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CHAPTER 2

Visual Cultures under Occupation

Pictorial traces of the RNG are not difficult to find today. Calligraphy by Wang Jingwei dating from the war years and earlier has sold for significant sums at auction.[1] The wartime oil paintings of one of occupied China's best-known artists, Fan Tchunpi, have been the subject of a number of exhibitions abroad.[2] At the same time, a quite different trade in RNG imagery has developed on the Internet. Photographs of occupation provenance abound online, many lifted directly from the pages of wartime newspapers. These are copied and pasted from one site to another (rarely being dated or attributed in the process) and are frequently used to make political judgments about the RNG. For example, one of the most regularly reproduced images on blogs is a photograph of Wang Jingwei raising a toast with Heinrich Georg Stahmer (the German ambassador to China) in front of a Nazi swastika—*Wang and Nazis,* as it is called on Wikimedia Commons (figure 2.1).[3]

Taken out of context (as they often are), these quite different sorts of ephemera present an image of the RNG that is reductionist or simply misleading. Calligraphy or paintings produced by Wang and his acolytes can be held up as evidence of the apparently urbane character of the regime's leaders. Contrarily, photographs of Wang standing beside symbols of the Third Reich can be called upon whenever an implied association between the RNG and Nazism is desired. Such interventions, however, rarely explain the background to, or origins of, these pictorial traces. They tell us little about the specific context in which a portrait may have been painted, or even the date or original purpose of a now infamous photograph. Removed from any temporal specificity, the moment in which such images were produced can be presented as indicative of the entire regime: the RNG was led by either literati or Nazi sympathizers—or both.

In reality, the production and circulation of visual media—painting, photography, graphic art, cinema—comprised a complex and continually shifting set of processes in Japanese-occupied China. For the RNG, the development of such forms of expression were crucial precisely because they

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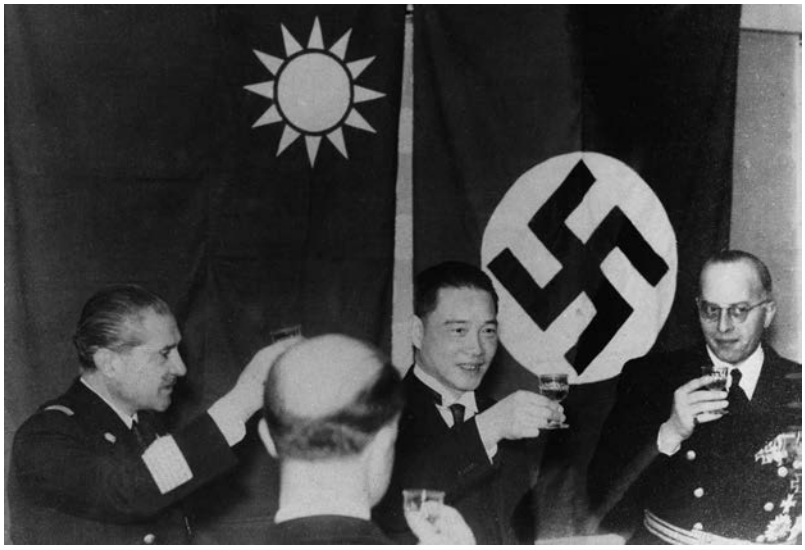

Figure 2.1. Wang Jingwei toasting Georg Heinrich Stahmer, German ambassador to China (*right*), and Francesco Maria Taliani de Marchio, Italian ambassador to China (*left*), in January 1942. Courtesy of Academia Historica.

enabled sections of this regime to develop and express their own specific views about what an occupied China should look like. An "occupied gaze" would be possible only if Chinese cultural workers had access to techniques and technologies that would allow that gaze to be reproduced in a diverse range of media; that same occupied gaze would survive, however, only while the RNG was able to control, censor, or entirely eradicate alternative "ways of seeing" under occupation. The fostering of the RNG's iconographies of occupation therefore needs to be appreciated in a wider context in which various Chinese and Japanese-sponsored administrations (and individuals) were competing for control of the visual in occupied China.

Just as importantly, this occupied gaze, and the iconographies of occupation that were fostered under it, were never static or monolithic. They were, rather, both eclectic and inconsistent. They reflected the highly factionalized nature of this regime and the fact that it was continually responding to changes in Japanese military fortunes over which it had no control—to say nothing of more mundane variables that shaped visual and artistic practice, such as access to paper, ink, or film stock. In the RNG realm, therefore, the appreciation of oil paintings by French-trained artists took place

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alongside the drawing of bawdy cartoons and the creation of extravagant propaganda murals. All had their place in certain contexts and at specific moments throughout the short life of the RNG. This is precisely why a visual history of the RNG can provide us with a unique insight into this regime. One of the points I wish to make in this book, for example, is not that Wang Jingwei was *not* a fascist but, rather, that the adoption of Axis-inspired aesthetics gathered pace well after *that* photograph was taken (almost certainly by a Japanese newsman on January 19, 1942).[4] It is the visual record that allows us to trace such subtle changes.

One aim of this chapter, therefore, is to move beyond misconceptions that both the art trade and the blogosphere have, perhaps unwittingly, sustained about visual practices developed under occupation. Artwork was created, photographs taken, and thoroughfares festooned by a vast array of groups and individuals during the occupation. More specifically, however, this chapter is designed to contextualize the wider sphere of cultural production—particularly in terms of visual cultures—in RNG China, so that we can make sense of the diverse iconographies that developed under occupation. Who was tasked with building visual cultures in occupied China between 1939 and 1945? What institutions were created or restructured to foster, mediate, or censor visual expression? And how did Chinese cadres and cultural workers manage their relationship with the Japanese (or, for that matter, with each other)? An overview of the media and cultural infrastructure that was developed under occupation, as well as an institutional history of various types of artistic practice that informed a wide set of visual cultures, will address these questions. While such an analysis is worthwhile in its own right, it is provided here to set the scene for later chapters, in which the evolution of particular visual narratives are explored along thematic lines. This chapter, however, also seeks to do something that has been attempted far too rarely in scholarship on wartime China—that is, to take seriously the work of Chinese institutions and individuals who operated under occupation.

Occupation Precedents

As the research of a number of scholars working on the imperial Japanese presence in Asia has already shown, the creation of client regimes under Japanese tutelage was frequently accompanied by the development of distinctive visual cultures. Barak Kushner, Kari Shepherdson-Scott, and others have demonstrated how visual propaganda was utilized by the Japanese

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and their allies among local elites to promote Sino-Japanese cooperation.[5] So important was this pictorial side of the Japanese advance that it constituted what I have elsewhere called a "visual invasion."[6]

The development of visual cultures under the RNG needs to be understood in light of such antecedents. The RNG inherited some of its most recurrent visual narratives from client regimes in China that predated it, as well as directly from the Japanese military. This is hardly surprising, as Japanese advisers sat alongside Chinese cadres in some of the key institutions tasked with producing or censoring pictorial media.[7] RNG archival files are full of references to high-ranking members of the Propaganda Corps (Hōdōbu) attached to Japan's China Expeditionary Army, for this body also assisted the RNG in distributing the propaganda it produced. For example, the Propaganda Corps' Mabuchi Itsuo, a "key figure in the link between military and civilian propaganda operations in China and Japan,"[8] worked directly with the Ministry of Publicity (MoP) to coordinate propaganda policy. Under the guidance of Mabuchi, the Japanese continued to employ dozens of Japanese artists to produce visual propaganda for distribution in rural areas and in regions on the front line.[9] Artists attached to the Japanese military, such as Kawashima Riichiro and Ōta Tenkyō, produced vast amounts of printed propaganda, some of which celebrated the "return" of the RNG—despite never actually serving Wang's regime.[10] And regional newspapers edited by Chinese within the RNG realm habitually republished pictorial propaganda produced by Japanese news agencies.[11]

We should not, however, assume that this meant a complete lack of agency on the part of Chinese cultural producers or a wholesale adoption of discursive practices from Japanese military or media organizations on the part of the RNG. To be sure, the RNG "returned" at a moment when visual practices, developed elsewhere in Japanese-occupied Asia, were already available as a set of prêt-à-porter precedents. In addition to these, however, the RNG inherited Chinese political, cultural, and media institutions, as well as cultural workers themselves. The agencies of the RNG drew on all of these—sometimes selectively but often because it had no other choice.

The wellspring of much of the imagery initially adopted by the RNG, as well as institutional modes of putting such imagery into practice, was Manchukuo. While the "empire" of Manchukuo was ideologically and structurally far removed from the RNG, it cast a long shadow over virtually all client regimes that followed it, especially in terms of cultural production. The RNG was not immune to such influence. It is for this reason that a consideration of Manchukuo visual culture and the cultural institutions

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through which this was fostered is important for any study of iconographies of occupation under Wang Jingwei.

Manchukuo fostered an entire visual culture aimed at celebrating and sustaining the life of this state until its disappearance in 1945. Institutions such as the South Manchuria Railway Company's (Mantestu) Film Unit and, later, the Manchukuo Film Association (Man'ei)—the "dream factory" of Japanese imperialism, as Michael Baskett has described it[12]—were instrumental in producing what Jie Li has characterized as a "phantasmagoria that had enchanted various utopian fantasies" in this outpost of Japanese imperialism.[13] Perhaps the most celebrated living icon of Manchukuo in the wider region was the Man'ei star Li Xianglan (Ri Ko Ran), that "enduring symbol of the Chinese culture produced within Japanese-occupied Manchuria."[14] Li Xianglan not only became the most marketable celebrity associated with Man'ei. Her extra-diegetic face also emerged as one of the most recurrent symbols of occupation visual cultures more broadly, appearing regularly on the covers of pictorials and in print advertising produced in, and in support of, this new state in the northeast.

Institutionally, Manchukuo also provided a model of how best to mobilize cultural producers in the service of Japanese rule. It was here, for example, that the Kwantung Army founded the Kyōwakai (Concordia Association), originally as a "propaganda and information-gathering agency . . . [that] concentrated on promoting and publicizing the new regime."[15] The Kyōwakai also fostered pro-regime artistic expression in Manchukuo, thereby establishing a template through which a state-sponsored mass organization could bring local cultural workers together with Japanese agents to produce visual (and other) propaganda.

In terms of aesthetics, as well as the processes through which such aesthetics were reproduced, Manchukuo set the standard for other, post-1937 client regimes in China. As I have described elsewhere, for example, many of the "institutional models of mobilization" put in place by the PGROC in north China were derived directly from Manchukuo templates.[16] This included the Xinminhui (New People's Association), a north China–based propaganda and political body founded by the Japanese but staffed by Chinese and modeled directly on the Kyōwakai. Tasked with mobilizing local citizens to support Japanese war aims, the Xinminhui published its own newspapers and pictorials and fostered a cohort of artists, writers, and musicians. Its cultural influence in north China remained potent until the end of the war.[17]

In east China, a similar pattern emerged. Here, the analog of the Concordia Association was an organization called the Daminhui (Great People's

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Association). Organized by the Japanese special service in Shanghai[18] but directed by the veteran KMT member Wen Zongyao and affiliated with the RGROC,[19] the Daminhui has been described as the "flagship enterprise of the Reformed Government [i.e., the RGROC]."[20] It learned its trade, however, directly from the Xinminhui; indeed, propagandists associated with the north China body, such as Miao Bin,[21] served as advisers to the Daminhui, as did the aforementioned Mabuchi Itsuo. It was such individuals who guided the Daminhui's Propaganda Department (Xuanchuanbu), within which were employed all manner of Chinese cultural workers. The Daminhui made a particular name for itself in rousing local communities at pro-occupation celebrations.[22]

Despite this very clear Manchukuo influence, much of the propaganda work undertaken by the Daminhui looked remarkably similar to the "salvationist" (*jiuguo*) propaganda that had been developed by the Chinese resistance in Wuhan in 1938.[23] This resemblance was due to a number of the Daminhui's affiliated agencies having been specifically designed to emulate what the Japanese saw as effective methods of persuasion developed by the Chinese resistance early in the war.[24] Nonetheless, the Daminhui developed its own "brand." It operated under a logo composed of a five-pointed star and a crescent moon. This logo became so prominent in the RGROC that, at one stage, it adorned Nanjing's city walls.[25]

As well as crafting an institutional framework for propaganda production that drew on Manchukuo precedents, the Japanese also initiated projects in the late 1930s that would have a lasting impact on visual cultures in occupied China, including the establishment of Chinese-language and bilingual (Japanese-Chinese) pictorials.[26] Japanese news agencies and their proxies on the Asian continent began producing such publications within months of the 1937 invasion. In time, these became one of the key forms of media through which occupation iconographies would come to be nurtured and circulated. Some of these publications were modeled on commercial Chinese pictorials that had survived the Japanese onslaught of 1937 by relocating to Shanghai's International Settlement. The *New China Pictorial* (*Xin Zhonghua huabao*) was one such example. Financed by the Japanese military and edited by a Peace Movement journalist called Wu Linzhi, this pictorial looked almost identical to the glossy magazines produced by commercial Chinese publishers when it first appeared on Shanghai newsstands in June 1939.[27] Others were associated with specific groups that the Japanese had established in occupied China. These included the East Asia League (EAL) (Dong Ya Lianmeng), established in February 1940 to foster Pan-Asian

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sentiment,[28] and the Sino-Japanese Cultural Association (SJCA) (Zhong-Ri wenhua xiehui), established in the summer of 1940 with the support of Chu Minyi (the RNG foreign minister). Both of these organizations have been dismissed as inconsequential in some of the literature on the occupation.[29] Nevertheless, they played an important role in providing space for the production of highly politicized Chinese artistic expression under occupation. In Guangzhou, the local chapter of the East Asia League published *Dong Ya Lianmeng huabao* (Toa pictorial), a periodical that would develop into one of the primary vehicles for the dissemination of occupation iconographies in that city. The *Changjiang huakan* (Yangtze pictorial) was established by the local chapter of the SJCA in Wuhan and, under the editorship of local dramatist and author Xie Xiping, promoted the work of Wuhan-based artists, writers, and photographers.[30] The similarities that such publications could claim with the colorful magazines of Republican Shanghai were more than coincidence. Wang Jingwei's Peace Movement had lamented the lack of a pictorial it could call its own in 1939 and subsequently co-opted *Liangyou* (Young companion) into its stable of media products.[31] Wu Liande, the founder of this most commercially successful of prewar pictorials, was later listed as a member of the RNG's Special Propaganda Unit (Tezhong xuanchuanzu),[32] meaning that the skills involved in producing glossy pictorials in Shanghai could be made directly available to Wang's regime.

By far the most influential of occupation magazines, however, was the *Huawen Daban meiri* (*Kabun Ōsaka mainichi*)—a publication I shall refer to hereafter as the *Kabun*. This bimonthly periodical, edited originally in Osaka but specifically for a literate Chinese audience in China itself, was first published in November 1938. Initially, the *Kabun* adopted a north China perspective, reporting on developments in the PGROC and Manchukuo. Its distribution was aided by the Japanese military as the latter pushed through China in the pre-RNG period, and by early 1941, the *Kabun* claimed a circulation of over 600,000 in China.[33] While such self-published figures should be viewed with some skepticism, they nonetheless give some indication of the importance of this periodical to occupation authorities.

Despite being created at the time of Japanese conquest, this was not a purely dogmatic publication, however. Indeed, as Norman Smith has noted, the *Kabun* maintained a measure of editorial autonomy, which meant that Chinese intellectuals could publish within its pages material that might otherwise have been censored in Manchukuo or occupied China.[34] In the *Kabun,* partisan features on leading figures in early client regimes sat alongside illustrated essays about painting or interviews with Chinese film celebrities.

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This magazine also provided a forum for Chinese cultural workers who had "stayed behind" after the Japanese invasion. A significant number of individuals who populate subsequent chapters of this book were featured in the *Kabun,* and many of the visual tropes that would come to be used most frequently by the employees of RNG institutions were first explored on its pages by Chinese illustrators.

Rebuilding a Visual Infrastructure

The RNG thus "returned" to an occupied China that was already brimming with what might be termed distinct "occupation visual cultures" championed in Japanese-sponsored pictorials, organized by Japanese-initiated organizations, and promoted by Pan-Asian celebrities such as Li Xianglan. All of these would continue to play a role, to varying degrees, for the remainder of the war.

At a practical level, this existing cultural infrastructure represented a boon for Wang's Peace Movement. In east China, in particular, existing cultural organizations could be appropriated as the nebulous Peace Movement was rapidly transformed from an idea-cum-clique into a "living and breathing" regime. The need to create entirely new cultural institutions from scratch could thus be avoided. Sections of the Daminhui, for example, were absorbed into Wang Jingwei's reorganized KMT, even though the Daminhui itself was officially folded in 1940.[35] RGROC propaganda bureaucrats were kept in post at the local level at the insistence of the Japanese.[36] And the pictorials that Japanese news agencies had established in 1938 and 1939 could continue to be published but could turn their praise away from earlier client regimes and focus it instead on Wang Jingwei. The *Kabun* was a case in point. It shifted its adulation firmly onto Wang in late 1939, while continuing to publish the less overtly political content that had become its staple. In August 1941, in a move that symbolized this magazine's support for the RNG cause, the *Kabun* opened an office in Nanjing.[37]

It was not just institutions that could be brought into the RNG orbit, however. Chinese individuals who had carved out careers in the pre-1940 occupation media could just as easily be put to work for the new regime. Many of the figures who emerged as the main names in RNG cartooning, for example, had started their careers in the employ of RGROC and/or PGROC publications or in the Daminhui. One example was Chen Xiaozuo. A graduate of the Shanghai School of Fine Arts (Shanghai meishu zhuanke xuexiao), Chen came into occupation cartooning thanks to his father, an

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RGROC official and well-established writer named Chen Liaoshi. Chen *fils* contributed sketches to Daminhui publications (although he had also contributed artwork to anti-Japanese pictorials prior to the war).[38] Under the *nom d'art* "Ma Wu," Chen was producing cartoons for RGROC pictorials and the newspaper *Nanjing xinbao* from early 1939.[39] He continued to do this until the end of the war, later via an official affiliation with the RNG army Propaganda Corps.[40]

Others artists came to occupation cartooning with different pedigrees. Dong Tianye and Cao Hanmei had both led distinguished careers prior to 1937, often in Chinese pictorials that took a decidedly anti-Japanese line. At different points after 1940, however, both worked for state-sponsored media outlets. From 1942 onward, Dong Tianye produced caricatures of occupation-compliant starlets for the commercial press, increasingly producing overt regime propaganda over the course of the war. Cao Hanmei—the brother of famed Republican-era (and resistance) cartoonists Zhang Guangyu and Zhang Zhengyu—emerged (through the pages of the *Kabun*) as a creator of cartoons and other forms of visual art in RNG-sponsored periodicals like *Guoyi,* while training RNG cultural cadres in propaganda arts. His cartoons and *lianhuanhua* (comics) were published through the Li Shiqun–affiliated newspaper *Guomin xinwen* and various other outlets during the occupation.[41]

The RNG's partial reliance on preexisting talent, as well as its attempts to graft such talent onto its own media apparatus, was not without controversy. The client regimes that predated the RNG had been tasked with denigrating Republican Chinese icons and ideologies.[42] The return of an administration that took pride in its Republican heritage and even revived the ROC flag thus represented a challenge. The residua of earlier occupation tropes, some of which sought to disown or undermine prewar Republican iconography, would linger after 1940, ultimately undermining the coherence of the message that the regime sought to promote.

It was also the RNG's insistence on its Nationalist credentials, however, that would lead to the creation of new institutions tasked specifically with managing Nanjing's message(s). This is best illustrated by the MoP.[43] The MoP predated the return of the RNG to Nanjing by some months, having developed out of the China News Service (Zhonghua tongxunshe)—a Shanghai-based organization that had been established in November 1939 and that maintained close ties to the pro-Wang newspaper *Zhonghua ribao* (Central China Daily News).[44] The process of establishing a new regime under Wang Jingwei needed to be sold to the Chinese people (and others)

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and hence required management. The return itself was a highly visual affair and demanded the resources of a quasi-governmental ministry to oversee its choreography, though the MoP had little choice but to leave the organization of the day's processions to the Daminhui (a body that specialized in such skills).[45]

The management of the MoP provides us with clues about the ways in which the RNG viewed propaganda and censorship. The MoP's minister was Lin Baisheng. Lin was a Soviet-trained, Cantonese newspaper editor who had followed Wang Jingwei for many years (both in China and in Europe). In 1939, he had operated a de facto Peace Movement propaganda organization from the offices of his *Nanhua ribao* (South China Daily News) on the aptly named Hollywood Road in Hong Kong.[46] He was assisted in his work by intellectuals, such as Hu Lancheng, who had established names for themselves in pro-Wang newspapers prior to the *huandu*.[47] In 1940, however, Lin's MoP was forced by the Japanese to accept into its ranks many members of the Daminhui; and at the local level, its propaganda was initially overseen by Chinese who had worked within the RGROC in 1938 and 1939.[48] This would have major implications for the messages that the MoP sought to impart, especially in the first years or more of the RNG's return.

In Nanjing, the MoP managed virtually all matters relating to the control and censorship of the media, as well as both domestic and international distribution of overt and covert regime propaganda. It was the MoP, for instance, that oversaw regulations, introduced in April 1941, for the banning of photographs and paintings that were deemed undesirable by the regime. These were a broad set of rules that reflected the MoP's attempt to balance the desire for cultural innovation with anxieties about accusations that this was anything but a distinctly Chinese regime. Unsurprisingly, then, these looked remarkably like rules that had been implemented during the Nanjing decade. Photographs and paintings that undermined "respect for the Republic of China" (*Zhonghua minguo zunyan*), went against the Three Principles of the People and national policies, were harmful to "good behavior and public order" (*shanlang fengsu gonggong zhixu*), or depicted areas of significance to national defense were all outlawed.[49] In reality, the breadth of such definitions allowed the MoP and its workers to maintain a wide degree of leeway in deciding what could and could not be seen in occupied China.

So as to train people in making such decisions—and, of course, in producing alternative work that would fit with regime norms—the MoP also established its own Central Propaganda Institute (CPI) (Zhongyang xuanchuan jiangxisuo), attached to the Central University (Zhongyang daxue) in

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Nanjing. Here it trained cadres, journalists, and artists in a broad curriculum but also in specialized fields such as propaganda art. The CPI employed the artist Cao Hanmei, the well-established dramatist Chen Dabei, and various other intellectuals to train the next generation of occupation cultural workers.[50] Graduates of this institute were employed in newspapers and publicity bureaus (*xuanchuanchu*) throughout occupied China (as the RNG sought to dilute residual RGROC influence beyond Nanjing).[51] Curricula vitae that still exist for staff in the RNG's Guangzhou Bureau of Publicity provide an insight into the sorts of individuals these were. Almost all high-ranking staff at this office were university graduates;[52] most had held positions in the KMT or the Chinese armed forces prior to 1937; and all had been exposed to a vast array of media work prior to their RNG tenure.[53]

The MoP also created the RNG's only official Chinese purveyor of news. This was the Central News Agency (CNA) (Zhongyang dianxunshe), which was established in May 1941 as a replica of a Nationalist (i.e., Chiang Kai-shek) organization of the same name.[54] Jointly managed by MoP personnel and Japanese media managers such as Yoshino Inosuke of Dōmei, the CNA was responsible for generating content for newspapers (including both copy and images).[55] It also published periodicals, books, and special collections to celebrate important events.

In terms of pictorial content, the CNA was initially reliant on Japanese news agencies, especially Dōmei. One of the main tasks of the CNA's Photographic Unit (Sheyingshe), for example, was to distribute photographs from Japanese sources to Chinese newspapers in the regime's hinterland.[56] In light of the sheer dominance of photojournalism in occupied China by Japanese firms that specialized in the form,[57] there was little opportunity for the CNA to produce it own pictorial content in the early years of its existence.[58] From mid-1941 onward, however, the CNA emerged as the main vehicle of the occupied gaze, especially in terms of documentary and propaganda photography in support of Rural Pacification. It even opened its own regional offices in Suzhou and Wuxi to aid such efforts in the following year.[59] In May 1942, the CNA also embarked on a policy of strengthening its capacity to produce news photography. This program was inspired by the new realities of a post–Pearl Harbor world, in which rival Chinese administrations such as the Chongqing Nationalists were seen to be benefiting from direct interaction with American news media.[60] As a result of all this, the CNA evolved into a producer of its own photography, with individuals such as Xue Diwei and Chen Guoqi playing leading roles in crafting new visions of occupied China that aligned with regime policies.[61] Xue may have

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been related to a journalist called Xue Huizi (with whom he almost always worked while at the CNA),[62] while Chen was related by marriage to Wang Jingwei himself. Both would produce a significant body of photography for RNG news media and publications. In light of such contributions, the CNA was arguing by 1944 about the need to recognize photography as being "more practical than written propaganda" and a form that was "more popular [*tongsu*] and easy to understand, but [that] can also leave readers with an extremely deep impression."[63]

Mobilizing Cultural Workers

The MoP, its offshoots such as the CNA, and other government and party bodies all produced visual propaganda. These institutions did not, however, represent the full extent of visual expression in Wang Jingwei's China. On the contrary, the development of cultural production beyond government control was not only allowed but encouraged, at least up until 1943. A number of art colleges reopened and organized their own exhibitions,[64] while individual artists continued to sketch, paint, and sculpt—often simply as a means to survive what were, after all, financially trying times.[65] However, both the RNG and the Japanese would seek to consolidate and exact increasing levels of control over such groups, especially as the International Settlement (where significant numbers of non-RNG-affiliated cultural workers had resided) was brought under direct Japanese control in December 1941 and as the RNG put new regulations governing "wartime culture and propaganda" in place in 1943.[66] In other words, as the neutral rhetoric and aesthetics of the *huandu* period gave way to the nativist nationalism and "Axis turn" of the New Citizens Movement, so too did the Japanese and the RNG seek to exert far greater control over cultural production in occupied China more generally.

The approach taken to such cultural consolidation was uniform. It involved the coaxing by the Japanese of artists who had remained in occupied areas to reprise their crafts in the service of occupation. At the same time, and in the spirit of Pan-Asian brotherhood, Japanese artists would be "invited" to work with their Chinese peers, so as to train a new generation of occupation-era Chinese cultural workers. It was this approach that led, for example, to the founding of the Chinese Cartoon Association (CCA) (Zhongguo manhua xiehui) in late 1942. This organization brought together Chinese cartoonists like Ma Wu, Cao Hanmei, and Dong Tianye with cartoonists from the Propaganda Corps and Japanese newspapers like

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Tairiku shinpō, including Katō Minosuke and Miura Noa.[67] The CCA produced its own magazine, *Zhongguo manhua* (Chinese cartoons), and organized exhibitions of Chinese cartoons.[68] By 1943, the CCA was the primary institution promoting the art of cartooning in Wang's China.

A lesser-known example was an organization founded to support a field of visual culture that has been almost entirely overlooked in the academic literature on the RNG—*muke,* or woodcuts. Much has been made of the centrality of the woodcut form to the visual cultures of resistance in wartime Yan'an.[69] However, some artists who had long been associated with this form, such as the Beijing-based Wang Qingfang, took to promoting a revival of woodcuts through the pages of occupation magazines such as the *Kabun* from 1939 onward.[70] Organizations such as the Daminhui also employed their own woodcut specialists, with individuals such as Wang Chuan being particularly prolific.

From December 1942 onward, however, a periodical entitled *Zhongguo muke* (Chinese woodcuts) was published in Shanghai. This promoted woodcuts as a legitimate Pan-Asian art form and even went so far as to enlist figures such as Uchiyama Kanzō—a friend of the form's most vocal promoter in prewar China, Lu Xun—to argue for a renaissance of this form under occupation.[71] *Chinese woodcuts* was edited by a Chinese artist called Wang Yingxiao, who appears to have come to the form only after the Japanese invasion. Wang not only went on to publish collections of highly politicized woodcuts but was also, alongside Japanese woodblock artists such as Tagawa Ken, a founding member of the RNG state-backed Zhongguo muke zuozhe xiehui (Association of Chinese Woodcut Artists, or ACWA) in October 1943.[72] The ACWA would take the lead in training CPI graduates and others in woodcut production for the remainder of the war.

Other groups of Chinese artists were also co-opted into regime-backed cultural programs. The China Arts Society (Zhongguo wenyi xiehui) had been founded in the RGROC period by the writer Chen Liaoshi (father of the aforementioned Chen Xiaozuo/Ma Wu) but included prominent visual artists such as Cao Hanmei within its ranks. Its flagship periodical, *Guoyi,* in which various forms of traditional painting, calligraphy, and other visual arts were celebrated, predated the return of the RNG by some months. Nevertheless, it would come to represent an important forum in which acquiescent artists could ply their trade under occupation.[73]

In practice, however, the RNG was anything but purist when it came to the arts. Some of the most active Chinese artists under occupation were those who had been trained in Europe and who undertook what was referred

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to as "European-style painting" (*yanghua*)—usually meaning they worked in oils. Well-known artists who came under such a definition included Liu Haisu and Yan Wenliang, both of whom exhibited their work in occupied Shanghai.[74] As Michael Sullivan notes, such work continued for largely mundane reasons. Oil paintings were just as important as middle-class status symbols during the occupation as they had been before it.[75]

There were also more political reasons, however, to tolerate such work. Consider, for example, the paintings of one of the most celebrated of Chinese artists to have been trained in Europe—Fan Tchunpi.[76] Described by Craig Clunas as "the first Chinese student of significant artistic experience to study in France,"[77] Fan had been a prominent exponent of modernist oil painting in the pre-RNG era.[78] Due to her direct connections to the Peace Movement—she was the widow of the Peace Movement martyr Zeng Zhongming—Fan was elevated to an unprecedented level of cultural prominence during the occupation (despite being a purveyor of art that was decidedly European in its provenance). She continued to exhibit her work—portraits of her late husband, for example—right up until the final months of the occupation.[79] And by painting an "autumn morning at Zijinshan [Purple Mountain]" in 1944—that is, at almost the exact time that Wang Jingwei was being buried on the slopes of that very mountain—she proved that European styles of painting were, in fact, entirely acceptable to a vehemently nativist regime, providing they were produced by a member of Wang's inner circle.[80]

The Occupation Culture Industry

Bringing cultural workers of prewar pedigree into the fold represented one way in which to seek visual legitimacy. It also provided a pool of talent that could be drawn upon for the purposes of visual propaganda beyond the RNG itself. In many spheres of cultural production, however, the RNG was reliant upon an existing commercial media sector and entertainment industry, either for providing a ready-made source of talent or simply for ensuring that cultural pabulum could continue to be produced for a war-weary populace. In the 1939–1940 period, this in fact represented official Peace Movement policy. Wang's courtiers chose to deliberately conflate political messaging and commercial advertising so that the unwanted attention of censors in colonial Hong Kong, as well as in Shanghai's International Settlement—still administered by a predominantly Western-dominated municipal council—could be avoided.[81]

The problem, however, was that such commercial interests did not always cooperate with RNG (or Japanese) policy makers. Take, for example,

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cinema. Poshek Fu describes commercial cinema under occupation as an "ambiguous space in which boundaries between heroic and villainous, political and apolitical, private and public were rarely clear and constantly transgressed."[82] Early in the occupation, Shanghai had served as a producer of commercial cinema in spite of the Japanese invasion. Indeed, the Japanese had initially encouraged commercial film exhibition in occupied China, as they would later do in other parts of occupied Asia.[83] Under what Fu has characterized as an "ambivalent partnership," commercial filmmakers and distributors in Shanghai were permitted by Japanese censors to continue their work—making new films but also showing foreign (including Hollywood) films—providing these did not undermine Japanese rule.[84]

Within this context, some in this industry did maintain links with the Peace Movement and, later, the MoP. The director Wong Hing-sue not only made period dramas (*guzhuangpian*) in Shanghai, for example, but also edited graphic pictorials in praise of Wang Jingwei.[85] Lin Baisheng even coopted commercial film stars into state rituals in Nanjing, while celebrities such as Li Lihua provided both copy and photography for the occupation media in accounts of interaction between the MoP and the film industry.[86] And some of the biggest stars of Chinese commercial cinema in the 1939–1940 period would even be cast as "brand ambassadors" for occupation itself.

In the spring of 1942, the Japanese forced Chinese filmmakers to unite under China United Productions (CUP) (Zhonghua lianhe zhipian gufen youxian gongsi) as they sought to encourage a shift toward more overtly Pan-Asian movies in China. Nevertheless, despite ongoing Japanese efforts—including the creation in May 1943 of the China United Motion Picture Company (CUMP) (Zhonghua dianying lianhe gongsi), which came under the direct management of the RNG—the commercial film industry continued to maintain an "entertainment orientation" for its urban clientele. The occupation state—that is, both the RNG and the Japanese—thus found itself balancing a desire to exploit the glamour associated with film celebrities, with an equally urgent anxiety about the potential for this industry to undermine Pan-Asian unity. This tension was never entirely resolved and led to competing ideas about what an occupied Chinese populace should aspire to as the war dragged on.

Other creative industries proved more obedient. Some of the private photographic studios that had proliferated in Chinese cities during the 1920s and 1930s, for example, continued to operate under occupation, producing everything from photographs of celebrities to wedding photography. On the one hand, this industry could be a thorn in the side

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of censors, especially when it reproduced popular "glamour portraits" of Hollywood celebrities at a time when the RNG was nominally at war with the United States.[87] On the other hand, photographic studios could be employed to craft occupation iconographies. One such example was the Shanghai-based Bann's Studio (Guangyi zhaoxiangguan). Like many of its competitors, Bann's had made a name for itself photographing the rich and famous of Republican China before the war, and its work had even been featured on the cover of the above-mentioned *Young companion*. It took its English trading name from the Anglicization of the surname of its founder, Peng Wangshi, who had emerged as an innovative photographer of landscapes in the 1920s. More importantly, Bann's had produced portraits for cultural and political celebrities in the 1930s.[88] From 1941 onward, however, it would be responsible for producing some of the most frequently reproduced photographic portraits of Wang Jingwei, all while advertising itself as representing "the highest standard in artistic photography" (*yishu zhaoxiang de zuigao shuizhun*).[89] Bann's was proof that a balance could be struck between the commercial media and RNG state aspirations.

The private sector played a role in the creation of visual cultures in other ways too. This was especially the case for specific industries that sought to make the most out of the commercial opportunities that occupation presented. Chief among these was pharmaceuticals. As Sherman Cochran has shown, Japanese pharmaceutical brands such as Jintan were already household names in China by the time of the *huandu,* having long seen in China an important market. Using its "full arsenal of advertising weapons," such as its trademark, Jintan was able to "occupy a prominent place in China's landscape" both before and after the occupation.[90]

Contemporary accounts suggest that the new realities of occupation were fully exploited by such companies when it came to advertising art. In the first year of the *huandu,* the cities of occupied China brimmed with advertisements for Japanese pharmaceutical products (ranging from newspaper adverts to billboards) that conflated commercial messages with highly politicized statements about the need to support the RNG and the notion of a Japanese-led Asia. Describing a train journey from Shanghai to Nanjing in 1941, the Chinese writer (and leading member of the SJCA) Zhang Ziping wrote with surprising candor about the nature of pharmaceutical advertising and visual propaganda that he witnessed along his route:

> All the way along, on both sides of the tracks, was blue hoarding covered in white slogans and advertisements. "Jintan . . . build the

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> New Order in East Asia"; "Rohto eyedrops . . . won't tingle or cause pain . . . peace and anticommunism"; "Rebail brand . . . gonorrhea pills . . . only by eradicating communism can we save China"; "Wakamoto enriches the blood and strengthens the body, reverses aging and restores youth . . . save the nation through peace"; "Establish a strong central government"; "China, Japan, and Manchukuo must unite . . . world-famous Daigaku eyedrops." The number of such slogans were seemingly endless. There were so many that I grew dizzy and dozed off.[91]

This overlap between political and commercial (and particularly medicinal) messaging was not unique to occupied areas of China.[92] The expansion of commercial opportunities for Japanese pharmaceutical firms would, however, have significant consequences for the iconographies of occupation. And it is perhaps more than coincidence that—as Zhang Ziping had noticed—Japanese producers of eye care products were particularly prominent in such efforts. The notion that occupation produced new ways of seeing was, in fact, exploited by such companies, as they mixed messages about the supposed clarity that their products could bring to users' eyes and the clarity that Japanese domination could bring to the people of China themselves.[93]

Imagined Audiences

The RNG imagined a diverse range of constituencies. It is important, therefore, to grasp just how this regime tried to prioritize its needs when it came to producing or controlling visual cultures across those parts of China to which it laid claim. Disagreements about the regime's aims often manifested themselves in debates over contradictory though contemporary icons and symbols, as quite different modes of visuality were deployed to different audiences.

In an interview at the end of 1940, the head of an MoP delegation to Japan confided that the main target of RNG propaganda, at least at this early stage of the regime's existence, was almost exclusively Chinese people living outside the RNG realm.[94] The archival record left by the MoP confirms this. We know, for instance, that the MoP assessed the efficacy of its propaganda in "Free China."[95] We also know that RNG cadres collected communist propaganda that they captured during military campaigns, and openly expressed admiration for the skill of communist propagandists at different points throughout the war.[96]

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It is equally clear, however, that the nature and content of propaganda being distributed toward Nanjing's rivals differed markedly from that circulating in occupied China itself. And despite claims in 1940 to be primarily concerned with the conversion of residents in Free China to the RNG cause, new markets for visual propaganda opened up at times throughout the war.

Rural Pacification, for example, led to entirely new avenues for the use of various forms of visual culture throughout the Lower Yangtze delta. Indeed, the very nature of these campaigns, in which the RNG sought to root out resistance and rebuild villages in the service of the regime, were visual. MoP cadres painted murals and slogans on the walls of rural compounds, calling on people to "defend Chairman Wang" (*yonghu Wang zhuxi*) and "revitalize the villages" (*fuxing nongcun*). Rural Pacification drama teams performed skits that underlined the futility of resistance. And "Rural Pacification pictorials" (*qingxiang huabao*) spread regime messages via photographs, cartoons, and woodcuts.[97] We have few means of assessing the reception of the visual depictions that were circulated through such media in "pacified" areas themselves. In some contemporary accounts, however, we learn that such efforts were but part of a wider struggle for control of the visual in the occupied countryside. Rural Pacification slogans shared village walls with the propaganda of resistance groups, and local residents were not always able to readily distinguish one from the other in the context of the rapidly shifting borders of the RNG state.[98] This may well have reflected deliberate attempts to emulate modes of visuality already tried and tested in the prewar years.

In the cities of east and south China, students, merchants, and "petty urbanites" (*xiao shimin*) represented the MoP's primary clientele, and one that continued to grow as people returned to the cities in search of stability.[99] The priorities of the RNG in this setting initially focused more on the tolerance of commercial culture that was apolitical in content. It was for the residents of towns and cities that the established forms of visual entertainment, from fine arts to cinema and cartooning, were encouraged.

Nonetheless, the archives left to posterity by the MoP suggest ongoing frustrations about the extent to which these underlying messages were getting through to such imagined audiences. At the first nationwide meeting of propaganda cadres in the summer of 1941, for example, Lin Baisheng singled out the effects of colonialism as one of the main reasons for China's lack of a proper propaganda infrastructure. At the same time, he called for the influence of "compradors and slaves to foreigners" (*maiban yangnu*)—those he deemed to have sold China out to the West—to be purged from China.[100]

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Irritation about the lack of enthusiasm for the occupation is a regular theme in MoP reports throughout the war. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, for instance, local cadres were told to "rouse the Shanghainese to grasp this opportunity of returning to peace and working together to revitalize China and revitalize East Asia under the direction of the supreme leader Wang Jingwei."[101] Clearly, no amount of top-down visual media was enthusing this city's residents in ways that Lin Baisheng may have liked.

There can be little doubt that Japanese military and government institutions played a crucial role in advising on, overseeing, controlling, and molding the visual cultures that were produced and circulated in occupied China. The influx of Japanese pictorials, the dominance of Japanese news agencies, and even the billboards filled with brash advertisements for Japanese pharmaceutical goods all dominated what could be seen—and *how* it was seen—in the cities of the RNG realm. It is also true that the various organs of the RNG state, to say nothing of the culture industry, would simply not have been able to operate without the permission of the Japanese military.

Such support did not, however, equate with complete control over cultural expression. Nor does the fact of Japanese power negate the very real agency that the RNG itself established in building its own cultural infrastructure (or the work that those who operated outside of state control managed to continue to pursue in spite of occupation). In the realm of visual media, RNG agencies found a space in which they could exercise control partially independent of Japanese military rule. They emulated Japanese techniques as well as prewar and early-occupation-era Chinese methods to force (often conflicting) visions upon the occupied people they governed. Using terms that presage the theoretical contributions of scholars such as Nicholas Mirzoeff, one RNG cadre went so far as to argue in 1943 that "pictures [*tuhua*] are the sharpest cultural weapons we have, and have a close connection to politics."[102]

The RNG was, of course, not the only Chinese administration to hold such views. Indeed, RNG discussion of images as weapons sounds remarkably similar to the "paper bullet"–laden language of resistance that was emerging from various parts of Free China at the same time.[103] Such similarities hint that visual cultures in Wang Jingwei's China were not just reactive to Japanese policies but were also designed to respond to various alternative visions of China that were being imagined by rival Chinese regimes and cultural workers. These included those envisaged (until December 1941) by the commercial print media of Shanghai's International Settlement,

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by cadres and intellectuals in the "great interior," by communist cultural workers in Yan'an and the base areas, and by New Fourth Army guerrillas in the Lower Yangtze delta. The RNG was fully aware of all of these. Indeed, it borrowed ideas and techniques from these alternative visions as it sought to assemble its own iconographies.

Nonetheless, in the sheer breadth of agency that was exercised under occupation by Chinese cultural workers, we can see the emergence of what I call an occupied gaze—a specific mode of seeing and visually representing China that was distinct from that exercised by both the Japanese and the resistance. This gaze sought autonomy from Japanese power by deploying recognizably Chinese modes of visuality, even while it relied on the Japanese presence for its very existence. At the same time, it denied a place to those who questioned Wang's right to rule.

In relying on a foreign power with whom it was constantly negotiating for further autonomy, and in drawing on an eclectic range of Chinese cultural workers, the RNG was never able to achieve visual uniformity in its messages. It may well be that such uniformity was never necessarily desirable for a regime that sought to promote itself as more liberal than its rivals in Chongqing and Yan'an. There were no "talks at the Nanjing forum" under Wang Jingwei.[104] Nor was there ever a single style of artistic expression proscribed under occupation. As a result, the iconographies of occupation that Chinese painters, photographers, cartoonists, and filmmakers created or recycled in support of the RNG, and sometimes in spite of it, were as eclectic as the hastily assembled community of Peace Movement fellow travelers, Daminhui propagandists, and refugee artists itself.

The consequences of such inconsistency were an ever-changing set of iconographies that sometimes competed, not just with those favored by resistance forces, but also against each other. Given all this, the recycling today of photographs of Wang Jingwei with German diplomats or the appreciation of Fan Tchunpi oil paintings at European exhibitions need not be seen as contradictory. They serve, rather, to remind us just how visually disparate the iconographies of occupation would ultimately become.

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