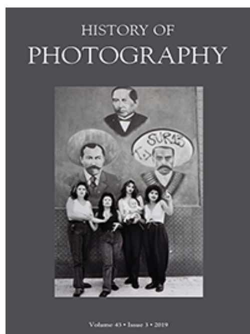

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# The ‘Occupied Lens’ in Wartime China: Portrait Photography in the Service of Chinese ‘Collaboration’, 1939–1945

Jeremy E. Taylor

This article explores the importance of portrait photography to the wartime collaborationist regime of Wang Jingwei, which governed parts of Japanese-occupied China from 1940 to 1945. The article demonstrates how, for a combination of practical, political, and cultural reasons, studio portraiture was chosen as one of the primary forms of media for the propagation of iconography by this administration. Studio portraiture was also, however, a realm in which this Chinese regime sought to stamp its own mark on visual culture, separate from the iconography of the occupying Japanese. The article demonstrates this by tracing the origins and fate of a number of widely circulated studio portraits of Wang taken in 1939, 1940, and 1941. This article also speculates about the possibility of identifying and defining an ‘occupied lens’ during the war, one which was clearly derivative of prewar forms yet evolved in ways which set it apart both from Japanese propaganda and from the visual culture of resistance.

**Keywords:** *China, Japan, foreign occupation, war, studio photography, portraits, leaders, Wang Jingwei (1883–1944), Bann’s Studio (Guangyi zhaoxiangguan), Liang Boping (dates unknown)*

In her book *Visual Occupations*, Gil Hochberg demonstrates how we might understand the ‘making of the [Israel-Palestine] conflict […] by focusing on the distribution of the visual’.[1] Noting that invasion and occupation, by their very nature, lead to acts of concealment, as well as to the proscription of certain ‘ways of seeing’,[2] Hochberg suggests that questions need to be asked about the very milieu of occupation from the starting point of the visual. Such questions include ‘what or who can be seen, what or who remains visible, who can see and whose vision is compromised’ in the occupation context.[3] Such questions build on Nicholas Mirzoeff’s argument that ‘visuality is a specific technique of colonial and imperial practice […] by which power visualizes History to itself’.[4] They also address a growing body of literature on the place of photography in the visuality of foreign occupation, and specifically the ‘asymmetries and absences’ which typify photojournalism in recently occupied societies such as Iraq and Afghanistan.[5]

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1 – Gil Z. Hochberg, *Visual Occupations: Violence and Visibility in a Conflict Zone*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2015, 5.
2 – A concept first developed in John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, London: Penguin 1973.
3 – Hochberg, *Visual Occupations*, 5.
4 – Nicholas Mirzoeff, ‘Introduction: For Critical Visuality Studies’, in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff, London: Routledge 2013, xxix–xxxviii, xxx.
5 – See, for example, Susan L. Carruthers, ‘Why Can’t We See Insurgents? Enmity, Invisibility, and Counterinsurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan’, *Photography and Culture*, 8:2 (2015), 191–211.

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Hochberg's focus on 'what or who can be seen' is entirely valid for the ongoing conflict that is her topic. In applying such questions to historical cases of foreign occupation, however, the notions of concealment and absence take on a very different pertinence. In most of the histories written of the Japanese occupation of China, for example, questions of 'what or who can be seen' do not apply purely to the visual regimes put in place by the Japanese, but also to strategies deployed by successive Chinese governments who, since the end of World War II, have sought to obfuscate, dismiss, or, more recently, render invisible the visual cultures that were sustained by the Chinese who worked in the service of various 'client regimes'.[6] In the narrative of patriotic resistance that has become so central to Chinese nationalism since the 1990s,[7] there is little space for seeing the visual forms of expression created by Chinese under occupation, unless such forms of expression can be interpreted as acts of overt resistance.[8] This tendency can be found in scholarship undertaken outside China as well, especially when it comes to photography. With a few exemplary exceptions, often undertaken by historians of Japan and written from the perspective of the 'colonial gaze',[9] photography in occupied China has been absent from all of the standard histories of the topic in English,[10] and from accounts of photography during the war against Japan in Chinese.[11] Indeed, photographs produced under occupation have usually been deployed as mere discursive tools to illustrate supposedly treasonous behaviour.[12] Contrast such silence to the extensive work on wartime Chinese photography produced in areas beyond Japanese control in the name of resistance,[13] and on Japanese photography produced in other parts of occupied Asia, such as the 'client regime' of Manchukuo (1932–45).[14]

Despite such historiographical lacunae, photography was crucially important to one of the most studied 'client regimes' in Japanese-occupied China – the Reorganised National Government (RNG) led by the veteran Chinese statesman and former premier of the Republican Chinese government, Wang Jingwei, from spring 1940 until the Japanese surrender in autumn 1945. This was the last but most ambitious of such 'client regimes' established under the Japanese. It nominally governed large swathes of east and south China from its reestablished capital of Nanjing, subsuming a number of preexisting puppet states when formally launched in 1940. Intriguingly, this regime never claimed to represent an ideological break with the Chinese republic from which it had split. Rather, it claimed to represent a return to normalcy and peace under Japanese dominion, resurrecting many of the institutions, practices, and symbols of the prewar Chinese state.[15]

Photography was an important medium in the political culture of this regime. The RNG compiled photographic histories of itself.[16] It employed Chinese photographers within its official Central News Agency (CNA; Zhongyang dianxunshe), an organisation which argued that photographs were 'more practical than the written word [and] more popular and easy to understand, but can also leave readers with an extremely deep impression' (*jiao wenzi tongsu er yi jie, dan yu duzhe yi ji shengke zhi yinxiang ye*).[17] It sponsored photographic pictorials and exhibitions, giving non-state photographers a space in which to publish and display their work.[18] Photography was also an accepted form of elite leisure under this regime, with a number of the RNG's highest ranking officials being keen amateur photographers.[19]

At the same time, photography was always a realm of contested cultural expression in occupied China. Despite assumptions about this 'collaborationist' regime being hand-in-glove with the Japanese, photography as a practice helps to

6 – Wang Ke-wen, 'Irreversible Verdict? Historical Assessments of Wang Jingwei in the People's Republic and Taiwan', *Twentieth Century China*, 28:1 (2002), 57–81. In this article, I borrow the term 'client regime' from David P. Barrett, 'Introduction', in *Chinese Collaboration with Japan, 1932–1945: The Limits of Accommodation*, ed. David P. Barrett and Larry N. Shyu, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2001, 1–17.

7 – Parks M. Coble, 'China's "New Remembering" of the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, 1937–1945', *China Quarterly*, 19 (June 2017), 394–410.

8 – This is in contrast to many other cases of occupation, in which visual forms of expression such as photography have been a central concern for a number of scholars. For example, on photography during the American occupation of Japan (1945–52), see Julia Adeney Thomas, 'Power Made Visible: Photography and Postwar Japan's Elusive Reality', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 67:2 (2008), 365–94.

9 – See, for example, Andrea Germer, 'Artists and Wartime Politics. Natori Yōnosuke: A Japanese Riefenstahl?', *Contemporary Japan*, 24:1 (2002), 21–50.

10 – See, for example, *Brush and Shutter: Early Photography in China*, ed. Jeffrey W. Cody and Frances Terpak, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press and the Getty Research Institute 2011; and Wu Hung, *Zooming In: Histories of Photography in China*, London: Reaktion Books 2016.

11 – Such as Song Zhenjun, '*Zai kang-Ri zhanzheng zhong kangzhan zhuti de sheying chuangzuo*' (The production of war-themed photography during the War of Resistance), *Shenyang gongye xueyuan xuebao*, 12:1 (2016), 7–12.

12 – As they are in *Wang Jingwei yu Wang wei zhengfu* (Wang Jingwei and the bogus Wang government), ed. Huang Renyuan, Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan 1994.

13 – Claire Roberts, *Photography and China*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press 2013, 91–99.

14 – Annika A. Culver, *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-Garde Propaganda in Manchukuo*, Vancouver: UBC Press 2013, 100–33.

15 – David P. Barrett, 'The Wang Jingwei Regime, 1940–1945: Continuities and Disjunctures with Nationalist China', in *Chinese Collaboration with Japan*, ed. Barrett and Shyu, 102–15.

16 – Such as Zhongyang dianxunshe, *Zhongguo canzhan yi lai dashi xiezhen zhuanji* (An album of photographs of major events in China since the declaration of war on the allies), Nanjing: Zhongyang dianxunshe 1944.

17 – Ibid., 2.

18 – Details of a number of such exhibitions are listed in *Bianzhe* (The editor), '*Fuyin qianxi*' (On the eve of publication), *Changjiang huakan* 4:2 (February 1945), 30. The *Changjiang huakan* (*Yangtse pictorial*) itself regularly featured landscape and other

expose just how non-collaborative the relationship between the RNG and Tokyo could be. Chinese intellectuals openly expressed displeasure at the photographic practices of Japanese tourists at sites of political importance in occupied China, for example.[20] Also, when CNA photojournalists travelled through occupied areas of the country in 1940 to document life under Japanese rule, they had to be under the strict control of Japanese military minders.[21] As I shall demonstrate in the following, this tension was present even in the iconography produced by the RNG, for certain forms of photography came to be favoured precisely because they allowed the Chinese a greater degree of autonomy from the Japanese, challenging Japanese imperial propaganda which favoured promotion of the image of the emperor.[22] Indeed, in what I refer to as 'the occupied lens',[23] a photographic perspective that was distinct from the colonial gaze and from the photography espoused by agents of the Nationalist and Communist resistance against the Japanese, we find a prism through which to address complex tensions that arose in the realm of the visual during wartime.

This article represents the first time that such questions have been asked. Utilising archival and photographic materials that have, for the most part, never been analysed before,[24] this study seeks to fill a major gap in the developing literature on RNG China, much of which has hitherto overlooked the significance of the visual in the making of this regime's self-image.[25] It does this by examining portraiture, one specific form of photography which emerged as an important strand in the political culture of the RNG, charting the ways in which studio portraits in particular were used by this regime as a means of creating and sustaining visual narratives around its leader. Such narratives were reactive to attacks on Wang by artists working in the name of resistance, but also resisted attempts by the Japanese to manage Wang's image. The portraiture produced by Chinese commercial photographic studios in the service of a collaborationist regime was thus a realm of contestation in which Chinese 'collaborators' at the same time countered rhetorical attacks from their Chinese enemies – which, quite literally, presented Wang Jingwei as the 'face' of treason[26] – and control of the visual by a foreign occupier.

In considering the products of this occupied lens, I adopt an approach which Irene Stengs defines as the 'cultural biography of the portrait', examining the creation and circulation of a handful of studio portraits of Wang Jingwei which were produced at key points in the life of this regime, but then used at different moments and for different purposes thereafter.[27] In addition, I make use of archival and published material from the time relating to photographic practice and the circulation of portraiture in occupied China, to situate the production and use of such portraits in the wider context of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). As shall become clear, there were many continuities between prewar and occupation-era studio portraiture. This reflected the training and background of individual photographers themselves, as well as the ideology of Wang Jingwei's administration, which claimed to be reestablishing an orthodox Chinese polity in spite of the Japanese presence. At the same time, however, restrictions on visual expression under occupation determined what, to reference Hochberg again, could be seen and not seen in occupied China.

More ambitiously, this article seeks to put Chinese photography under occupation back into the wider story of photography in modern China more generally, and therefore to allow it to be seen again. This is a crucial endeavour, because a nascent body of scholarship on the role of photographic studios in China, and on studio portraiture in particular, is starting to pose urgent questions regarding not just the development of this modern form, but also the difficulty in distinguishing the public and the private, and the commercial and official, when it comes to the

forms of photography in its many issues; for another example, where a number of female photographers operating under the RNG were featured, see Anon, '*Renwu jieshao*' (Introduction to personalities), *Zhonghua huabao* (China pictorial), 2:1 (February 1944), 12–13.

19 – Including the RNG foreign minister Chu Minyi; photographic albums which once belonged to Chu are now held in the Prints & Photographs Reading Room (Lot 11700), Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

20 – Liu Longguang, '*Heping yu zuguo*' (Peace and the motherland), *Huawen Daban meiri*, 5:5 (March 1941), 19–23.

21 – Xue Huizi (photography by Xue Diwei), *E Gan shidi shichaji* (A field survey of Hubei and Jiangxi), Nanjing: Zhongyang dianxunshe 1940.

22 – Morris Low, *Japan on Display: Photography and the Emperor*, London: Routledge 2006.

23 – I am indebted to Austin Parks of Loyola University Maryland for the expression 'occupied lens'. Austin Parks, 'The Occupied Lens: Japanese War Photographers in North and South Vietnam', presented at the conference Cultures of Occupation: Towards a Transnational Dialogue, University of Nottingham, January 2018.

24 – Including, although not limited to, the Lin Baisheng Photographic collection held at Stanford University's East Asia Library. This collection of over two hundred photographs which once belonged to Lin Baisheng (Wang Jingwei's Minister of Publicity) includes a number of important studio portraits of Wang Jingwei. I thank the East Asia Library, and particularly Zhaohui Xue, for allowing me to work with this important collection.

25 – For recent surveys of the literature on this regime, see Yingying Gao, 'A Survey of Twenty-First-Century Studies of the Japanese-Occupied Areas in China', trans. Tian Xiansheng, *Journal of Modern Chinese History*, 9:1 (2015), 130–51; and David Serfass, '*Occupation Japonaise et collaboration Chinoise: Tendances historiographiques récentes*' (The Japanese occupation and Chinese collaboration: recent historiographical tendencies), *Revue Historique*, 680 (April 2016), 941–66.

26 – On definitions of treason in occupied China, see Frederic Wakeman, Jr, 'Hanjian (Traitor)! Collaboration and Retribution in Wartime Shanghai', in *Becoming Chinese: Passages to Modernity*, ed. Wen-hsin Yeh, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2000, 313.

27 – Irene Stengs, 'The Commodification of King Chulalongkorn: His Portraits, Their Cultural Biographies, and the Enduring Aura of a Great King of Siam', in *Commodification: Things, Agency, and Identities*, ed. Wim M. J. van Binsbergen and Peter L. Geschiere, Münster: Lit Verlag 2005, 301–18.

realm of photography in China. Such issues take on a quite different significance when we start to consider them in the light of wartime politics.[28]

28 – Luke Gartlan and Roberta Wue, 'Introduction', in *Portraiture and Early Studio Photography in China and Japan*, ed. Luke Gartlan and Roberta Wue, London: Routledge 2017, 1–14.

## *Studio Photography in Japanese-Occupied China*

As a significant scholarship on Japanese propaganda explains, the Japanese invasion in 1937 was accompanied by an explosion of photographic depictions of China, produced for both a Japanese, home-front audience and for an occupied Chinese readership.[29] Japanese news agencies such as Asahi, Yomiuri, and Dōmei dominated the production and circulation of photography in occupied areas following the initial invasion.[30] Occupation newspapers in this early period were full of photographic images of China. In almost all cases, however, these images traced their provenance to Japanese news photographers. In fact, even after the founding of the RNG in March 1940, the main role of agencies such as the CNA, when it came to photography, was to distribute images produced by Japanese photojournalists.[31]

29 – David C. Earhart, *Certain Victory: Images of World War II in the Japanese Media*, Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe 2008.

30 – Anne Tucker, et al., *The History of Japanese Photography*, Houston: Museum of Fine Arts 2003, 192.

31 – Zhongyang dianxunshe, *Zhongyang dianxunshe disannian* (The third year of the Central News Agency), Nanjing: Zhongyang dianxunshe 1943, 21.

Nonetheless, there is one form of photography which survived the initial onslaught, and in which Chinese photographers were able to continue to ply their trade, albeit under difficult and often coercive conditions. This was studio photography. The 1920s and 1930s had represented the heyday of studio photography in China, when thousands of studios were opened in major cities. As Claire Roberts notes, 'portrait photographs, recording important personages, commemorations, and rites of passage, were shared with family, friends, and associates, and published in the growing number of illustrated magazines and newspapers reporting on social and political change' in this period.[32] By the 1930s, this industry served a growing demand from illustrated magazines, such as the much-studied *Liangyou* (*Young Companion*), for glamour portraits of Chinese film celebrities,[33] as the Hollywood 'semiotics of glamour' of which Liz Willis-Tropea has written reached urban China.[34] As Wen-hsin Yeh argues of cities such as Shanghai in the prewar decade, 'the camera stood at the center of an integrated cultural industry that mobilized the capacities of multiple machines in the service of urban consumerism'.[35] In fact, so indigenised had studio photography become by the 1930s that China began to export studio photographers themselves to other parts of Asia.[36] Studio photography was, in other words, a form of expression that was fully integrated into Chinese urban, commercial, middle-class culture by the outbreak of war in 1937.

32 – Roberts, *Photography and China*, 65.

33 – Zhao Hao, '*Liangyou huabao yu Zhongguo xiandai sheying fazhan*' (The *Young Companion* and the development of modern Chinese photography), *Zhejiang yishu zhiye xueyuan xuebao*, 8:4 (2010), 76–80.

34 – Liz Willis-Tropea, 'Glamour Photography and the Institutionalization of Celebrity', *Photography and Culture*, 4:3 (2011), 261–76.

35 – Wen-hsin Yeh, 'Beyond the Frame: The Camera in Republican China and Wartime Chongqing', in *Brush and Shutter*, ed. Cody and Terpak, 115.

36 – Karen Strassler, 'Cosmopolitan Visions: Ethnic Chinese and the Photographic Imagining of Indonesia in the Late Colonial and Early Postcolonial Periods', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 67:2 (2008), 395–432.

Studio photography did not end with the Japanese invasion. Counter-intuitively, the occupation necessitated the longevity of this industry. In Shanghai's International Settlement and French Concession, both initially spared Japanese occupation by virtue of their special status under the so-called 'Unequal Treaties' with foreign powers, a plethora of commercial studios continued to operate, serving a middle-class clientele who continued to desire wedding, graduation, and family photographs (figure 1). In areas under direct Japanese control, attempts to register local residents, so as to manage potentially recalcitrant populations, meant a boon in work for local photographers. Studio portraits were an integral part of the production of *liangmin zheng* (good character cards), and many residents who had never had portraits taken before were forced to have their likeness produced for such purposes. In other cases, photographic studios were called upon by Japanese military personnel to produce or reproduce photographs to be sent home; and Chinese leaders at all levels of the 'client regimes' continued the practice of producing photographic portraits of themselves to be used as gifts, just as their prewar predecessors had done.[37]

37 – Tong Bingxue, *Zhongguo zhaoxiangguan shi, 1859–1956* (A history of Chinese photographic studios, 1859–1956), Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan 2017.

In light of this context, it is not surprising that it was the world of studio photography which Wang Jingwei's so-called Peace Movement – the group of Republican Chinese politicians, journalists, and intellectuals around Wang who

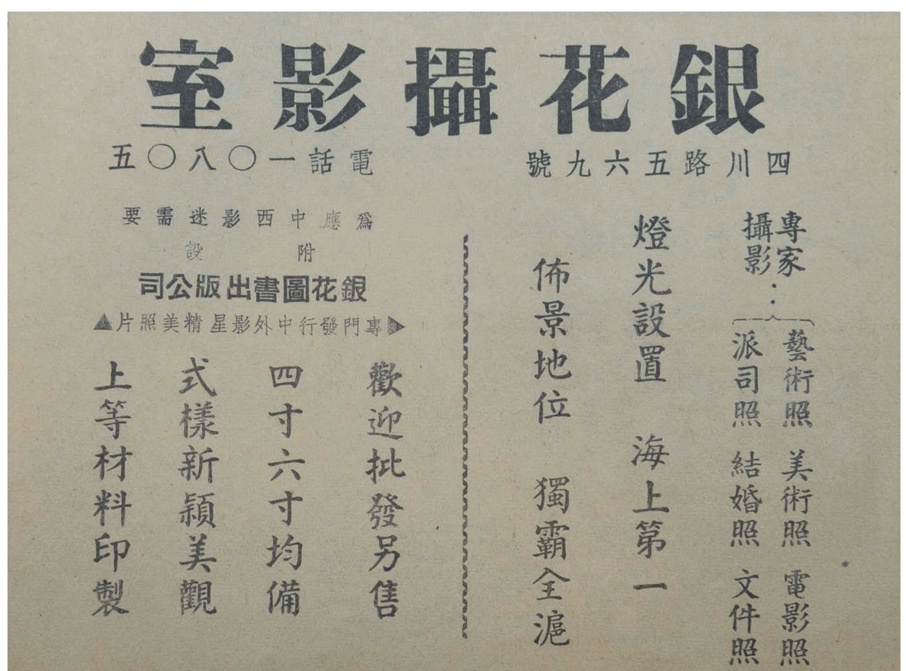


Figure 1. Advertisement for Yin Hua Photography Studio (Yin Hua sheyingshi), one of many commercial photographic studios active in Japanese-occupied Shanghai, from *Mingxing huabao*, 2 (January 1943). From the Paul Kendel Fonoroff Collection. Courtesy of the C. V. Starr East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley.

advocated a negotiated peace with Japan rather than a continuation of armed resistance – first turned to, in the absence of a formal state infrastructure for propaganda, when it was seeking to repackage its leader for an urban Chinese audience in summer 1939.[38] This was the period following Wang Jingwei's defection from the Chinese resistance in December 1938, after which he had moved first to colonial Hanoi, where an unsuccessful attempt was made on Wang's life by Chinese resistance agents, and then to Shanghai. It was in Shanghai that Wang and those around him engaged in direct negotiations with the Japanese on the establishment of a new Chinese administration under occupation.[39]

There already exists a significant literature on the role of political portrait photography in the making of modern leaders in the pre-World War II decades in Europe, when 'the photograph displaced the painted portrait as the primary medium of portraiture'.[40] Such literature has shown how photographic technologies that had been developed in the commercial sphere could be redeployed in official or partisan personality cults, and in the service of dictators, revolutionaries, or monarchs. Advances in studio photography coincided with the rise of the media-savvy politician, so that, as Maurizio Peleggi explains, 'photography […] was critical to the construction, rather than the mere projection' of the image of the modern leader.[41]

The RNG was no exception, and neither was the Chinese regime from which it had split in 1939. As Joan Judge has argued, 'Photographs are central to understanding the early Chinese Republic [as they] gave rise to new social practices and new modes of sociability'.[42] This included the rise of studio portraiture in Republican Chinese political culture. The use of studio-produced photographic portraits as political icons emerged as a practice in China as early as the 1910s, with the reproduction of photographs of statesmen appearing regularly in the new medium of the pictorial.[43] There were also specific events, however, which enhanced such developments. For example, the 1925 death in Beijing of the Republic's first head of state, Sun Yat-sen, led to the widespread use of photographic portraits as devotional objects in China.[44] Such practices only intensified with the elaborate reburial of Sun at a mausoleum in Nanjing in 1929 – an event at which Wang Jingwei had not been present – as well as during the subsequent

38 – On the formation of the Peace Movement, see Wang Ke-wen, 'Wang Jingwei and the Policy Origins of the "Peace Movement", 1932–1937', in *Chinese Collaboration with Japan*, ed. Barrett and Shyu, 21–37.

39 – The most thorough study of this period remains Gerald E. Bunker, *The Peace Conspiracy: Wang Ching-wei and the China War, 1937–1941*, Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press 1972.

40 – See, for example, Alessandra Antola, 'Ghitta Carell and Italian Studio Photography in the 1930s', *Modern Italy*, 16:3 (2011), 251.

41 – Maurizio Peleggi, 'The Aesthetics and Politics of Royal Portraiture in Thailand', *Ars Orientalis*, 43 (2013), 84.

42 – Joan Judge, 'Portraits of Republican Ladies: Materiality and Representation in Early Twentieth Century Chinese Photographs', in *Visualising China, 1845–1965*, ed. Christian Henriot and Wen-hsin Yeh, Boston: Brill 2013, 131.

43 – Joan Judge, *Republican Lens: Gender, Visuality, and Experience in the Early Chinese Periodical Press*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2015, 33–38.

44 – Henrietta Harrison, *The Making of the Republican Citizen: Political Ceremonies and Symbols in China, 1911–1929*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000, 133–48.

'Nanjing Decade' (1927–37), when Chiang Kai-shek's regime used photographic portraits to promote personality cults associated with both the posthumous Sun and with Chiang himself.[45] The mass reproduction of photographic portraits of political leaders and the display of these in public places – a practice still common in Chinese political culture today – date from such Republican precedents. Most importantly, however, such practices developed out of an unwritten alliance between the commercial photographic and publishing industries in China's main urban centres and the Republican political elite, many of whom were only too willing to adopt the techniques, technologies, and aesthetics developed in the private sector for political ends. As a result, by the 1930s there operated in Shanghai and other cities studios which specialised in producing portraits of political and military leaders while also serving the needs of middle-class urbanites and commercial publishers.[46] This alliance resulted in some of the most iconic of images in the Republican era, such as the widely circulated wedding photography of Chiang Kai-shek and May-ling Soong produced by Chung Hwa Studio in Shanghai in 1927.[47]

The political utility of commercially produced photographic portraits only increased following the outbreak of war in 1937, as studio portraits of Chiang Kai-shek, China's main leader in the fight against Japan, were commissioned from commercial studios (figure 2), and photographic imagery of Chiang in all manner of militarised and martial pose became ubiquitous throughout 'Free China'.[48] While private studios played a key role in producing such imagery, however, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists also instituted new laws in this period regulating the reproduction and display of such portraits.[49] Ironically, a good deal of the resultant portraiture, designed to rouse public support for the war against Japan, emulated elements of imperial Japanese photography, including some of the most commonly reproduced portraits of the Meiji emperor from the late nineteenth century.[50]

Any new Chinese administration to emerge under occupation and claiming to represent a return to Republican Chinese orthodoxy needed to adopt such standard forms of Chinese political iconography if it hoped to appear legitimate. This is precisely what Wang Jingwei's RNG did. By producing and circulating photographic portraits of Wang which could be given to followers as political gifts, hung on office and classroom walls (figure 3) and reproduced in pro-Wang publications, the Peace Movement took on the standard ritual trappings of prewar Chinese statecraft.

There was something about studio portraiture, however, which was also uniquely suited to the circumstances of occupation. In a recent study, Luke Gartlan and Roberta Wue note how studio portraiture, quite unlike other forms of photography, is 'inherently collaborative' in nature. Studio portraits are as much a production of the sitter or client as they are of the photographer, with both parties being involved in a negotiation which results in the creation of a new likeness.[51] This argument takes on added significance under foreign occupation, for it suggests that the studio can itself be turned into a partially autonomous space in which the occupied Chinese can strive to visually define themselves on their own terms and in ways which are not always possible in other forms of visual expression. If the Japanese authorities controlled so much else in the realm of visual propaganda, from photojournalism to oil painting, it was logical for the RNG to turn to a form of image-making which was recognisably Chinese, yet which also offered an opportunity for greater RNG agency and independence.[52]

Photographic portraits were also an obvious choice for a regime which put so much emphasis on the supposed charisma and political credibility of its nominal leader, Wang having been one of the most important figures in Chinese politics prior to the war. Indeed, the RNG was initially concerned with marketing Wang Jingwei as a wise and patriotic martyr who was ready to put his life at risk for

45 – Jeremy E. Taylor, 'Enemy of the People: Visual Depictions of Chiang Kai-shek', 2012, Enemy of the People Digital Archive, available at https://www.dhi.ac.uk/chiangkaishek/background/(accessed 15 August 2019).

46 – Roberts, *Photography and China*, 72–77.

47 – Ibid., 73.

48 – Jeremy E. Taylor, 'Republican Personality Cults in Wartime China: Contradistinction and Collaboration', *Comparative Studies in Society & History*, 57:3 (2015), 665–93.

49 – Ibid., 673.

50 – Mikiko Hirayama, 'The Emperor's New Clothes: Japanese Visuality and Imperial Portrait Photography', *History of Photography*, 33:2 (2009), 165–84.

51 – Gartlan and Wue, 'Introduction'.

52 – On the RNG's continual struggle for autonomy from the occupying Japanese, see Margherita Zanasi, *Saving the Nation: Economic Modernity in Republican China*, Chicago: Chicago University Press 2006, 209–21.

Figure 2. Kwong Hua Studio, *Chiang Kai-shek*, circa 1937. Used here on cover of Fang Shaoyun, *Zuigao lingxiu kangzhan yanlunji* (A collection of the Supreme Leader's speeches on the War of Resistance), Guangzhou: Guangzhou tebie shi dang bu 1938.

peace – as evidenced in his survival of the assassination attempt in 1939 in Hanoi – rather than rousing support for the occupation per se.[53] All of this had visual consequences, for it led to the RNG – and the Peace Movement from which it had evolved – cultivating a metonymic relationship between Wang's person and face, and the polity over which he ruled. Given the centrality of emperor worship to imperial Japanese propaganda and to the propaganda of rival puppet states such as Manchukuo, this photographic promotion of Wang might even be interpreted as a challenge to Japanese visual hegemony.[54]

53 – On the importance of martyrdom to the promotion of Wang, see Jeremy E. Taylor, 'From Traitor to Martyr: Drawing Lessons from the Death and Burial of Wang Jingwei, 1944', *Journal of Chinese History* 3:1 (January 2019), 137–58.

54 – Low, *Japan on Display*. On Puyi's emulation of Japanese royalty in the mid-1930s, see Yamamuro Shin'ichi, *Manchuria under Japanese Dominion*, trans. Joshua A. Fogel, Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press 2006, 162.

Figure 3. Photograph of an unidentified diplomat hanging a portrait of Wang Jingwei on a wall in the Chinese (RNG) embassy in Tokyo, June 1941. Courtesy of The Mainichi Newspaper/AFLO.

Interestingly, photography even featured prominently in the Wang-centric textual literature that the Peace Movement and the RNG propagated. Wang Jingwei's own attempt, during his time as a radical student leader, to assassinate the Manchu Prince Regent Zai Feng in 1910 (subsequently considered proof of his legitimacy as a patriot and revolutionary) had apparently been organised under the cover of a bogus photography studio in Beijing. And it had been during a photo shoot in Beijing in 1935 that would-be assassins (supposedly aligned to Chiang Kai-shek) had attempted to end Wang's life.[55] As both of these events were emphasised in RNG propaganda as proof of Wang's selflessness, photography became a major feature of Wang Jingwei hagiography. During the occupation, Wang's earlier survival of such events would be worked into a grand narrative about his supposed willingness to become a martyr in the service of peace.[56]

55 – Howard L. Boorman, 'Wang Ching-wei: China's Romantic Radical', *Political Science Quarterly*, 79:4 (1964), 504–25.

56 – On the importance of martyrdom in narratives constructed around Wang Jingwei, see Zhiyi Yang, 'The Road to Lyric Martyrdom: Reading the Poetry of Wang Zhaoming (1883–1944)', *Chinese Literature*, 37 (2015), 135–64.

### *Contested Portraiture in the 1939–40 Period*

In the period between Wang Jingwei's initial defection from Chiang Kai-shek's government in December 1938 and the announcement in summer 1939 of his

Figure 4. Kwong Hua Studio, *Wang Ching-wei*, 1935. Frontispiece in Seyuan Shu, ed., *Poems of Wang Ching-wei*, London: George Allen & Unwin 1938. © British Library Board (X15/4597).

intention to negotiate a settlement with the Japanese, a number of prewar photographic portraits of Wang were circulated, by his supporters and by the Japanese, in occupied China's media. One such portrait (figure 4), produced in 1935 by the privately-run Kwong Hwa Studio (Guanghua zhaoxiangguan) in Nanjing, the studio of choice for Nationalist politicians in China's capital prior to the war,[57] was recycled with particular frequency in early 1939. This image presented Wang with what was, at the time, referred to as a '*chourong manmian*' (distressed countenance)[58] – his eyebrows raised in an expression of concern – and had been used as the frontispiece in prewar collections of Wang's writings.[59] A second image, possibly produced earlier in the decade but regularly reproduced in Peace

57 – Roberts, *Photography and China*, 75.

58 – He Peng, '*Yi wei sheyingshi yanli de Wang Jingwei*' (Wang Jingwei in the eyes of a photographer), *Shijixing* (May 1995), 34–36.

59 – *Poems of Wang Ching-wei*, trans. Seyuan Shu, London: George Allen & Unwin 1938.

Movement propaganda, presented Wang as a friendly statesman, his gaze directed at the viewer, suggesting (to reference Sontag) 'solemnity, frankness, the disclosure of the subject's essence',[60] and the hint of a smile on his lips. In both cases, Wang was presented in a distinctly urbane and civilian mode, dressed in a Western suit and tie, thereby choosing a well-honed association with 'worldliness, progress, action, and financial success'.[61] This marked Wang apart from his political mentor Sun Yat-sen, and from many of his peers, all of whom were usually photographed in a Sun Yat-sen tunic (*Zhongshanzhuang*), military uniform, or scholar's robe (*changpao*).

Both of these portraits, although primarily the former, were circulated in the first half of 1939 in Japanese-language newspapers, and publications affiliated to the Peace Movement in Hong Kong and Shanghai.[62] The image of Wang with a 'distressed countenance', produced during a time when he had served as the Republic of China's premier, was redeployed to signify the notion of Wang's selflessness in seeking peace with a foreign invader; the second image, in contrast, could be called upon when a more approachable image of Wang was required. Significantly, no new studio portraits of Wang were produced in the first half of 1939, meaning that references to Wang in the press were illustrated with prewar images such as these, which emphasised the continuity of his leadership. Some of the most widely circulated collections of Wang's speeches and essays distributed by his Peace Movement supporters in this period featured no images of Wang at all.[63]

In summer 1939, however, a new studio portrait of Wang was unveiled (figure 5). This portrait would become one of the most frequently used and definitive images of Wang for the remainder of the war. Although the provenance and precise date of the production of this portrait is difficult to determine through extant sources,[64] it was almost certainly taken after Wang's stay in Shanghai in late May 1939, when Wang was engaged in formal negotiations with the Japanese.[65] While I am yet to determine the identity of the individual who took this photograph, Japanese-language newspapers which helped to circulate this untitled portrait, such as the Shanghai-based *Tairiku Shimpo*,[66] credited it to the *Zhonghua ribao* (*Central China Daily News*), a Shanghai broadsheet edited by Lin Baisheng (who would later serve as the RNG Minister of Publicity), which recommenced publication in the guise of a Peace Movement vehicle in July 1939.[67] This newspaper only published the image for the first time on 31 August 1939, after a number of other publications had used it.[68] It may have been the work of one of the *Zhonghua ribao*'s house photographers, Kang Zhengping, a Shanghai-based photographer famed for his studio portraits of Republican statesmen prior to the Japanese invasion.[69] As with all of the early portraits of Wang produced in the 1939–40 period (including others that I explore in the following), however, it was never formally attributed to a single photographer. In captions appearing next to the image in the occupation press, the portrait was usually defined in the sparsest of terms as '*Wang Jingwei xiansheng jin ying*' (a recent image of Mr Wang Jingwei).[70]

In this 1939 image, Wang is dressed as he had been in most portraits produced in the 1930s, in a dark three-piece suit, a spear point-collared white shirt, and a tie – the attire of a wealthy Chinese businessman rather than a pro-Japanese activist. Split lighting renders the left side of Wang's face dark, and draws attention to his brilliantined hair, one of the signs of male glamour in the photographic portraiture in illustrated magazines earlier in the century. The soft focus of the image and the pose assumed by Wang give the photograph an almost pictorialist quality. He gazes off-camera into the right middle-distance with an expression that suggests idealism, purpose, and determination, but with the same raised eyebrows that had typified the 1935 Kwong Hwa studio portrait, thus suggesting continuities with prewar photography. Yet this was not the same Wang Jingwei that the urban Chinese public were accustomed to seeing in the prewar years, for this portrait presented a more defiant image, especially in terms of the pose. It offered visual proof that Wang had survived

60 – Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, New York: Rosetta Books 1975, 30.

61 – On the political significance of such clothing, see Antonia Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation*, New York: Columbia University Press 2008, 180.

62 – Lawrence M. W. Chiu, 'The *South China Daily News* and Wang Jingwei's Peace Movement, 1939–1941', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Hong Kong*, 50 (2010), 343–70.

63 – One example being Nanhua ribao, *Wang Jingwei xiansheng zhongyao jianyi* (Important suggestions from Mr Wang Jingwei), Hong Kong: Nanhua ribaoshe 1939.

64 – The only specific date I have seen attached to this image is one in the *Hawai'i Times* Photo Archive, where a scan of the portrait lists the image (object number: ddr-njpa-1-1063) as having arrived at the offices of the *Hawai'i Times* (a Japanese-language newspaper based in Honolulu) on 12 July 1939. Available at http://ddr.densho.org/ddr-njpa-1-1063-master-4853ea7569/(accessed 15 August 2019).

65 – Don Bate, *Wang Ching Wei: Puppet or Patriot*, Chicago: Ralph Fletcher Seymour 1941, 146–49.

66 – The image was published for the first time in the *Tairiku Shimpo* on the front page of the 11 July 1939 edition, where it was credited to the *Zhonghua ribao*.

67 – Sei Jeong Chin, 'The Historical Origins of the Nationalization of the Newspaper Industry in Modern China: A Case Study of the Shanghai Newspaper Industry, 1937–1953', *China Review*, 13:2 (2013), esp. 7.

68 – This newspaper first used the image to adorn an article entitled '*Zhongguo Guomindang zai Hu juxing diliuci quanguo daibiao dahui*' (The sixth national congress of the Kuomintang is convened in Shanghai), *Zhonghua ribao* (31 August 1939), 1.

69 – Jia Yihe, *Minguo Shanghai sheying: Haipai sheying wenhua qianshiji zhi yanjiu* (Photography in Republican Shanghai: a study of Shanghai-style photographic culture in the 20th century), Shanghai: Shiji chuban 2016, 235–36.

70 – See, for example, Xuanchuanbu, *Wang Zhuxi heping jianguo yanlunji* (Collection of Chairman Wang's speeches on peace and nation building), Nanjing: Xuanchuanbu 1941, np.

Figure 5. Unknown photographer, portrait of Wang Jingwei, circa July 1939. Courtesy of The Mainichi Newspaper/AFLO.

the assassination attempt by resistance agents in Hanoi just a few months earlier, and, by showing most of Wang's body in its three-quarter framing, it seemed to emphasise that Wang was in good health, despite the attempt on his life. Descriptions of the image, such as an extended essay which accompanied it in a September 1939 issue of the Chinese-language (but Japanese-financed and edited) pictorial *Huawen Daban meiri*, entitled '*tingshen fenqi heping jiuguo*' (lifting himself upright to save the nation through peace), stressed Wang's corporeality, but also his supposed vitality.[71] As Wang was rising from the dead, so too was an occupied China rising from the ashes of war.

The non-descript background of this image is matched by the lack of props or symbolic accoutrements in Wang's outfit. This austere and almost timeless quality may explain the portrait's longevity. It was the preferred choice in Chinese-language media when such outlets were reintroducing their readers to Wang in

71 – Taishi Gong, '*Tingshen fenqi heping jiuguo*' (Lifting himself upright to save the nation through peace), *Huawen Daban meiri*, 3:5 (September 1939), 4.

the second half of 1939, and a number of newspapers used it on their front pages to mark Wang's assumption of government on 30 March 1940.[72] It was also subsequently recycled for quite different purposes. The Japanese pharmaceutical firm Rohto produced a lithographic version of the portrait in a newspaper advertisement for its eye drops in spring 1940 – published even in the *Zhonghua ribao*, where its strapline '*Weiren yu ming shi yanyao*' (The world famous eye drops of great men) at once calls Wang great, yet reduces his vision to a product of Japanese industry.[73] On the recognition of the RNG by the Axis powers in 1941, the same portrait was placed by Mainichi editors alongside photographs of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini (figure 6). For the RNG itself, this portrait continued to be used as the frontispiece for Ministry of Publicity (MoP) publications well into 1941,[74] as well as the basis for murals and banners of Wang. Occupation newspapers were still using it some four years after its production as a generic image that could illustrate Wang-themed news, especially during periods later in the war when Wang's health was deteriorating.[75]

This was not the only studio portrait to be produced in this early period. A number of new portraits, also unattributed and undated, present a quite different image of Wang, and were used for different purposes. In January 1940, for example, a new headshot of Wang, this time gazing directly at the viewer – as he had done in the 1935 portrait – began to be circulated (figure 7). This image shows a more fully lit Wang in slightly clearer focus, so that the texture of his tie and collar can be discerned. The defiant and slightly romantic air of 1939 has been replaced by an expression of amiable solemnity, although the prominence given to his brilliantined hair marks at least one commonality between the two images.

This portrait was distributed precisely as Wang's imminent return to Nanjing was being openly discussed in the Chinese press. Its circulation was almost certainly timed to coincide with the conclusion of the Qingdao conference in

72 – For example, '*Qingzhu guomin zhengfu huandu tekan*' (Supplement celebrating the return of the national government), *Zhonghua ribao* (30 March 1940), 1.

73 – '*Weiren yu ming shi yanyao*' (The world famous eye drops of great men), *Zhonghua ribao* (30 March 1940), 11.

74 – Such as Xuanchuanbu, *Wang Zhuxi heping jianguo yanlunji*.

75 – See, for example, '*Wang Zhuxi fang Ri zuo fan jing*' (Chairman Wang returned to Nanjing yesterday after a visit to Japan), *Zhong bao* (24 September 1943), 1.

Figure 6. Portrait of Wang Jingwei alongside photographs of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. From Anon, '*De Yi deng ba guo chengren guomin zhengfu*' (Eight countries, including Germany and Italy, recognise the national government), *Huawen Daban meiri*, 7:2 (July 1941). Courtesy of the East Asia Library, Stanford University.

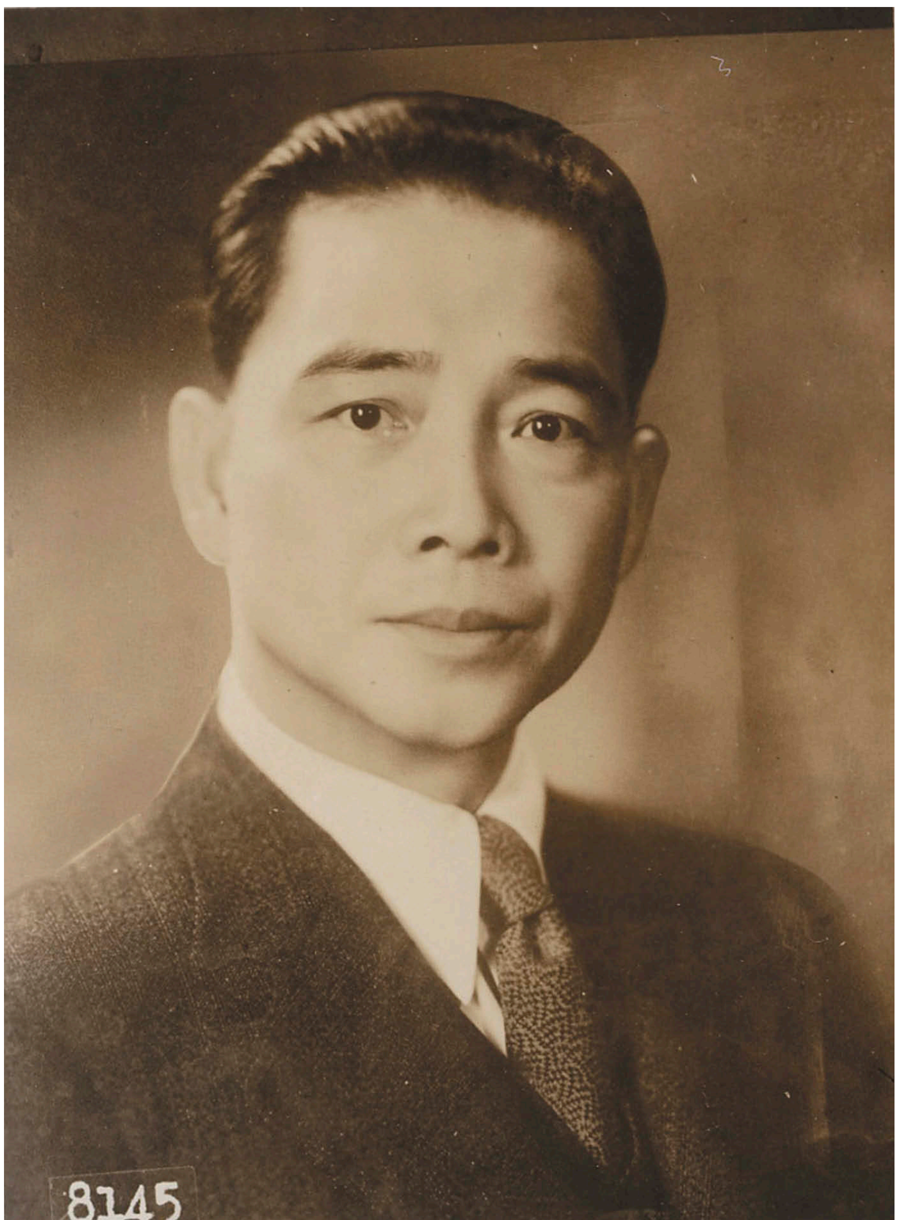


Figure 7. Unknown photographer, portrait of Wang Jingwei, 31 January 1940. Denshō Digital Repository (ddr-njpa-1-1084), *Hawai'i Times* Photo Archives. Courtesy of the *Hawai'i Times* Photo Archives Foundation.

January 1940, when the structure of Wang's nascent administration was decided. While never being attributed to a specific photographer, this portrait appears to have been created by the institutional predecessor to the MoP, the China News Service (Zhonghua tongxunshe), a Shanghai-based office which was directly linked to the *Zhonghua ribao*. It was used in official publications by related organisations later in the war,[76] and adorned publications celebrating Wang's official return to Nanjing in March 1940. The aforementioned *Huawen Daban meiri* used a colourised version of this portrait on the cover of the issue it published to celebrate the inauguration of Wang's regime, as did the MoP, which used it as the cover image of one its very first publications, a bilingual (Chinese and English) programme produced to mark the festivities of March 1940 (figure 8).[77] The image also inspired banners produced to celebrate Wang's arrival in Nanjing at the same time (figure 9). It may well have been a version of this same 'brightly painted picture of our leader Chairman Wang standing some ten metres tall before us, showing his amiable smile' (*Wang zhuxi xiezhen, youcai jiqi xianming, you san si zhang gao, women de lingxiu, hexie de xiaorong, yanran zai muqian*) that so

76 – Such as Zhongguo tongxinshe, *Shin Chūkoku no keizai dōkō* (Economic trends in new China), Tokyo: Zhongguo tong-xinshe Dongjing shiju 1943.

77 – Ministry of Publicity, *Special Commemoration Issue: Return of the National Government of the Republic of China to its Capital*, Nanjing: Ministry of Publicity, 1940.

Figure 8. Cover image of Ministry of Publicity, *Special Commemoration Issue: Return of the National Government of the Republic of China to its Capital*, Nanjing: Ministry of Publicity, 1940. Courtesy of Shanghai Library.

Figure 9. Unknown photographer, *Nanking Chinese celebrating* [*sic*], March 1940. Corbis Images.

impressed CNA photographers in the city of Wuhan during their visit there in summer 1940.[78]

78 – Xue, *E Gan shidi shichaji*, 10.

The 1939 and January 1940 portraits were not the only means of depicting Wang Jingwei during this crucial, transitional period. In Japanese promotion of Wang, other forms of photography and other forms of portraiture took precedence. One of the most widely circulated images of Wang in the occupation press in spring 1940, for example, was not a studio portrait at all. It was, rather, a news photograph of Wang in his trench coat and fedora, flanked by his Peace Movement followers, visiting a rain-soaked Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in mid-March 1940, produced by an Asahi photojournalist (figure 10).[79] Wang may well be the central figure in this image, but he is framed and overshadowed by the imposing architectural symbol of the mausoleum, suggesting a symbolic but very much hierarchical link between Wang and the late Sun Yat-sen. The drab scene within which Wang is pictured here also includes a disorderly band of 'collaborators' straggling beside and behind him, doing little to present him as a charismatic leader. At the same time, the Japanese government arranged for Japanese artists, including Kan'emon Asai, to paint portraits in oils of Wang over the course of 1940 (figure 11).[80] Few of these portraits appear to have survived, but accounts by high-ranking RNG officials – such as that written by Zhou Fohai, the RNG finance minister and lead negotiator, who recorded in his diary the fact that Wang and other RNG officials were presented with completed oil paintings of themselves in March 1940, made by unnamed Japanese artists – suggest that Chinese officials had little say in the production of such images.[81]

79 – An important symbolic event recounted in Yue Du, 'Sun Yat-sen as *Guofu*: Competition over Nationalist Party Orthodoxy in the Second Sino-Japanese War', *Modern China*, 45:2 (2019), 201–35.

80 – As evidenced in a photograph of Wang posing for this painting with Asai himself: 'Wang Jingwei having his portrait painted', 16 August 1940, object: ddr-njpa-1-1067 (G388.040), Denshō Digital Repository, available at http://ddr.densho.org/ddr-njpa-1-1067/(accessed 5 August 2019).

81 – See *Zhou Fohai riji quanbian, shangbian* (The complete, edited diaries of Zhou Fohai, Part I), ed. Cai Dejin, Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe 1998, 262. The extant photographic record suggests that such paintings were rarely hung in public spaces – I have yet to see a photograph of an RNG office in which anything other than a photographic portrait of Wang was hung.

As if to stress the importance of photographic portraiture to the RNG, many of Wang's followers within the RNG also turned to this medium when cultivating their own status. While Wang Jingwei remained the embodiment of this regime until his death in 1944, other leaders, such as Zhou Fohai (figure 12), and Wang's wife Chen Bijun, all posed for studio portraits at one stage or another during the occupation, and all used factional media sources to distribute such images. However, in terms of the sheer number of portraits, or the scale of their distribution, none could compete with Wang Jingwei.

Figure 10. Unknown photographer, *Wang Ching-wei at statue of Sun Yat-sen* [sic], 19 March 1940. Corbis Images.

Figure 11. Unknown photographer, Wang Jingwei having his portrait painted, August 1940. Denshō Digital Repository (ddr-njpa -1-1067), *Hawai'i Times* Photo Archives. Courtesy of the *Hawai'i Times* Photo Archives Foundation.

*Bann's Studio and the Militarisation of Wang's Image*

In autumn 1941, the MoP approached a commercial purveyor of studio portraiture to craft a new set of images of Wang Jingwei to align with the shifting realities of the Second Sino-Japanese war. Bann's Studio (Guangyi zhaoxiangguan) was typical of the dozens of commercial studios that had operated in China's largest city in the prewar decades, having opened for business in Shanghai in 1927. The studio took its English trading name from the Anglicisation of the surname of its founder, Peng Wangshi, a Chinese photographer who had studied in Japan, and who had established a name for himself as an innovative photographer of Chinese landscapes in the 1920s. Accordingly, the studio marketed itself as '*yishu zhaoxiang de zui gao shuizhun*' (the highest standard in artistic photography).[82] More importantly, Bann's had produced portraits for both cultural and political celebrities in this period, such as the poet Xu Zhimo and the Nationalist finance minister T. V. Soong, as well as hundreds of other lesser known clients, including those who had fought the Japanese in earlier conflagrations (figure 13). Bann's portraits had even graced the cover of *Young Companion*, and are still lauded in histories of Republican-era photography today.[83] While this pedigree may have been relevant in having Bann's commissioned to produce a new set of portraits in 1941, the fact that Bann's had opened a branch office in Nanjing, the RNG capital, at some stage after 1940 also suggests a political proximity to the Wang regime.[84] One of Bann's Nanjing-based photographers, Liang Boping, was responsible for this new set of 1941 portraits.[85]

82 – Advertisements for Bann's appeared, for example, in the newspaper *Jing bao* (16 November 1944), 2.

83 – Such as Chen Xuesheng, *Xunhui shiluo de minguo sheying* (Searching for the lost photography of Republican China), Taipei: Fukai yishu 2015, 117–19.

84 – Although it was certainly not the only studio to operate in the city. Nanjing newspapers from the occupation era, such as *Jing bao*, often featured advertisements for other commercial photographic studios.

85 – Other photographs produced by Liang and circulating now on Chinese auction sites would suggest that Liang was a purveyor of wedding portraits.

Figure 12. Cover of *Guomin xinwen huabao*, 2 (November 1941), featuring colourised portrait of Zhou Fohai by unknown photographer. Courtesy of Shanghai Library.

The production of these portraits was timed to coincide with the broadening of the Rural Pacification (*qingxiang*) campaigns. These campaigns had first been introduced in July 1941 by the Japanese military with the specific aim of wiping out communist-led resistance in the villages of Zhejiang and Jiangsu.[86] They were more than a military purge, however, for Rural Pacification involved RNG cadres reeducating 'pacified' villagers about the need for greater levels of RNG control. Indeed, the campaigns were designed to involve Japanese-led military 'pacification' in the countryside alongside RNG management of political and cultural affairs in such areas, and their prosecution was inspired by prewar attempts by Chiang Kai-shek to eradicate rural Chinese communist bases.[87]

While Rural Pacification has often been depicted as little more than an excuse for Japanese violence,[88] this campaign also entailed the militarisation of Wang Jingwei's image, and the widespread promotion of Wang, for the first time, beyond the confines of occupied China's cities. CNA journalists were dispatched to follow and document Wang Jingwei's 'inspections' (*xunshi*) of pacified areas,[89] while public art depicting Wang himself in the form of murals

86 – Gregor Benton, *New Fourth Army: Communist Resistance Along the Yangtze and the Huai, 1938–1941*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1999, 249–50.

87 – David Serfass, '*L'occupation Japonaise comme objet pour l'histoire de l'État Chinois: l'exemple de la campagne de pacification rurale de gouvernement de Wang Jingwei, 1941–45*' (The Japanese occupation as an object for the history of the Chinese state: the example of the rural pacification campaigns of the Wang Jingwei government, 1941–45), *Études Chinoises*, 35:2 (2016), 123–37.

88 – For a typical example, see *Wang wei zhengquan ziliao xuanbian: Wang Jingwei guomin zhengfu 'qingxiang' yundong* (Collection of material relating to the bogus Wang regime: the Wang national government's Rural Pacification campaign), ed. Zhu Xu Zidao, Liu Qikui and Cao Zhenwei, Shanghai: Xinhua shuju 1985.

89 – Anon, '*Wang weiyuanzhang san ci xunshi qingxiangqu ji*' (An account of Chairman Wang's third tour of the Rural Pacification areas), *Zhongyang daobao zhoukan*, 2:39 (April 1942), 19.

Figure 13. Bann's Studio, photograph of Huang U-pei, gelatin silver print on card, 29 July 1932. Courtesy of the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience.

was added to village walls.[90] It was within this context that Liang Boping's new set of studio portraits was created.

Aesthetically, there is little remarkable about the 1941 Rural Pacification portraits. In terms of their composition, for example, they represent nothing unusual or innovative in the grander scheme of studio portraiture in Republican China. The manufacture of these new portraits, however, did mark an important departure in the framing of a leader who had spent his entire career cultivating a civilian persona, and who had been repackaged by his supporters in 1939 in a decidedly civilian, if romantic, fashion. Prior to 1941, Wang had never been photographed in a studio while wearing a military uniform.

In these new portraits, a bemedalled Wang is shown dressed in the uniform of a field officer (figure 14). Some of the portraits are three-quarter-length images, while others show Wang from the shoulders up. In some cases, Wang holds a ceremonial sword in gloved hands. In all cases, Wang – his face fully lit and

90 – Many of these are now held at Academia Historica in Taipei, which houses one of the most extensive collections of documentary photography produced by the RNG. This collection can be accessed online, available at www.drnh.gov.tw (accessed 5 August 2019). On this collection, see Dai Jieming, '*Yi tuxiang shiliao tanjiu Wang Zhaoming zhengquan zhi zhengzhi wenhua: Cong Guoshiguan guancang tanqi*' (Studying the political culture of the Wang Jingwei regime through pictorial sources: the Academia Historica collections), *Guoshi yanjiu tongxun*, 6 (2014), 140–48.

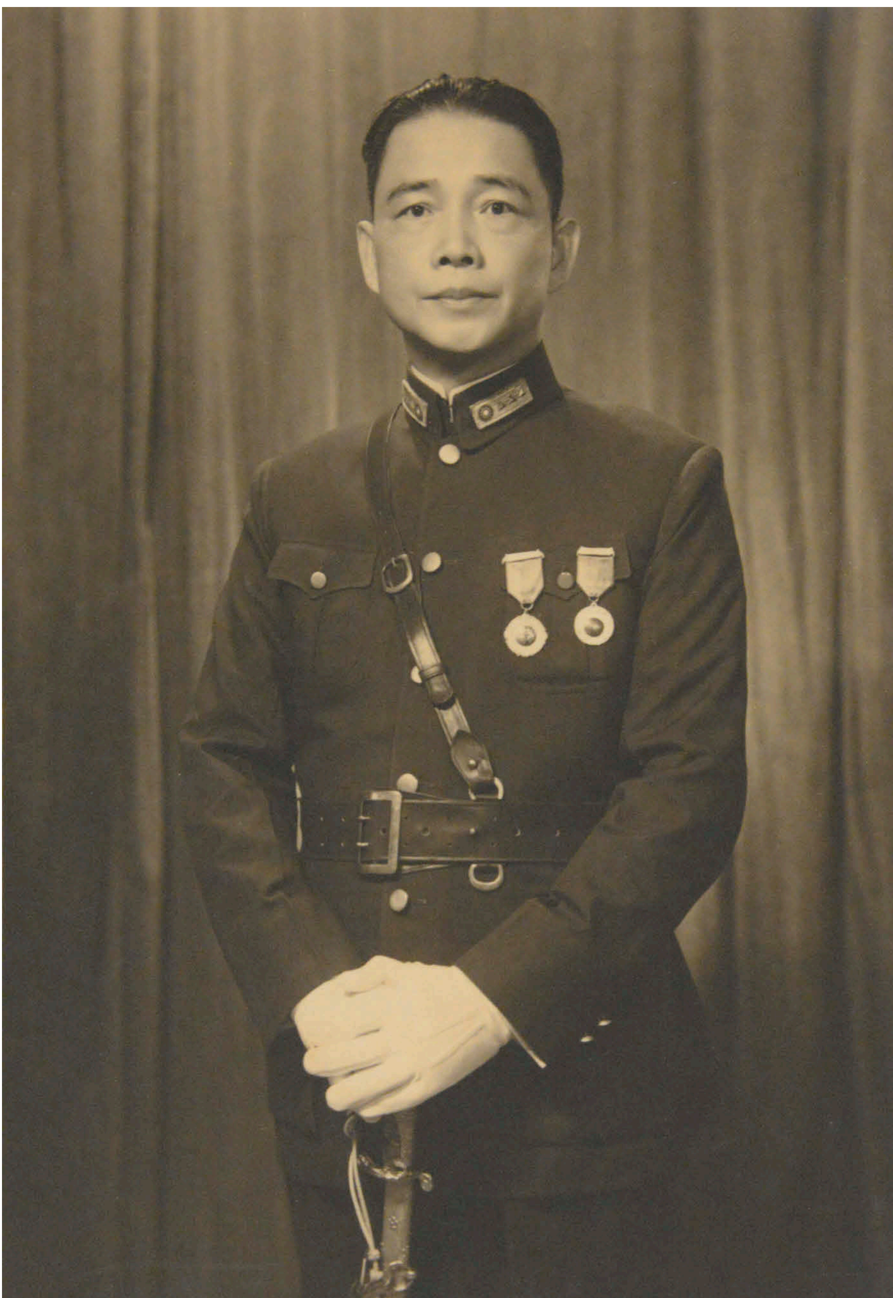

Figure 14. Liang Boping (Bann's Studio), portrait of Wang Jingwei, gelatin silver print on card, circa October 1941. Lin Baisheng Photographic Collection. Courtesy of the East Asia Library, Stanford University.

bearing what can only be described as a neutral and unemotional expression with none of the vaguely idealistic or romantic features of the 1939 portrait – gazes directly at the viewer. Far less emphasis is placed on Wang's brilliantined hair in these portraits; indeed, in a number of these images, Wang wears a military cap (figure 15).

In their prominent inclusion of medals, collar insignia pins, buckles, and belts, this new set of portraits adopts elements of the iconic imagery of Chiang Kai-shek that had been produced by Kwong Hua Studio four years earlier. Wang in 1941 is dressed in a similar uniform to the one Chiang had worn in 1937, and carries the same symbolic objects, such as a ceremonial sword, with which Chiang had been associated in early wartime portraiture. Yet these new portraits also present Wang in a far less idealistic guise than the 1939 portraits had done. Under much fuller lighting, and captured with a far sharper focus, Liang Boping reveals the circles under Wang's eyes and the impurities in his facial skin. The hazy but timeless

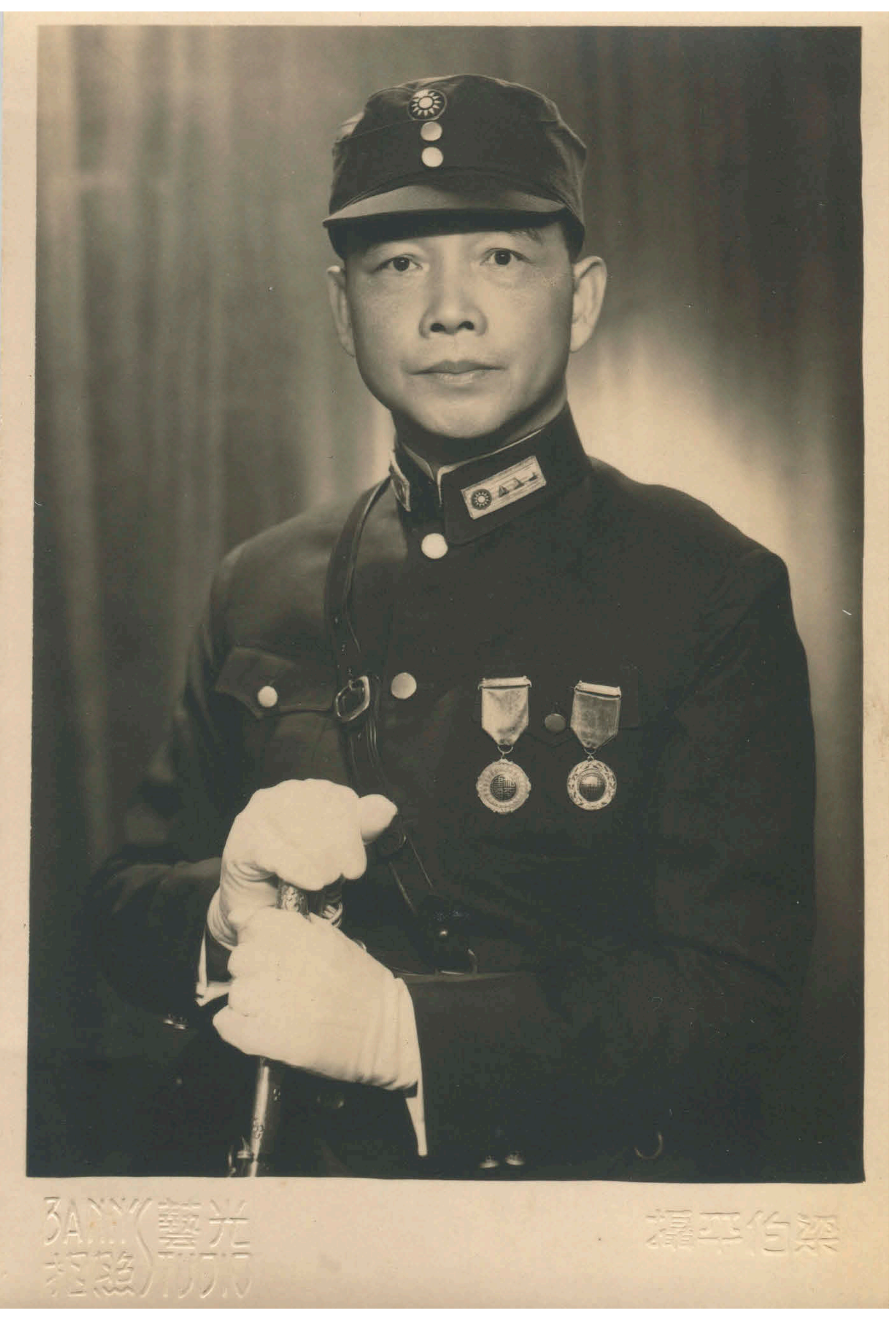

Figure 15. Liang Boping (Bann's Studio), portrait of Wang Jingwei, gelatin silver print on card, circa October 1941. Lin Baisheng Photographic Collection. Courtesy of the East Asia Library, Stanford University.

idealist of 1939 is replaced by an older but more thoughtful military leader. Wang had visibly aged during his almost two years in power, and the claims to martyrdom that RNG cadres made about him are now in full view, etched in his face rather than expressed by the 'distressed countenance' of prewar portraiture. At the same time, in the posed and formal nature of the new portraits, one can detect a degree of reflexive complicity on Wang's part.[91] In Bann's Studio, Wang is showing himself to be entirely in control of his image, and confident in his control of occupied China.

91 – I thank one of the anonymous reviewers of *History of Photography* for this observation.

One might assume that such portraits represented a cynical attempt to rouse confidence in Wang's nominal leadership of Rural Pacification. As RNG cadres entered 'pacified' villages, they would display the image of a Chinese military leader rather than Japanese officers to local residents. I would suggest, however, that they can also be interpreted as an attempt to wrest control of Wang's image away from Japanese news agencies, creating a new representation of Wang which

makes reference to earlier Wang portraiture, but also seeks to transform him into a military officer. If Rural Pacification was as much about the RNG exerting control over rural China as it was about Japanese military might, then it was also an attempt to project a dynamic, assertive, and martial image of the regime with which Wang was so closely associated. In this way, Rural Pacification challenged earlier Japanese attempts to pacify the image of occupied China, and to render its collaborationist leadership visually docile or passive. Portraits of the RNG leader which took visual cues from the iconography of early-wartime resistance, yet maintained recognisable elements of RNG hagiography stressing the notion of Wang as a martyr to the cause of peace, represented an attempt to establish at least limited RNG agency in occupation visual culture. It is no coincidence that Liang's portraits emerged just as occupation newspapers were also publishing photographs of a uniformed Wang Jingwei *in situ*, touring rural areas, all openly attributed to RNG – that is, Chinese – photographers employed by the CNA.[92]

92 – Anon, '*Wang weiyuanzhang san ci xunshi qingxiangqu ji*', 19.

Liang Boping's military portraits remain some of the most widely circulated ephemera from the RNG today. They were used extensively in various forms and contexts by the RNG for the remainder of the war. In early 1942, for instance, they were rebranded as products of the New Citizens Movement (Xin guomin yundong), a mass mobilisation campaign that the RNG introduced in January that year, and which oversaw the militarisation of everyday life, especially for the urban youth of occupied China. It was under this movement that a far greater degree of mass worship of Wang as a '*zuigao lingxiu*' (supreme leader) was encouraged by the MoP.[93] In other instances, the portraits were published in proximity to Sun Yat-sen portraits in occupation pictorials, suggesting that the RNG found in these 1941 images a set of Wang iconography that was solemn enough to be associated with the Republic of China's 'Founding Father' (*Guofu*).[94] They would also inspire later portraits of Wang in military uniform, especially in the uniform of the RNG navy (a largely symbolic and river-based military force), which would become commonplace in 1943, following Wang Jingwei's declaration of war on the Western Allies in January that year. It was an unattributed portrait of Wang in military uniform, sharing much in common with the Rural Pacification portraits of 1941, which would literally follow Wang to his grave at the end of 1944, when it was chosen to accompany his cortege to a burial site just outside Nanjing.[95]

93 – Luo Junqiang, '*Weiting youying lu: Dui Wang wei zhengfu de huiyi jishi*' (Secret records of the puppet government: my memoirs of the bogus Wang government), in *Wei ting youying lu: Dui Wangwei zhengquan de huiyi* (A secret record of the puppet government: memoirs from the Wang Jingwei regime), ed. Huang Meizhen, Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe 1986, 49.

94 – Du, 'Sun Yat-sen as *Guofu*'.

95 – Taylor, 'From Traitor to Martyr'.

### *Conclusion: Towards a History of the 'Occupied Lens'*

Almost all of the literature on photography under Japanese occupation in China focuses on questions of the colonial gaze. Historians of photography have, understandably, been interested in attempts by Japanese photographers to capture their interpretations of a conquered China.[96] In focusing on such issues, however, the field has largely overlooked the ways in which forms of photography which were derivative of prewar Republican Chinese practices could also be used by the Chinese living under occupation even as the Japanese gazed at them. The RNG succeeded in ensuring that distinctly Chinese forms of studio portraiture survived under occupation, and that continuities with prewar photography were put at the forefront of occupation iconography. The RNG did this because it saw the potential of such forms in promoting its figurehead as a legitimate political, and later military, leader.

96 – Kari Shepherdson-Scott, 'A Legacy of Persuasion: Japanese Photography and the Artful Politics of Remembering Manchuria', *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, 27 (2015), 124–47.

Like the 'photographic realist' art of Vichy France examined by Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, portrait photography produced under the RNG was perhaps 'not very different from the art realized under other regimes', and involved simply adding the figure of China's 'collaborationist' leader 'to the same old styles' (as had

occurred for Philippe Pétain in Vichy France).[97] However, by resurrecting prewar political portraiture and by calling on Chinese photographers to manufacture such images, the RNG was marking itself out as a distinctly Chinese regime, in spite of the Japanese presence. What I refer to here as the 'occupied lens' was entirely cognisant of Japanese control. Yet it strove to maintain recognisably Republican Chinese forms in the construction of iconography under occupation by creating new portraits of Wang in the guise of an idealist patriot or a field officer. Such iconography owed far more to middle-class Shanghai than to immediate Japanese precedents. In light of the uses of photography by Japanese propaganda agencies to promote emperor worship in this same period, it is significant that so many studio portraits of Wang were created at all under the RNG. Also, the sheer longevity of a number of the portraits examined in this article, on online auction sites or on the panels displayed at historical sites in China today,[98] suggest that the occupation did little to undermine the skill that Chinese studio photographers themselves had developed in the decade or more prior to Japan's invasion.

97 – Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, *Art of the Defeat: France 1940–1944*, Los Angeles: Getty Publications 2008, 139.

98 – The 1939 *Zhonghua ribao* portrait, for example, is still used to adorn tourist sites in Nanjing today, such as the former site of the central government of the Republic of China (Guomin zhengfu).

The portraits of Wang created by Chinese photographers under occupation are clearly inspired by events beyond the studio, and by the effective use of political portraiture by the Chinese resistance from 1937 onwards. We can see this in everything from the defiance of the 1939 image of Wang, in which he 'lifted himself upright to save the nation' and overcame doubts about his mortality, to the militarisation of the Rural Pacification and subsequent portraits. The influence of the photographic by-products of the wartime Chiang Kai-shek personality cult can be felt in each of these, as the RNG reverted to a visual rhetoric which spoke at once of Chinese defiance and autonomy.

Ultimately, however, the RNG was reliant on Japanese acquiescence, control, and capital to see that such imagery was circulated. In this regard, studio photography – or, to be more precise, the cultural biographies of specific portraits – can shed light on the limits of the RNG's deployment of portrait photography when it comes to carving out a third space between the visual dominance of the occupier and the visual cultures of resistance. It was all very well for RNG propagandists to commission local photographers to craft new portraits of Wang Jingwei; it was quite another thing to ensure that these portraits were circulated beyond Nanjing, in a manner which fitted an RNG – rather than a Japanese – agenda. In the hands of Japanese editors or propagandists, a defiant portrait of a 'resurrected' Wang Jingwei produced by a Shanghai-based newspaper could quite easily be turned into an image of global fascism, or a crass advertisement for eye drops.

In this regard, we find parallels between Chinese portrait photography under Japanese occupation and Dutch portrait photography under Nazi occupation at precisely the same time. As Remco Ensel reminds us, the 'character and meaning' of portrait photography can be completely transformed when it is reproduced in a new, occupied, context.[99] The consequences of such a simple argument for the study of photographic culture under the RNG are profound: a Shanghai-style studio portrait can, through Japanese manipulation, be subsumed into the visual cultures of the Axis powers.

99 – Remco Ensel, 'Dutch Face-ism: Portrait Photography and *Völkisch* Nationalism in the Netherlands', *Fascism*, 2 (2013), 18–40.

In the course of conducting research for this article, I have also been struck by the number of alternative portraits of Wang that can be found in archival collections today (such as figure 16) – some by Liang Boping, but many others unattributed – which are rarely found in RNG publications of the period or, indeed, in any published sources at all. To reference Hochberg again, there is much in the oeuvre of the *Zhonghua ribao*, Bann's Studio, or the MoP which remains, to this day, unseen. Similarly, it was only by the grace of Japanese editors that the 1939 and 1941 portraits of Wang were distributed so widely in the first place (and for reasons we shall perhaps never know). The 'occupied lens' was thus ultimately limited in the propagation of its vision by the control of Japanese censors and publishers. Similarly, while we find in the RNG creation and

Figure 16. Unknown photographer, portrait of Wang Jingwei in naval uniform, gelatin silver print on card, circa 1942. Lin Baisheng Photographic Collection. Courtesy of the East Asia Library, Stanford University.

distribution of official portraits a continuation of prewar Republican political culture, we must also consider the subtle but potentially significant practices which differentiated this from other twentieth-century Chinese regimes. The RNG was the only modern Chinese government not to adopt portraits of its leader on banknotes or coinage,[100] and – unlike both Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists and Mao Zedong's post-1949 People's Republic of China – the RNG did not introduce extensive laws governing the placement or production of Wang portraits.[101] All of this suggests that the 'occupied lens' did not always equate with a confidence in the longevity of this regime amongst RNG propagandists.

While this study ends with the Rural Pacification portraits of late 1941, new portraits of Wang were produced well into 1943 by both Chinese and Japanese

100 – *Wang Jingwei yu Wang wei zhengfu*, ed. Huang.

101 – Taylor, 'Republican Personality Cults', 673.

photographers. The challenge for future students of this topic may be to determine just what it was about any of Wang's numerous wartime portraits which saw them favoured or ignored by the RNG, the Japanese, or Wang himself. We also need to interrogate other forms of photography practised under occupation, most noticeably news photography, a form which developed within the CNA from the middle of 1940 onwards, and which has left to posterity a significant body of photographs that still sit today, largely unstudied, in the collections of institutions such as Academia Historica in Taipei. For the time being, however, we would do well to acknowledge the existence of an 'occupied lens', and to consider how the cultural biographies of the portraits it produced provide a vision of a China which belonged neither to Japan nor to the anti-Japanese resistance.