that the history in Chinese secondary school textbooks has been “deliberately designed to bolster the Party’s authority,”<sup>331</sup> and textbooks are often “successful in persuading their readers to accept narratives that conform to Chinese communist ideology.”<sup>332</sup> It is thus justified that,

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<sup>327</sup> A few recent English-language articles examine the new version of textbooks, including: Xu Shuqin, “Ideology and Politics in Junior-Secondary Chinese History Textbooks: Comparing Two Versions Published in the 21st Century.” *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 51, no. 3 (2021): 448-468; Yan Fei, Zhou Zhong, Wang Haoning and Wen Qiao, “Grafting Identity: History Textbook Reform and Identity-Building in Contemporary China.” *Journal of Educational Change* 22, no. 2 (2021): 175-190; Ye Wangbei, “The Return of ‘One Guideline, One Textbook’ Policy: Moral Education Textbook and Teacher Interaction in China.” *Comparative Education Review* 66, no. 1 (2022): 60-79.

<sup>328</sup> However, the use of language and the content in these curriculums are largely urban-cantered, as demonstrated in Ye, “The Return of ‘One Guideline, One Textbook’ Policy,” 75.

<sup>329</sup> Ministry of Education of the PRC, “全面落实教材建设国家事权 系统描绘大中小学教材建设蓝图 [Full implementation of the state’s authority in the construction of teaching materials; systematic depiction of a blueprint for the construction of teaching materials in schools and universities],” [http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xwfb/s271/202001/t20200107\\_414566.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s271/202001/t20200107_414566.html), accessed on 10 January 2020.

<sup>330</sup> Gerdien Jonker, “Imagining Islam: European encounters with the Muslim world through the lens of German textbooks,” in *Perceptions of Islam in Europe: Culture, Identity and the Muslim’ Other*, ed. Luigi Cajani (Madrid: Santillana, 2009), 37.

<sup>331</sup> Robert Weatherley and Coirle Magee, “Using the Past to Legitimise the Present: The Portrayal of Good Governance in Chinese History Textbooks,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 47, no. 1 (2018): 43.

<sup>332</sup> Isabella Jackson and Du Siyi, “The Impact of History Textbooks on Young Chinese People’s Understanding of the Past: A Social Media Analysis,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 51, no. 2 (2022): 214.



despite the biased version of the past in the uniform national textbooks,<sup>333</sup> the deliberately chosen and carefully crafted historical narratives in history textbooks are a representation that should not be overlooked in studies of the creation of historical conciseness and public memories in China.

Furthermore, the learning experience of Chinese students contrasts with some educational systems in other countries. In Chinese and some Asian education traditions, memorisation often precedes understanding.<sup>334</sup> However, scholars argue that in the Chinese context, “memorisation can lead to understanding for Chinese students, and that repetition can contribute to higher-level learning outcomes.”<sup>335</sup> Consequently, the content of textbooks assumes a crucial role in the Chinese educational experience.<sup>336</sup>

In the older version of the PEP textbook, Sun Yat-sen was not introduced in an independent section, but his portrait was chosen to be the front page illustration of the last unit in the book, entitled “The Trend of Anti-Invasion and Seeking Democracy in Modern China (近代中国反侵略、求民主的潮流 *Jindai Zhongguo Fan Qinlue Qiu Minzhu de Chaoliu*)” that covers modern Chinese History from the Opium War till the end of the Sino-Japanese War (See Figure 16). The newly composed *Bu Bian Ban* textbook presents Sun Yat-sen’s life in greater detail to students. Lesson 8, spanning four pages, is dedicated

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<sup>333</sup> Ye, “The Return of ‘One Guideline, One Textbook’ Policy,” 60-79.

<sup>334</sup> The extensive use of memorisation is also evident in Japanese and Indian contexts. See: Nirmala Rao and Carol K. K. Chan, “Moving Beyond Paradoxes: Understanding Chinese Learners and Their Teachers,” in *Revisiting the Chinese Learner: Changing Contexts, Changing Education*, edited by Carol K. K. Chan and Nirmala Rao (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2010), 6-8.

<sup>335</sup> Chan and Rao, “Moving Beyond Paradoxes,” 6-8.

<sup>336</sup> For an overview of the development of the Chinese teaching research system, see: Wei Liang, Lu Litao, and Wang Hongyao, “The History, Features, and Prospects of the Chinese Style Teaching Research System.” *Chinese Education & Society* 53, no. 5-6 (2020): 255-273. Moreover, Yan Fei, Zhou Zhong, Wang Haoning and Wen Qiao’s article demonstrates, through interviews with teachers and students in Beijing, that students’ learning in classrooms usually will not be supplemented with any “facts that contradicted the textbook.” Yan, Zhou, Wang and Wen, “Grafting Identity,” 175-190.

to Sun's early revolutionary activities, the formation of the united league of underground resistance movements, the Tongmenghui (同盟会) that he founded, and his development of the Three People's Principles,<sup>337</sup> followed by Lesson 9 on the Xinhai Revolution, Lesson 10 on the founding of the Republic of China, and Lesson 11 on the Beiyang government.<sup>338</sup> Sun Yat-sen was selected to be the representative figure for the spread of revolutionary ideas in China from the mid-1890s to 1910s.

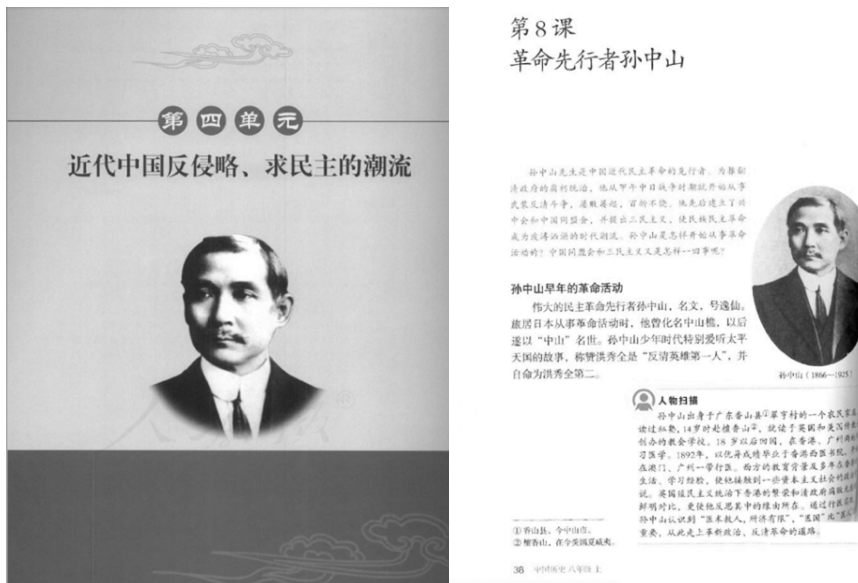


Figure 18: Unit 4 - The trend of anti-aggression and seeking democracy in modern China<sup>339</sup>

Figure 19: Lesson 8 – The Revolutionary Pioneer Sun Yat-sen<sup>340</sup>

<sup>337</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Eight-Grade Volume 1* (Beijing: People's Education Press, 2016), 38-41.

<sup>338</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Seventh Grade Volume 1*, 42-49.

<sup>339</sup> People's Education Press Curriculum Institute (课程研究所) and History Curriculum and Teaching Materials Research and Development Centre (历史课程教材研究开发中心) ed. *历史1 必修 History 1 Compulsory* (Beijing: People's Education Press, 2007), 49.

<sup>340</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Seventh Grade Volume 1*, 36.

The introductory text of the *Bu Bian Ban Chinese History Eighth Grade*<sup>341</sup> Lesson 8 poses a central question for students: “How did Sun Yat-sen start to engage in revolutionary activities?”<sup>342</sup> This inquiry sets the stage for the depiction of Sun’s early exposure to revolutionary ideas, such as his adolescent interest in the Taiping Revolution and his initial encounters with Western ideologies that prompted him to question the Qing rule.<sup>343</sup> This narrative bears a striking resemblance to the storyline presented in the 1980s graphic biography, thereby establishing a continuous thematic thread extending into 2016. Nevertheless, the textbook swiftly transitions from Sun’s early years to his adulthood, with minimal narrative development, underscoring his identity as a “revolutionary pioneer.”

However, Sun Yat-sen’s adulthood being portrayed in the 2016 history textbook is even more fragmented and subjective than his imaginary childhood illustrated in the 1981 graphic biography. Despite being lauded as a figurehead of the Chinese Revolution, Sun’s contributions in the textbook are simplified and condensed. His rejected petition to Li Hongzhang in 1894, the unsuccessful uprising he led in 1895, and the establishment of the Tongmenghui in 1905 are mentioned but lack detailed context or analysis.<sup>344</sup> The narrative neglects to delve into Sun’s ideologies in any depth, with the exception of a brief explanation of the Three People’s Principles provided within a text box below the main body of the textbook narrative.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Grade Eight is equivalent to the second year of secondary school in the Chinese education system, with students in early adolescents (13 to 14 years old).

<sup>342</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Seventh Grade Volume 1*, 38. “孙中山是怎样始从事革命活动的？”

<sup>343</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Seventh Grade Volume 1*, 38.

<sup>344</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Seventh Grade Volume 1*, 39.

<sup>345</sup> In the textbook’s explanation, the Principle of Nationalism (民族 *Minzu*) is to overthrow the Qing empire’s rule, the Principle of Democracy (民权 *Minquan*) is to

The 2016 textbook's portrayal of Sun Yat-sen's life emphasises his "resilient in the face of repeated failures (屡败屡起, 百折不挠 *lǚ bài lǚ qǐ, bǎi zhé bù nǎo*)."<sup>346</sup> On the one hand, the lengthy lesson devoted to the depiction of Sun ensures that he remains a memorable historical figure for students. On the other hand, the generalised and oversimplified narrative overlooks the nuances of his political career and persona, rendering him less relatable to the students. Sun's complex life is thus reduced to a symbol of nationalism and Chineseness, omitting the rich facets of his life that have been commemorated and discussed elsewhere.

Through the two case studies of the most extensively available and accessible text (and illustrations) of Sun Yat-sen, one in the 1980s and the other in the 2010s, both targeting younger readers, it is demonstrated that the Sun's life story in these reading materials is transformed from a constructed and relatable image to a respectful but indistinct persona. By simplifying the narrative of revolution to the ahistorical claim that Sun masterminded it, the revolution is made easier to understand and the nation is given a national hero to celebrate and strengthen national identity and unity. Moreover, the latest version of textbook gives more space to introducing Sun Yat-sen to students than before, aligning the textbooks with Xi Jinping's more concrete ambitions for reunification with Taiwan.

- ***Remembering Sun's Afterlife: The Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall (Guangzhou)***

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establish the Republic, and the Principle of People's Livelihood or Socialism (民生 *Minsheng*) is to monitor and regulate the land price nationwide until all lands become state-owned. Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Seventh Grade Volume 1*, 39.

<sup>346</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Seventh Grade Volume 1*, 38.

Finally, this chapter will utilise Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (Guangzhou) as the last piece of the constructed narrative about Sun Yat-sen. The architect of the Guangzhou Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall also designed Sun Yat-sen's Mausoleum in Nanjing; the latter is larger in size and has gained more attention from scholars on Asian studies as well as architectural historians. Charles Musgrove studies the Mausoleum in terms of how it embodies part of the ceremonial function and meaning, which the Nationalist government initially wished for, but evolves into a site with kaleidoscopic and changing messages.<sup>347</sup>

The consistent element between the Memorial Hall and the Mausoleum is that they were both constructed as “new symbolic template[s] for transforming China's people from ‘loose sand’ into citizens.”<sup>348</sup> This characteristic continues as one of the main features of the buildings and parks. As the paid guide in the Memorial Hall indicated,<sup>349</sup> the building was designed to unite the people and serve the masses' needs. During the Nationalist Era, the Guomindang held their formal meetings there; before every gathering, the party members stood up, faced the stone tablet on the stage on which Sun Yat-sen's will was engraved, and read his words. Besides official functions, the Hall also accommodated functions for ordinary people. In 1935, it was used as the examination hall for the university entrance exam in Guangzhou.

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<sup>347</sup> Charles D. Musgrove, “Monumentality in Nanjing's Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Park,” *Southeast Review of Asian Studies* 29 (2007): 1-19.

<sup>348</sup> Musgrove, “Monumentality in Nanjing's Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Park,” 1. Sun uses “loose sand” to reference the Chinese population that he dismisses as difficult to mould to a purpose. See: Sun Yat-sen, “三民主義 民族主義 第一講 Three People's Principles Minzu (or Civic Nationalism) Lesson one,” 27 January 1924, in Huang Yan 黃彥 ed, *孫文選集 (上冊) Sun Wen's Selected Writings (first volume)* (Guangzhou: Guangdong People's Publishing House, 2006), <http://www.sunyat-sen.org/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=46&id=6638>, accessed on 1 May 2023.

<sup>349</sup> The field trip was taken in 2019 by the author.



Figure 20: “National College Entrance Examination in Guangdong (全國高考在廣東 *Quanguo Gaokao zai Guangdong*)”<sup>350</sup>

This function of accommodating formal ceremonial and political conventions in the city persisted from 1949 until it was replaced by the newly constructed Baiyun International Convention Centre in 2007. A graphic and textual exhibition (in 2019) shows that the site hosted the second meeting of representatives of people of all professions in Guangdong Province (广东省第二届各界人们代表会议) in September 1951, the People’s Group Weddings with 175 newly married couples on 14 October 1952, and a broadcast meeting during which participants listened to the words from leaders like Deng Xiaoping.<sup>351</sup>

<sup>350</sup> “National College Entrance Examination in Guangdong (全國高考在廣東),” *Hanxue Weekly* 5 No.10, (1935): 1.

<sup>351</sup> For example, of the exhibitions, see Figure 18.



Figure 21: A corner of the exhibition board.<sup>352</sup>

Figure 22: Entrance ticket to Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall on 24 August 2019<sup>353</sup>

While the main auditorium acts as a meeting hall for the province, the memorial site provides an exhibition experience. Visitors pay a ten-yuan entry fee to see the interior of the building and the photographic exhibition (see Figure 19). Limited tours with a private tour guide are also available daily at an extra charge. The visiting experience is a conventional style and has not changed along with the rapid development of the city. The designated visiting route starts with an exhibition showing documentation and photographs of Sun's political life (in Chinese and English). The exhibit follows a chronological order, showing selected narratives from the establishment of the Revive China Society in Honolulu and the ten anti-Qing armed uprisings led by Sun and his revolutionary party (all of these failed, but the exhibition's contents state that the events

<sup>352</sup> Picture taken by the author on 24 August 2019.

<sup>353</sup> Picture taken by the author on 24 August 2019.

“marked the victory of the Revolution of 1911”) to Sun’s later political and military struggle with the warlords and his opponent within the party.

Compared to other types of history representation in the public sphere, the Memorial Hall’s exhibition has the advantage of being positioned at the centre of Guangzhou’s old town on what used to be the presidential palace’s location. It attracts local citizens who live nearby and are looking for a place to have a family weekend day out or show the city and the nation’s past to their offspring, as well as travellers from other parts of the country and overseas. The narrative is distinguished from what we have seen in biographers and textbooks; while it still serves the aims of national propaganda (the theme of nationalism), the displayed narrative and the guided tour thrice stress the connection between the great man (伟人 *wei ren*) and the city Guangzhou. The tour guide used the phrase “in our Guangzhou (在我们广州 *zai women guangzhou*)” many times. The carpet in the Hall is printed with the city flower of Guangzhou – the kapok flower (See Figure 20). Notwithstanding the presence of Sun Yat-sen’s legacy throughout the tour, he is presented as an impersonal figure adding significance to the city.



*Figure 23: A corner of the carpet in the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall<sup>354</sup>*

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<sup>354</sup> Picture taken by the author on 24 August 2019.



This particular architectural work in Guangzhou has witnessed changes of regimes several times, including the Military Government (护法军政府 Constitutional Protection Junta), Wang Jingwei's puppet government, Chiang Kai-shek's Guomintang pre- and post-war government, and the establishment and development of the People's Republic of China. It is typical for the significance of a building to remain after the change of regime; however, the theme and function usually change to reflect the new government's values and goals. Nevertheless, all these regimes recognised the original meaning of this memorial hall – a space to hold momentous ceremonies and meetings, accommodate citizens' large-scale activities, and commemorate Sun Yat-sen. The life-size statue of Sun was placed on a high platform in the front garden in 1945 and changed three times due to political reasons but was never removed.<sup>355</sup> The treatment of the statue reveals the government and the public's attitude to what the person represents. Because of the ambiguous writings and speeches of Sun, there is always space for multiple interpretations;<sup>356</sup> therefore, he was able to be treated as a memorable and respectable character in different regimes. In China's official discourse, the historical complexities of Sun give way to the symbol of educating young Chinese about nationalism and modernity.

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<sup>355</sup> The platform was built in 1931 with the construction of the Memorial Hall, and the design of the stone statue was published in 1932. See: “廣州中山紀念堂前石像之設計 [Design of the stone statue in front of Zhongshan Memorial Hall in Guangzhou],” *中华 (上海) Zhonghua (Shanghai)* 13 (1932): 39.

The one installed in 1945 was borrowed from Sun Yat-sen University. See: “中山紀念堂前中山銅像翻新 [Renovation of the bronze statue of Zhongshan in front of Zhongshan Memorial Hall],” *廣州日報 Guangzhou Daily*, 22 February 2005.

<sup>356</sup> See the relevant argument in Michael R. Godley, “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics: Sun Yatsen and the International Development of China,” *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 18 (1987): 109-125.

## *Conclusion*

Through the analyses of graphic, education, and memorial representations of Sun Yat-sen and his life, this chapter highlights the multifaceted images crafted for non-elite audiences in Chinese society, including children, young adults, and local families. These various representations reveal the multiple layers of history in the public sphere in post-Mao China and demonstrate changes over time and across different media. Whereas the 1981 graphic biography pique interest in creating intricate details of Sun's childhood, the 2016 textbook focuses solely on Sun's revolutionary experience as an adult. Although the invented character of young Sun from the graphic biography may have faded with the decline of Chinese comic strips, it still constitutes a significant part of the personal memory of a generation of readers from the 1980s and continues to contribute to the construction of Chinese national identity.

However, later narratives tend to reduce the complexity of Sun Yat-sen into merely a symbol for respect and worship, thus overlooking the contentious interpretations and complexities inherent in his continuous official commemorations. Contrarily, the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Guangzhou, a nearly a-century-old piece of memorial architecture (completed in 1931), and the on-site exhibit displayed in 2019, retain a rich array of objects and materials, allowing for diverse interpretations of this Republican leader in a space dedicated to his memory. The Memorial Hall also remains intimately connected to the evolving city of Guangzhou. As a place for personal leisure and collective nostalgia, it serves as a testament to the enduring relevance of Sun Yat-sen's legacy.

Chapter 3 will broaden the discussion of multiple pasts by considering histories of those who experienced the 1911 Xinhai Revolution as children, and exploring the potential for incorporating subaltern studies in the Chinese context by analysing how

youth and women are appealed to with representations of the Xinhai revolution. Next, building on this chapter's exploration of historical sites and their representations of the past, Chapter 4 will examine the Huanghuagang Mausoleum and the memories associated with the famous Seventy-Two Martyrs.

### **Chapter 3: Voices of the Forgotten: A Pluralistic Examination of Women and Youths' Experience of the 1911 Revolution as Represented in Public Histories, from the 1930s to the 1940s**

The 1911 Xinhai Revolution (辛亥革命 *Xinhai Geming*) evokes the fall of an empire and the rise of a nation.<sup>357</sup> The Revolution, consisted of a series of activities against the Qing government across the country, of which the peak was the Wuchang Uprising in October 1911, heralding the birth of the first Chinese Republic. The event was once considered seismic and held the world's attention. However, nearly a century later, the echoes of the Xinhai Revolution had quieted, and the topic was reduced to a mere staging post in modern Chinese history.<sup>358</sup>

Nevertheless, the centenary of the Xinhai Revolution in 2011 sparked a surge of scholarly activity both within and outside of China. Under the guidance of China's Ministry of Education, Chinese universities initiated nationwide research projects, encouraging scholars to explore various aspects of the Xinhai Revolution. The result was an outpouring of over a hundred research articles and conference papers, each shedding light on distinct facets of the Revolution.<sup>359</sup> Some of these studies proposed fresh directions for future research – integrating existing findings into a comprehensive

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<sup>357</sup> Arif Dirlik and Roxann Prazniak, "The 1911 Revolution: An End and a Beginning," *China Information* 25, no. 3 (2011): 213-231. Or, as Harrison argues, "the 1911 revolution created a new image of the republican citizen" and also "created a new model of the state." See: *Henrietta Harrison, The Making of the Republican Citizen: Political Ceremonies and Symbols in China, 1911-1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 93.

<sup>358</sup> Rana Mitter attributes the declining scholarly attention of the 1911 revolution till 2011 to the ongoing doubts about the significance of this event. See: Rana Mitter, "1911: The Unanchored Chinese Revolution," *The China Quarterly* 208 (2011): 1009. Dirlik and Prazniak also address the ambiguous result of the Revolution, see: Dirlik and Prazniak, "The 1911 Revolution, 213."

<sup>359</sup> For a summary of research on the topic that emerged in 2011, see: Sun Fang 孙芳, "辛亥革命百年研究综述 [A Review of Studies on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Revolution of 1911]," *Journal of Jiangxi Normal University (Social Science)* 46 no.2 (2013): 95-110.

overview, in search of historical truth,<sup>360</sup> and examining how public consciousness of the past influenced the citizens of today.<sup>361</sup> Concurrently, the centenary provided an opportunity for scholars in Chinese studies to gather and share their research findings. An international symposium commemorating the Xinhai Revolution was held in Wuhan in October 2011, drawing “[o]ne hundred and eighty-three scholars from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, the United States, France, Russia, Mongolia, and Australia,” during which 153 papers were exchanged and discussed.<sup>362</sup> Furthermore, in November 2011, the English academic journal *China Information* dedicated a special issue to the “legacies of the 1911 Revolution,”<sup>363</sup> while the *Journal of Modern Chinese History* published a special issue entitled “Rethinking the 1911 Revolution” in the following year, featuring more papers from an international perspective.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> This popular approach in Chinese scholarship emphasises the discovery of “historical facts (历史事实 *lishi shishi*)” under the principle of historical materialism. For example, see: Chen Xianda 陈先达, “历史唯物主义的史学功能 [The Significance of Historical Materialism for History – Some Reflections on the Facts, the Phenomena and the Laws of History],” *Chinese Social Science* no. 2 (2011): 42-52.

<sup>361</sup> Sun 孙, “辛亥革命百年研究综述 [A Review of Studies on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Revolution of 1911],” 109-110.

<sup>362</sup> Yan Changhong and Peng Jian, “A Synopsis of the International Symposium in Commemoration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the 1911 Revolution,” *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 6, no. 1 (2012): 65-79.

<sup>363</sup> *China Information* Volume 25 Issue 3, November 2011, Special issue on legacies of the 1911 Revolution, <https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/cina/25/3>, accessed on 10 May 2023.

Dirlik and Prazniak, “The 1911 Revolution: An End and a Beginning,” 213-231; Peter Zarrow, “Chinese Press Accounts of the 1911 Revolution: Seeing ‘Revolution’.” *China Information* 25, no. 3 (2011): 233-256; Wang Guo “The ‘Revolution’ of 1911 Revisited: A Review of Contemporary Studies in China.” *China Information* 25, no. 3 (2011): 257-74; Wong R. Bin, “Centennial Perspectives on China’s 1911 Revolution,” *China Information* 25, no. 3 (2011): 275-82.

<sup>364</sup> *Journal of Modern Chinese History* Volume 6, Issue 1, 2012.

Joseph W. Esherick, “Reconsidering 1911: Lessons of a Sudden Revolution.” *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 6, no. 1 (2012): 1-14; Yan and Peng, “A Synopsis of the International Symposium in Commemoration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the 1911 Revolution,” 65-79.

Notwithstanding, as noted by Rana Mitter, the Chinese authorities' indecisiveness in how to construct the definite narrative of the Xinhai Revolution led to the reduced prominence of the Revolution.<sup>365</sup> The research topic faded again in the ensuing two decades. In mainland China, without the state's promotion and support, the depth and breadth of research into the Revolution have dwindled. Likewise, from 2012 to 2023, only one English edited volume and one scholarly monograph focusing on the 1911 Revolution were published.<sup>366</sup>

This chapter diverges slightly from the rest of the thesis's case studies and traces memories of the Revolution from their earliest expressions, showing how mythmaking began immediately and public responses to the revolution were being recorded from the outset. The Xinhai Revolution, as a cultural and cinematic narrative and as a subject of national commemoration targeting a nationwide audience, has experienced multiple waves of popularity from the early republic till recently, despite the weakening global research interest. The resulting by-products offer abundant sources of recreating history from various perspectives. Meanwhile, successive Chinese governments participated closely in producing a narrative (even though it could be an "indecisive" one) through various means, such as compiling textbooks and organising state-sponsored commemorative events. This chapter examines materials from republican magazines and newspaper sections targeting women and children. The authors, often male adults invited by the magazine editors, shared their memories or understandings of the Xinhai Revolution with their intended readers. These accounts are particularly noteworthy due to their detailed recounting of the Xinhai Revolution, and the strong emotions conveyed,

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<sup>365</sup> Mitter, "1911: The Unanchored Chinese Revolution," 1009-1020.

<sup>366</sup> Joseph Esherick and C. X. George Wei eds, *China: How the Empire Fell* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015); Zheng Xiaowei, *The Politics of Rights and the 1911 Revolution in China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2018).

especially when compared to other historical materials such as administrative commemorations or orthodox narratives in newspapers of the time.

Moreover, this case study aims to present a pluralistic view of Chinese history, showcasing the multi-vocality and plurality of the past. In *Histories of the Aftermath*, the contributors examine how the narratives of the Second World War reshaped private and public memories in Europe and how it played a role in redefining European citizenship, with the goal to “restore the plurality and multiplicity of European histories.”<sup>367</sup> For instance, Anna Krylova analyses the shifting representations of Valeriia Gnarovskaia, a female infantry soldier who was awarded the title of “Hero of the Soviet Union” in 1944 for her combatant personality and combat skills. Three decades later, although the Soviet central press continued to cover Gnarovskaia’s heroic deeds, her combat performance and leadership skills were lost in the retelling of the stories, which were replaced by new imaginary details emphasising her maternal instincts to save others, mistaking her for a female medical worker.<sup>368</sup> Relatedly, through analysing the retelling of the Xinhai Revolution in China, this chapter argues that the remembering and forgetting of a Chinese female martyr Qiu Jin (秋瑾, 1875 – 1907) and the posthumous representations of her went through shifts comparable to that of Gnarovskaia. The chapter also demonstrates a potential transnational analysis of the pluralistic perspectives in historical narratives beyond the scope of either the European or the Chinese situation.

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<sup>367</sup> Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller, eds. *Histories of the Aftermath: the Legacies of the Second World War in Europe* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2022).

<sup>368</sup> Anna Krylova, “Neither Erased nor Remembered: Soviet “Women Combatants” and Cultural Strategies of Forgetting in Soviet Russia, 1940s–1980s,” in *Histories of the Aftermath: the legacies of the Second World War in Europe*, edited by Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller, 83-120 (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2022), 82-87.

Moreover, the editors of *Histories of the Aftermath* adapt the approaches of “the history of emotions” and “the history of memory.”<sup>369</sup> Frank Biess’s chapter “Feelings in the Aftermath” investigates the existence of different “emotional communities/regimes” in post-war Europe, ranging from “Hope” to “Fear” to “Resentment.”<sup>370</sup> Drawing parallels from these European contexts, it is evident that the discussion of the legacies of the Xinhai Revolution in public discourse, particularly in the realm of personal experiences, cannot ignore the presence of emotions. Nevertheless, with a limited theoretical foundation concerning the Chinese past and the history of emotions, it is challenging to illustrate any “emotional communities”<sup>371</sup> within the Chinese context through a single case study. This thesis, therefore, does not intend to depict or argue for the existence of an emotional regime in contemporary China, nor discuss whether such a regime is dissolving. Instead, the focus lies on how multiple interpretations of the past have been leveraged in specific conditions to evoke responses, often emotional, from certain segments of the population, and reconstruct the complex and temporal public memories.<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Pertti Ahonen, “Review of *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe*, by Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller,” *Central European History* 45 no. 2 (2012): 358.

<sup>370</sup> Frank Biess, “Feelings in the Aftermath: Toward a History of Postwar Emotions,” in *Histories of the Aftermath: the legacies of the Second World War in Europe*, edited by Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller, 30-48 (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2022), 30-40.

<sup>371</sup> Biess, “Feelings in the Aftermath: Toward a History of Postwar Emotions,” 40.

<sup>372</sup> Dorothee Wierling uses and defines the idea of “generational memories” while investigating the interplay between personal and official narratives in Germany; see: Dorothee Wierling, “Generations as Narrative Communities: Some Private Sources of Public Memory in Postwar Germany,” in *Histories of the Aftermath: the legacies of the Second World War in Europe*, edited by Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller, 102-120 (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2022).



Interpretation plays a crucial role in constructing collective memories of the Revolution, as it creates new narratives and meanings surrounding historical events, rejuvenates public interest, and implants new personal memories. Among the vast body of scholarship that emerged in 2011, Chen Yunqian and Feng Jie stand out for their work on the official narratives and public memories of the Xinhai Revolution. Chen has published extensively on how public spaces and local exhibitions contribute to constructing memories of the Revolution.<sup>373</sup>

In the overseas scholarship, Joseph Esherick's 1976 monograph set a foundation for studying the Xinhai Revolution. Esherick examines the social and economic causes of the Revolution in Hunan and Hubei, arguing that, while it was politically progressive, it was socially regressive.<sup>374</sup> In his 2012 article "Reconsidering 1911", which coincided with the centennial celebration, he continues to view the Revolution as the spark that ignited a series of revolutions seeking to bring modernity to Chinese society.<sup>375</sup> He also consistently argues against the Nationalist and Communist narratives that the Revolution was closely linked to Sun Yat-sen and the *Tongmenghui* 同盟会.<sup>376</sup> However, he revises his earlier stance by acknowledging his previous underestimation of anti-Manchu

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<sup>373</sup> For some of Chen's published articles on the discourse, see: Chen Yunqian 陈蕴茜, "纪念空间与社会记忆 [Spaces of Remembrance and Social Memory]," *学术月刊 Xueshu Yuekan* 44, no. 7 (2012): 134-137; Wang Nan 王楠 and Chen Yunqian 陈蕴茜, "烈士祠与民国时期辛亥革命记忆 [The Martyrs' Shrine and the Memory of the Xinhai Revolution in the Republic of China]," *民国档案 Republican Archives* 2011/03 (2011):72-82; Chen Yunqian 陈蕴茜, "地方展览与辛亥革命记忆塑造(1927~1949) [Local exhibitions and the shaping of the memory of the Xinhai Revolution]," *江海学刊 Jianghai Xuekan*, 2011/04 (2011): 155-165.

<sup>374</sup> Joseph W. Esherick, *Reform and Revolution in China: The 1911 Revolution in Hunan and Hubei* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976).

<sup>375</sup> Esherick, "Reconsidering 1911," 1.

<sup>376</sup> Esherick, "Reconsidering 1911," 3.

sentiment, a topic that has been brought to light by the work of other scholars.<sup>377</sup> The first section of this chapter examines personal accounts of the Revolution published in the 1930s for young students, depicting what it was like to experience the Revolution as children. Thus, the myth-making of the revolution began while it was taking place or in its immediate aftermath, and the impressions these authors formed as children would go on to influence how they reflected back on the period in later life. Some of these materials unveil a strong connection between the promotion of Anti-Manchu sentiment and the Xinhai Revolution, a connection that was implanted in children's minds around 1911 and continued to be emphasised throughout the republican era.

While debates persist over whether the Revolution in 1911 should be considered a “failure” or “triumph”,<sup>378</sup> there is no doubt about its iconic status in both the Republic of China (ROC) and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Both governments view the Revolution as a subject for commemoration, designed to stimulate patriotic feelings among their citizens.<sup>379</sup> In recent decades, discussions about the Revolution have evolved, with a broader analysis of the social and political changes occurring before and after 1911

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<sup>377</sup> For example, see: Edward J.M. Rhoads, *Manchus & Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861–1928* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

<sup>378</sup> For example, see: Edward Friedman, “Revolution or Just Another Bloody Cycle? Swatow and the 1911 Revolution,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* (1970): 289-307; Esherick, “1911,” 141-84; George T Yu, “The 1911 Revolution: Past, Present, and Future,” *Asian Survey* 31, no. 10 (1991): 895-904; Yan and Peng, “A synopsis of the international symposium in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the 1911 Revolution,” 65-79.

<sup>379</sup> On commemoration in republican China, see: Henrietta Harrison, “Martyrs and militarism in early Republican China,” *Twentieth-Century China* 23, no. 2 (1998): 41-70. On the studies of the communist interpretation of the Xinhai Revolution, see: Guido Samarani, “Studies on the History of Republican China in the PRC and the Nanjing Research Centre,” *Revue Bibliographique de Sinologie* 14 (1996): 153-58.

taking precedence over debates about the Revolution itself.<sup>380</sup> Or, as Wong R. Bin suggests: “Historians of China sometimes think of the entire period between 1911 and 1949 as one of ‘revolution’.”<sup>381</sup> However, this chapter posits that the complexity and plurality of experiences and memories tied to the Xinhai Revolution make it a unique case study. It offers a rich site for exploring not only contested social memories but also the constructs of nationalism.<sup>382</sup>

In the early years of the Republic and throughout the Nanjing decade (1927-1937), interpretations of the Xinhai Revolution were highly dynamic and varied.<sup>383</sup> While the orthodox narrative of the 1911 celebrated the founding of the Republic and praised adult men who contributed to the uprisings, youth and women were also considered important audiences in the republican era. Although they often went unnoticed, there were representations of the Xinhai Revolution tailored to appeal to them. This chapter first examines personal memories of the Xinhai Revolution collected or published in the 1930s. These memories and interpretations come from intellectuals who, having experienced the Revolution as children, later became republican citizens. Some of these individuals were notable writers of the New Culture Movement. The primary audience for the magazines and newspapers analysed in this chapter were republican youth who had not experienced the Revolution first-hand. However, the older generation’s memories were transmitted through these published texts. Moreover, these accounts offer unconventional constructions of history tailored to suit the audience’s interests. They also

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<sup>380</sup> For example, see: Mitter, “1911: The Unanchored Chinese Revolution,” 1017; Wang Guo, “The ‘Revolution’ of 1911 Revisited.” 257-274. Esherick, “Reconsidering 1911,” 1-14.

<sup>381</sup> Wong, “Centennial Perspectives on China’s 1911 Revolution,” 275.

<sup>382</sup> Berger, Lorenz, and Melman, eds. *Popularizing National Pasts*; Chaturvedi, “Introduction,” 1-15; Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” 66-111.

<sup>383</sup> Zarrow, “Chinese Press Accounts of the 1911 Revolution,” 233-256.

disclose the memories and experiences of children and women during the Revolution. Through retelling the past, new memories were formed, and new narratives were created. Furthermore, the findings of this chapter underscore the thesis's main argument, showing that the collective memory of the Republic of China is multi-versions and ever-changing. The analysis concerning the retelling of Qiu Jin's stories further indicates that the resurgence of certain memories often coincides with selective amnesia.

The analysis reveals that Qiu Jin was the only woman acknowledged by the Nationalist government as a martyr of the Xinhai Revolution, despite her death occurring in 1907, four years before the Wuchang Uprising took place. As a revolutionary and one of the earliest Chinese feminists, Qiu Jin lived an unconventional life, fuelled by her ambitions and patriotism. The multifaceted nature of Qiu Jin's experiences and personality makes her a compelling figure for commemoration. She was chosen to represent women warriors, martyrs, and feminists, and she has gained more popular recognition than many of her male and female contemporaries. The second section of this chapter looks into how Qiu Jin's story was promoted by various parties advocating for her remembrance. Each representation serves a different purpose and pays attention to different parts of her life (or her death).



Figure 24: “The Founding Father and Founding Martyrs of the Republic of China (中華民國國父及開國先烈 *Zhonghua Minguo Guofu ji Kaiguo Xianlie*),” Qiu Jin is on the top-left of the newspaper page and is the only woman.<sup>384</sup>

- **Retelling 1911 in the 1920s**

One of the earliest narratives to surface after the autumn of 1911 was *The Sketch of the Xinhai Revolution* (辛亥革命史 *Xinhai Geming Shi*), published by The Commercial Press, one of the earliest publishing houses in China, in 1923.<sup>385</sup> Over the two decades following 1911, the official history of the Xinhai Revolution began to coalesce, enriched

<sup>384</sup> “中華民國國父及開國先烈: 秋瑾: [照片] [Founding fathers and martyrs of the Republic of China: Qiu Jin: (photo)],” *政治月刊*(南京) *Zhengzhi Yuekan (Nanjing)* 2 no.1 (1934): 1.

<sup>385</sup> Gao Lao 高勞, *辛亥革命史* [*The Sketch of the Xinhai Revolution*], (Beijing 北京: 商务印书馆 *The Commercial Press*, 1923).

by diaries and articles where authors recounted their personal experiences of the Revolution. This section will leverage these unofficial sources to explore the genesis of public recollections about this event. Not only are these personal accounts as important as scholarly or official histories in constructing public understandings of the past event but they were also published before the ones written by historians or experts became available to the public. These memories and records are contemporary and imbued with fresh, subjective perspectives, and are often unorganised. This study will not evaluate their reliability as historical records but will compare these initial public recollections to later popular narratives and public responses, identifying continuities and changes.

In 1925, Lu Xun, a key figure in Chinese literature, advocated for “properly making the history of the founding of the Republic of China (ROC) for the youth.”<sup>386</sup> He expressed concern that “the origins of the Republic of China (民國的來源 *Minguo de lai yuan*)” had been lost in merely fourteen years.<sup>387</sup> It is worth noting that Lu Xun’s plea was not condemnation targeting the then existing historical account; instead, he was questioning the republican youths’ mindset, which he perceived as lacking the revolutionary spirit that sparked in and around 1911. The founding of the ROC was followed by regional and international armed conflicts, and the government’s inability to address social issues disillusioned many republican intellectuals who had anticipated empowering changes for China. Frustrated by the common dissatisfaction that “before the Revolution, I was a slave; not long after the revolution, I was tricked by the slaves and

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<sup>386</sup> Lu Xun 魯迅, “忽然想到 [Sudden Thoughts]” in *華蓋集 Huagaiji* (Beijing 北京:北新書局 Beixin shuju 1926). 9-10. “退一萬步說罷, 我希望有人好好地做一部民國的建國史給少年看, 因為我覺得民國的來源, 實在已經失傳了, 雖然還只有十四年!”

<sup>387</sup> Lu 魯, “忽然想到 [Sudden Thoughts],” 10.

become their slave,”<sup>388</sup> they sought solace in recent history, hoping a reinterpretation of the national legacy of the Xinhai Revolution might galvanise the populace. This sentiment marked the advent of the first wave of Xinhai Revolution reinterpretation in the mid-1920s.

It has been commonly perceived that a primary conflict within Qing China lay between the country’s ethnic groups, predominantly between the Han majority and the ruling Manchu.<sup>389</sup> Contrary to this popular belief, economic historian Kent Deng provides evidence suggesting that the social revolutions from 1644 to 1911 were largely intra-Han conflicts, with the Manchu playing a “either marginal or negligible” role.<sup>390</sup> Julia Schneider’s monograph, *Nation and Ethnicity*, further elaborates on this point, revealing that late Qing nationalists and reformers advocated the theory of “assimilative power,” which placed the Han Chinese at the centre of Chinese historiography, often overlooking the “desires and plans of non-Han populations.”<sup>391</sup> It is also important to note that while the sources analysed in this chapter frequently reference ethnic differences in China, they primarily cater to a Han Chinese audience, largely neglecting the experiences and perspectives of other ethnic populations within the modern Chinese state. This focus on the Han Chinese population is significant for the examination of the Xinhai Revolution and its narrative construction in the selected materials.

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<sup>388</sup> Lu 魯, “忽然想到 [Sudden Thoughts],” 9-10. “我覺得革命以前，我是做奴隸；革命以後不多久，就受了奴隸的騙，變成他們的奴隸了。”

<sup>389</sup> Jia Yanli 贾艳丽, “辛亥革命中的满汉冲突与调适 [Conflict and Reconciliation between Manchu and Han in the 1911 Revolution],” *清史研究 The Qing History Journal* 2011/03 (2011):110-117.

<sup>390</sup> Kent Deng, “Myth of Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Revolutions 1644–1911,” *Asian Ethnicity* 15, no. 2, (2014): 197-221.

<sup>391</sup> Schneider, *Nation and Ethnicity*, 269, 381-389.

The military preparation of the revolutionary uprisings against the Qing, albeit with varied goals and methods, was united by a shared goal: to “expel the alien rulers and alleviate the Han Chinese’s sufferings.”<sup>392</sup> The interpretation of the Xinhai Revolution promoted by Chinese intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s deviated from the original revolutionary spirit of 1911. For one, it shifted the focus from the ethnic conflict, aligning with Sun Yat-sen’s “Five Races in Harmony (五族共和 *Wuzu gonghe*)” slogan. The transition from the anti-Manchu Han nationalism advocated by the Tongmenghui (同盟会) since 1905 to the new “Five Races in Harmony” concept that Sun Yat-sen expressed in 1912 is ambiguous. The motive behind Sun’s statement – whether it was mere political expediency – is still a topic of debate.<sup>393</sup> Moreover, the violence inflicted upon, if not specifically targeting, ordinary Manchus during the 1911 Revolution is often downplayed or obscured in historical accounts.<sup>394</sup> This underrepresentation of Manchu experiences and the shift away from ethnic conflict narratives reflect the complex ways in which historical memory is constructed and revised over time, and how it can be influenced by political and ideological factors. This chapter aims to explore these processes of memory construction and revision in relation to the Xinhai Revolution, and these findings highlight the need to consider the multiple and contested narratives that exist within collective memory, and how these narratives can change over time in response to societal and political shifts. As we delve further into this research, it is crucial to keep in mind

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<sup>392</sup> Zhou Yueran 周越然, “辛亥文献 [Xinhai Archives],” *中华月报 Zhonghua yuebao* 6 no.4 (1943): 50-53. “憫我漢族於水火，解我漢族於倒懸 (二、民軍告示).” “同逐蠻夷 (四、六言告示).”

<sup>393</sup> Zheng Dahua 郑大华, “论晚年孙中山‘民族建国’思想中的‘民族’问题 [On the ‘Nation’ in the Idea of ‘National State Building’ in Sun Yat-Sen’s Late Life],” *民族研究 Ethno-National Studies* no.4 (2020):1-19.

<sup>394</sup> Edward J. M. Rhoads and Mette Halskov Hansen, *The 1911 Revolution in Manchus and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861-1928* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2001). 173-231.



these layers of complexity and the continual evolution of historical interpretation and memory.

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三八〇分

Figure 25: Gao Lao, *The Sketch of 1912 Revolution*, Beijing: Commercial Press, 1923, 3.

Gao Lao's *The Sketch of the Revolution* (辛亥革命史 *Xinhai geming shi*) is a 79-page account of the history of the Xinhai Revolution. It begins with the “spread of revolutionism (革命主义之传播 *Geming zhuyi zhi chuanbo*)” and traces the political and ideological changes from 1908 to 1911.<sup>395</sup> The textbook-like narrative briefly introduces the background of the Revolution, highlighting “bad politics” and “ethnic differences”,<sup>396</sup> and presents detailed accounts of the soldiers’ military actions. The second chapter of the book covers the “Era of Revolutionary Success”, detailing how other provinces, inspired

<sup>395</sup> Gao 高, 辛亥革命史 [*The Sketch of the Xinhai Revolution*].

<sup>396</sup> Gao 高, 辛亥革命史 [*The Sketch of the Xinhai Revolution*], 5. “政治之不良”, “政体之不善”, “种族之异”.

by the military victories in Wuhan and Beijing, transitioned to independence in a relatively peaceful manner.<sup>397</sup> Notably, the book includes a proclamation from the Revolutionary Junta in Sichuan:

The purpose of this uprising is to revitalise the Han nationality, reject the Manchus, defend the country and enable the people to live and work in peace and contentment. Tomorrow has been set as the date of entry into the city, and the people will be able to work in peace as usual.<sup>398</sup>

The same principle can be found in notices posted in Yichang before the Wuchang Uprising, assuring the public of their safety and ability to continue their usual activities.<sup>399</sup> Besides notices, flyers were also delivered in regions that had no previous interaction with the revolutionary army. For example, one states that: “Each of our people should stay at their position and perform their duty. Scholars will not quit studying; farmers will not stop cultivating; workers will not change their occupation; and businessmen will not cease trading activities.”<sup>400</sup> However, these words were more aspirational than reflective of reality. Gao Lao’s narrative does not delve into the actual impact of the revolution on people’s daily lives; it concludes with the transfer of power and the appointment of new local officials.

Nevertheless, this narrative began to be challenged in the 1930s. The following section analyses a collection of personal accounts of the Xinhai Revolution. These accounts, which were personal memories from those who experienced the Revolution as children and were later invited to recount their experiences with students in 1933, offer a more personal perspective on the event. Both Gao’s book and the personal accounts

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<sup>397</sup> Gao 高, *辛亥革命史* [*The Sketch of the Xinhai Revolution*], 23.

<sup>398</sup> Gao 高, *辛亥革命史* [*The Sketch of the Xinhai Revolution*], 23. “本軍起義，以興漢排滿保教安民為宗旨，定期明日入城，人民當照常安業。”

<sup>399</sup> Zhou 周, “辛亥文獻 [Xinhai Archive],” 52. “決不擾害商民，其各自安生業。(五、宜昌告示).”

<sup>400</sup> Zhou 周, “辛亥文獻 [Xinhai Archive],” 52. “凡爾等人民，務須各守爾職，各安爾業；士不退學，農不變耕，工不改作，商不變其貿易。(六、传单)”

below made up a fraction of the private histories, while Gao Lao's narrative provided a broad overview of the Xinhai Revolution. The lived experiences of individuals, as mentioned in the next section, offered a counterpoint to the narrative provided by Gao and Zhou Yueran (author of the article “辛亥文献 [Xinhai Archives]” published in 1942) and provided a more nuanced, multifaceted understanding of the Xinhai Revolution.

- *Personal Accounts of the Xinhai Revolution Published in the 1930s and 1940s – Children and Youths' Perspectives*

In 1933, *Zhongxue sheng* 中学生 (*The Juvenile Student*) (1930-1949), a republican magazine for secondary school students, dedicated its Issue 38 to celebrating the national day of the ROC (the annual commemoration of the Xinhai Revolution). The magazine's editors included renowned Chinese educators and children's literature writers like Ye Shengtao 叶圣陶 (1894-1988) and Feng Zikai 丰子恺 (1898-1975). It was one of the most famous youth magazines at the time. Educators today have studied the magazine's role as a supplementary history teaching method<sup>401</sup> and how it cultivated the Republic's youth.<sup>402</sup>

Five articles in Issue 38 were categorised as “essays on Xinhai (辛亥随笔 *Xinhai suibi*),” and the series invited a few intellectuals to share their personal experiences of Xinhai. These essays, with republican teenagers as their target readers, are a form of memoir that embody personal experience and emotions in the Xinhai era (1911-1912),

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<sup>401</sup> Zhu Ci'en 朱慈恩, “《中学生》与民国时期的历史教学 [The *Zhongxue Sheng* Magazine and the Historical Teaching in the Republic of China],” *教育与教学研究 Education and Teaching Research* 27 no.10 (2013): 120-124.

<sup>402</sup> Song Yingli 宋应离, “传播文化知识的殿堂 培育青年成长的沃土——从《中学生》看叶圣陶的编辑思想 [A Temple For Spreading Cultural Knowledge, A Fertile Ground For Nurturing The Growth of Youth - The Editorial Thought of Ye Shengtao From *Middle School Student (Zhongxue Sheng)*],” *中国编辑 Zhongguo Bianji* no.3 (2014):13-16.

and indicate how late Qing youth felt about the ethnic conflict during that era and how the writers interpreted these emotions after they became Republican citizens.

The first essay was written by Hongtu (宏徒),<sup>403</sup> who was studying at a secondary school in Guiyang, Guizhou, in 1911. He narrated a story about watching his uncle changing into the Han costume, only that the author did not recognise the costume and found it familiar by comparing it with a costume in Beijing and Sichuan operas. On the day after the revolutionary army took over Guiyang City, Hongtu was reminded by his uncle of the change in the city; however, he only remembered hearing some gunshots at night, which was not too noisy. He went on and described that, in a few days, people in the street all changed into Han costume and saw themselves as “heroes” (like the characters in operas who wear a special knot as a symbol of being the heroes); a few more days later, after pledging blood to be each other’s allies, these “heroes” started to kill each other, and dead bodies could often be found on the street. All this stopped after the warlords arrived.<sup>404</sup> These absurd episodes make up what the author considers the significance of the Xinhai Revolution for Guizhou. In his forties in 1933, he did not think that the Xinhai Revolution had brought any notable changes to his life, and, in this essay, he satirises the locals who thought they were revolutionary heroes back then and points out that they were nothing but bandits dressed as heroes and nervously defending their vague and imagined pride and status.

The following essay was written by the famous Chinese writer Mao Dun (茅盾 1896-1981), who was studying at a middle school in what he calls “K town” (near Shanghai) in 1911. The principal attitudes his essay shows are ignorance of and curiosity

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<sup>403</sup> It was common for people to publish with their pen names at the time.

<sup>404</sup> Hongtu 宏徒, “辛亥革命: 辛亥革命与‘英雄结’ [Xinhai Revolution: Xinhai Revolution and ‘Heroic Knot’],” *中学生 Zhongxue sheng* no.38 (1933): 1-3.

about the revolution as a youth.<sup>405</sup> Both feelings were held by young Mao Dun and his schoolmates due to the lack of access to the latest news. In his narrative, there were only two sources of news after the success of the Wuchang Uprising. One was for them (students and teachers in K town) to go to the train station to buy second-hand newspapers left by the passengers travelling from Shanghai. He described the first moment when students laid eyes on these newspapers from Shanghai as sensational as “discovering the New World by Columbus.” This essay does not directly indicate K town students’ response to what they read in the newspapers, primarily political and social changes in other parts of China; they just needed to feed their hunger for new information. However, their inquiring minds about changes outside their daily lives show that they were open to some sort of social transformation, whether it was due to dissatisfaction with the status quo or curiosity about the unknown.

Another storyline in the essay is about voluntary queue-cutting among young people in the late Qing Dynasty. A few teachers in the school in K town started to wear short hair when they studied abroad in Japan; however, they had chosen to wear fake braids to stay undercover later, when revolutionaries were seen as criminals and would risk being captured and punished by the local authorities. In the spring of 1911, abandoning Manchu costumes (wearing short hair and dressing in suits) was strongly associated with supporting the revolution and was seen as a brave move among young Chinese. Some school students also cut their hair to show their fearlessness and uniqueness. Ironically, nearly all of them wore the fake braids afterwards, for fear of being captured.<sup>406</sup> These students are not necessarily active supporters of the revolution; however, most of them felt cheerful about the success of the uprisings. The author

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<sup>405</sup> Mao Dun 茅盾, “我所见的辛亥革命 [The Xinhai Revolution in my Experiences],” *中学生 Zhongxue sheng* no.38 (1933): 3-5.

<sup>406</sup> Mao 茅, “我所见的辛亥革命 [The Xinhai Revolution in my Experiences],” 3-5.

described how, soon after they changed their hairstyle, they had lived in fear of other schoolmates pulling off their fake braids. As a result, they enthusiastically welcomed the revolution that could free them from that kind of worrying life.<sup>407</sup> At the end of the essay, Mao Dun summarises: “The Xinhai Revolution I have seen was just like that – it was all about the braids.” In a less direct way, this essay indisputably shares the satire on revolutionary sentiments as the one written by Hongtu. Interestingly, Mao Dun did not associate changing hairstyle in 1911 with ethnic hatred, although many people did so to demonstrate their abandonment of Manchu rule and culture.<sup>408</sup> Nationalism was also not strongly presented in this essay; instead, the author uses a rather relaxed and nearly indifferent tone to describe a rapidly changing society in which children and young adults were focusing on their own curiosity, pride, and shame.

The following essay, narrating the success of the revolutionary outbreak in Suzhou, touches upon the romantic imagination some students had before 1911. According to the essay, while the majority of the Chinese population felt fear for the outbreak of the revolution and mostly pictured gunfire, death, and homeland loss when they imagined such events, some, mostly young students, were excited about the revolution. They believed that the overthrow of the Qing emperor would make them the master of the nation (中国的主人 *Zhongguo de zhuren*).<sup>409</sup> Nevertheless, the author stated, between 1912 and 1933, neither form of the imagination came true, especially the students’ romantic one of becoming the future masters.<sup>410</sup> In 1933, when the Xinhai history was written, its magnificence and idealism had already faded away. Therefore,

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<sup>407</sup> Mao 茅, “我所见的辛亥革命 [The Xinhai Revolution in my Experiences],” 4.

<sup>408</sup> Mao 茅, “我所见的辛亥革命 [The Xinhai Revolution in my Experiences],” 3-5.

<sup>409</sup> Cheng Sheng 程生, “苏州光复 [The Liberation of Suzhou],” *中学生 Zhongxue sheng* no. 38 (1933): 9.

<sup>410</sup> Cheng 程, “苏州光复 [The Liberation of Suzhou],” 8-10.

while republican citizens accepted that this was a historic and celebrated event, and although 10 October 1911 was marked as the national day of the ROC, doubts emerged from celebrations and commemorations and were implanted in students.

The last article of the series was the longest and most personal one; it was written by Yuzhi 愈之 to recall his student life as a secondary school fresher in 1911.<sup>411</sup> The story's protagonist – the author's younger self – was physically frail and not radical. However, he sympathised with the revolution, and in the article, he mentioned that he and others of his age, when walking by Qiu Jin's memorial in Shaoxing, would remember the decapitation of this figure – possibly the only radical female revolutionary in the late-Qing – and be shrouded in a mysterious<sup>412</sup> revolutionary sentiment and antipathy towards the Qing court. It is hard for the readers to tell whether this sentiment comes from sympathy for the physically weak but mentally brave resisters, or a sense of disapproval of the Qing government. The impact of selectively representing females in the revolution will be discussed in more detail in the proceeding section.

In Yuzhi's account, by May 1911, young people in Shaoxing could no longer hold back the feeling of recognition to the revolution against the Qing and wanted to take action. The most immediate way for them to act accordingly, seemingly familiarly, was to change their hairstyle. Students in Shaoxing, like those in K town, wished to be included in the social movement by giving up the queue they had worn for life. Yuzhi's father, however, warned him not to do so, not because the father disagreed with the revolution but rather because he worried about his son's safety. In 1911, queue-cutting was an act that men did to show rebellion. Chinese women in 1927 had their chance to use the short

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<sup>411</sup> Yuzhi 愈之, “辛亥革命: 辛亥革命与我 [The Xinhai Revolution: The Xinhai Revolution and Me],” *中学生 Zhongxue sheng* no. 38 (1933): 11-15.

<sup>412</sup> It was mysterious because young people did not have a clear political consciousness, explained by the essay's author Yuzhi.

haircut to show support for the national revolution (led by the Nationalist revolutionary army).<sup>413</sup>

In the end, young Yuzhi was afraid to disobey his father and chose to keep his long braid. For that, he “paid a huge price” (出了重大的代价 *Chule zhongda de daijia*); he became a bullying target of his classmates and had a new and humiliating nickname – “the pig’s tail.” For him, this was one of the most shameful experiences he had in life, and, over two decades later, he still felt disappointed for not being able to redeem himself in front of his classmates.<sup>414</sup>

In 1911, non-radical youths were facing peer shame, and radicals were in danger of administrative persecution. In 1933, disappointment had replaced fear or aspiration as the popular sentiment Chinese intellectuals had towards the revolution, which was also the primary emotion they expressed to secondary school students in *The Juvenile Student*. However, even though queue-cutting, an act normally associated with anti-Manchu sentiment, was cited in the essays, these private historical narratives express little hatred of Manchu rule. These young people were more concerned with the attitudes and changes of people around them, particularly their older family members, teachers, and peers.

In 1939, *Shanghai Women* (上海妇女 *Shanghai funü*) published an article entitled “Xinhai Memories (辛亥回忆 *Xinhai huiyi*)”. As in “Essays on Xinhai,” the author talks about her childhood memories of the Xinhai Revolution (at the age of ten) in a small coastal town called Haiyan, Zhejiang province. Wenyang 文央, the author, describes her mother’s and her panic about the coming revolution. For the little girl, it was the sense that something unknown was approaching that made her panic and excited at the same

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<sup>413</sup> Yuzhi 愈之, “辛亥革命 [The Xinhai Revolution],” 11-15.

<sup>414</sup> The author was sick and stayed at home from the second half of 1911 through 1912.



time.<sup>415</sup> She also records the rumour in Haiyan before the actual arrival of the revolutionaries: some said that the first change to come would be cutting off all men's queue. This idea scared Wenyang's mother, who thought: "Isn't it (a man with no braid) the same as the monks in the temple? How can [I] sleep with someone who has the fearful looking of a monk?"<sup>416</sup> This implies that the cutting of a man's hair was not strongly associated with anti-Manchu sentiment or being a nationalist (in the opinion of Wenyang's mother); instead, the wife was fearful because the hairstyle resembles Buddhism monks who were believed to be wicked and lascivious in the late-Qing.<sup>417</sup>

Again, everyday worries outweigh concerns about social or national changes, suggesting that the earliest forms of the narrative (or propaganda) of the revolution had succeeded in achieving a certain degree of social stability. When individuals were invited to share their memories of a historical period in their youth, what they spoke of were mostly personal feelings related to their living circle instead of social changes.

In Wenyang's writing, rumour also had it that, as long as every family put up the white flag of surrender, the revolutionaries who were about to enter the city would not touch a single hair on the people's heads (不會來碰你的毫毛的 *buhui lai pengni de haomao de*). As a result, every piece of white fabric, from sheets to handkerchiefs, was

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<sup>415</sup> Wenyang 文央, "辛亥回忆 [Xinhai Memories]," *上海妇女 Shanghai Women* 3 no.8 (1939): 3. "在幼稚無知的心靈裏, 只覺得這變動是不尋常的, 也有些恐嚇, 也有些興奮."

<sup>416</sup> Wenyang 文央, "辛亥回忆 [Xinhai Memories]," 3. "這不跟廟裏的和尚一樣了嗎? 像和尚那般的怕樣子, 怎麼能跟他睡在一起."

<sup>417</sup> Late Qing monastery was accused of lacking discipline and moral decay; a series of late-Qing graphic stories in the collection of the Children's Library of Hunan Province showcase this phenomenon. Jin Chanxiang 金蟾香, "和尚寻欢 [Monks Seeking Pleasure]," Hunan sheng shaonian ertong tushuguan 湖南省少年儿童图书馆, Jan 2016. [http://read.nlc.cn/allSearch/searchDetail?searchType=all&showType=1&indexName=dat\\_a\\_634&fid=036111501010851](http://read.nlc.cn/allSearch/searchDetail?searchType=all&showType=1&indexName=dat_a_634&fid=036111501010851), accessed on 10 May 2021.

hung up to “welcome the revolutionaries and preserve the family’s assets.”<sup>418</sup> Despite their fear of the unknown, ordinary families are by and large willing to go along with celebrating the Republic, in the hope that their lives and assets would not be affected. On the day the revolutionaries arrived in town, Wenyang’s father went out and did not come home all night. The family worried so much that they sent the little girl to go and look for him. Wenyang did not find her father, but she brought back the contents of a street notice with words to reassure the public, which calmed her anxious mother.

On the one hand, such posters fulfilled the purpose of avoiding excessive chaos and strife leading to panic among the people. On the other hand, the comforting words coming from the revolutionary troops demonstrate the disconnection between ordinary people and the revolutionaries, and the published accounts we analysed are further evidence of the division between different groups in the late Qing Dynasty and the early years of the Republic, and the disagreement or dissatisfaction of some intellectuals with the aftermath of the Xinhai Revolution.

In the 1930s and 1940s, more articles were published to feature the history of the Xinhai Revolution from the perspective of ordinary people. Lin Yumei’s “Xinhai Fairy Tales (辛亥童话 *Xinhai Tonghua*)”, published in 1947, is one of them.<sup>419</sup> More than three decades after 1911, personal memories were featured as “fairy tales” instead of “essays.” While the form was similar to the series of “Xinhai Essays”, the content is different. An eleven-year-old boy who studied in Xiamen in 1911 and 1912 felt strong compassion and enthusiasm for the revolution. Moreover, he describes the hatred of the Manchus by citing

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<sup>418</sup> Wenyang 文央, “辛亥回忆 [Xinhai Memories],” 3. “...為了表示歡迎, 也為了保全自己的身家。”

<sup>419</sup> Lin Yumei 林毓梅, “辛亥童话 [Xinhai Fairy Tale],” *现代周刊(槟榔屿) Xiandai zhoukan* [vol and no unknow] (1947): 9.

Liu Bowen (1311-1375), a Chinese military strategist and poet from the late Yuan and early Ming dynasties, who writes: “With ninety-nine swords in our hands, we will not stop until we have killed all *hulü* 胡虜 [A common term for non-Han peoples from the north].”<sup>420</sup> He also records a self-written song with the lyrics as “Hate, hate, hate, the Manchu is now a king; fortunately, fortunately, fortunately, the revolutionary soldiers were born.”<sup>421</sup> This more violent rhetoric may reflect the wartime context in which the “Xinhai Fairy Tales” were published, when China had been at war for a decade against the Japanese and then in civil war, as much as or more than the original sentiment of 1911.

The anti-Manchu sentiment, however, had been seeded in Lin’s mind back in 1908. Rumours once again played an essential role in affecting people’s mindsets. After the death of the Guangxu emperor, Lin observed growing societal disrespect towards Qing authorities, fuelled by a series of rumours surrounding the Xuantong emperor. One particularly horrifying rumour alleged that the emperor sought human flesh for his meals – an unfounded claim that nevertheless generated fear. Instead of aggressive emotions, anti-Manchurian sentiments held by ordinary people in the twentieth century were mainly fear and scepticism.

David Brophy, whose research focuses on Uyghur nationalism, argues that the official historiography in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) downplays the ethnic factors in the Xinhai revolution to portray it as a “common struggle of all ethnic groups,” and remembers the revolution as a symbol of national unity.<sup>422</sup> This latter perspective,

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<sup>420</sup> Lin 林, “辛亥童话 [Xinhai Fairy Tale],” 10. “手持鋼刀九十九，殺盡胡虜方罷手。”

<sup>421</sup> Lin 林, “辛亥童话 [Xinhai Fairy Tale],” 10. “恨，恨，恨，滿奴今為君；幸，幸，幸，天生革命軍。”

<sup>422</sup> David Brophy, “Five Races, One Parliament? Xinhai in Xinjiang and the Problem of Minority Representation in the Chinese Republic.” *Inner Asia* 14, no. 2 (2012): 358.

which seemingly promoting harmony, could also be seen as an attempt to sanitise the complexities of the past, echoing the thesis's argument about the need for a more nuanced and multi-vocal understanding of historical narratives. Such oversimplifications, while convenient for fostering national unity, risk erasing the lived experiences and emotions of individuals like Lin and others, who navigated the realities of ethnic tensions in their everyday lives and presented their personal memories distinctively.

The meaning of the Xinhai Revolution was divided. While the Nationalist government spoke highly of the outcome of the revolution initiated by its founder, it is revealed that some Republican intellectuals considered the event ironic and unfulfilled. Such viewpoints were published in popular journals for the literate population, including women's magazines and students' reading materials. During the Republican period, 1911 was the landmark event of the nation, and its significance endured. However, scepticism was also expressed in memories and commemorative texts.

- ***Remembering by forgetting: Qiu Jin, the representative of female martyrs for the Xinhai Revolution***

Qiu Jin (秋瑾), a woman who lived in the late Qing period and was executed publicly in 1907, was a symbolic figure in modern Chinese history concerning the anti-Manchu revolution and the women's liberation movement. She is one of the few women whose name and contributions are recognised by the succeeding governments and the people as a great revolutionary. Her image is controversial, although commemorations held by various parties have solidly reinforced her significance. Qiu Jin's heroic story endures through time and remains familiar to today's young Chinese. Some of Qiu's alleged characteristics were featured in all forms of public culture narrating her, including her fearlessness, determination, and radicalism. Her nationalism and patriotism, her

advocation of feminism, and her role in a neo-Confucian family (her husband's) were selectively presented and discussed by various authors. This section looks into how the public media and official narratives acknowledged her as a martyr sacrificed for the goal of the Xinhai Revolution even though she died four years before the Wuchang Uprising.

Qiu Jin's image embodies multiple meanings, and thus her stories have been implanted in people's memories with different vital themes. The complexity of Qiu Jin's commemorative image has generated research interest among Chinese historians and received attention from scholars writing in English. A few days after her death, her execution triggered intense and far-reaching discussions in newspapers and journals from Beijing to the east-coast province of Zhejiang. Xia Xiaohong's research focuses on the social and cultural transformation and the divergent women exemplars in the late Qing Dynasty.<sup>423</sup> Xia is one of the first historians who looked at both the newspaper articles and literary works that emerged in the late Qing featuring Qiu Jin. Xia concluded that, although Qiu Jin was commemorated as the great female revolutionary in both the Republic of China (ROC) and the PRC, her earlier image in popular media depicted her as a female educator and patriot who fought for the equalisation of nan nǚ (男女 men and women) instead of the anti-Manchu revolution and therefore was unjustly killed by the governmental machinery of Qing China.<sup>424</sup> Inspired by Xia's argument, Li Xizhu's work inquiries into the interaction between public opinions and governmental reactions in the late Qing regarding the aftermath of Qiu Jin's case. Li's research argues that the civil discontent resulting from the government's unjust handling of the case of Qiu Jin and the power of civil opinions at that time burdened the Qing government with the pressure for

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<sup>423</sup> Xia Xiaohong 夏晓虹, *晚清女性与近代中国* [*Women in the Late Qing and Modern China*], (Beijing: 北京大学出版社 Beijing University Publishing House, 2004).

<sup>424</sup> Xia 夏, *晚清女性与近代中国* [*Women in the Late Qing and Modern China*].

constitutional reform.<sup>425</sup> Ma Ziyi criticised Li's article on Qiu Jin's case and stressed that the civil discontent, which was divergent itself, focused more on the wrongful execution of an innocent woman than the injustice in the judicial process.<sup>426</sup>

Li Xiangdong's work on the late Qing media's agenda-setting about Qin Jin's case, and Xia Weidong's article investigating the transformation of Qiu Jin's image between 1907 and 1945 both follow the framework of the discourse set by earlier researchers such as Xia Xiaohong and Li Xizhu.<sup>427</sup> Li Xiangdong's research reveals the limited but striking function of the media "agenda-setting";<sup>428</sup> Xia Weidong's article reviews in more detail the changes in Qiu Jin's image in different historical periods, and argues that political factors were the most important factors leading to these changes.<sup>429</sup> With the acknowledgement that public opinion and writing are difficult to capture and quantify, the following section examines Qiu Jin's image amid the Xinhai Revolution and argues that "forgetting" is a key method in re-creating the stories of Qiu Jin and is also one of the reasons that her image fits well in all sorts of narratives in modern Chinese

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<sup>425</sup> Li Xizhu 李细珠, "清末民间舆论与官府作为之互动关系 [Interaction between Public Opinion and Official Action in the Late Qing Period: The Example of Zhang Zengyang and Qiu Jin]," *近代史研究 Modern Chinese History Studies* no.2 (2004): 9-10.

<sup>426</sup> Ma Ziyi 马自毅, "民间舆论如何看待秋瑾案 [How Popular Opinion Views The Qiu Jin Case]," *史林 Shi Lin* no.5 (2005): 1-5.

<sup>427</sup> Li Xiangdong 李向东, "晚清媒介对秋瑾事件的议程设置 [Analysis on the Media's Agenda-setting about Qin Jin Case in the Late Qing Dynasty]," *南都学坛 Nandu xuetan* 31 no.3 (2011): 26-30. Xia Weidong 夏卫东, "性别与革命: 近代以来秋瑾形象转换的考察(1907—1945) [Gender and Revolution: An Examination of the Transformation of Qiu Jin's Image since Modern Times]," *民国档案 Republican Archives* no.1 (2016): 66-72.

<sup>428</sup> Explained by Li as the act of "the media focusing on a certain event or social issue for a certain period of time, attracting the attention of the public and becoming a core topic of the social opinion." ("议程设置"(Agenda—setting) 是指传播媒介 在一定的时间内对某个事件或社会问题给予重视 并集中报道, 引起社会公众的注意, 进而成为社会舆论的中心议题。) Li 李, "晚清媒介对秋瑾事件的议程设置 [Analysis on the Media's Agenda-setting about Qin Jin Case in the Late Qing Dynasty]," 26.

<sup>429</sup> Xia 夏, "性别与革命 [Gender and Revolution]," 72.

history. Wei Wenzhe,<sup>430</sup> Ma Ziyi,<sup>431</sup> and other scholars touch upon the “misreading (误读 *wu du*)” of Qiu Jin. Besides misreading, this section reveals that the power of forgetting is noticeable, whether it is an individual’s act or a collective process.

Hu Ying’s writings examining the public commemoration dedicated to Qiu Jin’s remembering focus on the buildings of Qiu Jin’s tomb and monuments in the years after her execution.<sup>432</sup> Those monuments were constructed to achieve two different goals: the deceased’s spiritual immortality and mass mobilisations of the general public. Hu studies the commemorators of Qiu Jin from 1908 to the post-Mao period and argues that the influential roles of her commemorators (including Sun Yat-sen and Zhou Enlai) and “her unique form of death” made her an iconic symbol whose meanings endured through time.<sup>433</sup> Nevertheless, Qiu Jin was not the only person to be publicly executed in a brutal manner for the crime of opposing the Qing government, nor was she the only female with such experience at that time.<sup>434</sup> There is no single explanation for the significance her death has carried. It is nearly effortless for people in the late Qing and the early Republic to describe and remember Qiu Jin as a vulnerable and relatable figure, because she was a woman. However, in her published writings (poems and speeches) and her chosen dressing style, Qiu repeatedly indicated her desire to appear more masculine as a means to

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<sup>430</sup> Wei Wenzhe 魏文哲, “被误解的革命女杰 —论《六月霜》里的秋瑾形象及其它 [A Wrongly-Accused Heroine: On the Image of Qiu Jin in “June Frost” and Others],” *青岛大学师范学院学报 Journal of Teachers College Qingdao University* 21 no.4 (2004): 28-32.

<sup>431</sup> Ma 马, “民间舆论如何看待秋瑾案 [How Popular Opinion Views The Qiu Jin Case],” 1-5.

<sup>432</sup> Hu Ying, *Burying Autumn: Poetry, Friendship, and Loss* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center: 2016).

<sup>433</sup> Hu Ying. “Qiu Jin’s Nine Burials: The Making of Historical Monuments and Public Memory,” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 19, no. 1 (2007): 177-178.

<sup>434</sup> For example, Fuzhen 福贞, Mao Zhixiang 毛芷香, Liu Huifang 刘惠芳 are three women who died for an uprising in 1900. Xia 夏, “性别与革命 [Gender and Revolution],” 69.

achieve gender equality.<sup>435</sup> The paradox is that she was remembered only in the years before 1911 as an advocate of the feminist movement, but, as argued by researchers mentioned above, the conventional perception of women, an image of beauty, vulnerability, and innocence, was one of the main reasons that brought Qiu Jin to the attention and sympathy of the public.

In December 1911, when the revolutionaries began to celebrate the Xinhai Revolution's achievement and openly mourn those who had died for the revolution, Qiu Jin's photo was hung alongside those of male martyrs, and the commemorators officially declared her a heroine and martyr. In the journal *Zhonghua funü jie* 中华妇女界, Mrs Xueping listed one hundred memorable women and called Qiu Jin "The heroine of the human world."<sup>436</sup> In fact, she called her literally a "female man" (女丈夫 *nü zhangfu*), meaning heroine, showing how heroic qualities were seen as masculine properties. Only by embodying what were seen as masculine virtues of bravery and idealism could a woman achieve the status of a heroine alongside male heroes. *Shenbao*, *Shibao*, and *Xinwenbao* all published articles in 1911 and 1912 to commemorate Qiu Jin, and stress that she was a martyr and "a rarely seen chivalrous woman (女侠 *nü xia*) who shed blood for her country,"<sup>437</sup> and she did not die for herself nor the women's community, but for

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<sup>435</sup> Fan Hong and JA Mangan, "A Martyr for Modernity: Qiu Jin-Feminist, Warrior and Revolutionary," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 18, no. 1 (2001): 27; Qiu Jin 秋瑾, "敬告女同胞书 [A Letter to Fellow Women]," *艺园 Yiyuan* 1 no.13 (1931): 104-106.

<sup>436</sup> Xueping 雪平, "百美吟: 秋瑾、吴芝瑛、林宗雪、唐群英、汤国黎、德林郡、吕碧城、余沈寿、庄鬃诗、缪素筠 [A Hundred Beauties: Qiu Jin...]," *中华妇女界 Zhonghua Funü Jie* 1 no.4 (1915): 5. "人间女丈夫."

<sup>437</sup> Rongyang sanshui, 榮陽三水, "挽秋瑾女士 [Elegy for Ms Qiu Jin]," *Shibao* 时报, November 7, 1912. "侠女为国流血是从来所罕见."



“our nation shared by 400 million people.”<sup>438</sup> The role Qiu Jin was remembered for is usually occupied by men. In the earliest narrative, Qiu became a heroine for his warrior-like or chivalrous characters.

Similarly, in 1914, a photo showing Qiu Jin’s tomb was entitled “the first woman who died for the nation.”<sup>439</sup> From then, Qiu Jin was officially incorporated into the triumphant narrative and celebration of the Xinhai Revolution. Around the same period, official commemorators and popular reading materials both addressed her as a figure with a masculine spirit, noting that it was out of the ordinary for a woman to act like her and such extraordinariness made her worth remembering and comparable to other “national heroes” (民族英雄 *minzu yingxiong*). The parts of her personality and experience that contradict the above narrative were then selectively forgotten. On 10 October 1936, the Double Ten Day (双十节 *Shuangshi jie*) Special Issue for women and children includes a piece on “The Relation between Qiu Jin and the Double Ten Day,”<sup>440</sup> and it gives Qiu Jin various titles, including “the Aspirant who died for the revolutionary movement to overthrow the Manchus and establish the Republic”, “the [unliberated] woman who overcame all odds to do revolutionary work”, “the pioneer of women” who “although [she] did not advocate women’s liberation and the feminist movement, she pioneered them [in practice].”<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>438</sup> “秋瑾女士追悼会纪事 [Chronicle of the Memorial Service for Ms Qiu Jin],” *Shenbao 申报*, 26 April 1912. “秋瑾女士非为个人而死 非为女界而死 实为我□□四万万人共有之国家而死云云。”

<sup>439</sup> “中国女界为国流血者第一人: 鉴湖女侠秋瑾女之墓 [The first Chinese woman who bled for her country: the tomb of Qiu Jin, the heroine of Lack Kan],” *Xiangyan zazhi 香艳杂志* no.3 (1914): 1.

<sup>440</sup> The Double Ten Day is to commemorate 10 October 1911, the day of Wuhan Uprising and the National Day of the Republic of China.

<sup>441</sup> Yuyi 寓意, “秋瑾和双十节 [Qiu Jin and the Double Ten Festival],” *Shenbao 申报*, 10 October 1936, 8.

In the 1930s, Qiu Jin's image as a national martyr was further intensified by popular media such as *Shenbao*. Moreover, she became a role model for the “new women (新女性 *xin nüxing*)” promoted by the Nationalist party-state in the mid-1930s,<sup>442</sup> and the commemoration of Qiu Jin in 1934 and 1935 became an instrument of condemning women who were commonly considered as the more frivolous “modern Chinese girl” (现代中国女性 *xiandai Zhongguo nüxing*). The modern girl concept initially referred to women who were able to take up professions outside of the home and enjoy the freedom of mind in the 1920s, as written in an English poem for Chinese readers in 1930: “I am the Modern Chinese Girl”: “My hair I now begin to curl / And bob and crop the latest style. ... / On land, on sea, or in the air, / My brother's work I claim a share: / In every field I strive to beat / All those that come with me to meet!”<sup>443</sup> The Nationalist government and some citizens accused such a woman in the mid-1930s as “a young lady who has her hair beautifully dressed, whose clothing is of a new, strange fashion, and who may be frequently found in theatres and cabarets,” “a luxuriously decorated girl” and “an enemy to the present world.”<sup>444</sup>

Being a late-Qing figure, Qiu Jin predated the phenomena of the “modern girl” category and the “new woman”, both of which emerged during the May Fourth era from 1919. Moreover, Qiu Jin is arguably a counterexample of the promoted “new woman,” an image of women who were asked not to abandon their domestic role (also being called “the new good wife and good mother” 新贤妻良母 *xin xianqi liangmu*) and were

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<sup>442</sup> Tian Heqin 田和卿, “新女性讨论专辑: 一. 从生物学的观上说到新贤妻良母主义 [New Woman Discussion Album: I. From a biological perspective to the new good wife and good mother],” *新女性 New Women* 1 (1935): 13.

<sup>443</sup> Y.Y. Kim, “The Modern Chinese Girl,” *中华英文周报 Chinese English Weekly* 18 no. 456 (1930): 45.

<sup>444</sup> Tsue Ying 啾莺, “English by Chinese Students: What Is a Modern Girl?” *英语周刊 English Weekly* no.139 (1935): 1025.

expected to dedicate themselves to raising their children properly. Qiu Jin's decision to leave her husband and children to study in Japan, and to explicitly request a divorce later (although divorce was unavailable to her at that time), was omitted from the commemoration of her at this time.<sup>445</sup> In this new narrative of using commemoration of the female martyr of the Republic to advocate the patriotic and family-oriented “new woman”, the Nationalist government, the popular media, and school pupils slipped some parts of Qiu Jin's life, including her unconventional married life, her desire to break out of her gender role and her actions in pursuing this desire.

In 1934, to commemorate “the Anniversary of Qiu Jin's Death (秋女士就义纪念日 *Qiu nüshi jiuyi jinian ri*),”<sup>446</sup> the author of a *Shenbao* article first praised Qiu Jin for her contribution to promoting women's education and gender equality, then condemned women in the 1930s:

Surely today, more than twenty years later, women's studies are prevalent, and men and women have equal rights; but what about the dignity, status and abilities of women? All we see is the mass production of “square hat” racks in the schools every year that can only consume but cannot produce; all we see is the news of rape (強姦 *qiang jian*), abandonment, suicide, demands for alimony, and other unprogressive issues in the various newspapers.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> Li Xizhu 李细珠, “民间舆论与秋瑾案问题及其他--答马自毅教授 [Public Opinions, Qiu Jin Case and Other Problems-Replying to Prof. Ma Ziyi],” *史林 Shilin* no.2 (2006): 56-7.

<sup>446</sup> The *Shenbao* editor of this page proposed to set this an official holiday and the Chinese version of Women's Day. “纪念先烈秋瑾女士 [Commemorating the Martyr Ms Qiu Jin],” *Shenbao 申报* 15 July 1934, 6.

<sup>447</sup> Ji Qun 济羣, “纪念秋瑾女侠感言 [Reflections on The Commemoration of The Heroine Qiu Jin],” *Shenbao 申报*, 15 July 1934, 6. “果然在二十余年后的今日，女学是盛行了，男女是平权了；然而女子的人格如何，地位如何，能力又如何？只看到各学校里每年造出大批地能消费不能生产的‘方帽’架子；只看到各种报纸上披露着强奸、遗弃、自杀、要求赡养费等不展进的消息！”

In the School Magazine of Suzhou Ying Hua Girls' School<sup>448</sup>, a secondary school student Wang Yixing published an essay entitled "Ms Qiu Jin, whom I admire" in 1936, and she wrote:

Look how great this lady [Qiu Jin] is! She sacrificed herself for the revolution. Such a woman who sacrifices herself for the revolution is more noble, greater and more sacred than a woman who never leaves her boudoir! But modern women are only interested in make-up, love and vanity. Some are shouting "Male and Female Equality (男女平等 *nan nü pingdeng*)" but show no social thought nor any greatness themselves. This kind of woman is no better than a peasant worker (小工 *xiaogong*), because she only consumes and does not produce; she is an insect injurious to society and does not benefit the country. We should fight against such women! At the same time, we should become women like Qiu Jin, ready to sacrifice ourselves for the public good in the future and do something spectacular for our country!<sup>449</sup>

Both texts condemned the educated Chinese woman who "only consumes and does not produce" but they came from different perspectives. The *Shenbao* author Ji Qun implies that women in 1934 failed to achieve what Qiu Jin called for and should be held accountable for the negative news such as "rape (強姦 *qiang jian*),<sup>450</sup> abandonment, suicide, demands for alimony."<sup>451</sup> Ji Qun ends the article with an appeal for Chinese women to undertake a wholehearted self-examination. Here, Qiu Jin is merely an emblem

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<sup>448</sup> "英华校刊社简则 [The Introduction of Yinghua School Journal Society]," *Yinghua 英华* no.6 (1936): 18. "本刊由英华女校全体学生合组而成, 故称英华女校。"

<sup>449</sup> Wang Yixin 王一心, "我所景仰的秋瑾女士 [Ms Qiu Jin, whom I admire]," *Yinghua 英华* no.6 (1936): 223-224. "看! 这位女士(秋瑾); 多么伟大啊! 为了革命, 竟牺牲了. 这样一个为革命牺牲的女子, 比死守闺房的女子, 来得高贵, 伟大, 神圣! 但是现代女子, 只知爱妆饰、谈恋爱、慕虚荣, 一些没有社会思想, 中喊'男女平等', 自己不拿出一点伟大的精神来。这种女子, 不如一个小工, 因为他只有消费, 不会生产, 是社会的蛀虫, 是没有有益于国家的, 这种女子, 我们该打到, 同时, 我们要做像秋瑾样的女子, 预备牺牲自己, 将来为公众谋福利, 为国家做一番轰轰烈烈的事业!"

<sup>450</sup> It is unclear if they were referring to women allowing themselves to be seduced and resulting in more sexual licentiousness or promiscuity.

<sup>451</sup> Ji Qun 濟羣, "纪念秋瑾女侠感言 [Reflections on The Commemoration of The Heroine Qiu Jin]," 6.

of the ideal woman in China, similar to how, when people commemorate the Xinhai Revolution, they are reflecting on the social issues at the time. Wang Yixin's short essay gives more attention to Qiu Jin and eulogises her for sacrificing herself and choosing not to live a cloistered life. Even though evidence from this section cannot indicate whether Wang's statement is representative of other students, it shows that the image of an "unprogressive modern girl" is borrowed from other popular narratives circulating since the early 1930s, such as Ji Qun's piece.

However, the image of Qiu Jin became more varied and fluid when commemorations and interpretations of her flourished in the 1930s and 1940s, while some people used her nationalism to help persuade women to devote themselves to family life. A generalised version of the logic behind these statements is: Qiu Jin sacrificed her life for the establishment of the ROC; female citizens should follow Qiu Jin's path and help make the country better; bearing and raising children is an important role of women and a fundamental means of revitalising the country. In contrast, other people retained the notion of Qiu Jin as a woman warrior who fought for a meaningful life outside of the household for women and called for Chinese women to be as brave as her and be ready to sacrifice themselves for the collective. Both interpretations emphasise Qiu Jin's death instead of her life, coincident with the Nationalist government's portrayal of Qiu Jin as a female martyr contributing to the success of the Xinhai Revolution. The popular narrative of Qiu Jin in the late Qing, came to be depicted in a traditional opera and a novel, both named *Liu Yue Shuang* (六月霜) and presenting the main character as a reformer advocating for "family revolution" (家庭革命 *jiating geming*) instead of a revolutionary

fighting for “political revolution” (政治革命 *zhengzhi geming*).<sup>452</sup> The “woman warrior” aspect of Qiu Jin’s character was further developed in the 1940s, and, as argued by Louise Edwards, was used for the mobilisation of women during the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>453</sup>

Alicia Spencer-Hall argues that the public only gets to know symbolic figures in media texts where their true selves are blurred or made unauthentic, although their signification as real people remains crucial.<sup>454</sup> As Spencer-Hall observes in her study of Marie of Oignies, a 13th century Catholic saint, “the ‘true’ identity of a celebrated figure is fragmented, pieced together by various attributes which together form a whole.”<sup>455</sup> There has been a similar pattern in the narrative making of Qiu Jin since the late Qing. During the process of narrative construction, some of her experiences or viewpoints (authentic or not), once considered significant, eventually got forgotten by the following generation of storytellers, from governmental sources to newspaper reporters and school pupils. Not only did the various attributes of Qiu Jin’s story hardly form a whole, but they also underwent several rounds of reconstruction and remained changeable.

During the Sino-Japanese War and Civil War, Qiu Jin continued to be commemorated as a Xinhai martyr. In the 1940s, at least three films were made about her: *Qiu Jin* by Lianxing Company (聯星) in Hong Kong, filmed in 1941, and *Bi Xue Qian*

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<sup>452</sup> Wei Yulian 魏玉莲, “继承与突破—话剧《秋瑾传》和小说《六月霜》的对比研究 [Inheritance and Breakthrough - A Comparative Study of the Drama “Qiu Jin” and the Novel “June Frost”],” *戏剧文学 Xiju wenxue* 2 no.345 (2021): 69-71.

<sup>453</sup> Louise Edwards, *Women Warriors and Wartime Spies of China*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 40-65. Edwards’s final argument is that Qiu Jin’s unconventional significance was reshaped and manipulated to the gender norm and eventually became a “good Confucian mother and loyal supporter of the state” in the 1980s, which the later part of the chapter will discuss.

<sup>454</sup> Richard Dyer. *Stars*. (London: BFI Publishing 1998): 68, cited in Alicia Spencer-Hall. “The Xtian Factor, or How to Manufacture a Medieval Saint.” In *Medieval Saints and Modern Screens*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 148.

<sup>455</sup> Alicia Spencer-Hall. “The Xtian Factor, or How to Manufacture a Medieval Saint.” In *Medieval Saints and Modern Screens*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 148.

*Qiu* (碧血千秋) by Zhong Dian San Chang (中電三廠) in Beiping, screened in 1948. Additionally, a film by Huaying Company (華影) in Shanghai featuring Qiu Jin was marketed in 1943 and caught more media attention, because the film was originally scheduled to star a famous actress, Chen Yanyan. News reports promoting this film use the most glamorous and glittering words to describe the life of Qiu Jin, calling her “the only great woman of modern times (近代唯一的女偉人 *jindai weiyi de nü weiren*)” and “a life of greatness, inspiring and tragic (一生史蹟, 可歌可泣 *yisheng shiji, kegekeqi*)”.<sup>456</sup> Although this is not necessarily the first time an article cited Qiu Jin as the only significant female figure of modern times, such a narrative had an origin and a considerable impact. Evidently Qiu Jin’s story was seen as sufficiently popular and engaging to attract the attention of screenwriters and directors, decades after her death.

In 1947, a newly established society called “Comrades of the Xinhai Revolution” (辛亥革命同志會 *Xinhai Geming Tongzhi Hui*) organised an Exhibition of Xinhai Revolution Documents and invited Qiu Jin’s daughter Guifeng (also named Canzhi) for the ribbon-cutting. One of the artefacts being displayed was “Picture of Lady Qiu Jin’s death in action (秋瑾女士就義圖景 *Qiu Jin nüshi jiuyi tujing*)”,<sup>457</sup> showcasing that her death was more important than her life. During the re-remembering of Qiu Jin in the Republic, another aspect forgotten by the media is her family, especially her husband, who represented the Qing official, the oppressor in the Confucian family hierarchy, and played the unkind or stupid supporting character in Qiu Jin’s life story. In 1931, *The*

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<sup>456</sup> “陈燕燕演秋瑾 [Chen Yanyan plays Qiu Jin],” *华影周刊 Huaying Zhoukan* no.42 (1943): 1; “秋瑾 [Qiu Jin]” *影剧 Yingju* no.3 (1943): 22.

<sup>457</sup> “辛亥革命文献展览 市长主持双十揭幕 [The exhibition of Xinhai Revolution documents, chaired by the mayor, was unveiled at the Double Ten Festival],” *Dagong bao* 大公报 (Shanghai 上海) 5 October 1947, 5.

*Independent Weekly* (英華獨立早報 *Yinghua duli zaobao*) published an article entitled “Surname of Revolutionary Martyress’ Husband[?] (秋瑾丈夫姓什麼 *Qiu Jin zhangfu xing shenme?*)” and concluded that “[T]he greatness of the lady revolutionary apparently had overshadowed the family of her husband.”<sup>458</sup> This was worthy of comment because it was so unusual for a wife to be more prominent than her husband and his family.

There is more to discover about the commemoration and representation of Qiu Jin, including the narratives of her under the communist regime and what admonition her story is sending to today’s young Chinese. Moreover, there are other late Qing female reformers or revolutionaries who might be considered Xinhai martyrs but whose names were buried in historical commemoration and represented solely by Qiu Jin. Their stories and the forgetting of their names is another intriguing topic for historians. The representative position Qiu Jin’s image has overshadowed other women’s Xinhai experience, while the memories of 1911 are reserved mainly for men. When people (especially young women) in the ROC tried to look for a female reference in this revolution, Qiu Jin was the one they could find. For this reason, this individual’s life and death needed to embody all of the distinguishing characteristics people were looking for from a pre-Republican heroine. Forgetting aspects of her life and work is a necessary step in reconstruction when contemporary needs are at the forefront of people’s minds. When what were seen as irrelevant details of Qiu Jin’s life faded into oblivion in order to highlight the desired narrative, and so Qiu Jin, who had done things that went against the gender norms in the late Qing and did not fit well into the mould that the Republican

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<sup>458</sup> “秋瑾丈夫姓什麼 [What is the surname of Qiu Jin’s husband],” *英華獨立周報* [*Anglo-Chinese Independent Weekly*] 1 no.30 (1931): 5.



narrators wished her to fit, was nonetheless able to endure through time as the incarnation of greatness.

### *Conclusion*

The findings of this chapter coalesce around several key points. First, personal memories and accounts of the Xinhai Revolution, as presented in republican newspapers and magazines aimed at younger audiences, underscore the multiplicity of interpretations surrounding this historical event. This is evidenced by the widely varying ways people recall and commemorate it. Second, through the lens of Qiu Jin's shifting representation, a female perspective is added to the predominantly masculine narratives of the 1911 Revolution. This not only contributes to the discourse surrounding diverse pasts (which mostly consists of studies on the European context),<sup>459</sup> but it also challenges the conventional narratives of China's modern nation-building. Interestingly, Qiu Jin's enduring popularity and widespread depiction suggest that, despite elements of her life being overlooked or forgotten, her private histories provided a platform for selective public memories to thrive. This highlights the need for more narratives that shed light on the female experience when revisiting monumental events like the Xinhai Revolution.

In essence, the crafting of private histories into myth-history for wider consumption does not produce a unified interpretation. Instead, these narratives are often reinterpreted and reshaped by individual receivers. Furthermore, textual recounting represents only one layer of historical narratives that also included cinema, fictional readings, and memorials. Therefore, considering the extensive publication of the 1911 Xinhai Revolution from the republican era to the present, the following chapter will delve

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<sup>459</sup> For example, see: Berger, Lorenz, and Melman, eds. *Popularizing National Pasts*; Biess and Moeller, *Histories of the Aftermath*; Stefan Tanaka, *History without Chronology* (Ann Arbor: Lever Press, 2019).

into the Huanghuagang Mausoleum in Guangzhou as a case study. This examination will explore how physical locations can preserve and shape public memories.

## Chapter 4: Preserving the Past, Inviting Change: The Xinhai Martyrs in the Huanghuagang Mausoleum

Sun Yat-sen's name has long been closely associated with the 1911 Xinhai Revolution, particularly in orthodox Chinese historiography and popular historical accounts. But other, less well-known heroes are celebrated too. In the most recent Chinese history textbook for Grade Eight students aged approximately 14-16, the unit chronicling the Xinhai Revolution begins with a brief introduction of the uprisings led by Tongmenghui in 1906 and 1907, showing headshots of Xu Xilin (1873 - 1907) and Qiu Jin (1875 - 1907), both of whom were killed for their direct or indirect participations in the rebellion in 1907 - Xu in Anqing, Anhui province, and Qiu in Shaoxing, Zhejiang province.<sup>460</sup> The textbook's subsequent paragraph is dedicated to the "Huanghuagang Uprising (黄花岗起义 *Huanghuagang Qiyi*, literally Yellow Flower Mound Uprising),"<sup>461</sup> another unsuccessful attempt by revolutionaries, led indirectly by Sun and directly by Huang Xing (1874 - 1916), in April 1911 (the year of the Xinhai 辛亥).<sup>462</sup> Despite being suppressed by the Qing government within a few days, the Uprising holds significant historical weight. Its importance stems not just from its timing - being the most well-known uprising at the beginning of 1911, which was followed by the Wuchang Uprising in October of the same year, marking the end of the Qing Empire - but also from its aftermath: the burial of seventh-two bodies in Guangzhou and the creation of the

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<sup>460</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Eight-Grade Volume 1* (Beijing: People's Education Press, 2016), 42.

<sup>461</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Eight-Grade Volume 1*, 43.

<sup>462</sup> The traditional way of numbering the years in Chinese uses the sexagenary cycle (干支 *ganzhi*) or sixty stems and branches; Xinhai 辛亥 is the 48<sup>th</sup> one in the cycle and occurs every sixty years.

Huanghuagang Mausoleum to host and honour the martyrs. According to the textbook, both the event and the location exemplify heroism and inspire national aspirations.<sup>463</sup>

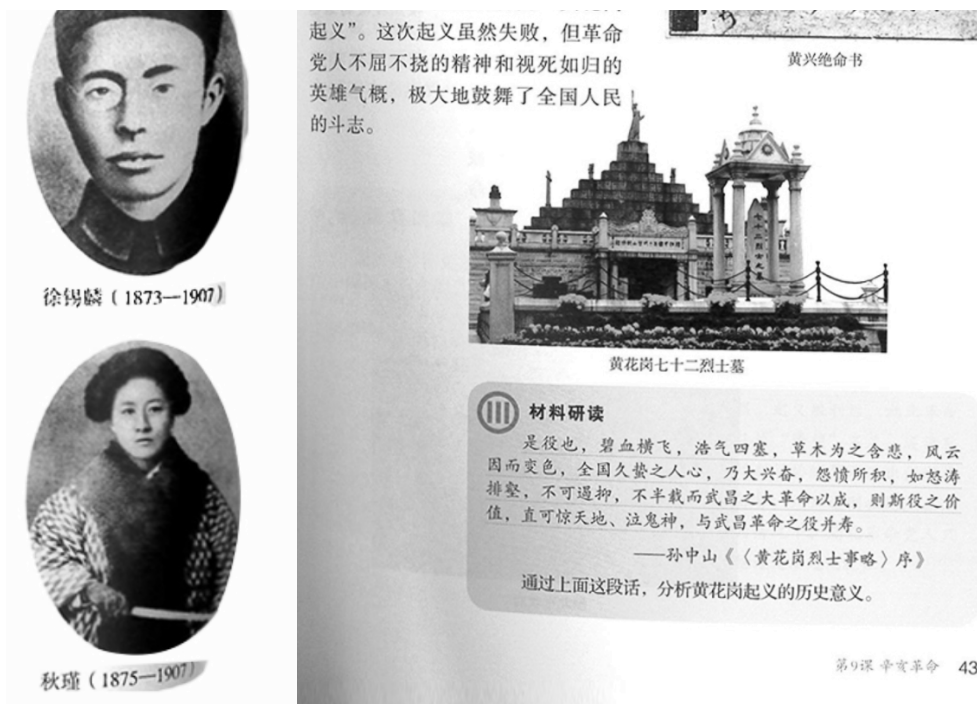


Figure 26: Xu Xilin (1873 - 1907) and Qiu Jin (1875 - 1907)

Figure 27: The Cemetery of the Seventy-two Martyrs of Huanghuagang<sup>464</sup>

Modern Chinese history museums and revolutionary mausoleums, initially modelled after Western exhibits,<sup>465</sup> have evolved into dynamic public spaces. They are critical for shaping people’s understanding of history and national identity and serve a crucial role in consolidating ideology.<sup>466</sup> Despite their educative purpose, contradictory

<sup>463</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Eight-Grade Volume 1*, 43.

<sup>464</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Eight-Grade Volume 1*, 42-43.

<sup>465</sup> Qin Shao, “Exhibiting the Modern: The Creation of the First Chinese Museum, 1905-1930.” *The China Quarterly*, no. 179 (2004): 684-686. Qin Shao explains “exhibitory modernity” as a phenomenon that appeared in both the early 20th and 21st centuries in China, referring to the state’s act of investing in exhibitory institutions and activities to showcase the progress of national modernity.

<sup>466</sup> Denise Y. Ho and Jie Li, “From Landlord Manor to Red Memorabilia: Reincarnations of a Chinese Museum Town.” *Modern China* 42, no. 1 (2016): 6-7.

narratives frequently permeate the past they present to the public.<sup>467</sup> Huanghuagang Mausoleum is taken here as a case study to shed light on the nature of commemorative activities carried out by the state, and to illustrate how these practices have changed from the Republican era to the present.

The Huanghuagang Mausoleum, nestled at the heart of the Huanghuagang Commemoration Park in Guangzhou, is a site of commemoration constructed and maintained by the Guomindang during the Republican era. This public mausoleum is the final resting place of the 72 martyrs who fell during the 29 March Uprising of 1911. The burial in the “mound of yellow flowers”<sup>468</sup> has resulted in the Uprising being known as the Yellow Flower Mound (Huanghuagang) Uprising in China. Although quickly suppressed by Qing forces in Guangdong, the Uprising was one of the most significant efforts by the Tongmenghui to overthrow the Qing in 1911, and as such is commemorated as part of the Xinhai (1911) Revolution

The chapter begins with a first-hand account of my visit to the Huanghuagang Mausoleum, wherein I played dual roles: as an observer and a visitor. This experience acts as a personal prologue to the subsequent analytical exploration of the site, its history, and the manifold narratives it embodies. Then, this chapter is divided into three distinct sections of analysis. The first section explores the dual meanings of the Huanghuagang Mausoleum, with a particular focus on the annual rituals carried out by both the central and local governments to commemorate the martyrs. This section also explores how these

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<sup>467</sup> For more discussions, see Yu Hongmei’s study on the relationship between history and ideology in Chinese main melody films. Yu Hongmei. “Visual Spectacular, Revolutionary Epic, and Personal Voice: The Narration of History in Chinese Main Melody Films.” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 25, no. 2 (2013): 208-210.

<sup>468</sup> Some said it was initially named “the mound of the red flowers” and was changed by Pan Weida 潘微达 to better represent the revolutionaries’ spirit. Li Ruoqing 李若晴, “烈士精神与革命记忆: 20 世纪诗画中的红棉意象. [Martyrdom and Revolutionary Memory: Red Cotton Flowers Imagery in 20th Century Poetry and Painting]” *文艺理论与批评 Theory and Criticism of Literature and Art* 6 (2018): 140.

repeated memorial services contribute to a gradual fading of the heroes' personas. This sub-section delves into Sun Yat-sen's preface to Zou Lu's *Huanghuagang Lieshi Shilie* (黃花岡烈士事略 *Brief History of the Martyrs of Huanghuagang*),<sup>469</sup> a seminal work initially published in 1922, which subsequently became a part of the high school curriculum in 1983. The incorporation of this piece into educational discourse not only demonstrates the re-establishment of the waning "cult" of Sun Yat-sen, but also signifies a retrospective condemnation of the Republican era through Sun's words. The sub-section analyses the underlying implications of this shift and the consequent impact on the collective historical memory and understanding of the period.

The second section of the chapter spotlights the commemorative narratives surrounding non-martyr heroes linked to the Huanghuagang Uprising, as portrayed in scholarly journals and elsewhere, and sheds light on the conflicting versions of these stories that exist today. This comparison of different narratives around the same events underlines the multi-layered nature of myth creation and demonstrates how heroic figures are shaped. The final part of the chapter pivots to examining the physical experiences of visitors to the Huanghuagang Mausoleum in recent decades, seeking to grasp samples of visitors' experience to the Mausoleum, by collecting web dairies shared on the virtual communities in Douban (豆瓣, a social network and popular culture database).

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<sup>469</sup> Sun Yat-sen 孫文, "黃花崗烈士事略序 [The Preface of A Brief History of the Seventy-two Martyrs of Huanghuagang]," in Zou Lu 鄒魯, *黃花岡烈士事略 [A Brief History of the Martyrs of Huanghuagang]*, [location and publisher unknown], 1922. The Digital copy is provided by Quan Guo Bao Kan Suo Yin (CNBKSY), <https://www-cnbsky-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/literature/tushu/e22fdb1b39f07ec26a93e5d502564c5b/101>, accessed on 7 April 2022.

On Tuesday 19, Wednesday 20, and Thursday 21 January 2021, visitor numbers to the Huanghuagang Park were recorded as 7290, 7148, and 6815. These figures represent approximately 17% and 18% of the site's maximum daily carrying capacity (40,683 people).<sup>470</sup> On January 22, a site visit was carried out to evaluate the representation of the past in the historical site and to collect some unpublished engraved inscription on the stones gifted by people or societies with connection with the martyrs or the Guomindang. Entry through the Red Iron Gate and along the Pathway to the Mausoleum revealed a line of stone monuments, one of which bore the inscription: "Worshipping Heroes; the body dies and the name remains famous for thousands of years; the accomplishment brings smiles to the grave."<sup>471</sup> This inscription resonated with one of the core purposes of the Mausoleum: to venerate heroes and safeguard their legacies. This theme was further echoed by features throughout the Mausoleum and its surrounding areas. One notable example is the Silent Pond (默池 *Mo Chi*):

This pond was built in 1921. The deck of the arched bridge at the centre of the pond is made of fine and closely woven stairs to create a solemn atmosphere, where people cannot help walking on slowly and bowing, just like mourning martyrs who gave their lives for national rejuvenation. Water continuously gushing out from flower-shaped nozzles on both sides of the bridge implies that the revolutionary spirit and patriotism of martyrs will be carried on uninterruptedly from generation to generation.

Contrary to the steadfast messaging of these historical artefacts, the visitors and staff present on 22 January 2021 embodied a diverse range of contemporary Chinese life: The woman in the blue uniform sweeping the floor, the old couple holding hands, the elderly man in a wheelchair, school kids in uniforms eating snacks around a stone table, elderly people playing poker in a stone pavilion, and the middle-aged man jogging on the

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<sup>470</sup> Source: the "Traffic count (客流量统计 *Ke liu liang tong ji*)" displayed on the bulletin board at the park's visitor office on 22 January 2021.

<sup>471</sup> "崇拜英雄 身歿名留蜚聲千古 功成志遂含笑九泉"

path.<sup>472</sup> On this particular Friday afternoon in January, no organised groups of visitors appeared to pay respect to the martyrs in this Patriotic Education Demonstration Base (爱国主义教育示范基地 *Aiguo Zhuyi Jiaoyu Shifan Jidi*).<sup>473</sup> Instead, visitors seemed to appreciate the space more as a back garden, where daily life took precedence over historical remembrance.



Figure 28: the “Traffic count (客流量统计 *Ke liu liang tong ji*)” displayed on the bulletin board at the park’s visitor office on 22 January 2021.<sup>474</sup>



Figure 29: The “Worshipping Heroes” Stone Monument<sup>475</sup>

<sup>472</sup> Photos taken for each activity without showing faces.

<sup>473</sup> China Development Gateway, “爱国主义教育示范基地之黄花岗七十二烈士墓园 [Patriotic Education Demonstration Base - the Huanghuagang Cemetery of the Seventy-two Martyrs]” [http://cn.chinagate.cn/indepths/zggcd90n/2011-04/14/content\\_22358541.htm](http://cn.chinagate.cn/indepths/zggcd90n/2011-04/14/content_22358541.htm), accessed on 7 April 2022.

<sup>474</sup> Photo taken by the author on on 22 January 2021.

<sup>475</sup> Photo taken by the author on on 22 January 2021.



The Huanghuagang Uprising as a historical event has stayed alive in public culture and memories and endured through changing political regimes; this longevity is arguably a result of the maintenance of the memorial site by the authorities. Pan Shaw-Yu studies the immediate memorialisation of the Uprising and how the romantic and sentimental narratives associated with the revolutionary activities made it a popular and influential topic at the time.<sup>476</sup> Lin Juemin, one of the Huanghuagang martyrs who became well-known for his “Farewell Letter to My Wife (与妻书 *yu qi shu*),” is still renowned among educated young Chinese who learnt the written piece from their high school textbooks. Other names are lost in the public memory, while the ritual of visiting the Mausoleum during the Qingming (tomb-sweeping) Festival remains.<sup>477</sup>

This chapter will also narrate the state-organised annual ritual at the Huanghuagang Mausoleum in the PRC, as a means to discuss why this event remains memorable in the PRC and how the burial site functions as a museum to preserve, modify, and multiply the interpretations of the past. It is possible that repeating commemorations would result in the domination of a more simplified narrative. This chapter, however, argues that the official site and commemorative activities do not shape a simplified historical narrative; on the contrary, the outcome of providing a one-sided and ever-changing historical narrative is the emergence of multiple reinterpretations. Moreover, the collective memory of an event like the Huanghuagang Uprising, which is strongly tied to a physical location and the surroundings, becomes harder to limit to a singular past.

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<sup>476</sup> Personal stories of the martyrs also made the uprising more lively and easier to transfer into public literature. Pan Shaw-Yu 潘少瑜, “感傷的力量: 林覺民「與妻訣別書」的正典化歷程與社會文化意義 [Sentimental Power: The Canonization and Socio-Cultural Significances of Lin Juemin’s ‘Farewell Letter to My Wife’],” *臺大中文學報* [*National Taiwan University Chinese Journal*] 45 (2014): 269-322.

<sup>477</sup> Qingming Festival (清明节 *qing ming jie*), also known as Tomb Sweeping Day, is the day Chinese people show respect to the dead in early April.

Although the commemorative site itself was built and is still primarily funded by the state, it is beyond merely representing the state's narrative when it was open for visitors and to be reviewed and interpreted; instead, the site becomes a venue for pluralistic perspectives to encounter each other.

Public historians have engaged in discussions about how museums, in both their broad and narrow senses, can evolve to better represent a diverse population. This is aimed at ensuring that visitors from various backgrounds can see their identities reflected in the exhibitions.<sup>478</sup> Some institutions are achieving this through the implementation of innovative pedagogical frameworks.<sup>479</sup> Other scholars, such as Emilie Sitzia and Yuha Jung,<sup>480</sup> discuss the possible ways to create “ignorant museums” which aim at mitigating elitism and transfer museums from the site of expertise to public forums.<sup>481</sup> However, such discussions are often centred in regions where museums are viewed as embodiments of knowledge and elitism, such as in the realm of fine art. China has had different experiences in modern and contemporary history, and museums and memorial parks offer a combination of displays, educational opportunities, and community spaces for leisure activities.

Folklore of the past, rumours of the present, histories written by historians, and memorials built by the states all share value as various narratives people use to describe and make sense of human society. When public historians and some other historians long for the systematic analysis of the reception of history, they know that it is nearly

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<sup>478</sup> Emilie Sitzia, “The Ignorant Art Museum: Beyond Meaning-making.” *International journal of lifelong education* 37, no. 1 (2018): 73.

<sup>479</sup> Carmel Borg and Peter Mayo. “Museums: Adult education as cultural politics.” *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 2010, no. 127 (2010): 35-44.

<sup>480</sup> Yuha Jung, “The Ignorant Museum: Transforming the Elitist Museum into an Inclusive Learning Place.” In Nicola Aberly (Ed.), *The New Museum Community: Audiences, Challenges, Benefits* (Edinburgh: Museums Etc, 2011), 272–291

<sup>481</sup> Sitzia, “The Ignorant Art Museum”, 80-83.

impractical, for few readers reveal and publish their thoughts systematically and fewer verbal conversations are recorded and retained. One approach is that the researcher goes into these sites with shared cultural understanding and values as other contemporary visitors and, therefore, simultaneously forms or enriches their version of the history. The richness and diversity in representing a historical event are explicable when the researcher appreciates various pasts and considers unofficial history equally important as the official version.<sup>482</sup>

- *The Mausoleum as a Site of Dualities and the Origin of Chinese Martyrdom*

A mausoleum, serving as a nexus between the earthly realm and the domain of the departed, inherently has religious connotations. This is especially true of a mausoleum dedicated to national heroes. Chinese scholars have discussed how the government in the 1930s constructed the Huanghuagang Mausoleum as a political space filled with sacredness.<sup>483</sup> Moreover, the Mausoleum is also used as an outdoor museum of historical monuments, architectural designs, and the urban landscape.<sup>484</sup> Denise Y. Ho and Jie Li state that revolutionary museums in China have “replaced traditional temples as new ritual sites” since Mao’s era.<sup>485</sup> In their conclusion of analysing a Chinese museum town,

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<sup>482</sup> See Angela Carter, “Introduction” in *Angela Carter’s Book of Fairy Tales*. (London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2015), 7-26.

<sup>483</sup> Yang Lin 杨林 and Zhang Jijiao 张继焦, “政治空间的神圣性建构—以黄花岗七十二烈士墓园为例的考察 [The Construction of Sacredness in Political Space: An Examination of the Cemetery of the Seventy-two Martyrs of Huanghuagang as an Example],” *北方民族大学学报(哲学社会科学版) Journal of Beifang University of Nationalities* 138, (2017): 50-53.

<sup>484</sup> There are also temporary exhibitions held inside the Huanghuagang Park; in 2013, a motion was raised to promote the Huanghuagang Park to be a museum for a higher level of preservation and protection: <http://www.xhgmw.com/html/xinhaijinian/wenzhang/2014/0716/9963.html>, accessed on 2 August 2021; in 2018, Huanghua Culture Hall (黄花文化馆) was built inside the park to hold more cultural activities and exhibits.

<sup>485</sup> Ho and Li, “From Landlord Manor to Red Memorabilia,” 3-37.

Ho and Li list a series of dichotomies challenged by the transformation of the museum town from the Republican to the Reform era, including the contradictions between “public and private, fact and fiction, secular and sacred, material and spiritual, serious and playful.”<sup>486</sup> These sets of dualities are observable in the Huanghuagang Park, where layers of narratives have been accumulated since the early twentieth century.

Since the Republican era, national memorial ceremonies for martyrs have flourished nationwide. The Guangzhou Uprising on 29 March 1911 (lunar calendar) was commemorated to the fullest extent by the Nationalist government; the government-organised public remembrance of this attempt to overthrow the Qing in the 1920s established the concept of martyrdom in modern Chinese history. In 1930, the date 29 March was set as the “Memorial Day of the Revolutionary Martyrs (革命先烈紀念日 *Geming Xianlie Jinian Ri*)”<sup>487</sup> and became a national holiday to commemorate all revolutionary martyrs.<sup>488</sup> Then, Chiang Kai-shek turned the Memorial Day into Youth Day in 1944 and held a commemoration in the wartime capital Chongqing to celebrate it.<sup>489</sup> The Nationalist Government also institutionalised the process of rituals and

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<sup>486</sup> Ho and Li, “From Landlord Manor to Red Memorabilia,” 32.

<sup>487</sup> Guo Hui 郭輝, *民國前期國家儀式研究: 1912-1931 [A Study of National Ceremonies in the Early Republican Period (1912-1931)]* (Beijing: Social Science Literature Press, 2013), 202-213, cited in Wang Yuhui 王余輝, “安生慰死: 南京國民政府國家忠烈祭祀制度的建立 [Comforting the living and the dead: The establishment of the Nanjing Nationalist Government’s national system of sacrificing loyal martyrs],” *抗日戰爭研究 The Journal of Studies of China’s Resistance War Against Japan* 2 (2018): 47.

<sup>488</sup> This date (29 March) is continued to be celebrated as a national holiday in Taiwan; see: 紀念日及節日實施辦法 [Implementation Regulations for Days of Remembrance and Festivals], <https://law.moj.gov.tw/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?pcode=D0020033>, accessed on 20 August 2021.

<sup>489</sup> Chiang Kai-shek 蔣中正, “首屆青年節告全國青年 [The First Youth Festival, To The National Youth],” *革命青年(上饒) Revolutionary Youth (Shangrao)* 1 no. 6 (1944): 6-7. The Communist regime continued to celebrate the May Fourth Youth Day, while Wang Jingwei’s Nanjing Nationalist Government started to celebrate the May Fifth Youth Day from 1943. See: Wang Jingwei 汪兆銘, “五五青年節之意義 [The Meaning of May Fifth Youth Day],” *中國青年(上海 1942) Chinese Youth (Shanghai 1942)* 2 no.3 (1943): 3.

commemorations, including music playing, bowing, silent mourning, placing flowers, and giving eulogies.<sup>490</sup> The institutionalised rituals have been carried over to the Huanghuagang public memorial service since the founding of the PRC. Many parts of the ceremonies in the PRC resemble the Republican memorial, including the date,<sup>491</sup> the leading attendees, and the ritual.

Nevertheless, martyrdom in modern and contemporary China and its religious aspect have a deeper root than the new political rituals made by either of the political Parties. Chinese folklorist Zhou Xing's work on the cultural logic of the Tomb-sweeping Day identifies the transformation of the dead's soul in the folk customs of memorial ceremonies in the burial site.<sup>492</sup> Tomb-sweeping rituals are recorded in *Zhou li* (周禮 *Rites of Zhou*), and *Han shu* (漢書 *Book of Han*),<sup>493</sup> and are said to date to as early as the Xia Dynasty (traditionally circa 2200 – 1760 BC)<sup>494</sup> or Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1046 - 256 BC). In the Tang Dynasty (618–907), tomb-sweeping was popular among ordinary people and was often associated with the reinforcement of the Confucian concept of “Xiao (孝, filial piety)”.<sup>495</sup> In Zhou Xing's analysis, “the soul of the dead” can only become an

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<sup>490</sup> Wang 王, “安生慰死 [Comforting the living and the dead],” 47.

<sup>491</sup> Just as Taiwan, the PRC commemorates the Huanghuagang martyrs on 29 March in the new calendar instead of the lunar calendar date on which the uprising took place.

<sup>492</sup> Zhou Xing 周星, “从‘亡灵’到‘祖灵’或‘英灵’: 清明墓基的文化逻辑 [From ‘the soul of the dead’ to ‘ancestral soul’ and ‘spirit of a martyr’: A study of the cultural logic of the Tomb-sweeping Day],” *云南师范大学学报 Journal of Yunnan Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences)* vol.49 no.3 (2017): 106-119. A similar framework is used in a recent study on Timor-Leste: Lia Kent and Rui Feijo. *The Dead as Ancestors, Martyrs, and Heroes in Timor-Leste* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 2020.

<sup>493</sup> Shang Binghe 尚秉和, *历代社会风俗事物考 [An Examination of Social Customs and Folklore through the Dynasties]*, (Beijing: 中国书店 Chinese Bookstore, 2001), 266-269, cited in Zhou, “From ‘The Soul of The Dead’ To ‘Ancestral Soul’ And ‘Spirit of A Martyr’,” 107.

<sup>494</sup> Sarah Allan, “The Myth of the Xia Dynasty.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* no. 2 (1984): 242.

<sup>495</sup> *Liji – Zhongyong* 礼记·中庸, “事死如事生, 事亡如事存, 孝之至也 [Thus they served the dead as they would have served them alive; they served the departed as they

“ancestral soul” after regular tomb-sweeping rituals during which the descendants offer sacrifices to show love and remembrance. In this process, a “new tomb (新坟 *xin fen*)” becomes an “old tomb (老坟 *lao fen*)”, joy replaces sadness, the memories and personalities of the deceased begin to blur, and, eventually, a loved one become an ancestor.<sup>496</sup> The paradoxes of seriousness and playfulness, and remembering and forgetting, are rooted in the long-existing custom and culture of how Chinese people deal with death.

When the worship of an ancestral soul is no longer confined to the family or community sphere, but enters the public sphere, it is in the process of becoming the “spirit of a martyr”. Honouring martyrs in China in some ways leads paradoxically to an accurate memory of the individual being forgotten and dissipated. The annual ceremony extricates participants in the ritual from sadness, sorrow, or feelings of guilt in their everyday lives. In the long course of time, the sacredness inevitably fades away, and a graveyard or a mausoleum regularly visited and commemorated by the living can even become a playground. Such characteristics run in contradiction to the governments’ desire to keep the martyrs’ spirit eternal in contemporary times.

- *The Communist Remembrance of the Xinhai Martyrdom*

***Government Organised Annual Commemorative Ritual (公祭) in Huanghuagang in Mao’s China***

To explore the dynamics of rituals performed in homage to the Huanghuagang martyrs, the next section begins with a review of the annually reported public

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would have served them had they been continued among them - the height of filial piety.]” <https://ctext.org/liji/zhong-yong/zhs?en=on>, accessed on 25 August 2021.

<sup>496</sup> Zhou, “From ‘the soul of the dead’ to ‘ancestral soul’ and ‘spirit of a martyr,’” 110-112.

commemorations (公祭 *gong ji*) at Huanghuagang. The provincial government initiated these ritual ceremonies in 1950, the first anniversary since the establishment of the new state. *Nanfang Daily* published reports of the process and the scale of those ceremonies. Although news reports each year is brief and follows a fixed format, these journalist records provide a narrow but insightful perspective on how the interpretation of this historical event and site has evolved within the People's Republic of China, and capture the shifting socio-political landscape. Moreover, these rituals provide a parallel to the commemoration of Sun Yat-sen's birth, as analysed in Chapter 1, thereby enabling a comparative exploration of the official narratives surrounding a revered figure and the revolution in which he played a crucial role, from the 1950s through the post-Mao era.

On 29 March 1950, representatives of all social backgrounds gathered to carry out a public commemoration of the Huanghuagang martyrs. In addition to government officials and military personnel, labour unions, banking institutions, high schools, and universities in Guangzhou also sent representatives to attend the event.<sup>497</sup> The commemoration was chaired by Situ Meitang 司徒美堂 (1968-1955), a leading overseas Chinese figure who funded Chinese nationalist activities as early as 1911 and returned to China in September 1949 to take up the leadership of one of the democratic parties - *Zhigongdang* (致公党) - and became vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).<sup>498</sup> The purpose of the memorial event, conveyed in the speech by Li Zhangda 李章達 (1890-1953), the Vice Mayor of Guangzhou at that time and formerly a dedicated member of the *Tongmenghui* (同盟会) who participated in

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<sup>497</sup> “黃花崗烈士殉難卅九週年 市各界昨舉行公祭 [The 39th anniversary of the martyrs of Huanghuagang, the city held a public memorial yesterday].” *Nanfang Daily* 南方日報, 30 March 1950, 1.

<sup>498</sup> Mao Zedong, “Letter to Situ Meitang”, in *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976: September 1945 - December 1955*, edited by Michael Y. M. Kau and John K. Leung, (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), 185-186.

the revolutionary activities in 1911, is to learn from the fearless spirit (大無畏精神 *da wuwei jingsheng*) of the martyrs. Li also pointed out the unique significance of the commemoration when the islands of Taiwan and Hainan were supposedly about to be liberated.<sup>499</sup> In the 1950s, the ceremonies were held every year except 1958, the year of the peak of the Anti-Rightist Campaign (反右运动 *fanyou yundong*) and the launch of the Great Leap Forward (大跃进 *da yuejin*). During this decade, the local government in Guangzhou was made up of a mix of Communist and former GMD members,<sup>500</sup> some of whom such as Li Zhangda, Qiu Zhe 丘哲 (1885-1959), Yao Yuping 姚雨平 (1882-1974), Chen Rutang 陈汝棠 (1893-1961), and Zhang Wen 张文 (1887-1960) had been members of the Tongmenghui, followers of Sun Yat-sen, and had direct connection with the Xinhai martyrs; these people presided over the commemoration for a number of years.

While memories of the deceased revolutionary heroes had been fading from people's minds exponentially after decades of commemorations, the authorities formed a stronger tie between the memorial of the dead and contemporary social difficulties or

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<sup>499</sup> “黄花崗烈士殉難卅九週年 [The 39th anniversary of the martyrs of Huanghuagang],” 1. “李章達副市長指出在革命已在全國大陸取得了基本勝利的今天，在台灣、海南島即將解放的前夕來公祭七十二烈士是有特別重要的意義的。繼提出我們應向七十二烈士學習，繼承並發揚他們推翻滿清的大無畏精神，來完成我們新民主主義的革命事業。”

<sup>500</sup> A small number of former GMD members, who refused Chiang Kai-shek's leadership at some point, participated in the founding of minor political parties, which later became parts of the Chinese Communist Party's United Front. Leaders of these political parties held government positions in the PRC, but many were affected during the anti-rightist campaign and later movements. Nonetheless, a few highly ranked non-Communist Guangdong officials, including the ones attended the commemoration in Huanghuagang, managed to remain as “True Friends of the Communist Party” during the anti-rightist campaign.

For “True Friends of the Communist Party,” see: 陈汝棠 Chen Rutang, “在第一届全国人民代表大会第四次会议上的发言，他们不是党的真朋友而是假朋友，陈汝棠的发言 [Speech at the Fourth Session of the First National People's Congress, They Are Not True Friends of the Party but False Friends, Statement by Chen Rutang],” *人民日报 Renmin Ribao*, 7 July 1957, 1.

<http://ccrd.usc.cuhk.edu.hk.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/Fulltext.aspx>, accessed on 6 April 2022.



political struggles. Meanwhile, the social and political situations posed a dramatic influence on the memorial activities. The ceremonies in the 1950s were carried out by high-level officials who identified the martyrs as friends and loved ones, which helped maintain the legitimacy of the Republican memorials in mainland China and thus significant continuity. However, several features threatened the continuity, including the passing away of former Tongmenghui officials and the political movements of the 1950s. In 1952, the escalation of the “three-anti” and “five-anti” movements resulted in “astonishing disclosures of serious corruption and waste in government, of accusations against government officials of all rank, and of confessions made ‘voluntarily’ or under various degrees of pressure.”<sup>501</sup> The economic and political campaigns affected local governments’ interpretations of the Huanghuagang memorial in March 1952. Zhang Wen, the vice-chairman of the Guangdong Provincial People’s Government and a standing committee member of the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Guomintang (民革 *Ming*), spoke in the ceremony and stated that by learning from the Huanghuagang martyrs’ revolutionary spirit one could “repel capitalist attacks and consolidate the working class leadership”<sup>502</sup> Gradually, the remembrance of the Xinhai Revolution, which was identified as a bourgeois revolution to achieve capitalism, was being transferred to be celebrations of communism. Only by doing so, the annual rituals might live through the various political campaigns. Zhang concluded: “We firmly believe that since we have achieved such a great victory today under the leadership of the Communist Party and

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<sup>501</sup> It started in 1951 with the “anti-corruption, anti-waste and anti-bureaucratism struggle” (“three-anti 三反”). See: Theodore Hsi-En Chen and Wen-Hui C. Chen. “The ‘Three-Anti’ and ‘Five-Anti’ Movements in Communist China,” (1953) In *Chinese Economic History Since 1949*, 1292-1311, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1298.

<sup>502</sup> “...打退資產階級的進攻，鞏固工人階級的領導權。”“廣東、廣州各界人民昨公祭黃花崗烈士 [People from Guangdong and Guangzhou pay public tribute to the martyrs of Huanghuagang yesterday].” *Nanfang Daily* 南方日報, 30 March 1952, 3.

Chairman Mao, as long as we remain united with the Communist Party and under the leadership of Chairman Mao, we will be able to consolidate and develop our victory!”<sup>503</sup> Similarly, in the same decade and later, the public remembering of Sun Yat-sen was embedded in Mao’s growing personality cult narrative and became a subsidiary to it.

The ceremonies continued without interruption and with a similar format in the years after 1952. In 1955, the report rendered the environment and participation on the day of the ceremony: “The red cotton of Huanghuagang is in full bloom. Various kinds of wreaths are placed in front of the graves of martyrs.”<sup>504</sup> The number of official participants varied from seventy to four hundred between 1950 and 1956,<sup>505</sup> but most of them were made up of party members or politicians, “on behalf of the people from all walks of life (代表各界人民 *daibiao gejie remin*).”<sup>506</sup> In the 1950s, neither the survivors of the Huanghuagang Uprising nor the relatives of the martyrs were placed in the spotlight, except in 1957 when the guests to the government-organised ceremony included two elderly farmers who fought in the 29 March Uprising (Xu Huanhui 徐煥輝 and Xu Xiliu 徐錫流) and other family members of the martyrs from Huaxian (花縣), Guangdong. There are, however, different versions of reports regarding the elderly men surnamed Xu who participated in the uprising in Guangzhou with their fellow villagers in their youth, but received different treatment compared to the seventy-two recorded fallen

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<sup>503</sup> “最後，他說：‘我們堅決相信：既然我們在共產黨和毛主席的領導下，能夠取得今天這樣偉大的勝利，只要我們繼續團結在共產黨的，在毛主席的領導下，我們就一定能鞏固和發展勝利!’” *Nanfang Daily* 南方日報, 30 March 1952, 3.

<sup>504</sup> “黃花崗的紅棉花正在怒放。烈士墓前擺著各式各樣的花圈。” *Nanfang Daily* 南方日報, 30 March 1955, 1.

<sup>505</sup> According to reports in *Nanfang Daily*, there were around 400 participants in 1950, more than 200 people in 1951 and 1952, over 100 in 1953, more than 70 in 1954, over 130 in 1955, more than 230 in 1956, 300 in 1957,

<sup>506</sup> *Nanfang Daily* 南方日報, 30 March 1956, 1.

martyrs. The comparison of different versions of the survivors' narrative will be discussed further in the upcoming section of this chapter.

Memorial events in the early PRC were chaired by members of democratic parties as close allies of the CCP. Some of these members formed an intangible connection between Sun Yat-sen's political goal and Mao Zedong's revolution. The annual ritual held in Huanghuagang Mausoleum paused twice, in 1958, and then between 1968 and 1972, affected by the two major political campaigns that directly or indirectly threatened the survival of the new China's democratic parties.<sup>507</sup> The democratic political parties, defined by an American scholar as "the mass organisation for politically active, non-Communist elites on the mainland,"<sup>508</sup> hardly recovered from the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957, suffered more heavily during the Cultural Revolution<sup>509</sup> and arguably never regained their full strength. When the ceremony in Huanghuagang resumed in 1973, it no longer represented largely remembrance of peer revolutionaries carried out by members of alternative political parties (and, of course, former members of the Tomgmenhui were, by this point, deceased) but embodied the Communist remembrance of the Xinhai martyrdom.

1967 was the last year of reported commemoration in Huanghuagang before the peak of the Cultural Revolution. Unlike the previous ceremonies, participants read out Chairman Mao's quotes in front of the tomb: "The core strength leading our mission is the Communist Party of China. The theoretical basis guiding our thinking is Marxism-Leninism." The speaker said: "Thousands of martyrs have died heroically before us for

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<sup>507</sup> The Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution.

<sup>508</sup> Alan Donald Pauw, "Chinese Democratic Parties as a Mass Organization," *Asian Affairs* 8 no. 6 (1981): 372-90.

<sup>509</sup> All the eight democratic parties in the PRC were dissolved in August 1966. See: Wei Yufeng 韦玉凤, "民主党派在'文化大革命'时期的历史概要 [Outline of the history of the democratic parties during the 'Cultural Revolution']," *Shijiqiao 世纪桥* 2001/5 (2001): 34-36.

the benefit of the people. Let us hold their banners high and step forward on their blood trail.”<sup>510</sup> The Xinhai martyrs in this era were undistinguished from other heroes based on the *Nanfang Daily* reports. Not specifying the Xinhai Revolution or the Huanghuagang Uprising as the subject of the commemoration could be an act of self-protection for the Guangdong government, which was regrouped as the Guangdong Revolutionary Committee in 1967 after a “peaceful transition (和平过渡 *hepin guodu*).”<sup>511</sup> The attendees of the ceremony were anonymous in 1967, grouped as “people from interested parties (有关方面人士 *youguan fangmian renshi*)” and “representatives of the proletarian revolution (无产阶级革命代表 *wuchan jieji daibiao*).”<sup>512</sup> From the resumption of the annual ceremony in 1973 until the late 1980s, reports in *Nanfang Daily* covered only the participating agencies and a few names of the representatives, with no summary of speeches or more details. The usual leading participating agencies include the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee of the CCP, the National Committee of the CPPCC, the Central Committee of *Min ge* (民革), and the relatives of the martyrs. The presence of relatives provided a direct connection to the martyrs, lending legitimacy to the occasion.

It is clearly demonstrated that the government-organised public rituals served a political purpose to trigger patriotic emotions. Although the martyrs are the subject of commemoration, the ceremony itself seemed to be less centred on the experiences of

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<sup>510</sup> “领导我们事业的核心力量是中国共产党。指导我们思想的理论基础是马克思列宁主义。”“成千上万的先烈，为着人民的利益，在我们的前头英勇地牺牲了，让我们高举他们的旗帜，踏着他们的血迹前进吧。”“纪念黄花岗七十二烈士殉难五十六周年 [Commemorating the 56th anniversary of the martyrdom of the 72 martyrs of Huanghuagang]”, *Nanfang Daily* 南方日報, 30 March 1967, 2.

<sup>511</sup> 华南工学院东方红公社 The East Red Commune of South China College of Technology, “谈广州的夺权斗争 [On the struggle to seize power in Guangzhou],” *南方日报 Nanfang Daily*, 14 February 1967, 2.

<sup>512</sup> *南方日报 Nanfang Daily*, 14 February 1967, 2.

these individuals and was not primarily focused on the remembrance of the past. The post-1949 remembrance of the Huanghuagang martyrs is hardly comparable to the early Republican commemoration in this sense. The 1911 revolutionaries are no longer the core of the national image or identity in the PRC, and little evidence suggests that “there is a desire to be like him, while at the same time he is one of us.”<sup>513</sup> It is, however, not clear whether the dimming of the hero-centred narrative is solely linked to the change of the regime, or if it can also be attributed to the culture that when a tomb is visited regularly for decades, “the soul of the dead” gives way to everyday life.

### *The Reading of a Textbook Article: Sun Yat-Sen’s Preface*

The reports of the post-1980s annual public rituals became increasingly paradigmatic and stereotypical (and perhaps the same was true of the events), and there are no more detailed or analytical sources offering additional interpretations of our understanding of the commemorations of Huanghuagang. Meanwhile, alternative materials are more abundant. Although there is no obvious or immediate power of political mobilisation coming from the commemoration of this single historical event, new interpretations are provided by the authorities based on Sun Yat-sen’s accounts. For example, the foreword Sun Yat-sen wrote to Zou Lu’s book *A Brief History of the Martyrs of Huanghuagang* (黄花岡烈士事略 *Huanghuagang Lieshi Shilue*) in 1922<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>513</sup> Max-Jean Zins, “Public Rites and Patriotic Funerals: The Heroes and the Martyrs of the 1999 Indo-Pakistan Kargil War.” *India Review* (London, England) 6, no. 1 (2007): 25–45.

<sup>514</sup> Sun Yat-sen 孫文, “黄花崗烈士事略序 [The Preface of *A Brief History of the Seventy-two Martyrs of Huanghuagang*],” in Zou Lu 鄒魯, *黄花岡烈士事略 [A Brief History of the Martyrs of Huanghuagang]*, [location and publisher unknown], 1922. The Digital copy is provided by Quan Guo Bao Kan Suo Yin (CNBKSY), <https://www-cnbsky-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/literature/tushu/e22fdb1b39f07ec26a93e5d502564c5b/101>, accessed on 7 April 2022.

was incorporated into Chinese language and literature (语文 *yu wen*) high school textbooks in 1983. School teachers' published papers, introducing the text and providing methods of teaching it, have enabled an examination of how educationalists interpreted the 1922 article in the 1980s and what messages were converted and delivered to students in the teaching about the martyrs of Huanghuagang.

Sun Yat-sen's preface expressed mixed emotions; it includes his tribute to the martyrs of Huanghuagang, his regret at their passing, the sorrow their sacrifice brought to the people of the time, and the pent-up resentment in the hearts of the late Qing people. Educators in the 1980s recognised that Sun's written piece was more than the preface to a book; it was "an anthem of revolution, a rallying cry that strikes the heart."<sup>515</sup> Nevertheless, Sun's reputation and popularity in the 1980s was not as pronounced as it was in the 1920s; as a result, putting his piece of writing into the textbook did not spontaneously evoke patriotic emotions. In one of the teaching guides, the writer first established the significance of the author (called here 孙文 Sun Wen) for the high school students by quoting the words of Mao Zedong and Vladimir Lenin.<sup>516</sup> The guideline quoted Mao saying of Sun: "He devoted his whole life to the transformation of China, and really gave his all to make China a better place and died for it. (鞠躬尽瘁，死而后已 *ju gong jin cui, si er hou yi*)"<sup>517</sup> And Lenin's statement is: "In China, the Asiatic provisional President of the Republic is a revolutionary democrat, endowed with nobility and

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<sup>515</sup> “与其说这是一篇书的序言，毋宁说是一首革命的赞歌，是震撼人心的战斗号角。” Li Jun 李军，“烈迹惊环宇 深情著宏文——读《〈黄花岗七十二烈士事略〉序》 [Reading of 'A Brief History of the Seventy-two Martyrs of Huanghuagan'],” *宁波师院学报(社会科学版) Ningbo Shiyuan Xuebao* 1985/04 (1985): 88.

<sup>516</sup> Zhou Yaogen 周耀根，“《〈黄花岗烈士事略〉序》备课指要 [‘The Preface of A Brief History of the Seventy-two Martyrs of Huanghuagang’ – Guide to Lesson Preparation],” *语文教学通讯 Yuwen Teaching Newsletter* 1983/10 (1983): 28.

<sup>517</sup> Zhou, “Guide to Lesson Preparation,” 28. Cited 毛泽东选集 [Selected Works of Mao Zedong], vol. 5 (Beijing: 人民出版社 People's Publishing House, 1977), 311-312.

heroism...”<sup>518</sup> These endorsements established the authority of the provisional President’s writing and led students to accept his perspective and therefore empathise with the martyrs’ sacrifice. Another teacher from a specialised school also raised the need to introduce the author of the preface, in an article published in 2016, as some of her students were unaware that the famous Sun Zhongshan (孙中山) and the author of “the Preface” Sun Wen (孙文) is the same person.<sup>519</sup>

Furthermore, “the Preface” indicates a period during which the Huanghuagang “passed into oblivion (湮没 *yanmie*)”; it was not until 1918 that new tombstones were constructed for the martyrs buried there, and 1922 was the first time that someone tried to compile biographies for the seventy-two fallen martyrs.<sup>520</sup> In the 1980s, lesson plans and guides further interpreted the history between 1911 and 1922 in an accusing way. For example, Xu Guishen, a professor of Chinese Language and Literature at Sun Yat-sen University (Guangzhou), states:

[The Nanjing Provisional Government of the ROC] should have erected monuments to the martyrs for posterity to admire and learn from. However, within a short time after the establishment of the Provisional Government, the achievements of the Xinhai Revolution were usurped by the classes of large landowners and compradors, represented by Yuan Shikai, and later by the warlords of all ranks.<sup>521</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> “这里的亚洲的共和国临时大总统是充满着崇高精神和英雄气概的革命的民主主义者。” Zhou, “Guide to Lesson Preparation,” 28. The English (translated by Stepan Apresyan) of Lenin’s article “Democracy and Narodism in China” is from *Lenin Collected Works Volume 18* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975): 163-169.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1912/jul/15.htm>, accessed on 7 April 2022.

<sup>519</sup> Liu Xiaoqing 刘晓庆, “破译句子的密码一再教《〈黄花岗烈士事略〉序》 [Deciphering the Code of Sentences - Re-teaching ‘the Preface of *A Brief History of the Martyrs of Huanghuagang*’],” *中学语文 Secondary School Yuwen* 2016/13 (2016): 80-81.

<sup>520</sup> Sun 孫, “黄花岗烈士事略序 [The Preface of *A Brief History of the Seventy-two Martyrs of Huanghuagang*],” 1.

<sup>521</sup> “[南京临时政府] 理所应当为烈士树碑立传, 以供后人敬仰和学习。但临时政府成立之后的瞬息之间, 辛亥革命的成果便被以袁世凯为代表的大地主大买办阶级所阴谋篡夺, 以后更是大小军阀‘变乱纷乘.’” Xu Guishen 许桂燊, “《黄花岗烈士事略

Xu states further that “the Preface” pointed out the “serious flaw (严重的缺陷 *yanzhong de quexian*)” of Zou Lu’s book, which is that the account of the seventy-two martyrs could not be exhaustive and inclusive of all the martyrs, with Sun’s personal regret (“滋可痛已 *zi ke tong yi*”).<sup>522</sup> The reasons behind that flaw, demonstrated by Xu, was the failings and weakness of the Nationalist government, which was an added layer of the interpretation of the chaotic years of the early Republic.<sup>523</sup>

No substantial studies on the teaching and learning of the Huanghuagang Uprising or martyrs are present between the 1990s and the first half of the 2010s. In 2015, “the Preface” was again included in a regional secondary school textbook in the PRC.<sup>524</sup> In a short piece as a reflection of her personal teaching experience, schoolteacher Wang Huihui records a classroom interaction. Wang’s article cites conversations between her and the students: after being asked in which part of Sun Yat-sen’s piece the tragic and poignant emotions are conveyed, student 5 read aloud in an impassioned voice: “If all the people of our country would strive for our country in the spirit of the sacrifices of our martyrs and help us to fulfil this great responsibility and realise our ideal of a true Republic of China, then this history of the founding of our country would be immortalised for all time.”<sup>525</sup> The teacher then asked how the student felt about when reading the

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序》浅析 [A Brief Analysis of [‘The Preface of *A Brief History of the Martyrs of Huanghuagang*’],” *中学语文 Secondary School Yuwen* 1983/09 (1983): 19-20.

<sup>522</sup> Sun 孫, “黃花崗烈士事略序 [The Preface of *A Brief History of the Seventy-two Martyrs of Huanghuagang*],” 1.

<sup>523</sup> “顧自民國肇造，變亂紛乘。” Sun 孫, “黃花崗烈士事略序 [The Preface of *A Brief History of the Seventy-two Martyrs of Huanghuagang*],” 1.

<sup>524</sup> Sujiaoban (苏教版) textbooks, which are published by Jiangsu Education Publishing House and used in most of Jiangsu province, and some areas of Shanxi, Anhui, Shan’xi, Guangdong.

<sup>525</sup> Wang Huihui 王慧慧, “何为“行而远”？——兼以重读《〈黄花岗烈士事略〉序》为例 [What is ‘spreading the word far and wide’? –The rereading ‘the Preface of *A Brief History of the Huanghuagang Martyrs*’ as an example].” *语文知识 [Yuwen]*



paragraph, and student 5 replied: “[I] feel a slight responsibility too!” The student further explained that, when they were reading aloud the text a few days earlier in class, it felt no more than reading the textbook aloud. Student 5 said: “It feels different when I reread it today. I feel like ‘fighting for our country (为国奋斗 *wei guo feng dou*)’ seemed to be a matter of urgency.”<sup>526</sup> This case shows that students in the 2010s could still feel an urge to share Sun and the martyrs’ responsibility and commitment to the nation, especially when they were encouraged by the teacher to pinpoint one of the emotions that the author of the text conveys in words and pick up Sun’s political mobilisation message. The fact that the Xinhai Revolution is defined by the CCP as a bourgeois revolution does not detract from its potential to incite patriotism and identification with the martyrs of 1911 as sharing the same cause as the CCP.

Throughout the post-Mao era, the on-site commemoration of the Xinhai martyrs in Huanghuagang was carried out annually but contained less sentimental mourning and no explicit strong political messages. Nevertheless, the history was taught in classrooms by reading the short and clear preface written by Sun Yat-sen in commemoration of the Huanghuagang Uprising. The interpretation of the piece focused on two points, as evident by the teaching materials in the 1980s: the re-establishment of the fading “cult” of Sun Yat-sen,<sup>527</sup> and the condemnation of the Republican era through interpreting Sun’s words. The 2010s teaching of the same piece is not nationwide but only carried out in Jiangsu

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*Knowledge*] 2015/03 (2015): 71. The original text by Sun Yat-sen reads: “倘國人皆以諸先烈之犧牲精神為國奮鬥，助余完成此重大之責任，實現吾人理想之真正中華民國，則此一部開國血史，可傳世而不朽。” in Sun 孫, “黃花崗烈士事略序 [The Preface of *A Brief History of the Seventy-two Martyrs of Huanghuagang*],” 1.

<sup>526</sup> Wang, “何为 “行而远 [What is ‘spreading the word far and wide’],” 71.

<sup>527</sup> The topic related to the representation of Sun Yat-sen is discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis. For the relevant study, see: Du, “Sun Yat-sen as Guofu,” 201-235.

province.<sup>528</sup> Nevertheless, the more recent reading of the text in a classroom setting provides insights and the basis for studying students' responses to the past. Hereafter, the seventy-two martyrs as individuals were discussed even less. They faded further into the collective image of martyrs in the pre-PRC time.

- *Non-martyr “Heroes” and the Conflicting Narratives Surrounding Them*

Past experiences are not inherited by a newer generation automatically, as many have argued. The Xinhai Revolution has been commemorated by the Chinese so extensively that it is arguably one of the most emotionally charged symbols in modern Chinese history. The previous chapter discusses the revolutions in 1911 as experienced pasts, recorded and narrated by Chinese intellectuals, with a focus on women and youths' perspectives.<sup>529</sup> Nevertheless, men as heroes was the powerful narrative of Chinese history and, besides the seventh-two martyrs buried in the Huanghuagang Mausoleum, other men were commemorated in the memorial park and in the stories of Huanghuagang.

Kam Louie's research on Chinese masculinity points out that traditionally a male hero in the Chinese context is a man of *wen-wu* (文武, master of both the pen and the sword),<sup>530</sup> and in some cases, they were considered as asexual and not associated with love stories (such as most readings of Guan Yu 关羽).<sup>531</sup> Meanwhile, women were placed in a position of surrendering themselves to men, and desire for women was an obstacle in

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<sup>528</sup> 高中语文 苏教版必修4 [*Senior High School Yuwen- Jiangsu Education Press Version Compulsory 4*] (Jiangsu: Jiangsu Education Press, 2015).

<sup>529</sup> Paul A. Cohen divides his book on the Boxers into three parts (narrative, experience, and myth) and writes with an emphasis on the experienced past and the mythologised past. Paul A. Cohen, *History in three keys: The Boxers as event, experience, and myth*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

<sup>530</sup> Kam Louie, “Constructing Chinese Masculinity for the Modern World: With Particular Reference to Lao She's the Two Mas.” *The China Quarterly*, no. 164 (2000): 1062-78.

<sup>531</sup> Kam Louie, “Sexuality, Masculinity and Politics in Chinese Culture: The Case of the ‘Sanguo’ Hero Guan Yu.” *Modern Asian Studies* 33, no. 4 (1999): 839.

the path of a yet-to-be hero.<sup>532</sup> Modern revolutionaries, however, were driven away from the asexual heroic images and influenced by both European heroes and the Meiji masculinity<sup>533</sup> to be romantic and patriotic. Some Chinese scholars have discussed the romantic side of the Huanghuagang martyrs, particularly how the love story of Lin Juemin was preserved, revealed, became widely disseminated, and touched the people who listened to the story.<sup>534</sup> An article published in 2010 by *Guangdong Party History and Archives Research*<sup>535</sup> explicitly states:

[The 'Farewell Letter to My Wife'] is not only a love letter between husband and wife, but also a letter of determination and declaration of a revolutionary willing to die to serve his country! This letter, with its majestic text and heartfelt patriotism, has been hailed as 'the most noble and pure love letter of the revolutionaries!'<sup>536</sup>

This Huanghuagang martyr fits perfectly into the modern heroic image embodying both romance and patriotism. However, others who were commemorated do not all fit into this narrative, and some even fit with the *wen-wu* type of hero in their descriptions. The retelling of the Huanghuagang myth is fragmented yet lively. The below sections present case studies of how the non-martyr heroes are dealt with in the myth of the Huanghuagang Mausoleum.

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<sup>532</sup> Louie, "Sexuality, Masculinity and Politics in Chinese Culture," 846-848, 854.

<sup>533</sup> Cheng, Eileen J. "Performing the Revolutionary: Lu Xun and the Meiji Discourse on Masculinity." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 27, no. 1 (2015): 1-43.

<sup>534</sup> Pan, "感傷的力量 [Sentimental Power]," 269-322.

<sup>535</sup> A Party journal sponsored by the Party History Research Office of the CCP Guangdong Provincial Committee (中共广东省委党史研究室).

<sup>536</sup> Su Airong 苏爱荣, "林觉民和他的绝笔书 [Lin Jumin and his last letter]," *广东党史 [Guangdong. Party History]*, 2010/07 (2010): 17-18.

*Pan Dawei (潘达微) 's myth: "an immortal revolutionary legend (不死的革命传奇)"*

Pan Dawei (潘達微), a Chinese artist and revolutionary whose name was rarely mentioned in published scholarly works in English, has been identified as a legendary figure in Chinese publications for his act of arranging the burial of the 1911 Guangzhou Uprising martyrs. Notwithstanding that the martyrs were not in the centre of the narrative, the person who first enabled the recognition of their martyrdom was made the new hero, and his role was emphasised in the myth of the uprising. Pan taking up a crucial position in the narrative of Huanghuagang martyrs also shows that, sometimes, the commemoration is as important as, if not more than, the original sacrifice.



Figure 30: 潘達微俠士遺像 [Posthumous Portrait of the Martyr Pan Dawei]<sup>537</sup>

The glorification of Pan Dawei first appeared in the late-1920s. In 1928, *Zhenguang Magazine (真光雜誌)* reposted an article written by Pan in which he describes

<sup>537</sup> “潘達微俠士遺像 [Posthumous portrait of the martyr Pan Dawei],” *文華 Wenhua* no.3, (1929): 31.

in detail how he made his way into Guangzhou and arranged the burial of the martyrs.<sup>538</sup> The text recounts his intense desire for the dead heroes to be appropriately buried to comfort their spirits. He turned to the Guang Ren Charity (廣仁善堂), a local Tai Shi (太史, someone employed as an imperial secretary)<sup>539</sup>, and a Western-style doctor (西醫 *Xi yi*) for help. In Pan's account, with these people's help, together they handled a series of matters, including funeral expenses, site selection for the cemetery, materials for the coffin, and the depth of the grave excavation.<sup>540</sup> Pan's act was potentially so significant to the later established Republic that it was promoted by the editor of the article as "The most important page in the history of the Republic of China (中華民國歷史最重要之一頁 *Zhonghua Minguo lishi zui zhongyao de yiye*)".<sup>541</sup> *Zhenguang Magazine* was one of the earliest Christian magazines in the Chinese language,<sup>542</sup> and the Chinese Christian community in Guangzhou and Pan's personal network contributed to the promotion of Pan's name and his association with the Huanghuagang.<sup>543</sup>

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<sup>538</sup> Note: Originally included in a book named *三月黃花 (Yellow flowers in March)* published by 嶺南大學出版社 (Lingnan University Press), and the article was mailed to *Zhenguang* magazine by Lin Jianzhong.

<sup>539</sup> The inscribed autobiography of Pan indicates that it was Jiang Kongyin Tai Shi who offered the help.

<sup>540</sup> Pan Dawei 潘达微, "潘达微之黄花冈七十二烈士殡葬情形记 [The Funeral of The 72 Martyrs of Huanghuagang by Pan Dawei]" *真光杂志 Zhenguang Magazine* 27 no.4, (1928): 70-72.

<sup>541</sup> Pan 潘, "潘达微之黄花冈七十二烈士殡葬情形记 [The Funeral of The 72 Martyrs of Huanghuagang by Pan Dawei]," 70.

<sup>542</sup> "Introduction" in Literature Navigation, *真光杂志*. <https://www-cnbsy-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/literature/literature/429aa418cd0b83292d1d28675005505f>. Accessed on 7 April 2022.

<sup>543</sup> Including one of the editors of *Zhenguang Magazine* Zhang Yijing (张亦镜), Zhang's close friend Lin Jianzhong (林建中) who was also an educator participating in various works in Lingnan University in Guangzhou (including the foundation of the College of Science of Lingnan University), and Pan's friend as well as former Tongmenghui member Lu Danlin 陆丹林 who was also a friend of Zhang Yijing.

"会闻 林建中来函节录," *真光杂志 Zhenguang Magazine* 27 no.4, (1928): 75-76; "读者园地:林建中先生与亦镜先生函" *真光杂志 Zhenguang Magazine* 27 no.11, (1928): 76-79; Lin Jianzhong 林建中, "广州岭南大学科学院落成感言 [Guangzhou Lingnan

In an issue of 1930, following Pan's death late in the previous year, the iconic pictorial magazine *Liangyou* (良友) published a picture of Pan and captioned in English: "The late Pan Dah-mei, a leader in Chinese pictorial press of early days and a famed revolutionary."<sup>544</sup> The accompanying Chinese text, written by Pan's fellow revolutionary and famous artist Lu Danlin (陸丹林), praised his merits of collecting and burying the seventy-two martyrs, and his compassionate personality, and mourned his death. Other articles written by Lu Danlin, published respectively in 1947 and 1949, reiterated Pan's name as the "The man who collected the bodies of the martyrs of Huanghuagang for burial (黄花岗烈士收尸者 *Huanghuagang shou shi zhe*)".<sup>545</sup>

The mythologising of Pan consists of a simplified narrative based on his article "The Funeral of the 72 Martyrs of Huanghuagang by Pan Dawei."<sup>546</sup> This myth was developed in the late 1920s and early 1930s to commemorate Pan after he passed away and was buried in Huanghuagang, re-emphasised by a few in the 1940s as "The Revival of the Pan Dawei Spirit (潘達微精神的復活 *Pan Dawei Jingshen de fuhuo*)".<sup>547</sup>

The narrative was inherited by the PRC officials to promote noble and patriotic acts; the Guangzhou government reset the tombstone for Pan in 1951, with new memorial

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University Academy of Sciences Inauguration Testimonial]", *真光杂志 Zhenguang Magazine* 28 no.1, (1929): 54-55; Lu Danlin 陆丹林, "真光丛刊序," *真光杂志 Zhenguang Magazine* 27 no.1, (1928): 1-4.

<sup>544</sup> "闻人小影: "收葬七二烈士之革命党人中国昼报界前辈潘达微氏遗像 [Wenren Xiaoying: Portrait of Pan Dawei, a revolutionary who helped bury the 72 martyrs]", *良友 Liangyou* no.45 (1930): 20.

<sup>545</sup> Lu Danlin 陆丹林, "黄花岗烈士收尸者潘达微 [Pan Dawei who collected the bodies of the martyrs of Huanghuagang for burial]", *茶话 Chahua* no.10 (1947): 136-140; "黄花岗烈士收尸者:潘达微 [The man who collected the bodies of the martyrs of Huanghuagang for burial: Pan Dawei]", *京沪周刊 Beijing-Shanghai Weekly* 3 no.4 (1949): 16.

<sup>546</sup> Pan 潘, "潘达微之黄花岗七十二烈士殡葬情形记 [The funeral of the 72 martyrs of Huanghuagang by Pan Dawei]," 70-72.

<sup>547</sup> "文化春秋: 潘达微精神的复活 [Wenhua Chunqiu: The Revival of the Pan Dawei Spirit]," *文化新闻 [Cultural News]* no.234 (1945): 1.

inscriptions on the tombstone by Li Zhangda and Yao Yupin.<sup>548</sup> Essays and articles published after 1949 stressed the importance of Pan Dawei, a trend which continued into the twenty-first century. A 2010 article gives Pan Dawei the title: “An immortal revolutionary legend (一个不死的革命传奇 *Yige bu si de geming chuanqi*).”<sup>549</sup> The official commemoration of “Huanghuagang” in the PRC was slightly altered to belittle the late-Qing Guangzhou community and condemn the Beiyang government and Chiang Kai-shek’s Nanking National Government. Nevertheless, it praises Pan Dawei as a courageous and heroic figure without whom there would not be an appropriate site to commemorate the martyrs.

It is, however, questionable whether Pan’s role in creating the burial site is significantly distinguishing from those whom he sought help from. For example, his autobiographical account of the funeral published in 1928 shows gratitude to the board of the Guangren Charity, the Qing Tai Shi, and the Western-style doctor. Nonetheless, an essay published by a popular history magazine in 2003<sup>550</sup> contrasts with the 1928 narrative regarding the doctor. Pan’s account states:

When I told him what had happened, the doctor promised [to help] with all his heart. He said that there was no urgency to pay the price [of the land], which was merely a few hundred gold. I heard that and was grateful to the doctor; I told him the spirits of the seventy-two martyrs could be properly handled now. The doctor soon handed me the land deed, but in the end, [the deal] was interfered with by other people and was discontinued. At that moment, I cried with grief and pain. The doctor was kind and felt sorry for me; he then said to me: “Whatever I can help you I would do what you want, except for giving you the land.”<sup>551</sup>

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<sup>548</sup> Luo Zhenbang 罗镇邦, “潘达微墓碑碣 [Tombstone of Pan Dawei],” *岭南文史 Lingnan Wenshi* 1991/03 (1991):14, 15, 37.

<sup>549</sup> Yuan Ran 渊然, “潘达微:一个不死的革命传奇 [Pan Dawei: An immortal revolutionary legend],” *大经贸 Da Jingmao* no.10, (2010): 96.

<sup>550</sup> The magazine *文史天地* (History of World) was originally named *贵州政协文史资料* (Guizhou CPPCC Literature and History), and is sponsored and supervised by Guizhou Provincial Political Consultative Conference.

<sup>551</sup> Pan 潘, “潘达微之黄花冈七十二烈士殡葬情形记 [The funeral of the 72 martyrs of Huanghuagang by Pan Dawei],” 70-71. “告以事，醫生慨然相許諾。且謂低價毋急償，區區數百金，唯公便。余聞而德醫生，謂七十二烈士英靈其可妥也。醫生旋以

In the 2003 version, written by Lu Maoqing, who published over 200 historical essays on Communist history and the history of the Republican era in official newspapers and magazines (mostly in the 2000s), the story becomes:

Thankfully a doctor who knew him well and needed money reluctantly agreed to sell the land and took a deposit. Pan Dawei was so excited to go home and get the funds together that the couple discussed pawning their wedding ring as they were short of money. Then the doctor came and said that his wife was worried about being implicated and refused to sell the land, forcing him to return the deposit.<sup>552</sup>

In the renewed version of the story, Pan Dawei is portrayed as a solitary hero who fought against the odds to fulfil his goal of giving a proper funeral and burial to the martyrs to comfort their souls. This transformation echoes the common European conception of “a solitary hero on a lonely quest” that originated from Greek mythic narratives.<sup>553</sup> Furthermore, the simplified version of Pan’s story also avoids the complication of members of the bourgeoisie being helpful – a Qing official and a western-style doctor – which would not conform to simple communist binaries of good and bad class backgrounds. In addition, the new image of Pan conforms to the pre-modern Chinese Moral Hero who is “a self-conscious, highly moral well-educated [member of the] elite” who chose reclusion when times were awry and became active when an

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地券相付，卒為旁人所尼，遂中止。余此時撫案大慟，醫生意良不忍，乃告余曰：余可助君者，舍讓地外，唯君欲。”

<sup>552</sup> Lu Maoqing 陆茂清, “侠肝义胆潘达微 [The Heroic and Righteous Pan Dawei],” 文  
史天地 *History of World*, 2003(08): 38-41. “亏得一个熟悉的医生手头等钱用，勉强同意卖地，并收下了定金。潘达微兴冲冲回家凑钱，因短缺甚多，夫妻俩商量把结婚纪念的戒指当了。正在这时，那医生来了，先赔不是后说妻子担心受株连，寻死作活不肯卖地，逼他退还定金。”

<sup>553</sup> Benjamin Garstad, “Hero into General: Reading Myth in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Nonnus of Panopolis, and John Malalas.” *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 3, no. 2 (2014): 227–60. Garstad’s work analysed the phenomenon of bolstering the reputation of the heroes and their cults by interpreting or recasting them as generals with military campaigns, turning them into historical narratives.



enlightened ruler took over.<sup>554</sup> In this case, Sun Yat-sen fits the image of the enlightened ruler who beckoned the hero of virtue and ability, and Pan's story hereafter follows "the mythic topos of the Moral Hero meeting with his time"<sup>555</sup> and then losing his chance when the era changed again.<sup>556</sup> The character of the Moral Hero, however, is reserved for narratives around male heroes. While a few Chinese heroines also served their times and wise rulers, their narratives did not concern a solitary and reclusive way of life or a lonely quest. The renewed attention to Pan in the twenty-first century and the reframing of the 1920s narrative about him reinforce a mythical past which fits one of the ways people prefer to commemorate the heroes and remember the past.

The image of the hero is diverse and includes those who died in the uprising and those who preserved history after the failed uprising and made commemoration possible. One could argue that those who enable commemoration are elevated to a similar status as martyrs. The same characters are given different experiences in the changing times, but the first-person story narratives remain and circulate among a small number of people as new narratives are created. Thus, when we search for stories about the past, our memories, books, or the Internet do not provide a definitive version of the narrative. The story of the burial in Huanghuagang alone contains different emphases depending on the message conveyed.

While Pan Dawei left a valuable account for public remembering of the burial in Huanghuagang, another key figure also contributed to forming the legend of the Huanghuagang martyrs and maintaining the space for commemoration. When the former chairman of the Nationalist Government Lin Sen solicited donations from overseas

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<sup>554</sup> Alan J Berkowitz, "The Moral Hero: A Pattern of Reclusion in Traditional China," *Monumenta Serica* 40 (1992): 1-3, 13-15.

<sup>555</sup> Berkowitz, "The Moral Hero," 17.

<sup>556</sup> *Rushi* 入世 and *Chushi* 出世.

Chinese to build the mausoleum, he had hoped that it would be a venue for various commemorative activities and stated: “A stage will be set up in front of the East Garden to speak about the history of the 72 martyrs who died on 29 March. In addition to the designated speakers, people from all walks of life can apply to speak freely on the stage, but only for 20 minutes.”<sup>557</sup> Lin Sen’s vision for the Huanghuagang Mausoleum includes creating a venue where history is solidified, and different ideas can be exchanged freely. Lin himself has a unique reputation among republican politicians because of his “inaction.”<sup>558</sup> Serving as the chairman of the Nationalist government from 1931 to 1943, Lin was remembered as “the official in charge of the seal (掌印官 *zhang yin guan*)”<sup>559</sup> and “the statesman like a common man (布衣元首 *buyi yuanshou*),”<sup>560</sup> or was completely unrecognised and forgotten by the people. Although also an important figure in preserving the historical memory of Huanghuagang, Lin Sen’s government position prevented him from being portrayed as a hero in the same way as Pan. Nonetheless, Lin’s vision and action laid the foundation for all commemorative activities in later years, including the annual rituals held by the communist government in the post-1949 era.

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<sup>557</sup> “設台於東園前面 演說三月二十九日七十二烈士殉國歷史 除指定演說員演講外 各界均可報名登台自由演說 但限二十分鐘為度” Lin Sen 林森, ed. *碧血黃花集 Bixue Huanghua ji*, 1919, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/990076859370203941/catalog>, accessed on 26 October 2021.

<sup>558</sup> For example, see Hu Shi’s article: Hu Shi 胡適, “國府主席林森先生,” *獨立評論 Duli Pinlun* no.91, (1934): 12-13.

<sup>559</sup> Wang Chenzuo 王晨作, “‘美鬚公’ ‘掌印官’ 林森 [Lin Sen, ‘A man with a beautiful beard’ and ‘the official in charge of the seal’]” *一周間(上海) Weekly (Shanghai)* 1 no.4, (1934): 152-155.

<sup>560</sup> Fujian Archives, “林森： 民国时期的 ‘布衣元首’ [Lin Sen: ‘the head of state like a common man’ in the republican era],” 2 August 2021 [http://www.fj-archives.org.cn/dazx/dawh/bycg/202108/t20210802\\_295115.htm](http://www.fj-archives.org.cn/dazx/dawh/bycg/202108/t20210802_295115.htm), accessed on 10 January 2022.



Figure 31: Mr Lin Sen, President of the National Government, went to Canton to pay homage to the Seventy-two Heroes.<sup>561</sup>

### *Contradicting Narratives about The Peasant Survivors of the Uprising*

In 1957, the guests to the government-organised ceremony included two elderly farmers who fought in the 29 March Uprising (Xu Huanhui 徐煥輝 and Xu Xiliu 徐錫流) and other family members of the martyrs from Huaxian (花縣), Guangdong. The most well-known Huanghuagang martyrs had been the elite youths, including students returning home after studying in Japan, and Chinese from Nanyang (南洋, Southeast Asia, especially Malay Archipelago).<sup>562</sup> Nonetheless, over one-fifth of the dead (eighteen identified names) were villagers from Huaxian, many of whom were farmers from families that had worked the land for generations.<sup>563</sup> These figures were less significant in

<sup>561</sup> (Photo taken by) Huang Jianhao 黃劍豪, “林主席蒞粵行蹤: 國府主席林森氏, 南下致祭黃花崗烈士及視察……[President Lin's visit to Guangdong: The President of the State Government, Mr. Lin Sen, paid tribute to the martyrs of Huanghuagang and visited .....]” 良友 *Liangyou* no.127, (1937): 3.

<sup>562</sup>Du Chunhe 杜春和 and Geng Laijin 耿來金, “黃花崗烈士表 [List of the Huanghuagang martyrs],” 历史档案 *History Archive* 01 (1986): 59-61.

<sup>563</sup>Hu Wenhan 胡文漢, “辛亥革命花縣十八烈士事略 [A Brief History of the Eighteen Martyrs of the Xinhai Revolution from

Republican China compared to the elite martyrs, but they represented a more desirable social class in the PRC. The research reveals a comparison of how stories of the farmer martyrs were told differently between 1947 and 2018. The stories of these farmers were largely neglected in the intervening decades, as no discussion can be found except for a piece of article written by Xu Xiliu's grandson Xu Zhiqiang for the centenary of the Xinhai Revolution in 2012, a year after the grand commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution.<sup>564</sup> In another interview in 2021, "Xu Zhiqiang told reporters that he grew up listening to his grandfather's stories about the Xinhai uprising, and had seen the things his grandfather used when he participated in the uprising." Xu said:

After a hundred years, as the third generation [of the martyrs], they are all in their seventies. During the Cultural Revolution, those who knew the story of the uprising and the parties involved were tight-lipped, and with the passage of time, fewer and fewer descendants know the legacy of their ancestors.<sup>565</sup>

Since 2012, the provincial government has made an effort to recall the legendary history by organising exhibitions to "let more citizens relive history, feel the fire and blood of the war, remember the heroes, and feel the spirit of national self-reliance and bravery."<sup>566</sup> An article published on 15 October 2018 told a story of how Xun Huanhui,

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Huaxian],”[http://www.gzzxws.gov.cn/qxws/hdws/hdzj/jnxhgm/201108/t20110825\\_21689.htm](http://www.gzzxws.gov.cn/qxws/hdws/hdzj/jnxhgm/201108/t20110825_21689.htm), accessed on 29 August 2021.

<sup>564</sup>Xu Zhiqiang 徐志强, “祖父徐锡流参加辛亥革命经历二三事 [Two or three stories about my grandfather Xu Xiliu's experience in the Xinhai Revolution],” 6 August 2012 <http://www.xhgmw.com/m/view.php?aid=5029>, accessed on 28 December 2021;

<sup>565</sup> The interview is excerpted in the following article: “英魂归百年 热血传中华（下）——花都辛亥革命志士百年祭 [花都辛亥革命志士百年祭 [Centennial Ceremony of Xinhai Revolutionary Aspirants in Hua country]” In *Commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution in Guangzhou*, [http://www.gzzxws.gov.cn/qxws/hdws/hdzj/jnxhgm/201108/t20110826\\_21730.htm](http://www.gzzxws.gov.cn/qxws/hdws/hdzj/jnxhgm/201108/t20110826_21730.htm), accessed on 28 December 2021.

<sup>566</sup> “目的就是通过展览让更多的市民重温历史，感受当年的战火与热血，缅怀英雄，感受民族的自强不息、英勇奋斗的精神。” in “花都辛亥革命志士百年祭 [Centennial Ceremony of Xinhai Revolutionary Aspirants in Hua country],” accessed on 28 December 2021.

Xu Xiliu and another older man (Xu Zhenyi 徐镇益) barged into the ceremony on 29 March 1947. They wore a white cloth on their chests with a line reading: “The surviving members of the Xinhai Revolution vanguard who fought against the Governor of Guangdong on March 19.”<sup>567</sup> The online article provides no reference. Nonetheless, the event was also reported by *Lingnan Ri Bao* 嶺南日報 on 30 March 1947.<sup>568</sup> In the *Lingnan Ri Bao* article, reporter Xie Bingkun 謝炳坤 described the process of the Huanghuagang memorial ceremony and interviewed one of the Xus.

Intriguingly, the Xus’ narratives of their lives and their vision of the nation, published in 1947 and retold in 2018, look similar to each other at first glance, but are markedly different on closer examination. First, the article in 1947 quotes the interviewee (Xu) as follows:

We sacrifice our personal interests and happiness for the sake of our country and our nation. After the Xinhai battle, we feared being killed by the Qing forces, so we took refuge in the countryside and have been working hard doing farm work until now. But our hard work was not enough. We had asked the governor for relief before, but the governor ignored us, so our request for relief was in vain.

I hope that today’s young people will continue to carry on the spirit of the martyrs, and clear away the obstacles to the revolution in order to console the souls of the martyrs and the dead soldiers and civilians in the nine springs [九泉 *jiu quan* - the underworld of Chinese mythology].<sup>569</sup>

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<sup>567</sup> “辛亥革命三月十九日攻两广总督先锋队生还义士” The date (March 19) is a mistake in the article. Ailishi 爱历史, “黄花岗起义敢死队员怒闯公祭现场 官员竟说他没资格领救济 [Huanghuagang Uprising survivors barged in public memorial site in anger, officials said they were not eligible for relief],” 15 October 2018, [https://www.sohu.com/a/259556988\\_105641](https://www.sohu.com/a/259556988_105641), accessed on 30 August 2021.

<sup>568</sup> Xie Bingkun 謝炳坤, “當年灑碧血 此日吊黃花 [The blood was shed in the past, and today we mourn under the yellow flowers],” *Lingnan Ri Bao* 嶺南日報, 30 March 1947, 3. The present of the Xu(s) were also reported in *Guangzhou Daily* 廣州日報, *Zhongzheng Ribao* 中正日報, *Guohua Bao* 國華報, and *Guangzhou Qishier hang Shangbao* 廣州七十二行商報 covering the ceremony.

<sup>569</sup> “我們犧牲個人利益與幸福來為國家為民族。自辛亥之役後，恐被滿清殺，避居鄉間，努力耕耘，一直到現在。可是努力耕耘還不夠，以前曾向縣長請求過救濟，但是縣長不理會我們，結果請救濟是落空了。”“今天國家雖然是勝利了，而革命途程還佈滿荊棘，希望今日青年們繼續着先烈精神，把革命的障礙掃個清光，以慰九泉下烈士與死難軍民之靈！” Xie Bingkun 謝炳坤, “當年灑碧血 此日吊黃花 [The

Then in 2018, the narrative was presented thus:

[Xu Zhenyi said:] “I don’t mind being poor, it’s fine as long as the country is rich and strong; when the whole country works together, it can melt steel.” Another person asked about their current living conditions, and Xu Huanhui let out a long sigh, “Alas! When the Japanese devils (日本鬼子) came, we ate rice bran, but we didn’t complain. After the victory of the war, there was one time that my child was sick and I went to the relief detachment to ask for a bit of nutritional powder issued by the Relief Department, but Mr. Relief said I was not eligible and as a result, I did not receive it. I just want to ask everyone present that if I was not eligible to receive this relief, then who in the world is eligible to receive it?”<sup>570</sup>

The narratives of how the elderly men arrived at the site were also different, as shown in the report and article titles. The 1947 one is “The blood was shed in the past, and today we mourn under the yellow flowers”, and the 2018 one is “Huanghuagang Uprising survivors barged into public memorial site in anger; officials said they were not eligible for relief.” By presenting the before and after of the event in writing, Xie Bingkun indicated that the three older men who “dressed in civilian clothes and looked aged (身穿平民服装, 面色苍老 *shenchuan pingmin fuzhuang, mianse canglao*)” appeared in front of the altar before the ceremony. Following the paragraphs of the introduction and interview with the old men, Xie’s report then narrated that the public ritual began in a solemn atmosphere. Contrary to this, the 2018 web article’s restatement implied that the

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blood was shed in the past, and today we mourn under the yellow flowers],” *Lingnan Ri Bao* 嶺南日報, 30 March 1947, 3.

<sup>570</sup> Ailishi 爱历史, “黄花岗起义敢死队员怒闯公祭现场 官员竟说他没资格领救济 [Huanghuagang Uprising Survivors Barged in Public Memorial Site in Anger, officials said they were not eligible for relief],” 15 October 2018, [https://www.sohu.com/a/259556988\\_105641](https://www.sohu.com/a/259556988_105641), accessed on 30 August 2021. “我觉得自己穷不打紧, 国家富强就可以了, 主要全国齐心, 钢铁也能够熔化。”又有人问到他们现在的生活状况, 徐焕辉长叹一声:“唉! 穷得很, 自耕自食, 日本鬼子来的时候, 我们吃过米糠, 但也没有怨言。抗战胜利以后, 有一次我的孩子病了, 我到救济分队请领一点救济署下发的营养粉, 但是救济先生说我没有资格, 结果就没有领到。我只想问在场的所有人, 我没有资格领取这个救济品, 那么天下到底谁才有资格领呢?”

Xus interrupted the ceremony and broke into the venue, and presented a mockery of the GMD's self-deception and hypocrisy towards the peasants.<sup>571</sup>

The web article told a past event rewritten by the author, evident by phrases such as “when the whole country works together, it can melt steel,” and it is also noticeable merely by how it is different from the coverage of the day in 1947. This newer account also expresses a strong sense of condemnation and anger; this sentiment was conveyed by questioning those in attendance, “Who in the world is eligible to receive [the relief]?” The journalist's report in 1947 took up a more subtle, elitist, positive approach; however, it is difficult to judge how accurate were the reported statements of the elderly, which are refined and similar to the official mobilisations in the 1940s.

On the one hand, the two pieces in 1947 and 2018 demonstrate the different historical narratives of parallel existence. On the other hand, they illustrate the role of survivors and the martyrs' family members in the commemorative process. On 29 March 1947, a fellowship society was organised by survivors and relatives of the seventy-two martyrs, to collect historical materials and support surviving families. Over a hundred people, including Xu Zhengyi, Xu Huanhui, and Xu Xiliu joined the event; *Lingnan Ri Bao* covered the fellowship event on the same page next to the article mentioned previously.<sup>572</sup> However, in commemorating the martyrs, their families were seldom placed in the centre of the commemoration, either in the past or present. When the remembrance of Qiu Jin, as a significant female figure, was carried out initially by her

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<sup>571</sup> Ailishi, “黄花岗起义敢死队员怒闯公祭现场[Huanghuagang Uprising Survivors Barged in Public Memorial Site in Anger].” “突然闯入会场的这三位黄花岗起义敢死队幸存义士，一时间成为了当时公祭现场最为引人瞩目的人物，让现场那些装模作样公祭的官员极为尴尬。”

<sup>572</sup> “七十二烈士遺族籌組聯誼會 搜集先烈史料扶養遺族 [The surviving families of the 72 martyrs are organising a fellowship society to collect historical materials of the martyrs to support their surviving families].” *Lingnan Ri Bao* 嶺南日報, 30 March 1947, 3.

friends and fellow villagers with resources and power, male martyrs who were remembered collectively, such as the 72 revolutionaries in Huanghuagang, left behind vulnerable and silent wives and children (遗属 *yi shu*) in need of the nation's support and upbringing. Even when their names were brought up in line with the commemoration, they were addressed as symbolic characters and subjects of the public relief scheme.

The modified story about the Xus is another example of a conflicting narrative that co-exists with the previous one. In the public historical representation of modern history, many more examples can be found in which a small fraction of the past is added with a few new touches. For those who gain interest in a particular historical story involving less significant people who are often neglected in the conventional historical account, it is a bigger challenge to restore the past without a historian's mindset and effort. Nonetheless, for these people, history is not only a puzzle but also a part of their personal memory. With a subconscious recognition and memory of a certain historical narrative, some of them may have the opportunity to visit the Huanghuagang Mausoleum. The memory they hold intervenes in the visiting experience and gives some visitors the urge to express and share their feelings. Although the materials analysed in the following section are limited in number, they reveal valuable insights into how visitors interact with and interpret a historical site.

#### - *Visiting Experience Shared on Virtual Communities*

Nowadays, Huanghuagang is a public park with free admission, and the environment is carefully studied and preserved by modern architects in Guangzhou. The geographical and architectural layout of the Huanghuagang mausoleum has been an engaging and ongoing topic for scholars residing in Guangdong province, particularly researchers on architecture and landscape at universities such as the South China



University of Technology and governmental organisations like Guangzhou Municipal Bureau of Parks and Woods (园林局 *Yuanlin Ju*). Nevertheless, in the field of architecture and landscape, historical meaning has also been seen as the fundamental element of the Huanghuagang mausoleum. In 1982, Zheng Zuliang (郑祖良 1914-1994), a renowned Guangzhou landscape architect and head of the Yuanlin Ju at the time, published a brief introduction to the Huanghuagang mausoleum.

In the 1980s, the architects' description of the cemetery's historical context largely reflected the official narrative of the time:

Under the Guomindang's rule, no attention was paid to the maintenance of the cemetery, which was once in a state of disrepair and infested with thieves. It was only after the founding of New China that the cemetery became a place for the people, including overseas Chinese and compatriots from Hong Kong and Macau, to pay their respects and pay homage to the martyrs.<sup>573</sup>

Zheng's statement here is identical to the interpretation of Sun Yat-sen's Preface in school textbooks in the 1980s; by indicating and extending the neglect of this commemorative space in the early Republic in comparison to the efforts CCP made to restore the place, Zheng and others used the Huanghuagang mausoleum as an example to glorify the PRC government in its efforts into ensuring continuous commemoration and the involvement of the ordinary people in commemoration of patriotic history.

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<sup>573</sup> Zheng Zuliang and Wen Shuji 郑祖良, 文树基, “黄花岗七十二烈士墓园 [The Cemetery of the Seventy-two Martyrs of Huanghuagang].” *广东园林 Journal of Guangdong Landscape Architecture*, 1982/03 (1982): 22.



Figure 32: The illustration in Zheng and Wen’s 1982 article, showing the Huanghuagang mausoleum<sup>574</sup>

As introduced earlier in the chapter, although the Mausoleum continues to carry out the function of an official commemorative site, it is also a community space for leisure visiting. On an online platform named *Douban* (豆瓣), which acts as a virtual community where people share their ratings and comments on films, books, and music, and have the cyberspace to post *Douban* diaries, some visiting experiences are archived and give an insight into how visitors nowadays view and experience the Mausoleum. On the one hand, the park contains layers of material history added by different parties from the time when the burial site was expanded as a commemorative space by the Guangzhou military government in 1912.<sup>575</sup> On the other hand, the space aims to trigger emotional

<sup>574</sup> Zheng 郑 and Wen 文, “黄花岗七十二烈士墓园 [The Cemetery of the Seventy-two Martyrs of Huanghuagan],” 22.

<sup>575</sup> Lu Qi 陆琦, “广州黄花岗七十二烈士墓园 Huanghuagang Commemorative Park, Guangzhou,” *广东园林 Guangdong Landscape Architecture* 32 no.4, 78.

reactions in its visitors, so it not only provides a narrative of the past but also potentially generates new memories for visitors.<sup>576</sup>

One diary entry posted on 28 August 2021 shows pictures of feral cats living inside the Huanghuagang park and writes: “Quite a few cats are sleeping under the bushes, not caring at all about the bystanders passing by. Here, we are the passers-by.”<sup>577</sup> This visitor seems uninterested in the historical significance of the site. In 2008, another resident in Guangzhou took a day trip to Huanghuagang Park and shared the experience online:

Sometimes I feel that the architecture of the Guomintang era, at least that of the tombs, does have a deep meaning and that the buildings are quaint and simple. Nowadays, the architecture in China is either too crude or too elaborate, where the foreign elements and the local elements can hardly really blend. But the architecture of the Guomintang period seems to combine these two things very well. This is just a random thought; I am talking about architecture, and you must not take it seriously.

...

There were not many people in the park, mostly elderly people and children who were exercising and relaxing in the area, and there was also a student-like boy practising his spoken English by the tomb of Martyr Wang Chang. In the distance, I could hear some people singing old songs in unison, similar to those sung on Baiyun Mountain, but the number of people sounded smaller.<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> Emilie Sitzia, “Narrative Theories and Learning in Contemporary Art Museums: A Theoretical Exploration,” *Stedelijk Studies* 4 (2016): 1-15.

<sup>577</sup> Flower.Bar, “广州黄花岗公园，静谧的猫咪乐园 [Guangzhou Huanghuagang Park, a tranquil cat paradise],” 26 August 2021, <https://www.douban.com/note/811158673/>, accessed on October 2021. “不少猫在树丛下睡觉，丝毫不在乎旁人的经过。在这里，我们才是过路人。”

<sup>578</sup> Kaola 考拉, “黄花岗小记 [A short note on Huanghuagang],” 24 June 2008, <https://www.douban.com/note/13679594/>, accessed on 19 October 2021. “有时候觉得，国民党时代的建筑，至少是陵墓的建筑，的确意蕴深长，而且建筑物都很古朴、简洁，现在国内的建筑，或者太过粗陋，或者太过繁复，外来元素和本土元素，难以真正融合。但国民党时期的建筑，似乎把这两点很好地结合起来。这不过是随想，我谈建筑，您千万别当真。”“公园里人不多，大部分都是本地锻炼、消闲的老人家和小孩，还有一个学生模样的男生在王昌烈士的墓旁在练习英语口语。远处，还听到一些人在齐声高歌那些老歌的，跟白云山上大家唱差不太多，不过人数听着就不多。”

This is an example showing how a random visit to the Mausoleum and the surrounding park generates observations and thoughts on the present freely. Following these, the author of the posted article also expresses his understanding of Chinese historiography:

The concept of *cheng wang bai kou* (成王败寇, those who have succeeded are called emperors and kings; those who have failed are called the thieves and robbers) is heavily weighted in China, as is the concept of *ci yishi bi yishi* (此一时彼一时, the time is different and the situation has changed). As for Wang Jingwei (during his revolutionary period with Sun Yat-sen), Hu Hanmin, Zou Lu, Chen Jiongming, and many others like them, how can their words and actions in history be taken lightly? How can they be dismissed so easily with a single remark? The good thing is that the situation is much better now.

Having recently walked around some of Guangzhou's monuments, it seems that the period of the greatest damage to them was after the founding of the Communist Party, especially during the Cultural Revolution, which could be called a cultural disaster, as with Buddhist monasteries, mosques, Catholic churches, and so on. Huanghuagang is considered to be the best preserved, probably due to the positive assessment of Dr Sun Yat-sen and the Xinhai Revolution in the history written by the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>579</sup>

This personal travelogue is also a piece of understanding and reflection on modern Chinese history by a Chinese citizen. The author concluded that Huanghuagang Park perfectly combined commemoration and leisure, nature, and humanity. In a physical site where the past is displayed with multiple layers of meanings and is open for interpretation, the visitor can draw critical comments on how history is treated by the official voice while recognising the selective presentation of a historic site during a specific period.

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<sup>579</sup> Kaola 考拉, “黄花岗小记 [A short note on Huanghuagang],” “中国的成王败寇观念很重, 此一时彼一时的观念也很重。汪精卫 (在跟从中山先生革命时期)、胡汉民、邹鲁包括陈炯明, 很多这样的人, 他们在历史上的言行, 岂可轻言? 岂可轻易一言即加否定? 好在现在的情形好了不少。” “最近走了一些广州的古迹, 似乎对古迹破坏最厉害的时期, 就是中共建国以后, 特别是文革时期, 简直可以称作是文化的劫难, 比如佛教寺院、清真寺、天主教堂等, 莫不如此。黄花岗保存算是最好的, 大概与孙中山先生和辛亥革命在中共所写历史中的正面评价有关。”

In 2017, a local youth organisation focusing on social innovation, youth entrepreneurship, and philanthropic cooperation<sup>580</sup> organised a guided tour and introduced the story regarding the space of Huanghuagang to its followers. The article posted to record the touring experience points out that some may think that the Huanghuagang was a “heavy, pathos, distant (厚重 *houzhong*, 悲怆 *beichuang*, 遥远 *yaoyuan*)” history, others consider it “strange, unfamiliar, even a bit dispensable (陌生 *mosheng*, 不了解 *buliaojie*, 甚至有点可有可无 *shenzhi you dian ke you ke wu*).” “This [seemingly] silent cemetery has so many stories that it wants to tell you. If you have time, come, and hear it speak.”<sup>581</sup> The cemetery and park are, in fact, far from being silent; as described, many are using the space for leisure activities, including “playing shuttlecock, dancing, fan dance, playing tai chi, playing erhu, listening to Beijing opera, knitting, boxing, playing cards, playing mahjong.”<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> 807 创新空间 807 Innovation Space, <https://site.douban.com/210295/>. Accessed on 7 April 2022. “社會創新 青年創業 跨界公益合作”

<sup>581</sup> 807 创新空间 807 Innovation Space, “碧血黄花，走读墓碑下的故事 | 导赏回顾 [The blood that shed in a just cause and the Yellow Flower, A Walk Under the Tombstone | Guided Tour Review],” 4 May 2017, <https://www.douban.com/note/618784980/>, accessed on 19 October 2021 “这个沉默的墓园有太多想跟你讲的故事。有时间的话，过来听听它说话吧。”

<sup>582</sup> Huang Xiaoxie 黄小邪, “黄花岗 Huanghuagang,” 13 August 2013, <https://www.douban.com/note/294941496/>, accessed on 19 October 2021.



*Figure 33: Local people playing cards and other games under a tree in Huanghuagang Park.*<sup>583</sup>

Besides citizens who see the park as a community space and an extension of their daily routine for leisure time, others visit the site to pay respect to the martyrs. One

*Douban* daily contributor writes:

Last Saturday, I finally visited the Huanghuagang, as I had hoped, to lay a bouquet of chrysanthemums [for the martyrs]. They are the heroes of my heart; in the prime of life, they gave their lives resolutely for an ideal China. Now lying here quietly, the noise from outside cannot be heard. The green hills are fortunate to bury the bones of the faithful, and Guangzhou, too, is more prosperous because of you. When I walked up the steps from the main gate, I felt a sense of admiration and gratitude. However, it is not a place that is superior to others, it is a place where many people walk around freely and casually. “Freedom never dies”, which is inscribed on one of the monuments.<sup>584</sup>

As other visiting logs demonstrated, this historic site has given some visitors binary emotions; it represents solemnity and informality at the same time. Nevertheless, the visiting experience only generates history-related reflections if visitors come to the site seeking to feel the past. Thus, many more people who use the space regularly and indifferently have helped establish the informal environment.

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<sup>583</sup> Photo taken on 22 January 2021.

<sup>584</sup> Wendy, “辛亥百年 黄花岗 [Xinhai Centenary; Huanghuagang],” 4 April 2011, <https://www.douban.com/note/143589855/>, accessed on 19 October 2021.

However, one of the very few *Douban* diaries posted before the 2010s leaves an outlier's comment. On 6 August 2009, a user wrote the demand in his virtual diary for the demolition of Huanghuagang.

Those buried there were terrorists who were involved in an “organised serious violent crime of a terrorist nature, planned by hostile forces outside China”. And what's worse: they were against the only legitimate government of China, the Qing Empire. They deserved death, so why build a damn park like this? This is a clear demonstration against the government.<sup>585</sup>

It is unclear how common a viewpoint like this might be. PRC citizens have distinctly different responses after being told what to remember and what to forget. Also in 2009, a *Gaokao* (高考, The National College Entrance Examination in mainland China) candidate from Hubei received a 100% mark in the *Yuwen* (语文, Chinese) essay, and this student wrote an emotionally charged account of his trip to the Huanghuagang Park in a classical Chinese poem. “It was only because the shedding of martyrs' blood that brought the sun and moon to this new day.”<sup>586</sup> Gratitude was shown in the poem to the martyrs for their sacrifices which chronologically resulted in the present nation; nonetheless, this poem is a hymn to the new era of China. In the final two lines of the poem, the student writes:

Nowadays, the beautiful landscape no longer bears bloodshed. There are as many factories as iron horses, and the information age is upon us. The people are happy and free from misery, and there is hardly a sad face again. As I stand at the entrance to the Mausoleum today, my thoughts are overwhelmed with emotions.<sup>587</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> Zhelang 哲郎, “应该拆了黄花岗 [Huanghuagang should be demolished],” 6 August 2009, <https://www.douban.com/note/40991316/>, accessed on 19 October 2021. “那里埋的，都是参与了一起“由境外敌对势力策划的，有组织、有图谋并带有恐怖性质的严重暴力犯罪事件”的恐怖分子。而且更为恶劣的是：他们反对的是中国的唯一合法政府——大清。死有余辜，还建什么鸟公园，这不是赤果果地向政府示威么。”  
<sup>586</sup> “只因烈士血如海，才使日月换新天。” A *Gaokao* candidate from Hubei, “站在黄花岗陵园的门口 [Standing at the entrance of the Huanghuagang Mausoleum],” 7 June 2009, <https://www.douban.com/note/37883025/>, accessed on 19 October 2021.

<sup>587</sup> A *Gaokao* candidate from Hubei, “站在黄花岗陵园的门口 [Standing at the entrance of the Huanghuagang Mausoleum].” “今之河山多锦绣，不复沉沦如从前。工厂遍地

As might be expected, the Mausoleum is a place where young people were organised to learn about the China Dream in 2021.<sup>588</sup> A visitor noted:

When I returned to the Huanghuagang several years later, the Qingming Festival had just passed. As I walked up the pathway to the tomb, I saw a large group of students in school uniforms lining up in front of the tomb for a group tomb-sweeping event, reciting the China Dream in a lively voice and so on.<sup>589</sup>

Although being collected and presented in as systematic a manner as possible, the above paragraphs show a wide range of different observations and responses to the Huanghuagang site. This result, nevertheless, is not a representative sample of the broader Chinese museum visitors or history enthusiasts. As a virtual community, *Douban* is an online forum where users share personal reviews of films, books, music, and other cultural products.<sup>590</sup> Museums and historical sites are also parts of the cultural products,

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多铁马，信息时代在眼前。民众康乐少悲苦，难以再见愁容颜。吾今立于陵门口，思绪纷飞感万千。”

<sup>588</sup> China Dream is a nationalist concept put forth by President Xi Jinping in 2012. See the China Daily webpage for more relevant reports and interpretations: <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/Chinese-dream.html>, accessed on 7 November 2021.

<sup>589</sup> Scheherazade, “86/365 黄花岗 [86/365 Huanghuagang],” 10 April 2021, <https://www.douban.com/note/799804311/>, accessed on 19 October 2021. “数年后再见黄花岗时清明刚过，走上墓道时，看见一大群穿校服的学生在墓前排着队举行集体扫墓活动，声情并茂地朗诵中国梦之类。”

<sup>590</sup> Examples of recent cultural studies using Douban as the primary site for data collection: Matthew D. Johnson and Keith B. Wagner, Kiki Tianqi Yu, and Luke Vulpiani. *China's iGeneration Cinema and Moving Image Culture for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); Yang Jie, and Brian Yecies. “Mining Chinese Social Media UGC: a Big-Data Framework for Analyzing Douban Movie Reviews.” *Journal of big data* 3, no. 1 (2016): 1–23; Nie Hui, and Liu Mengyuan. “Emotion Mining and Analysis of Comments Based on Emotional Model—A Case Study on Book Reviews of Douban.” *Zhishi guanli luntan* 3, no. 6 (2018): 313–324; Zhao Miaoxi, Wenmin Liang, Gaofeng Xu, and Zhifeng Li. “Urban Networks of Leisure Activities: Using Douban Event to Measure Interaction in the Megacity Region of the Pearl River Delta.” In *Cities as Spatial and Social Networks* (Cambridge: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 165–189; Aiting Xu, Tianxing Qi, and Xinzhi Dong. “Analysis of the Douban Online Review of the MCU: Based on LDA Topic Model.” *Journal of Physics*. Conference series 1437, no. 1 (2020): 1–10.



even though the users less commonly discuss them than other categories. The result is a sample of the internet generation who willingly share their historical understanding triggered by a leisure visit. Although limited in scale and numbers, these visitors represent many of the seven types of museum visitors categorised by John H Falk and Lynn D. Dierking, who advocated for free-choice learning. A few of them are “Explorers” who expect things that can “fuel their curiosity and learning” during the visits. Others, especially students in groups or by themselves, are “Facilitators” who are socially motivated. The history enthusiasts among the content makers are “Professionals/Hobbyists.”<sup>591</sup> And, as a tourist site in Guangzhou, many of the visitors to the Mausoleum are “Experience Seekers” who see the place as a destination.<sup>592</sup> There are, indeed, visitors who go to the Mausoleum for religious or spiritual recharge, whom Falk and Dierking name as “Rechargers”.<sup>593</sup> The variety of visiting experiences and past interpretations demonstrate the multiple layers of historical memory, especially when the past event is heavily attached to a physical location.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter primarily analyses the commemorative activities centred around the Huanghuagang Mausoleum, highlighting the processes of remembering and forgetting the

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<sup>591</sup> John H. Falk, and Lynn D. Dierking, *The Museum Experience Revisited* (Walnut Creek: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 47.

<sup>592</sup> On 2 May 2019, the six red tourism destination including the Huanghuagang Park had a total of 48,400 visitors. Guangdong Provincial Department of Culture 广东省文化厅, “2019年五一节假期第二日广东省假日文化和旅游市场信息 [Holiday Culture and Tourism Market Information for Guangdong Province on the Second Day of the May Day Holiday 2019],” 2 May 2019, [http://whly.gd.gov.cn/gkmlpt/content/2/2465/post\\_2465709.html#2628](http://whly.gd.gov.cn/gkmlpt/content/2/2465/post_2465709.html#2628), accessed on 15 January 2022.

<sup>593</sup> Falk, and Dierking, *The Museum Experience Revisited*, 47. The last two of the seven types of visitors are “Respectful Pilgrims” and “Affinity Seekers”, which also consist in the common visitors to the Huanghuagang Park.

martyrs, as well as the creation of non-martyr heroes. All of these phenomena, which first emerged in the Republican era, have persisted into the People's Republic of China era, with minor adjustments in narratives over time. The chapter contends that commemoration had remained a central narrative element to such an extent that when the Xinhai martyrs ceased to be potent symbols for the average Chinese citizens, while new heroes, like Pan Dawei, were simultaneously forged. These new heroes were presented as significant contributors to the early stage of the commemoration and instrumental in establishing the memorial site. Furthermore, the chapter argues that contemporary interpretations, reflecting the political milieu of different eras, seldom supersede the messages and emotions conveyed directly by the historic site, but are rather layered on top of them. Consequently, historical memories materialise in forms that may at times contradict each other, yet each is meaningful and rooted in both past and present experiences.

## Chapter 5: The Evolution of the Villainous Figures of Yuan Shikai and the Warlords, from the 1920s to the present

In a 1986 article titled “Some Issues on the Study of Republican Personages,”<sup>594</sup> influential official historian Li Xin 李新, who held leading positions in various academic societies and institutes from the late 1970s to 1990s, including the Institute of Modern History at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Party History Research Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the Research Office of the History of the Republic of China, and the Society for Modern Chinese History,<sup>595</sup> made the following statement:

The characters in the history of the Republic change a lot, so don't rush to cast a man's reputation in stone. [...] Don't be like a child watching a play, where the villains (red faces) and heroes (white faces) are clearly delineated from the beginning and remain unchanged. Some good people, like Sun Yat-sen 孙中山, became better and better. Some bad people, Yuan Shikai 袁世凯, worsened; Yuan was never a good person, and his wickedness peaked when he declared himself Emperor. Some good people turned bad, like Wang Jingwei 汪精卫.<sup>596</sup>

Shifting the focus from the heroes or “good people (好人 *hao ren*)” to the “villains (坏人 *huai ren*),” the second part of this thesis will examine Yuan Shikai and Wang Jingwei. These two figures are among the most frequently depicted historical “villains” from the republican era, both notorious leaders of state and government. Yuan was elected Provisional President of the Republic of China in 1912, while Wang led the Guomindang

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<sup>594</sup> Li Xin 李新, “关于民国人物研究的若干问题 [Some Issues on the Study of Republican Personages],” *Republican Archives* 民國檔案 1986/01 (1986): 106-109.

<sup>595</sup> Source of the biographical sketch: 近代中国网 ModernChina.org, “李新,” <https://modernchina.org/scholar/lixin>, accessed on 2 December 2022.

<sup>596</sup> Li 李, “关于民国人物研究的若干问题 [Some Issues on the Study of Republican Personages],” 109. “民国史上的人物变化很大，不要一下子把人定死。……不要象小孩子看戏一样，红脸白脸一清二楚，毫无变化。好人越变越好的，如孙中山。坏人越变越坏的，如袁世凯，他一天也没好过，到称帝时坏到了顶点。好人变坏的，如汪精卫。”

government in Wuhan and later the Reorganised Nationalist Government, a regime condemned for its collaborative role during the Second Sino-Japanese War. This chapter examines the interpretations of the “bad people who later worsen,” represented by Yuan Shikai. Yuan’s reputation is strongly associated with his identity as a warlord, a group of influential but notorious characters in the history of the Republic of China. Examining the constructed image of Yuan as a villain also demands investigations of how the label of “Chinese warlords” was created in official and popular historical accounts.

The bad reputation of Yuan Shikai was a constructed product, like other historical presentations. Recent scholars know that the pre-1949 and the early PRC writings of this figure were compiled under the profound influence of political conflict and ideological promotion and were the results of a lack of materials. Nonetheless, a systematic analysis of the construction of such a historical image needs to be included. This chapter deconstructs the image of the Republican president Yuan Shikai and the meaning of warlords in China. The analysis reveals that the Chinese historical judgement of Yuan follows the earlier condemnation established during the 1930s by both the CCP and the GMD in the 1940s; the evil images of Yuan and the regional warlords remained active and unchallenged until the 1990s. Moreover, biographical writings in recent decades also reference republican publications using book titles such as “How Yuan Stole the Nation (袁氏盜國記 *Yuan Shi dao guo ji*),”<sup>597</sup> even when they were trying to provide a balanced judgment that shows nuances in Yuan’s political and personal life.

In *Deconstructing History*, Alun Munslow concludes:

We historians employ narrative as the vehicle for our reports but usually neglect to study it as an important part of what we do. [...] A historical narrative is a discourse that places disparate events in an understandable order. [...] So, while

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<sup>597</sup> Huang Yi 黄毅, *袁氏盜國記* [*Yuan’s Story of the Thief of a Nation*]. (Shanghai: 國民書社 Guomin Shushe, 1916).

individual statements may be true/false, narrative as a collection of them is more than their sum. The narrative becomes a complex interpretative exercise that is neither conclusively true nor false.<sup>598</sup>

A review of the coexisting and contradictory popular narratives of a historical figure such as Yuan is a way of studying the construction and responses of twentieth-century Chinese popular history and bridging the ideas and values behind certain interpretations of the past. Sinologist Glen Dudbridge explores the idea of reading multiple discourses and presenting the changing interpretations of historical or literary materials.<sup>599</sup> The 2007 Festschrift published in honour of Dudbridge's scholarship applied the method to imperial and modern China, focusing on both history and literature and analysing "how written narratives have undergone different readings, editing processes, changing interpretations and significance in the process and how such processes contribute to the process of reading as reconstructing and the rewriting of history."<sup>600</sup> Some writers and editors inevitably used written narratives for various purposes, including self-fashioning and political propaganda; this trend is more noticeable in writing and editing historical stories or commentaries on significant historical figures.

The previous chapters of this thesis have examined the ways representation and commemoration of individual and collective heroes and heroines from the Republican era have changed over time. They also highlighted the significance of these historical narratives within the contexts they were created. This chapter takes a turn to investigate a more controversial political figure, Yuan Shikai. Yuan's political life spanned from the

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<sup>598</sup> Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History*. London: Routledge, 2006, 10.

<sup>599</sup> Glen Dudbridge, *A Portrait of Five Dynasties China: from the Memoirs of Wang Renyu (880-956)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>600</sup> Berg, "Introduction," xv.

late Qing to the early Republican period,<sup>601</sup> and this chapter predominately looks at his reputation as the President of the Republic of China.

Yuan Shikai's reputation was commonly associated with two pejorative labels, *Junfa* (军阀) and “thief of the nation (窃国大盗 *qie guo da dao*)”. *Junfa* refers to his pivotal role among the Beiyang Warlords, a collective of military commanders who wielded political power in the early Republic. The label “thief of the nation” stems from his ascension to the head of state after the Xinhai Revolution, an act that both the GMD and CCP propagandists later deemed as “stealing the fruit of the Revolution.”<sup>602</sup> Given that the official historical denunciations of Yuan Shikai stem from these two distinct narrative threads, this chapter separately investigates Yuan's biographies and the public condemnation of the *Junfa*, a group of diverse military strongmen personified by Yuan, the most infamous among them. It is important to note that these figures were not inherently historical villains. Rather, the reputation of each warlord varied widely depending on regional, social, and political contexts, and these reputations evolved over time. However, during subsequent periods of political chaos, their reputations unequivocally shifted towards the negative.

This chapter aims to chart the evolution of these hostile images, albeit in a non-linear order, because the rewriting of historical events and people often do not appear chronologically.<sup>603</sup> Furthermore, the contemporary representation of the warlord figures,

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<sup>601</sup> Ma Yong's article provides a linear historical account of Yuan's transition from “an advocate of constitutional monarchy to a limited republican,” focusing on the events before the founding of the new Republic in 1912. Ma Yong, “From Constitutional Monarchy to Republic: The Trajectory of Yuan Shikai,” *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 6, no. 1 (2012): 15-32.

<sup>602</sup> “窃取革命果实 (*qie qu geming guoshi*);” how this term emerged in the Chinese discourse will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>603</sup> This view of seeing historical writing was proposed by Gu Jiegang who used a critical historiographical approach to Chinese historical sources and questioned the process of ancient historical writing in China. Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, *秦漢的方士與儒生* [*Fang Shi*

which underwent some waves of restoring their contributions in history as strongmen in the 1980s and 1990s, will be discussed, followed by a brief analysis of the current trend of disparaging these characters while the state is tightening the space for negotiating history once again. Using sources that re-emerged and were published in the 2000s, Patrick Fuliang Shan wrote up the most recent English-language biography of Yuan Shikai.<sup>604</sup>

Shan states in the Introduction:

Strangely enough, this negative image [of Yuan as a stereotypical historical villain] was well-preserved throughout the twentieth century and has even slipped uncritically into the new millennium. More oddly, this hideous effigy has been preserved both in the oral tradition and in written annals so well that he has become a prominent target of perpetual censure.<sup>605</sup>

Shan's biography, therefore, draws most of its attention to Yuan's political, military, and other personal achievements in the late Qing period, trying to provide a "fair" judgement of Yuan and indicate the primary sources which portray Yuan positively (primarily from Yuan's family members and his subordinates).<sup>606</sup> Shan's attempt in restoring Yuan's reputation provides valuable historical accounts but receives some critical comments from his academic peers; Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik comments that Shan's study "does not go beyond publications in the People's Republic of China at the beginning of the Yuan Shikai fever" and "tries to define a 'more objective' view on Yuan by taking the side of current mainstream opinions."<sup>607</sup> However, although there was once the "Yuan Shikai Fever" and as scholarly interest in Yuan peaked in the 1990s in

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*and Confucianism in Qin and Han*] (Shanghai: 上海古籍出版社 Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 2005).

<sup>604</sup> Patrick Fuliang Shan, *Yuan Shikai: A Reappraisal* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2019).

<sup>605</sup> Shan, *Yuan Shikai*, 3.

<sup>606</sup> Shan, *Yuan Shikai*, 5.

<sup>607</sup> Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik comments that Shan's study "does not go beyond publications in the People's Republic of China at the beginning of the Yuan Shikai fever" and "tries to define a 'more objective' view on Yuan by taking the side of current mainstream opinions." Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik. "Yuan Shikai: A Reappraisal by Patrick Fuliang Shan (Review)." *China Information* 34 no.2 (2020): 305-307.

mainland China, and even some writings that praised him “as a reformer, a moderniser, a national hero, a talented administrator, a wise politician, and an adept poet” among the voluminous literature about Yuan emerged at that time,<sup>608</sup> the older yet indelible Chinese storytelling that sees Yuan as the villain still seems to persist in the public discourse. Shan’s book does not answer how the “unanimously denounced”<sup>609</sup> account of Yuan came to be, and few other scholarly works find the need to address that. This chapter seeks to discover the public representations of Yuan Shikai and the process of constructing the villain figure from the 1940s till the present.

Popular print and books aimed at mass audiences published since the 1940s are the main sources this chapter uses to analyse the subject. The chapter takes into consideration the background of the journals being used, the editors’ positions or the general thoughts held by the writers. While the reading experience itself is hard to reconstruct, by looking at multiple sources in different periods, the chapter seeks to explore popular narratives and the process of creating them. By focusing on the representation of Yuan Shikai and, later, the constructed image of the Chinese warlords, the analysis discloses the process in which evil political figures were created and narrated through texts (and visual images in some cases) and discusses how the image of these figures remains in the popular discourse, even when the history is revised or when the significance of the historical topics fades away.

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<sup>608</sup> Shan, *Yuan Shikai*, 5.

<sup>609</sup> Shan, *Yuan Shikai*, 5.



- *An analysis of the Communist historical writing on Yuan Shikai: “Thief of the Nation”*

Chinese biographies of Yuan Shikai were published as early as 1916; some of the widely referenced ones are Huang Yi 黃毅’s *Yuan’s Story of the Thief of a Nation* (袁氏盜國記 *Yuan Shi Dao Guo Ji*) (1916) and Bai Jian 白蕉’s *Yuan Shikai and the Republic of China* (袁世凱與中華民國 *Yuan Shikai yu Zhonghua Minguo*) (1936).<sup>610</sup> These books provide the basis of the stories of Yuan Shikai that later became familiar to the majority of Chinese people. The Communist history book on Yuan Shikai, entitled *Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation* (竊國大盜袁世凱 *Qie Guo Dadao Yuan Shikai*) was written by Chen Boda 陳伯達 in the 1940s, and in more accessible vernacular language; this book became the most influential version of historical stories about Yuan after 1949 and will be analysed here.

In July 1949, Chen Boda’s biography of Yuan Shikai was republished by Xinhua Bookstore (新華書店 *Xinhua Shudian*) with the new title “*Introducing Yuan Shikai, the Thief of the Nation*”; the publisher first established in Yan’an under the Propaganda Department of the CCP.<sup>611</sup> The first edition of this book was published four years earlier (in 1945) by *Qiyuinshe* 丘引社 in Hong Kong. Since it was reprinted, it has been one of the most influential biographies of Yuan Shikai in Chinese.<sup>612</sup> Chen Boda authored two biographies between 1946 and 1949; one is *Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation* (竊國大盜袁世凱 *Qie Guo Dadao Yuan Shikai*)<sup>613</sup> and the other entitled *Chiang Kai-shek, Public*

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<sup>610</sup> Huang Yi 黃毅, *袁氏盜國記* [*Yuan’s Story of the Thief of a Nation*] (Shanghai: 國民書社 Guomin Shushe, 1916); Bai Jiao 白蕉, *袁世凱與中華民國* [*Yuan Shikai and the Republic of China*] (上海: 人文社月刊 Renwen She Yuankan, 1936).

<sup>611</sup> Chen Boda 陳伯達, *介紹竊國大盜袁世凱* [*Introducing Yuan Shikai, the Thief of the Nation*] (Shanghai: 新華書店 Xinhua Bookstore, 1949).

<sup>612</sup> Shan, *Yuan Shikai*, 4.

<sup>613</sup> Chen 陳, *介紹竊國大盜袁世凱* [*Introducing Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation*].

*Enemy of the People* (人民公敵蔣介石 *Renmin Gongdi Jiang Jieshi*).<sup>614</sup> The definitions of the two men in the book titles are still familiar to some Chinese readers today. Both boldly titled publications helped establish and reinforce Chen's role as "A pen under Mao Zedong" and later "A pen of the Central Committee of the CCP".<sup>615</sup> The following section examines the narrative in Chen's biography of Yuan in which the early Communist version of the Republican president was set up and defined in historical writings.

The first page of Chen's biography quoted Mao's evaluation of Yuan: "Comrade Mao Zedong's 'On Coalition Government' mentioned two figures in modern China: Mr Sun Yat-sen, a revolutionary democrat, and Yuan Shikai, a tyrannical one who stole the country [from its people] (竊國大盜的專制派 *qie guo da dao de zhuanzhi pai*)."<sup>616</sup> In Chen's book, Yuan was described as a dark shadow over Chinese society, a representative of the reactionaries (反動派 *Fandong pai*) who tried their best to "strangle China's future (絞殺中國的前途 *jiaosha Zhongguo de qiantu*)."<sup>617</sup> The eighty-page biography is a strong condemnation of Yuan Shikai and some other political figures in the 1940s whom the author deemed similar to Yuan and harmful to China.<sup>618</sup> The biography only very

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<sup>614</sup> Chen Boda 陳伯達, *人民公敵蔣介石* [*Chiang Kai-shek, Public Enemy of the People*] (Hongkong: 正報出版社 Zhengbao Publisher, 1949). A book of comic strips of the same title was published by Liaoning Fine Arts Press in 1962 and reenforced the narrative among Chinese in the mainland, along with other propaganda against Chiang Kai-shek.

<sup>615</sup> Xu Shunfu 許順富, "陳伯達是如何進入和淡出毛澤東視野的(上) [How Chen Boda entered and faded out of Mao Zedong's vision]," *文史天地 Wenshi Tiandi*, no. 1 (2019): 10-15. "毛澤東手下的一支筆" and "中共中央的一支筆".

<sup>616</sup> Chen 陳, *介紹竊國大盜袁世凱* [*Introducing Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation*], 1. On page 12 and other places of the book, it was indicated that the oppose side of Yuan Shikai was the people. On page 74, it writes: "Let such a shameful anti-people dictator as Yuan Shikai be forever reviled by the people! (讓袁世凱這樣可恥的反人民大獨裁者永遠被人民所唾罵吧!)"

<sup>617</sup> Chen 陳, *介紹竊國大盜袁世凱* [*Introducing Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation*], 1.

<sup>618</sup> Chen 陳, *介紹竊國大盜袁世凱* [*Introducing Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation*], 1.

vaguely indicates that there were contemporary figures who should be accused of their evil acts similar to Yuan, however, other materials of that time point specifically to Chiang Kai-shek as the contemporary villain. Attacking the historical villain was thus a way of attacking the contemporary enemy, just as celebrating Sun Yat-sen was a way of justifying and bolstering the growing cult of Mao in the 1950s and 1960s.

The primary accusation of Yuan in Chen's writing is his "two-faced characteristic (兩面派)" for being a man of insincerity and deceitfulness. Chen states that such a characteristic was already revealed during Yuan's handling of the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898 when he betrayed the reformists in exchange for his power and wealth, and to earn the Qing court's trust.<sup>619</sup> Yuan's second wicked advantage, as narrated in this 1945 biography, was his success in establishing of the New Army (新建陸軍 *Xinjian Lujun*) and a number of deputies whom the biographer calls "the minions for stealing state power (竊國的爪牙 *qie guo de zhua ya*)."<sup>620</sup> Chen concludes that "[w]ith the power of the 'New Army' as the body and the tactics of the two-faced faction, Yuan Shikai gained the support of the Chinese and foreign reactionaries step by step and became the first thief of the nation in modern China."<sup>621</sup>

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"In terms of cruelty and insidiousness of their tactics, the present-day 'Yuan Shikai' finally far surpassed the dead Yuan Shikai. (現實的袁世凱，在手段的殘酷與陰毒上，終究遠遠地超過了已死的袁世凱。)"

<sup>619</sup> Chen 陳, 介紹竊國大盜袁世凱 [*Introducing Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation*], 3.

<sup>620</sup> Chen 陳, 介紹竊國大盜袁世凱 [*Introducing Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation*], 4.

The biographer lists people such as Feng Guozhang (馮國璋), Duan Qirui (段祺瑞), Wang Zhanyuan (王占元), Cao Kun (曹錕), Duan Zhigui (段芝貴), and Xu Shichang (徐世昌) as "the so-called 'orthodox Beiyang(北洋正統).'"

<sup>621</sup> Chen 陳, 介紹竊國大盜袁世凱 [*Introducing Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation*], 5.

"以'新建陸軍'的力量為體，以兩面派的手段為用，袁世凱就這樣一步一步地得到中國和外國反動派的扶持，變成了近代中國的第一個竊國大盜。"

Following the statement above is the most strong condemnation of Yuan in the biography: a person who “stole the fruit of the revolution (竊取革命果實 *qie qu geming guoshi*)”.<sup>622</sup> The term “the Fruits of the Revolution” started to appear frequently in Chinese language publications around 1930, being used in translated works (such as Ba Jin’s discussion of capitalism) and early works on Industrialisation or French Revolution in late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>623</sup> The term was introduced to more Chinese theorists from works of Russian scholars such as Maxim Gorky,<sup>624</sup> in studies of Russian society.<sup>625</sup> Since the mid-1930s, “the Fruits of Revolution” becomes a popular term among political writers of both the CCP and Guomindang (GMD), shortly after the peak of the third Communist International (Comintern)’s influence on Republican state-building in China in the late 1920s and 1930s.<sup>626</sup> In the 1946 version of the biography (published in Hong Kong), Chen Boda borrows the term as the title of the biography’s second chapter in which he dismisses any attempt Yuan made to “preserve China (or maintain the unity of China, 保存中國 *bao cun Zhongguo*)” and accuses Yuan of “seizing sole power (獨攬大權 *du lan da quan*).”<sup>627</sup>

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<sup>622</sup> Chen 陳, 介紹竊國大盜袁世凱 [*Introducing Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation*], 6.

<sup>623</sup> Ba Jin 巴金, 从资本主义到安那其主义 [*From Capitalism to Anarchism*] (Shanghai: 自由書店 Ziyou Bookstore, 1930); Mao Dun 茅盾, 西洋文学通论 [*General Theory of Western Literature*] (Shanghai: 世界書店 Shijie Bookstore, 1930). Wang Chunyi 王纯一, 西洋史要 [*Western History*] (Shanghai: 南強書店 Nanqiang Bookstore, 1930).

<sup>624</sup> Maxim Gorky, translated by Xiao Sen 萧参, 高尔基创作选集 [*Selected works of Gorky*] (Shanghai: 生活書店 Shenghuo Bookstore, 1933).

<sup>625</sup> Institute for Soviet Studies 苏联研究社, 俄国社会民主党与农民问题 [*The Russian Social Democratic Party and the Peasant Question*] (Shanghai: 开华书局 Kaihua Books, 1933); Yang Dansun 杨丹菀, 改造中的苏俄 [*Soviet Russia in transformation*] (Shanghai: 青年协会书局 Youth Association Books, 1934).

<sup>626</sup> Edward Hallett Carr. *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

<sup>627</sup> Chen Boda 陳伯達. 竊國大盜袁世凱 [*Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation*] (Hongkong: 丘引社 Qiuyinshe, 1946), 6.

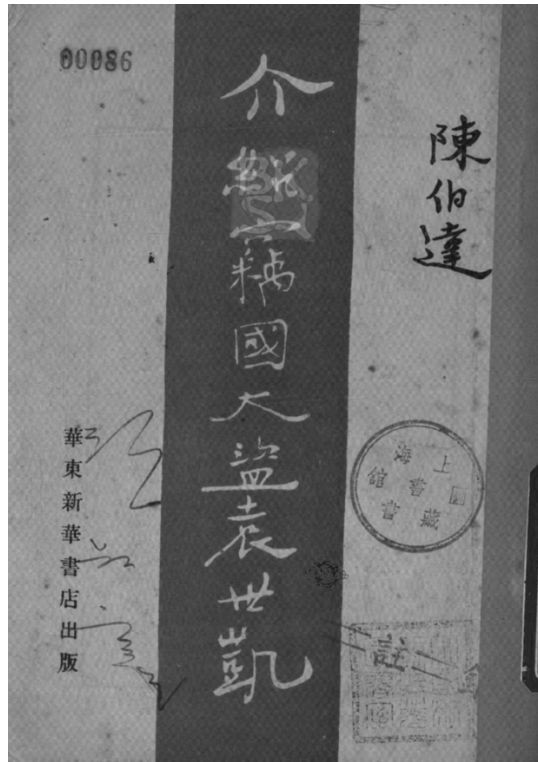


Figure 34: 介紹竊國大盜袁世凱 [Introducing Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation] (1949)<sup>628</sup>

辛亥革命，這是資產階級性質的革命。這革命是人民歷來反對滿清朝廷所鬱積而大爆發的結  
果，革命的發展是很迅速的。革命的基本力量是工人、農民、手工業者和小資產階級。資產階級  
總份子，革命活動地盤主要是舊形式的民衆組織（會黨）和革命軍，而這種會黨和革命軍主要的  
以農民大衆構成的。代表資產階級和小資產階級的政治思想的孫中山民主主義（民族民權民生三  
大主義），是這個革命的政治綱領，起了很積極的作用。可是革命有它的兩點：工人們英勇地參  
加鬥爭，但那時中國無產階級還弱小，還沒有形成獨立的政治力量，起護民衆的自覺性和組織性

二 竊取革命果實  
辛亥革命的妥協性——「保存中國」  
還是「獨攬大權」——「大奸大猾」  
還是「大忠大信」

Figure 35: “Stole the Fruit of the Revolution (竊取革命果實)” in the 1946 Biography<sup>629</sup>

In 2020, the newly revised unified history textbook for Grade 8 students in China replaced the term “stealing” (竊取 *qie qu*) in the Introduction of a Lesson Unit and instead stated: “The fruits of victory in the Xinhai Revolution eventually fell into the hands of Yuan Shikai.”<sup>630</sup> School teacher Jin Feng 金飞 commented that such “subtle changes in presentation reflect a shift in assessment orientation.”<sup>631</sup> Notwithstanding this development, not only did it take nearly eight decades for the “subtle” change to be

<sup>628</sup> Chen 陳, 介紹竊國大盜袁世凱 [Introducing Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation], Cover.

<sup>629</sup> Chen 陳, 竊國大盜袁世凱 [Yuan Shikai, the Thief of the Nation], 6.

The 1949 reprint of the book removed the subtitles.

<sup>630</sup> Jin Feng 金飞, “‘窃取’还是‘落入’?—对袁世凯与辛亥革命果实关系的思考 [‘Stealing’ or ‘Falling into’? Reflections on the relationship between Yuan Shikai and the fruits of the Xinhai Revolution],” 教育研究与评论(课堂观察) *Research and Review on Education*, 2020/05 (2020): 72-75.

<sup>631</sup> Jin 金, “‘窃取’还是‘落入’? [‘Stealing’ or ‘Falling into’?],” 72.

included in one place of the middle school history textbook, but the main body of the textbook on Xinhai Revolution retains the description stating that “the successful fruit of the Xinhai Revolution was stolen by Yuan Shikai (辛亥革命的胜利果实被袁世凯窃取 *Xinhai Geming de shengli guoshi bei Yuan Shikai qie qu*)”.<sup>632</sup> In Chinese public history, including the most dominate one – the educational history, the accusation of Yuan Shikai’s role in 1912 remains the same as presented in Chen Boda’s book, labelling Yuan the “Thief of the Nation.”

It is essential to evaluate how and to what extent Chen’s narrative was accepted and potentially internalised by Chinese readers at the time. Despite the influential position of Chen and his biography within the Communist Party in the 1940s, intellectual readers offered their opinions which were sometimes differential from the biographer’s ideas. At least five book reviews were published in 1946 on this biography. All five pieces were printed by magazines founded in 1945 or 1946 which aligned or sympathised with the Communist movement or the labour movement in China, respectively located in Hong Kong, Chongqing, Shanghai, Beiping (Beijing), and Singapore. Those reviews represent reactions to such a historical narrative within the intellectual communities with Communist sympathies.

The *Xinqi* (新旗) journal was founded by a left-wing society in Hong Kong; its review of Chen Boda’s book uses an affirmative tone yet is critical in essence. The reviewer (Zheng Chaolin 郑超麟 1901-1998, a Chinese Trotskyist revolutionary,<sup>633</sup>

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<sup>632</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Eight-Grade Volume 1*, 48.

<sup>633</sup> For introduction and studies of the reviewer see: Marxist Internet Archive, “Biography of Zheng Chaolin,” <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/zhengchaolin/index.htm>. Accessed on 16 March 2022. Zheng Chaolin, and Gregor Benton. *An Oppositionist for Life: Memoirs of the Chinese Revolutionary Zheng Chaolin* / Edited and Translated by Gregor

writing under the pseudonym Shuyan 舒嚴) in Hong Kong agreed with Chen's approach of using history to serve the present. Still, he criticised how Chen drew the comparison between the past and present by stating that the social context of Yuan's time was the same as in the mid-1940s.<sup>634</sup> Furthermore, he questioned the naming of Yuan Shikai and his class's political actions as "Yuan Shikaiism 袁世凱主義 (*Yuan Shikai Zhuyi*)"; instead, Zheng argued that it was not different from Bonapartism – the famous French political ideology.<sup>635</sup> Zheng's book review dismissed the portrayal of Yuan and his kind as thieves or villains and stated that chaos in late Qing and early Republic was caused by several features, including the collapse of the feudal gentry (Qing court and the Manchurian landowners) and the bourgeoisie's weakening status in terms of maintaining control over the nation. According to Zheng Chaolin, the bourgeoisie willingly handed its power to figures like Yuan, who could liaise between different classes, only intending to overthrow Yuan and his kind at a later stage.<sup>636</sup> Opinions similar to what Zheng expressed were presented in some of the Chinese scholarly articles published in the 2010s, although without referring to the review in the 1940s.<sup>637</sup> The long period in between is when a controversial narrative in the process of being constantly reinforced.

Zheng's response to Chen's book stressed the Marxist interpretation of history, where economic forces rather than individuals drive change. It is intriguing as the evolution of narratives based on villains and heroes repeatedly proved themselves more

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Benton. Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Humanities Press, 1997; Gregor Benton ed. *Prophets Unarmed: Chinese Trotskyists in Revolution, War, Jail, and the Return from Limbo*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

<sup>634</sup> Shuyan 舒嚴, "书评: 窃国大盗袁世凯 [Book review: *Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation*]," *新旗 Xinqi* vol.5, (1946): 9-13.

<sup>635</sup> Shuyan 舒嚴, "书评 [Book review]," 12.

<sup>636</sup> Shuyan 舒嚴, "书评 [Book review]," 13.

<sup>637</sup> For example, see: Guan Wei 关威, "再论袁世凯与辛亥革命的成与败 [On Yuan Shikai and Success and Failure of the Revolution of 1911]," *Historical Research in Anhui 安徽史学* 2015/04 (2015): 89-94.

convincing and popular in communist China than the Marxist history. Presumably, the approach of creating life stories of these historical figures (like the ones of Sun Yat-sen, Yuan Shikai, and Wang Jingwei) helps ordinary people to comprehend the past and creates more emotional reactions to history.

Zheng's account is also an example of how historical narratives, or the judgement of political figures with a villainous image, remained non-uniform even within the communist community during the mid-1940s. Another short comment in *Yisiqi Huabao* (一四七画报), a magazine based in Beijing, reads that Chen's writing of the history book was the creation of "a historical play" (一部歷史劇 *yi bu lishi ju*) and the biographer only used documents about Yuan Shikai to "make the play seem realistic" (為了劇情逼真 *wei le juqing bizhen*).<sup>638</sup> The critic stated that Chen's book is more creative writing than accurate history, accusing the writer of sensationalising and lacking accuracy. Nevertheless, as the analyses throughout the thesis show, the creative aspects of depicting the villainous figure remain the dominant official and popular narratives nationwide.

Besides the two relatively critical reviews, the other three pieces thoroughly supported Chen's interpretations of Yuan Shikai.<sup>639</sup> In Linyi (林異)'s piece published by the monthly journal *Qingnianxuexi* (青年學習) based in Chongqing, the reviewer took a different approach from Zheng's, in which he not only adopted but also exaggerated the satirical and critical view of Yuan Shikai in the book, calling the story of Yuan an "ugly history" (醜史 *chou shi*).<sup>640</sup> This book review is the only piece authored by Linyi in either

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<sup>638</sup> “窃国大盗袁世凯 (陈白尘近作) [*Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation* (Recent work by Chen Bai-Chen)],” 一四七画报 *Yisiqi Huabao* 5, no.1 (1946): 15. Most articles in *Yisiqi Huabao* provide no author credentials, including this short piece.

<sup>639</sup> National index to Chinese newspapers & periodicals.

<sup>640</sup> Linyi 林异, “读‘窃国大盗袁世凯 [Reading *Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation*],” 青年学习(重庆) *Qinnianxuexi (Chongqing)* 1, no. 6 (1946): 27.



*Qingnianxuexi* or other journals and magazines; therefore, their political and social background is unknown to researchers today. Nonetheless, the position of the *Qingnianxuexi* is reflected by the founder of the journal, Zhang Bojun 章伯钧, who participated closely in the founding of the PRC in the later years and was deemed as a “rightist intellectual” during the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957.<sup>641</sup> The journal claims its focus as giving the voice of Republican youths a platform, and one of its political goals was to stop the Chinese Civil War after the end of the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>642</sup> Two other book reviews around the same time also affirmed the wickedness of Yuan Shikai. For example, Yang Yibo (楊一波)’s writing for *Renren Zhoukan* (人人周刊)<sup>643</sup> summarised that:

He relied on all the dark forces of the old China.  
He relied on imperialism.  
He relied on his own reactionary armed forces and on his own henchmen, lackeys, traitors, and secret agents.  
Finally, he relied on the disintegration and weakness of the revolutionary parties of the time, on the wandering and ambiguity of the political agendas, on their internal contradictions, on their disengagement from the people.<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> Hu Yihe 胡一禾, “章伯钧的错误思想由来已久 [Zhang Bojun’s erroneous ideas have been around for a long time]” *人民日报 Renmin Ribaao*, 16 June 1957.

<http://ccrd.usc.cuhk.edu.hk.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/Fulltext.aspx>, accessed on 7 April 2022.

<sup>642</sup> Jian Bozan 翦伯赞, “我贡献青年学习的几点意见 [My contribution to the development of youth learning],” *青年学习(重庆) Qingnian Xuexi (Chongqing)* 1, no. 1/2 (1946): 9-10.

<sup>643</sup> The weekly journal is a public publication directly led by the Shanghai Vocational Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. The National index to Chinese newspapers & periodicals, “Literature Navigation,” <https://www-cnbsky.com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/literature/literature/8fc3bf30856933890360975d8b843396>, access on 22 March 2022.

<sup>644</sup> Yang Yibo 杨一波, “书报介绍: ‘窃国大盗袁世凯 [Book Introduction: *Yuan Shikai, the Thief of the Nation*.],”” *人人周刊 Renren Zhoukan* 3, no.1 (1946): 22.

“他依靠舊中國的一切黑暗勢力。他依靠帝國主義。他依靠自己反動的武裝與死黨，走狗，叛徒，與特務。最後，他依靠當時中國革命政黨渙散，軟弱，政綱的游離，模糊，內部的矛盾，脫離人民。”

The weekly magazine *Fengxia* (風下), based in Singapore, offered a piece with a similar conclusion and spoke highly of the biographer's achievement in presenting the stories of Yuan as a "robber" whose character was "vile and repulsive (卑鄙齷齪的大盜 *beibi wocuo de dadao*)" and who was doomed to failure.<sup>645</sup> Regarding the main gain from reading the book, the reviewer Qiuying (秋英) concluded: "After reading this book, no one with foresight would want to become Yuan Shikai."<sup>646</sup> It is worth noting that all the analysed reviews took the same approach by not directly referencing whom should be deemed as the new "Yuan Shikai" or naming the contemporary villain (Chiang Kai-shek), although they all pointed out that Chen's book was not just about the past but addressing the present. This contemporary villain, on the other hand, was brought up in other popular print and compared with Yuan Shikai or the warlords.<sup>647</sup> One poem published in 1947 was entitled "賣國賽過袁世凱 *Mai Guo Sai guo Yuan Shikai* [The One who is Selling the Country and Worse than Yuan Shikai]" and includes the line "Chiang Kai-shek is selling his country, and the US buys it; he is selling the country and worse than Yuan Shikai."<sup>648</sup> Another one titled "蔣介石與袁世凱比賽 *Jiang Jieshi yu Yuan Shikai Bisai* [Competition between Chiang Kai-shek and Yuan Shikai]", also produced in 1947, concludes with "袁世凱蓋棺論定是罵名千古, 蔣介石蓋棺論定是遺臭萬年 [The final verdict on the coffin

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<sup>645</sup> 秋英 Qiuying, "一周一书:窃国大盜袁世凱 [Book of the Week: Yuan Shikai, the Thief of the Nation]," *風下 Fengxia* no.48, 1946, 143.

<sup>646</sup> "讀了這本書後, 有遠見的人, 誰也不願意做袁世凱。" 秋英 Qiuying, "一周一书:窃国大盜袁世凱 [Book of the Week: Yuan Shikai, the Thief of the Nation]," 143.

<sup>647</sup> The Guomindang and Chiang Kai-shek's Nanjing regime was accused of being the "新軍閥 [New Warlord]", "國民黨軍閥 [Guomindang Warlord]", or "南京軍閥 [Nanjing Warlord]" in the 1940s. The accusations of the "New Warlord" will be further analysed in the later section of this chapter.

<sup>648</sup> "賣國賽過袁世凱 *Mai Guo Sai guo Yuan Shikai* [The One who is Selling the Country and Worse than Yuan Shikai]," *江海雜誌 Jianghai Magazine* no.1 (1947): 12. "蔣介石賣國美國買, 他賣國勝過袁世凱"

of Yuan Shikai is a thousand years of infamy, and The final verdict on the coffin of Chiang Kai-shek is to remain in disgrace for 10,000 years].”<sup>649</sup> Such direct comparison fuelled the constant representation and introduction of Yuan Shikai in the late 1940s and early 1950s in the communist regime, while the actual enemy at that time was Chiang Kai-shek and Guomindang. The interchangeable use of the present as a reference for the past and the past as a reference for the present is hereby evident; such a way to interpret the past and present has been visible in both history in the public sphere and the individuals’ interpretation of the past, as shown elsewhere in the thesis.

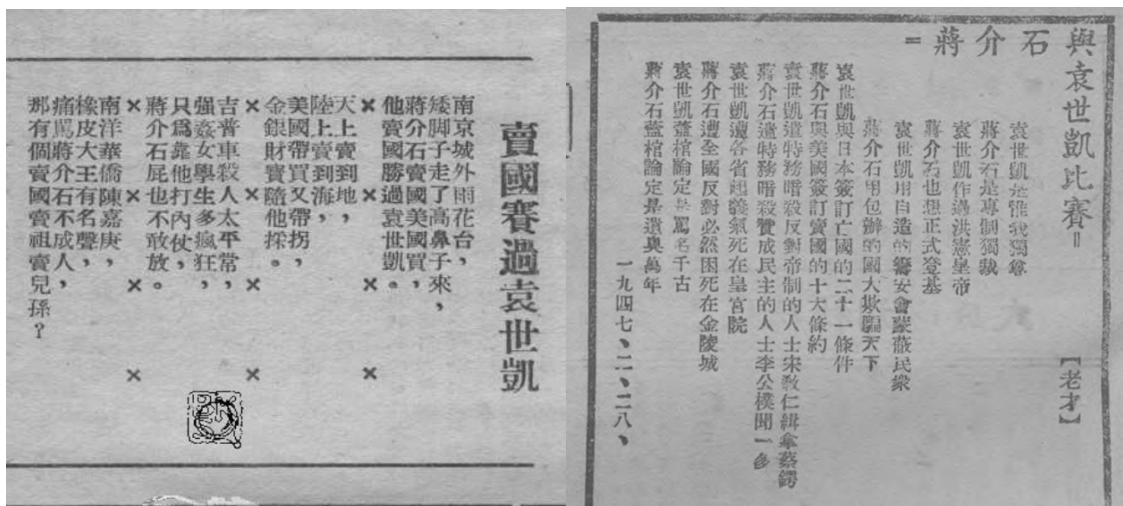


Figure 36: “賣國賽過袁世凱 *Mai Guo Sai guo Yuan Shikai* [The One who is Selling the Country and Worse than Yuan Shikai]”<sup>650</sup>

Figure 37: “蔣介石與袁世凱比賽 *Jiang Jieshi yu Yuan Shikai Bisai* [Competition between Chiang Kai-shek and Yuan Shikai]”<sup>651</sup>

While the Communist Party conveniently attached the notoriety of Yuan Shikai to the GMD leader Chiang Kai-shek, the GMD regime refuted Chen Boda’s writing,

<sup>649</sup> Lao Cai 老才, “蔣介石與袁世凱比賽 *Jiang Jieshi yu Yuan Shikai Bisai* [Competition between Chiang Kai-shek and Yuan Shikai],” *大威週刊 Dawei Weekly* 2, no.16 (1947): 21.

<sup>650</sup> “賣國賽過袁世凱 *Mai Guo Sai guo Yuan Shikai* [The One who is Selling the Country and Worse than Yuan Shikai],” 12.

<sup>651</sup> Lao Cai 老才, “蔣介石與袁世凱比賽 *Jiang Jieshi yu Yuan Shikai Bisai* [Competition between Chiang Kai-shek and Yuan Shikai],” 21.

attacking Chiang by innuendo, with a ban of the book, yet also portrayed Yuan Shikai as the villain from a different angle. There was no direct comment on the biography from GMD members or supporters in the late 1940s, but the official response was evident by an order announced by the Sichuan provincial government of the ROC; the order was to suppress the book in all provinces because it contained “defamation of the government (詆毀政府情事 *di hui zhengfu shi*)” and violated Article 21 of the Publication Law.<sup>652</sup>

The content of Article 21 was added to the Press Law in 1930 and updated in 1935, and it reads as below:

Publications must not contain statements or advocacy of any of the following.

1. Anyone who intends to undermine the Guomindang or violate the principles of the Three Principles.
2. Anyone who intends to subvert the Nationalist government or harm the interests of the Republic of China.
3. Anyone who intends to disrupt public order.<sup>653</sup>

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<sup>652</sup> Deng Xihou 鄧錫侯, “命令：训令：通案：秘编字第〇一三九四号（三六，四）：令各专署市府局：令仰取缔“愿望”“窃国大盗袁世凯”等由书 [Order: Instruction: General Case: Secret Series No. 01394 (36, 4): Orders to the special agencies and municipalities: Orders to suppress books including “Wishes” and “Yuan Shikai, the Thief of the Nation” and so on.],” *四川省政府公报* [*Sichuan Provincial Government Gazette*] no. 457 (1947): 44.

<sup>653</sup> 出版法 *Publication Law* (民國 25 年立法 26 年公布) [Legislated in 1936 Published in 1937] 第四章 出版品登載事項之限制 Chapter 4 Restrictions on Publication 第二十一條 Article 21: 出版品不得為左列各款言論或宣傳之記載。

- 一、意圖破壞中國國民黨或違反三民主義者。
- 二、意圖顛覆國民政府或損害中華民國利益者。
- 三、意圖破壞公共秩序者

The Article was seen as an obstruction of freedom of expression in the late Republic. The revised Publication Law was published by the GMD official weekly magazine *中山週報* *Zhongshan Zhoubao* in 1936, and critics and debates of the new Law emerged around the same time.

For example, see: Shimu 士木, “修正出版法之检讨 [Review of the Revised Publication Law],” *工读半月刊* *Gongdu Banyuekan* 1, no.1 (1936): 3-5; Tong Han 童罕, “时事评论: ‘修正出版法’的真面目 [Commentary on Current Events: The True Face of the ‘Revised Publication Law’],” *上海文化界救国会会刊* *Shanghai Wenhuajie Jiuguoehui Huikan*, First issue (1936): 1; Jia 嘉, “一周简评: 再修正之出版法 [A Brief Review of the Week: The Revised Publication Law],” *上海党声* *Shanghai Party Voice* 2, no.22 (1936): 3.

Presumably, the GMD believed that Chen's book, in its condemnation of a key figure in the early Republic, harmed the interests of the Republic. Evidently, Chen Boda's work, which was later widely accepted as the standard narrative about Yuan Shikai until recent revisions of history in the post-Mao era,<sup>654</sup> met a mixed response in 1946 and 1947. Communists broadly, though not exclusively, welcomed it, while it was seen by the GMD as a harmful narrative to the republic which should be suppressed.

Notwithstanding the diversity of opinions towards Yuan by Republican intellectuals, the Party history of both the CCP and the GMD spoke of Yuan with negative views. While the biography authored by Chen Boda accuses Yuan Shikai of stealing the country from the people, the veteran GMD party member Zou Lu (邹鲁 1886-1954) published the Party history of the GMD (*中國國民黨史略 A Brief History of the Chinese Nationalist Party*) dedicating a section to the act of Yuan Shikai in the aftermath of the Xinhai Revolution, which Zou describes as “*dao xing ni shi* (倒行逆施 to go against the tide, to try to turn back history).”<sup>655</sup> Zou states in the foreword to the first edition of 1945 that this history book is for “general readers not specialising in party history,” and that it was hastily compiled and only included materials from his earlier book of the same title published in 1929,<sup>656</sup> and the official government reports available at the time.<sup>657</sup> He further points out it is certainly in question that whether the materials used to write this book were appropriate and adequacy enough,<sup>658</sup> thus, disclosing his intention of letting

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<sup>654</sup> Paul A. Cohen, “The Post-Mao Reforms in Historical Perspective.” *Journal of Asian Studies* 47, no. 3 (1988): 518-540.

<sup>655</sup> Zou Lu 邹鲁, *中國國民黨史略 A Brief History of the Guomindang* (Shanghai: 商務印書館 The Commercial Press, 1947) (first printed in 1945), 63.

<sup>656</sup> Zou Lu 邹鲁, *中國國民黨史稿 A Preliminary History of the Guomindang* (Shanghai: 民智書局 Minzhi Bookstore, 1929).

<sup>657</sup> Zou 邹, *中國國民黨史略 A Brief History of the Guomindang (1947)*, 1.

<sup>658</sup> Zou 邹, *中國國民黨史略 A Brief History of the Guomindang(1947)*, 1.

readers review the content critically. Historian Jiang Tingfu (蔣廷黻 1895-1965), when reviewing Zou's 1929 book on the history of GMD, has commented that, although the author has a clear perspective as a senior GMD member, he indicated the preliminary nature of the work and "performed the work most scrupulously."<sup>659</sup>

The superficial difference between the definition of Yuan's character in Chen's and Zou's book is that in Chen's narrative, Yuan was evil both by nature and due to the unique social environment in the late Qing and early Republic;<sup>660</sup> according to the history Zou wrote, which focuses more on the reaction of the Guomindang members in light of the social situation, Yuan Shikai was eager for power and was driven by his ambition (野心 *yexin*) and desire (慾望 *yuwang*).<sup>661</sup> In Zou's writing, it was only in 1915 when Yuan planned his enthronement to be performed that "Yuan's conspiracy to steal the country for several years was fully exposed."<sup>662</sup> Notwithstanding, this narrative difference does not represent the primary contrast between CCP and GMD's narratives of Yuan Shikai.<sup>663</sup> The GMD's account, arguably targeting the elites, as evident by the formal style of writing and the broader historical narrative covered in the books. Nevertheless, "the Thief of the Nation" in the communist historical account, although still referring to the act of Yuan of which he "stole the fruit of the [Xinhai] Revolution" from the Tongmenghui members and the other Republicans, was later used to make insinuations that Chiang, as a

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<sup>659</sup> Jiang Tingfu 蔣廷黻, "BOOK REVIEWS: 1. Tsou Lu: *A Preliminary History of the Kuomintang...*" *The Chinese Social and Political Review* 15, no.1 (1931): 102-108.

<sup>660</sup> Chen 陳, 竊國大盜袁世凱 [*Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation*]. 1.

<sup>661</sup> Zou 邹,, 中國國民黨史略 *A Brief History of the Guomindang* (1947), 66, 74.

<sup>662</sup> Zou 邹,, 中國國民黨史略 *A Brief History of the Guomindang* (1947), 78. "袁氏數年來的竊國陰謀, 至此完全暴露無遺."

<sup>663</sup> For another GMD-centred history book published around the same time, see: Zheng Hesheng 郑鹤声, *中华民国建国史 A History of the Founding of the Republic of China* (Shanghai: 正中书局 Zhengzhong Shuji, 1946).

vicious military commander in the Communist narrative, was the same or even worse than Yuan Shikai, for Chiang was attempting to sabotage the Communist Revolution during the Chinese Civil War. Yuan's villainous image thus embodies a more contemporary accusation in the conflict between the GMD-led government and the CCP.

- *Chinese Warlords in Creation: images of Yuan Shikai and his successors  
Tuchuns (督軍 Dujun) and Warlords (軍閥 Junfa) in Chinese and  
English*

Warlordism entrenched the military at the centre of Chinese life, it introduced hundreds upon thousands of young men to the military life as officers and as soldiers. By its own actions, and by the adjunct actions of banditry, it institutionalised violence. It reduced politics and political solutions to impotence and ridicule; it substituted fear and force for due process. It undermined China's economy, threw her fiscal system into disarray, and retarded efforts at economic advancement, except in areas under foreign control.<sup>664</sup>

Diana Lary's 1981 writing on Warlord studies provides a passionate and critical introduction to Chinese Warlords, and Yuan Shikai, for his "discreditable role of the father of warlordism" in Lary's account.<sup>665</sup> Lary also criticises scholarship that attempted to partially restore Yuan and the warlords' reputation in history,<sup>666</sup> calling such interpretation "disingenuous" and "closer to whitewash than to revisionism."<sup>667</sup> Lary's criticism in her review of the literature studying Chinese warlords offers a representation of European and North American scholarship's opinion on Yuan and the warlords in the 1980s.<sup>668</sup> However, the scholarly assessment of these historical villains is not always analogous to that of public history, and Western interpretations are often contradicting the

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<sup>664</sup> Diana Lary, "Warlord Studies," *Modern China* 6, no. 4 (1980): 440.

<sup>665</sup> Lary, "Warlord Studies." 449.

<sup>666</sup> Such as: Ernest P. Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai: Liberalism and Dictatorship in Early Republican China* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 1977).

<sup>667</sup> Lary, "Warlord Studies." 449.

<sup>668</sup> For another literature review on Warlord Studies and in response to Lary's article, see: J. A. G. Roberts, "Warlordism in China." *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 45/46 (1989): 26–33.

Chinese views. Nevertheless, when one is looking at the creation of Chinese warlords, the western opinions evidently played a role in it, as shown in the analysis below. Therefore, by tracing the origin of the terminology and portrayal of military leaders or warlords (including Yuan Shikai) in early Republican China, one can find the ground of the narrative that comes after.

From 1916 to the late 1920s, the provincial military commanders in China, who exercised significant power under the presidency of Yuan Shikai and his subsequent leadership in the Republic of China, were still referred to as Tuchuns (督軍 *Dujun*).<sup>669</sup> This term was used in thousands of *Government Gazettes* (政府公報 1912-1928),<sup>670</sup> and appeared more frequently than “warlord” in foreign publications from Shanghai reporting on the Chinese political situation.<sup>671</sup> Arthur Waldron’s 1911 analysis of the term *Junfa* (军阀 warlord) posits that it was a borrowed term from Europe that became prevalent in political discussions from the 1920s onwards.<sup>672</sup> He studied how western debates on

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<sup>669</sup> “督軍 *Dujun*: Provincial military governor during the early Republic of China era (1911-1949),” <https://www.moedict.tw/%E7%9D%A3%E8%BB%8D>, accessed on 14 April 2022.

<sup>670</sup> *The Nanking Government Gazette* (南京政府公報 1927), as the official publication representing the political opponent of the Beiyang government and provincial warlords, used the term “warlord (军阀)” more frequently.

<sup>671</sup> For example, see: “The Constitution Objected to by the Tuchuns 督军反对的宪法,” *The Far Eastern Review* 13, no.14 (1917): 546-549; Peter S. Jowe, “Special Articles: The Tuchuns Must Go,” *Millard’s Review* 17, no.9 (1921): 432-433; Upton Close, “Special Articles: And After the Tuchuns, the People,” *Millard’s Review* 19, no.12 (1922): 497-498; John Gilbert Reid, “About Tuchuns,” *国际公报 International Bulletin* 7 (1923): 8-9; Gu Runqing 顾润卿, “Current Events: Tuchuns Draft Defense Plans for Foreigners,” *英文杂志 English Magazine* 10, no.1 (1924): 76.

In 1938, *Millard’s Review* published an editorial piece adopting the term “Warlord Era”: “Editorial Paragraphs: ‘Warlord Era’ Returns to Chinese Railways – Generals Brab Cash,” *Millard’s Review* 86, no.9 (1938): 276-277.

<sup>672</sup> Arthur Waldron, “The Warlord: Twentieth-Century Chinese Understandings of Violence, Militarism, and Imperialism,” *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (1991): 1073–1100.



militarism found their way into, assimilated within, and were eventually adapted by China. Waldron suggests that the transition from the use of *dujun* to *junfa*, symbolises “a fundamental transition in the Chinese understanding of violence.”<sup>673</sup> Waldron further examines the influences of German, American, Japanese, and Communist Russian perspectives on the Chinese conception and imagery of “warlords.”<sup>674</sup> Waldron also points out that Chinese anti-warlordism and anti-imperialism went hand in hand during the Republican era, though by the 1950s these were no longer “living terms.”<sup>675</sup>

Edward A. McCord’s 1996 article also states that the term “warlord” started to emerge during the politically struggling years after the May Fourth Movement (1919), although the issues raised by the military-dominated government and anti-warlordist advocates had appeared since 1911.<sup>676</sup> McCord’s study further discusses the dilemma of using military power to accumulate revolutionary capability and the condemnation of military intervention in national politics in the early Republic.<sup>677</sup> It is, however, still under-examined how, in the Chinese public discourse, strong military men came to be defined as the western-imported images of warlords.

In a 2010 piece re-examining the reputation of provincial warlords in 1919, Chen Zhongping questions the assumption that warlords were the antitheses of popular nationalism; in contrast, it was the provincial warlords’ support and “protests against the pro-Japanese policies of the Beijing government” that enabled the positive results of the May Fourth Movement in terms of the rejection of the Shangdong settlement.<sup>678</sup> Guo

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<sup>673</sup> Waldron, “The Warlord,” 1075.

<sup>674</sup> Waldron, “The Warlord,” 1088.

<sup>675</sup> Waldron, “The Warlord,” 1098.

<sup>676</sup> Edward A. McCord, “Warlords against Warlordism: The Politics of Anti-Militarism in Early Twentieth-Century China.” *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 4 (1996): 796.

<sup>677</sup> McCord, “Warlords against Warlordism,” 795-827.

<sup>678</sup> Chen Zhongping. “The May Fourth Movement and Provincial Warlords: A Reexamination,” *Modern China* 37, no. 2 (2011): 135-169.

Xiangwei's 2020 article examines in more details how Chen Jiongming, the military strongman, collaborated with the May Fourth intellectuals and participated in what Guo describes as "the Chinese enlightenment." It thus argues that Chen should be excluded from the category of "warlord" by identifying his political and intellectual thoughts beyond military goals and actions.<sup>679</sup>

However, as Chen Zhongping states, the term "warlord" was not universally derogatory in China, as evidenced by a provincial military leader who addressed his kind as "warlord comrades" (军阀同胞 *junfa tongbao*) in the telegram.<sup>680</sup> Chen's work ends with the brief comment that "the term 'warlord' became increasingly derogatory not only because of the social violence and political fragmentation caused by military leaders, but also because the public—especially leftists—viewed their activities as a betrayal of national interests."<sup>681</sup> In these accounts, it remains unanswered in what ways "the public (especially leftists)" viewed and portrayed warlords as traitors of the nation.

The vilification of certain individuals possessing significant military and political power and demonstrating a willingness to employ an almost dictatorial approach to governance, continued to evolve during the so-called post-warlord era following 1926. This vilification was also used to critique (General) Chiang Kai-shek's Nanking government by his adversaries. The discreditable historical image of Yuan and his successors persisted in popularity during the decades following the Sino-Japanese War and amidst the ongoing conflict between the CCP government and the Nationalist government under Chiang's leadership, which subsequently retreated to Taiwan. Before

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<sup>679</sup> Guo Vivienne Xiangwei, "Not Just a Man of Guns: Chen Jiongming, Warlord, and the May Fourth Intellectual (1919-1922)," *Journal of Chinese history* 4, no. 1 (2020): 161–185.

<sup>680</sup> Chen, "The May Fourth Movement and Provincial Warlords," 163. Chen quotes Edward A. McCord's 1996 research of the military leader's telegraph campaign in 1919 for this statement.

<sup>681</sup> Chen, "The May Fourth Movement and Provincial Warlords," 166.

delving into the afterlife of the warlord narrative in communist China, this section will scrutinise the emergence of this image. It aims to distinguish the original anti-militarism in early twentieth-century China, a topic analysed by Waldron and McCord, from its later evolution into anti-warlordism.

In 1920, *Zhengheng* 政衡 magazine, founded by Tan Pingshan 谭平山 (1886-1956), a socialist and an early member of the CCP, published a piece written by the magazine founder himself (using his former name Tan Mingqian 谭鸣谦) demonstrating opinions on Chinese warlords (*dujun*) and foreign warlords (*junfa*) from the perspective of a socialist intellectual in early-twentieth-century China. In Tan's 1920 analysis, the international warlords had already met their doom at that time (世界军阀的末日 *shijie junfa de mori*), which shall have altered the military men in China (促我国军人之自觉 *cu wo guo junren zhi zijue*).<sup>682</sup> Tan's article acts as a Chinese response to the loss of lives during the First World War ("大战争 The Great War"), the conflict that dispelled the widespread enthusiasm for the army that had existed in most western countries before 1914.<sup>683</sup> He draws four social reasons to explain the failure of European militarism and, at the end, questions the capacity of Chinese military people to claim themselves as warlords, for they lacked the ability to invade other nations.<sup>684</sup> Those military men, in Tan's view, were not professional or powerful enough to be warlords, yet were conducting themselves as wrongfully as the warlords and bullying innocent civilians in

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<sup>682</sup> Tan Mingqian 谭鸣谦, "世界军阀的末日: 军国主义为万恶之原, 军阀灭亡的四大原因, 促我国军人之自觉 [The doom of the international warlords: militarism as the original of all evils, the four causes of warlords' demise, and the impetus for our military men's self-awareness]," 政衡 *Zhengheng* 1, no.1 (1920): 1-9.

<sup>683</sup> Jakob Vogel, "Military, Folklore, Eigensinn: Folkloric Militarism in Germany and France, 1871–1914." *Central European history* 33, no. 4 (2000): 487.

<sup>684</sup> Tan 谭, "世界军阀的末日 [The doom of the international warlords]," 7-8.

their home country.<sup>685</sup> This piece finishes with a call to Chinese military people to put down their weapons and become Republican citizens who have love for peace and order:

... so that you can, for the time –being, bully the now powerless government and the miserable civilian population. However, in this global trend, there is no permanent survival through the animal nature, barbarism, and animal power of human beings. The German warlords, who were the most powerful in the world, ended up in the situation they are in today; how can our military people not examine the advantages and disadvantages and be willing to make the same mistakes?

就讓你一時可以欺凌現在毫無實力的政府和慘苦無告的平民。但在這個世界潮流中，斷然沒有全憑人類的獸性、野蠻性、和動物力等可以永久生存的。一世之雄的德國軍閥尚有今日的結果，我國的軍人豈可不審利害，甘心蹈他覆轍？<sup>686</sup>

Tan's account was speaking to the warlords who inherited the fragmented political power after Yuan Shikai died, and the military men under them. In the 1920s, Yuan or his followers had not become the absolute symbol of “the Thief of the Nation” nor “the minions for stealing state power,”<sup>687</sup> a narrative brewing but not yet formed. Tan's account also reinforces that the early depiction of warlords in China was associated with the armies in the Western world (as the “international warlords” in the article's title)<sup>688</sup> instead of the Chinese situation or Yuan Shikai himself.

Tan (using the name Mingqian 鳴謙) also published a different piece in the weekly journal of the Peking University Student Union in 1920. In the students' journal, Tan acknowledges and condemns the Chinese military men as warlords. He writes in more detail about the acts of Chinese warlords that were unethical and would bring the nation down if there were no intervention. Nonetheless, Tan's call to Chinese soldiers, the

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<sup>685</sup> Tan 譚, “世界军阀的末日 [The doom of the international warlords],” 8.

<sup>686</sup> Tan 譚, “世界军阀的末日 [The doom of the international warlords],” 8-9.

<sup>687</sup> Chen 陳, 介紹竊國大盜袁世凱 [Introducing Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation], 4.

<sup>688</sup> Arthur Waldron's study implies the same conclusion, in which he introduces Chen Duxiu as who first used the term *junfa* in modern Chinese, “as part of a fascinating and revealing essay written in connection with the defeat of Germany in the European war.” Waldron, “The Warlord,” 1085.

majority of whom he deems as “unemployed vagrants, hoodlums, bandits, armed rebels, and robbers,”<sup>689</sup> is different from the plea for “Abolition of Tuchuns and Disbandment of Troops” (廢督裁軍 *Fei du cai jun*) which was popular in the early 1920s. The latter was raised and promoted by the military leaders in various provinces as well as by President Li Yuanhong, as a response to the national conflicts and the growing discontent among the public.<sup>690</sup> Although Li Yuanhong expressed his dissatisfaction with the progress of the abolition of provincial *dujuns* in 1923 and (according to a translated piece in *Chinese English Weekly*) said that if such actions were not put in force, “the last days of the nation will arrive,”<sup>691</sup> many still regarded the plea as no more than idle theorising.<sup>692</sup> Others advocating for the gentle approach to the disbandment of troops, as shown in the discussion published in *The Endeavor* 努力週報 (founded by Hu Shih 胡適 after he left the editorial board of *New Youth*),<sup>693</sup> suggested the abolishment of unfit and greedy military officers such as Zhang Jinyao 張敬堯 and Chen Guangyuan 陳光遠 and

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<sup>689</sup> Mingqian 鸣谦, “军阀亡国论 [The Theory of Destruction of the Nation by Warlords],” *北京大学学生周刊* [*Peking University Student Weekly*] no.6 (1920): 1-3. “我國的軍人，多是一般無業遊民，和一般地痞，棍徒，七匪，綠林，鬍匪，馬賊湊合的。”

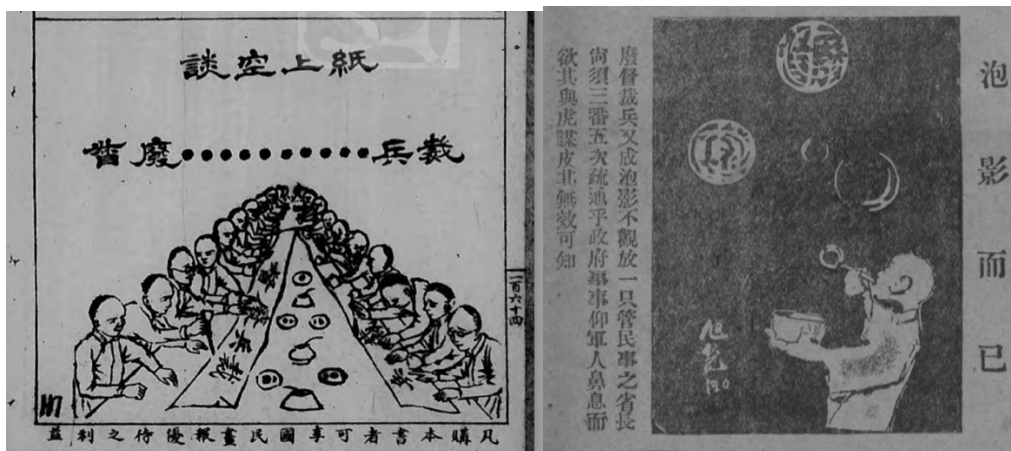
<sup>690</sup> “公电二：黎大总统希望实行废督裁兵计划电（一月五日） [Public telegram II: President Li’s plea to implement the plan to abolish the *dujuns* and disband the troops (5 January)],” *参议院公报* *Senate Bulletin* 3, no.4 (1923): 176-179.

<sup>691</sup> Liang Yunli 梁鋈立, “总统吁请废督裁兵(中英文对照) [President’s Plea for Abolition of Tuchuns and Disbandment of Troops (in Chinese and English)]” *中华英文周报* *Chinese English Weekly* 8, no. 192 (1923): 220.

<sup>692</sup> For another example of public comment like this in 1925, see: Guangyi 光一, “时事短评:政府毕竟没有废督裁兵的决心 [A short review of current affairs: the government is not determined to abolish the *dujuns* and disband the troops after all],” *现代评论* *Modern Review* 1, no. 10 (1925): 2-3.

<sup>693</sup> Founded in Beijing on 7 May 1922 and last published on 31 October 1923. “努力周报,” [https://www-cnbsky-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/literature/literature/e90291b204235afbaa630fd7195a7247](https://www-cnbsky.com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/literature/literature/e90291b204235afbaa630fd7195a7247), accessed on 29 April 2022.

appointment of capable men such as Wu Peifu 吳佩孚 and Chen Jiongming 陳炯明 while limiting their powers and preferably sending their armies to borderlands.<sup>694</sup>



Figures 38 and 39: 紙上空談 [Idle Theorising]<sup>695</sup> 泡影而已 [Just Illusions In Bubbles]<sup>696</sup>

In 1922, *The Weekly Review* (originally named Millard’s Review 密勒氏評論報), an English-language weekly based in Shanghai, published a special article featuring the military governors and the people under their rules. The author Upton Close (Josef Washington Hall)<sup>697</sup> acknowledges yet disagrees with a thought shared by other foreign communities in China, which said that “China is hopeless.”<sup>698</sup> Close lists some of the political issues that he believed Chinese society faced, namely “the repeated overturns of the comedy government in Peking, the petty wars of rival *Tuchuns* in the provinces, the

<sup>694</sup> Shuheng 叔衡, “废督裁兵的办法 [The method of *fei du cai bing*],” *努力周报 The Endeavor* vol. 13 (1922): 1-2. [The author Shuheng might be He Shuheng, one of the founders of CCP from Hunan.]

<sup>695</sup> “插画:纸上空谈, 裁兵废督 [Illustrations: Paper talk and *cai bing fei du*],” *国民快览 Guomin kuailan* no. 12 (1923): 193.

<sup>696</sup> Xuguang 旭光, “泡影而已 [just illusions in bubbles],” *时报图画周刊 Shibao Pictorial Weekly* 27 (1920): 4.

<sup>697</sup> J. W. Hall also co-authored a book on Chinese history published in 1926: Herbert H. Gowen (Herbert Henry), and Josef Washington Hall. *An Outline History of China: with a Thorough Account of the Republican Era Interpreted in Its Historical Perspective*. New York: D. Appleton and company, 1926.

<sup>698</sup> Upton Close, “Special Articles: And After the *Tuchuns*, the People,” *Millard’s Review* vol.19 no.12 (1922): 497-498.

absence of central authority, the excessive imposition of authorised taxes forcible, collection of illegal taxes, banditry and looting.”<sup>699</sup> However, as a foreign observer committed to China, he pinpoints the public opinion in China, in particular, the “passive resistance” people had held, as a way that, in his prediction, would slowly resolve the matters and ensure the preservation of the nation:

They (the people) instinctively know that if they resisted long enough, they would get Shantung [Shandong] back. They knew that if they resisted long enough, they would overthrow Yuan Shih-kai’s monarchical scheme. By patient resistance, so patient that it is maddening to the Occidental, or even the Japanese or Indian, they frustrated Chang Hsun [张勋], retired Tuan Chi-jui [段祺瑞] and encompassed the downfall of Chang Ching-yao [张敬尧], Wang Chan-yuan [王缙绪], Chang Kwang-chen [张光臣] and other blood-sucking provincial tyrants. Their passive resistance gives succour to the inevitable rival who outs the tyrant from his throne.<sup>700</sup>

The article concludes that none of the *Tuchuns*’ regional rulings would persist if they did not consolidate the popular will among the people. And, idealistically, states: “But we may be certain that through the misrule of the Tuchuns, gradually, not necessarily in the forms and conventions in which representative government has moulded itself in the West, will come the rule of the people.”<sup>701</sup>

The journal pieces show an enormous dissatisfaction with the political situation following the death of Yuan Shikai, during which the central authority was missing and powerful men were in command of personal or provisional armies. The dissatisfaction contained a strong nationalist sentiment, and these political figures were the main target of condemnation even before the Chinese term warlord represented only negative meanings. Nonetheless, other evidence shows that warlordism was never adequately

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<sup>699</sup> Close, “Special Articles,” 497.

<sup>700</sup> Close, “Special Articles,” 498.

<sup>701</sup> Close, “Special Articles,” 498.

addressed and resolved by the GMD government,<sup>702</sup> leaving a negative political term haunting the later years of the Republic.

Diana Lary's study briefly mentions the association between Chiang Kai-shek and "warlordism," and addresses:

The question of whether Jiang Jieshi himself was a warlord is sometimes raised, usually to vilify that gentleman yet further. Though he remained true to many of the basic concepts of military rule, he nevertheless presided over a government and a Party which had pretensions – and some real claim – to establishing itself as a new national government, interested in the future of China rather than simply in the future of its own members. To call Jiang simply a warlord is not fair.<sup>703</sup>

Notwithstanding whether the assessment made by Lary was objective or not, Chiang and his Party were extensively accused of being the New Warlord in the communist popular print during the republican era. Having already established that Chiang was also described in comparison to Yuan Shikai in the 1940s, the following sections will investigate whether Yuan, the warlords, and Chiang were all condemned interchangeably in the communist depiction from the 1920s to the present.

### ***The Communist depiction of warlords in Gongren Zhi Lu (工人之路 1925-1926)***

A comparable yet fundamentally different commentary on Chinese warlords to Tan Pingshan or Josef Washington Hall's opinions in the 1920s was the article Cai Hesen 蔡和森 (1895-1931) wrote and published in *Xiangdao* 嚮導 (the official publication of the Central Committee of the CCP) in September 1922.<sup>704</sup> In this propaganda piece, Cai states explicitly that warlords needed to be eradicated through revolution and cooperation

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<sup>702</sup> Lary, "Warlord Studies." 442-444.

<sup>703</sup> Lary, "Warlord Studies." 444.

<sup>704</sup> Hesen 和森, "軍閥專政與軍閥割據 [Unification by Force and Autonomy in the United Provinces: Warlord Dictatorship and Warlord Settlement]," 嚮導 *Xiangdao* vol.2 (1922): 4-7.



with the revolutionary mass.<sup>705</sup> The Chinese term for “Down with the Warlords” (打倒军阀 *Dadao Junfa*) was a slogan used by different parties after 1919 but claimed more strongly by communist historians. Some recent works of historians in the PRC examine the similarity between the condemned “warlords” and Sun Yat-sen or Chiang Kai-shek’s armies in the south.<sup>706</sup> In contrast, others argue that the Communists were the first to raise this slogan and came up with agenda, which became the guidance for the Northern Expedition (or “the National Revolution and Northern Expedition co-led by the Nationalist and Communist Parties.”)<sup>707</sup>

A search for the keyword “*junfa* (军阀)” in the Chinese Periodical Full-text Database (1911-1949), published by Shanghai Library, yielded the largest number of results in five journals: 工人之路 *Gongren Zhi Lu* (529 results), 新天津副刊 *Xin Tianjin Fukan* (134 results), 红色中华 *Hongse Zhonghua* (128 results), 向导 *Xiangdao* (68 results), and 兴华 *Xinghua* (59 results).<sup>708</sup> Remarkably, between 1925 and 1926, the Communist Party newspaper *Gongren zhi lu* 工人之路 (*The Workers’ Path*) had 529 results on warlord(s), which exceed the totals from any other journal between 1911 and

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<sup>705</sup> Hesen 和森, “軍閥專政與軍閥割據 [Unification by Force and Autonomy in the United Provinces],” 4-7.

<sup>706</sup> Wang Jianwei 王建伟, “1920年代‘打倒军阀’口号的历史遭际 [The history of the ‘Down with the Warlords’ slogan in the 1920s],” *Jiangsu Social Sciences*. 2012(03):222-229.

<sup>707</sup> “国共合作领导的国民革命运动和北伐战争”; See: Weng Youwei 翁有为, “二十世纪二十年代初中共与其他政治力量关于军阀问题‘解决’方略之考察 [Strategies of the CCP and Other Political Forces to “Solve” the Warlord Problem in the Early 1920s],” *中共党史研究 Research on the History of the Chinese Communist Party* 2012/05, (2012):24-29, 30.

<sup>708</sup> Chinese Periodical Full-text Database (1911-1949), “*junfa* (军阀),” <https://www-cnbsky-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/search?author=&searchContent=%E7%9D%A3%E5%86%9B%E9%97%AE%E9%A2%98&categories=10%2C1%2C2%2C3%2C4%2C6&types=1%2C2%2C3>, accessed on 9 May 2022.

1949,<sup>709</sup> showing statistically that the Communist Party was the leading force in propagating the negative images of Chinese warlords in the Republican era. It should be noted that the data is derived from available digital sources as the Shanghai Library database does not encompass all issues from these two years.

The newspaper *Gongren Zhi Lu* (*The Worker's Path*) was the primary reading material for workers involved in the Canton–Hong Kong strike, lasting from June 1925 to October 1926. As one of the earliest communist publications promoting Marxism in China, the newspaper was influential. Chief editor Deng Zhongxia (邓中夏 1894-1933),<sup>710</sup> who led several workers' strikes as the Party representative from 1922 to 1926 in major cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, has been recognised by scholars of CCP history as a pioneer left-wing revolutionary writer in the ROC.<sup>711</sup> The daily newspapers diverse sections including domestic and international affairs, political reviews, entertainment columns for workers, among others. According to a 1962 article published in *Xinwen Zhanxian* (*新闻战线 The Press 1956-2021*), *The Workers' Path* was the “spiritual food for the more than 200,000 striking workers (including their families) participating in the Canton–Hong Kong strike. The number of copies has increased from 3,000 per day at the beginning of the issue to 10,000, with almost one copy for every four

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<sup>709</sup> Possibly due to the search setting and presentation of the digital collections of the database, there are some repetitions in the search result.

<sup>710</sup> Deng also authored: Deng Zhongxia 邓中夏. *中國職工運動簡史 [A Brief History of the Chinese Worker Movement] 1919-1926* (Beijing: 人民出版社 People's Press, 1949).

<sup>711</sup> For example, see: Wang Yongxi 王永玺, “中国工人运动的伟大先驱与杰出领袖——邓中夏(上) [The Great Pioneer and Outstanding leaders of Chinese Workers' Movement—Deng Zhongxia(Part One)],” *北京市工会干部学院学报 Journal of Beijing Federation of Trade Unions Cadre College* 32, no. 1 (2017): 33-36. Deng was also known as a communist educator, see: Liu Gongcheng 刘功成, “邓中夏 – 中国最早的杰出的无产阶级教育家 [Deng Zhongxia—The Earliest and The Most Prominent Proletarian Educator in China],” *大连大学学报 Journal of Dalian University* 40, no.1 (2019): 9-23.

or five striking workers.”<sup>712</sup> A noteworthy inference from these figures is that the vast coverage of warlords in *The Workers' Path*, including numerous negative portrayals, would have significantly shaped the workers' perceptions of these figures. This is especially relevant given the newspaper's widespread readership among the striking workers. Thus, the newspapers served not just as a means of promoting Marxism but also as an influential medium disseminating the negative depiction of warlords during the Republican era.

Although aimed at a specific readership, one can find the thoughts and ideas presented in this newspaper across other communist publications at the time, which were popular to an extent beyond the working-class population during the years of the first Guomintang-Communist Cooperation. There are multiple interpretations of the starting point of this cooperation; some said it started in the autumn of 1922, inaugurated by Sun Yat-sen,<sup>713</sup> or by the Communist leaders;<sup>714</sup> other scholars point to 1923 or 1924.<sup>715</sup> This round of what the CCP calls the “United Front” (统一战线 *Tongyi Zhanxian*) ended in 1927 with the 12 April Purge in Shanghai. However, even during the years when the two major revolutionary parties intertwined and developed under Sun Yat-sen's leadership in Guangzhou, the propaganda and narrative about the provincial military governments produced by the CCP were distinguishable.

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<sup>712</sup> Huang Liusha 黄流沙 and Su Qian 苏乾, “大革命时期的《工人之路》日报 [The Daily *Worker's Path* during the Great Revolution],” *新闻战线 The Press* 1962/05 (1962): 45.

<sup>713</sup> Wu Tien-wei, “A Review of the Wuhan Debacle: The Kuomintang-Communist Split of 1927,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 29, no. 1 (1969): 125.

<sup>714</sup> Gu Xiaoshui 谷小水, “再论第一次国共合作的起源 [Re-discussing the Origin of the First Kuomintang-Communist Cooperation],” *中山大学学报 (社会科学版) Journal of Sun Yat-sen University (Social Science Edition)* 61, no. 4 (2021): 39-48.

<sup>715</sup> For example, see: Laura De Giorgi, “United Front,” In *Afterlives of Chinese Communism*, 303–309, (Canberra: ANU Press, 2019).

The materials from *The Workers' Path* and other propaganda materials from the same era provided researchers with a profoundly different perspective from the historical writings that focus more on Chinese intellectuals' pursuit of modernising the nation with cultural and political ideas from the Western countries, including Britain, America, and Japan. In contrast with the modernisation narrative, which also emerged after 1919 and developed through the New Culture Movement,<sup>716</sup> these countries were considered the leading foreign imperialists and the nation's greatest enemies by some left-wing revolutionaries at the time.

First and foremost, articles in *The Workers' Path* vehemently accused Chinese warlords of being reactionaries using different literary and graphic forms. The newspaper's language to depict warlords in 1925 and 1926 is almost identical to what was written about Yuan Shikai in the CCP-oriented historical accounts, showcasing a strong connection between the narrative of Yuan Shikai and the warlords. While the communist movement was absent when Yuan was the President, the movement flourished at the time when military leaders, who followed Yuan's path of depending on the armies being commanded directly to gain control of areas of China, were seen as the biggest enemy of the nationalist demands. Therefore, commentaries on contemporary politics and society, particularly the warlords' governing style, were constructed and promoted earlier than the CCP's narrative of the late Qing and early Republican history. The events and characters of the past emerge linearly, whereas the description of historical topics sometimes appears in retrospect, interspersed with flashbacks.

In particular, the Strike Committee published a commentary entitled "Informing the people (告民众 *Gao minzhong*)" on 20 February 1926. The commentary demonstrated

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<sup>716</sup> For relevant studies, see: Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World. The Making of the Modern World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

that both foreign imperialists and domestic warlords were the enemies of China, in which imperialist powers were the biggest enemy and the warlords were their “minion” (走狗 *zougou*) and “tools to suppress the people” (壓制人民的工具 *yazhi renmin de gongju*).<sup>717</sup> Other issues published pieces contributed by the workers, in which they called out the warlords as “demons” (惡魔 *e mo*) and “traitors of the nation” (國賊/賣國賊 *guo zie/maiguo zie*).<sup>718</sup> Meanwhile, the newspaper asserted that the warlords were doomed to failure. A worker with the pen name Jin 金 commented on the assassination of Hong Zhaolin (洪兆麟 1876-1925)<sup>719</sup> and wrote: “One less warlord for China; one less oppressor for us! Again, this is the end of the warlords!”<sup>720</sup> Another article entitled “The Warlord’s End (軍閥的收場 *junfa de shouchang*)” writes: “In the past, Xin Shilian 刑士廉 helped the imperialists to shut down the labour unions and oppress the people, and he was so arrogant and unbeatable; but now, having been defeated, he committed suicide and killed his family. This is the fate of the warlords!”<sup>721</sup> These short articles display the emotional reactions towards the warlords at that time; it was a period when workers were

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<sup>717</sup> The Canton-Hong Kong Strike Committee 省港罢工委员会, “代论:告民众 [Commentary: Informing the people],” *工人之路 The Workers’ Path*, no.237 (1926): 2.  
<sup>718</sup> “兩個賣國的會議 [Two Meetings Of Betrayers],” *工人之路 The Workers’ Path*, no. 132 (1925): 4; “打倒惡魔 [Down with the Demons],” *工人之路 The Workers’ Path*, no. 171 (1925): 4; “粵讴段祺瑞寻死 [Cantonese Poem, Duan Qirui seeking death],” *工人之路 The Workers’ Path*, no. 272 (1926): 4; Liang 良, “全国同胞应与帝国主义军阀作一死战速即推倒卖国段政府 [Our compatriots should fight to the death against the imperialist warlords and overthrow the traitorous Duan government immediately],” *工人之路 The Workers’ Path*, no. 269 (1926): 2.

<sup>719</sup> Former GMD divisional commander, then turned to be a general in the Beijing government under Li Yuanhong’s precedency.

<sup>720</sup> Jin 金, “又少了一个军阀吗 [One less warlord?],” *工人之路 The Workers’ Path*, no. 169 (1925): 4. “中國由少了一個軍閥；我們壓迫又少了一重！只可笑軍閥的結果，又是這樣！”

<sup>721</sup> Liang 良, “军阀的收场 [The Warlord’s End],” *工人之路 The Workers’ Path*, no. 132 (1925): 4. “昔日的刑士廉幫助帝國主義封閉工會，壓迫人民，氣焰逼近，不可一世，今日兵敗將亡，出於自殺，並殺其家人，這正是軍閥的收場。”

experiencing the consequences of Warlordism. Nonetheless, these narratives later became transferrable and described other historical villains, especially the warlords’ “father” – Yuan Shikai, showing multiple temporalities in creating historical narratives and the interchangeable reference to the past and the present.

Nevertheless, the newspaper was also clear about its position of supporting not only the workers’ strikes but also the military actions of the GMD and included the important announcement from the Nationalist government in print.<sup>722</sup> During the conflict between the Zhili 直隸 and Fengtian 奉天 cliques (also called the Second Zhili–Fengtian War), the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (中華全國總工會 *Zhonghua Quan Guo Zong Gonghui*), founded by the CCP in 1925, informed all workers that the Fengtian clique led by Zhang Zuolin (officially called the Fengtian Government of the Republic of China, which claimed direct descent of Yuan Shikai’s Beiyang government)<sup>723</sup> was “the biggest enemy (生死仇敵 *sheng si chou di*)” of workers and “the executioner of the foreign factory owners (外國廠主的劊子手 *waiguo chang zhu de guizishou*).”<sup>724</sup> The article was clear that, although the Zhili warlord Wu Peifu was also responsible for the death of some workers, the GMD government in Guangzhou and the National Army in

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<sup>722</sup> For example, see: “驱除段祺瑞 及一切卖国军阀 召集国民会议解决国是 [Expel Duan Qirui and all traitorous warlords and convene the National Assembly to resolve national issues],” *工人之路 The Workers’ Path*, no. 274 (1926): 3.

<sup>723</sup> Recent studies on the Fengtian Clique and its regime in Northern China include: Kwong Chi Man, “Chapter 3 The Fengtian Clique’s Strategies and Their Failure, 1925–1931,” In *War and Geopolitics in Interwar Manchuria*, 90–142 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017); Rana Mitter, “Reform And Reaction: Northeast China Under Zhang Xueliang, 1928–1931,” In *The Manchurian Myth*, 20–71. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019).

<sup>724</sup> “中华全国总工会上海办事处通告全国工友 [All-China Federation of Trade Unions Shanghai Office informs workers nationwide],” *工人之路 The Workers’ Path*, no. 142 (1925): 3; Liang 良, “全国同胞应与帝国主义军阀作一死战速即推倒卖国段政府 [Our compatriots should fight to the death against the imperialist warlords and overthrow the traitorous Duan government immediately],” 2. Liang’s article ends with the calling of “援助國民軍 [Let’s Help the National Army]!”

the North who stood alongside the Zhili clique had not suppressed workers and deserved supports of the Unions' workmates. Thus, the workers' published pieces had taken a position of allies with the other revolutionary party – the GMD. In the 1920s, GMD's National Army in the workers' press was still patriotic and worthy of support, in contrast to the direct association between GMD leaders and Yuan Shikai/the warlords shown in press and books in the 1940s.

Moreover, the warlords were accused of being “counter-revolutionary” forces in a short text for a Chinese opera published in the newspaper.<sup>725</sup> On the one hand, the Nationalist government released “Counter-revolutionary crime regulations (反革命罪條例 *Fan gemign zui Tiaoli*)” in 1927;<sup>726</sup> on the other hand, such a term, which was raised by Chen Duxiu as early as 1923,<sup>727</sup> became more frequently used in Mao's era. Tang Youren, a descendant of the martyrs of the Xinhai Revolution who later became a famous politician and diplomat of the Republic of China wrote in 1925:

Nowadays, there is a popular term, “counter-revolutionary” (反革命 *fan geming*), in society, especially among the intellectual class, which is used exclusively against political enemies or dissidents. These three characters alone can completely cancel the character of the dissidents and deny their actions. The meaning of this term is even more powerful than that of “traitor” (賣國賊 *mai guo zie*) and “slave of the fallen nation” (亡國奴 *wang guo nü*), and is simply treacherous. The person who has such a term attached to them immediately feels frightened and disoriented, as if a death sentence has been pronounced.<sup>728</sup>

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<sup>725</sup> Qipu 啓譜, “打倒帝国主义(未完) [Down with Imperialism (unfinished)],” *工人之路 The Workers' Path*, no. 127 (1925): 4.

<sup>726</sup> “昨日中央联席会通过之反革命罪条例 [The counter-revolutionary crime regulations passed by the Central Committee Joint Conference yesterday]” *汉口民国日报 Hankow Republican Daily*, 10 February 1927, 2.

<sup>727</sup> [Chen] Duxiu 獨秀, “革命与反革命 [Revolution and counter-revolution],” *向导 Xiangdao* no. 16 (1923): 3-5.

<sup>728</sup> Tang Youren 唐有壬, “时事短评: 甚么是反革命 [Short commentary on current affairs: What is counter-revolution]?,” *现代评论 Modern Reviews* 2, no 41 (1925): 4-5. “現在社會裡面——尤其是在智識階級裡面, 有一種流行名詞 ‘反革命’, 專用以加於政敵或異己者。只這三個字便可以完全取消異己者之人格, 否認異己者之舉動。其意義之重大, 比之 ‘賣國賊’ ‘亡國奴’ 還要厲害, 簡直是大逆不道。被加這種名詞的人, 頓覺得五內惶惑, 四肢無主, 好像宣布了死刑是的。”

Following the review, Tang states that the intellectuals who attempt to urge the immature youth to take a risky path are also a type of counter-revolutionary for it “can exhaust the power of the revolution, and risk severing the revolution.”<sup>729</sup> Wang Jingwei’s backing statement in *Gongrenzhilu* said: “Those who refused to oppose imperialism, and those who refused to promote the peasant and labour movement, were all counter-revolutionaries.”<sup>730</sup>

Indeed, the term “counter-revolutionary,” which was first used by Chen Duxiu in 1923 and later gained widespread usage during Mao’s era, had significant ramifications. It was employed as a potent label to discredit political adversaries, in particular those who resisted the tenets of communism or otherwise stood against the interests of the proletariat. Figures like Yuan Shikai and other warlords were also tainted with this label. This negative characterisation has persisted, and it remains an influential part of the narrative surrounding these figures in the historical discourse.

### ***The “new warlords” (新軍閥) in the Nanjing Decade (1927-1937)***

On 15 July 1926, *The Workers’ Path* published an article congratulating Commander-in-Chief Chiang on his inauguration; the article says: “Down with the warlords means down with imperialism...the two goals are echoing each other and have no difference.”<sup>731</sup> With the common goal of eliminating the warlords who depended on

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<sup>729</sup> Tang 唐, “甚么是反革命 [What is counter-revolution]?” 4-5. “因為他能消耗革命的力量, 而有斷絕革命的危機”

<sup>730</sup> Wang Jingwei 汪精衛, “评论:什么是反革命 [Comments: What is counter-revolution],” *工人之路 The Workers’ Path*, no. 130 (1925): 2. “凡是不肯反對帝國主義的, 和不肯提倡農工運動的, 都是反革命。”

<sup>731</sup> “罢工会贺蒋总司令就职 [The strike union congratulates Commander-in-Chief Chiang on his inauguration]” *工人之路 The Workers’ Path*, no. 378 (1926): 2. This idea is repeatedly emphasised in the newspaper, for another example, see: Qiying 奇英 “打倒軍閥必要打倒帝國主義 [Down with warlords requires down with



imperialists, the communist publication saw Chiang and his Party as allies. However, the collaboration ended in 1927 and was not resumed until the eve of the Second Sino-Japanese War. In 1929, newspapers and journals with the name *The Workers' Path* (*Gongren Zhi Lu*)<sup>732</sup> were banned by the provincial governments across the ROC following the order from the Executive Yuan of the National Government.<sup>733</sup>

During the Nanjing decade, starting from 1927, warlords were no longer the biggest consideration of many republican citizens. Notwithstanding, in the 1930s, “Down with the warlords” was still an active slogan in popular media. The keyword “*junfa*” (軍閥) has 5198 search results for the years between 1930 and 1939 in the Shanghai Library online database.<sup>734</sup> The large number of articles on the subject is a result of the flourishing of publications in the decade, but it also shows the continued and extensive discussion about issues relating to warlords in the era. In many writings, the Nanjing government

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imperialism],” *工人之路 The Workers' Path*, no. 339 (1926): 4; Xian Yiyu 洗一宇, “打倒帝國主義必要打倒軍閥 [Down with imperialism requires down with warlords],” *工人之路 The Workers' Path*, no. 339 (1926): 4.

<sup>732</sup> The publishing bodies are different, but the later publication named *The Workers' Path* carried on the communist propaganda and political ideas shown in the newspaper being analysed in this chapter.

<sup>733</sup> “中華民國國民政府行政院訓令：第一七〇四號 中華民國十八年五月二十日：令內政部：令飭轉行查禁工人之路刊物 [the Executive Yuan of the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China (R.O.C.) issued a directive on 20 May 1929, ordering the Ministry of the Interior to prohibit the publication of *the Workers' Path*],” *行政院公報 Bulletin of the Executive Yuan* no. 50 (1929): 21; Fang Benren 方本仁, “省政府准內政部咨請查禁青島出版物（工人之路）通令各廳飭屬查禁 [The Provincial Government Permits Consultation by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to Prohibit the Publication of *the Workers' Path* in Tsingdao]” *湖北省政府公報 Hubei Provincial Government Bulletin* no. 52 (1929): 14; Zhu Jiahua 朱家驊, “命令：浙江省政府民政廳訓令第一〇七七九號（中華民國十八年六月）：令各市市政府、各縣縣政府：查禁反動刊物工人之路 [Order: Zhejiang Provincial Government Department of Civil Affairs Order No. 10779 (June 1929, R.O.C.): Order the municipal governments and county governments of each city and county to check and ban the reactionary publication *Workers' Path*]” *浙江省政府公報 Zhejiang Provincial Government Gazette* no. 641 (1929): 6-7.

<sup>734</sup> Around the same time, the condemnation of Japanese warlords was also a popular topic in newspapers and journals.

replaced the Beiyang government as the “new warlords,” the “warlord bureaucrats” (軍閥官僚 *junfa guanliao*), or the “Warlord dictatorship” (軍閥獨裁政府 *junfa ducai zhengfu*)<sup>735</sup> and was deemed in need to being overthrown.<sup>736</sup>

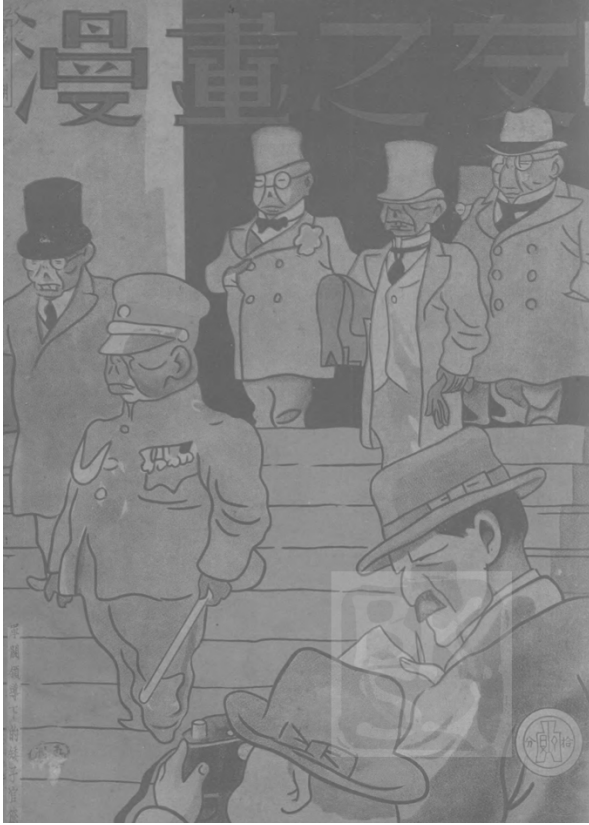


Figure 40: “軍閥領導下的矮子官僚 [Dwarf Bureaucrats under the Leadership of The Warlords]”<sup>737</sup>

In 1930, a fifth-grade student essay with the title “The Downfall of the Warlords” (軍閥的下場 *Junfa de Xichang*) was published in the school journals; the essay writes:

The warlords are the villains who cruelly harm us, the ordinary people. They are the enemies within our revolutionary forces. When our revolution was not yet complete, these villains were still in our midst, hindering our revolutionary work.

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<sup>735</sup> Zhang Yunru 张蕴如, “军閥獨裁政治下之怪現象 [The Strange Phenomenon under the Dictatorship of the Warlords],” *青年軍人 Young Soldiers* 2, no. 7 (1934): 4.

<sup>736</sup> Liu Zhiping 刘治平, “中国革命之当前任务推翻军閥統治 [The Current Task of the Chinese Revolution to Overthrow the Warlords],” *青年軍人 Young Soldiers* no. 19 (1933): 6-10.

<sup>737</sup> Cover, “军閥領導下的矮子官僚 [Dwarf Bureaucrats under the Leadership of The Warlords],” *漫畫之友 Comic Friends* 3 (1937).

Now, all the old warlords have been purged. Our government has been unified. This is something we should celebrate. But the new warlords are still lingering and continuing to do harm to us. Our main mission now is, therefore, to eliminate the new warlords. The warlords are ruthless and barbaric people. They will, of course, end up as bandits and robbers. Today is the 18th anniversary of the National Day of the Republic of China. From today onwards, we should all work hard to eliminate our enemies and achieve a peaceful society.<sup>738</sup>

The school newspaper only circulated within the Shanghai Mingzhi Middle and Primary school community; moreover, the students' essays were published by teachers, and it is not possible to determine how much of the written content was adults' works instead of the students' ideas. However, the excerpts about warlords provide readers with some of the essay topics discussed in the schools and show a sample of the opinion being presented to the rest of the school pupils.

Furthermore, the student's piece does not clearly identify who the "new warlords" were, although they "are still lingering and continuing to do harm to us." In the essay, the term is assigned to "the villains who cruelly harm us." Simplification of political terms like this has been evident in other societies and other historical periods; by doing so, the scope of "villains" or "enemies" was expanded to all "the others" someone encounters in life. In the case of the narrative treating the "new warlords" as the differentiation from the revolutionary forces, it was common to demean the strength of the others by suggesting that they were doomed to meet a tragic end. While terms such as "betrayal" (出賣 *chumai*), "selling the nation" (賣國 *mai guo*), and "enemy" (敵人 *di ren*) were used to

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<sup>738</sup> Xu Xiongwan 徐雄萬 and Lu Maojiu 陸懋玖, "军阀的下场 [The Downfall of the Warlords]" *民智女生專號 Minzhi Girls' Edition* no. 10 (1930): 1.

“軍閥，是殘害我們老百姓的壞東西。是我們革命隊伍中的敵人。在我們的革命還沒有完成的時候，這些壞東西，仍然混在我們的隊伍中，阻礙我們的革命工作。現在，一切的舊軍閥，都已經肅清了。我們的政府已經統一。這是我們應該慶祝的事。當時新的軍閥，還在苟延殘喘的繼續和我們作惡。我們目前主要的使命，因此就是消滅新的軍閥了。軍閥完全是很殘酷野蠻的人。他們的結果，當然是去當土匪做強盜了。今天是我们中華民國十八週年的國慶紀念日，從今天起，我們應當大家努力，消滅我們的敵人，達到我們的安樂社會。”

describe the “new warlords,” very few of these people were condemned as collaborators or “*hanjian*” (漢奸); the latter describes those who gave aid to the foreign enemy rather than those who were supported by the foreign powers. The next chapter will examine the ideas and narratives about *hanjian*, who received more attention in wartime China after 1937. Nonetheless, the discussion above regarding constructing the image of an evil warlord as the enemy of the people is solely focusing on the condemnation shown in print; certain military leaders who cooperated with the Communist Party in the 1930s received different comments at the time, although these remarks or reputation also changed over time.

It was once accepted that the term “warlords” was reserved for the Beiyang military man, and, in the 1930s, some who did not agree with the Nanjing government expanded the meaning of the term into covering whoever acted as the opposite of the “revolutionary soldier.”<sup>739</sup> In texts targeting a younger readership, the idea was introduced further. For example, Sheng Heli (沈和禮), the author of a few articles in the children and youth’s journals *Tongguang* (同光) and *Xiaopengyou* (小朋友), wrote in 1933:

The greatest *hanjian* are Chiang Kai-shek and Zhang Xueliang, the two villains! The reason why we must oppose Chiang and Zhang is that they are both dictatorial warlords who betrayed their nation and sold it to foreign powers for high positions and great wealth; they also slaughtered and exploited people domestically. The whole of China has suffered from their betrayal for several years and has fallen below the level of the colonial state; the people have been slaughtered by them for several years and are already desperate. So, Jiang and Chang are our current enemies, and our hatred for them is even more profound than that for Japan.<sup>740</sup>

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<sup>739</sup> Zhengzhi 真之, “军阀论 [The Warlords],” *民众三日刊 Minzhong Sanri Kan* 1, no 4 (1931): 3-5. Zhengzhi was the principal editor and contributor of the journal, who advocated opposing the Nanjing government and later called it a “military dictatorship” (軍事獨裁政治). The journal was first published in Shanghai in 1931; nonetheless, personal information of the editors is anonymous. See: Gongyou 共由, “給民衆三日刊一個公開的商榷 [A Public Discussion of *Minzhong Sanri Kan*],” *线路 Xianlu* no.11 (1932): 42-43.

<sup>740</sup> “最大的漢奸，莫如蔣介石張學良這兩個壞蛋！我們所以要反蔣，反張，就是因為他們都是獨裁的軍閥，對外則賣國求榮，對內則屠殺剝括，整個的中華被他們幾

Sheng's article focuses solely on the condemnation of the new villains, being accused of as "dictatorial warlords" (獨裁的軍閥 *ducai de junfa*) and *hanjian*. While the criticism of warlords intensified in the public discourse, the representative figures of *junfa* evolved dramatically and stayed variable. The accusation (of being *junfa*) was also made against the Communists in these years; moreover, fast forward to 1952, a scientist Chen Huagui 陈华癸 mentioned in his published *jiantao* (檢討) that in the 1940s he once viewed the military success of the CCP as "one warlord defeated another one."<sup>741</sup> This widening usage of the term "warlord" (*junfa*) implies an ongoing, complex process of historical reinterpretation, one in which figures like Yuan Shikai are continually reassessed and reimagined.

***What happened "during the Beiyang Warlord Era" (在北洋军阀时代):  
Self-criticism in Mao's China***

In the years after 1949, when the PRC was established, and the warlords and the power they represented were in the past and only discussed in the discourse of history, "*junfa*" was still a frequently discussed term during the political movements in the 1950s and later. Many intellectuals, when writing their "self-examination reports" (自我检讨 *zi wo jiantao*), refer to the 1920s as the "Beiyang Warlord Era" during which they received education or participated in political activities and thus, as Chen Yuan 陈垣 stated, felt that "the politics of the time were polluted" (深感到当时政治的污浊 *sheng gan dangshi*

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年的出賣，已經跌次殖民地的水平線下，民眾被他們幾年的屠殺，已是奄奄一息，所以蔣張是我們當前的大敵人，我們對他們的仇恨比日本還要深一層。”沈和禮，“从民众抗日说到军阀卖国” *同光 Tongguang* vol.5-6 (1933): 89-92.

<sup>741</sup> Chen Huagui 陈华癸，“我的思想檢討 [My Self-Criticism],” in *教師思想改造文選 (上輯) Selected Essays on the Transformation of Teachers' Thought (Volume 1)*, 36-46, (漢口 Hankou: 中南人民出版社 Zhongnan People's Publishing House, 1953), 40-41.

zhengzhi de wuzhuo).<sup>742</sup> Zhu Jisheng 朱继圣 expressed: “During the warlord era and the reign of the Guomindang reactionary faction, I was very disappointed by the decadence of the government and the filth of society.”<sup>743</sup>

Moreover, in 1957, when the anti-Right movement had started, more individuals who self-identified or were exposed by others as the problematic class were picked out and asked to write an article to self-examine the acts and thoughts they once held. Long Yun 龍云, a general who used mainly military power to govern Yunnan, has undergone a series of changes in his identity in the official and nationwide popular narratives. He ruled Yunnan for nearly two decades, from 1928 to 1945;<sup>744</sup> during this period, he maintained a relationship with the Nanjing government and as an ally of Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei.<sup>745</sup> Although the latter relationship caused some doubt about his motive for fighting against the Japanese after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War,<sup>746</sup> he earned the name of a “good warlord” who was willing to help the Red Army and defeat the nation’s enemies, especially through a myth of the CCP party history called “The Map offered by

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<sup>742</sup> Chen Yuan 陈垣, “自我检讨 [Self-Examination Reports],” 6 March 1952, <http://ccrd.usc.cuhk.edu.hk.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/Fulltext.aspx>, accessed on 20 May 2022.

<sup>743</sup> Zhu Jisheng 朱继圣, “我两年余来的思想转变 [The Transformation of My Mentalities Over The Past Two Years],” in *人民日报 People’s Daily*, 27 September 1951. “在军阀时代和国民党反动派统治时期, 政府的腐朽和社会的污浊, 使我非常失望”.

<sup>744</sup> Zhu Qiang Fu Shuo 朱强富硕, “范式变革与议题转换: 四十年来云南军阀史研究的学术史考察 [Changes of Paradigm and Topics: An Academic Research of the Warlord History of Yunnan in the Past Forty Years],” *地域文化研究 Regional Culture Study* 19 no.4 (2020): 127-133.

<sup>745</sup> Bai Lu 白路, “1928 - 1945 年蒋介石与龙云关系探微 [The Relationship between Chiang Kai-shek and Long Yun, 1928-1945],” *长春师范大学学报 Journal of Changchun Normal University* 36, no.1 (2017): 83-84; Xie Benshu 谢本书 and Feng Zuyi 冯祖贻, eds, *西南军阀史 (第一卷) [History of the Warlords of Southwest China (vol. 1)]* (Guiyang: 贵州人民出版社 Guizhou People’s Publishing House, 1991): 6.

<sup>746</sup> Wang Dian 王甸, “龙云的投敌卖国行为点滴 [Long Yun’s Defections To The Enemy And Traitorous Acts],” *新华通讯社编 内部参考 Xinhua News Agency Editor Internal Reference*, 9 July 1957; Yang Tianshi 杨天石, “龙云与汪精卫出逃事件诸问题 [Wang Jingwei’s Escape and Long Yun],” *江淮文史 Jianghuai Wenshi* no.2 (2017): 24-50.

Long Yun.”<sup>747</sup> He maintained a high-ranked political position in the early PRC, representing the Yunnan region and the community of his ethnic background (彝族 *yi zu*),<sup>748</sup> but was eventually attacked harshly for his years as a warlord and a rightist element (右派分子 *youpai fenzi*).<sup>749</sup>

Long Yun’s self-criticism report, publicised on 14 July 1957 in *Renmin Ribao* (人民日报), shows a mix of his self-assessment and the Party’s political propaganda on him.<sup>750</sup> His experience after 1957 is an example of the treatment of a military individual who was once the enemy of the Communist Party, then became a friend and a subordinate, and, at last, whose image turned into someone who acted against the Party and ought to be criticised and handled as the reactionary. Nonetheless, after the 1980s, Long Yun’s reputation was redeemed by some members of the government and historians when the overall narrative of Chinese warlords became less hostile and discussed more as a neutral historical term.

In the 1957 report, Long Yun said: “During the reign of the Kuomintang reactionaries, I presided over the military administration of a province and exploited and oppressed the Yunnan people for more than ten years, which led to my supremacy and

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<sup>747</sup> Pu Jinshan 普金山, “‘龙云献图’有意而为’. 再探索 [Further Exploration of the View that Longyun Presented the Map Intentionally],” *学术探索 Academic Exploration*, no.2 (2020): 146-156; “龙云献图的背后—红军巧渡金沙江与龙云‘献图’关系探析 [Behind the Story of Long Yun’s ‘Map Offering’ —Analysis of the Relationship between the Red Army’s Skilful Crossing of Jinsha River and Long Yun’s Map Offering],” *学术探索 Academic Exploration*, no.9 (2020): 109-117.

<sup>748</sup> Zhao Zheng 赵峥, “从‘猓猓’到‘彝族’—龙云身份变迁的历史过程与现代启示 [From “Guo Guo” to “Yi Zu”: The Identity Transition of Long Yun and its Enlightenment],” *Beijing Cultural Review New Chinese History* no. 04 (2020): 123-143.

<sup>749</sup> Central Rectification Office of the RCKK 中国国民党革命委员会中央整风办公室, “右派分子龙云的反动言行 [The reactionary words and behaviours of the rightist Long Yun],” 15 August 1957, <http://ccrd.usc.cuhk.edu.hk.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/Title.aspx>, accessed on 21 May 2022.

<sup>750</sup> Long Yun 龙云, “思想检讨 [Self-criticism],” *人民日报 People’s Daily*, 14 July 1953, 3.

arrogance in the style of a feudal bureaucrat and warlord (封建官僚和军阀作风 *fengjian guanliao he junfa zuofeng*).”<sup>751</sup> Although, due to the requirements of self-criticism, Long listed the problematic statements he made before and the ideological roots that led to these statements, he had not identified himself as a former warlord but as a person in the military service (“投身军武 *tou sheng jun wu*”) and with the style of a warlord (“军阀作风 *junfa zuofeng*”). In other accounts opposing Long, he was more often accused of being the local King of Yunnan (“云南王 *Yunnan Wang*” or “土皇帝 *Tu Huangdi*”) instead of *junfa*.<sup>752</sup> At that time, the term warlord had not yet fully transferred from a political accusation to a historical category of people.

Furthermore, in the midst of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution beginning in 1966, the public’s perception of Yuan Shikai and the warlords underwent an unexpected shift. Chen Boda, the author of the book *Yuan Shikai, Thief of the Nation* (竊國大盜袁世凱 *Qieguo Dadao Yuan Shikai*), was denounced as a counter-revolutionary by the Central Committee of the CCP in 1972. In 1961 and 1962, Mao Zedong had heralded Chen as a reliable source.<sup>753</sup> However, by 1966, even though Chen was leading the Central Cultural Revolution Group and advocating for the Cultural Revolution Committee with Mao’s endorsement, he was already attracting controversy.<sup>754</sup> A particularly notable

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<sup>751</sup> Long 龙, “思想检讨 [Self-criticism],” 3.

<sup>752</sup> Wu Shaomo 吴少默, “从反共起家到反党反社会主义的龙云 [From anti-communist to anti-party and anti-socialist, Long Yun],” *云南日报 Yunnan Daily*, 9 July 1957.

<sup>753</sup> Mao Zedong 毛泽东, “在中共八届九中全会上的讲话 (一) [Speech at the 9th Plenary Session of the 8th CCP Central Committee (1)]” 13 January 1961, <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/maozedong/1968/5-002.htm>, accessed on 24 May 2022; “在八届十中全会上的讲话 [Speech at the 10th Plenary Session of the 8th Central Committee],” 24 September 1962, <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/maozedong/1968/5-021.htm>, accessed on 24 May 2022.

<sup>754</sup> Chen Boda 陈伯达 and Kang Sheng 康生, “陈伯达康生等关于北京广播学院文化革命的谈话 [Chen Boda, Kang Sheng, and Other Talks on the Cultural Revolution of



clash occurred between him and the People's commune (燎原公社 *Liaoyuan gongshe*);<sup>755</sup> the People's commune sought to censure (批斗 *pi dou*) Mu Xin 穆欣, a fellow member of the Central Cultural Revolution Group.<sup>756</sup> In spite of Chen's frequent appearances as a central administrator in official meetings and activities before 1970, his status came under direct assault in August 1970. Mao Zedong, in his piece "Some of My Opinions (我的一点意见)" accused Chen Boda of propagating "rumours and sophistry" (谣言和诡辩).<sup>757</sup> This marked the end of Chen's political career and the reliability of his writings in politics and history.

While Chen's works on Republican historical figures had previously served as key references for historical interpretations among Chinese Communist intellectuals, the fall of his political career cast a shadow on his authority as a historical narrator. His subsequent imprisonment for his part in the chaos of the Cultural Revolution further undermined his credibility. Thus, for the first time, the traditional narrative of Yuan Shikai as "the thief of the nation" was opened up to debate.

The Cultural Revolution contains so many elements that still seem uncertain or incomplete for historians to conclude the meaning of this large-scale political movement in China. However, based on the information on mass media in the 1960s and early 1970s, it is safe to conclude that during this period, some of the historical narratives or comments on individuals' merits and faults established in the Republic era were

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Beijing Broadcasting Institute]," 14 July 1966, <http://ccrd.usc.cuhk.edu.hk.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/Fulltext.aspx>, accessed on 24 May 2022.

<sup>755</sup> Chen Boda 陈伯达, "陈伯达给《光明日报》'燎原公社'的电话 [Chen Boda's phone call to 'Liaoyuan Commune' of Guangming Daily]," 23 January 1967, <http://ccrd.usc.cuhk.edu.hk.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/Fulltext.aspx>, accessed on 26 May 2022.

<sup>756</sup> "中共中央发出关于设立中央文化革命小组的通知 [The CCP Central Committee issued a notice on the establishment of the Central Cultural Revolution Group]," 28 May 1966, <http://www.scio.gov.cn/wszt/wz/Document/921943/921943.htm>, accessed on 26 May 2022.

<sup>757</sup> Mao Zedong 毛泽东, "我的一点意见 [Some of My Opinions]," 31 August 1970.

abandoned for various reasons. Demolishing the older narrative does not always mean the appearance of a newer one; instead, it could result in a shift of the focus on historical narrative and the disappearance of some historical figures in popular discourse. In Mao's China, Yuan Shikai and the warlords certainly marked a period in Chinese history filled with political and military chaos; notwithstanding this, they faded away from the centre of the discussion in terms of who were the biggest enemies of the nation.

In Li Li's study of the representation of the Cultural Revolution, the author differentiates between national memory and group memory and points out that the latter aims at creating a shared identity through "one transhistorical storyline."<sup>758</sup> The storyline is, in the words of Svetlana Boym, "a Manichaean battle of good and evil and the inevitable scapegoating of the mythical enemy."<sup>759</sup> Yuan Shikai and the warlords, then the GMD and Japanese, were once the designated enemies of the Chinese people and the CCP, which sought and still seeks to represent the general population; notwithstanding that, new enemies emerged in the later era, and the evil figures in the past are in a position open for reinterpretations.

#### - *Rediscovering Yuan Shikai in the Reform Era*

Many scholars have examined the rapid changes during the Reform and Opening Era in China, which started in 1978, not only economically and politically but also in terms of social and cultural transformations.<sup>760</sup> In his study on the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, Roderick MacFarquhar argues that the Cultural Revolution is a

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<sup>758</sup> Li Li, *Memory, Fluid Identity, and the Politics of Remembering: The Representations of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in English-Speaking Countries* (Leiden: BRILL, 2016), 179.

<sup>759</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 43.

<sup>760</sup> For example, see an edited volume by China scholars working on the topic (mainly based in mainland China): Cao Tian Yu, Zhong Xueping, and Liao Kebin, eds, *Culture and Social Transformations in Reform Era China*. (Leiden: BRILL, 2010).

watershed in not just the history of the PRC but also modern Chinese history.<sup>761</sup> However, when looking at the evaluation of modern Chinese historical figures, especially in biographical writings in the post-1978 era, one can see that narrative changes did not occur as rapidly as economic developments. The notion of memory studies has many challenges and uncertainties; however, tracing the changing stories or assessments of someone like Yuan Shikai and the warlords is a way to see the forming of memories regarding the historical past one can read in books and see on the screen.<sup>762</sup>

In the early 1980s, state-run publishers published several writings and historical documents revealing and reviewing Yuan Shikai as a political player and a man from a conventional type of Chinese family. In 1982, the People's Publishing House (人民出版社 *Renmin Chuban She*) in Henan printed *The Life of Yuan Shikai* (袁世凯的一生 *Yuan Shikai de Yisheng*), authored by Hou Yijie.<sup>763</sup> Soon after Hou's book, the Chinese Literature and History Press (文史资料出版社 *Wenshi Ziliao Chuban She*), a publisher under the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), compiled a book entitled *The Dream of Being the Emperor for 83 Days* (八十天皇帝梦 *Bashisan Tian Huangdi Meng*), gathering writings about Yuan Shikai from his children, relatives, subordinates and old friends.<sup>764</sup> Both publications continue to receive attention three decades later. Hou Yijie published *The Biography of Yuan Shikai* (袁世凯传 *Yuan Shikai*

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<sup>761</sup> Roderick Macfarquhar, "The Impact of the Cultural Revolution on Reform Era Political Culture," in *Culture and Social Transformations in Reform Era China*, 343-345; Roderick Macfarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*. (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2022): 450-465.

<sup>762</sup> Li's book takes a similar approach by analysing literacy works on the theme: Li, *Memory, Fluid Identity, and the Politics of Remembering*, 179.

<sup>763</sup> Hou Yijie 侯宜杰, *袁世凯的一生 The Life of Yuan Shikai* (Henan: 人民出版社 People's Publishing House, 1982).

<sup>764</sup> Wu Changyi 吴长翼, ed, *八十天皇帝梦 The Dream of being the Emperor for 83 Days* (Beijing: 文史资料出版社 Chinese Literature and History Press, 1983).

Zhuan) in 2003, based on his 1982 manuscript with added materials and a revised writing style.<sup>765</sup> This biography was most recently reprinted in January 2020 by Liaoning People's Publishing House, with the brief "Half a History of the Late Qing Era + Half a History of the Republic of China."<sup>766</sup> The most recent reprint of *The Dream of being the Emperor for 83 Days* was in 2016, in the series 100 Classics Collections of Literature and History edited by the Committee on Literature, History and Learning of the National Committee of the CPPCC (全国政协文史和学习委员会 *Quanguo Zhengxie Wenshi he Xuexi Weiyuan Hui*).<sup>767</sup> These publications range from the 1980s to the 2020s, each presenting durable representations of Yuan Shikai and providing unique perspective on Yuan.

The different versions of Abstract, Preface, and Afterword in the publications mentioned above shed light on the changes in narratives produced by the official presses targeting a popular readership.

In Hou's 1982 book, the Abstract writes:

There have been many virtuous men and women in history who have been admired and remembered by future generations, and many traitors and villains who have been despised and reviled by future generations. What kind of a man that Yuan Shikai was? What did he do in his life? This book is a chronological account of Yuan Shikai's reactionary activities, based on a wide range of sources and the nature of the problem, which exposes Yuan Shikai's hideous behaviour as a usurper of power and a thief of the nation, a restorer of the monarchy and a master of conspiracy and manipulation.<sup>768</sup>

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<sup>765</sup> Hou Yijie 侯宜杰, *袁世凯传 Biography of Yuan Shikai* (Tianjin: 百花文艺出版社 *Baihua Wenyi*, 2003).

<sup>766</sup> Hou Yijie 侯宜杰, *袁世凯传 Biography of Yuan Shikai* (Liaoning: 人民出版社 *People's Publishing House*, 2020).

<sup>767</sup> 全国政协文史和学习委员会(The Committee on Literature, History and Learning of the National Committee of the CPPCC) ed, *八十三天皇帝梦 The Dream of being the Emperor for 83 Days* (北京: 中国文史出版社 *Chinese Literature and History Press*, 2016).

<sup>768</sup> Hou 侯, *袁世凯的一生 The Life of Yuan Shikai*, 1.

“历史上有多少仁人志士为后人所敬仰、怀念，又有多少奸贼恶棍为后人鄙弃、唾骂。袁世凯是个什么人？他的一生都干了些什么？本书按照时间顺序和问题的性

This book follows the agenda of shaping a hideous image of Yuan, and still calls him by the accusations raised by Communist writers in the late Republic and the early PRC. In the author's afterword drafted in June 1983 for a reprint, Hou discussed the approach he took for the biography, which he believed should be different from history textbooks and reflect the individual's life in detail and show his unique personality. Hou had hoped to compile a book that was "vivid and lively, with literary and artistic charm" and could "keep the reader entertained, not to be put off, and not to drowse."<sup>769</sup> He further stated:

Based on the above understanding, when I compiled *The Life of Yuan Shikai*, I tried to give a more detailed and factual account and evaluation of Yuan Shikai's reactionary life under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought; in addition to explaining how the history of the late Qing and early Republican period had shaped him as a typical representative of the class of big landlords and big compradors, I also tried to highlight his personality in a truthful manner and took the courage to make some attempts at creating a vivid image.<sup>770</sup>

Hou Yijie acknowledged that, to achieve the goal, he would need a "higher level training in Marxist-Leninist theory, better literary skills, and broad knowledge," as well as richer historical material that can be used to create detailed images of historical figures, both of which were lacking at the time of writing the book and, therefore, resulted in an unsuccessful attempt and a work that "reads dull and insipid."<sup>771</sup>

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质，在掌握大量资料的基础上，比较详尽地叙述了袁世凯一生的反动活动，使其篡权窃国、复辟帝制、善搞阴谋权术的狰狞面目暴露得淋漓尽致。”

<sup>769</sup> Hou 侯, *袁世凯的一生 The Life of Yuan Shikai*, 502-503.

“生动活泼，具有文采和艺术魅力”；“能使读者饶有兴味，不忍释手，不打瞌睡。”

<sup>770</sup> Hou 侯, *袁世凯的一生 The Life of Yuan Shikai*, 503.

“基于以上认识，我在编著“袁世凯的一生”时，除力图在马列主义、毛泽东思想的指导下，对袁世凯的房东一生进行比较详尽、实事求是的叙述和评价，说明清末民初的历史何以造就了他这个大地主大买办阶级的典型代表外，还如实地突出了他的个性，并鼓足勇气在生动形象方面做了点尝试。”

<sup>771</sup> Hou 侯, *袁世凯的一生 The Life of Yuan Shikai*, 503.

“较高的马列主义理论修养、较好的文学素养，广博的知识。”“由于上述的原因，收效极微，读之仍有枯燥呆板、味同嚼蜡之感。可以说，尝试基本上是失败的。”

In the 2003 biography that Hou compiled, a new abstract is provided in which Yuan was introduced as “One of the most important historical figures of late modern Chinese history, whose life epitomises this period of history.”<sup>772</sup> However, the fundamental assessment of Yuan was unchanged; he “stole the fruit of the Xinhai Revolution”, then “went against the tide and restored the autocratic monarchy”, which eventually led him to “a sinful life ended in a wave of national revolt against him.”<sup>773</sup> Hou’s conclusion of this revised biography gives more credit to Yuan Shikai’s achievement and commendable character. It addresses the Chinese scholarly works in the 2000s that acknowledge Yuan Shikai’s contribution to the modernisation of China and the development of industry and commerce.<sup>774</sup> Yang Jing’s article lists research in Chinese from the 2000s to the 2010s on Yuan, many of which moving away from condemnation to a more balanced assessment of Yuan’s achievement and failures, such as Su Quanyou and Zou Baogang’s “Issues and Trends in Studies on Yuan Shikai’s Evaluation.”<sup>775</sup> Some recent scholarly work, in Yang’s review, demonstrates “the positive effect of Yuan Shikai’s administrative measures on historical development during the early Republican period” and affirms “the important contribution of Yuan Shikai.”<sup>776</sup>

The biography’s viewpoint adopts the common method used to assess significant political characters under the ideology “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” which

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<sup>772</sup> Hou 侯, *袁世凯传 Biography of Yuan*, 1.

“中国近代史后期最重要的历史人物之一，他的一生堪称这一历史时期的缩影。”

<sup>773</sup> Hou 侯, *袁世凯的一生 The Life of Yuan Shikai*, 1.

<sup>774</sup> Yang Jing 杨静, “近二十年来袁世凯相关问题研究综述 [A Review of Research on Issues Related to Yuan Shikai in the Past Two Decades],” *艺术科技 Art and Technology* 32 no. 12 (2019):128.

<sup>775</sup> Su Quanyou 苏全有 and Zou Baogang 邹宝刚, “有关袁世凯研究中的评价问题及其趋势 [Issues and Trends in Studies on Yuan Shikai’s Evaluation],” *开封大学学报 Journal of Kaifeng University* 27 no. 1 (2013): 36-39.

<sup>776</sup> Yang 杨, “近二十年来袁世凯相关问题研究综述 [A Review of Research on Issues Related to Yuan Shikai in the Past Two Decades],” 128. “民初时期袁世凯施政措施对历史发展的积极作用,” and “袁世凯的重要贡献.”

stressed the division of a person's major achievements and wrongdoings; "some of Yuan Shikai's actions were in accordance with the tide of history, some other actions went against it."<sup>777</sup> The similar view was re-emphasised in 2017 by Zeng Yeying, a researcher affiliated with the Institute of Modern History in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; in his article, Zeng strongly refuted the historical accounts implying that Yuan could be "the father of the 1911 Revolution" and, similar to what Hou expressed in 2003, rejected to lauding Yuan's accomplishments.<sup>778</sup>

Although researchers have had access to much richer historical material during the reform and opening period and witnessed some openness to the historical narrative established in the Maoist period, biographies of Yuan Shikai have never entirely abandoned the older history. After the period when publications in Chinese and English all worked towards reassessing the reputation of Yuan and providing an apparently more nuanced and balanced account, the underlining warning in the Chinese discourse is not to overly narrate Yuan Shikai's actions in language that is too positive. The analysis in this chapter traces the historical writings and evaluations from the 1920s to the present, focusing on both the periodically renewed and revised Chinese biographies of Yuan Shikai and the debates over the meaning of Chinese warlords (*junfa*).<sup>779</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

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<sup>777</sup> Hou 侯, *袁世凯传 Biography of Yuan*, 528.

<sup>778</sup> Zeng Yeying 曾业英, "袁世凯是辛亥革命的“共和元勋”吗? [Is Yuan Shikai the Father of the 1911 Revolution?]" *河北学刊 Hebei Academic Journal* 37 no.4 (2017): 53-61.

<sup>779</sup> There are a few English biographies that give more nuances to the writing of Yuan Shikai, and they may be included in the revised version of the chapter. Ernest P. Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-K'ai: Liberalism and Dictatorship in Early Republican China*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977; Stephen R. MacKinnon, *Power and Politics in Late Imperial China: Yuan Shi-Kai in Beijing and Tianjin, 1901-1908*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

The objective of this chapter is to highlight the evolving historical narrative, particularly in stories aimed at the general readership, using the case of Yuan Shikai and Chinese warlords to delve into the treatment of figures who were subject to less controversy compared to the commonly portrayed national traitors. This study reveals that the construction of the untrustworthy and wicked image of warlords in China originated during the initial collaboration between the CCP and the GMD. Over time, the condemnation of enemies of the nation or the people was extended to a broader range of adversaries by political forces involved in popular history writing and the use of historical narratives for public education, including the CCP's efforts to compile Yuan Shikai's biography in 1946 and beyond.

This chapter reveals the intricate and evolving historical narratives associated with Yuan Shikai and the Chinese warlords. The analysis underscores the complexity of these figures' portrayal and the dynamic nature of historical interpretation, shaped by political agendas and public perception. Examining the Communist historical writing on Yuan Shikai, specifically through Chen Boda's biography, *Yuan Shikai: The Thief of the Nation*, published in 1946 and reprinted in 1949, a deliberate association is made between Yuan's notoriety and the GMD leader Chiang Kai-shek. This strategic connection aims to condemn both figures and establishes a narrative framework. While the GMD's historical accounts also criticise Yuan, their scrutiny does not reach the same level as the CCP's propaganda.

In some accounts, Yuan was "the Father of the Chinese Warlords;" in this chapter, the construction of images surrounding Chinese warlords (*junfa*) is explored, as a similar process of constructing the villainous figures applies to this term and the individuals behind it. Although the term *junfa* initially carried a more moderate connotation, it gradually evolves into a villainous characterisation closely linked to Yuan Shikai. Early



communist newspapers extensively condemn warlords, portraying them as cruel villains inflicting harm upon the people. However, the narrative shifts after 1927, when the Nationalist government and Chiang Kai-shek are depicted as the “new warlords,” blurring the distinction between Yuan Shikai and subsequent figures.

During Mao’s leadership, historical works on Yuan Shikai and the warlords, including Chen Boda’s biography, face criticism, temporarily diminishing their reliability and popularity among ordinary people. Scholars and revisionists in the Reform era reassess Yuan Shikai, departing from his portrayal as a villain. However, recent biographies targeted at the general readership continue to depict Yuan as the “thief of the nation,” focusing on his usurpation of power. Notably, the latest Grade 8 history textbook maintains an emphasis on Yuan’s role in “stealing the fruit of the Xinhai revolution.”<sup>780</sup> The chapter’s exploration of the narratives surrounding Yuan Shikai and the warlords highlights their diverse and non-linear nature. Political forces, propaganda efforts, and shifting interpretations all contribute to the shaping of these figures’ historical treatment. This evolution underscores the intricate nature of historical storytelling and the subjective aspects of historical portrayal. By examining the shifts in these narratives over time, valuable insights are gained into the construction of historical villains and the dynamic nature of collective memory.

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<sup>780</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Eight-Grade Volume 1*, 48.

## Chapter 6: The Evolving Narratives of Wang Jingwei: Contrasting Tales of a Martyr, Leader, and Disgraced Traitor

This chapter looks into the ongoing creation of a uniquely complex historical figure in the context of Republican Chinese History. Wang Jingwei was a political leader close to becoming a “revolutionary martyr” at a younger age but was eventually condemned by the majority of the nation as a traitor (*hanjian* 汉奸). Since establishing the Re-organised Nationalist Government (RNG), a collaborative or puppet government, in 1940, Wang Jingwei’s prominent identity in the history of China was a traitor to the nation. However, there were times when Wang, as a leader of the Nationalist Party (or Guomintang, GMD), embodied the revolutionary spirit shared by followers of Sun Yat-sen; after 1927, Wang became the symbolic figure of those who disagreed with Chiang Kai-shek inside or outside of the GMD.<sup>781</sup> Wang’s revolutionary actions in the late Qing and early Republican era and the political role he took up in the Nationalist government are less frequently brought up in contemporary public discourse.<sup>782</sup> Nonetheless, Wang’s political career spanned four decades from the revolutionary period in the late Qing Dynasty to the final years of the Second Sino-Japanese War and underwent a few drastic shifts. Each transition of his life story generated distinct popular views of him in his lifetime and after his death.

Unlike the French “traitor” Philippe Pétain (1856 - 1951),<sup>783</sup> whose profile was similar in many ways, there was never a public trial of Wang Jingwei for his treason (his

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<sup>781</sup> Li Zhiyu 李志毓, “在历史光谱下：汪精卫研究若干问题评述 [Under the Historical Spectrum: A Review of Some Issues in Wang Jingwei Studies].” *南京大学学报: 哲学、人文科学、社会科学 Journal of Nanjing University (Philosophy, Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 2016 (2), 110-118. George E. Sokolsky, “Kuomintang Differences: The Popular Animus against the Nanking Government,” *South China Morning Post*, Aug 11, 1928, P.15

<sup>782</sup> A later section of this chapter will discuss the absence of Wang Jingwei in national commemoration and other forms of popular historical narrative.

<sup>783</sup> Sidney B. Fay, “Is Pétain A Traitor?” *Current History* 9, no. 49 (1945): 207–12.

late wife Chen Bijun had one and received life imprisonment).<sup>784</sup> Nonetheless, the post-war years witnessed a heightened public condemnation of Wang. As both Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government and the Communist regime controlled the official narrative surrounding Wang, his once-heroic image as a national hero against Qing rule and a personality cult figure within the Republic of China (ROC) was marginalised in public commemorations and excluded from official histories. Consequently, among the educated population, curiosity and imagination were sparked, leading to a reshaping of Wang Jingwei's historical image, more dramatic than that of Sun Yat-sen or Yuan Shikai. This chapter aims to delve into Wang Jingwei's historical reputation in China by analysing various literary sources, from biographies to teaching materials to online platforms. Through this investigation, the study will demonstrate the persistence of inconsistencies in the public representation of Wang.

This chapter starts with a brief analysis of the formation of Wang Jingwei's popular image in the Republican era, following which it is divided into two main sections; each of them integrates different types of sources produced in the PRC to analyse the continuously changing historical account of Wang Jingwei in popular discourse. The selected materials provided the reading public, school pupils, and later internet users (netizens) with knowledge and stories about Wang as a former leader of the Nanjing government. Wang was never officially valorised in mainland China. Nonetheless, Li

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<sup>784</sup> For analyses of the relevant trials in post-war China, see: Yun Xia, "Engendering Contempt for Collaborators: Anti-Hanjian Discourse Following the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945." *Journal of Women's History* 25, no. 1 (Spring, 2013): 111-134; Zanasi, Margherita, "Globalizing Hanjian: The Suzhou Trials and the Post-World War II Discourse on Collaboration." *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 3 (2008): 731-51; Yun Xia, *Down with Traitors: Justice and Nationalism in Wartime China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017. Both scholars choose to use the Chinese *pinyin* "hanjian" directly, instead of applying the English translations as either "traitor of the Chinese people" or, less directly, "collaborator," because neither translation seems to capture the complexity and the social meanings behind this term.

Zhiyu, a researcher based at the University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, published a monograph in 2014 in which she tries to provide a more balanced account of Wang's political life and investigate the choices Wang made without simply attaching the *hanjian* label to Wang.<sup>785</sup> Li's book was published in Hong Kong by Oxford University Press, and remains unavailable in the mainland Chinese book market. Nonetheless, this book attracted 368 reviews on the Chinese online platform Douban.com and received an overall mark of 9.0/10.0, with 94 per cent of the reviewers giving positive comments.<sup>786</sup> Narrating Wang's life from a near-martyr to a traitor, Li's writing is also a rare Chinese account in which Wang, like Li Xin suggested, being portrayed as a "good person" (好人 *haor en*) who "turned bad" (变坏 *bian huai*).<sup>787</sup>

The collective memory of Wang Jingwei, however, has always been multifarious. In addition to examining the narratives surrounding Wang Jingwei, this chapter also explores the reception and response to these narratives, going beyond a mere examination of their presentations. While Wang Jingwei may not have been extensively featured in history books, museum exhibits, or mainstream history curricula in mainland China, unlike national figures such as Sun Yat-sen or Yuan Shikai, his life and stories have garnered significant public interest, if not more so than the historical figures previously analysed. The last section of this chapter shows that, between 2014 and 2020, internet users who explicitly showed sympathy for his desperate choice during the war, while others saw him as ambitious and greedy. Many believe that Wang was a traitor and a nationalist at the same time. A website user defines Wang Jingwei as a "good-looking,

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<sup>785</sup> Li Zhiyu 李志毓, *警弦: 汪精卫的政治生涯 Alarmed Strings: Wang Jingwei's Political Career* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>786</sup> Douban Books 豆瓣读书, "警弦 *Alarmed Strings*,"

<https://book.douban.com/subject/25983635/>, accessed on 20 May 2023.

<sup>787</sup> Li 李, "关于民国人物研究的若干问题 [Some Issues on the Study of Republican Personages]," 109.

literary, and complex-minded *hanjian*” and received the largest number of agreed reactions from other users among the 314 answers to the question “How to assess Wang Jingwei?”<sup>788</sup>

Before diving into the opinions about Wang Jingwei expressed by the generation of internet users, this chapter firstly analyses the Chinese scholarly publications in the 1980s, tracing the journey from scholarly to public history, especially educational works, to popular perceptions. These publications were the earlier works aiming at providing a more comprehensive account of Wang Jingwei based on the given historical sources. The research found that the two forms of major scholarly publications, journal articles and books, provide slightly different written representations of Wang Jingwei. Furthermore, the flourishing of historical research on the history of the ROC did not translate into renewed knowledge provided by history textbooks or other products of the Chinese educational system. Although academic writers nuanced Wang Jingwei’s actions and ideas, students rarely learn about this controversial historical figure in the classroom. However, the later part of this chapter reveals that the educated public found alternative means to familiarise themselves with the different aspects of Wang Jingwei’s life.

One of the relatively widely circulated means of alternative representations of Wang Jingwei was the re-publication of his poems and the works carried out by Chinese scholars focusing on Wang’s literary achievement.<sup>789</sup> Moreover, the online discussion

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<sup>788</sup> Answer 142 to the question “如何评价汪精卫 [How to assess Wang Jingwei].” Zhihu, 17 December 2016. <https://www.zhihu.com/question/26391434/answers/updated>. Accessed on 27 January 2023.

<sup>789</sup> Wang Jingwei 汪精衛, *雙照樓詩詞藁 Shuangzhao lou shici gao*, Hong Kong: 天地圖書有限公司 Cosmos Books Ltd, 2012.

under the question “How to assess Wang Jingwei?”<sup>790</sup> will be reviewed and analysed to discover some aspects of the netzines’ opinion on the historical figure drawing from the various channels of learning history in the post-1990s PRC. This section focuses on the public debate about how Wang Jingwei should be depicted and presented for his role in Republican History. In the popular sphere, narratives featuring Wang Jingwei are more complicated (although less prevailing) than those of other figures discussed in this thesis. Such a complexity provides a lens into analysing the historical figure whose posthumous reputation was thought to be definite yet is still in the process of being collectively constructed.

#### - *The Evolution of Wang Jingwei’s Reputation in The Republican Era*

The complexity of Wang’s popular image had been planted during the Republican era. The multiple shifts in Wang Jingwei’s living reputation have now been studied closely by Chinese historians and biographers in the past few decades.<sup>791</sup> English scholarship also started to pay more attention to the study of Wang Jingwei in the past few years; some credited the earlier years in his career life and went beyond solely placing him in the context of the Second War World.<sup>792</sup> Chinese biographer Huang Meizhen acknowledged the “glorious beginning (光荣的起点 *guangrong de qidian*)” of

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<sup>790</sup> The question “*Ruhe pinjia Wang Jingwei 如何评价汪精卫.*” Zhihu.

<https://www.zhihu.com/question/26391434/answers/updated>. Accessed on 1 November 2022.

<sup>791</sup> Most of the Chinese studies were published after the 1980s.

<sup>792</sup> For example, see: Yang Zhiyi. “The Road to Lyric Martyrdom: Reading the Poetry of Wang Zhaoming (1883-1944),” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 37 (2015): 135-64; Yang Zhiyi, “A Humanist in Wartime France: Wang Jingwei During the First World War,” *Poetica* 49, no. 1/2 (2017): 163-192; Jeremy E. Taylor, “From Traitor to Martyr: Drawing Lessons from the Death and Burial of Wang Jingwei, 1944,” *Journal of Chinese History* 3, no. 1 (2019): 137-58; Yang Zhiyi. “The Memory of an Assassin and Problems of Legitimacy in the Wang Jingwei Regime (1940-1945),” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 80, no. 1 (2020): 37-83.

Wang Jingwei and that he was “once at the forefront of the overthrow of the Qing Empire and was well known and admired by the people of his time.”<sup>793</sup> In the 1920s, even during the years he spent in France,<sup>794</sup> he had an admirable reputation among the Republican public and the GMD party members. When comparing the three leaders (Mao Zedong, Chiang Kai-shek, and Wang Jingwei) during the Second Sino-Japanese War, Rana Mitter states that Wang was “a more prominent nationalist and revolutionary in his youth than either Mao or Chiang, and served as second in command to the legendary revolutionary Dr Sun Yat-sen.”<sup>795</sup>

Following the inauguration of the RNG in 1940, on top of the old and new popular images of Wang Jingwei, the propagandists working in the puppet Nanjing regime worked on producing and promoting the heroic image of Wang. This heroic image stresses Wang’s earlier experience as a revolutionary and his failed assassination of the Manchurian prince (Zaifeng) to create the notion of “a living martyr” who willingly risked his life for the nation.<sup>796</sup> Moreover, in the last few years of Wang’s life, he identified himself with the 1911 martyrs buried and commemorated in Guangdong.<sup>797</sup>

After he died in 1944, Wang’s body was transported from Japan back to China, followed by a ceremonial burial. Jeremy E. Taylor argues that while organising the burial in 1944, the Nanjing government was clear about making the ceremony comparable to the one given to Sun Yat-sen in 1925.<sup>798</sup> Nevertheless, the attempts to preserve any reputation

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<sup>793</sup> Huang Meizhen 黄美真, ed, *汪偽十汉奸: 汪精卫, 陈公博, 周佛海, 褚民谊, 陈璧君, 罗君强, 王克敏, 王揖唐, 梁鸿志, 李士群* *Wang wei shi han jian: Wang Jingwei, Chen Gongbo, Zhou Fohai, Chu Minyi, Chen Bijun, Luo Junqiang, Wang Kemin, Wang Yitang, Liang Hongzhi, Li Shiqun [The Ten Traitors in the Pseudo-Regime of Wang]* (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Press, 1986), 1.

<sup>794</sup> The poems he wrote during this period was analysed by Yang Zhiyi in Yang, “A Humanist in Wartime France,” 163-192.

<sup>795</sup> Rana Mitter, *China’s War with Japan* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 20.

<sup>796</sup> Yang, “The Road to Lyric Martyrdom,” 136.

<sup>797</sup> Taylor, “From Traitor to Martyr,” 137-158.

<sup>798</sup> Taylor, “From Traitor to Martyr,” 147-149.

Wang Jingwei had left were hardly successful in the years afterwards. The (modest, fragile, and martyr-alike) heroic image to which Wang was once attached nearly disappeared after the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Those who once worked alongside him in the government went through trials, and most of them were sentenced to death penalties as “traitors (*hanjian*).” Both nationalists and communists alike condemned Wang and his supporters.<sup>799</sup> The remaining narrative of Wang Jingwei was mainly about a disgraceful traitor until more recently.

Multiple agents,<sup>800</sup> especially the political parties trying to establish a stable regime during the late Republican period, including the GMD’s Nationalist government, the Communist regime, and the RNG itself, all played essential roles in the process of creating the various popular narratives of Wang Jingwei by producing materials from biographies to more casual remarks and visual representations.

Recent studies in cognitive psychology finds that adults tend to apply a “cognitive shortcut” when forming opinions towards social groups.<sup>801</sup> If we see political parties and their followers as social groups, applying this finding to the Republican political rivalries can indicate that knowing “Wang Jingwei is weak and betrayed the nation” can activate the opposite beliefs about Wang’s rivals, such as “Chiang Kai-shek (or Mao Zedong) is

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<sup>799</sup> Yun Xia’s book analyses some of the individual trials in details, and argues that while Guomindang was in charge of the post-war trials, the CCP played an indirect role in influencing the decisions of these sentences. See: Yun Xia, *Down with Traitors: Justice and Nationalism in Wartime China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017).

<sup>800</sup> Warren Buckland uses the term “agents” in narrative study as those “who control the spectator’s access to the sequence of actions and events.” See: Warren Buckland, *Narrative and Narration: Analyzing Cinematic Storytelling* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), ix.

<sup>801</sup> Kramer, Hannah J., Deborah Goldfarb, Sarah M. Tashjian, and Kristin Hansen Lagattuta, “Dichotomous Thinking About Social Groups: Learning About One Group Can Activate Opposite Beliefs About Another Group.” *Cognitive Psychology* 129 (2021): 1-18.



strong and patriotic.” Intentionally or not, this was once the major role that Wang Jingwei’s biographies played in the public identity formation of his political rivals.

- *Ongoing Narrative Changes in the PRC*

In contemporary China, the stories of Wang Jingwei arguably underwent the process of being reappropriated after the 1980s, during which historians started to raise the question of whether there should be changes or updates in the historical assessments of Wang. This process was more evident among overseas Chinese scholars,<sup>802</sup> but also noticeable in the scholarship in mainland China.<sup>803</sup> Back in 1975, historians Ding Xianjun and Wen Shaohua co-authored the study entitled “Wang Jingwei, a capitulator during the Xinhai Revolution” and accused him of being “a traitor who helped Yuan [Shikai] seize power.”<sup>804</sup> However, in 1988, when Wen Shaohua published a biography of Wang Jingwei, the author toned the accusation down,<sup>805</sup> and in 2016, when a revised version of the book was published, Wang became one of “the men of the year (风云人物 *feng yun*

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<sup>802</sup> For example, see: Wang Ke-wen, “Irreversible Verdict? Historical Assessments of Wang Jingwei in the People’s Republic and Taiwan,” *Twentieth-Century China* 28, no. 1 (2002): 57-81.

<sup>803</sup> Zhao Yeyuan 赵矢元 and Tian Yipeng 田毅鹏, “辛亥革命时期的孙中山和汪精卫 [Sun Yat-sen and Wang Jingwei during the Xinhai Revolution],” *社会科学战线* 1986/04 (1986): 180-187; Huang Ziwei 黄自为, “对汪精卫一生实事求是的评价——读《汪精卫评传》 (A Factual Assessment of Wang Jingwei’s Life - Reading the Biography of Wang Jingwei),” *贵州师范大学学报: 社会科学版* 1989/02 (1989): 109; Hu Chunhui 胡春惠, “汪精卫与‘低调俱乐部’ [Wang Jingwei and the ‘Low Profile Club’],” *抗日战争研究* 1999/01 (1999): 35; Li Wei 李伟, “论汪精卫早期历史的三大疑点 [On three major doubts about Wang Jingwei’s early history],” *长春师范大学学报: 人文社会科学版* 31, no.10 (2013): 42-44; Li Zhiyu 李志毓, “在历史光谱下: 汪精卫研究若干问题评述 [A Review of Some Issues in the Study of Wang Jingwei],” *南京大学学报 Journal of Nanjing University* 2016/02 (2016): 110-118.

<sup>804</sup> Ding Xianjun and Wen Shaohua 丁贤俊 and 闻少华, “辛亥革命时期的一个投降派——汪精卫 [A surrenderist during the Xinhai Revolution - Wang Jingwei],” *吉林大学社会科学学报 Journal of Social Sciences, Jilin University* 6 (1975): 37-45.

<sup>805</sup> Wen Shaohua 闻少华, *汪精卫传 [A Biography of Wang Jingwei]* (Jilin: 新华书店 Xinhua Bookstore, 1988).

*renwu*) during the Xinhai Revolution.”<sup>806</sup> The transition of Wang Jingwei’s reputation in history books aimed at general readers was slow but always in evidence. As indicated by Liu Kang, there was a strong sense of “historical reappropriations and displacements” in the popular culture arena during China’s transformation in popular culture in the 1990s.<sup>807</sup> The development of a new form of popular culture in China also inevitably impacted the transformation of the public’s opinions on Wang Jingwei.

Memorials to Wang’s betrayal that were intended to last in perpetuity have met more nuanced responses in recent years. In 1940, a booklet entitled “Practical Wartime Propaganda Techniques” (战时实用宣传术 *zhanshi shiyong xuanchuan shu*) mentioned a tactic calling on locals to “mould kneeling statues of Wang and his wife, so that the traitorous couple would be left in disgrace for all eternity.”<sup>808</sup> In Chinese culture, the kneeling statues are not merely showing respect or submission to any superior; instead, its cultural symbolism situates in particular in the tale of the national hero Yue Fei (岳飞, 1103-), a general who defeated the Jin army (金兵 *Jin bing*) in the battlefield but was framed by the most infamous *hanjian* (traitor to the Han people) Qin Hui (秦桧, 1091-1155) and lost his life.<sup>809</sup> The most iconic kneeling statues in Chinese history has been the

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<sup>806</sup> Wen Shaohua 闻少华, *汪精卫传 [A Biography of Wang Jingwei]* (Beijing: 团结出版社 Unity Press, 2016).

<sup>807</sup> Liu Kang, “Popular Culture and the Culture of the Masses in Contemporary China.” 123-45. In *Postmodernism and China*. Edited by Arif Dirlik and Xudong Zhang. (New York, USA: Duke University Press, 2000).

<sup>808</sup> Cai Huaqing 蔡槐卿, *战时实用宣传术 [Practical Wartime Propaganda Techniques]*. [Location unknown:] 政治半月刊社, 1940: 145. “发动各地民众, 建立无名英雄墓, 并铸汪逆夫妇跪像, 使奸逆遗臭万年。”

One of such statues was found in a construction site in Shaoxing in 2004. Shi Yu, Yao Qiong, “Shaoxing wachu Wang Jingwei guixiang: Kusang lianhong zuichun wuhua dabang,” [Shaoxing Excavates Kneeling Statue of Wang Jingwei: Tearful, Bound, and Blushing, with puckered lips] *Jinbao xun*, <http://news.sina.com.cn/s/2004-11-09/04594180962s.shtml>, accessed on 17 November 2022.

<sup>809</sup> Huang Jiandong 黄建东 and Huang Feiying 黄飞英, “秦桧跪像历铸 12 次 [Kneeling statue of Qin Junji Cast 12 Times],” *文史天地 Wenshi Tiandi* 9 (2010): 71-72..

set of Qin and his wife, placed in front of tomb of Yue Fei. Building shameful statues was a way to create public memory of the Wang couple. Using stones as the embodiment of traitors (奸逆 *jianni* and 汉奸 *hanjie*), the propagandists expected the hateful memory of Wang and Chen Bijun to persist like that of Qin Hui.<sup>810</sup> In a way, the kneeling statues ensure that the disgraced memory of Wang Jingwei in the 1940s continued to be remembered in the 2010s. One of the sets of kneeling statues that are still present today is placed in the courtyard of the Qi Jiguang (戚继光) Memorial Hall in Taizhou, Zhejiang province.<sup>811</sup> Qi Jiguang was a Ming Dynasty General who fought against the Japanese (known as *wokou* 倭寇) in the 1560s. According to the information provided by the Taizhou government, this set of statues was cast in 1940, and in 1941, and when the Japanese troops arrived at the city, they were destroyed and thrown into a nearby well; the statues were retrieved and repaired by the local government in 1987 and placed in the current location.<sup>812</sup>

The shape and placement of the statues of the Wang couple evoke memories of the hero and traitor back in the 1140s; the location of one set of statues (inside the Qi Jiguang Memorial Hall) brings together the history of Chinese generals defeating Japanese invaders in the 1560s and Japan's invasion in the mid-twentieth century. The collective memories of modern Chinese history are, therefore, further intertwined with a more

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<sup>810</sup> Kneeling statues of Qin Hui and his wife nowadays can still be found in the shrines of Yue Fei. For further discussion, see: Huang Donglian. "Shrines of Yue Fei: Spaces for Creation of Public Memory." *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 37, no. 2-3 (2005): 74–112.

<sup>811</sup> Taizhou Local History Compilation Office 台州市地方志编纂室, "戚继光纪念馆 [Qi Jiguang Memorial Hall]," 台州史志网 Taizhou History Website, 28 June 2019, [http://tzsz.zjtz.gov.cn/art/2019/6/28/art\\_1229142730\\_54204292.html](http://tzsz.zjtz.gov.cn/art/2019/6/28/art_1229142730_54204292.html), accessed on 20 May 2023.

<sup>812</sup> Taizhou Local History Compilation Office 台州市地方志编纂室, "戚继光纪念馆 [Qi Jiguang Memorial Hall]."

distant past, showing that historical narratives and commemorations reinforce national identity and create multiple temporalities of the past.



Figure 41: Pictures of the kneeling statues of Wang Jingwei and Chen Bijun in Wenzhou.<sup>813</sup>

Figure 42: Pictures of the kneeling statues of Wang Jingwei and Chen Bijun in Taizhou.<sup>814</sup>

In the 1980s, Wang Jingwei remained a villainous figure in his biographies; his early achievements have generally been downplayed or ignored to demonstrate his unquestionable wickedness.<sup>815</sup> Meanwhile, other scholars in the 1980s noticed the

<sup>813</sup> Lu Jianguang 鲁剑光, “发现‘叮叮当’ [Discover ‘Ding ding dang’],” 温州新闻 Wenzhou News, 11 May 2006, <http://wznews.66wz.com/system/2006/05/11/100114750.shtml>, accessed on 20 January 2023.

<sup>814</sup> Jiaojiang Release 椒江发布, “藏在椒江巷子里的‘国宝’ [The ‘National Treasure’ Hidden in the Lane of Jiaojiang],” 澎湃 The Paper, 23 August 2020, [https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_8858617](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_8858617), accessed on 20 January 2023.

<sup>815</sup> For example: Huang Meizhen, and Zhang Yun, 黄美真, 张云 eds., 汪精卫集团投敌 [Wang Jingwei's group defecting to the enemy] (Shanghai: 上海人民出版社 Shanghai People's Press, 1984); Huang Meizhen 黄美真, ed, 汪偽十汉奸: 汪精卫, 陈公博, 周佛海, 褚民谊, 陈璧君, 罗君强, 王克敏, 王揖唐, 梁鸿志, 李士群 [The Ten Traitors in the Pseudo-Regime of Wang] (Shanghai: 上海人民出版社 Shanghai People's Press, 1986);

absence of this critical personage in modern Chinese history and produced materials and written works containing the early years of Wang's political career.<sup>816</sup> Wang Jingwei's poems and the remnants of his acclaimed depiction were re-discovered and hence brought about a romantic notion of him around the 2010s and later in mainland China.<sup>817</sup> Such a romantic image also features his good-looking appearance. For example, on 31 October

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Zhu Qiufeng 朱秋枫, compiled, *金陵别梦 大汉奸汪精卫传闻* [*Rumours of the Great Traitor Wang Jingwei*] (Hangzhou: 浙江文艺出版社 Zhejiang Literature and Art Publishing House, 1987); Fudan University Modern Chinese History Research Centre 复旦大学历史系中国现代史研究室, eds, *汪精卫汉奸政权的兴亡: 汪伪政权史研究论集* [*The Rise and Fall of Wang Jingwei's Traitorous Regime: A Collection of Studies on the History of the Pseudo-Regime of Wang*] (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 1987); Wen 闻, *汪精卫传* [*A Biography of Wang Jingwei*], 1988; Li Li 李理 and Xia Chao 夏潮, *汪精卫评传* [*Review and Biography of Wang Jingwei*] (Wuhan: 武汉出版社 Wuhan Publishing House, 1988); Cai Dejin 蔡德金, *汪精卫评传* [*Review and Biography of Wang Jingwei*] (Chengdu: 四川人民出版社 Sichuan People's Press, 1988); Wang Yungao 王云高, *汪精卫叛国前后* [*Wang Jingwei before and after his treason*] (Beijing: 中国华侨出版社 China Huaqiao Publishing House, 1991); Wang Guangyuan 王光远 and Jiang Zhongqiu 姜中秋, *陈璧君与汪精卫* [*Chen Bijun and Wang Jingwei*] (Beijing: 中国青年出版社 China Youth Publishing House, 1992).

<sup>816</sup> For example, The Research Committee on Literature and History of the Beijing Municipal Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference 中国人民政治协商会议北京市委员会文史资料研究委员会, ed. *文史资料选编* 第 14 辑 [*Selected Documents in Literature and History*] Series 14 (Beijing: 北京出版社 Beijing Publishing House, 1982); Chen Xulu 陈旭麓 ed, *中国近代史词典* [*A Dictionary of Modern Chinese History*] (Shanghai: 上海辞书出版社 Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 1982); The Editorial Team, *中学生历史手册 History Handbook for Secondary School Students* (Zhengzhou: 河南人民出版社 Henan People's Press, 1982); Li Xin 李新 and Ren Yimin 任一民, eds, *辛亥革命时期的历史人物* [*Historical figures during the Xinhai Revolution*] (Beijing: 中国青年出版社 Chinese Youth Publishing House, 1983); Zhang Qiqian 张奇谦, *中国通史讲稿 下 近代部分* [*Lectures on the General History of China Modern section*], (Beijing: 北京大学出版社 Beijing University Press, 1984).

<sup>817</sup> Yu Yingshi 余英时, "序言 Preface," in Wang 汪, *雙照樓詩詞藁 Shuangzhao lou shici gao*, 2012, 6-30.

In the English-writing scholarship, Wang Jingwei as a romantic figure was mentioned as early as 1964; see: Howard L. Boorman, "Wang Ching-Wei: China's Romantic Radical," *Political Science Quarterly* 79 no.4 (1964): 504-525. Other overseas scholars working on his representation in the late Republic and the PRC also acknowledge Wang's appearance; for example: Jonathan Henshaw, "Serving the Occupation State: Chinese Elites, Collaboration, and the Problem of History in Post-war China," PhD diss., (British Columbia: The University of British Columbia, 2019), 16.

2014, one Chinese netizen quoted Xu Zhimo's published diary: "I saw him (Wang Jingwei) once in 1918 on a ship in Nanjing and he was a beautiful man; so lovely! [Hu] Shizhi 胡适 said if he was a woman, he would love him with all his heart; now that he is a man... he loves him too!"<sup>818</sup> This is one of the answers posted on Zhihu (知乎), a Chinese social question-and-answer website, to the question "How to assess Wang Jingwei?"<sup>819</sup> Other questions and answers on Zhihu regarding the evaluation of Wang Jingwei by the users will be discussed in the later part of this chapter.

In the 2000s and 2010s, a growing body of research has shed light on Wang Jingwei's significant impact on Republican Chinese history, despite the ambiguous and controversial narratives surrounding his legacy. However, public opinion on Wang Jingwei remains divided, as evidenced by the reinstallation of kneeling statues depicting the Wang couple or the numerous discussions on the question-and-answer platform Zhihu, which has generated 314 responses. In contemporary occasions that commemorate the series of events in the Republican era, such as the revolutions leading to the establishment of the Republic, the subsequent state-building process, or the wartime years, Wang Jingwei's role as an individual or as a member of the Nationalist government continues to be either neglected or summarily dismissed as that of a *hanjian*, a traitor.

#### - *Writing Republican "Villains": Chinese Biographies and Scholarly Works*

There is no clear evidence of Wang Jingwei in historical research or general history readings produced in the seventeen years after the domination of Marxism

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<sup>818</sup> Lu Xiaoman 陸小曼 ed, Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, *志摩日記 Zhimo's Diary*, Shanghai 上海: 晨光出版公司, 1947, 28. <https://taiwanebook.ncl.edu.tw/zh-tw/book/NCL-002577161/reader>. Accessed on 3 January 2023.

<sup>819</sup> Zhihu users both ask and answer questions; while a question is asked, multiple users can provide answer in the webpage containing the question.

historiography in the newly established PRC. It is commonly agreed that the Cultural Revolution period was a pause of scholarly research and publication, except for what was selected to serve political needs. Thus, this chapter takes the 1980s as the focus to investigate the biographies and scholarly works on Wang Jingwei, as writings in the period set out the base of interpretations of Wang in the following decades and represent the official historical narrative which remains today. It was also the first period when historians could use the abundant materials in the capital and provincial archives in the mainland.

Moreover, the findings of this chapter suggest that the so-called “official narrative” was not one-sided in the 1980s. Publications for researchers, general readers, and school pupils followed the guidelines set out by the authorities in the PRC; however, the guidelines changed according to the different groups of the intended audience. In particular, written works published in academic journals on the assessment of Wang Jingwei developed some nuance; meanwhile, biographies and other history books attracting both scholars and public readers adopted the definition of Wang Jingwei as a traitor (*hanjian*) but discussed more of his personal life and some of his humanitarian side; finally, the history education for *Gaokao* (university entry exam) candidates in this period largely dismissed Wang’s role in history and rarely featured him in the teaching and learning.

In 1986, a collective biography edited by Fudan University was published,<sup>820</sup> and it contains ten figures, all of whom were deemed “traitors to the nation (*hanjian*)” and

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<sup>820</sup> Huang 黄, ed, *汪偽十汉奸* [*The Ten Traitors in the Pseudo-Regime of Wang*]. The editor Huang Meizhen (黄美真) is specialising in the history of occupied Shanghai and (co-)authored other books on Wang Jingwei and his regime. For example, see: 黄美真 Huang Meizhen, *汪精卫集团投敌* [*Wang Jingwei’s clique’ defection to the enemy*]

dismissed during the politically repressed era between the 1950s and 1970s. These figures were grouped and given the title “The Ten Traitors in the Pseudo-Regime of Wang (*The Ten Traitors*) (*Wang wei shi hanjian 汪偽十汉奸*),” providing a moral lesson to the public readers.<sup>821</sup> The method of writing collective biography outside China was developed by feminist scholars in Germany,<sup>822</sup> and, as a study method, it “does not generate knowledge about an individual; rather, collective biography generates knowledge about how an individual is part of the social.”<sup>823</sup> In addition, the practice of writing about historical figures collectively and compiling them into a grand history book is rooted in both Chinese and European historical writings; while biographical writings (纪传体 *Jizhuanti*) in dynastic China were treated as the Official History (正史 *Zhengshi*), the Greco-Roman collective biographies often falls into the literature category.<sup>824</sup> In terms of the format and content, *The Ten Traitors* embodies the concept of

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(Shanghai: 上海人民出版社 Shanghai People’s Press, 1984); ---, *伪廷幽影录 [Recording the Shadow of the Pseudo-government]* (Beijing: 中国文史出版社 China Literature and History Press, 1991); ---, and Zhang Yun 张云, *汪精卫集团叛国投敌记 [Wang Jingwei’s group’s treasonous defection to the enemy]* (Henan: 河南人民出版社 Henan People’s Press, 1987).

<sup>821</sup> Huang 黄, ed, *汪偽十汉奸 [The Ten Traitors in the Pseudo-Regime of Wang]*.

<sup>822</sup> Frigga Haug, et al. *Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory*. Translated from German by E. Carter. (New York: Verso, 1999).

<sup>823</sup> Roberta Hawkins, Karen Falconer Al-Hindi, Pamela Moss, and Leslie Kern, “Practicing collective biography,” *Geography Compass* 10, no. 4 (2016): 165-178. The idea is from Bronwyn Davies and Susanne Gannon, “The practices of collective biography.” In *Doing collective biography*, edited by Bronwyn Davies and Susanne Gannon (London: Open University Press, 2016), 1–15.

<sup>824</sup> Wang Chengjun 王成军, “中西古典时代传记史学观念之比较—以司马迁《史记》与普鲁塔克《希腊罗马名人传》为例 [A Comparison of Biographical-Historical Concepts in the Chinese and Western Classical Era: The Case of Sima Qian’s *Shiji* and Plutarch’s Biographies of Greco-Roman Personalities],” *传记研究 Biographical Literature* 8 (2022): 146-157.



the modern European collective biography developed in the 1980s instead of the *Jizhuanti* history books in China.<sup>825</sup>

In writing Wang Jingwei's biography, the main question Huang Meizhen was concerned about is: "How did Wang Jingwei degenerate from his glorious beginnings to become a national sinner and be listed in the traitor's biography?"<sup>826</sup> The question shows that the biographer was looking for the shift of characteristics in Wang and did not treat him as "an unchangeable character (静止的人物 *jingzhi de renwu*),"<sup>827</sup> although he applies a moral judgement (glorious/sinful) to the beginning and end of Wang's life. Another grand biography of Wang published in 1988 (*汪精卫评传 Wang Jingwei pinzhuan*) adopted the same approach - in which Wang's belief and personality was not fixed but changeable according to the circumstance he was in.<sup>828</sup> The chapter on Wang in *The Ten Traitors* also blurs the boundary between Wang's personal and political life,

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<sup>825</sup> For the discussion of the adoption of western format in modern Chinese historiography, see: Q. Edward Wang 王晴佳, "中国史学的西'体'中用: 新式历史教科书和中国近代历史观之改变 [Where Is Sima Qian? The Acceptance of Western Narrative History in Modern Chinese Historiography]," *Journal of Peking University: Philosophy and Social Sciences* 51, No. 1, (2014): 104-114; Wang Chengjun 王成军, *中西古典史学的对话: 司马迁与普鲁塔克传记史学观念之比较 [Dialogue between Chinese and Western Classical Historiography: A Comparison of Sima Qian's and Plutarch's Conceptions of Biographical Historiography]* (Beijing: 中国社会科学出版社 China Social Science Press, 2009).

<sup>826</sup> Huang 黄, *汪偽十汉奸 [The Ten Traitors in the Pseudo-Regime of Wang]*, 1. "汪精卫是怎样从光荣的起点, 墮落为民族的罪人而列名于汉奸传世的? 他一生所走的道路, 将引起人们的思考。"

<sup>827</sup> The idea was discussed in Li Fangyu 李芳瑜, "史记取材与纪传体的形成 [Materials of Historical Records and Formation of Biography in China]," *渭南师范学院学报 Journal of Weinan Teachers University* 25, no. 7 (2010): 7.

<sup>828</sup> Cai 蔡, *汪精卫评传 Review and Biography of Wang Jingwei*. Cai also published other works on Wang Jingwei and his regime, including: Cai Dejin 蔡德金, *汪精卫伪国民政府纪事 Chronicle of Wang Jingwei's Pseudo National Government* (Beijing: 中国社会科学出版社 China Social Science Press, 1982); --, *历史的怪胎: 汪精卫国民政府 The Freak of History: Wang Jingwei's National Government* (Guangxi: 广西师范大学出版社 Guangxi Normal University Press, 1993); -- ed, *周佛海日記 Diary of Zhou Fuhai* (中国社会科学出版社 China Social Science Press, 1989).

which is a common approach in biographies of Republican political figures written during and before the 1980s, as shown in the biographies of Sun Yat-sen and Yuan Shikai.<sup>829</sup>

In *The Ten Traitors*, Wang Jingwei's childhood was introduced as a period when a few sets of contrast appeared, which led him to develop the contradictory personality shown in his political career.<sup>830</sup> "The youngest son of his parents, Wang Jingwei was a good-looking, intelligent, well-educated boy who was loved by his parents. But the good times did not last long." After the death of his parents, Wang was raised by his oldest brother, who was strict with him. The biographer states that there was a connection between Wang's childhood experience and how he became "modest from the appearance but narrow-minded in reality," later had "low self-esteem but was ambitious to be outstanding," and how he ended up being an "inconsistent and unpredictable" person.<sup>831</sup> Huang Meizhen did not provide a definite statement to whether Wang betrayed Sun Yat-sen and the revolutionaries and favoured the Qing prince Shanqi during his imprisonment in 1910. However, Huang pointed out that "this stain on the soul (Wang's communication with Shanqi) is the trace of Wang Jingwei's later failure to uphold the yellow flower (revolutionary spirit) in history."<sup>832</sup>

Although using a more comprehensive range of archives and historical documents<sup>833</sup> and showing some nuances in Wang's earlier life and career choices, *The*

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<sup>829</sup> Analysed in the earlier chapters. For example: Zhao 赵, *孙中山 Sun Yat-sen*; Huang 黄, *孙中山 Sun Yat-sen*; Chen 陳, *介紹竊國大盜袁世凱 [Introducing Yuan Shikai, the Thief of the Nation]*.

<sup>830</sup> 黄 Huang, *汪偽十汉奸 [The Ten Traitors in the Pseudo-Regime of Wang]*, 3.

<sup>831</sup> Huang 黄, *汪偽十汉奸 [The Ten Traitors in the Pseudo-Regime of Wang]*, 3. "幼年时期的生活处境, 对于后来汪精卫的外表谦和而心地狭窄, 懦弱自卑而又要出人头地, 以及首鼠两端, 反覆无常的矛盾性格之形成, 不无关系。"

<sup>832</sup> Huang 黄, *汪偽十汉奸 [The Ten Traitors in the Pseudo-Regime of Wang]*, 17. "所以, 当时就有人指出: '兆铭在狱时, 固已投降民政部大臣善耆矣。' 这种心灵深处的污点, 正是汪精卫后来不能保持黄花晚节的历史痕迹。"

<sup>833</sup> The editor lists in the preface that the book references "the archives of the Pseudo-Regime of Wang, cases of the Pseudo-Regime of Wang traitor trials, domestic and foreign

*Ten Traitors* provides a fixed narrative of Wang Jingwei as a historical villain and the leading *hanjian* of his time. “Even though Wang Jingwei’s grave was blasted into oblivion in 1941,” the last paragraph of this 128-page short biography writes, “his reputation as a traitor to his country, like that of Qin Hui in the Song Dynasty, has been firmly nailed to the pillar of shame of history for all eternity!”<sup>834</sup> The main purpose of *The Ten Traitors* was to introduce the life stories of Wang and his political followers and present a moral lesson to the readers. Wang Jingwei’s childhood and youthhood were written based on personal documents or story-telling type of writing, and the period of the puppet government is based on historical documents and scholarly writings.

The second book for analysis is a collective work published in 1987 using archival sources to reconstruct Wang’s regime, *The Rise and Fall of Wang Jingwei’s Traitorous Regime* (汪精卫汉奸政权的兴亡 *Wang Jingwei han jian zheng quan de xing wang*); this book is compiled by the Fudan University Modern Chinese History Research Centre, which seemingly aligns more closely to the Marxist historical narrative explained by Mao Zedong.<sup>835</sup> In this work, class struggle was the main motivation behind Wang Jingwei’s act of betrayal, and “with the victory of the Great War of Resistance Against Japan, the Chinese people have long swept it (Wang Jingwei’s Traitorous Clique) into the dustbin of

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writings on the subject, as well as newspapers, magazines and books published during the anti-Japanese war. We have also used interview materials to investigate certain facts.”

Huang 黄, 汪偽十汉奸 [*The Ten Traitors in the Pseudo-Regime of Wang*], Preface.

<sup>834</sup> Huang 黄, 汪偽十汉奸 [*The Ten Traitors in the Pseudo-Regime of Wang*], 128. “抗战胜利后, 国民党军政机关纷纷迁回南京, 一九四六年一月中旬, 在蒋介石即将返回南京之时, 国民党当局指令工兵某部炸开了汪墓, 将汪的棺材连同尸体运往清凉山火葬场, 全部火化。汪精卫虽尸骸无存, 化为一缕黑烟, 但他的卖国臭名却同宋代的秦桧一样, 被牢牢钉在历史的耻辱柱上, 遗臭万年!”

<sup>835</sup> 复旦大学历史系中国现代史研究室 Fudan University Modern Chinese History Research Centre, eds, 汪精卫汉奸政权的兴亡 [*The Rise and Fall of Wang Jingwei’s Traitorous Regime*], 1987

history forever.”<sup>836</sup> Furthermore, the Fudan University Modern Chinese History Research Centre applies more clearly a contemporary agenda in studying the Re-organised government of Wang:

Aggression will be defeated, and traitors will perish. All invaders and their lackeys will not end well. The power of the people is invincible. The study of the history of the Wang regime is very useful for people to understand this pattern of history, to enlighten future generations, to guide the future, to arouse the patriotic spirit of hundreds of millions of people on both sides of the (Taiwan) Strait, to achieve the reunification of the motherland and to rejuvenate the great nation of China.<sup>837</sup>

This volume compiled by Fudan University was primarily intended for an academic audience, as shown in the subtitle “A Collection of Studies on the History of the Pseudo-Regime of Wang”, nevertheless, the Introduction of the book extends the audience into the general public by aiming at “hundreds of millions of people.”<sup>838</sup> The political agenda concerning the situation of Taiwan was also the key message delivered by the state in commemorating Sun Yat-sen in the 1980s and further stressed in the 2000s and later.<sup>839</sup>

Huang Meizhen, the editor of *The Ten Traitors*, also authored three out of the eleven chapters in *The Rise and Fall of Wang Jingwei's Traitorous Regime*.<sup>840</sup> In the chapter discussing the reasons that Wang Jingwei's clique went over to the enemy (投敌

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<sup>836</sup> Fudan University, eds, *汪精卫汉奸政权的兴亡* [*The Rise and Fall of Wang Jingwei's Traitorous Regime*], 2. “随着伟大抗日战争的胜利，中国人民早已把它永远扫进了历史的垃圾堆。”

<sup>837</sup> Fudan University, eds, *汪精卫汉奸政权的兴亡* [*The Rise and Fall of Wang Jingwei's Traitorous Regime*], 5. “侵略必败，汉奸必亡。一切侵略者及其走狗都没有好下场，人民的力量是不可战胜的。汪伪政权史的研究，对于人们了解这个历史规律，启迪后人，指导将来，唤起海峡两岸亿万人民的爱国主义精神，实现祖国统一，振兴中华大业，是很有教益的。”

<sup>838</sup> Fudan University, eds, *汪精卫汉奸政权的兴亡* [*The Rise and Fall of Wang Jingwei's Traitorous Regime*], 5.

<sup>839</sup> James Reilly, “Remember History, Not Hatred: Collective Remembrance of China's War of Resistance to Japan.” *Modern Asian studies* 45, no. 2 (2011): 463–490.

<sup>840</sup> Fudan University, eds, *汪精卫汉奸政权的兴亡* [*The Rise and Fall of Wang Jingwei's Traitorous Regime*], 40-68, 68-127, 350-393.

*tou di*), Huang disagreed with the explanation given by John Hunter Boyle or the writings of Wang's regime by Jin Xiongbai (金雄白). Boyle's book was translated into Chinese and published by The Commercial Press in 1978;<sup>841</sup> Jin once worked as a high-ranked officer in the RNG and later published (with the pen name Zhu Zijia) a serial on Wang Jingwei's regime in the *Chunqiu* Journal based in Hong Kong.<sup>842</sup> The lengthy monograph (with more than one million words) based on Jin's serial articles is still a popular read 50 years later; after being republished in 1971, 1974, 1984, 1988 by different publishers in Hong Kong or Taiwan, it was reprinted twice in Taiwan in 2014 and 2020.<sup>843</sup> Nonetheless, the various prints of Jin's book were all published in Hong Kong or Taiwan, thus unable to reach a wider audience in the mainland. Huang quoted and objected to Boyle's translated words describing Wang as a person with the contradicting characteristics of being "despicable and selfish" and "noble and patriotic" at the same time.<sup>844</sup> Jin, on the other hand, disclosed that Wang "was never a man who would willingly sell out his country," whose opinion Huang deems as against the historical reality.<sup>845</sup>

To refute Boyle's two-sided assessment of Wang Jingwei and his political followers, Huang Meizhen used the example of Luo Junqiang (罗君强), who stated in an autobiographic article<sup>846</sup> that he decided to work with Zhou Fohai, "a powerful and

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<sup>841</sup> John Hunter Boyle, *中日战争时期的通敌内幕 (1937-1945) [China and Japan at war, 1937-1945; the politics of collaboration]*, (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1978): 8.

<sup>842</sup> Zhu Zijia 朱子家, *汪政权的开场与收场 [The opening and closing of the Wang regime]*, (Hong Kong: 春秋杂志社 Chunqiu, 1964), 10.

<sup>843</sup> The latest version is available on the Eslite 诚品 Online bookstore: <https://www.eslite.com/product/1001112632873739>, accessed on 17 November 2022.

<sup>844</sup> Huang Meizhen 黄美真, "汪精卫 Wang Jingwei," in *汪精卫汉奸政权的兴亡 The Rise and Fall of Wang Jingwei's Traitorous Regime*, edited by Fudan University, 48.

<sup>845</sup> Huang 黄, "汪精卫 Wang Jingwei," 48.

<sup>846</sup> Huang 黄 ed, Luo 罗君强, *伪廷幽影录 [Recording the Shadow of the Pseudo-government]*.

influential partner (有权有势的伙伴 *you quan you shi de huoban*),” to increase the chance of “making a name for himself (搞出一点名堂来 *gao chu yidian mingtang lai*).”<sup>847</sup> Luo’s words, in Huang’s opinion, show that these groups of people became *hanjians* only because they were hungry for power and that they could hardly have a “noble and patriotic” side.<sup>848</sup> Regarding Jin Xiongbai’s personal comment on Wang Jingwei’s character, Huang invalidated it on the ground of Mao Zedong’s theory on “Capitulationism in the War of Resistance.” The term “Capitulationism (投降主义 *Touxiang Zhuyi*)” was used by Mao in his interview with James Bertram in October 1937,<sup>849</sup> and was discussed in more detail as “National Capitulationism (民族投降主义)” in a report Mao made in Yan’an in November 1937.<sup>850</sup> In Mao’s theory, the “big landlords and big bourgeoisie” inevitably tended towards capitulations and thus the right wing was “the nerve centre of national capitulationism.”<sup>851</sup> Based on Mao’s concept, Huang argues that it is simply incorrect to say that Wang “was never a man who would willingly sell out his country,” and that the statement was contrary to historical reality.<sup>852</sup> The argument Huang made was in a way similar to the accusation of “historical nihilism,” a term used

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<sup>847</sup> Huang 黄, “汪精卫 Wang Jingwei,” 55.

<sup>848</sup> Huang 黄, “汪精卫 Wang Jingwei,” 55-56.

<sup>849</sup> Mao Zedong, “Interview With The British Journalist James Bertram (和英国记者贝特兰的谈话),” 25 October 1937, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_05.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_05.htm), accessed on 22 November 2022. This term was not included in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*; Tom Bottomore, Laurence Harris, V. G. Kiernan eds, *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Hoboken, New Jersey: Blackwell Publishers, 1992.

<sup>850</sup> Mao Zedong, “The Situation And Tasks In The Anti-Japanese War After The Fall Of Shanghai And Taiyuan,” 12 November 1937, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_06.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_06.htm), accessed on 22 November 2022.

<sup>851</sup> [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_06.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_06.htm)

<sup>852</sup> Huang 黄, “汪精卫 Wang Jingwei,” 52-56.

by the Chinese authorities since the 1990s, and frequently brought up as grounds for the online censorship in the 2000s and later.<sup>853</sup>

The ways of making similar arguments against non-officially approved historical narratives in the 1980s and later show the continuity of how the state and state-sponsored historians recognise counter-narratives of the past. In short, terms embodying ideological ideas were addressed by the leadership and frequently used in their speeches afterwards to reinforce the importance of the terms to the wider population, following which historians and scholars in universities picked up the message and applied it to their interpretations and writings of history. Moreover, terms and discourses like “national capitulationism” and “historical nihilism” often have ambiguous meanings and can be used in different ways as it suits, and the interpreters would turn to the leaders’ speeches for references of the “correct” interpretations.

However, Huang and others’ account of Wang Jingwei provides more information about Wang’s earlier life and presents the existing counterarguments. Writing about Wang at considerable length provides the authors with space for nuanced analyses. By refuting counter-narratives, namely the works by overseas and Hong Kong-based authors, which displayed the positive effects of Wang Jingwei’s activities and praised his personality, Huang Meizhen and the editorial team from Fudan University showed their considerations of alternative interpretations of the historical figure. Therefore, the discussion in Huang’s writing could also potentially lead the readers to other alternative sources of reading, which Huang and the mainland authors disagree with.

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<sup>853</sup> Xu Jian, Qian Gong, and Wen Yin. “Maintaining Ideological Security and Legitimacy in Digital China: Governance of Cyber Historical Nihilism.” *Media international Australia incorporating Culture & policy* 185, no. 1 (2022): 26–40.

The reinvention of stories about Wang Jingwei was influenced heavily by the popularity of the history of the Republic of China in the PRC. The editor of Zhonghua Bookstore (中华书局 *Zhonghua Shuju*) summarised in 1988 that, between 1981 and 1986, there were more than 400 newly published academic monographs on modern Chinese history, over 10,000 scholarly articles on the topic, and more than 180 freshly founded historical societies.<sup>854</sup>

Moreover, historian Li Xin 李新 noted in 1985:

The Republic of China is the closest to us, and it is very different from the new China; its history is the history of the society belonging to the exploitation system (剥削制度社会 *boxue zhidu shehui*), and it is the last history of the old China;<sup>855</sup> if people want to understand the old China and the old society, the first thing they must understand is the history of the Republic of China. I think people are so eager to read books on the history of the Republic of China not because the Republic of China history books are exceptionally well written but because the general public has this need.<sup>856</sup>

There was a high demand for popular history reading materials, as Li noted.

Academic historians were supplying this demand, and, as a result, scholarly writings were also aimed at public audiences, as demonstrated by the Fudan University's volume on Wang Jingwei's regime and the following history books on the history of the ROC. Moreover, empirical studies found that Chinese citizens in post-Mao society were looking to construe new identities through historical narratives,<sup>857</sup> and that popular culture on

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<sup>854</sup> Li Kan 李侃, "历史学要走出史学界 [Historiography should go beyond the field of the historian]," *Republican Archives 民國檔案* 1988(01): 78-79.

<sup>855</sup> Western scholars never fully adopted the term "new China (新中国)," and researchers raised attention to the continuities instead of the dissimilarities of pre-and post-1949 China. For example, see: Suzanne Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China: The Search for an Ideal Development Model*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

<sup>856</sup> Li Xin 李新, "The Preface to *Outline of the History of the Republic of China* (《中华民国史纲》序)," *Republican Archives 民國檔案* 1985(02), 103. 张宪文 Zhang Xianwen and others eds, *中华民国史纲 Outline of the History of the Republic of China*, Henan: Henan People's Publishing House 河南人民出版社, 1985.

<sup>857</sup> For the analysis of such experience in the northern Manchuria, see: Martin T. Fromm, *Borderland Memories: Searching for Historical Identity in Post-Mao China*. Cambridge



historical writings was booming.<sup>858</sup> In the context of education reform, researchers in China also acknowledged that “[i]n this new millennium, the ‘old’ China is experiencing an era of restoration, revival and prosperity.”<sup>859</sup> When “the general public has the need” to read about the history of the Republic of China, the state ceded some control to historical publications, and thus some topics that had been avoided in the decades before could be explored.

In 1986, Li Xin published a commentary piece on “Some Issues on the Study of Republican Personages” and addressed the guidance as to how to write about characters of “reactionary forces (反动力量 *fandong lilian*)” such as Chiang Kai-shek, Hu Hanmin (another GMD politician), and Wang Jingwei. Li advised authors not to avoid historical figures like these but write about their evil characteristics. “The key is to give them some kind of ‘monuments’, some sort of ‘biographies.’ It’ll be a completely different matter if you glorify and worship them. Wang Jingwei is a big traitor; he should be given a biography so that his traitorous crimes will remain in infamy.”<sup>860</sup> Furthermore, Li provided his definition of whether a Republican character should be considered reactionary: “The criterion should be whether they advance or hinder the advancement of history under the then historical conditions.” Li’s opinion above demonstrates the standard Marxist history and provides insights into the desired academic approach to writing the “reactionary forces” in mainland China. However, such principle can be amended or simplified, to produce a more easily comprehended historical account for the

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Studies in the History of the People’s Republic of China. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

<sup>858</sup> For cinematic representation of socialist China developed in post-Mao China, see: Chris Berry, *Postsocialist Cinema in Post-Mao China: The Cultural Revolution after the Cultural Revolution*. Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004.

<sup>859</sup> Janette Ryan ed, *Education Reform in China: Changing Concepts, Contexts and Practices*, Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011, 62.

<sup>860</sup> Li Xin 李新, “关于民国人物研究的若干问题 [Some Issues on the Study of Republican Personages],” *Republican Archives 民國檔案* 1986(01): 106.

public. Li further addressed that, for the Republican history after the Manchurian Incident in 1931, the analysis of the characters' right and wrong should be based on whether they were anti-Japanese or not,<sup>861</sup> thus providing a much narrower principle than the Marxist one, in theory making it easier to follow and eliminating potential debates. Under such criteria set by official historians in 1986, Wang Jingwei was unmistakably an evil figure for his collaborative activities with Japan and the establishment of the puppet government (RNG).

Furthermore, with Lin Xin overseeing the compilation of the history of the ROC at the Institute of Modern History,<sup>862</sup> the scholarly research of the Republican era in mainland China after the 1970s treats political leaders of the ROC as the main subject of writing so that it would not be identical to the already existed Party History (党史 *Dang Shi*) and Revolutionary History (革命史 *Geming Shi*).<sup>863</sup> The need to distinguish the History of the ROC (民国史 *Minguo Shi*) from other histories of the same period was also stressed by Li Zongyi 李宗一.<sup>864</sup> Li Zongyi was one of the authors contributing to the eight-volume *Biographies of History of the Republic of China* (中华民国史人物传 *Zhonghua Minguo Shi Renwu Zhuan*) and sixteen volume *History of the Republic of*

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<sup>861</sup> Li 李, “关于民国人物研究的若干问题 [Some Issues on the Study of Republican Personages],” 108.

<sup>862</sup> The project was appointed to Lin Xin by Zhou Enlai and Dong Biwu in 1972, according to the records of the Chongqing government. Chen Zhaoquan 陈朝权, “弃官从学 一心治史: 记重庆籍著名历史学家李新 [The famous Chongqing historian Li Xin, who abandoned his official position to study and devoted himself to history],” *重庆地方志 Chongqing Local Archives* 2021(03), <http://www.cqdfz.cn/shtml/cqdqw3/fzyd/llyj/2022/02/21/685294.shtml>, accessed on 4 December, 2022.

<sup>863</sup> Xinfu 信夫, “近代史研究所中华民国史研究概况 [Overview of research on the history of the Republic of China at the Institute of Modern History],” *Republican Archives 民國檔案* 1985(01): 134-135.

<sup>864</sup> Li Zongyi 李宗一, “近两年来民国史研究的几点进展 [A few progresses in the study of the history of the Republic of China in the last few years],” *Republican Archives 民國檔案* 1987(04): 87-91.

*China* (中华民国史 *Zhonghua Minguo Shi*) compiled by the Institute of Modern History;<sup>865</sup> the publications of these volumes spanned from 1978 to 2011, and the complete collection was published by *Zhonghua Book Company* in 2011.

Chinese historians in the 1980s were assigned with projects of writing a history of the Republic of China, targeting both academic and public audiences, mostly biographies of the political leaders, excluding members of the CCP. Leading historians at that time were concerned about the correct way of giving historical evaluations to figures who were deemed “bad (坏人 *huai ren*)” in Mao’s socialist China.<sup>866</sup> While the class struggle was no longer the sole discourse in China, and those who had been formerly considered bad and banned from historical narrative were included more and more in publications to fulfil the government’s reform agenda and the public’s curiosities and reading demands, a significant historical figure like Wang Jingwei was still discussed within the official guidance for research activities. Wang Jingwei’s government was a “traitorous regime (汉奸政权);”<sup>867</sup> Wang himself was a traitor to the nation;<sup>868</sup> any attempts to moderate Wang’s traitorous crime would be offered a rebuttal.<sup>869</sup> Nevertheless, some freedom was

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<sup>865</sup>中国社会科学院近代史研究所 The Institute of Modern History in Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, *中华民国史人物传 Biographies of History of the Republic of China*, Beijing: 中华书局 *Zhonghua Book*, 2011; —, *中华民国史 History of the Republic of China* ], Beijing: 中华书局 *Zhonghua Book*, 2011.

<sup>866</sup> Li 李, “关于民国人物研究的若干问题 [Some Issues on the Study of Republican Personages],” 109.

<sup>867</sup> Fudan University, eds, *汪精卫汉奸政权的兴亡 [The Rise and Fall of Wang Jingwei’s Traitorous Regime]*.

<sup>868</sup> For more discussions on the concept of *hanjian*, see: Wang Ke 王柯, “‘汉奸’: 想象中的单一民族国家话语 [‘Hanjian’: Imagined discourse of a nation state],” *Twenty-First Century (Hong Kong)* no.83, 2004(06): 63-73; Wu Mi 吴密, “‘汉奸’考辨 [Examination of the ‘hanjian’ Discourse],” *清史研究 The Qing History Journal* 2010/04 (2010): 107-116.

<sup>869</sup> Huang 黄, “汪精卫 Wang Jingwei,” 48.

given to historical writings to be more nuanced; as Li Xin concluded (also quoted in Chapter 5):

The characters in the history of the Republic change a lot, so don't set a man's reputation in stone at once. [...] Don't be like a child watching a play in which the bad guys (red faces) and good guys (white faces) were clear from the beginning and unchanged. Some good people became better and better, such as Sun Yat-sen. Some bad people became worse and worse, such as Yuan Shikai; he was never good, and his evilness peaked when he claimed himself the emperor. Some good people became bad, such as Wang Jingwei.<sup>870</sup>

The space to interpret Wang Jingwei as a “good person (好人 *haoren*)” who “turned bad (变坏 *bianhuai*)” was restricted after all; in the 1980s, journal articles in Chinese rarely addressed Wang Jingwei without the definite traitorous label. On the contrary, general history books and biographies of the Republican era were able to discuss other aspects of Wang's different stages of personal life and career path. Although volumes such as the works compiled by Fudan University or the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (on the history of the ROC and Wang Jingwei's regime) also attracted academic readers, they, under the state's supervision, demonstrated a way to meet the need of the public for obtaining stories of the Republican era which was different from a play where “the bad guys (red faces) and good guys (white faces) were clear from the beginning and unchanged.”<sup>871</sup> Meanwhile, scholars were not encouraged to change the standard historical narrative set by the Party's Congress. Even though they may seem to contradict each other, these freshly produced historical writings in the 1980s all followed

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<sup>870</sup> Li 李, “关于民国人物研究的若干问题 [Some Issues on the Study of Republican Personages],” 109.

<sup>871</sup> Li 李, “关于民国人物研究的若干问题 [Some Issues on the Study of Republican Personages],” 109.

The projects had leading historians and were funded by state agencies. [Sources to be added.] Moreover, such a principle of writing historical figures was raised by Jian Bozai as early as 1963. Jian Bozai 翦伯赞 [Compiled from audio recordings in 1963], “关于历史教学和研究的几个问题 [Several issues concerning the teaching and study of history],” *广西师范大学学报 Journal of Guangxi Normal University*, 1978(4), 15-32

the principle set by the CCP in response to the milieu at that time, with particular concern on discussing men who were powerful and “bad” at the same time.<sup>872</sup> The historians’ works analysed in this chapter were among the most representative in mainland China in the 1980s and the 1990s, published by some of the biggest publishing houses for both academic and general audiences, and demonstrating the officially supported way of writing history. However, volumes dedicated to the writing of Wang Jingwei have been dominated by publications that carry institutional or state propaganda functions. Few other historians or writers published the history or stories about Wang Jingwei in mainland China; the ones published in Taiwan and Hong Kong providing narratives not aligning with the principles above have been refuted by the mainland China authors. Thus, the space to freely discuss the historical “villain” in published works is still narrow. Similarly, there is few documentaries or visual treatments of Wang in films or pop culture; despite the popularity of televisions dramas of the Second Sino-Japanese War (or the “anti-Japanese drama”),<sup>873</sup> and the flourishing market of the “main melody films,”<sup>874</sup> Wang Jingwei is almost never a major character in this type of historical film or television series, and it is impossible for audiences to know more about Wang on screen, except for some clipped and fragmented representations. He is simply often absent.

#### - *The Absence of Wang Jingwei in History Teaching*

In 1979, historian Chen Zhenjiang 陈振江 published “Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Historiography” in the periodical journal *History Teaching* (历史教学 *Lishi*

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<sup>872</sup> “坏人” in the Chinese term, and as addressed by Li Xin.

<sup>873</sup> For a recent study of this sub-genre of TV drama, see: Song Geng 宋耕, “Consuming The Anti-Japanese War On The Tv Screen In China: State Ideology, Market And Audience.” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 49, no. 2 (2017): 1-22.

<sup>874</sup> Stephen Yiu-Wai Chu, *Main Melody Films: Hong Kong Film Directors in China. Edinburgh Studies in East Asian Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022).

*Jiaoxue*). Although, when established in 1951, *History Teaching* was a platform for discussions among history scholars in Chinese universities, the focuses shifted to history teaching and new curriculums in middle schools and high schools, as well as entrance exams for studying history at universities after the discontinuation of publication between 1967 and 1978, when the magazine was resumed in 1979.<sup>875</sup> In the article, Chen Zhenjiang echoes the post-Cultural Revolution trend of bringing back the importance of “the masses (人民群众 *renmin qunzhong*),”<sup>876</sup> in particular, to dispute with treating the ruling class as central characters of modern Chinese history.<sup>877</sup> Another noticeable difference was that, in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese historians started to deliberately avoid the overuse of the past to disparage the present (借古讽今 *Jiegu fengjin*).<sup>878</sup> During the Cultural Revolution, references to history, or the so-called “insinuating historiography” (影射史学 *yingshe shixue*), were typically used to make a point about the present and were used extensively by the “Gang of four” (四人帮 *Si ren bang*).<sup>879</sup> Nonetheless, making insinuations and accusations of the present by discussing the past has had a longer tradition than the Cultural Revolution period, and it was not easily getting rid of in the public discourse as the historians and teachers would have

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<sup>875</sup> “复刊词,” *历史教学 History Teaching*, 1979(1), 78-79.

<sup>876</sup> [Secondary sources to be added, if any] Other primary sources indicating the trend, including the curriculums, exam questions and answers, and highlights for exam review published in the issues of *History Teaching* and other similar journals in 1979.

<sup>877</sup> Chen Zhenjiang 陈振江, “三十年来中国近代历史学发展的情况 [Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Historiography],” *历史教学 History Teaching*, 1979(10), 36-39.

<sup>878</sup> For example, see relevant discussion in Su Shoutong 苏寿桐, “介绍新编中学历史教学大纲 [Introducing the New Secondary School History Syllabus]” *历史教学 History Teaching*, 1979(1), 23-26. This trend of avoiding insinuations, however, was criticised in 1998, as in Qu Lindong 瞿林东, “百年史学断想 (Thoughts on a Century of Historiography),” *世纪论评 Shiji Lunping*, 1998 (1), 72-77.

<sup>879</sup> For example, see: Wang Junyi 王俊义, “历史研究中的古为今用与“四人帮”的影射史学 [The Use of the Past for the Present in Historical Research and the Insinuating Historiography of the “Gang of Four],” *北京师范大学学报(社会科学版)*, 1977/06 (1977): 51-58.

wanted. Because of the difficulty of accessing complete sets of Chinese textbooks when this research was conducted, the below analysis is based on a wide range of secondary sources, from articles discussing the reformed ways of teaching Republican history in the classroom to the published national history exams questions and recommended answers in 1979 and afterwards.

Moreover, both changes in history teaching accounted for the minimised discussion or the absence of people such as Yuan Shikai and Wang Jingwei in introducing history to Chinese pupils. Wang Hongzhi addressed in 1979: “Only the most basic historical knowledge can be included in [secondary] textbooks, and only the most representative historical figures can be included in textbooks.”<sup>880</sup> Another article addressing the issues of the Chinese History textbooks for secondary school also mentioned that certain events and personages, to which historians hold different opinions and the remarks on whom remain debatable, were left out from the textbook’s narrative.<sup>881</sup> To summarise, the early stage of education reform in the late-1970s and the early 1980s resulted in a further dismissal of giving students an in-depth look at Wang Jingwei from the history teaching content.<sup>882</sup> Such a trend was continued (or resumed) in the 2010s after implementing the national secondary school history textbooks and discontinuing the use other versions of textbooks nationwide. In the Ministry of Education

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<sup>880</sup> Wang Hongzhi 王宏志, “略谈在新编中学《中国历史》课本中写历史人物的几个问题 [A few points on writing about historical figures in the new Chinese History textbooks for secondary schools],” *历史教学 History Teaching*, 1979(02), 28-32. Wang was a member of the Chinese History textbook editorial group from the 1960s to the 1990s (excluding the decade of the Cultural Revolution).

<sup>881</sup> Yan Wen 颜文, “略谈新编中学《中国历史》课本近代部分的几个问题 [A few issues in the Modern History section of the new Chinese History textbook for secondary schools],” *历史教学 History Teaching*, 1979(09), 52-55. Yan also stated that the newer textbooks should reflect the latest research outcomes regarding the controversial topics.

<sup>882</sup> Such a trend was continued (or resumed) in the 2010s after implementing the national secondary school history textbooks and discontinuing the use other versions of textbooks nationwide.

compiled Grade 8 history textbook (2016) introducing Chinese history between 1839 and 1949, Wang Jingwei was mentioned twice:

Chiang Kai-shek, Wang Jingwei and other rightists of the Guomindang betrayed the revolution one after another with the support of imperialist forces. ... In July [1927], Wang Jingwei convened the “Conference on Dividing the Communist Party” in Wuhan.<sup>883</sup>

Under the inducement of the Japanese invaders, Wang Jingwei, the head of the pro-Japanese faction in the Nationalist Government, openly defected to the enemy and established the pseudo-Nationalist Government in Nanjing in March 1940.<sup>884</sup>

Both places in the textbook are merely providing the historical context helping students to understand the efforts and achievements of the CCP respectively in the years after 1927 (with the ensuing Lessons entitled “Mao Zedong Pioneered the Road to Jinggang Mountain” and “The Long March of the Chinese Workers and Peasants Red Army”)<sup>885</sup> and 1940.<sup>886</sup> Therefore, the historical textbook largely omits Wang Jingwei as a main character in the history of GMD and the Second Sino-Japanese War, directing students’ focuses away from this controversial historical figure.

Nonetheless, schoolteachers would inevitably encounter questions about such a lesser-discussed topic from individual students randomly. One example was found in a piece of “References for Teaching and Learning (教学参考 *Jiaoxue Cankao*)” published in 1992, demonstrating how schoolteachers could introduce Wang Jingwei in more detail to students, in which Wang was labelled as the “*hanjian* and traitor” (汉奸卖国贼 *hanjian*

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<sup>883</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Eight-Grade Volume 1*, 73.

“蒋介石、汪精卫等国民党右派在帝国主义势力支持下，先后背叛革命。… [1927年] 7月，汪精卫在武汉召开 ‘分共会议’ 。”

<sup>884</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Eight-Grade Volume 1*, 102.

“在日本侵略者的诱降下，国民政府内的亲日派头子汪精卫公开叛国投敌，于 1940 年 3 月在南京建立伪国民政府。”

<sup>885</sup> The two historical episodes were typically signalling Mao Zedong’s path to power.

<sup>886</sup> Ministry of Education (教育部), *中国历史八年级上册 Chinese History Eight-Grade Volume 1* (Beijing: People’s Education Press, 2016), 75-89, 104-108.



*maiguozie*).<sup>887</sup> The article cites books authored by Huang Meizhen, Cai Dejin, and Jing Xiongbai;<sup>888</sup> despite the fact that each of these sources starts from a different perspective while narrating Wang Jingwei's personal and career life, the teaching and learning reference simplifies the disagreements among authors and presents the commonly accepted villain image to students.

Besides published books telling a series of primarily standardised stories of Wang Jingwei, the development of the internet has encouraged alternative histories to be written and posted online. Moreover, some of the internet literature attracted an unprecedented number of readers in China between the early 2000s and 2010s,<sup>889</sup> when the state was still gradually developing its strategy for online censorship, and there were more possibilities to find uncensored information on the internet. In 2013, Yang Fei published a commentary essay on *廉政瞭望 Honesty Outlook*, a CCP journal based in Sichuan focusing on topics related to anti-corruption in mainland China which does not usually include writings about history.<sup>890</sup> Yang's article gives a series of unexpected titles to Wang Jingwei, calling him "a morally perfect person" (道德完人 *daode wanren*), "a traditional Chinese intellectual" (道学先生 *daoxue xiansheng*), an "enthusiastic fighter"

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<sup>887</sup> For example, see Zhao Youci 赵友慈, "从汪伪政权的'国旗'问题看汪精卫的汉奸嘴脸 [Wang Jingwei's traitorous face in the light of the 'national flag' issue of the Wang Pseudo-Regime]," *历史教学 History Teaching*, 1992(1), 48.

<sup>888</sup> Huang Meizhen 黄美真 and Zhang Yun 张云 eds, *汪精卫国民政府成立 [The Establishment of Wang Jingwei National Government]*, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press 上海人民出版社, 1984; Cai Dejin 蔡德金, *汪精卫伪国民政府纪事 [Chronicle of Wang Jingwei's Pseudo-National Government]*, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press 中国社会科学出版社, 1982; Jing Xiongbai 金雄白, *汪政权的开场与收场 [The beginning and end of the Wang regime]*, Hongkong: 春秋杂志社, 1963.

<sup>889</sup> For recent studies on Internet Literature in China, see: Michel Hockx, *Internet Literature in China*. West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2015; Chen Jing, "Refashioning Print Literature: Internet Literature in China." *Comparative Literature Studies* 49, no. 4 (2012): 537–46.

<sup>890</sup> "廉政瞭望 *Honesty Outlook*," 人民网 People.cn, <http://fanfu.people.com.cn/GB/352774/352775/index.html>, accessed on 10 May 2023.

(热血勇士 *rexue yongshi*), and “a patriot” (爱国者 *aiguo zhe*), and not doing so sarcastically.<sup>891</sup> The only in-text reference of this piece is a controversial Japan-based writer Lin Siyun (林思云)’s series of blog posts entitled “The Truth About Wang Jingwei” (真实的汪精卫 *Zhenshi de Wang Jingwei*).<sup>892</sup> Lin Siyun’s reputation on the Chinese internet in the 2000s was one of “The Four Traitors (*hanjian*) on Overseas Chinese Language Websites.”<sup>893</sup> Lin was the only “*hanjian*” blogger based in Japan, and he primarily wrote about Wang Jingwei and the Sino-Japanese War; however, being a “*hanjian*” blogger in the 2000s was not solely an accusation of “treason” as in other contexts. Instead, it involved debates between different groups of overseas Chinese.

In 2006, Chinese students who had migrated to America in the decade following 1985 and had become active users of the website mitbbs.com found a platform for sharing opinions and information.<sup>894</sup> This website was originally an internal online noticeboard called bbs.mit.edu, but it was converted after the original Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) web addresses were blocked in China in 2002. It gained popularity among Chinese students in the US.<sup>895</sup> On the online platform, the earlier generation of

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<sup>891</sup> Yang Fei 杨飞, “汪精卫的‘完人时代’ [Wang Jingwei’s ‘Era of a perfect man’],” *廉政瞭望 Honesty Outlook*, 2013(02), 70-71.

<sup>892</sup> Yang 杨, “汪精卫的‘完人时代’ [Wang Jingwei’s ‘Era of a perfect man’],” 70.

For extracts of Lin’s writing, see: “[轉文] 真實的汪精衛 [Forwarded] The real Wang Jingwei,” Ptt.cc, <https://www.ptt.cc/bbs/historia/M.1172592310.A.57B.html>, accessed on 10 January 2023.

<sup>893</sup> Wenwei 文炜, “林思云: ‘汉奸’是怎样炼成的 [Lin Siyun: How a ‘Traitor’ is Made],” *東洋鏡 Dongyang Jing*, 25 June 2009,

<http://www.dongyangjing.com/displ.cgi?zno=10025&&kno=004&&no=0004>, accessed on 10 January 2023; Wang Yi 王怡, “我们的喉咙是敞开的坟墓 [Our Throats are the Open Grave],” *民主中国 Minzhu Zhongguo*, 8 November 2009, <https://minzhuzhongguo.org/default.php?id=124>, accessed on 10 January 2023.

<sup>894</sup> The converted MIT BBS ceased operations in 2022.

<sup>895</sup> See: <http://tech.mit.edu/V122/N58/58web.58n.html>, accessed on 10 January 2023.

(This webpage is no longer available when the chapter is revised in May 2023, as a result, some detailed information is missing from this footnote.)

Chinese students who went abroad in the mid-1980s was subsequently accused of being “*hanjian*” by students who arrived in the US in the late 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>896</sup>

Interestingly, some of the “*hanjian*” bloggers were regarded as inspirations by Chinese intellectuals and writers. For example, Wang Yi (王怡), a writer associated with Independent Chinese PEN Centre (独立中文笔会 *Duli Zhongwen Bihui*), an international Non-Profit Organisation registered in America advocating for the freedom of speech for Chinese writers worldwide and promoting Chinese literature,<sup>897</sup> once stated that he “also had a strong desire to be seen as a *hanjian*.”<sup>898</sup> This information provides the context of internet writing, where young and educated Chinese immigrants utilised the writing and reading of Wang Jingwei and identified themselves as “*hanjian*” sarcastically to demonstrate their support for values such as free speech in America. It reflects the evolving meaning of terms like “*hanjian*” and how Wang Jingwei, in a different social environment, became a popular topic among online history readers.

While alternative histories such as Wang Siwen’s affirmative account of Wang Jingwei caught the attention of some Chinese history enthusiasts, including history teachers in the 2010s, Zhang Zaihu, a teacher from Beijing, shows concern over the boom of “new media on the web,” “plural interpretations of history,” and public history. In an article published in 2016 in the journal supervised by the Ministry of Education of PRC,

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<sup>896</sup> Jia jia, “爱国小将在异国他乡票选汉奸结果你万万想不到 [Patriotic youth in a foreign country voting for “the biggest hanjian”, an unexpected result],” LinkedIn, 7 July 2017, <https://cn.linkedin.com/pulse/爱国小将在异国他乡票选汉奸结果你万万想不到-jia-jia>, accessed on 12 January 2023.

For a detailed study on Chinese Student Migration, see: Liu Lisong. *Chinese Student Migration and Selective Citizenship* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2015).

<sup>897</sup> See: “笔会简介 [Introduction to PEN],” last edited on 1 March 2023, <https://www.chinesepen.org/blog/archives/19>, accessed on 10 May 2023.

<sup>898</sup> Wang 王, “我们的喉咙是敞开的坟墓 [Our Throats are the Open Grave].”

*History Research and Teaching* (历史教学问题 *Lishi Jiaoxue Wenti*),<sup>899</sup> Zhang states that the vast amount of alternative historical information is deconstructing and overturning the conclusions presented in textbooks, making it difficult, if not confusing and disorienting, for secondary school history teachers to respond.<sup>900</sup>

Zhang further criticised that some teachers unwittingly accepted some of the “miscellaneous historical information (鱼龙混杂的历史信息 *yulong hunza de lishi xinxi*)” and disseminated them to the classroom, resulting in confusion and distortion of students’ perceptions, values, and worldviews, causing severe consequences. In Zhang’s opinion, history is subjective, and only historians with professional training can conduct proper historical research. “If it were true that everyone can do the job of a historian, it would be the suicide of historiography.”<sup>901</sup> Zhang concludes in this article that history education is fundamentally different from historical research, and he quoted Chen Qi’s summary on the goal of history teaching for high schools in China: “the core of teaching history (whether in China or abroad) is to educate about patriotism and the mainstream values of the country.”<sup>902</sup>

The points Zhang raises are applicable to all historical topics in school teaching in twenty-first-century China, but especially so in relation to the famous and infamous historical political figures this thesis analyses.

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<sup>899</sup> Zhang Zaihu 张在虎, “我们应当教给中学生怎样的历史—对高中历史教学中中需要注意的几个问题的思考 [What Kind of History should we Teach our High School Students - Reflections on Several Issues that Need Attention in the Teaching of High School History],” *历史教学问题 History Research and Teaching*, 2016(05), 116-120.

<sup>900</sup> Zhang 张, “我们应当教给中学生怎样的历史 [What Kind of History should we Teach our High School Students],” 116.

<sup>901</sup> Zhang 张, “我们应当教给中学生怎样的历史 [What Kind of History should we Teach our High School Students],” 118.

<sup>902</sup> Chen Qi 陈其, “明确中国高中历史教育的核心目标 [Identify the Core Goals of Chinese High School History Education],” *课程·教材·教法 Curriculum, Teaching Materials and Methodology* 2008(06), 68.

Even if you agree with someone else's narrative that differs from that in history textbooks, you should only take it as your own personal position and never naively think that you have finally discovered the 'historical truth', let alone spreading it to your students as 'real history' by incorporating your personal likes and dislikes into your teaching.<sup>903</sup>

Besides teachers' opinions and ways of teaching, the goal of education in mainland China focuses exceptionally on students' exam performance. In the 1980s, regional educational magazines annually published mock exam questions and suggestions for students' review for *Gaokao* (University entrance exams in mainland China).<sup>904</sup> On the one hand, the period of modern and contemporary China usually took up the majority of the *Gaokao* questions,<sup>905</sup> and the War of Resistance against Japan has always been the focus of the annual examinations. Before 2013, "The establishment of the pseudo-regime by Wang Jingwei's clique (汪精卫集团建立伪政权 *Wang Jingwei jituan jianli wei zhengquan*)" was covered in the National *Gaokao* Exam syllabus (考试大纲 *kaoshi dagang*) under the topic "The brutal colonial rule of the Japanese imperialists."<sup>906</sup> On the other hand, after selectively reviewing *Gaokao* exam questions and mock questions

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<sup>903</sup> Zhang 张, "我们应当教给中学生怎样的历史 [What Kind of History should we Teach our High School Students]," 120.

<sup>904</sup> 考试 Examination (Beijing), 新高考 New University Entrance Examination (Jiangsu), 试题与研究 Exam Questions and Studies (He'nan), 新课标教学 Teaching and Learning of New Curriculum (Beijing), 高中生 High School Students (Hunan), 课程·教材·教法 Curriculum, Teaching Material and Method (Beijing). Half of the selected journals are based in Beijing and cover studies on *Gaokao* examination questions nationwide.

<sup>905</sup> For example, see: 国家教育部考试中心全国高考历史试卷评价组, "2001 年全国高考历史试卷评价报告," *试题与研究*, 2002(06), 33-37; -- "2002 年全国高考历史试题分析(广东, 河南, 广西卷)," *试题与研究*, 2002(06), 37-39.

<sup>906</sup> For example, see: "06 年高校招生全国统一考试大纲(历史单科)"

<http://edu.sina.com.cn/exam/2006-03-02/104929661.html>. "2010 普通高等学校招生全国统一考试文综大纲"

[https://gaokao.eol.cn/gkdg/zz/201001/t20100119\\_441116\\_4.shtml](https://gaokao.eol.cn/gkdg/zz/201001/t20100119_441116_4.shtml) Access on 10 January 2023.

published in the six different education journals from 1992 to 2018,<sup>907</sup> it is noted Wang Jingwei and the RNG government were absent from nearly all the mock questions for *Gaokao*. The only exception being noted was a single-choice question in an Exercises on Modern and Contemporary Chinese History made out by the New University Entrance Examination Questions and Research Centre in 2007.<sup>908</sup> While students may have studied

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<sup>907</sup> The *Gaokao* exam questions and mock questions reviewed for this chapter included but not limited to: Fan Ruixiang 范瑞祥, “1996 年高考历史试题分析 [Analysis of The 1996 Gaokao History Test Questions],” *考试 Exams* 1996(05): 19-25; Wang Jiaqi 王家琪 and Yang Zikun 杨子坤, “97 年高考历史模拟试题 [97 Gaokao History Mock Test].” *考试 Exams* 1997(Z1): 51-55; Wang Fuyou 王富友, “1998 年高考历史试题解析 [Analysis of The 1998 Gaokao History Test Questions],” *考试 Exams* 1998(Z2): 26-31; Wang Fuyou 王富友, “1999 年高考历史试题(全国卷)解析 [Analysis of The 1999 Gaokao History Test Questions],” *考试 Exams*, 1999(Z2): 22-25; “2000 年高考历史模拟试卷(一) [2000 Gaokao History Mock Test (1)],” *考试 Exams* 2000(Z1): 47-50+53-55; “2001 年全国高考历史试卷评价报告 [Analysis of The 2001 Gaokao History Test Questions],” *试题研究 Shiti Yanjiu* 2002(06): 33-37; Wang Guoshun 王国顺, “2002 年部分省市高考模拟历史试题精编 [Some provinces and cities mock history test questions for Gaokao in 2002],” *试题研究 Shiti Yanjiu* 2002(06): 47-64; “2002 年全国高考历史试题分析(广东、河南、广西卷) [Analysis of The 2002 Gaokao History Test Questions (Guangdong, He’nan, Guangxi)],” *试题研究 Shiti Yanjiu* 2003(06): 37-39; Niu Xinzhe 牛新哲, “2003 年部分省市高考历史模拟试题选编 [Some provinces and cities mock history test questions for Gaokao in 2003],” *试题研究 Shiti Yanjiu* 2003(06): 49-64; Cai Quan 蔡权, “中国近代史同步练习(下) [Modern Chinese History Practice (2)],” *新高考 New Gaokao* 2006(12): 40-46; Zou Yong 邹勇, “2008 年高考历史第一轮复习同步训练中国近现代史部分(上) [The First Round of Review for 2008 Gaokao of Modern Chinese History (1)],” *试题与研究 Shiti yu Yanjiu* 2007(26): 38-52; -- “2008 年高考历史第一轮复习同步训练中国近现代史部分(下) [The First Round of Review for 2008 Gaokao of Modern Chinese History (2)],” *试题与研究 Shiti yu Yanjiu* 2007(35): 10-23; “2008 年高考文综历史《考试大纲》的新变化 [The New Changes in the 2008 Gaokao Literature and History ‘Examination Syllabus’],” *试题与研究 Shiti yu Yanjiu* 2008(17): 1-2; Ding Maowen 丁茂文, “湖北省黄冈市 2008 年模拟高考历史试题 [Huanggang City, Hubei Province, 2008 mock history test questions for the Gaokao],” *试题与研究 Shiti yu Yanjiu* 2008(08): 60-64; Wang Sheng 王生 and Chu Desheng 储德生, “2009 年高考历史模拟试题(二) [2009 Gaokao History Mock Test (2)],” *试题与研究 Shiti yu Yanjiu* 2009(17): 14-21; Ma Shouxin 马守信, “2009 年历史高考模拟试题 [2009 Gaokao History Mock Test],” *新高考 New Gaokao* 2009(Z2): 79-83; Shi Yan 史研, “2010 年高考历史试题评析精选 [Analysis of The 2010 Gaokao History Test Questions],” *试题与研究 Shiti yu Yanjiu* 2010(26): 1-6.

<sup>908</sup> Cai 蔡, “中国近代史同步练习(下) [Modern Chinese History Practice (2)],” 40.

the topic; therefore, the fact that it was unlikely to be covered in the examination meant teachers would devote little classroom or homework time to understanding Wang Jingwei and his regime.

In 2013, the National *Gaokao* Exam syllabus underwent major changes and removed the topics directly mentioning any of the puppet regimes during the Sino-Japanese War and simplified it into “[t]he crimes of the aggression of the Japanese army and the resistance against Japan by the Chinese military and people.”<sup>909</sup> Prior to that, in an article summarising the “‘Landmark’ Historical Events” from high school history textbooks in 2011, it appears that there was no “Landmark” (标识性 *Biaoshi Xing*) event in-between October 1938 (Capture of Wuhan by Japanese forces) and Spring 1945 (The 7th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party at which Mao presented his political report, “On Coalition Government” and victory over Japan was anticipated).<sup>910</sup> Therefore, any historical significance of Wang Jingwei and his regime during the Second Sino-Japanese War was further removed from the teaching of modern Chinese history to high school students, which means that Chinese students are very unlikely to have had discussions about this controversial historical figures throughout their secondary education.

In summary, although national and regional history textbooks of all levels between 1992 and 2018 covering the period of modern Chinese history might or might not include the narrative of Wang Jingwei’s life, Wang was excluded to a larger extent from the classrooms and the three years of *Gaokao*-oriented study. Therefore, students in China

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<sup>909</sup> “考试说明：2013年普通高等学校招生全国统一考试（广东卷）历史考试大纲 [Exam Description: 2013 National Unified Examination for Higher Education Admissions (Guangdong Paper) History Exam Outline],” 18 March 2013, <http://www.zxls.com/generation/2013/03/18/35953.html>, accessed on 10 January 2023.

<sup>910</sup> Shi Yuzhong 石玉中, “必修一 ‘标志性’ 历史事件诠释 [Compulsory 1 Interpretation of ‘Landmark’ Historical Events],” *新高考 New Gaokao*, 2011(09): 30.

rarely have chances to engage in dynamic discussions about Wang Jingwei guided by teachers in their learning experience, unless the teacher was willing to risk being criticised. Nonetheless, the stories of Wang were widely circulated outside of schools and passed down by multiple sources of information. Therefore, most educated Chinese made up their opinions about Wang Jingwei from sources outside of the education system. The following section uses one of the several questions on Zhihu asking for answers on evaluations of Wang Jingwei to discover if the presence of Wang in popular culture and the absence of him in official education resulted in a higher chance of being biased when young Chinese were forming their knowledge of history and understanding of the past.

- *The Divided Online Opinions on Wang Jingwei*

The following section is a case study combining methods of historical and media and communication studies, using Zhihu (知乎) as the data repository. Zhihu is the most popular Question-and-answer (Q&A) website in China. The statistic report in March 2022 reveals that, in the last quarter of 2021, the website had 103.3 million average monthly active users (MAUs).<sup>911</sup> Another report in 2021 shows that: “[Among all Zhihu users, t]he percentage of people younger than 19 years old is 20%, 70% of users between 20 and 29 years old, 9% of users between 30 and 39 years old and the rest took up 1%; gender-wise, 67% of users are male and 33% are female.”<sup>912</sup> The majority of the users are educated

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<sup>911</sup> Wen Ting 温婷, “Zhihu’s 2021 revenue grew 118.9% year-over-year to \$2.959 billion, with non-advertising revenue accounting for 61% of the revenue,” 上海证券报 Shanghai Securities News, 14 March 2022, <https://news.cnstock.com/news,bwqx-202203-4844920.htm>, accessed on 02 January 2023.

<sup>912</sup> “知乎用户画像深度分析 [In-depth Analysis of Zhihu’s User Profile],” 凤凰网 Phoenix, 24 March 2021, <https://i.ifeng.com/c/84sBWqk8wMs>, accessed on 02 January 2023.



middle-class.<sup>913</sup> Zhang Lun's work based on the assessment of textual information in Zhihu illustrates that, as a Q&A website, Zhihu created a typical "competitive marketplace of ideas," where "competition among ideas" were revealed and thus there were no dominant viewpoints, and rival opinions were not excluded.<sup>914</sup>

The analysis of this section solely focuses on Wang Jingwei, the popular perception of whom predominately different from Sun Yat-sen or Yuan Shikai, although their historical significance was parallel in the account of leading historians in China and abroad.<sup>915</sup> Wang Jingwei, unlike other case studies discussed in the thesis, has little representation in Chinese history in the public sphere. His obvious absence, however, still led to thousands of internet users "searching" over the past decades for a nuanced history beyond the simple assessment of "heroes" or "villains."

In 2014, a question entitled "How to assess Wang Jingwei? (Hereafter abbreviated to How to assess Wang)" was raised, and since then has attracted 377 answers (314 answers were gathered for this analysis), 2,662 followers, and more than one million pageviews, and continued to receive answered in 2023.<sup>916</sup> The answers it received show the changes or continuity of online opinions for nearly a decade; moreover, because the original question was asked without mentioning the term "*hanjian*," it has a larger chance of attracting answers focusing less on this label of Wang. As the question asker stated: "[Wang Jingwei is] a figure whose evaluation tends to be polarised, and there are

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<sup>913</sup> Peng Altman Yuzhu. "Digital Nationalism versus Gender Politics in Post-reform China: Gender-issue Debates on Zhihu." *Global Media and Communication* 18, no. 3 (2022): 281-99.

<sup>914</sup> Zhang Lun, Li Yong-Ning, Peng Tai-Quan, and Wu Ye. "Dynamics of the Social Construction of Knowledge: An Empirical Study of Zhihu in China." *EPJ Data Science* 11, no. 1 (2022): 1-35.

<sup>915</sup> For example, see: Li 李, "关于民国人物研究的若干问题 [Some Issues on the Study of Republican Personages]," 109; Mitter, *China's War with Japan*, 20

<sup>916</sup> "如何评价汪精卫? [How to assess Wang Jingwei?]," <https://www.zhihu.com/question/26391434/answers/updated>, accessed on 12 January 2023.

conflicting praise and criticism, so I hope to hear a rational discussion.”<sup>917</sup> Due to the lack of other systematic data on public discussions on Wang Jingwei, Zhihu users’ opinions and interactions in cyberspace provide unique and accessible sources for answering some research questions on how the educated public responds to the combination of a strictly state-controlled historical assessment of Wang Jingwei and the absence of Wang in narratives of the Republican history besides the leader of a traitorous regime. While other historical characters such as Sun and Yuan also attracted attention and have been discussed more extensively online, the evaluation of them proved far less polarised, with many internet users being able to draw information from official sources or commemorations.

This chapter takes answers to this question as the primary sources to study how different opinions Zhihu users have towards Wang Jingwei were displayed and interacted with each other online. Zhang Lun and others’ research in 2022 investigated 1,832 questions to which the number of answers ranged from 10 to 2,114, and the result shows that 75 per cent of the questions received less than 40 answers; in comparison, the number of answers to “How to assess Wang” (377) is remarkably high. Moreover, the earliest answers to the question were posted in October 2014, and the latest one on the day of the data collection was posted on 9 January 2023. In eight and a half years, answers were posted every year, showing that there has been a persistent interest in Wang Jingwei over the years. The largest amount of information was accumulated in the three days after the question was raised (80 out of the 314 answers were posted between 29 October and 31 October 2014). Nonetheless, this study exhibits a different pattern from the general

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<sup>917</sup> “如何评价汪精卫? [How to assess Wang Jingwei?],” <https://www.zhihu.com/question/26391434/answers/updated>, accessed on 12 January 2023.

information accumulation through Zhihu Q&A;<sup>918</sup> that is, for this question, new information was accumulated even at the end of the answer sequence. As shown in Chart 1 below, in 2022, this question attracted up to 51 answers, many of which are lengthy or informative.

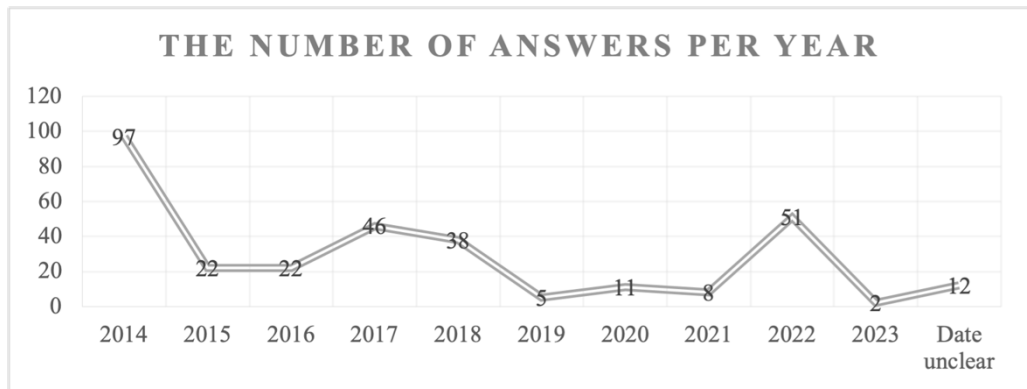


Chart 1: The number of answers posted per year (2014-2023)

This study collected 314 answers to the question “How to assess Wang” and sorted these answers by posting date (For example, Answer 1 was posted on 29 October 2014; Answer 314 was published on 9 January 2023).<sup>919</sup> When giving examples of the answer, the serial number will be shown instead of the user’s Zhihu identity. Three of the 314 answers received more than 1,000 agreeing reactions or likes (赞同 *zantong*); among the rest, 11 answers received the number of *zantong* ranging from 125 to 673; 35 received the number of *zantong* ranging from 10 to 93 (see Chart 2). Such a result indicates statistically that a small number of the answers were reviewed by hundreds and thousands of Zhihu users and received approval of the provided information. It also reinforces that this Q&A thread is a way for some users to express opinions, and for all other viewers (whether they posted answers or not) to accumulate information and use the “*zantong*”

<sup>918</sup> Zhang, Li, Peng, and Wu, “Dynamics of the Social Construction of Knowledge,” 11.

<sup>919</sup> The answered being excluded were ones “folded” by the webpage and not visible as they were deemed to contain repetitive or irrelevant information. “为什么知乎的部分回答会被折叠? [Why some of Zhihu’s answers are folded],”

<https://www.zhihu.com/question/20120168>, accessed on 20 May 2023.

option to interact with others. Meanwhile, 357 answers received between 1 and 10 likes, showing that the majority of the answers were noted by the webpage viewers and received some responses.

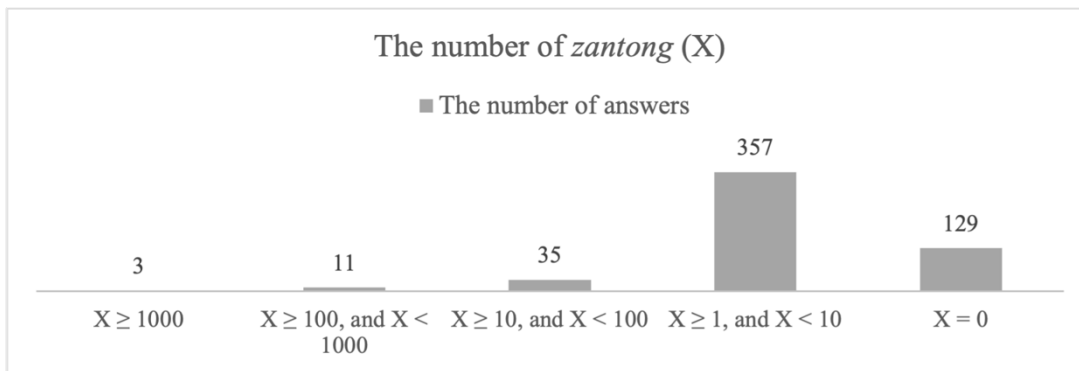


Chart 2: The number of *zantong* (likes) each answer received.

First of all, despite the fact that the question was raised without addressing the term “*hanjian*,” 77 of the 314 answers define Wang Jingwei as a *hanjian*; 41 of them see “*hanjian*” as Wang Jingwei’s sole definition, and 11 of them address Wang as “*da hanjian* (the big traitor)” implying Wang as the representative figure of all *hanjians* and the most notorious among them. This result shows that most Zhihu users who participated in this Q&A accept the narrative being passed down by historians who worked closely with the state. Moreover, arguments were formed between those who believe there were good intentions behind Wang’s surrender (Answer 14 even calls Wang Jingwei a mixture of a “*hanjian*” and a “national hero”) to Japan and the ones who disagree with similar statements (Answer 206 quotes a blog article: “To understand and forgive a national traitor is to insult and desecrate a hero”).<sup>920</sup>

<sup>920</sup> “汪精卫—卖国贼与曲线爱国者的争议 [The Controversy of Wang Jingwei - Traitor or the Patriot],” 27 June 2018, <https://www.jianshu.com/p/4244fe78168f>, accessed on 15 January 2023. (Please be aware that this website displays pop-up advertisements.)

In terms of the indication of external sources to form an opinion, 27 answers quote excerpts from Wang Jingwei's poetry, and around 61 indicate the sources of information (not necessarily historical materials). It is worth noting that almost all answers in which Wang Jingwei's poetry is quoted give him a complex assessment instead of a single definition (although some of them contain no other information than the poem).

In November 2009, the National Taiwan University Press published a recorded talk in the form of two DVDs, given by Yeh Chia-ying (Ye Jiaying 叶嘉莹), a scholar of classical Chinese poetry.<sup>921</sup> Yeh's speech re-introduced the idea that Wang Jingwei was at once a martyr-like figure, and that the lyric in his poetry communicated a strong desire for martyrdom to the Chinese community, including the one in mainland China and overseas.<sup>922</sup> A few lines of Wang's most poem read:

Boldly singing in the market square,  
With composure, even when being a prisoner in Chu's lair;  
A swift stroke, their life they'd gladly share,  
Youthful dreams they faithfully declare.  
(慷慨歌燕市, 從容作楚囚; 引刀成一快, 不負少年頭)<sup>923</sup>

This poem was written by Wang Jingwei in 1910 when he was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Qing Court after his failed assassination of the Qing Prince. In a nutshell, Wang's poem and his attempted assassination as a late-Qing revolutionary shows that he was willing to sacrifice his life for the greater good. Yeh added that the

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<sup>921</sup> Chia-ying Yeh 叶嘉莹, *汪精衛詩詞之中的精衛情結 [Jingwei's Complex in Wang Jingwei's Poetry]* (2DVD), Taipei: 國立臺灣大學出版中心, 2009. Audio-visual recording of the Humanities Lecture by Chia-ying in National Taiwan University.

<sup>922</sup> Years later, Yang Zhiyi studied more on the topics of Wang's poetry and published her scholarly findings in English journals: Yang, "The Road to Lyric Martyrdom: Reading the Poetry of Wang Zhaoming (1883-1944)," 135-64; ---, "A Humanist in Wartime France," 163-192; ---. "The Memory of an Assassin and Problems of Legitimacy in the Wang Jingwei Regime (1940-1945)." 37-83.

<sup>923</sup> Wang Jingwei 汪精衛, "被逮口占四絕 [After Arrest]," 1910, <https://zh.wikisource.org/hant/%E8%A2%AB%E9%80%AE%E5%8F%A3%E5%8D%A0%E5%9B%9B%E7%B5%95>, accessed on 10 May 2023.

emotions shown in Wang's later poems reveal that he became ready to sacrifice his reputation.<sup>924</sup> The name Wang chose for himself, *Jingwei*, is a mythical bird that tries to fill the ocean with stones; the common Chinese interpretation of this task of Sisyphus is "one who has determination in the face of impossible odds." Yeh argues that Wang's actions can be assessed with the complex in the stories about the bird *Jingwei*, a figure devoting their life to an impossible mission.

Yeh's speeches on Chinese poetry are well-liked on video-sharing websites in China; a 17-hour-long video featuring 50 of her speeches has been watched over 1.62 million times since it was posted in 2019.<sup>925</sup> Around 2018, the full version of the audio or video recording of Yeh's talk on Wang Jingwei's poems has been circulating in Chinese social media;<sup>926</sup> in 2021, a user of Bilibili (one of the most popular video platforms in China) shared the video recording which remains available now.<sup>927</sup> There are also articles posted online based on the transcribed text of Yeh's speech.<sup>928</sup> The above shows that those who are interested in the studies of Wang's poetry can find sources about them online.

The popularity of Yeh's interpretation of Wang's lyric martyrdom also caused controversy; in 2021, Ding Yi, a retired scholar whose research focuses on Mao Zedong's

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<sup>924</sup> Yeh 叶, *汪精衛詩詞之中的精衛情結 [Jingwei's Complex in Wang Jingwei's Poetry]*.

<sup>925</sup> "叶嘉莹: 中华诗词之美 全 50 讲[Ye Jiaying] The Beauty of Chinese Poetry (All 50 Lectures) (1)" Bilibili.com, [https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1D4411j7Kr?p=1&vd\\_source=5d4e15fca10c23da808618eaf2f71c3d](https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1D4411j7Kr?p=1&vd_source=5d4e15fca10c23da808618eaf2f71c3d), accessed on 12 May 2023.

<sup>926</sup> For example, see:

[https://weibo.com/3818350551/GgNM7gMc3?refer\\_flag=1001030103\\_](https://weibo.com/3818350551/GgNM7gMc3?refer_flag=1001030103_), accessed on 12 January 2023. Most of these unauthorised sharing of the video is now unavailable.

<sup>927</sup> "叶嘉莹: 中华诗词之美 全 50 讲[Ye Jiaying] The Beauty of Chinese Poetry (All 50 Lectures) (2)" Bilibili.com, [https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1BL411M76S/?vd\\_source=5d4e15fca10c23da808618eaf2f71c3d](https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1BL411M76S/?vd_source=5d4e15fca10c23da808618eaf2f71c3d). Accessed on 18 January 2023.

<sup>928</sup> "汪精卫诗词中的'精卫情节' (叶嘉莹) [Jingwei's Complex in Wang Jingwei's Poetry by Ye Jiaying]" Zhihu.com, 29 August 2022, <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/490245084>, Accessed on 18 January 2023.

poetry, posted two articles online to accuse Yeh of defending the name of a “*hanjian*,” and to dispute with “complex of a martyr” Yeh and her students found in Wang’s poems.<sup>929</sup> Ding’s main argument was that Yeh’s assessment of Wang was based on her personal experience, for example, “deeply influenced by enslaving education” (受奴化教育影响太深 *shou nü hua jiaoyu yingxiang tai shen*) and that she was not being empathic with Chinese people who suffered due to Wang’s actions.

Similarly, in 2012, Yu Ying-shih (Yu Yingshi 余英时), a renowned Chinese American historian and Sinologist, prefaced a reprint of Wang Jingwei’s poetry collection by Cosmos Books in Hong Kong.<sup>930</sup> Yu used historical sources to discuss Wang’s mindset from 1937 to 1943, especially Wang’s “martyr” complex. Yu wrote: “The above repetitive arguments about Wang Jingwei’s mental journey are not intended to vindicate him; value judgements are simply not part of my consideration. My sole aim is to understand his poetry through the establishment of psychological facts.”<sup>931</sup> When Yu Ying-shih passed away in 2021, a journalist posted an article about Yu entitled “A life of

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<sup>929</sup> Ding Yi 丁毅, “不应为当了汉奸的汪精卫招魂一致叶嘉莹先生公开信 [We should not restore the memory of Wang Jingwei who was a *hanjian*: An open letter to Mr Ye Jiaying],” 23 October 2021; --, “汪精卫诗词研究何以步入误区? —丁毅再致叶嘉莹先生公开信 [How did the study of Wang Jingwei’s poetry fall into a misconception? -- Ding Yi’s second open letter to Mr Ye Jiaying],” 3 February 2022. <http://m.wywxwk.com/content.php?classid=13&id=443714>; <http://www.wywxwk.com/Article/sichao/2022/02/449241.html>, accessed on 15 January 2023.

<sup>930</sup> Wang Jingwei 汪精衛, *雙照樓詩詞藁 Shuangzhao Lou Poetry and Lyrics* (Hong Kong: 天地圖書有限公司 Tiandi Books, 2012).

<sup>931</sup> Yu Ying-shih 余英时, “序言 Preface,” in *雙照樓詩詞藁 Shuangzhao Lou Poetry and Lyrics*, <https://book.douban.com/review/13555041/>, accessed on 23 December 2022. The editor Yan Chungou from Cosmos Books wrote an article to commemorate Yu in 2021 and revealed touching details about their intentions regarding the preface to Wang’s book; see: Yan Chungou 顏純鈞, “與余英時先生的一段文字因緣[A Text-based Connection with Mr Yu Ying-shih],” 思想空間 Linking Vision, 18 August 2021, <https://www.linking.vision/?p=2610>, accessed on 18 January 2023.

mixed reputations: he once advocated for Wang Jingwei (一生毀譽參半，曾鼓吹汪精衛 *Yi sheng hui yu can ban, ceng guchui Wang Jingwei*).”<sup>932</sup>

Yeh Chia-ying and Yu Ying-shih both focus on Wang Jingwei’s poetic achievements in their works. However, their popularity in mainland China and the wide dissemination of their views on the internet have sparked debates among readers and internet users. Notably, Zhihu users who are also readers of Wang Jingwei’s poems share the perspective of Yeh and Yu regarding Wang’s “martyr” complex. Some even mention Wang’s personal charm, despite acknowledging his treacherous act of establishing the RNG. However, it is important to note that many of these users are aware of the potential criticism they may face. As a result, a few of the answers begin by acknowledging that Wang was indeed a “*hanjian*” and clarify that they are not attempting to exonerate him.

In addition to poems, the sources of information indicated by the Zhihu users are diverse, including “history as popular legends (野史 *yeshi*),”<sup>933</sup> “an [unspecified] article,”<sup>934</sup> recent publications in Hong Kong,<sup>935</sup> a 1906 article from *Minbao* 民報,<sup>936</sup>

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<sup>932</sup> [https://www.zhdate.com/news\\_history/380126.html](https://www.zhdate.com/news_history/380126.html), accessed on 15 January 2023.

[The webpage became unavailable when this chapter was revised in May 2023, resulting in the missing information of this footnote.]

<sup>933</sup> Answer 73, on 31 October 2014, received 1 like. Main points: 1. Handsome; 2. Treated his wife well.

<sup>934</sup> Answer 16, on 30 October 2014, received 2 likes. Main point: The people who succeed hold the power of history, while those who fail become villains (成王敗寇 *cheng wang bai kou*).

<sup>935</sup> Answer 156, on 28 February 2017, received 7 likes. Main point: Expressing sympathy for Wang Jingwei. Li 李, *驚弦 Alarmed Strings*; Li Jie 李劫, *梟雄與士林: 20 世紀中國政治演變和文化滄桑 [The Lords and the Scholars: Political Evolution and Cultural Changes in 20th Century China]* (Hong Kong: 晨鐘書局 Cheng Zhong Books, 2010).

<sup>936</sup> Answer 244, on 31 July 2020, received 15 likes. Main points: 1. Like the Adventists in the fiction *Three Bodies* 2. anti-Manchu, pro-Japanese 3. Shameless.



Wang Jingwei's speeches,<sup>937</sup> Lin Siyun's article and Yeh Chia-ying's article,<sup>938</sup> photos from unknown sources, Wang's poem and Hong Kong director Zhang Che's comment,<sup>939</sup> Phoenix TV's documentary on Wang Jingwei,<sup>940</sup> Xu Zhimo 徐志摩's published diary,<sup>941</sup> conversations with elderly people from Zhejiang,<sup>942</sup> Baidu 百度 search results,<sup>943</sup> Wikipedia,<sup>944</sup> *Four Generations Under One Roof* (四世同堂), a novel by Lao She lao she,<sup>945</sup> one's history teacher.<sup>946</sup> It demonstrates the divided sources of information on a historical figure who mainly receive a fixed reputation and was absent from a certain widely accepted source of information.

Furthermore, the Chinese saying “以古鉴今 *yi gu jian jin*” (Using the past as a reference for the present) has been a noticeable politics of historiography since the 2000s.

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<sup>937</sup> Answer 265, on 20 April 2020, received 1744 likes. Main point: Wang was rationalising his traitorous behaviour in the speech. Excerpts from Wang Jingwei's “还我们的本来面目 [Give us back our true identity],” a speech at the joint reception of various organisations in Osaka, Japan on 25 June 1941.

<sup>938</sup> Answer 198, on 11 March 2018, received 477 likes. Main points: Expressing sympathy for Wang Jingwei.

<sup>939</sup> Answer 1, on 29 October 2014, received 13 likes. Main points: 1. Not familiar; 2. A good-looking man (美男子 *mei nanzi*); 3. Once a heroic character, died a hanjian.

<sup>940</sup> Answer 132, on 22 September 2016, received 1 like. <http://www.pcne.tv/>, accessed on 15 January 2023. Phoenix TV is based in Hong Kong.

<sup>941</sup> Answer 49, on 31 October 2014, received 1 like. Main points: 1. A good-looking man (美男子 *mei nanzi*); 2. Different from the Wang Jingwei in textbooks.

<sup>942</sup> Answer 154, on 28 February 2017, received 6 likes. Main point: Wang Jingwei was an undercover agent sent by Chiang Kai-shek to collaborate with Japan.

<sup>943</sup> Answer 10, on 30 October 2014, received 2 likes. Main point: Wang's wife was ugly and fierce; thus, Wang was good at hiding his thoughts and he was ambitious.

<sup>944</sup> Answer 51 and Answer 48.

<sup>945</sup> Answer 100 and Answer 297.

<sup>946</sup> Answer 30.

Jonathan Unger,<sup>947</sup> Alisa Jones,<sup>948</sup> Robert J. Shepherd and Larry Yu,<sup>949</sup> and some other scholars' works all picked up this view of the past as the main theme of history writing, history education, and heritage management in contemporary China. On 13 January 2023, the Chinese Communist Party News published excerpts of Xi Jinping's quotes on People's Daily Online (人民网 *Renmin wang*) and entitled the article "Learning from history: In 2022, this is how Xi Jinping addressed cultural confidence."<sup>950</sup> While the authorities delivered such a message, the re-generated interest in commenting on Wang Jingwei in 2022 shows that the educated public has taken on this view of discussing the past. After February 2022, at least seven answers to the Zhihu question on Wang Jingwei compared Wang's role during the Japanese invasion to Ukraine's situation facing Russia's invasion;<sup>951</sup> Answer 267 states that Wang Jingwei was the Chinese version of the head of the Donetsk government, and Answer 272 says in the tone of a "Russian supporter (俄粉 *E fen*)" (most likely in a sarcastic way): "[Wang was] better than Zelenski; at least he knew that in the unlikely event of victory it would be better to surrender early."<sup>952</sup> Not only Russia's invasion of Ukraine evoked some associations with Wang Jingwei among this group of Chinese internet users, but also the users who participated in the Zhihu Q&A

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<sup>947</sup> Jonathan Unger, *Using the past to serve the present: Historiography and politics in contemporary China* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>948</sup> Alisa Jones, "Changing the past to serve the present: history education in Mainland China." In *History Education and National Identity In East Asia*, edited By Edward Vickers, 65-100. New York: Routledge, 2013.

<sup>949</sup> Robert J. Shepherd and Larry Yu. *Heritage management, tourism, and governance in China: Managing the past to serve the present. Vol. 2* (Berlin: Springer Science & Business Media, 2012).

<sup>950</sup> "以古鉴今 2022 年习近平这样谈文化自信 [Learning from the Past, in 2022 Xi Jinping talks about cultural confidence in this way]," 人民网 People.com, 13 January 2023, <http://CCP.people.com.cn/n1/2023/0113/c164113-32605832.html>, accessed on 20 January 2023.

<sup>951</sup> Answer 267, 270, 271, 272, 276, 300, 306.

<sup>952</sup> Answer 272 was posted on 21 April 2022 and received 8 likes. The full answer in Chinese: "俄粉: 比泽连斯基强, 起码人家知道打不过就该早早投降。"

in the international context of Russia's invasion interchangeably used the past to reference the present, and the standard of the present to discuss figures from the past.

### ***Conclusion***

Wang Jingwei's reputation was damaged almost irreparably by his collaborative activities during the Second Sino-Japanese War and further solidified through the sinful image in official writing and his shameful statues, which Wang's once-political opponents encouraged to circulate widely in the post-war years. In the 1980s, scholars from mainland China re-discovered an interest in writing about Wang Jingwei and the previously neglected history of the ROC. After that, some writers and biographers introduced the early years of Wang's life when he acted more as an admirable young person who was nearly one of the martyrs for his failed assassination of the Manchurian Prince. At the same time, the official accounts, including the party-supervised scholarly journals and the state-controlled historical archives, retain the emphasis on Wang Jingwei as a modern representative of national traitors (*hanjian*). In the public discourse, supported by the data collected from Zhihu, the complexity of Wang Jingwei persists. The discussion of the most agreeable way to depict Wang Jingwei has been attracting consistent interest from internet users in the past decade and more. The analysis of the 314 answers in this chapter also demonstrates a split of views. Nonetheless, some common trajectories are noticeable. While 77 of the 314 answers defined Wang Jingwei as a *hanjian*, others sought to interpret Wang as a figure containing multiple narratives, and the long-lasting attention to this question/answers thread demonstrates that people were looking for a nuanced history above simply heroes and villains.

Furthermore, the individuals' comments on the internet demonstrate a different trajectory from what Jannelle Warren-Findley and James B. Gardner argued sequentially,

which is that while historians intended to present the meaning of complexity to the public, the public engaged in a way that sees historical representation as “an unmediated and uninterpreted past” and looks for “commemoration, nostalgia and life-coping skills.”<sup>953</sup> In this case study, the Chinese public was at least partially aware of mediated and interpreted past, and some of them actively looked for nuanced historical interpretations from online communities in the past decades. As stated by the Zhihu question asker under their question about the evaluation of Wang Jingwei: “[Wang Jingwei is] a figure whose evaluation tends to be polarised, and there are conflicting praise and criticism, so I hope to hear a rational discussion.”<sup>954</sup>

Tracing the assessment of Wang Jingwei by internet users, one also found that they follow the trend of interchangeably using the present as a reference for the past and the past as a reference for the present. For example, when the conflict between Russia and Ukraine intensified because of the Russian invasion, this Zhihu question received a new wave of attention from people who intended to compare the Ukrainian situation with Wang Jingwei and the puppet regime during the Second Sino-Japanese War.

There is recently another non-mainstream interpretation of Wang Jingwei worthy of remarks, which was brought to me by a fellow researcher in gender studies. A group of Chinese game players of a strategy video game named “Hearts of Iron”, in which players can play as a nation involved in the Second World War, reimagined and recreated the image of Wang Jingwei as a female cartoon figure resembling the Japanese animated figures of a young girl. Although this chapter and thesis will not go into further analysis

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<sup>953</sup> Warren-Findley, “Public History and National Identity,” 318-319; James B. Gardner, “Contested Terrain: History, Museums and the Public,” *The Public Historian* 26, no. 4 (2004): 13, quoted in Warren-Findley, “Public History and National Identity,” 319.

<sup>954</sup> “如何评价汪精卫? [How to assess Wang Jingwei?],”

<https://www.zhihu.com/question/26391434/answers/updated>, accessed on 12 January 2023.

of this interesting phenomenon, the existence of this unconventional image reinforces the argument that public history in mainland China is contested and ever-changing.

## Conclusion

In “The Past is a Changing Present,” Alun Munslow raises the thought-provoking question, “Why is it that history keeps on changing?”<sup>955</sup> He approaches this question from a deconstructionist perspective, challenging the limitations of the modernist empirical method of “seeking the past.” Munslow argues that history is not a fixed entity to be discovered, but rather a constructed narrative discourse shaped by historians situated in both the past and the present. These narratives are often non-linear and discontinuous, highlighting the dynamic nature of historical interpretation. Munslow approaches history by recognising its literary dimension and argues that the process of creating history, as shaped in narratives or stories, is crucial in understanding the past.<sup>956</sup> In his account, written historical narratives are solely the textual product of historians, people who had professional training to gather historical evidence and reconstruct the past in narrative form.<sup>957</sup> These products, however, were always intended “for everyone to read,” although this phrase was only briefly mentioned in Munslow’s introduction.<sup>958</sup> It thus brings us into the discussion about history in the public realm, whereat historians play an important role in creating narratives, but such a role is shared with other agents, the states’ officials, educationalists, creative workers, ordinary people, to name a few. Therefore, in public history, the past is always situated in a relative present where history has been displayed to its wider audiences, and opinions from the present-day constantly influence how the past is represented. Public historians constantly argue the indivisible connection between the past and people, or the public, in everyday life.<sup>959</sup>

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<sup>955</sup> Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 34.

<sup>956</sup> Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 1-2, 34-35.

<sup>957</sup> Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 1-2.

<sup>958</sup> Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 1.

<sup>959</sup> David Dean, “Introduction,” in *A Companion to Public History*, edited by David Dean (Hoboken: Wiley, 2018), 1.

History is indeed a product facing a much wider public than only professional historians. Thus, never before is there such an obvious answer to Munslow's question quoted earlier: History keeps on changing not only because of the diverse perspectives imposed by historians in their writings but also for the fact that "everyone" has an opinion about the past at some point and "anyone" could be the person who added another historical interpretation to the "long chain of interpretations."<sup>960</sup> The public nature of history simply cannot be dismissed.

History is changing; moreover, history is multi-layered, especially in the public realm. Analyses in this thesis demonstrate that a narrative does not disappear in the public discourse; even when the government tries to demolish some older narratives, they are able to cluster together in some hidden corners of the public realm, in stories, in sites, and in people's memories. This thesis argues that heroes and villains persist in the public understanding of the republic era even though the state has tried to shift the narrative to the century of national humiliation, because narratives providing value judgments on individuals are inherently appealing to people. Moreover, popular history does not always follow trends in academic historiography, especially regarding a historical villain, and individuals remain able to reach diverse conclusions about the past despite close state control of historical narratives.

By broadcasting the commemoration of Sun Yat-sen through mass media, the PRC and its changing leadership seek to use the narrative of Sun Yat-sen, a symbol of modern China shared by Chinese communities on both sides of the Taiwan Straits regardless of political and ideological beliefs, to evoke national pride and indignation simultaneously, and to curate memories of the time when the commemoration was held. In the official commemoration, the rituals, languages, and symbols are associated with

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<sup>960</sup> Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 35.

either Mao Zedong's cult, the CCP's achievements, or Xi Jinping's stronger emphasis on the reunification of Taiwan and the mainland. The ahistorical claims that Sun, at a young age, diagnosed the problems of imperial China and masterminded the 1911 Revolution are present in the graphic biography of Sun and (in the latter case) implied in history textbooks in the PRC. The narrative of Sun as the "pioneer of revolution" (革命先行者 *geming xianxing zhe*) has made the origin of the revolution easier to comprehend for the public. Nevertheless, this narrative also encompasses personal memories, including the ones belonging to Sun's widow Song Qingling, and those of contemporary visitors to the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Guangzhou and the sites and architectures elsewhere dedicated to the remembering of Sun Yat-sen.<sup>961</sup> Using a figure like Song Qingling added legitimacy to the state's approved narrative about Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary and communist credentials.

Besides the famous historical personalities, other case studies also emerged from the research, including a loosely defined group of republican writers, the heroine (also called 女丈夫 *nü zhangfu* or 女侠 *nü xia*) Qiu Jin, the anonymous martyrs who died in 1911 during the Guangzhou Uprising and buried in Huanghuagang (黄花岗), and Pan Dawei, a member of the late-Qing gentry who helped organised the burial of the martyrs in Huanghuagang and was later described as a new hero enabling the society to properly commemorate martyrs, whose life story is included in the myth of late-Qing uprisings. The republican writers' personal accounts showcase how ordinary people were depicted as or felt like heroes in the aftermath of the revolution, each from their own private perspectives instead of the enforced patriotism of the Republican era. At first, Qiu Jin's image as the sole heroine of the Xinhai Revolution followed the narrative of masculine

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<sup>961</sup> For example: Li 李, *中山陵 Zhongshan Ling*.



virtues of bravery and idealism. It later became the embodiment of multiple distinguishing characteristics people sought from a pre-Republican heroine. The burial site in the Huanghuagang itself contains multiple layers of the past; moreover, the narrative of on-site events (as displayed in newspapers or webpages) that happened over the decades can change over time to reflect the messages being conveyed; the 72 martyrs who were (and still largely are) anonymous in the popular narrative become indistinguishable male heroes commemorated alongside communist martyrs in the later years. The past is a changing present, and a historical hero is also a contemporary hero whose interpretation is never conclusive, especially in the public realm. It is perhaps also in this context that the association between public history and memory is justified. Like memories, public history is not fixed but constructed and ever-changing. While humanity relies on constantly revisiting memories to suit the current identities,<sup>962</sup> historical representation in the public domain makes up a proportion of these memories.

Moreover, the shared knowledge of heroes from the past ensures a shared piece of memory, regardless of the diversity of interpretations of such a memory may be to different individuals. History thus makes an impact in forming a common identity; having a “national hero” who is periodically commemorated but not promoted to the status of a cult personality is like having a common acquaintance. Paradoxically, the impact of having these representations is superficial yet profound to society. Their insignificance to society ensures that interpretations of them can remain ambiguous and conflicting, as they have always been, and their significance results in the non-negligible presence of these historical stories within the “identity borders”<sup>963</sup> or “social boundaries”<sup>964</sup> throughout

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<sup>962</sup> John R. Gillis, “Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship” In *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, edited by John R. Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 1-24, 3.

<sup>963</sup> Schneider, *Nation and Ethnicity*, 389.

<sup>964</sup> Gillis, “Memory and Identity,” 4.

time. Nonetheless, neither the identification with heroes and heroines nor the social boundaries are fixed. The fluid narrative creates fluid identities.

Like heroes, villains also form an integral part of the story. The two later case studies of this thesis provide two distinct trajectories of narrative development and public reception of villain-like historical figures. They were not celebrated, and they represented the more difficult kind of narrative past in which the supposedly ideal nation encountered key political actors from within whose historical existence contradicted the political or moral values then and now. However, this project found that the name of Yuan Shikai and the collective image of Chinese warlords are constructed instead of represented with balance and nuances. Historian Li Xin stressed in 1986 that “monuments” and “biographies” should be given to characters of “reactionary forces” (反动力量 *fandong lilian*),<sup>965</sup> and villains and traitors should be remembered for their “traitorous crimes” so that their infamy will last.<sup>966</sup> Such a principle of writing the history of villains for the public and for the future generations has a root in China. The combination of our natural tendency to make moral judgments and the traditional historiography in China, which emphasises drawing lessons from the past, contributed to the development of biographical accounts for Yuan Shikai and the warlords. However, these narratives, when associated with other “reactionary forces,” have transformed into metaphors used to condemn other, more current and influential adversaries, such as Chiang Kai-shek during and shortly after the Chinese Civil War.

Moreover, the representation of Wang Jingwei is more dismissive compared to Yuan Shikai; in an extreme account (compiled by historians at Fudan University whom

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<sup>965</sup> Including Yuan Shikai and Wang Jingwei, as well as other rivals of the CCP in the past.

<sup>966</sup> Li 李, “关于民国人物研究的若干问题 [Some Issues on the Study of Republican Personages],” 106.

government appointed to write the history of Wang's puppet regime), it was described that "the Chinese people have long swept it ('Wang Jingwei's Traitorous Clique') into the dustbin of history forever."<sup>967</sup> Being in "the dustbin of history," Wang Jingwei was less frequently represented than other key historical figures analysed in this thesis, and he has been absent from history education of the secondary level in the PRC. The alternative interpretation of Wang Jingwei, one that focuses less on his wrongdoing and acknowledges his political or literary achievements, only circulated outside of mainland China and, on occasion, attracted attention from a small group of Chinese internet users. However, the human fascination with complex life stories makes Wang a prevailing figure on the Internet. Even though the communist state has made few attempts to present history as anything but a single unified narrative, history still finds a powerful impact on individuals, the past and the present are still in dialogue, and multiple narratives are still embedded in history storytelling in the Chinese context.

As such, this thesis also provides an adaptation of the "universal methods" of analysing public history locally, which could contribute to the discussion on a global scale by offering what Serge Noiret and Thomas Cauvin described as "the deeper close reading of local pasts" that has the potential to be "fruitfully connected worldwide."<sup>968</sup>

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<sup>967</sup> Fudan University, eds, 汪精卫汉奸政权的兴亡 [*The Rise and Fall of Wang Jingwei's Traitorous Regime*], 2.

<sup>968</sup> Serge Noiret and Thomas Cauvin, "Internationalising Public History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Public History*, 26-27.

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