Between National Imagination and Social Critique: Female Figurations in Pang Xunqin and Fu Baoshi’s Wartime Chinese Painting (1930s-40s)

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Xiao Yang

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation provides the first in-depth comparative study in any language of the female figurations made, viewed, and interpreted in the realm of refashioning modern Chinese painting during the war period of Republican China (1930s-1940s) in the Nationalist government-controlled southwestern inner frontier, with projects by Pang Xunqin (1906–85) and Fu Baoshi (1904–65) as disparate yet related case studies. This dissertation pays particular attention to two themes of Pang and Fu’s wartime projects. One is their study of Chinese art antiquity as an attempt to modernize Chinese art historiography after the May Fourth New Culture Movement. The other is their wartime paintings featuring their perceived native southwestern women clad in traditional costumes, such as Pang’s Guizhou Mountain People and Fu’s Mountain Spirit. Investigating the different modes of cultural-making practices of these two artists, this dissertation examines the Chinese artistic modernity embodied in the wartime nativist trend of making female figurations. This dissertation argues that these Han Chinese male artists’ wartime art historiography and female figurations should be understood as their cultural-making practices of reinventing China’s artistic past. Two entangled concerns were embedded in the wartime dynamics of making, viewing, and interpreting these projects of refashioning Chinese modernity in painting—that is, a national imagination of China’s past and a social critique of China’s wartime conditions at the present.
Chapter 1 interrogates the Han Chinese ethnographic eye embedded in Pang Xunqin’s May-Fourth-inflected modernist approach to the “folk” during the 1930s and 40s in his Chinese art historiography and *Guizhou Mountain People* paintings. This chapter argues that Pang’s quest for China’s native aesthetic tradition, inspired by a surge of wartime nationalism and displacement, epitomizes a primitivist paradigm in which the Han Self was to be rediscovered in the multicultural southwestern inner frontier of China, a secure cultural zone untouched by Euro-American modernity. Drawing from interdisciplinary fields imported from Euro-American countries and Japan, including archaeology, cultural anthropology, and ethnographic photography, Pang’s wartime projects re-conceptualized a specific body of non-Han southwestern ethnic material culture that he encountered in Guizhou as another national art antiquity, alternative to the classical Han Chinese tradition of literati art.

Chapter 2 examines Pang’s entangled national and social concerns during the 1930s and 40s as exemplified in his feminization of southwestern non-Han ethnic groups. It explores the ways in which multiple European and Japanese modernities were appropriated and transformed in Pang’s formation of a singular aesthetic of “decorative realism.” This chapter argues that a significant reason why Pang’s self-proclaimed “classicist” paintings of *Guizhou Mountain People* were publicly criticized by the Nationalist-government official in charge of wartime propaganda as pictures “harming the image of the nation” was that these female figurations could be viewed as a southwestern variant of the female symbols Pang created during the early and
middle 1930s. These earlier female images constitute a social symbolism reflecting on the hardship and depression of wartime Chinese social reality under not only the foreign imperialist and capitalist invasions but also the domestic authoritarian regime. Pang’s social symbolism served as a main strategy in his wartime painting as well, as he depicted a series of unhappy, melancholic, and contemplating women as a symbol of wartime China.

Chapter 3 studies Fu Baoshi’s wartime paintings of female figures drawn from *Chuci* and modeled on the female archetype traditionally attributed to legendary Eastern Jin Gu Kaizhi. It sets Fu’s emphasis on Han cultural patrimony in constrast to Pang’s cosmopolitan aesthetic vision in refashioning modern Chinese painting, examining how Fu made a cultural and political allegory of China’s past and present. Reading Fu’s painting and Chinese art historiography, this chapter reveals how Fu rejuvenated and re-conceptualized his selected schools and period styles associated with the literati ink aesthetic discourse as a distinctively Chinese paradigm of intellectual art, in an effort to fully engage with the modern cause of national identity formation and revolution. Contextualizing Fu’s *Mountain Spirit* (1946) in the intellectual politics of studying national antiquity during the Civil War, this chapter argues that, by fusing iconographic attributes and technical models that had been coded in the literati aesthetic discourses of late imperial China and modern Japan, as well as elements of the French legacy of revolutionary romanticism, Fu transformed the Pre-Qin Shamanic motif from *Chuci* into a female figuration of wartime China and a political allegory of the unfinished Chinese Revolution.
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My belated but most heartfelt thanks go to my parents, Dong Zhenghe and Yang Gang, who have nurtured my initial artistic upbringing. Finally, I feel deeply grateful to my husband, Liu Tao, for his deep understanding, lasting encouragement, and silent endurance.
NOTE ON CHINESE NAMES

Chinese names appear in Chinese name order with the family name first, e.g., Pang Xunqin, except for authors of English-language publications or authors who write primarily in English, e.g., Kuiyi Shen.
DEDICATION

To my mother, Dong Zhenghe, and my father, Yang Gang.
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INTRODUCTION

Studies in Modern Chinese art have expanded exponentially in the last decade, but it is still a nascent field, particularly when it comes to scholarship on the pre-1949 era, which reflects the lack of communication between scholars across the Chinese Nationalist (Kuomintang, KMT hereafter) and Chinese Communist (CCP hereafter) divide. Monographs on twentieth-century Chinese art by scholars such as Michael Sullivan, Julia Andrews, Kuiyi Shen, Li Zhujin, Wan Qingli, Hu Guanghua, Ruan Rongchun, and Lv Peng emphasize comprehensiveness and paved the way for new possibilities for future research in the field. Few topics have been treated with much systematic and critical depth.¹ Even though some catalogues, dissertations, articles, and studies of individual artists have been published, providing a partial picture of how modern Chinese art unfolded, few of them have intensively focused on the war period of Republican China from 1931 to 1949.² Most scholars who do research the pre-1949 era have focused on a history of modern art and artists in Shanghai during the 1920s and the 1930s (before the


² Recent dissertations which partially treated individual artists’ artistic transformation during the war period include Sandy Ng’s Lin Fengmian (1900-1991): Figure Painting and Hybrid Modernity in Twentieth-century Chinese Art (2005), Xiaoqing Zhu’s Pang Xunqin (1906-1985) – A Chinese Avant-garde’s Metamorphosis, 1925-1946 (2009), Zhijian Qian’s Toward a Sinicized Modernism: The Artistic Practice of Lin Fengmian in Wartime China, 1937-1949 (2014).
full-scale War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression officially broke out), to the neglect of other cultural centers. To be sure, treaty port culture from Shanghai to Tianjin propelled a particular kind of Sino-modernity that drew heavily on Euro-American art. Nevertheless, despite links to European and American arts, China’s semi-colonial modernity of the east coast only constitutes the first chapter of the whole story of the historical development of Chinese artistic modernity in the twentieth century. If we consider literature that focuses directly on art created after the 1937 Japanese invasion, we find that the scholarship is quite narrow. Propaganda woodblock prints and wartime cartoons receive the most scholarly attention, but art historical studies of this period in the People’s Republic of China seldom encompass painting or photography beyond the CCP base in Yan’an (where Mao Zedong was based after the Long March) in northern China.3 This dissertation identifies a wartime “nativist” trend, in which Republican art and debates largely moved away from emulating European aesthetics, and an intellectual and pictorial retreat towards the past became a new focus. By concentrating on this significant, but overlooked, radical shift and the impact of nationalism in the development of painting genres and styles, this dissertation attempts to expand beyond and deepen the dialogue between one-dimensional accounts fixed on coastal modernity of the pre-war period and a CCP-focused art history during the war.

Huang Zongxian’s 2000 book, Dayouhuan shidai de jueze: Kangzhan shiqi dahoufang

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meishu yanjiu (Choices in a Time of Hardship: Art of the Rear in the Resistance War Against Japan), published in the Chinese language on mainland China, is the only survey focusing on the dynamic and diverse artistic discourses and visual practices that existed during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression in the KMT-controlled area of the interior, with the wartime capital of Chongqing in the southwest as its center.4 Huang has introduced many primary materials in this book and framed them in the geopolitical context of wartime China. Nevertheless, as the author suggests, the research is still preliminary, and it aims to initiate the field and encourage more provocative, future research. One short chapter of Huang’s book is devoted to an overview of “wartime zhongguohua 中國畫 (Chinese painting),” discussing how artists such as Fu Baoshi (1904–65) and Zhang Daqian (1899–83), who practiced exclusively with indigenous materials and techniques (mainly ink, mineral pigments, and paper), transformed their art form and style based on their strong nationalist sentiments and their will to maintain the dignity of minzu yishu 民族藝術 (national art).5 This discussion is limited to a brief introduction and lacks any detailed visual analysis of individual works in relation to the larger sociopolitical conditions of wartime China. Despite the obvious shortcomings of his study, Huang suggests multiple possible directions for future research. This dissertation research is inspired by Huang’s suggestion that a thorough understanding of the internal factors conditioning

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4 On November 20, 1937, shortly after the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression officially broke out, the KMT government announced Chongqing to be the wartime capital, finally relocating there around early December that year.

5 Huang, Zongxian. Dayouhuan shidai de jueze: Kangzhan shiqi dahoufang meishu yanjiu (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2000).
the ecosystem of the development of Chinese painting in the wartime entails “critical analysis of cultural nationalism embedded in the discourse criticizing or proposing the reform of Chinese painting,” rather than an understanding of the chaotic debate on wartime Chinese painting as “merely out of the temporary need for visual propaganda.”

This dissertation provides the first in-depth comparative study of female figurations in wartime projects of refashioning modern Chinese painting and, by so doing, inquires into the complicated relationship between modern Chinese art, scholarship, and politics in an era of profound sociopolitical transformation. This research focuses on the wartime activities of modern Chinese artists in the southwestern inner frontier controlled by the KMT-government as a long-neglected area in the study of twentieth-century Chinese art. The projects by the French-trained Pang Xunqin (1906–1985) and the Japanese-trained Fu Baoshi in the 1930s and 1940s form the core of this dissertation research as disparate yet related case studies. During their displacement in the KMT-controlled southwestern interior, both artists not only devoted themselves to the study of Chinese art history but also made a number of paintings featuring their perceived native female figures clad in their perceived traditional costumes against a backdrop of the mountainous, cloudy landscape of southwestern China.

6 Huang, Zongxian. Dayouhuan shidai de jueze: Kangzhan shiqi dahoufang meishu yanjiu, 14-15.
7 Historians in Mainland China have been debating on how to define the time range of the Second Sino-Japanese war. In January 2017, the Chinese government extended its official definition of the starting point of the Second Sino-Japanese War back to September 18, 1931 -- the Invasion of Manchuria by Japan – as opposed to July 7, 1937 as the traditional starting date defined by the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. It is more prudent to consider that the Second Sino-Japanese War had two phases, with the Japan invasion of Manchuria and establishment the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1931 as the beginning of its first phase and the full-scale war launched on July 7, 1937 by the Marco Polo Bridge Incident as the beginning of its second phase.
This research aims to identify a wartime brand of Chinese artistic modernity embodied in this nativist trend of refashioning modern Chinese painting in the wartime southwestern inner frontier, as exemplified in paintings such as Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* and Fu’s *Mountain Spirit*. As sites of imagining Chinese national culture, these female figurations received critical receptions from various viewpoints regarding their “Chineseness.” As Craig Clunas suggests in *Chinese Painting and Its Audiences* (2017), instead of searching for a definition of “the essence of what makes ‘Chinese painting,’” it is more productive and meaningful to “look at some of the ways that works have been viewed, over a relatively long span of time.”8 This dissertation not only contextualizes the female figurations by Pang and Fu in their wartime viewing context in the southwest inner frontier of Republican China, but also attempts to understand the visual modernity of these paintings in relation to some earlier, historical models of pictorial art in pre-twentieth-century China. Meanwhile, this dissertation examines the formal and conceptual elements of these wartime paintings in relation to their contemporaneous global trends of modernisms. By so doing, this dissertation examines the various ways in which and reasons why these wartime experiments of modern Chinese painting were made, viewed, and interpreted during the 1930s and 1940s in wartime China.

Although Pang and Fu differed greatly from each other in their family and educational backgrounds, they both belonged to the generation of Enlightenment Chinese intellectuals after

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the May Fourth Movement. They were trained abroad during the prewar period in France and Japan, respectively, and returned to China around the late 1920s or early 1930s. Both Pang and Fu played the dual role of art historian and painter during the 1930s and 1940s, working and communicating with other important intellectuals and scholars in academic, cultural and political institutes far beyond the circles of fine art. This dissertation reads these artists’ wartime Chinese art historiography and painting in parallel, examining the cultural, social, and political implications of their wartime projects in the intellectual and institutional histories of studying Chinese art history and national antiquity in Republican China. By so doing, this dissertation examines the different ways in which these artists’ projects epitomize the wartime nativist trend of reevaluating national antiquity and reinventing China’s artistic past.

Concentrating on this pivotal moment in modern Chinese art, this research explores how the development of painting genres and styles in KMT-controlled southwestern interior in the 1930s and 1940s closely engaged with competing intellectual politics and official ideologies reoriented due to the surge of wartime nationalism – including national learning, Chinese Marxism, Neo-Confucianism and many other major intellectual schools – within a broader, modern global context. With its radical focus on the wartime formation of native aesthetics, this dissertation aims to transform our understanding of the artistic currents of postwar and contemporary society in mainland China that have guided Chinese art discourse in the present. Several major theoretical perspectives – Han critical studies, transnationalism, and feminist critique – are
applied in the analytical framework of this dissertation.

As Chris Vasantkumar notes in *Critical Han Studies*, “the division of labor between Han studies” (as the inquiry into the nature of “Chineseness”) and “minority studies” (as the more historicized investigations of ethnicity, which focus on groups that are now ethnic minorities of the People’s Republic of China) “that has historically shaped Chinese social science has to some degree been perpetuated in the practices of foreign scholars.”\(^9\) Being “critical” in the relatively new domain of critical inquiry—“Critical Han Studies”—means dispelling any notion that “Han” is a stable, eternal, objective, or natural category, and showing instead that it is changing, contested, and contingent on political developments. It has been pointed out by current scholarship that an ethnically Han-centric nationalism played a significant role in the collapse of the Qing Empire and the establishment of the first modern nation-state of China (Republic of China) as a Han-centered, multiethnic nation. This dissertation focuses on the war period during the 1930s and 40s, when the wartime proximity of the government, official institutes, and artists to the multicultural frontier in southwest China made the Han intellectuals felt anxious again about how the Han identity formation became problematic. It examines these artists’ wartime formulations of “Chineseness” and “national spirit” in their art historiographies and paintings, attending to the relationship between their scholarship, artwork and the larger ethnic discourse of

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“Han” in Republican China. Both Pang and Fu's wartime art historiographies are scholarly-cum-political in nature, epitomizing how these artists’ conceptions of Chinese nation and their projects of refashioning modern Chinese painting were partially shaped by and negotiating with the nationalistic circumstances of wartime Republican China.

Drawing from interdisciplinary fields imported from Euro-American countries and Japan, including cultural anthropology and archaeology, Pang Xunqin’s wartime projects of composing Chinese art historiography and refashioning modern Chinese painting—*Guizhou Mountain People*—best represents a May-Fourth-inflected ethnographic approach to visualizing the non-Han ethnic people living in the southwestern multicultural frontier. To interrogate the ethnographic eye embedded in Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People*, this dissertation research contextualizes his wartime historiography of Chinese “ethnic art” and “folk art” in the May-Fourth-inflected intellectual and institutional histories of the study of national antiquity in Republican China. This dissertation examines the process in which KMT government institutionalized a totalizing, hierarchical system of value about the “national” artistic past, designing a state power structure that assigned fixed places to categories like “folk art” and “ethnic art” in relation to “high art” during the 1930s and 40s. By comparing the ways in which Pang and Fu engaged and negotiated with this newly established official value system of national art, this dissertation asks: did the artists in question help construct or deconstruct this system, or were they shaped by it? This question will be discussed through a critical inquiry into the
cognitive relationship between these Han Chinese male elite artists and the non-Han people in the southwest, in terms of how these artists perceived the history of the Han people in relation to that of the non-Han minorities. In contrast, Fu Baoshi’s *Mountain Spirit* drew its female themes from *Chuci* (Songs of the South), a classical text of Chinese literature composed in the Han Chinese classical language, which had been ascribed since the second century AD to the Pre-Qin politician-poet Qu Yuan of the Southern Kingdom of the Warring States Era (475 BC–221 BC). Fu’s wartime writing, including some passages of his seemingly “levelheaded,” less politicized scholarship, epitomizes the ways in which his Chinese art historiography and the larger nation-state building process through which the Japanese-inflected Republican Chinese ethnic construct of “Han” and “Han-ness” was taking shape were intertwined.

This research unites diverse disciplinary discourses—painting, ethnographic photography, archaeology, literary studies and dramaturgy— to identify the patterns of discursive and material productions in representing these female themes. Compounding the ethnographic eye of the experimental paintings made by these Han Chinese male artists of the multiethnic “folk” in southwest China frontier was a gendered tendency. Images of women, not highly regarded in Chinese art in the past, grew in number and in variety during the war period. A significant trend, as exemplified in the wartime projects by Pang and Fu, was the emergence of modern Chinese elite painting visualizing women of not only Han but also non-Han ethnicity living in the mountainous southwestern interior. The wartime artistic retreat to the nation’s past was achieved
by creating female images that did not represent the coastal cosmopolitanism of pre-war Republican China (1912–37). Pang and Fu’s paintings offered new missions and qualities to the longstanding genre of *shinvhua* 仕女畫, which dates as far back as the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420). Both artists had a tendency to romanticize their female subjects as the crystallization of a purer cultural tradition beyond the pressures of Western-style modernity. Why did they choose to paint these “native” Chinese women clad in “traditional” costumes? How did these artists visualize the female themes in their paintings? Thematically, technically, stylistically, and aesthetically, these female figurations epitomize how the abstract ideas of the Chinese nation – its past and present—were visualized through the Chinese artist’s brush.

To investigate the cultural, social, and political implications of the visual elements of these artists’ female figurations conditioned by the highly politicized wartime circumstances, one must contextualize them in the KMT-controlled southwestern frontier in the 1930s and 1940s as a particular place in which modern Chinese painting was refashioned in a specific time, one marked by war and revolution in multiple senses—not only the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression but also the Civil War between the KMT regime and the Leftist revolutionaries lead by the CCP. Situated in this wartime viewing context, this dissertation examines the different intended audiences of these painting. By so doing, it explains how these paintings conveyed to their wartime audiences these artists’ entangled concerns with not only the national but also the social, and the complicated ways in which they invited different
interpretations of their cultural, social and political implications. Due to these entangled and sometimes counterbalanced concerns embedded in the wartime projects by Pang and Fu, hovering between a nationalist position and a socialist position, their female figurations received various, competing comments regarding the national identities constructed and political stances conveyed through them. Engaging with the theoretical concerns of feminist critique, this dissertation investigates the gender politics embedded in the wartime dynamic in which these paintings of women were made, viewed, and interpreted. What do these female figurations and their critical receptions tell us about the complicated relationship between ethnicity, gender and ideology during the war in the KMT-controlled southwest inner frontier? This research examines the wartime modalities of social hierarchy constructed among different ethnic groups, genders and classes as reflected by the various critical receptions of these male Han Chinese elite artists’ female figurations during the war.

This dissertation research adopts a transnational perspective to examine the role that the re-use of the past as reinvented tradition(s) played in the formation of modern Chinese painting during the war period of the early 1930s through the end of the 1940s. This approach draws on the scholarship of art historian Aida Wong and historian Prasenjit Duara. By tracing the interpersonal contacts and exchange of ideas between the Chinese and Japanese art worlds from the late nineteenth century through the early 1920s, Aida Wong argues that, in the case of the formation of guohua 國畫 (national-style painting) during the prewar period of Republican
China, “the foreign” becomes embedded in China’s identity both literally and imaginatively, rather than remaining something external as a mere source of “influence.” Despite its imperialist ambition in China, Japan emerges also as a critical ingredient in China’s imagination of “the nation.”¹⁰ Her scholarship prompts me to explore the ways in which, even after the official breakout of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1937–45), Japan continued to play an important role in individual Chinese artists’ pictorial construction of Chinese identity. It is true that, as Wong observes, “although instances of Japanism continued in Chinese painting during the war and after, the Republican government radically cut back on scholarship support for study in Japan and the number of Chinese artists with firsthand knowledge of Japan dwindled.”¹¹ However, my research is prompted by the fact that Japanese-trained scholar-artists such as Fu Baoshi only started to practice the genre of figure painting intensively after the war began, by drawing from modern Japanese scholarship on Chinese art history and incorporating elements of nihonga (Japanese-style painting) in their perceived national imagery, reusing the idealized past of Han Chinese literati painting tradition of China based on not only on traditional Chinese literati treatises but also Japanese ideals of China. “Perhaps,” as Prasenjit Duara suggests, “one of the most politically significant paradoxes of nationalism . . . is the transnational origin of its claim to historical and contemporary distinctiveness.”¹²

¹⁰ Aida Wong, Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies, University of Hawai’i, 2006).
¹¹ Aida Wong, Parting the Mists, 125.
¹² Prasenjit Duara, Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern (Maryland: Rowman &
models developed by these scholars, I explore the theme of transnationalism as a crucial strategy through which historical, local, and regional elements are mediated with global resources in the wartime refashioning of Chinese artistic and visual modernity.

Throughout each chapter, this dissertation research attends to how the French-trained Pang Xunqin and the Japanese-trained Fu Baoshi took a transnational trajectory of making their paintings “modern” based on their prewar experiences of training abroad, in Europe and Japan, respectively, appropriating globally circulated techniques, materials, organizational modes, and aesthetic concepts in their female figurations that they believed to be “Chinese.” By so doing, this dissertation emphasizes the centrality of transnationalism in the wartime refashioning of Chinese visual modernity. Such an approach was chosen not only because of the training these artists received abroad before the war, but also because Fu and Pang, like many Chinese intellectuals of their generation, saw both the Euro-American and Japanese models as inevitable counterpoints for the construction of modern Chinese culture. One of the problematic issues in this field is the long-standing question of “foreign influence on modern Chinese art”; this project aims to blur the distinction of “foreign” and “Chinese,” “modern” and “traditional,” by identifying how, by the 1930s, Chinese artists were already in a second or third phase of developing a modern art that was distinctly Chinese and yet in dialogue with other global modernisms. Despite Pang and Fu’s discursive emphasis on the distinctive “Chineseness” of

their paintings executed in “Chinese brush” and ink on paper or silk, both artists’ practices of refashioning modern Chinese painting involved a process of transnational migration of imageries and ideas during a time period of epochal change and intensified interaction with “the West” and modernizing Japan.

As Fu and Pang had different intended audiences for their wartime projects, disparate critical receptions of their paintings regarding their “Chineseness” emerged among audiences with different cultural, social, ethnic and national identities and concerns during the war period. This dissertation examines the wartime critical receptions of Pang and Fu’s female figurations, attending to how these paintings attracted different viewers and interpretations due to the differences of these Han Chinese male elite artists in their cultural-political visions of the Chinese nation’s past and present and their conceptions of the future development of modern Chinese painting. Given the ethnographic impulse and cosmopolitan aesthetics of *Guizhou Mountain People*, a majority of Pang’s wartime audiences found the national identity of his paintings impossible to identify. These social symbolist paintings featuring mountain women of the southwestern, multicultural frontier and his cosmopolitan aesthetic vision attracted some foreign buyers as wartime sojourn in the KMT-controlled region in support of China’s War of Resistance Against Japan, some non-Han southwestern ethnic artists, as well as some liberal intellectuals sharing Pang’s cosmopolitan vision. In comparison, in fuller consideration of the highly politicized and nationalistic wartime circumstances, Fu positioned himself as a “national
artist” rejuvenating traditional literati painting as a distinctive “Chinese” paradigm and reclaiming thereby the superiority of Han Chinese cultural patrimony. Nevertheless, Fu’s archaistic female figure paintings created during the 1940s were not nostalgic but implicitly engaging with the leftist revolutionary aesthetic discourses. These paintings were acclimated from Han Chinese male elites with competing political agendas, not only the KMT but also the CCP leaders and pro-CCP leftist intellectuals during the Civil War. A comparative analysis of the thematic, technical, and aesthetic qualities of the wartime paintings by Pang and Fu, therefore, provides a key to understanding how the wartime surge of nationalism repositioned individual artists in the wave of refashioning modern Chinese painting.

Based on a close reading of these female figurations by Pang and Fu, respectively and comparatively, this dissertation argues that the entangled concerns of the national and the social were embedded in the wartime dynamics in which their works were made, viewed, and interpreted in seemingly disparate yet resonating ways. Drawing on European, Japanese, and Chinese resources, Pang depicted a series of melancholic and contemplating women as a social symbol of wartime China in *Guizhou Mountain People* series. The multiple visual focuses and multivalent style of these paintings—an attempt to synthesize “the decorative” and “the realistic”—epitomize an uneasy counterbalance between Pang’s coexisting concerns of the national and the social. Conversely, combining selected thematic and stylistic elements conventionally coded by Chinese literati discourses and modern Japanese Sinology, as well as
elements of *nihonga* and French revolutionary romanticism, Fu’s modern literati painting transformed the ancient mythological subject of Mountain Spirit into a female figuration of wartime China as well as a political allegory of the unfinished Chinese Revolution.
Chapter 1. Ethnographic Eye and the Refashioning of Chinese Modernism: *Guizhou Mountain People*

1.1. *Guohua* or *Xihua*?: *Guizhou Mountain People* as Experimental *Zhongguohua* Transcending National Boundaries of Media

Pang Xunqin (English name: Hiunkin Pang, 1906–1985) created his *Guizhou Mountain People* 貴州山民圖 painting series (1940–46) during the War of Resistance Against Japan in the Nationalist-Party (Kuomintang, KMT hereafter) government controlled area of China. Since the early 1940s, this series has been somewhat of a puzzle to China’s official art institutes, including the National Fine Arts Exhibition and the collection system of the National Art Museum. This has been true both during the country’s years as the Republic of China, ruled by the KMT from 1912 to 1949, and during its years as the People’s Republic of China, governed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP hereafter) from 1949. As viewed by China’s official art institution, then and now, these paintings have always been puzzling in terms of whether they should be considered “national.” Several anecdotal moments, spanning a period of more than seventy years from 1942 to the second decade of the twenty-first century, are symptomatic of the problem of categorizing system.

In 1942, without Pang’s prior knowledge, a friend of his sent two works from the painting series of *Guizhou Mountain People* to be displayed at the Third National Fine Arts Exhibition. This exhibition, which was sponsored by the KMT government and located in the wartime...
capital of Chongqing, opened on December 25 that year. These paintings were initially sent, in succession, to the guohua 国畫 (national-style painting) section, then the xihua 西畫 (Western-style painting) section, and finally the tu’an 圖案 (graphic design) section; having been rejected from all three sections, the two paintings were reluctantly accepted by the xihua section to be displayed in the gallery for “Western-style painting.” If, in the early 1940s, Pang Xunqin’s series of Guizhou Mountain People was seen as neither “Chinese” nor “Western” in the field of painting in China, then after a span of more than half a century, it is now considered to be “Chinese”—but not quite. As of 2017, the Department of Collection in the National Art Museum of China divides its collection into six sections (categories): guohua, oil painting, sculpture, prints, “folk art,” and “comprehensive.” The comprehensive category encompasses paintings applied in various media other than guohua and oil painting, including watercolors, drawings, sketches, photographic works, and other kinds of painting applied in multiple media. This category also includes Neo-New Year pictures, which have been made since the twentieth century by elite artists who draw inspiration from the folk art tradition of New Year pictures. In August 2014, when talking about the National Art Museum’s collection of the paintings from

14 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolaide, 201.
Pang Xunqin’s *Guizhou Mountain People* series, the director of its Department of Collection said, “we are not quite sure about where these paintings should be put—the *guohua* section, the watercolor section [belonging to the comprehensive category], or somewhere else.”\(^\text{15}\) (Fig. 1.1-Fig.1.3) For instance, the National Art Museum recently displayed one painting from the *Guizhou Mountain People* series, *Huangguoshu Waterfall* (Fig. 1.2), in a 2015 exhibition entitled “One Hundred Years of Watercolor in China.”

The National Fine Arts Exhibition was an official art institution originally organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Education of the Nationalist government in Republican China in 1929. Throughout the period of Republican China, it functioned as a prominent modern platform for national exhibition culture. Since 1949, the mode of this art institution has continued to function in the People’s Republic of China ruled by the CCP.\(^\text{16}\) The exhibition culture that operated through the National Fine Arts Exhibition would provide a double-edged opportunity for public education and critique in the public sphere. It was inaugurated in the culturally and politically unsettled Republican era as an emerging national institutional space for domestic exhibition culture operated by the KMT government. Over time, the National Fine Arts Exhibition increasingly “embodied a possible architecture for a modern national canon” that “could accommodate ancient and contemporary, Chinese and foreign, fine

\(^\text{15}\) Director Han Jinsong’s talk at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, August 2014.
and applied arts all together.” If the term “canon” roughly refers to the “sets of art objects that claim cultural authority and a status as models for imitation, with an emphasis on the contingency of such claims,” then the exclusion of Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* by the Censorious Jury Committee of the Third National Fine Arts Exhibition in 1942 from the category of *guohua* (national painting) means that they could not be canonized. Although self-defined as “Chinese paintings” by Pang, they would definitely not be considered—or promulgated—as such by the national ideological art system.

Not until the early 1990s did Pang Xunqin’s art regain some scholarly attention in China and abroad. Since the 1990s, Pang’s art of the early 1930s, roughly called his “Storm Society period,” has been recognized as representative of the early twentieth-century Chinese “avant-garde.” The Chinese art historian Tao Yongbai claimed,

“The three most influential figures shaping the historical development of Chinese modern art, I believe, are Xu Beihong, Lin Fengmian, and Pang Xunqin. They were all educated in France. Xu situates himself in his native land, choosing realism to transcend Chinese traditional painting; Lin reconciles Chinese traditional art with Western art to establish a new artistic paradigm; while Pang, on the other hand, locates himself in the world, in modernity and in the future. He returns to the indigenous, from decorative paintings to arts and

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crafts designs; he has founded new subject areas and new disciplines.\textsuperscript{19}

During the early 1930s in Shanghai, Pang was promoted in mass media as a “Westernizing” modernist who excelled in painting in watercolor, gouache, and oil. From 1930 through 1934, the French-trained intellectuals Xu Weinan 徐蔚南 (1900-1952) and Shao Xunmei 邵洵美 (1906-1968) published some of Pang’s European-inflected modernist paintings in Shanghai’s popular public media, including the newspaper Shenbao 申報 and the cultural magazines Liangyou 良友, Shidai 時代, and Xiandai 現代.\textsuperscript{20} His paintings published in these magazines include Café (Fig. 1.4), Three Women (Fig. 1.5), and Such is Paris (Fig. 1.6), made during his stay in Paris. They also include some paintings of his Shanghai period, such as A Sailor Playing the Accordion (Fig. 1.7), Daughters of the Time (Fig. 1.8), Untitled (Squeezing Machine) (Fig. 1.9) and Son of the Earth (Fig. 1.10). These paintings demonstrate the vast inspirations that he drew from the visual languages of various European modernists, including Picasso, Matisse, Léger, and Munch. Meanwhile, Pang co-founded the Juelanshe 決瀾社 (Storm Society, 1932–36) together with Japanese-trained yoga (Western-style painting) artist and theorist Ni Yide 倪贻德 (1902–70), advocating modernist art trends from Europe and Japan. Both in China and abroad, mainstream historical narratives of twentieth-century Chinese art have always linked the name of Pang Xunqin to the ephemeral promotion and circulation of European modernisms in

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\item \textsuperscript{19} Tao Yongbai, “Dui Pang Xunqin de lishi sikao (Historical Consideration on Pang Xunqin),” in Yishu chizi de qiusuo, 15.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Yin Dingwei, “Yishujia de miankong: ershi shiji sanshi niandai Shanghai baokan dui Pang Xunqin yishu de chengxian [Artist’s Face : The Representation of Pang Xunqin’s Art in Shanghai Magazines in the 1930s],” Rongbao zhai, Vol. 133, no.12 (December, 2015): 140-155.
\end{itemize}
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early twentieth-century China, particularly in metropolitan Shanghai during the first half of the 1930s. Pang was considerably well received at that time, as he was thought to have passed the stage of imitating Western modern painting and come to understand its essence. Nevertheless, as Tao Yongbai described, because the concepts and practices of the members of the Storm Society “transcended the historical stage of culture at their own time,” their society’s movement was “not recognized at the time and thus ended quickly.”

Ralph Crozier, in his 1993 article discussing the fate of “Chinese modernism” through the case study of the short-lived Storm Society, likewise argued that although some elite critics were initially receptive to Chinese modernism in early twentieth-century China, when the war with Japan became imminent in the 1930s, the expectations that the elite critics held of the artists began to revolve much more around issues of nationalism.

Echoing Tao’s point of view, Croizer further argued in his 2009 article “When Was Modern Chinese Art? A Short History of Chinese Modernism” that “modernism in Chinese art” existed only in two clear-cut periods, one from 1929 to 1937 and the other from 1985 to 1989. It was in these two periods, he claimed, that “two attempts [were made] to bring the styles of modern European art and the philosophy behind them into the mainstream of Chinese art.” Accordingly, Croizer insisted that the period from 1937 to 1985 is a “long hiatus.”

Critics assumed that wartime nationalism was fundamentally antithetical to the “individuality-driven

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21 Tao Yongbai, “Zhongguo youhua de lishi sikao (Historical Consideration on Oil Painting in China),” in Meishu no. 2 (February 1988): 41-44.
content and stylistic innovation” that are the core of modernism.\textsuperscript{24} The wartime practices of Chinese artists are thus taken by these critics to be irrelevant to the development of Chinese modernism and visual modernity.

When it comes to Pang’s \textit{Guizhou Mountain People}—created during Pang’s displacement in southwestern China during the War of Resistance Against Japan—Tao’s assessment is that, compared to Pang’s earlier works painted before the late 1930s and 1940s, “these \textit{gongbi} 工筆 (fine-line drawing) paintings look cautious, as they seem to have weakened the artistic temperaments and features that he had earlier in which elegance and rigor complemented each other . . . He has not been able to fuse the \textit{gongbi} and the decorative perfectly in these paintings, which inevitably reveal traces of collage.”\textsuperscript{25} In contrast to this point of view, the Chinese historian Shao Dazhen considers \textit{Guizhou Mountain People} to be a project of momentous experimentation which signals Pang’s transforming vision in the late 1930s and 1940s for the future development of modern painting in China:

Mr. Pang’s \textit{Guizhou Mountain People}, which meticulously depict the local customs of the Miao people, doesn’t mean that he retreated backward from his earlier artistic experiments; rather, these paintings signal his new phase of experiments that lead forwards on the path of \textit{minjian} (folk) and \textit{minzu} (national) art.\textsuperscript{26}

Shao then claimed, “If his earlier works were intended to use Western painting to transform

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\textsuperscript{24} Ralph Crozier, “Post-Impressionists in Pre-War Shanghai: The \textit{Juelanshe} (Storm Society) and the Fate of Modernism in Republican China,” 135-154.

\textsuperscript{25} Tao Yongbai, “Dui Pang Xunqin de lishi sikao (Historical Consideration on Pang Xunqin),” 18.

\textsuperscript{26} Shao Dazhen, “Yige yongyuan tansuo de linghun (A soul experimenting forever),” in \textit{Yishu chizi de qiusuo}, 13.
Chinese painting, then *Guizhou Mountain People* epitomizes his attempt to use Chinese painting to transform Western painting."27 Following Shao’s path, current scholarship in Chinese and in English construct the chronology of Pang’s artistic transformation during the Republican period of China, during which time Pang’s artistic career mirrors some key turning points in the periodization of Chinese art in the first half of the twentieth century: “the 1920s infatuation with the West, the importation of the West in the early 1930s, the reexamination and rejection of the West during the late 1930s, and the embracing of the indigenous culture and art in the 1940s.”28

In an article Pang published in the mid-1940s, Pang stated that during the War of Resistance Against Japan he was consciously trying to make innovative modern “Chinese paintings” with distinctive minzuxing 民族性 (national characters).29 What is intriguing is that the wartime series of *Guizhou Mountain People* was long deemed as “un-Chinese” by the Chinese art institution, and yet it constitutes one of the most essential experiments that Pang made in painting between the mid-1930s and the 1940s. These were the years in which, according to the post-1989 historiography of Chinese modern art, Pang shifted his attention from emulating “forms of Western Modernism” to studying China’s “native traditions.” The controversy over the cultural identity (“Chinese” or “Western”) of *Guizhou Mountain People* in

27 Ibid., 14.
twentieth-century Chinese art history propels our reflection on the historiography of Chinese modernism. What is at stake is the criterion by which the fundamental opposition between “Chinese” and “Western” painting has been established in the institutionalized historical and critical discourse of art since the Republican period.

Perhaps in response to the official institutional reception of *Guizhou Mountain People* as “Western,” Pang published several short essays in 1944 in the column that he set up in the *Huaxi Wanbao* 華西晚報 (Western China Evening Newspaper) in Chengdu. In these essays, he discussed his concerns about the problems raised by the dichotomy of “Western painting” and “national painting,” which had been institutionalized since the early 1920s in art schools in Shanghai and elsewhere in China. In an essay published on August 7, 1944, Pang criticized the fact that “the departments of painting in [China’s] art schools are divided into Zhonghua xi 中畫系 (the Department of Chinese painting) and Xihua xi 西畫系 (the Department of Western painting).” He expressed his dissent with the circumstances of Chinese art education in which the students who majored in national painting merely study from ancient Chinese painting, whereas the students who majored in Western painting only study from Western painting. He pondered, “Should the practitioners in modern art of China merely study from ancient Chinese painting, or from Western painting? Or, is there any alternative way out?”

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art world’s remembrance of the emergence of the modern art movements “as an emerging, delicate bud . . . some twenty years ago.” Here, he did not conceptualize his wartime experimental Zhongguohua (Chinese painting) as a kind of guohua. The neo-traditionalist practices of guohua, which attempt to transform traditional Chinese ink painting into “modern art” while keeping using Chinese brush, ink and water as indigenous mediums, had emerged and became flourish since the 1920s in the Movement of Re-assessing National Essence through the 1930s. Instead, Pang chose to link his paintings to the avant-garde art movement launched in the wake of the May Fourth New Culture Movement. By so doing, Pang was consciously differentiating his wartime experimental Zhongguohua (Chinese painting) from the practices of guohua (national painting) in traditional mediums and formats.

The situation that Guizhou Mountain People encountered touches upon the problematic way of thinking about the relationship between the materiality of painting media and national identity in the twentieth century. As John Clark once noted:

The subject of “modern Chinese painting” is by no means self-evident. The extension of these terms, both individually and as a collective noun, has been the object of contention in 20th century China. Many writers have of necessity confined themselves to as neutral a description as they thought possible. This has often, but not always, meant discussion of the history of works and their artists in those areas politically controlled by the Qing, Republican, and People’s Republican governments in the twentieth century, where “painting” is work done in ink (soot in a colloidal solution of bone glue in water)

32 Ibid.
which uses the “Chinese” brush. …… Both Chinese and Sinological notions of authenticity have rarely moved beyond the deceptive binary opposition, erfen fa, as Chinese/Western. The category of national painting (on the model of the Japanese Nihonga), confuses painting media with visual aesthetics, and takes oil painting as predicated on a culturally essential vision which is un-Chinese. These problems are not merely theoretical: they are part of the contradictory self-identity of many 20th-century painters, and of the identity given the painter in Chinese culture.  

This nationalistic construction, established in the Chinese official art institution, appears to still exist in the first decades of the twenty-first century in China. The series of Guizhou Mountain People was painted with, in Pang’s own words, “Chinese brush on Chinese silk fabric” or paper/rice paper, not applied in oil—the most representative material of xihua (Western-style painting)—but in watercolor. Comparing to oil paints applied on canvas, the visual efficacy rendered by the application of watercolors on the surface of drawing paper is more akin to the visual efficacy achieved by the application of ink and mineral pigment washes on the surface of non-absorbable rice paper produced in East Asian countries. However, due to the fact that watercolor was imported from Euro-American countries by the Jesuit missionaries during the Ming and Qing Dynasties to China, this material was normally codified as a kind of “Western” media as well in the twentieth century China. In the early twentieth century, there emerged some Chinese painters excelled in watercolor, such as the Japanese-trained artist Li Shutong 李叔同

(1880-1942) who composed a treatise in 1905 on the methods of painting in watercolor.\textsuperscript{36} Even if watercolor was not as representative as oil paints as the Western medium for painting, its materiality could not connote the Chinese identity of a painting. Accordingly, paintings applied in watercolor were recognized not as “national” but as “Western” painting in the official art institution’s categorical system, as represented by the modern national museum collection and the government-sponsored National Fine Art Exhibition. Pang did not attempt to send these paintings to the \textit{guohua} (national painting) section in the 1942 Third National Fine Arts Exhibition, nor did he consider these paintings to be Western paintings. It was his friend who sent several pieces of Pang’s \textit{Guizhou Mountain People} to the \textit{guohua} section. In contrast, Pang did perceive his experiments to be modern Chinese paintings. Then, how do we understand the conceptualization of modern Chinese painting in Pang’s wartime experiment?

As early as the 1930s, due to rising nationalist sentiments in various fields including literature and art, foreign-trained Chinese artists had to face questions about the national identity of their paintings. There were debates on whether Chinese painting should be revitalized by incorporating material, technical, and thematic idioms from Western painting. As the French-trained Chang Shuhong 常書鴻 (1904–94) observed, among the paintings on display in the Second National Fine Arts Exhibition held in 1937, shortly before the July 7 Japanese invasion of Beijing heralded the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War, there had been some

\textsuperscript{36} Feng Hanzi, “Zaoqi zhongguo shuicai yishu fazhan yanjiu (Studies on the early development of watercolor in China),” in \textit{Yishu Jie (Art World)} 5 (May 2013): 80.
“Chinese paintings which fundamentally broke the conventions of traditional guohua in terms of coloration, thematic choice, and compositional modes.” He also remarked that there were some paintings “almost impossible to categorize” like “portraits of a young lady applied in watercolor on the ground of Chinese rice paper.” As Chang perceptively pointed out, although “this phenomenon looks like a trivial episode, it actually presents a crucial issue—that is, ‘Whither Chinese painting?’” As for this issue, raised by the Second National Fine Arts Exhibition, Qin Xuanfu published a quite influential essay entitled “Do We Need Western-style Painting?” Qin posed the key question in one sentence: “In the processes of reforming Chinese painting and creating new painting, do we need help from Western-style painting?”

Regarding the outright judgment of two of his Guizhou Mountain People series as Western-style painting by the Jury Committee of the Third National Fine Arts Exhibition in 1942, Pang Xunqin long remained indignant. He wrote in the 1980s (after the Cultural Revolution

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37 Chang Shuhong, “Kangzhan sinianlai de meishu gongzuo (Works done about art during the four years of War of Resistance),” published on Wenhua xianfeng (Cultural Pioneer), 1942(1): 57.
38 Chang Shuhong, “Kangzhan sinianlai de meishu gongzuo,” 57.
39 Ibid.
[1966-76]) that, “a Chinese man used a Chinese calligraphy brush to paint on Chinese silk fabric about the daily life of Chinese people—how could they not recognize them as Zhongguohua (Chinese painting)? I do not accept that the oil paintings I made are Xihua (Western painting) either.”

During the 1930s and 1940s, Pang might have expressed sympathy for the views on modern Chinese painting expressed by his close friend Ni Yide, who cofounded the Storm Society with Pang in pre-war Shanghai. In 1934, Ni Yide had proposed that, fundamentally, neither xiyanghua (Western painting) nor zhongguohua (Chinese painting) existed. “The art of each nation has its own particularity,” Ni maintained, but “the so-called xiyanghua is also zhongguohua, which should not be differentiated by [artistic] media.” The phrasing here, in which “West” is equated with “China” as a nation, demonstrates how slippery the references of these two terms are in modern Chinese intellectual discourse.

In Ni’s opinion, “neither a painting’s Chinese subject matter nor its Chinese technique of application” is enough to determine whether a painting could be considered as “Chinese painting.” To him, even if a painting was “applied in oil” and “doesn’t get rid of certain formal elements of Western painting,” the painting could still be considered an ideal “Chinese painting” as long as it

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41 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolaide, 202.
could effectively “convey the atmosphere of China as a whole.” In 1937, Ni published an article arguing against the prevalent discourse of a binary opposition based on media and technique between “national” and “Western” painting:

The so-called Western painting (xihua) as a particular painting [category] doesn’t exist; meanwhile, the so-called national painting (guohua) as a particular painting [category] doesn’t exist either. They have been categorized as different types of painting only in terms of different materials and techniques applied. For example, there is no difference between Chinese or Oriental paintings in watercolor on silk fabric or paper, and Western paintings of the same category applied in oil or watercolor/gauche on canvas with the techniques relating to these materials. Both applied in watercolor, they [are categorized as Chinese and Western paintings only because they] have some different characteristics and techniques. Therefore, it is also possible to use Western painting materials in Chinese painting.

During the war, instead of painting in oil, Pang created many works in watercolor. He claimed that it was a necessity due to the severe shortage of oil paint and tools in wartime southwest China. However, an important fact should not be ignored—that what Pang chose to use was Chinese brush rather than pen, a frequently used tool in drawing by Euro-American artists. Pang’s choice to create Chinese brush painting in watercolor must relate to his ideal to synthesize the Chinese and the West. The Chinese modernist was consciously trying out every possibility to make “new Chinese painting,” transcending national boundaries demarcated by

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45 Ni Yide, “Differences between Chinese and Western Paintings,” Xihua luncong xuji (Sequel to Anthology of Discussion on Western Painting)(Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1937), 41; emphasis added.
medium.

As early as the mid-1930s, in fact, when the Japanese imperialist invasion became immanent, traditional Chinese-style brush paintings, along with proletariat prints and caricatures, became the most-preferred national art forms. Important artists including Lin Fengmian 林風眠 (1900–91), Guan Liang 關良 (1900–86), Ding Yanyong 丁衍庸 (1902–78), Chen Qiucao 陳秋草 (1906–88), Yang Qiuren 楊秋人 (1907–83), Chen Zhifo 陳之佛 (1896–1962), and Ye Qianyu 葉淺予 (1907–95) all belong to this camp of those who started to explore a “modern style of Chinese painting” (zhongguohua de xiandai fengge 中國畫的現代風格) around the 1940s. More and more artists picked up the Chinese brush to create their purported “Chinese painting,” regardless of their earlier trainings in other materials and tools. It is true that, during the Republican period, Western-style painters found themselves doubly disadvantaged financially due to the expensive oil paint, canvases, and other tools needed for their work. During the wartime, many of them had to restrict their media to the more affordable watercolor and graphite. However, this financial precondition by no means presumes that artistic innovation was effaced during the war in the practices of the Chinese avant-garde artists who had previously been active in pre-war eastern and coastal areas. In the case of Pang Xunqin, his paintings of Guizhou Mountain People were painted with a mixture of media, using some indigenous “Chinese” tools, ink, and silk fabric together with some purported “Western” materials such as

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watercolor and European-produced drawing paper.\textsuperscript{47}

In Ni’s theory, what is crucial to the creation of new Chinese painting is one’s artistic creativity, mainly based on the ability to effectively capture his or her direct experiences toward reality in the artistic medium.\textsuperscript{48} To create new visual aesthetics, one could forge new techniques and mix materials, which together traverse the frame of binary opposition established between national and Western paintings. Ni’s theory also in some aspects corresponded with a statement from Wang Yachen 汪亞塵 (1893–1983) in the early 1930s about how to create “new Chinese painting.” Wang was originally trained in Seiyō ga 西洋画 (Western-style painting) in Japan in the late 1910s at Kawabata ga gakkō 川端画学校 (Kawabata Art School), as was Ni Yide. Later on, Wang transferred to the primer Tōkyō bijutsu gakkō 東京美術学校 (Tokyo Fine Arts School), after which he traveled briefly to France in 1928. After he returned to China, he began to concentrate on reforming guohua, insisting that despite the difference in materials applied, there is nothing essentially different between the so-called national and Western paintings. In addition, in Wang’s opinion, new Chinese painting should be created based on a thorough understanding of and reference to certain techniques of Western painting.\textsuperscript{49} Wang and Ni’s theories represent the belief of some modern Chinese artists—including Pang—who had been

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{47}] Pang Tao recalls that in some cases his father painted Guizhou Mountain People using drawing papers of the European brand, “Elephant” ("xiangpai tuhuazhi 象牌圖畫紙"), during the war.
\item[\textsuperscript{48}] Ni Yide, “Xin de guohua (New national painting)” (1932), \textit{Yishu mantan} (Rambling about Art) (Shanghai: Daguang shuju, 1935), 45-47.
\end{itemize}
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searching for effective approaches to making new Chinese painting by merging pictorial elements of East and West.

In my opinion, Pang’s wartime experimentation should not be considered merely “formalist,” as current Chinese art historiography suggests, in his shift of focus to nativist themes.50 In 1943, when these *Guizhou Mountain People* paintings were shown to the public for the first time, Pang clarified in his self-introduction for the show that “all these paintings are Chinese brush paintings.”51 His deliberately chosen term “Chinese brush painting” implies that his painting should not be equivalent to *guohua* (national painting) that had been institutionalized in the Chinese art educational system since the 1920s. As a reinvented tradition, *guohua* (national painting) emerged as a field in which the practitioners attempted to transform traditional Chinese ink painting into “modern art” while keeping using Chinese brush, ink and water as indigenous mediums. Without using the term *guohua*, Pang posed a question, which he answered immediately: “Why do I use a Chinese brush to paint? The reason is very simple—I use the techniques that I consider to be suitable for depicting specific themes.”52 That is, the formal qualities should be considered in conjunction with Pang’s shift of focus to the themes that he perceived to be more “native” or “local” during his wartime displacement in southwestern China. These paintings, to those who view them as “Chinese painting,” provide a case of modernist

51 Pang Xunqin, “Zipou (Self Analysis),” published in *Zhongyang ribao* (Central Daily), September 12, 1943.
52 Ibid.
experiment of Chinese painting that fundamentally “broke the conventions of traditional guohua in terms of coloration, thematic choice, and compositional modes” in the late period of Republican China. The formal and the thematic should not be considered as separate and even diametrically opposed aesthetic inquiries but rather as integral dimensions of a cohesive cultural-making experiment. This refashioning of “modern Chinese painting” was informed by anxiety about national identity in China’s first nation-state in the early twentieth century and, in a broad way, has proven important for resolving questions about China’s future.

Key to Pang’s nativist experiment is how he rendered his perceived “native Chinese” motifs based on his selection and incorporation of the plastic art traditions that he studied in Europe during the late 1920s and in China beginning in the 1930s. But it also has been proven that what is equally key to the art-historical position of Guizhou Mountain People is its thematic choices or the native motifs themselves. More recently, in the beginning of 2016, Pang’s Splendid Attire (Fig. 1.1), a painting of the Guizhou Mountain People series, was selected from the whole collection of the National Art Museum in the People’s Republic of China to be displayed in a grand government-sponsored exhibition held in the museum in celebration of the Spring Festival (Chinese Lunar New Year). The exhibition ran from January 26 to March 7, 2016. The title of the exhibition, “Great Unity of the Chinese Nation,” indicates that this painting served as an exemplary work instrumental to the propagation of the image of the modern

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53 Chang Shuhong, “Kangzhan sinianlai de meishu gongzuo (Works done about art during the four years of War of Resistance),” published on Wenhua xianfeng (Cultural Pioneer), 1942 (1): 57.
Chinese nation in which multiple ethnicities harmoniously united.\textsuperscript{54} Ironically, by tracing the history of this specific series of paintings back to its earliest public showings in the late period of Republican China, one finds that the same ethnic qualities of the themes of these paintings were negatively critiqued by the Nationalist government. After the aforementioned 1943 solo exhibition in which the series was shown to the public for the first time, on October 8, 1944, Pang held another solo exhibition in Chongqing. In this latter exhibition, there were more than a hundred paintings depicting the life of the people in the marginal regions in Guizhou.\textsuperscript{55}

Although the location of the exhibition—the Association of Sino-Indian Studies—was quite marginal in the wartime capital Chongqing, Zhang Daofan 張道蕃 (1897–1968)—the then Minister of the Propaganda Department of the Nationalist government—attended the show. However, the show seemed only to confirm Zhang’s suspicion that Pang was “an uncooperative person” to the Nationalist governmental ideology.\textsuperscript{56} The specific way in which the southwestern ethnic minorities were represented in Pang’s paintings seemed so problematic to Minister Zhang that he publicly criticized the paintings as “damaging the image of the nation.”\textsuperscript{57}

It is perhaps true that, as Tao Yongbai said, the artistry of \textit{Guizhou Mountain People} is not as “high quality” as Pang’s earlier works following the formal rules and aesthetic conventions of

\textsuperscript{54} “Zhonghua minzu datuanjie quanguo meishu zuopin zhan (Artworks Selected from the Whole Country for [Celebrating] the Great (Multi-Ethnic) Unity of the Chinese Nation),” an exhibition for celebrating the Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) held in the National Art Museum, Beijing, from January 26 – March 7, 2016.


\textsuperscript{56} Pang Xunqin, \textit{Jiushi zheyang zouguolaide}, 203.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
Western modernisms. However, the issues surrounding the artist’s specific “modern Chinese painting” style—from thematic choice to technical solutions—for visualizing the non-Han ethnic groups should be considered far beyond the framework of fine art. It is my contention that the complicated process in which this series of paintings was made, exhibited, viewed and interpreted in the late 1930s and 1940s must be contextualized by the cultural and socio-political circumstances of Republican China and examined within the intellectual and institutional histories of studying art history and national antiquity during the 1930s and 1940s. Given all the controversies surrounding national identity and cultural authenticity that *Guizhou Mountain People* has encountered since the 1940s, a contextualized examination of its visual elements will help illuminate the entangled relationship between art and politics in the process of building China’s first modern nation-state during the “wartime” in multiple senses – not only the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression but also the Civil War between the KMT and the CCP revolutionaries. Furthermore, as Pang himself suggested, in this series of paintings all the formal and thematic factors must ally to effectively serve the overall expressive purposes. As “one of the fundamental markers of visual modernity involves some definitive break with a prevailing representational and formal order,” my discussion of *Guizhou Mountain People* will attend to the artist’s “individual-driven content and stylistic innovation,” especially his cosmopolitan


59 Ralph Croizier, “Post-Impressionists in Pre-War Shanghai: The Juelanshe (Storm Society) and the Fate of Modernism in Republican China” (1993), John Clark (ed.) *Modernity in Asian Art* (Sydney, Australia: Wild Peony),
vision throughout the 1930s and 1940s of making modern Chinese painting in dialogue with global modernisms formally and intellectually, however problematic.

1.2. A May Fourth Approach to National Antiquity: Folk Art Motifs in Refashioning Modern Chinese Painting

Although, now viewed together as a whole series, these paintings were actually created at irregular intervals from 1940 through 1946 during Pang’s wartime displacement in Sichuan, first in the city of Chengdu (1940–42), and then in the wartime capital of Chongqing (1942–46). In early 1940, Pang resigned from the job that he had held since 1938, as a researcher at the Preparatory Office of the National Central Museum. Later in the same year, Pang initiated the project of painting *Guizhou Mountain People* shortly after he arrived in Chengdu, upon an invitation from Li Youxing 李有行 (1905–82) to teach at the Department of Applied Art in the Sichuan Provincial School of Art (SPSA). In 1942, Pang moved to Chongqing to teach graphic design in the Department of Art of the National Central University, while still continuing to teach at the SPSA. In Chongqing he worked on this series of paintings from 1942 to 1946. Importantly, a majority of this series of paintings are, in his own terms, “gongbi figure paintings” featuring China’s “ethnic minorities.” 60 According to current statistics, these paintings include *Huangguoshu Waterfall* (Fig. 1.2), *Drinking* (Fig.1.11), *Washing Clothes* (Fig. 1.12), *Carrying Water* (Fig. 1.13), *Dancing and Playing Lusheng (Reed-pipe wind instruments)* (Fig.1.14),

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135-154.

60 Pang Xunqin, *Jiushi zheyang zonguolaide*, 199.
Archery (Fig. 1.15), Selling Firewood (Fig. 1.16), Funeral (Fig. 1.17), Splendid Attire (Fig. 1.1), The Season When Oranges Turn Red (Fig. 1.18), Boating (Fig. 1.19), Cold Forest (Fig. 1.20), First Love (Fig. 1.21), Dance of the Blue Miao in Huaxi (Fig. 1.22), Taking a Break (Fig. 1.23), Harvest (Fig. 1.24), Fishing (Fig. 1.25), Selling Firewood (Fig. 1.26), Mother and Child (Fig. 1.27), A Miao Girl Pulling a Pig (Fig. 1.28), Picking Up Oranges (Fig. 1.29), Coming Back (Fig. 1.30), Visiting Relatives with An Umbrella (Fig. 1.31), Corn Harvest (Fig. 1.32), Paddy Harvest (Fig. 1.33), Catching Fish (Fig. 1.34), Spreading a Net (Fig. 1.3), Two Miao Ladies (Fig. 1.35).

In some paintings of the series, such as Splendid Attire (Fig.1.1), The Season When Oranges Turn Red (Fig. 1.18), Dance of the Blue Miao in Huaxi (Fig. 1.22), and Two Miao Ladies (Fig. 1.35), the meticulously rendered, intricate patterns on the clothes worn by the southwestern non-Han women become a dominant visual focus, which identifies Pang as a pioneer who singled out indigenous folk art motifs of the non-Han ethnic minorities in his experimental modern Chinese painting. The shapes and forms of the intricate embroidered patterns on the traditional clothing of the southwestern native women embodied, for Pang, the essence of traditional Chinese folk art. As one of the Chinese modern artists influenced by the iconoclastic May Fourth New Culture Movement, Pang, like his intellectual and artist friends in the 1920s and the early 1930s Shanghai, advocated an elevation of the status of folk art. Both the concepts of guohua (national painting) and minjian yishu (folk art) came into being in China in the 1920s, when the nation was
undergoing historiographical reform in which China’s antiquity underwent a revolutionary reassessment and reorganization. Under the influence of European and European-inflected Meiji Japanese scholarship, in 1922 Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) published Zhongguo lishi yanjiu fa 《中國歷史研究法》(The Research Method for Chinese History) in which he proposed studies of zhuanmen shi 專門史 (specialized histories) that would address “Chinese civilization” from different aspects such as zongjiao 宗教 (religion), wenxue 文學 (literature), meishu 美術 (art), and so on. Liang believed that, so that disparate groups in the nation could unite as a common citizenry, the practice of history should shed its longstanding preoccupation with the affairs of the administrative elite of society and began to address the common people’s accomplishments. This central tenet of the intellectual revolution was baptized by Liang as xin shixue 新史學 or “New Historiography.”

Liang’s idea had a huge impact on the new generation of modern Chinese historians who advocated that the national history of Chinese antiquity should be rewritten by consulting with not only the classical texts but also newly discovered materials. In Chinese academia, the trend of New Historiography was represented by the scholarship of many leading historians of the Early Republican period, including Wang Guoweи 王國維 (1877-1927), Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962), Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893-1980),

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and Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896-1950). Since the early 1920s, the reorganization of China’s guogu
國故 (national past or national antiquity) emerged in Chinese academia and swept across the
country. Meanwhile, shortly after the May Fourth New Culture Movement and its rediscovery of
minjian (folk) in the realm of literature, there emerged calls in the art world for the rediscovery
and revaluation of folk art. But it seems that there was not much interaction between the
practices of modern Chinese painting and the newly emerged historiography of folk art.

Yet, as soon as Pang returned to China from Europe in 1930, he began searching through
Chinese artistic “history” and “tradition” for the resources that might nurture his modern art
making. By 1934 Pang had publicly expressed a strong will to study his native art tradition, a
will that had been lingering in his mind even before his displacement to southwestern China
during the full-scale War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression.62 The nuanced change that
happened in Pang’s cultural identity from the late 1920s through the early 1930s after his return
to China could be vividly demonstrated by two self-portraits he made during this period. In 1930,
during a short stay at his ancestral estate in his hometown of Changshu in the Jiangsu Province of
the lower Yangzi region, Pang made a self-portrait in which he refashioned himself as a
traditional Chinese literati scholar wearing a Ming-Qing-style long robe. In this painting, he is
depicted as a scholar reading an old, bound book so attentively that he has no direct eye contact
with the viewer (Fig. 1.36). Delineated with fine-line drawing, this self-image is sharply different

62 Pang Xunqin, “Jieshao ziji (Self-Introduction),” originally published on Liangyou (Companion) in 1934; reproduced in Lun yishu, sheji, meiyu, 35.
from an earlier self-portrait in oil that he created during his stay in Paris in the late 1920s (Fig. 1.37). The expressionist brushwork applied in Pang’s Parisian self-portrait reveals an artist quite skilled in Post-Impressionism. It not only reflects Pang’s training in sketching, life drawing, and painting in oil, but also represents him as a Western-style avant-garde artist. In this Parisian self-portrait, Pang is smiling to the viewer while wearing a wide-brimmed black velvet hat and a suit in the French fashion. This hat was a gift from a French viscount during Pang’s stay in Paris.63 In the middle 1930s, soon after Pang’s arrival to Shanghai from Changshu, Xu Weinan began to promote Pang’s paintings drawn from European High Modernisms in Shanghai’s popular media. Xu published Pang’s paintings in Shenbao on June 30, July 1, August 27, October 3, November 17, respectively in 1930, introducing them as “works by painter Pang Xunqin who came back from France.” Importantly, Pang’s late 1920s Parisian self-portrait, rather than his 1930 Changshu self-portrait, was chosen and sent by Xu Weinan to an exhibition of paintings organized by the Shanghai municipal government.64 In the news about this exhibition that Xu published in Shenbao, again, he promoted Pang as “a newly returned Chinese artist from France.”65 Pang’s 1930 self-portrait, in contrast, was an image of self-refashioning that epitomizes the artist’s anxiety of cultural identity at the time. Indeed, during the period of his short stay in Changshu, Pang was reading histories and criticisms of traditional Chinese calligraphy and painting (書畫, shuhua), composed by dynastic literati connoisseurs in imperial

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63 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolaide, 95.
64 Ibid.
65 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolaide, 95.
China, such as *Tuhua jianwen zhi* (Records of Paintings Seen and Heard Of) by the Northern Song scholar-official Guo Ruoxu. Nevertheless, the literati art tradition was not the native art tradition that Pang desired to revitalize in order to rejuvenate modern Chinese painting.

To the artists living in the metropolis of Shanghai during the early 1930s, there were multiple concepts available regarding the possibilities for the future development of modern Chinese art. Pang lived in Shanghai (1931–36) and Beijing (1937) before his wartime displacement from the eastern, coastal areas of China to the southwestern interior. It is therefore quite possible that by the early 1930s, while communicating with a group of nationalist cultural critics, Pang had already begun to consider the empirical, “scientific” methods of fieldwork and ethnography in folkloric studies and their potential roles in the modern formation of Chinese painting. 1923 saw the founding of the Beijing University Folk Custom Investigation Society (Beijing Daxue fengsu diaocha hui), which may be best known for one of the first full-fledged examples of Chinese ethnographic fieldwork, the study of the Mount Miaofeng pilgrimage conducted by Gu Jiegang in 1925. The sample list of questions the Folk Custom Investigation Society prepared to guide regional surveys shows how the society began to incorporate the collection and study of material culture into the larger project of ethnography, attending to clothing, architecture, toys, and the like as distinctive and meaningful manifestations of folk

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culture. Although the work initiated within the society was preliminary in this regard, the eventual establishment of a folklore museum was one of their stated long-term goals. Discussions of folk songs and other types of folk literature appeared in many regional and national publications, and some other universities, most notably Zhongshan University in Guangzhou, began to develop their own ethnographic research programs.

In 1927, pioneering French-trained modernists including Lin Fengmian criticized the art world for not engaging in the cultural revolution launched by the intellectuals of the May Fourth generation who advocated for the significance of “Science” and “Democracy” in the New Culture Movement. By this time, the discussion of “folk arts and cultures” had already figured in the debates on the social role of art and artists that were waged in the pages of the Chinese press. The various artifacts made by people other than the elite ruling class were incorporated by pro-democracy Enlightenment intellectuals into their theoretical formulations about modern art. They argued for drawing from folk arts and cultures to endow modern art with Chinese characteristics, and for using empirical, “scientific” methods of fieldwork and ethnography drawn from Western-imported modern disciplines such as anthropology and sociology.

Pang’s way of conceptualizing China’s native art tradition were likely informed by some writers active then in Shanghai, including the nationalist cultural critics Fu Yanchang 傅彥長 (1891-1961) and Zhu Yingpeng 朱應鵬 (1895-?), who were introduced to him by Xu Weinan

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67 Lin Fengmian, “Zhi quanguo yishujie shu (Letter to the art world of the country)” (1927), reproduced in Zhongguo huihua xinlun (Hong Kong: Furang shufang, 1974), 44.
in the early 1930s. Since the early 1920s, these writers and critics active in Shanghai had been enthusiastically discussing how to study national cultures and arts by incorporating Western methods and how to draw inspiration from folk art to nationalize modern art in China. They had published a series of essays of literary and art criticism in which they made collective effort to build a nationalist cultural theory for the modern construction of a Chinese national aesthetic and culture. In the late 1920s, Fu introduced Gu Jiegang’s 1925 fieldwork via public media, in which he assigned epochal significance to Gu’s “fieldwork investigating [the custom of] the folk,” which, to May Fourth Enlightenment intellectuals like him, signaled an epistemological shift of modern culture-making. He considered Gu’s work to be groundbreaking empirical research that made an effort to elevate the status of “the folk” who had been “looked down upon for so long by the disciples of the ancient sages [such as the Confucian scholars]” in the field of study of “our [Chinese] nation’s art and culture.” It was easy for Pang to get access to these ideas of his friends, since the articles that the three critics published were collected in a single volume in Shanghai in 1927. In their collective attempts to elevate and bring attention to “folk arts and cultures,” these Shanghai-based critics assigned meaning and value to the objects and peoples through a nationalistic framework. No matter whether these Shanghai-based cultural critics were

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68 Pang Xunqin communicated with Xu Weinan, Fu Yanchang, and Zhang Ruogu in the early 1930s. According to a piece of news published on Shenbao on September 16, 1932, Fu Yanchang, Xu Weinan and Zhang Ruogu went to the opening ceremony of Pang Xunqin’s solo exhibition that day. They not only viewed the show but also “got Pang’s paintings” and “the catalogues of his paintings” as gifts.

69 Fu Yanchang, “Dang Zhonghua minzu you wenhua de shihou (The time when the Chinese nation has its art and culture),” in Fu Yanchang, Zhu Yingpeng, and Zhang Ruogu, Yishu sanjia yan (Words about Arts from Three Critics)(Shanghai: Young Companion Company, 1927), 3-6.
closely affiliated to the Nationalist government or not, their intellectual voices spread through public media at the time and might have served as a national-sponsored interpretation of the official ideology of nationalism during the 1920s and 1930s.

The nationalist complex had filtered through the intellectual debates on art and culture as one of the most crucial impetuses of Chinese modernization. The quests for national salvation, independence and national identity formation constitute not only a key clue to the political and cultural developments of twentieth-century China, but also a collective belief shared by the Chinese intellectuals and revolutionary youth. In the realm of political reformation, since the period of the 1911 Xinhai Revolution, “anti-imperialist national salvation” had been the mainstream ideology that could effectively mobilize the masses. After the Northern Expedition War (1926–28) launched by the KMT in the cause of National Revolution, when the country was largely unified, the nationalist complex was not evaporating in Republican China as a party-state under the regime of the increasingly authoritarian Nationalist government controlled by the KMT. Partially to suppress the Communist revolutionary idea that centralized class struggle, the Nationalist government tended to strengthen national consciousness through deliberate construction of national aesthetics, beginning in the early 1930s. The words of a supporter of the KMT’s Three People’s Principles (sanmin zhuyi: “minzu, minquan, minsheng”) reveal how the KMT’s cultural policies emphasized the building of the collective identity of the Chinese minzu (nation) through literature and art:
The artists of today must first know clearly the national character, then grasp the spirit of the age, before they proceed to create works of art which are an expression of these things. In other words, what we need today is the peaceful and great love of the *sanmin zhuyi* 三民主義 (Three People’s Principles). We want to read poetry and prose that are stimulating and heroic... We want to appreciate paintings that are solemn, holy and pure. At the same time, we hope the artists would focus their artistic activities on arousing our national consciousness and national spirit.  

Despite the high moral tone of its appeal to patriotism, the KMT philosophy of art was somewhat vague. What are “national character,” “national consciousness,” and “national spirit,” exactly? And, likewise, what is “the spirit of the age?” In 1936, in an essay on “The Ways of Innovating National Painting”(*guohua chuangxin yingqu de tujing* 國畫創新應取的途徑) an author commented that, “Art is the product of the time and a reflection of the nation. Therefore, [among] the various artworks, [only those] rich in the national characteristics of the time would be considered valuable. Even though a Chinese [artist] could study the paintings of other nations using foreign materials and methods, the connotations of [his or her painting] should be full of Chinese national essence.” Then, the question remains: how can artwork be created as “the product of the time” and “the reflection of the nation?” What are the “national characteristics” conveyed by certain paintings that could define them as “Chinese?”

As for the controversy on how to create *xin guohua* 新國畫 (new national painting), the

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71 Wang Xianzhao, “Guohua chuangxin yingqu de tujing (The way to renovate guohua),” *Zhongguo meishuhui jikan* (Chinese Art Association Quarterly), 1936, Vol. 3.
topic debated so much in the art world, Zhu Yingpeng proposed that new Chinese art should not only appeal to the aesthetic taste of the class of literati, but also to the themes made or welcomed by the masses. Meanwhile, incorporating Western techniques like modeling and coloration were strongly encouraged. As for the useful sources of a national art tradition for rejuvenating modern Chinese painting, Fu Yanchang proposed that artists should include as their subjects “the things that the masses had been familiar with [and welcome],” such as the images of “masks, God of Wealth, and Bodhisattva” common in folk opera and popular religions. Zhu Yingpeng, who himself was also an oil painter, proposed that they should consider patterns on folk handicrafts including “old-style Chinese embroidery” as “the most solemn and graceful design.”

In the early 1930s, Pang had expressed a similar idea, proposing to incorporate artisanal art made by anonymous common people into a new system of China’s national art tradition. An essay entitled “On Literati Painting” that Pang composed and published in 1933 elaborates his attempt to recalibrate the positions of ya 雅 (elegance) and su 俗 (vulgarity) —a pair of aesthetic tastes that were traditionally opposed—in response to a central work of modern Chinese art writing by Chen Hengke 陳衡恪 (Chen Hengque or Chen Shizeng 陳師曾, 1876–1923). Chen compiled his Studies of Chinese Literati Painting (Zhongguo wenrenhua zhi

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72 Zhu Yingpeng, Guohua ABC (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1999), 129. This edition is a photocopied version of the first edition of this book published in 1928 by Shanghai shijie shuju.
73 Fu Yanchang, “Ji Zhu Yingpeng de xin (Letter to Zhu Yingpeng),” Yishu sanjiayan, 64-66.
74 Zhu Yingpeng, “Yishu de xinshang,” Yishu sanjiayan, 128-130.
yanjiu) in 1922. It includes two texts in dialogue with each other—Chen’s own essay “The Value of Literati Painting” (Wenrenhua zhi jiazhi 文人畫之價值) and Ōmura Seigai 大村西崖 (1868-1927)’s “The Revival of Literati Painting” (Bunjinga no Fukkō 文人画の復興), translated into Chinese by Chen. Ōmura’s text represents the Japanese neo-traditionalist trend that began in the Taishō period (1912–26) of reviving literati painting in Japan. Interest in literati painting at that time contributed to the experiments of shin-nanga 新南画 or shin-bunjinga 新文人画 (Japanese neo-literati painting) in the circles of both Japanese Western-style painters and Japanese-style painters. Both groups of painters became critical of the overt “Westernized” way of synthesizing Japanese painting with Western painting that Fenollosa had advocated for Meiji Japan in his 1882 lecture “The True Theories of Art.” Dismissing bunjinga (Japanese literati painting) for what he perceived as its habitual rehashing of old models and its lack of formal harmony, Fenollosa meant to promote the creation of illusionistic effects drawing from European realistic paradigm while using traditional media in modern Japan. Since the mid-1910s through the early 1930s, in contrast, literati painting regained respect and appreciation as the “essence of Oriental painting” (tōyō no shinzui) in Japan. In a comparative analysis of the writings by Ōmura and Chen, the art historian Aida Wong traces the linguistic and epistemological shifts that occurred in the process of cross-cultural contact between wenrenhua 文人畫 (Chinese literati painting) in China and bunjinga in Japan, in which largely separate
practices were discussed together as an embodiment of the “Oriental modern.” In Ōmura’s writing, several dichotomies were constructed between bunjinga and European realist painting: subjectivism and objectivism, spirit resonance and verisimilitude, and Oriental and Western painting. Inspired by Ōmura’s writing, Chen’s writing established parallels between Oriental painting and Post-Impressionism, and between spirit resonance and individualism. Chen devised four criteria for literati painting. These four criteria differ somewhat between the vernacular and the classical versions of “The Value of Literati Painting.” In the vernacular Chinese (earlier) version, the four criteria are renpin 人品 (moral character), xuewen 學問 (learning), cai 才 (capabilities), and qing 情 (feelings). In the classical Chinese (later) version, they are renpin, xuewen, caiqing 才情 (capabilities of expressing feelings), and sixiang 思想 (thought). Chen defines wenrenhua as paintings with the xingzi 性質 (characters) and quwei 趣味 (taste) of the wenren 文人 (literati), who have gexing youmei 性質優美 (graceful personalities) and ganxiang gaoshang 感想高尚 (noble feelings-thoughts). The untrammeled nature of literati painting that had detached itself from worldly society, according to Chen, was given birth by the literati’s pinge 品格 (moral character), which was “vastly nobler than the populace’s.” In traditional China, the term wenren (literati) referred specifically to a group of elites who were scholar-officials, a distinct social class made up of the gentry and the educated.

77 Aida Wong, *Parting the Mists*, 63.
78 Ibid., 66.
who mostly aspired to join the civil service bureaucracy. Moral character is a standard ideal of the literati or, more accurately, Confucianism.

Pang opened his 1933 essay “On Literati Painting” by citing Chen Hengke’s definition of wenrenhua (literati painting), including its origin and its components. Pang was born and raised in a late Qing scholar-official family in Changshu, Jiangsu, in the lower Yangzi region, therefore, it was not hard for him to accept that the tradition of “literati painting is indeed valuable.” He agreed with Chen that the central tenets of literati painting lie in its emphasis on “renpin (moral character), xuewen (learning), caiqing (capabilities-feelings), and sixiang (thought).” Nevertheless, Pang maintained that the specific concerns of the “learning and thought” of the modern intellectuals of his own age were different from that of the literati scholars before; in his opinion, “the so-called ‘learning’ should include all common sense, [and] the so-called ‘thought’ could not be separated from social reality and personal circumstances. Therefore, the problems that the literati of our age have to tackle are very different from that of the literati in previous and later ages.” What were the problems of “our age?” As a French-trained modernist of the May Fourth generation, Pang criticized the fact that “for more than a thousand years the [practitioners of] literati painting had always been singing a song with ‘detached and idyllic’ tones.” Pang proposed that, to tackle this issue, “at least [we should] remove literati painting from the lifeless palace, to return it back to the people and society.”

break down the hierarchical dichotomy of value between “elegance” and “vulgarity” that had
been established by the traditional literati aesthetic system, by comparing the philosophical
characteristics of Chinese and Western art in terms of the meaningfulness of coloration.

In fact, Chen and Pang shared the belief that literati painting should be transformed into a
popularized art for people and society. For example, the unbound album of leaves *Customs of
Beijing* 北京風俗圖 (1914–1915) by Chen himself illustrates an intellectual impetus to mediate
the discursive dichotomy of aesthetic tastes and political positions between the high and mass
culture. This album of paintings reveals the specific way in which Chen combined literati art
techniques of ink and brush with the compositional mode of calligraphy and painting to negotiate
his own social position as an elite artist in relation to the common people he observed. Chen also
believed that literati of the new age should experiment to rejuvenate modern Chinese painting by
expanding their scope of inspiration beyond the tradition of literati painting. Chen made visual
commentary on public affairs by using ink wash sketches and mineral pigment to vividly depict
street scenes of lower-class Beijing people, images that also had the potential to cater to a wider
audience. Meanwhile, Chen suggested to the artist Qi Baishi 齊白石 (1864–1957), who was
originally a carpenter from the southern countryside, that he keep his own characteristic “folk
style” while drawing on the expressive brushworks of some individualist literati paintings in the
Ming and Qing dynasties—especially those by Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521–93) and Zhu Da 朱耷 (ca.
1625–1705). To reinforce the folk flavor of his painting, it is likely that Qi s drew from the
Shanghai school painter Wu Changshuo 吳昌碩 (1844–1927), whose paintings characteristically adopted bright colors and bold lines, incorporating an intensely Chinese taste for ancient epigraphy, that is, the jinshiqi 金石氣 (literally “the flavor of the ancient bronze vessels and steles”).

Pang also held the idea that relying on the traditional folk aesthetics of color would expand the modern Chinese artists’ perceptions of China’s native art tradition. But he chose to support his argument by negotiating between Western and Chinese aesthetics based on his Parisian training in European music and painting. To elaborate on the meaningfulness of color in painting, he analogized color to music because both of them have “gamme (range), tonalite (tone), and harmonie (harmony).” Accordingly, “monochrome painting is like a solo in music, whereas painting with complex colors is like a symphony.” Pang argued that compared to the tradition of European painting, “Chinese [literati] painting does not have complex colors, just like there is no large-scale ensemble in China.” According to him, the traditional system of aesthetic taste in China had long privileged the superior value of literati painting applied in ink and water, which “exposes the centrality of the spirit of individualism in Chinese art.”

To break down the long-established social hierarchy epitomized by the traditional elite art and aesthetic institution, he maintained that “a painting applied in complex colors” other than ink “is not necessarily vulgar,” while “a painting in ink and water would also look vulgar if the ink is

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not applied in a proper way.” By quoting the phrase “applying color properly by conforming to the form” from the early Chinese painting theory composed by Xie He 謝赫 (479–502) in Liufa 六法 (Six Laws), a set of rules for painting developed in the figurative Buddhist painting practices during the Southern Dynasty and predating the theories of “literati painting,” Pang proposed that “applying color is also a method of [Chinese] painting.” Then he asked, “[if] coloration can convey the individual emotions most effectively, why should [we as] painters renounce this tool?”81 Thus, he attempted to redefine the cultural meaningfulness of the Chinese native art tradition by rediscovering the history of Chinese color aesthetic beyond the tradition of literati painting.82

Besides the aspect of coloration, the shapes and forms of traditional patterns on the handicrafts strongly attracted Pang in his quest for an alternative Chinese art tradition. As the Chinese intellectuals reinvented handicrafts made by common people as an integrated part of China’s traditional folk art, they defined the wenyang 紋樣 (pattern) on clothing traditionally embroidered by folk women as a specific category of folk art. It was considered to have exceptional artistic value not only to the study of Chinese decorative/folk art but also to the modern renaissance of Chinese art. Besides the aforementioned 1920s article by Zhu Yingpeng on the embroidered patterns as objects of folk art, of note is an article published in 1934 by Lei Guiyuan 雷圭元 (1906–88), who would become Pang’s colleague in 1940 at the Department of

81 Ibid., 97-98.
82 Pang Xunqin, “Jieshao ziji (Self-Introduction),” published on Liangyou (Companion) in 1934; reproduced in Pang Xunqin, Lun Yishu, Sheji, Meiyu, 35.
Applied Art in the Sichuan Provincial School of Art in wartime Chengdu. This article provided a historical narrative of “the decline of Chinese decorative art and its current way out.” In this article, Lei considered “decoration” to be a kind of art “beloved by the people,” a primordial kind of “social” art originating in “the collective needs of the people, rather than [merely] any individual’s taste.”

The art historian Liu Ruikuan observes:

> before the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression[that is the Second Sino-Japanese War], the debates regarding national art tended to be polemical. One camp proposed to revive the glorious art of the Tang and Song dynasties; the other camp was inclined to embrace the modernizing aesthetics of popularization. In some extreme cases of the latter, such as the works by the members of the Chinese Association of Leftist Writers and Artists established in the 1930s in Shanghai, the proposal of popularizing art was combined with Communist ideology to emphasize the significance of the proletarian class. The former’s appeal to the aesthetic characteristics of traditional literati painting, which emphasized the autonomy of art and its role in expressing individual emotions, was comparatively individualist. Opposing each other, the debate between the two polemical trends was a debate on the cultural significance between Elegance and Vulgarity.

Concurrent with these two polemical proposals, the Leftists and liberal intellectuals and artists in the first half of the 1930s increasingly reached a consensus that traditional folk arts and cultures should be rediscovered and studied seriously as an important source of the national art tradition.

Mainly constituted by anonymous arts and handcrafts made by traditional artisan

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techniques, the objects labeled as “folk art” were celebrated as a kind of “art of the people” that could contribute to the rejuvenation of modern Chinese art among modern Chinese cultural elites. However, it was only after the War of Resistance Against Japan officially began (in 1937) that a majority of the Chinese political and cultural elite got access to an expanded body of folk arts and cultures— including those created by non-Han multiethnic people. This access occurred by way of their wartime displacement in China’s multicultural northern and southern interiors beyond the eastern urban areas during the late 1930s through 1940s. In 1940, Li Puyuan 李樸園 (1901–56), who had collaborated with the Chinese folklorist Zhong Jingwen 鐘敬文 (1903–2002) in planning the first major exhibition of folk art in Hangzhou in 1936 before the war, appealed again to the wartime art world that “[we should] research and sort the folk art, in order to leave a position for it to occupy in the current [categories of] art.”

In the same year, Pang began to paint Guizhou Mountain People shortly after his expedition to the southwestern multiethnic inner frontier from late 1939 to early 1940. Pang’s wartime paintings of Guizhou Mountain People epitomize an experimental modern Chinese painting project in which the fields of guohua and minjian yishu intertwine with and transform each other. Meanwhile, the series of paintings also epitomizes a modernist interest in expanding the sense of art history to the objects of ethnic art made by the folk of China’s frontier.

85 Li Puyuan, “Xiegei xianjieduan de yishujiamen (To artists at this stage),” Kangjian tongsu huakan (Popular Pictorial of War of Resistance and Construction,” 1940, Issue 2. Quoted from Huang Zongxian, Da Youhuan shidai de jueza – kangzhan shiqi dahoufang meishu yanjiu (Choices Made in An Age of Hardship: Studies on Art in the Rear Front during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression) (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2000), 162.
1.3. Nativism or Primitivism?: Han-Chinese Nationalism and Ethnographic Concerns in Guizhou Mountain People

Early Republican Chinese intellectual artists had incorporated the “folk” into the subject matter of their guohua paintings. In Chen Hengke’s album of leaves Customs of Beijing, the scholar-painter made ink wash impromptu sketches depicting the street scenes, everyday life, and costumes of the urbanites of lower social status and diverse professions in Beijing. In a satirical leaf entitled “The Walls Have Ears (牆有耳)” (Fig. 1.38) in the album, for example, the scholar-artist offered a visual commentary on public affairs in the nascent years of the Republic of China. Different from the urban citizens represented in Customs of Beijing, however, the Guizhou mountain people who were the main subject matter of Pang’s paintings during the 1940s constitute a different group of “the folk” of much lower social status inhabiting the highlands of Guizhou province in the southwestern interior of China.

The War of Resistance Against Japan radically recast Chinese cultural reference points. Due to the wartime displacement, many artists originally active in the urban areas of China’s east coastal cities such as Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Beijing moved in exodus to the southwestern hinterland, relocated to areas of the southwestern or/and northwestern inner frontiers. During the early 1940s, traveling in the southwestern and northwestern frontier and making pencil or ink

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(and color) sketches along the wartime displacement became a common practice of many Han Chinese artists. Artists Zhao Wangyun 趙望雲 (Fig. 1.39), Ye Qianyu (Fig. 1.40), Lin Fengmian (Fig. 1.41- Fig.1.42), and Guan Shanyue 關山月 (1912–2000) (Fig. 1.43- Fig. 1.44) all made paintings featuring the Miao people during the late 1930s and 1940s. An ethnic dimension entered the wartime refashioning of modern Chinese painting. One reason for the radical shift in subject matter among such a diverse range of artists was their wartime proximity to the ethnic minorities of the mountainous interior—Tibetan, Miao, Qiang, and Yi groups—unlike previously, at the eastern coast, which was mostly occupied by Han Chinese. As discussed above, many of those who were not trained in traditional literati painting techniques had shifted their focus during the war to the techniques and aesthetics that they perceived to be native Chinese. After the war began, more and more Chinese elite artists trained in Euro-American pictorial idioms became urgently worried about the national identity or Chinese-ness of their painting. Therefore, many of them preferred to use a Chinese brush and consciously make experimental Chinese paintings, a comparatively new area for them. Some key questions for all these artists are: how should they conceptualize the motif of the folk in their modern Chinese paintings? Who are these people? How are they painted? Fundamentally, what should the viewer look at?

Pang’s Guizhou Mountain People signals a breakthrough in modern Chinese art, in which the southwestern multiethnic people entered Han Chinese individual elite artists’ experiments in
an unprecedentedly large number. The breakthrough was one of refashioning modern Chinese painting as a native, Chinese motif of the folk in China’s first modern nation-state. Pang was among the very first Han Chinese artists who not only traveled in the multicultural southwestern inner frontier in the Republican China period, but who also painted the people and places there.\(^{87}\) Pang initiated this project in 1940 by creating twenty paintings on silk or paper, depicting, in his own words, the “lives, loves, marriages, street life, wood carrying, illnesses, and deaths of the Guizhou mountain people.”\(^{88}\) Nevertheless, some of these paintings seem to have been executed with a strong ethnographic interest in depicting the exotic costumes and artifacts or the distinctive festive and ritual events of the southwestern folk people — rather than primarily in realistically representing the everyday life of the people in the wartime southwestern frontier.

As Pang recalled, in the original series “every image has a simple explanation.”\(^ {89}\) Unfortunately, these paired textual explanations were all lost during the Cultural Revolution, so it is impossible for us to ascertain the specific content of the texts. Nevertheless, the format of text-image composite that Pang used recalls the court painting idiom of the Zhigongtu 職貢圖 or “Illustrations of Official Tribute.” The Zhigongtu is a specific genre of illustrations depicting the images of tribute missions to imperial China. In 1413, the Ming central government established a Provincial Administration Commission in the Prefecture of Guizhou, making

\(^{87}\) According to current statistics, during the Republican period Pang Xunqin and Zhao Wangyun are the first two Han Chinese artists who entered the Miao region in Guizhou in the late 1930s.

\(^{88}\) Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheya zongwulaide, 198.

\(^{89}\) Ibid.
Guizhou one of the thirteen provinces of the Empire. It soon went on to phase out the hereditary native chieftain system that had been in practice since the Yuan dynasty, replacing tribal headmen with administrative officials appointed by the central government. During the reigns of the Yongzheng (r. 1724-1736) and Qianlong emperors (r. 1736-1795), the Qing court was especially keen on implementing the policy of bureaucratizing native officials. With enlisted soldiers and recruited officers, it adopted a dual strategy of suppressing and pacifying. Many official documents, gazetteers, biographies, and maps were thus produced, which were to be used as administrative aids and consulted for information on local customs. In the eighteenth century, different versions of the *Huangqing Zhigongtu* 皇清職貢圖 (Illustrations of *Official Tribute to the Qing Empire*) were produced based on a *Zhigongtu* composed in 1750 by Xie Sui 謝遂, the court painter under Emperor Qianlong. (Fig. 1.45 - Fig. 1.46) Xie consulted the drawings and texts from the surveys of all ethnic minority groups that had been conducted by provincial governors on imperial order of the Qianlong emperor. In the four-volume *Zhigongtu* by Xie Sui in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei, there are seventy-eight sets of illustrations in the fourth volume depicting ethnic men and women from the frontier provinces of Guizhou and Yunnan (located in southwestern China near the Vietnamese border). (Fig. 1.45) Each set of illustrations in these volumes is accompanied by an introduction in both Manchurian

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and Han Chinese languages to the history, costumes, and customs of the corresponding tribe. Court painters used a text-image composite format to satisfy the imperial demand for typing and categorizing frontier peoples in an ethnographic paradigm. The indigenous men and women from Guizhou, portrayed in the *Huangqing Zhigongtu*, are seen holding local products or demonstrating special skills, these “life scenes” constituting a miniaturized and ethnographic representation of the ethnic minority peoples in the frontier.\(^9\) In the entry for the people of *Hua-Miao* (floral Miao), for example, a woman is shown wearing a blue, wide-sleeved coat decorated with twelve small square patterns; the sleeves are decorated with similar patterns. While the small square patterns are somewhat unclear, the textual introduction indicates that they were bright and made with batik fabric. Meanwhile, even though the text does not offer a description of the square pattern, it is nevertheless featured in the illustration.\(^9\) Interplaying with and complementing each other, the image and the text in the illustrations of *Official Tribute to the Qing Empire* were intended to produce systemic knowledge of the *yiguan* 衣冠 / *fuzhi* 服制 (institutionalized dress code), *xing* 性 (collective personality), and *xi* 習 (costume) of the frontier peoples.\(^9\) The sources that the illustrations (*tu 圖*) and the texts (*shuo 說*) of the *Zhigongtu* were built upon were varied; some are imaginative conjunctures and others are direct

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92 Ibid. 265.

records of the local costumes and exotic customs of the ethnic minorities inhabiting primarily the marginal regions of the Qing Empire.

In general, the southwestern and northwestern inner frontiers—Guizhou, Sichuan, Yunnan, Qinghai, Gansu, and Xinjiang were (and still are) largely populated by non-Han peoples, including Miao, Yi, Tibetans, Uighurs, Hui, Qiang and so on, traditionally described in mainstream Chinese texts as “barbarians” before the twentieth century in imperial China. Beyond the court, some literati also paid attention to the exotic, multiethnic cultures of the southwestern inner frontier. They recorded the physiognomy, language, customs, beliefs, and life styles of the multiethnic people in their books. For example, the Qing writer Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727–1814) compiled various Miao customs in detail in his book Yanpu Zaji 檐曝杂记 (Miscellany Recorded Under the Eaves).94 Around the same period, local, professional painters in the southwestern regions were making albums of paintings—normally entitled Qianmiao tuce 黔苗圖冊 (Album of Miao in Guizhou) or Miaoman tuce 苗蠻圖冊 (Album of Miao Barbarians) —drawing on the ethnographic paradigm of the court illustrations of Official Tribute. Pang must have known of the existence of these Miao albums and may have seen some versions of them while working as a research fellow at the Academia Sinica in Kunming.95 As indicated by a IHP documents signed by Fu Sinian about the policy of collecting the Miao albums from the

95 At least two copies of Miaoman tuce were housed at the Academia Sinica and later brought along with the relocation of the Academia Sinica in Taiwan in 1949.
local people that is currently collected in the Fu Sinian Achieve at the Academia Sinica in Taipei, the IHP scholars had been collecting such local albums during the middle 1930s. Rui Yifu, the anthropologist with whom Pang conducted his field work in the Miao regions, must have been quite familiar with the Miao albums and their various copies while working at the Academia Sinica in Kunming during the war years, and later—after the Academia Sinica moved to Taiwan—he would become the chief editor responsible for producing photographic copies of two Miao albums that are to this day housed at the Fu Sinian Library affiliated with the Academia Sinica (Fig. 1.47). Nevertheless, compared to the unflattering ethnographic images found in the Miao albums or in the *Official Tribute to the Qing Empire*, Pang’s portrayal of the Miao is much more attractive and sympathetic. Pang’s painstaking efforts to precisely record the Miao’s native costume and embroidery patterns, in an attempt to document their “originality,” testifies to his respect and admiration for the indigenous creativity and artistry of the southwestern ethnic people.96

Importantly, Pang titled this series of paintings *Guizhou Mountain People* in contrast to the authors of the albums of the Qing court paintings, who named the southwestern ethnicities as *man* or “barbarians.” The terms *shanmin* 山民 and *shanren* 山人 (mountain people) had traditionally been adopted by certain literati or scholarOfficials who, following the Confucian ethical norm, chose to become “remnant” recluses during certain political upheavals or after

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certain dynastic transformations, as a gesture of refusing to serve the new court in the new dynasty. For instance, after the Song dynasty was conquered by the Mongols, a Song literati scholar whose family name was Zhen 真 adopted shanmin as his penname and compiled his poems into an anthology entitled Zhen Shanmin Shichao 真山民詩鈔 (Record of the Poems by “Zhen Mountain People”). Zhu Da, a famous individualist “remnant” painter of the early Qing period, named himself Bada Shanren 八大山人 and became a Buddhist monk in 1648. He did so to escape the fate assigned to him as a descendant of the Ming imperial line after the collapse of the Ming dynasty. In contrast, the “mountain people” used in the title of Pang’s Guizhou Mountain People series refers to the multiethnic peripheral nationals living in the mountainous areas of the southwestern interior of China. During the Republican period, these multiethnic people started to be transformed from “barbarians” on the margin of the ancient empire to “ethnic minorities” within the nascent nation by the nationalist political, academic, and institutional apparatuses of the modern Chinese state. The single and the plural form of “people(s)” (min 民) are spelled the same in the Han Chinese spelling system, so, from this title those audiences who were lack of professional ethnographic knowledge could not tell the subject of the painting series was an ethnically singular “people” or various “peoples.”

Different from the other artists who were involved in the wartime trend of travel-sketching the native people and places of the southern inner frontier, Pang had a

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complicated and ambiguous cognitive relationship to the southwestern ethnic peoples. Pang had received wide exposure to the Miao albums and ethnographic fieldwork reports collected and conducted by scholars since 1938 when he began to work as a researcher at the Preparatory Office for the National Central Museum. In the span of just three months of fieldwork, from November 1939 through February of 1940, Pang and his research partner, the ethnologist Rui Yifu, visited over eighty ethnic tribes in the province. Together, they successfully gathered over four hundred costumes, textiles, embroideries, and other decorative arts for further study and display at the Central Museum and the Academia Sinica. Despite the ethnically ambiguous title chosen for the series, Pang learned from his government-sponsored ethnographic fieldwork that the mountain people featured in his paintings encompassed multiple southwestern ethnic groups: the floral Miao, the blue Miao, the white Miao, and the Zhongjia. Actually, throughout the Republican period, including the late 1930s and 1940s, there was still no consensus about what the “Miao” was: did it refer in general to the southwestern “ethnic minorities” as a whole as it did in the Qing period, or did it reference a specific ethnic group among them based on “scientific” anthropological and ethnological identification? While Republican anthropologists were still working hard in anthropological and ethnographic fieldworks and the

98 For more information see Michael Sullivan’s Art and Artists of Twentieth-century China (Berkley: University of California Press, 1966), 95.

99 The Zhongjia were identified as an ethnic group disparate from other southwestern ethnic groups in the Republican period; whereas this ethnic group has been identified as the Buyi ethnicity in the PRC’s minzu shibie [ethnic classification] system established since the 1950s.

analysis of historical texts to determine the “Chinese” status of the peripheral people, Pang’s paintings of Guizhou mountain villagers reflect his belief that the southwestern ethnic minorities, without a doubt, were citizens of the Chinese nation. In “Self-Analysis,” the introduction Pang wrote for his 1943 solo exhibition, Pang called the southwestern non-Han ethnic people not “primitive ethnicities” but rather his “Guizhou compatriots.” That is to say, Pang was consciously perceiving the non-Han ethnic peoples residing in these peripheral regions as the citizens of the modern Chinese (Zhonghua 中華 or Chunhua) nation. It was only because of such logic, rather than the ancient logic that considered these people as basically “barbarians” and thus “un-human,” that Pang could consider their handcrafts to be an alternative source of the folk art tradition.

By triangulating the government-sponsored archaeologists’ Bronze Age excavation in Anyang, anthropologists’ surveys of the racial and linguistic histories of the southwestern minority peoples in the Yunnan and Sichuan frontier, and the analysis by Republican-era artist Zhang Daqian 張大千 (1899–1983) of medieval mural techniques from northwestern Buddhist monuments along the Silk Road, Sarah Fraser pointed out that:

If the dig at Anyang were an example of a post-Antiquarian search for ancient China situated in a long, historical continuum, Zhang Daqian’s 1941–43 reproductions of the Dunhuang wall painting and the 1934–37 physical anthropology of Ling Chunsheng (1902–1981) in Yunnan, in addition to the ethnographic survey of Aba, Sichuan by Li

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102 Pang Xunqin, “Zipou (Self Analysis),” published in Zhongyang ribao (Central Daily), September 12, 1943.
Guangming in 1929 and 1941, fit loosely into a primitive paradigm in which cultural authority and agency are located with the modern visitor. The traveler assigns meaning and value to the objects and peoples under study through an interpretative, often nationalistic framework. In China, researchers’ efforts were complex in their motivations; they sought to elevate and bring notice to folk arts and cultures, but ethnographic fascination with the primitive re-inscribed certain time-honored prejudices about the frontier.¹⁰³

Then, a comparative framework set by the common historical context in which the projects of Zhang and Pang were conducted propels us to ask a question crucial to the cultural and political concerns of their works. Does Pang’s project of painting *Guizhou Mountain People* after his 1939 expedition in the southwestern inner frontier also “fit loosely into the primitive paradigm” like Zhang Daqian’s copies of the Dunhuang murals, “in which cultural authority and agency are located with the modern visitor”? Are there the age-long prejudices about the frontier reinscribed in Pang’s paintings of Guizhou mountain people? As a traveler into the southwestern inner frontier, did he “assign meaning and value to the objects and peoples under study through an interpretative, often nationalistic framework”? Was his enterprise also “complex” in motivations?

In what follows in this chapter, I examine the artist’s ethnographic approaches to painting the motif of “the folk” in the southwestern inner frontier as a “native Chinese” theme, attending to the role that his 1939–40 expedition played in painting *Guizhou Mountain People.* In

particular, I explore how Pang’s way of perceiving and visualizing the Guizhou mountain people might have been filtered through a Han-centric Chinese ethnographic eye in relation to the ethnic others in China—especially through the concrete ethnographic methodologies in which historical data was discovered and collected from the southwestern frontier by the ethnographers who worked with him. In Pang’s memoir that he completed in the early 1980s, Pang recalled that during the war he used to say, “as a Chinese artist, it is indeed necessary to learn the cultural heritage of our native land.” But the framework that Pang adopted for documenting the folk art he discovered in situ in the southwestern inner frontier especially attended to the ethnic qualities that could differentiate the southwestern material cultures from the modern Han Chinese cultures during this period. In particular, his special interest in documenting as folk art the detailed formal attributes of the embroidered patterns on the clothing of the southwestern ethnic people is simply striking, to the extent that his ethnographic interest in the exotic ethnic characteristics of the southwestern mountain people became a main theme of this series of paintings. To be sure, Pang’s preoccupation with the southwestern non-Han ethnic people and Guizhou landscape signaled something wider than the political-cum-scholarly, and he engaged the topic in artistic terms that were too wide to accommodate an overt scholarly-official agenda.

But an overview of the Han Chinese nationalist politics underpinning the Nationalist

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government’s ethnic policies will facilitate our understanding of the way in which Pang’s specific attention to the folk art of the southwestern frontier resonated with the government-sponsored academic frame of the ethnographic fieldwork conducted by the IHP scholars in Republican China.

As the 1911 Wuchang Uprising took a final toll on the ailing Qing Empire, exuberant revolutionaries soon faced a daunting new task of building a modern nation-state out of the millennial imperial legacy. The purported barbarian subjects of the former empire, living on peripheral regions within the historic territory of China, had been yoked under the imperial banner because of military conquest and tributary exchange. The question of how the nascent republic was to hold on to the vast yet remote imperial territories and command the allegiance of their inhabitants was part and parcel of the nationalist project of China. Compounding the difficulty of this project was the often virulent anti-Manchu nationalism centered on the Han majority, as evidenced in the goals for the Tongmenghui (Revolutionary Alliance) that Nationalist revolutionary leader Sun Zhongshan 孫中山（Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙，1866–1925) established in 1904: to expel the Tartar barbarians, to restore China, to establish a republic, and to distribute land equally among the people.105 Many late Qing revolutionaries accused the Manchurians of colonial invasion and oppression, yet here was an obvious contradiction: if the conquering of China proper by the Manchurians was to be considered colonialism, then the

105 There was also explicit equation of Manchus to dogs. See John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 121.
westbound expansion of the Qing empire would also be colonial gain. But the Han intellectuals evaded this antinomy and justified their acceptance of the political legacy of Qing, taking it for granted that the Manchu’s takeover of the Han people’s guo 国 (state) was unjustified while the Qing conquest of the west minorities was somehow different. When anti-Manchurian Nationalist revolutionaries established the Republican Chinese government in 1912, the territory on which it based its claims to sovereignty and thus which it inherited was the vast land of the Qing Empire—including Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet, and some other multiethnic and multicultural regions that had been conquered by the Qing through gradual expansion. In the ensuing years, the Republic of China as a nascent modern nation-state had gradually established its basic political system. However, the nature of the Chinese nation as the subject constituting this nation-state was still unclear.

The Han vision of ethno-nationalism driving the anti-Qing revolution raised serious questions about the place of non-Han ethnic groups in the future polity of the modern Chinese nation-state. In 1901, Liang Qichao introduced China to the European idea of nationalism, as it appeared in Japanese scholarship. When proposing the idea of minzu zhuyi 民族主義 (nationalism), Liang meant to use the international perspective to offer a political solution for China as it sought to resist the imperialist invasions from the Euro-American and Japanese

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modern nation-states. In 1902, Liang proposed his project to build Zhonghua minzu 中華民族 (Chinese nation) as minzuzhuyi guojia 民族主義國家 (nationalist state). Since the nineteenth century, the whole world had been increasingly reorganized into a system of nation-states. Although in practice the ethnic components of many nation-states were extremely complex, the political principle by which nationalism operated the nation-state system was simple: that the unit of a guo 國 (state) under the rule of a central government is consistent with the unit of a minzu 民族 (nationality/ethnic group/race) as a group of homogenous people. Drawing on the political principle of nationalism, Liang proposed, “our China as a nation should advocate da minzuzhuyi (grand nationalism) beyond xiao minzuzhuyi (narrow nationalism). What is ‘narrow nationalism?’ It means the Han in relation to other ethnic groups [within the Chinese nation]. What is ‘grand nationalism?’ It means an amalgamation of all the ethnic groups [that is, the Han and the other ethnic groups] as a nation [that is, the Chinese nation as a whole] in relation to other nations.” In order to survive in the new world system of nation-states, according to Liang, China had to “adopt an imperialist strategy, amalgamating the Han, Manchus, Hui (Muslims), Miao, and Tibetans to constitute a grand nation.” To avoid the possibility of divisiveness, when the new Republic of China was founded in 1912 under the leadership of Sun Zhongshan, Sun announced in his declaration as “the Provisional President” that “the foundation of the state

lies in the people. To amalgamate the places inhabited by the Han, Manchus, Mongols, Muslims, and Tibetans into one nation-state is to amalgamate the Han, Manchus, Mongols, Muslims, and Tibetans into one people. . . . That is, the [Chinese] nation is united.”

The nationalist principle joining Han, Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans, and Muslims was called *wuzu gonghe* 五族共和 (“five ethnic groups under one union”). The national five-bar flag in use from 1912 to 1928, with “red for the Han, yellow for the Manchurian, blue for the Mongolian, white for the Tibetan, and black for the Moslem community of China,” became a symbol of this new principle. *Wuzu gonghe* represented an ethnically inclusionary, nationalist vision of a new China, which should see fewer distinctions between Han and non-Han ethnic groups, but more ethnicities within the jurisdiction of the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua* or *Chunghua*). Intriguingly, the principle of *wuzu gonghe* as announced by the Provisional President Sun Zhongshan of the newly established Republic of China, replaced the southern-based “Miao” included in Liang’s proposal with the northern-based “Mongols.” This change might have been made based on the assumption that the “Miao” had been widely recognized as “authentically” Chinese given the historical fact that the southwestern region where they lived had been established as one of the thirteen provinces of the Ming empire ruled by Han people.

In the new system of the Chinese nation-state, the term *Huaxia* 華夏 as the traditional

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109 Sun Zhongshan, *Sun Zhongshan Quanji* (Complete Collection of Essays by Sun Zhongshan) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), vol. 2, 2. Sun’s thoughts here was drawn from Liang Qichao’s notion of *Zhonghua minzu* (Chinese nation) and Yang Du’s notion of *Wuzu gonghe* (five ethnic groups under one union).

designation for the Han people in imperial China was changed to the term *Hanzu* 漢族 (Han ethnicity) to imply that the Han was simply one among all the ethnicities within the territory of modern China. Nevertheless, the long-established Han-centrism persisted in the ethnic policies of the Republic and the racist dichotomy between the Han “civilization” versus the non-Han “barbarians” inhabiting the multicultural frontiers in ancient China was not entirely eliminated. Under the slogan of “ethnic equality,” the essential goal of the Nationalist government was to assimilate other ethnic groups into the Han through sinicizing policies. The *Zhonghua minguo linshi yuefa* 中華民國臨時約法 (Provisional Constitution of the Republic of China) announced that “the Republic of China was an amalgamation of five ethnic groups” and that “all people are equal in the Republic of China; there is no distinctions among races, classes, and religions.” In reality, however, the principle of *wuzu gonghe* mainly served as a discursive strategy during the originally southern-based KMT revolutionaries’ northern expedition (1926–28) to unite China. This expedition was led by Jiang Jieshi 蔣介石 (Chiang Kai-shek, 1887-1975), then commander of the National Revolutionary Army who would become the de-facto autocrat of the KMT regime in 1928. Only when negotiating with certain Mongolian, Tibetan, or Muslim delegates, would Sun touch upon the principle of *wuzu gonghe*.111 Importantly, and in contrast to the stated principle of *wuzu gonghe*, Sun had always identified himself as a *Hanzu* (Han ethnicity)

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leader. Speaking before the KMT in the 1920s, Sun emphasized that the goal of “nationalism” as the political principle of the KMT was to organize a *Hanzu guojia* 漢族國家 (Han-ethnic nation-state) by “assimilating the Manchus, Mongols, Muslims, and Tibetans into our Han nation as a *da minzuhui guojia* (grand nationalist nation-state).” That is to say, no matter the earlier “anti-Manchurian” slogan or the “five ethnic groups under one union” proposal, the ultimate goal of these political strategies was to assimilate non-Han ethnic groups into the Han-centric Chinese nation.

Accordingly, during the building of the modern Chinese nation in the Republican period, the Han perspectives on non-Han peoples were paradoxically both oppositional and incorporative, as the latter came to be partially constitutive of what was seen as the Chinese people. Despite the relatively small number and spatial marginality of the non-Han people as opposed to the Han people, non-Han were spread over 50 percent of China’s land area and occupied the strategic, resource-rich periphery to the north, south, and west. They figured prominently in the areas of cultural policy and Chinese consciousness of the Self. In 1928, when

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112 Sun Zhongshan, “Linshi dazongtong bugao quanguo tongbao shu (Temporary President Addressing to the Compatriots Throughout the Country); quoted from Wang Ke, “Minzu, yige laizi riben de wuhui: zhongguo zaoqi minzuzhuizi sixiangshizhi de lishikaocha (Minzu, a misunderstanding from Japan: a historical survey of the essential characteristics of early Chinese nationalism),” *Newsletter on Ethnic Sociology Studies* (Minzu shehuixue yanjiu tongxun), vol. 70.

113 Sun Zhongshan, “Xiugai zhangcheng zhi shuoming (Explanation of Amending the Constitution),” a talk delivered in the internal party meeting of the KMT in Shanghai on November 4, 1920.

114 Sun Zhongshan, “Zhongguo tongmenghui zongzhang (Regulation of Chinese Nationalist Revolutionary Alliance)” (released in March, 1912); quoted from Peng Wulin, “Nanjing linshizhengfu shiqi de xiandai minzu zhuangxing yu minzuguoxi zhi jiangou – yi ‘wuzu gonghe’ wei zhongxin (The transformation of modern nation-state and the construction of modern ethno-relationships during the period of Nanjing temporary government [of the KMT party]: taking ‘the principle of wuzu gonghe’ as a central case),” *Minzu yanjiu* (Studies on Ethnicities), 2009 (3): 80. Also see Jin Binghao ed., *Zhongguo minzu lilun bainian fazhan, 1900-1999* (One Hundred Years of Development of Chinese Ethnic Theories) (Shenyang: Liaoning minzu chubanshe, 2008), 127.
the KMT consolidated its power base and established the Nationalist government in Nanjing. Jiang Jieshi realized Sun Zhongshan’s hope of replacing the five-bar flag with the blue-sky-and-white-sun flag as the new national flag. Shortly after in the same year, the political instability of the time notwithstanding, the Republican era witnessed the earliest official ethnographic expeditions to remote areas of China. The Chinese concept of “nationalism” in use at the time was translated from Japan, which saw “a nation” as a group of people sharing a distinctive ethnic lineage, language, religion, and purportedly objective inherited physical and cultural characteristics. It is a form of ethno-nationalism in which the boundary of a modern, sovereign “nation-state” should be delineated racially and culturally. In the context of this ethno-nationalist framework, given the enormous ethnic differences throughout Chinese society, the political recognition of the “Chinese nation” as a national identity required the establishment of a knowledge system able to explain the origins of the Chinese and the historical relationships between Han and non-Han ethnicities as united components of the Chinese nation.

The Nationalist government persistently executed the ethnic policy of hanhua 漢化 (sinicization), with the goal of constructing a Han-centric Chinese nation through the assimilation of multiethnic groups within its territory into the entity of a modern nation-state. The Han-centered, multiethnic amalgamation proposed by the Republican nationalist agenda was to be complemented by state-sponsored ethnographic expeditions aiming to understand particular ethnicities within the national territory. For the nationalist intellectuals, defining the boundaries
of common cultural experiences among the Han and the non-Han ethnic groups was a question of modern identity and historiography.

Under such circumstances, the Institute of History and Philology (IHP) of Academia Sinica, the Nationalist government-sponsored premier social science and humanities research academy, was established in 1928 in the capital of Nanjing, with Fu Sinian as its founder and first director. Earlier a Peking University student leader of the 1919 May Fourth Movement, Fu founded the Institute of History and Philology after he had studied abroad in Europe for several years. The IHP gathered a group of academic elites, some of whom had received higher education abroad, setting up a forum for them to present their research to an international audience. Fu was a follower of Hu Shi, who promoted a cult of scientific attitude (scientism) and scientific research methods (an ideology dubbed “Mr. Science” by Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 [1879-1942]) as required by the modernization of China.115 Fu was one of the leaders in the larger trends of historical studies during the Republican period, placing high value on fieldwork and verifiable evidence as the foundation for scientific research in all sectors of the humanities. Methodologically, he promoted “collecting as many materials as possible in situ,” “excavating the ruins of ancient culture,” and “undertaking fieldwork to gather customs among various communities of the folk.” The IHP scholars believed in the epistemological authority of

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115 “Scientism” here refers to the ideology that viewed science as the supreme authority in all realms of human activity as well as in the natural world. It is generally agreed “scientism” was an influential ideology in China in the late 1910s and 20s and that it had significant political consequences, including the rise of Marxism. D. W. Y. Kwok, *Scientism in Chinese Thought, 1900-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965); Luo Zhitian, “Cong kexue yu renshengguan zhi zheng kan hou wusi shiqi dui wusi jiben linian de fansi,” *Lishi yanjiu* (1999), no. 3: 5-23.
scientific research as the privileged way of knowing: the scientific method provides the correct path to true knowledge—knowledge that is impartial, objective, and verifiable. Fu emphasized the importance of “objective (archaeology-based) history and philology” in reconsidering Chinese ancient history. Different strands of scholarship converged in IHP investigations, in which traditional Chinese learning mingled with, or was transformed by, European philology, history, archaeology, paleontology, and other “modern,” “scientific” scholarship. Referencing the archaeological materials newly excavated within China’s territory to reconsider the ancient texts known already in the past, the IHP scholars were aiming to use expansive tools and new materials to retrace the origins and developments of China and its culture.

While purportedly trying to “keep the orthodox [nature] of scientific Oriental studies in China,” ironically, the IHP scholars made many efforts to appropriate the research methodologies of European Oriental studies and to inspect Chinese historical issues “within the cosmopolitan horizon of world culture.” The frame in which the IHP scholars did their own research was modeled on the global (especially French and Germanic) “sinology” from the European tradition of Oriental studies, an epistemological paradigm that developed along with the European colonial expansions. As an academic trend, the European-style sinology came to prevail in Asian countries, beginning with Japan in the Meiji period (1868–1911). The studies on European history and culture in Europe were not called “Occidental studies.” There was only “Oriental studies” in Europe; the research subjects of Oriental studies were the non-European,
colonial Others. During the first half of the twentieth century, prominent sinologists, most of whom were French, had studied the history of China by delineating the history of its geographic neighbors and the regions of its inner frontier. Ironically, the IHP scholars engaged in the process of nationalism and internal imperialism—that is, a form of imperial nationalism—in the period of Republican China. By adapting the European legacy of Oriental studies, the Chinese nationalists employed the technologies of self-Orientalization and internal imperialism when they sought to transform the dichotomy of “primitive”—the multiple non-Han peoples residing in the inner frontier—and “civilized”—the Han people whose birthplace was perceived to be the zhongyuan 中原 or “Central Plains” recorded in the classical Chinese texts —into a commonality of co-nationals as the citizens of the Chinese national core.\(^{116}\)

In 1928, the Department of Ethnology 民族学组 was established in Academia Sinica by Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868-1940), the German-trained founder of the Academia Sinica. This event signals the birth of ethnology as a modern academic discipline in China, which focuses on the study of the ethnic components of the Chinese people.\(^{117}\) The IHP researchers of archaeology,\(^{117}\)

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\(^{117}\) Originally, in the Institute of Social Science in the Academia Sinica the Department of Ethnology was established, whereas in the Institute of History and Philology the Department of Anthropology. The former studied the cultures of the ethnic minorities, while the latter concentrated on physical anthropology. Soon, the latter was incorporated into the Department of Archaeology. Later, the Department of Ethnology is incorporated into and became the fourth department of the Institute of History and Philology. Shortly after, the Department of Ethnology in the Institute of History and Philology became the Department of Anthropology by adding more content of studying physical anthropology. In its introduction the Department of Anthropology emphasized on its research concentrations on both cultural and physical anthropologies. When the Institute of Physical Anthropology was established, the Department of Anthropology in the Institute of History and Philology resume the name “Department of Ethnology.” Refer to “Overview of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica,” ed., Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, in Zhongyang yanjiuyuan dangan (Archives of Academia Sinica. Ed., Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taipei): 393-2636 (In the archival file number, the first serial
anthropology, and ethnology in the Academia Sinica would work together to tie the borders to
the center of the Chinese nation—the Han. Drawing on the theory of social Darwinism and the
historical particularism pioneered by anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942), in the early 1930s
the IHP scholars and some ethnographers at certain universities in the south (such as Zhongshan
University) proposed that anthropology and ethnography were useful methods for reconstructing
the cultural history of the Chinese nation. The logic underpinning this proposal was that, as the
“primitive” stage of the chain of evolution of human society, the current state of the
ethnic-minority groups and some other tribes in remote marginal areas or the frontier could be
taken as proof of the account of ancient history as recorded in classical texts. As Cai Yuanpei
said in 1926, “since the ancient history of our nation has not yet developed, the fragments of
facts in Chinese history which could not be proved (through text) could be indirectly proved by
some ethnographic evidences.”118 This way, the non-Han ethnic people and their cultures were
objectified as research materials. The anthropological trick of temporality applied in research
took the synchronic as the diachronic, implicitly downplaying the contemporary ethnic others as
specimens of a part of the “primitive” past of the Han Chinese “we.”

Due to the surge of wartime nationalism against Japanese imperialist invasion, in their
government-sponsored scholarship some IHP researchers used archaeological evidence and

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118 Cai Yuanpei, “Shuo Minzuxue (On Ethnography),” originally published in December 1926; reproduced in Cai
Yuanpei Quanji (Complete Collection of Writing of Cai Yuanpei), Vol. 5, Gao Pingshu ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua
shuju, 1988), 110-111.
ethnographic fieldwork to construct the borders of the Chinese nation—with ethnic minorities as peripheral nationals—through ethno-historical discourse. In 1932, only one year after the Japanese established a puppet state on the northeast border of China, Fu Sinian, Xu Zhongshu 徐中舒 (1898-1991) and some other IHP scholars co-authored *Historical Outline of Northeast China*. Employing ethnological and linguistic knowledge, this work was intended to prove that the then northeastern area of China was China’s historic sovereignty. Even earlier, in 1930 Ling Chunsheng had led fieldwork conducted on the Hezhe people in the lower Songhua River region of northwest China, a region that was at the time directly on the border with the Soviet Union, and that would be occupied by Japan just one year later. Ling had studied ethnography and led the first scientific ethnographic field work in China, sponsored by the IHP, one year after getting his doctorate from the University of Paris. By distinguishing the Donghu people referenced in the ancient Chinese texts from the transnational group of Tungus, Ling attempted to securely place the Hezhe in the Chinese ethnic tapestry, instead of within a “pan-North Asian people.” Proffered by Japanese ethnologists who were inspired by European colonial anthropology, in particular Russian scholarship, the hypothesis of a pan–North Asian people is part of the Ural-Altaic thesis. This hypothesis stressed the racial commonality of the Tungusic people and positioned Manchuria as the “original homeland” of the Tungusic race. As a paradigmatic formulation of early twentieth-century Japanese ethnological discourse, this thesis was to give Japanese occupation and rule of Manchuria an anthropogenetic claim and, meanwhile, weaken the Chinese
claim on Manchuria.\textsuperscript{119} The Japanese academic-cum-imperialist efforts to incorporate “primitive” indigenous inhabitants of the northeast frontier as part of the narrative of Manchuria served the Japanese project of separating this contested region from China and constructing it as a “nation.” But it also influenced the Republican Chinese formulations of these people as part of the nation-space of China.\textsuperscript{120} The IHP scholars were eagerly embarking on an ethnographic and historical reconstruction of a still Han-centered Chinese civilization, which was to be partially built up from its peripheral regions and peripheral peoples.

Newly emergent modern states like China, India, and Thailand, trying to join in the global club of nation-states, gained impetus from modern empires, such as the British, the French, or the Japanese, to maximize and militarize their territorial boundaries. In the logic of building a modern “geo-body” (in Prasenjit Duara’s term) that controls global sources by territorially sovereign polities, these nascent modern states of Asia tended to incorporate contiguous, alien territories and peoples wherever possible, thereby blurring the practical distinction between imperialism and nationalism. The massive investment of state resources in these border regions often contrasted markedly with the informal arrangements, multiple sovereignties, forbidden lands, and imagery of barbarian wilderneses that had characterized them in the old empires. As Prasenjit Duara points out, to facilitate massive investment of state resources in these geographic areas, “new spatio-political forms,” including the “multicultural/multi-ethnic” or the

\textsuperscript{119} Prasenjit Duara, \textit{Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asia Modern} (Lanham, MD: Bowman & Littlefield, 2003), 194.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
“anthropogenetic” nation, had been designed to channel the territorial expansionism:

These forms . . . were premised upon a representational principle different from that of old-style colonialism: they sought to transform the difference between “primitive” and “civilized” into a commonality of co-nationals. Three elements, not always separable, comprised these forms: the ethnological—or ethno-historical—discourse . . . which produced the fundamental assumptions regarding “primitives” and their environment; administrative technologies to incorporate the “primitive” and the borderlands; and cultural technologies to naturalize and subjectivize the claim to them among the citizens of the national core. These forms did have consequences that were different from those of old-style colonialism, but the encapsulation of “peripheral” peoples, cultures, and regions by both the Japanese and Chinese state-builders also produced the (imperialistic) domination of the periphery by the center, or, frequently, peripheralized once-autonomous regions.121

As the Japanese occupied three provinces, established Manchukuo in northeast China in 1931, and invaded the capital of Nanjing in 1937, the Republican government, national research institutes, universities, art academies, libraries, and a large number of intellectuals and artists moved en masse to China’s southwestern interior. Regions in the south and west, always seen as the frontier during the dynastic period, were a puzzle culturally, politically, and racially to the Chinese Han majority. Since the early 1930s, archaeology’s associated fields of anthropology and ethnography had found ready research grounds in the southwest interior. Compared to northwestern China where a series of government-funded archaeological investigations of Han and Tang monuments were framed as highbrow explorations of yishu wenwu 藝術文物 or “art [as] cultural relics,” the southwestern hinterland of China mainly attracted “frontier studies”

based on a series of ethnographic fieldwork into multiethnic, “primitive ethnic” cultures. In fact, Republican Chinese frontier studies embodied a long-standing preoccupation with ethnicity and Han identity that can even be traced back to the Han dynasty during the second century, particularly focused on the southwest and northwest. As for the “Miao” people, from May 1 to August 1, 1933, the IHP scholars Ling Chunsheng 凌純聲 (1902–81) and Rui Yifu 芮逸夫 (1898–1990) conducted a fieldwork in western Hunan to investigate Miao ethnic linguistics.122 The main goal of their fieldwork there was to trace the history of immigration in this region and the forms of cultural circulation caused by the process of historical immigrations there. By so doing, based on their assumptions of Social Darwinism, these IHP scholars tried to map up an ethno-historical genealogy in which the southwestern people could be placed in relation to the Hanzu (Han people) and other groups of people in the ethnic tapestry of the multiethnic Chinese nation. The rhetoric of the Han Chinese nationalist scholarly reports in the 1920s through the 1940s took on the language of a colonial power assuming control of regions that are rich in natural resources and strategically vital, but that are perceived as culturally inferior to a homeland or heartland culture.

During the war, government-sponsored ethnographic research especially shifted its focus to the southwestern multiethnic hinterland as China’s inner frontier. Not only the anthropologists and ethnologists of the IHP, who relocated to the southwest during the war, but also many other

122 See Li Guangming and Wang Yuanhui, Chuanxi minzu diaocha jilu 1929 (Taipei: Academia Sinica Institute of History and Philology, 2004).
groups of ethnologists in newly established research institutions in the southwestern provinces in China were actively doing fieldwork on the people and culture of the southwestern ethnic minorities. In Kunming, for example, the Association of Southwestern Ethnic Studies was established and published *Southwestern Frontier Monthly*, a professional academic journal. Established in Chengdu was the Center of Cultural Studies at West China University, a center that emphasized studies of southwestern non-Han ethnic minorities. Also, the Ministry of Education of the Republican government assigned Zhongshan University in Guangzhou to establish a specific curriculum for “Studies on the Frontier,” to focus in particular on *xinan minzu* 西南民族 (southwestern ethnicities).

In the late Qing and early Republican period, “Miao” had been used as a general designation for the southwestern ethnicities. A brief, introductory history of the southwestern peoples was published through a journal of Historical Geography as an emergent academic discipline, narrating based on early mythologies that,

*the* Miao ethnic group had the longest history of negotiating with our [Han] ethnic group. Since the time of Huang emperor through that of Yao and Shun emperors, there had been fierce competition and struggle between [Miao and Han]. Since the Spring-and-Autumn period [of the Zhou dynasty], the name of “Miao” was replaced by a more generalized designation, “Man” (barbarian) [as the ethnic group was defeated by the Han and moved into the southwestern highland]. The name of “Miao” did not reappear in the Chinese imperial record until the Ming dynasty; in fact, more than half of the so-called “Man” people recorded in the official histories of previous dynasties are “Miao” people.\(^{123}\)

\(^{123}\) Ding Zijun, “Da’an shiqi (Answer No. 17),” *Dixue zazhi* (Journal of Geographic Knowledge), 1911, vol. 2 no.18:
However, the aforementioned *wuzu gonghe* (“five ethnic groups under one union”) principle set up in 1912 emphasized its amalgamation of only five ethnic components, leaving no place for a substantial number of southwest non-Han ethnic groups who at the time were vaguely referred as “Miao.” As early as 1913, some intellectuals expressed concern about the *wuzu gonghe* principle’s exclusion of the southwestern Miao from the five allied ethnicities. A 1913 editorial in *Independent Weekly*, a political and cultural journal run by Fu Sinian, criticized the principle of “five ethnic groups under one union,” accusing it of “foreshadowing the throwing away of the borderland inhabited by the Miao people” to foreign imperialists conspiring to split China. Since the mid-1930s, when the Academia Sinica moved to Yunnan in the southwestern inner frontier, the IHP scholars had been collecting the aforementioned local albums of paintings produced in the Qing period and featuring the southwestern minorities. The IHP ethnographers collected these albums as materials for scientific research on the ethnographic history of the southwestern multiethnic people, rather than as artworks. Despite the IHP scholars’ claim of academic independence from the government, the Nationalist government expected that their ethnographic research would facilitate the political and military control of the local people.

In April 1933, before the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression officially broke out in China, the Ministry of Education of the Nationalist government set up a preparatory office for the establishment of the National Central Museum in Nanjing, the capital of the Republic of
China. The government wanted to establish “a comprehensive museum to collect the objects made by ancient Chinese people throughout several thousands of years and the materials required for instilling modern intelligence [among the contemporary Chinese populace]. [These objects will be collected] for systematic display and permanent preservation, in order to promote scientific research and facilitate public education.”

Cai Yuanpei proposed the establishment of this preparatory office, and Fu Sinian served as the Director of the office. Originally, the preparatory office planned to set up a gallery in the museum exclusively for the collection of “distinctive customs of the ethnicities [other than the Han] in southwest China.” As the war officially started in July 1937, the preparatory office relocated with some other government-sponsored academic and educational institutions to the southwestern interior, temporarily in Kunming, the capital of the province of Yunnan. Many scholars working in these institutions relocated their field specimens, notes, libraries, and archaeological finds, in addition to the entire collection of the former imperial palace, to Guizhou, Yunnan, and Sichuan provinces in the southwestern interior. On August 14, 1937, eighty boxes of the most important treasures of the collection of the imperial palace were transferred via Hankou to Changsha and then moved to Guizhou province to avoid the ravages of the Japanese invasion. For six years, from 1938 to 1943, these treasured \textit{objets d’art} were stored in Anshun, Guizhou. With “the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[124] “Report of the works of the preparatory office for the National Central Museum from April, 1933 to January, 1941,” Chinese Secondary Historical Archives.
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additional convenience provided by geographical proximity and local institutions,” in 1939 the preparatory office of the National Central Museum, then based out of Yunnan, assigned Pang Xunqin to investigate, collect, and study “the art tradition of the ethnic minorities of the southwestern area of China” with the assistance of the IHP linguistic-ethnologist Rui Yifu.126

The 1939–40 joint expedition of Pang and Rui was officially entitled an “Investigation of Guizhou Folk Art” (Guizhou Minjian Yishu Kaocha). As discussed above, “folk art” had emerged as a recognized category in the second decade of the twentieth century in Republican China. Beginning in the late 1920s, a small but significant number of Chinese intellectuals—critics, scholars and social reformers—began to collect, write about, and exhibit visual materials they called “folk art.”127 When Chinese intellectuals first took up the idea of folk art, they drew on nineteenth-century Western theories of folklore and ethnography. Influenced by social Darwinism, these theories saw folk culture as an intermediate step between modern civilization and primitive society. Accordingly, the “folk” means a group of people less civilized than “citizens” but more civilized than “barbarians.” Ethnography and its methods increasingly became a general intellectual concern in early twentieth-century China. Nationalist intellectuals quickly took ethnographic authority into their own hands, both to counter the demeaning image of China created in Western ethnography, and to form a picture of Chinese

126 “Report of the works of the preparatory office of the National Central Museum from April, 1933 to January, 1941,” Chinese Secondary Historical Archives; Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zoguolaide, 181.
national culture and national character that would enable the reformation of its weaknesses.¹²⁸

Specifically, the folk art targeted in Pang and Rui’s 1939–40 joint investigation of Guizhou folk art does not refer to all the art objects made by the natives of Guizhou province. Rather, it exclusively referred to the handcrafts made by ethnic people—including their “costumes, decorations, and embroideries”—that were perceived to be distinctive and meaningful manifestations of the “primitive culture” of non-Han “ethnic minorities” inhabiting the southwestern inner territory the modern nation-state.¹²⁹ The Republican Chinese cultural elite’s understanding of the concept of “ethnic art” (minzu yishu 民族藝術)—that is, the art of non-Han ethnicities in China—was as deeply problematic as their formation of the concept of folk art. Not only peasants but also people of ethnic minority living as national peripherals within China’s borders became the objects of folkloric and ethnographic fascination. In the late 1920s, as the movement to collect folk songs expanded to other research fields in China, a large number of journals and books on the society and life of “ethnic minorities” had already been published and circulated. In March 1928, the weekly journal Minsu 民俗 (Folk Custom) was published by the newly established ethnographic research programs at the Institute of Linguistic and Historical Studies (ILHS) at Zhongshan University in Guangzhou. The scholar who established the ILHS in 1927 was Fu Sinian, who then moved to Nanjing in 1928 to work as the chair of the IHP at the

¹²⁸ Felicity Anne Lufkin, Folk Art in Modern China, 1930-1945 (Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2001), 30-31.
¹²⁹ “Report of the works of the preparatory office of the National Central Museum from April, 1933 to January, 1941,” Chinese Secondary Historical Archives.
Academia Sinica. Taking advantage of its proximity to the southwestern multicultural frontier, the academic circle at the ILHS published in this magazine some ethnographic studies on the folkloric literature, songs, and customs of the local peoples. In 1928, for example, some anthropologists from the ILHS, including the Russian S. M. Shirokogoroff (1887–1939) and the Chinese Rong Zhaozu and Yang Chengzhi, traveled to the hinterland of Yunnan to do anthropological and ethnographic fieldwork in the multicultural regions. There they observed the folk customs of the ethnic minorities designated as “Miao,” “Yi,” “Yao,” and so on. The records of their research were soon published in the weekly newspapers of the ILHS and the magazine Minsu. Nevertheless, the 1939 collaboration between an artist (Pang) and an ethnologist (Rui) in conducting ethnographic fieldwork on “folk art” in the southwestern frontier was unprecedented.

While the concepts of “folk” and “primitive” may sometimes be set in contrast—as in the rural versus the wild, or the settled community versus the nomadic tribe—the two categories are closely related within modern systems of artistic and cultural classification, and they function in similar ways. Both categories enable objects that are defined as temporally and culturally distant from the modern West to be incorporated into a totalizing system of value about the “national” artistic past. This new value system established in China in the early 1930s meant that the scope

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of folk art as a national tradition could encompass the material culture produced by the non-Han people. Meanwhile, within this new system established by the Enlightenment intellectuals and artists—most of whom were Han Chinese urban male elites trained in Euro-American countries or in the Western-inflected educational institutions in China—“primitive (non-Han) ethnic art,” like folk art, has been seen as evidence that modern principles of form and design are universal and essential.

The preparatory office for the National Central Museum gave two reasons for organizing the 1939 investigation of Guizhou folk art. First, “Guizhou has been a distant region without efficient transportation system. [Therefore,] this remote place of barren mountains is still inhabited by enormous primitive ethnic peoples [whose] primitive customs are preserved. In particular, the patterns on [their] costumes, decorations, and embroideries are distinctive [manifestations of their cultures], which can provide materials for comparative study when doing research on ancient [Chinese] culture.” And second, “even for today’s purpose of cultural enlightenment and producing harmony among [Han and non-Han] ethnics, [we] also should start to undertake fieldwork to gradually achieve inter-ethnic understanding.” This project was to study the historical relationship between southwestern ethnic culture and Han culture to see whether the former were cultures of the pure “Other” or “alter-ego,” via investigation of their

132 “Report of the works of the preparatory office of the National Central Museum from April, 1933 to January, 1941,” Chinese Secondary Historical Archives.
133 “Report of the works of the preparatory office of the National Central Museum from April, 1933 to January, 1941,” Chinese Secondary Historical Archives.
folk art objects as manifestations of their “primitive” cultures. It was expected that this investigation would help with defining the history and cultural characteristic of the Han Chinese Self.

Besides the European-style Sinology, Japanese ethnography of the Miao ethnic culture conducted in the early 1920s had direct impact on Pang’s approach to southwestern “ethnic art.” From the mid-1930s through the mid-1940s, governmental and institutional attention to the southwest was rooted in a Han Chinese nationalist interest in codifying the multiethnic traces of the frontier culture, tracing the local people’s historical relationship to ancient Han culture, and, in so doing, locating these peoples within the Han Chinese sphere for modern political purposes. Especially during the war, within the Han-centric nationalist frame in which much IHP scholarship on ancient Chinese civilization was undertaken, many Chinese scholars believed that the origin of the non-Han ethnicities and their historical relationships with the Han could be empirically and thus scientifically traced. In the case of the southwest, as Cen Jiawu 岑家梧 (1912–1966) put it in his 1940 *Review and Preview of Southwestern Ethnic Studies*，“southwestern ethnicities are important components of the Chinese nation. After the war broke out, the southwest region gains more and more important position. Economic, political, social, and cultural issues about the southwestern peoples [or ethnicities] gained particular attention. To solve these problems, we have to base our investigation on fieldwork.”134 Cen continued: “In the

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recent twenty years (that is the 1920s–40s), research institutes for [new] disciplines including anthropology, ethnology, philology, and history have been established. Then, southwestern ethnicities began to be investigated formally and scientifically.” Chen then pointed out that, although there had been European missionaries who were studying the Miao people even before the Republic of China was established, the truly “[formal and scientific] studies on the Miao people in Guizhou and Yunnan,” to Chinese scholars, “was initiated by a Japanese man, Torii Ryūzō.

In the late Qing and early Republican periods, the European nationalist-inflected Japanese traditionalist movement of reviving kokugaku/kokusuishugi 国学/国粹主義 (national essence) had become a model for the reconstruction of Chinese guoxue 國學 (national learning). The term guoxue encompassed the study of history, classical literature, and other subjects that were intended to redefine “national tradition.” The new generation of Japanese sinologists and scholars of Oriental Studies developed expertise in literary history, linguistics, ethnography, archaeology, and art history from the model of European scholarship, in addition to studying the Confucian classics that made up the core of kangaku (Han Chinese national learning). The interest in China that Japanese scholars in the modern field of kangaku showed, however, was

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135 Liang Qichao (1873–1929), a pioneer of national learning, was an admier of Japanese kokugaku and kokusuishugi. Particularly influential on his thinking was Kojo Teikichi (1866-1949), who penned an essay in 1897 that described the rise and fall of Chinese learning (kangaku) before and under the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912). Published in Liang’s newspaper Shiwubao under the title “Rebirth of Kangaku,” Kojo’s essay predicted that the rising momentum in Japanese kokugaku would buoy Chinese painting, as the former was recovering from the Meiji government’s enforcement of westernization. This view appeared to contravene the initial goal of kokugaku, which had set out to undo the hegemonic dominance of Chinese learning by privileging Japan as the primary subject of inquiry. But as Japanese national interests became increasingly intertwined with those of China, kokugaku scholars including Kojo himself renewed their interest in Chinese studies.
not mainly restricted to the culture of the Han Chinese majority as the name of kangaku implied. As early as 1902, the Japanese anthropologist Torii Ryūzō (1870–1953), whose academic works tended to follow the northward expansion of Japan and who hoped to develop an integrated view of Asia with Japan at the center, had conducted ethnographic research into non-Han peoples in southwestern China.136

Torii conducted forty days of ethnographic fieldwork in Guizhou province. The product of this expedition, Report of Fieldwork on Ethnic Miao, was published by Imperial University of Tokyo in 1907. In addition to the textual report, this book also published ninety ethnographic photographs to present the purported ethnic characteristics—that is, the exotic details—of costumes, tools, instruments, and housing among different branches of the ethnic Miao community. The Chinese translation of Torii’s book was published in Shanghai in 1936. Employing methodologies from modern anthropology and ethnology, this book was well recognized in Chinese academia as the first “scientific,” ethnographic work on China’s southwestern ethnicities produced by an East Asian scholar. In April 1937, Jiang Yingliang published a nine-page book review in Modern Historical Research, which celebrated Report of Fieldwork on Ethnic Miao as an ethnographic work on the southwestern ethnic population “with a true scientific research method.” This method was held in contrast with previous studies on the Miao people by British and French scholars, for example, which were “non-scientific” works

intended to “argue that some southwestern ethnicities are not part of the Chinese nation.” Toward the end of the review, Jiang Yingliang warned:

Nowadays, people in our country are all obsessed with talking about a “national cultural renaissance,” but their understandings of the [non-Han] ethnicities are extremely limited. Southwestern ethnicities constitute a major branch of the Chinese nation. Today, among those who are advocating for national unity and ethnic equality [in China], how many of them had done any fieldwork themselves in the areas inhabited by the southwestern ethnic groups? Not to mention that in the past [the Han] people had made numerous traditional fallacies about the southwestern ethnicities.\(^{137}\)

As a form of imperialist knowledge, the branch of Oriental studies entitled sinology developed in European countries and was later appropriated by Japanese imperial scholarship from the nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries. Japanese sinological studies stimulated the Nationalist government to support scholarly exploration of the non-Han ethnic peoples in search of the “primitive” origins of the Han-centric modern Chinese nation.\(^{138}\) Inspired by the European and Japanese scholarship, as Jiang explained, “the IHP scholars at the Academia Sinica are the domestic scholars who did the earliest systematic research on the southwestern ethnicities. The result of their research is groundbreaking and most significant.”\(^{139}\)

The IHP scholars Ling Chunsheng and Rui Yifu, among other groups of Chinese ethnographers, were right at the center of this massive, political-cum-scholarly effort to make a historical account of modern Chinese cultures, directing ethnographic surveys of the “primitive” culture of


\(^{139}\) Prasenjit Duara, Sovereignty and Authenticity, 26, 31-32.
non-Han peripheral nationals living in southwestern China. The ethnographic expedition undertaken by these nationalist elites in the southwestern provinces such as Guizhou was arguably part of a larger neocolonial Chinese expansion into Inner Asian borders. We see in this process the nationalization of a global discourse.

Ma Changshou 馬長壽 (1907–71), an ethnographer, sociologist, and historian who had been working at the National Central Museum since 1936, clearly recognized the colonial power structure embedded in the anthropological discourse on “primitive ethnicities.” In the late 1940s, Ma said,

the nineteenth century is recognized to be “a century of nationalism” politically and “a century of the revival of science” academically. With the desire for communities and the pursuit of independence, the national consciousness of the Euro-Americans was awakened. They (became) colonialist powers competing with each other. Their fighting against each other to gain more colonies caused the World War I. The Treaty of Versailles determined the principle of national-determination, claiming that every minzu (nation) had the right to establish an independent guojia (nation-state). However, the meaning of this provision was very vague. (In terms of the meaning of minzu,) whether the relatively weak ethnic groups and minorities constitute a unit of nation? There was no specific definition. Therefore, the Humanities since this period have been split (into two parts). The disciplines of politics and sociology (as one part) focus on the political and social

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140 Rui Yifu wrote research papers on not only the Miao ethnic group but also the ethnic and cultural components of modern Chinese nation based on his ethnologist research in southeastern China. From 1945 through 1949, the period after the Second Sino-Japanese War and before the Nationalist government fled to Taiwan when the CCP took power in Mainland China, Rui taught as professor in the Department of Frontier Policy at National Central University and one of the legislators of the Nationalist Government Legislature. For his research papers see Rui Yifu, Zhongguo minzu ji qī wenhuà lúngháo (The Chinese Nation and Some Aspects of Its Culture) (Taipei: Tonsan Publications Inc., 1989).

141 For more information see Sarah E. Fraser, “New-colonial China and Multiple Primitivisms, 1927-1945,” a paper presented at “Primitivism and Cosmopolitanism: Anthropology between the Wars in Germany, France, and China,” American Historical Association, Boston, January 7, 2011.
organization of the independent nation-states or the imperial-colonialist nation-states. Whereas the discipline of anthropology (as the other part) focuses on the prehistory of the primitive people 先史人 and the existing weak or minority ethnic groups. Although this way of academic division is more convenient for research, it inadvertently divided human into two categories: one category encompasses “the Primitive People,” the other “Civilized Man or People.” Even Culture has been divided into two categories: the Primitive People merely have “culture,” only the Civilized People have “Civilization.” May I ask: what is the standard for measuring the forms of humans and human culture in this categorizing system? The criterion is nothing else but the technical civilization of the White people. The White people are the inventors of the steam, electronic, and internal combustion powers, so that they developed to become imperialist colonial powers and capitalist nation-states. In other words, only the capitalist nation-states that became imperialist colonial powers are qualified as civilized nations (wenming guojia); on the contrary, the weak and minority ethnic groups could only be considered as primitive ethnicities (yuanshi minzu). Accordingly, anthropology is the field of science (exclusively) studying the weak and minority ethnic groups.\(^{142}\)

In the realm of domestic politics, modern nation-states developed with the goal of realizing democracy, freedom, and equality. However, in a global order informed by capitalist and imperialist policies, these “civilized” or “civilizing” nation-states would treat other nations, foreign ethnic groups, and internal minority ethnic groups following another standard. The contradiction inherent in the policies of these colonizing nation-states, and the national revolutions and independence movements launched by the colonized peoples, led the colonial powers to apply anthropology as a technology for colonization. The principles, ideas, methods,

and knowledge produced by anthropology were employed to aid the administration of the colonial empires. Based on Ma’s investigation into the development of applied anthropology in the colonial empires of Britain, the United States of America, Netherlands, and Australia, he emphasized the importance of differentiating the multiethnic frontier of China from the colonies of the Euro-American modern empires. Nevertheless, Ma’s insights were not effectively applied and executed by the Nationalist government in the making of frontier policy.

Since the mid- and late 1920s, in fact, certain Marxist-inflected field had begun to investigate into the social strata in China. For example, Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893–1976) attended to the economic basis and relation of production in China and analyzed the conditions of the class conflicts and class struggles in his *Report on Investigation of Peasant Movement in Hunan* (1926). Nevertheless, these investigations were generally conducted in the fields of political and economic histories, rather than anthropology. In the Republican period, anthropology was more concerned with the “physical” and “cultural” than the “socio-political” elements of Chinese society. As pointed out by current Chinese Neo-Leftist cultural critique, this de-political tendency of anthropology in Republican China, which centralized the cultural while estranging the political-economical, was precisely the “politics of anthropology” in early-twentieth-century China. This de-political approach, in turn, might have facilitated the

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covering of the colonial power structure embedded in international as well as domestic neo-colonial expansion of the modern nation-states.\textsuperscript{144}

Under such circumstances, the Japanese anthropologist Torii Ryūzō’s work arguably became one of the most significant models for Republican Chinese ethnographies or cultural anthropological fieldworks done among southwestern ethnic groups. In particular, Torii’s ethnographic focus on the cultural aspects of the Miao people in the 1920s had directly prompted Pang and Rui’s 1939–40 joint investigation of Guizhou folk art as well as Pang’s ethnographic fascination with the ethnic characteristics of the Miao patterns in his own (non-government-funded) project of painting the Guizhou mountain people. When collecting the Miao costumes in Guizhou province, Pang and Rui were intentionally comparing the clothes and embroidered patterns they collected with those of Torii Ryūzō’s collection. They felt proud that “thirty years ago, the Japanese Torii Ryūzō talked about some design patterns that he was not able to collect; whereas, unexpectedly, we were able to collect them.”\textsuperscript{145}

The perspectives and the specific objects of material culture that Torii studied in his ethnography of the southwestern ethnic people inspired Chinese scholars in their investigation of Guizhou folk art. Jiang Yingliang, in the aforementioned book review, particularly celebrated three chapters of Torii Ryūzō’s ethnographic report, which was attentive to the exotic details of the southwestern ethnic culture “encapsulated” in three things—a lusheng 蘆笙 (reed-pipe wind

\textsuperscript{144} Liu Daxian, “Zhongguo renleixue huayu yu ‘tazhe’ de lishi yanbian”, 483.
\textsuperscript{145} Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zoushulaide, 186.
instrument), a copper drum, and embroidered patterns, respectively, with photographic illustrations. These objects were considered by Torii as distinctive and meaningful manifestations of the southwestern—that is, the purportedly Miao—ethnic culture. Specifically, in the chapter concentrating on a copper drum “collected” from a Zhongjia family in Guizhou, Torii found similarities in shape and decorative pattern between this drum (which he assumed to be made by southwestern peoples) and the “Han ethnic feather drum.” He believed that these similarities could confirm dynamic cultural exchanges between the southwestern ethnic groups and the Han ethnic group, at least within the past several centuries.\(^{146}\) Moreover, in the chapter on embroidered patterns, Torii included images of multiple pieces of intricate patterns, and made three points that were crucial to the methodologies of later Chinese investigations of the southwestern ethnic groups. He argued that, by studying a specific pattern, one could “distinguish the character of the specific ethnic people who use this pattern,” “explore the relationship between this specific ethnic people and other ethnic peoples,” and “trace the history and lineage of the specific ethnic people.”\(^{147}\) Torii claimed the “mental status” of the ethnic Miao—the collective psyche of the Miao—to be “gloomy and introverted,” based on his psychological analysis of the exotic features of the lusheng instrument and the motifs of the Miao embroidered patterns.\(^{148}\) Such ethnographic approaches and theses provided impetus for

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\(^{147}\) Ibid.

nationalist Chinese anthropologists and ethnologists during the Republican period, including Jiang Yingliang, to suspect that the “personality of the southwestern ethnic groups” was “not as ‘too aggressive to get along with’ as the ancient (Han Chinese) historical accounts suggested.” Drawing on Torii’s theory, Chinese scholars hypothesized that “the southwestern ethnic groups had either changed their aggressive characters in the process of sinicization, or that the (southwestern) ethnic groups had never been aggressive.”¹⁴⁹ That is to say, the stereotypical assumptions of the southwestern ethnic collective mental status, which had spread through the official historical accounts produced by the old empire of ancient China, had to be corrected for the building of a harmonious, modern Chinese nation.

In 1933, before the Chinese edition of Torii Ryūzō’s Report of Fieldwork on Ethnic Miao was published, Ling Chunsheng and Rui Yifu of the IHP’s anthropology department led a three-month ethnographic fieldwork trip to the Xiangxi (western Hunan) area inhabited by the Miao ethnic group. They took ethnographic photographs mainly based on the model of European anthropology. From 1934 to 1936, collaborating with the provincial government of Yunnan, the IHP successively sent Ling Chunsheng, Lu Yunkui, and Rui Yifu to undertake ethnographic fieldwork to investigate the Miao ethnic group there. Based on the 1933 fieldwork and an initial manuscript they had drafted in 1937, Ling and Rui revised and published their Report of Fieldwork on Ethnic Miao in Western Hunan in 1947. Having drawn inspirations from Torii’s

research methods, however, the central thesis of this revised work was sharply opposed to that of Torii’s. Torii paid more attention to the transnational origins of the Miao, drawing links between the non-Han ethnics to the races that were not originated in the territory of modern China. In contrast, Ling and Rui attempted to prove that “the Miao was the ‘Mao’ in ancient China,” a people whose ancestors originated in the Central Plains of China and who were among the allies of the Zhou people (the ancestral lineage in Chinese historical narrative of the Han).\textsuperscript{150} Ling and Rui’s ethnography was more attentive to the historical, ethnic relationship between the Miao and the Han, whose alleged linkage revealed a process of voluntary absorption since ancient times of the Han-centered Chinese culture by the Miao. Ling and Rui wanted to show the historical assimilation of Chinese practices and traits among the neighboring peoples. This narrative strategy was meant to ensure that these non-Han ethnics were granted historical authenticity as part of the modern Chinese nation.\textsuperscript{151} Nevertheless, in terms of methodology, Torii’s approaches to the studies of the \textit{lusheng}, copper drum, and embroidered patterns received recognition from not only some Chinese ethnographers but also the artist Pang Xunqin.

The Republican Chinese nationalist scholarship and ethnographic photography had a significant impact on the artist Pang’s perception of his contemporary southwestern mountain peoples. It is true that, as discussed above, Pang did perceive these people as his “Guizhou

\textsuperscript{150} Ling Chunsheng, Rui Yifu, \textit{Xiangxi diaocha baogao} (Report of Fieldwork on Miao ethnic in Western Hunan)(Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1947).

\textsuperscript{151} In fact, the procedure of exposing connections between the cultural practices of different people was a common Japanese practice. See Prasenjit Duara, \textit{Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern} (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 197.
compatriots” in the sense these people were citizens of the Chinese nation. But what kind of “citizens” exactly? Were they perceived as a group of marginal nationals and “secondary citizens,” or “citizens” culturally and socially equal to the Han people? How did Pang conceptualize the “folk art” he and Rui collected from the southwestern mountain people in relation to the art tradition of his native Han Chinese?

In their ethnographic fieldwork, as discussed above, the IHP scholars largely assumed that these southwestern mountain people could be native and yet primitive Chinese, in that their distinctive minzu (ethnic) cultural attributes could be seen as embodying the primitive state of the Han Chinese culture as “civilization.” Therefore, comparing with his European modernist counterparts, such as Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) who incorrectly associated the distinctive Breton clothing with a medieval past without drawing on specific archaeological or ethnographic knowledge, Pang was more familiar with the “scientific” methods used in the ethno-archaeological research conducted by the IHP scholars as they examined the intangible mentality of the Guizhou mountain people through their artifacts. Based on his knowledge drawn from his working experiences with the IHP scholars in the fields of archaeology and cultural anthropology, Pang suspected that some Miao patterns with the motifs of a cow head might have a shared origin with the so-called Tao-tie pattern from the bronzes of the Shang dynasty.\(^\text{152}\) In

\(^{152}\) Pang Xunqin, “Luetan tuan (Brief Talk on Designed Patterns),” Zhongyang ribao (Central Daily Newspaper), Chengdu, February 13, 1944.
the preface that Pang wrote in 1941 for his *Arts and Crafts Collection*, he made a chronology for the historical development of Chinese graphic design by characterizing different period styles of the patterns he observed from archaeological objects from the Neolithic to the late Qing. In his chronology, he argued, “it was since the Three Dynasties [that is, the Xia, Shang, and Zhou] that Chinese designed patterns became to embody distinctive Chinese characteristics.” That is to say, the primitive stage, or the root, of Chinese graphic design was dated to the period of the Three Dynasties – the so-called High Antiquity in Chinese historiography. “While studying painting and the history of Chinese patterns,” he attempted to “pick the indigenous characteristics and spirit of Chinese graphic design in Chinese arts and crafts.” In Pang’s *Chinese Design Collection* there are multiple graphic designs appropriating the pictographic elements of the Tao-tie pattern (Fig. 1.48). The third graphic design included in his *Arts and Crafts Collection* was also made by borrowing the Tao-tie motif from the bronze vessels of the Shang Dynasty (Fig. 1.49). In the index for this catalog, he explained, “the Tao-tie pattern is a major pattern in the graphic design of arts and crafts during the Three Dynasties (that is, the Xia, Shang, Zhou Dynasties).” In his discovery of the visual commonality between the Miao pattern and the Tao-tie pattern of the Shang Dynasty, Pang imaginatively constructed a historical connection between two cultures based on contemplating the patterns of contemporary Miao artifacts and the archaeological objects dated to the period of High Antiquity discovered in northern China.

During his assigned 1939–40 ethnographic expedition to Guizhou, Pang was committed to
collecting material culture from the southwestern multiethnic tribes as ethnographic specimens and to bringing them back to the studio for museum display and ethnographic study of the embroidered patterns on the ethnic clothing. This museological commitment has its roots in larger trends in historical studies at the time. The research methods of the IHP scholars led by Fu Sinian indicate that high value was placed on fieldwork and verifiable evidence in all sectors of the humanities. The meaning of the patterns remained largely unknown, though; to many of the Han Chinese researchers they were like a dead language, as they were not trained to read them. Pang saw the living human subjects clad in ethnic costume and their customs as crystallization of the primitive states of traditional Chinese culture. Without understanding the exact symbolic meanings of the embroidered, colorful Miao patterns on the clothes that he collected, Pang insisted that he “had no choice but to render these patterns exactly as they appear,” because he felt that “we [as Chinese]” had to “hurry and begin research” on “the limited resources” and to “find what few materials still exist.” Pang’s approach to these southwestern multiethnic subjects was based on his confidence in the anthropological “trick” of temporality: taking the synchronic as the diachronic, taking the contemporary Other as the specimens of the pre-modern past of the Han Chinese “we.”

The modernist search for the primitive in Republican China was tuned toward peoples and places that were ultimately connected in a geographical contiguosness, rather than located on another continent as in the European cases. However, the southwestern hinterland is a region that
had not been politically and militarily under effective control of the Nationalist central government until the mid-1930s and that was inhabited by a substantial number of non-Han ethnic groups. The wartime strategic position of the southwestern inner frontier reinforced the ambivalent attitudes toward the non-Han people there, as expressed in the popular discourses among the Han Chinese elite in Republican China. On one hand, compared to the modern Han people, the community of southwestern non-Han people was conceptualized as constituting a conservative—primitive—society, which was like a “gallery of ancient people.” An urge among Han Chinese scholars to see the primordial past of the Self in the primitive Other is countered and contained by the dominant narrative of evolutionism in which the Miao life is regarded as having been frozen for several thousand years. On the other hand, partially due to the history of successive processes of sinicization since the period of imperial China, many non-Han elites born in the southwest also held a similar belief that the inner frontier preserved the remnants of ancient Han Chinese culture. In 1946, the Miao ethnic intellectual Shi Qigui 石啓貴 (1896–1959), who assisted the IHP ethnologists Ling Chunsheng and Rui Yifu in 1933 on their first expedition and who would later become the aboriginal ethnic deputy of the National Congress, considered the Miao people to be “twentieth-century world citizens who were still living in the nineteenth century or several centuries ago.” Another ethnic Miao intellectual

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154 “Guoda daibiao fangwenji (5) tuzhu minzu daibiao de yuanwang [Interview of the Deputies of National
Yang Hanxian claimed in 1946, “everyone who understand the meaning of Chinese culture agrees that Miao-Yi ethnic cultures are historical remains of ancient Chinese culture. Therefore, we can study ancient Chinese culture by studying Miao-Yi cultures; to us [Chinese], there is no doubt that to respect Miao-Yi culture is *de facto* to respect Chinese culture.”\(^{155}\) The self-identification among southwestern ethnic elites with the Han culture, however, was not a clear-cut one: it is hard to tell whether it was voluntary (based on a historical process of cultural assimilation) or strategic for political and economic reasons.

It is true that Pang’s project of painting *Guizhou Mountain People* was innovative in Republican China due to his tremendous efforts made in the visual realm to bring into the public eye folk art made by “low-class” artisans. However, it is critical to examine the problem of the Han Chinese elite’s special interest in incorporating the category of folk art into the new system of China’s national art tradition, in terms of the perspectives and specific methods they applied to observe the non-Han ethnic art as an integral, subsystem of China’s traditional folk art. Even if these Miao people were to be considered as the Han Chinese’s “compatriots” and fellow “citizens” within the modern Chinese nation, they were not considered to be equal to the “civilized” Han Chinese citizens in urban areas, but rather as “less civilized” peripheral nationals or premodern “folk.” The folk art and ethnic art in China served also as ethno-historical materials

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representing the primordial state of the Han civilization. Based on a Han-centered national history of the Han assimilation of the Miao, the early twentieth century Han intellectuals were prepared to retrace the origins and historical developments of the Han Chinese and their historical assimilation of other ethnicities within the sovereignty of the Chinese nation. In Pang’s case, the indigenous cultures of the Miao not only provided empirical evidence of local conditions and contemporary reality, through their folk art they also embodied the creativity of the past in his national cultural imagination.

Methodologically, Pang’s depictions of the costumes of the Guizhou mountain people in his 1940s paintings and Zhang Daqian’s contemporaneous record of High Tang Buddhist wall painting involved a painterly type of collecting: inspired by yet different from the archaeologists and ethnographers at their time, these artists were primarily interested in painting. In Zhang’s case, he attempted to record—by copying onto canvas—hundreds of Buddhist mural compositions in the northwestern multicultural frontier of China, especially interested in retrieving or “restoring” (in his own term) the vividness of the line drawing and richness of coloration. The pictorial collecting that Pang’s project of painting Guizhou Mountain People involved was fulfilled through ethnographic documentation—by delineating and tinting—of the shapes and colors of the specific patterns on the clothes collected from contemporary ethnic women in the southwestern multicultural frontier.

It is even possible that, given his gentry family background, Pang was aware of the court
and local traditions in late imperial China of painting the southwestern ethnic people: Pang’s
granduncle Pang Hongshu was the *xunfu* 巡撫 (provincial governor) in charge of the Guizhou
province in the late Qing period. Meanwhile, Pang was selected to conduct the
national-sponsored investigation of Guizhou folk art in 1939 due to his earlier experience of
working as a researcher in the preparatory office of the National Central Museum, where he
studied the early Chinese graphic design of newly excavated archaeological objects. Pang took a
job with the preparatory office in 1938, after leaving the Peking National Art School, where he
had been working since leaving Shanghai in the mid-1930s. Both the National Central Museum
and the Peking National Art School had relocated to the southwest by this time, the former to
Kunming, Yunnan, and the latter to Hunan. At the preparatory office relocated in Qingyunjie,
Kunming, in 1939, Pang gained the opportunity to make direct contact with China’s historic
cultural relics, and to meet and mingle with numerous archaeologists and historians of ancient
Chinese culture. For instance, there he worked with excavated archaeological objects such as
bronzes from Anyang in the archaeologist and philologist Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 (1911–1966)’s
studio. Guided by these scholars as his colleagues then, systematically, Pang made line-drawing
copies of the ancient patterns that were painted or carved on the surfaces of the newly excavated
neolithic pottery, bronzes and medieval stone monuments. The four-volume *Chinese Design
Collection* 中國圖案集 and the single-volume *Arts and Crafts Collection* 工藝美術集 that

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Pang painted and compiled during the early 1940s demonstrate the specific way in which he experimented to transform the pictographic elements he traced from the ancient patterns and motifs with his European-inflected modernist sense of graphic design by tinting his drawings of the ancient patterns with a bold color scheme. In the third volume of *Chinese Design Collection*, a graphic design was made by appropriating the motif of “Drum Dance” from a rubbing made from a stone-carved tomb monument in Nanyang, Shandong (Fig. 1.50). It is very likely that Pang got access to this rubbing through Dong Zuobin (董作賓 1895-1963), a pioneering archaeologist working then at the IHP who had investigated and made rubbings from the stone-carvings of this monument in Nanyang *in situ* in 1933 and dated the stone-carvings there to the Han Dynasty. The rubbings made by Dong and his colleagues from the stone-carvings in Nanyang during their trip, including the one featuring the motif of “Drum Dance,” was compiled by his colleague Sun Wenqing (孫文青 1896-1986) and published in Nanjing. (Fig. 1.51) Meanwhile, the bold color scheme and the minimalist structure of the decorative forms of Pang’s graphic designs like this one remind us of the brightly colored paper-cut pastiches made by the French modernist Henri Matisse (1869–1954) in his late age.

157 As for the four volumes of *Chinese Design Collection* (Vol. 1, Shang and Zhou patterns; Vol. 2, Latter Shang and Warring States patterns; Vol. 3, Han patterns, using his own carvings and patterns, hinting at Han pictographic elements; Vol. 4, Han and post-Han), the designs lost during the Cultural Revolution were some of the best, including the cover of the first volume. A good selection is presented in *Pang Xunqin* (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2006).


159 See Sun Wenqing, *Nanyang Hanhuaxiang Huicun* (Compilation of Stone-Carvings in Nanyang) (Nanjing [Nanjing]: Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo, 1937). Moreover, even earlier than the publication of *Nanyang Hanhuaxiang Huicun*, a catalog entitled *Nanyang hanhuaxiang ji* (Collection of Stone-Carvings in Nanyang), compiled by Guan Baiyi, was already published in 1930 in Shanghai. The catalog includes an illustration of a rubbing made by Zhang Zhongfu from this specific stone carving as well.
(Fig. 1.52). Pang shared with Matisse an interest in exploring the emotional expressiveness of colors and forms. Yet, different from Matisse, Pang realized his modernist interest through the process of transforming ancient Chinese patterns into his perceived modern Chinese design. In the graphic design that Pang made by appropriating the motifs like “Drum Dance,” by adding bold and bright colors to the original patterns of Medieval China, Pang projected his imagination of the national spirit of the pre-Song period of ancient China—his perceived “golden age.”

Besides the preparatory office, some other important cultural institutes – including the IHP and the Xinan Lianda (the National Southwest Associated University)\(^{160}\) – were also relocated in Kunming. As a professor at the Xinan Lianda, Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1902–88) not only became Pang’s neighbor but also an enthusiastic friend who encouraged Pang to continue his innovative work after viewing these volumes in 1939.\(^{161}\) During his wartime sojourn in Kunming, Shen collected a number of lacquer wares, it seems that the two intellectuals shared their interest in a long-neglected history of ordinary, anonymous artisans’ artistic creations in ancient China, which foresaw the establishment of the studies on wuzhi wenhua 物質文化 or “material culture” as a field of art historical studies in the early years of the People’s Republic of

\(^{160}\) Xinan Lianda, or the National Southwest Associated University, located in Kunming during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression was an institution in exile for three prominent universities – Peking University, Tshinghua University and Nankai University –that fled from northern China. Due to the existence of this institution, Kunming became an intellectual center during the wartime. In contrast to the politicization of the Chongqing cultural scene, the Kunming community was the headquarters or enclave of the so-called “independent intellectuals” who, as self-proclaimed heirs to the May Fourth critical spirit, refused to side with either the KMT or the CCP, but were equally concerned with China’s survival, modernization and spiritual revival.

\(^{161}\) Shen Congwen became Pang’s neighbor during their wartime sojourn in 1939 in Kunming. Pang moved to Qingyunjie, a street in Kunming, in 1939, whereas Shen’s studio was located on the other side of the same street, facing Pang’s home. See Sun Yan, Pang Xunqin Qiu Di Lungao (Collected Essays on Pang Xunqin and Qiu Di) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2015), 133.
The scope of the ancient patterns included in these volumes not only demonstrates Pang’s archaeology-inflected expanded sense of history, but also his specific standard in selecting period styles. The four volumes of the *Chinese Design Collection* include volume 1, Shang and Zhou patterns; volume 2, Latter Shang and Warring States patterns; volume 3, Han patterns, tracing the pictographic elements of the Han dynasty; volume 4, Han and post-Han patterns. No patterns from the (more recent) Song, Yuan, Ming, or Qing dynasties were selected; that is, the ancient patterns included were of the period no later than Tang dynasty (618–907). In an essay on Chinese patterns that Pang published in 1944, he said: “I always feel that the Chinese nation before the Song dynasty was not a nation as it is now. In [my] imagination, it was a vigorous, brave, enthusiastic, and righteous nation. Why have [our] Chinese people been able to tirelessly fight the war of resistance against the Japanese for such a long period? Because, fortunately, in our vein there still remains the blood that could help us to recover our vigor, brevity, enthusiasm, and righteousness. Now, to rebuild our [national] art, the first step is to recover this vigorous, brave, enthusiastic, and righteous [national] spirit. The garden of [Chinese] art has been barren; it is necessary to absorb nutrition from various cultures to develop our own [art].” “The second step,” in his utopian, cosmopolitan vision, “is to construct the national art of the new age towards

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162 Due to the limited space of this chapter and overall structure of this dissertation, I will discuss about this interest shared by Pang and Shen further towards the end of the next chapter.
the future of the great unity of the world.”

Impacted by the archaeologists working in the preparatory office of the National Central Museum, Pang’s way of tracing China’s “national spirit” back to pre-Song early Chinese culture had its roots in the larger intellectual discourses in Republican China in the quest of the “spirit of the Han and the Tang.” Since the 1930s, there had been a common belief shared by a considerable number of nationalist scholars and artists that modern Chinese art could be revitalized through incorporating the art of the pre-Song period. As two separate dynasties in which the central government of imperial China assumed powerful control over the vast, multicultural western frontier, the Han (202–220 BCE) and the Tang (608–907) were particularly celebrated as the exemplary models of China as economically, politically, and militarily powerful and superior throughout the world. “The Spirit of the Han and the Tang Dynasties,” a 1944 article by the historian He Changqun 賀昌群 (1903–1973), best encapsulates the reasons why and the ways in which Chinese nationalist intellectuals inscribed highly symbolic meaningfulness to two separate episodes in the remote past of imperial China—that is, the Han and the Tang Empires. He wrote:

In the Han and the Tang dynasties, the [Chinese] nation used to have extremely strong vitality. Any nation with strong vitality [in history] understood the significances of [Confucian] rituals and laws for social harmony, and the importance of obedience and disciplines. [In these two periods, the people of the Chinese nation were] brave and vigorous; they respected the [Confucian] rituals and laws while being expressive

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163 Pang Xunqin, “Luetan tuan (Brief Talk on Designed Patterns),” Zhongyang ribao (Central Daily Newspaper), Chengdu, February 13, 1944.
in emotion. [They were] ashamed to do anything cunning and hypocritical. [During these two periods, what the Chinese nation created] could be described as a “barbaric civilization.” Today China really needs to be such kind of “barbaric nation.”

Here what deserves special attention is the “barbaric civilization” as a seemingly paradoxical phrasing – the “barbaric” quality desired for reviving an old civilization could be best characterized by what Pang called “vigor, brevity, enthusiasm, and righteousness” in 1944. In the age of the national crisis, how to revive the vital national “spirit of the Han and the Tang” as a kind of “barbaric civilization” in China’s glorious, “primitive” past became a common concern among the Nationalist government and intellectuals. Not only culturally but also politically, the Han and the Tang dynasties have been continuously taken as the historical models of China’s “strong national spirit” even after the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. An article published in 1948 further elaborates the understandings of “the spirit of the Han and the Tang dynasties” at the time:

The [political] unity [of the Chinese nation] achieved in the Han and the Tang dynasties is considered as the feature of a nation whose centripetal force for unity is stronger than its centrifugal force for division. In [China’s] national history, the time of unity was longer than the time of division. Unity was normal and the correct path [for the nation’s development], whereas division was abnormal and the sign of chaos. The Han and the Tang dynasties are the periods when the [Chinese] society was particularly orderly rather than chaotic. To promote the spirit of the Han and the Tang dynasties is to provide [our nation with] a compass to carry forward the national spirit and restore national confidence. . . . The spirit of the Han and the Tang dynasties constitutes the glorious historical fact of the

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164 He Changqun, “Hantang jingshen,” originally published in Dushu Tongxun (Report on Reading), 1944, Vol. 84; reproduced in He Changqun, Weijin Qingtan Sixiang Chulun (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1999), 162.
development of the whole Chinese nation.\textsuperscript{165}

Beginning in the early 1940s, some Chinese artists also projected the imagined spirit of the Han and the Tang by visual means for the wartime Chinese audiences, in order to present an art-historically grounded model for the nation’s salvation in the present and its cultural revival in the future. One significant goal of Zhang Daqian’s project of reproducing Dunhuang murals, for example, was to revive the High Tang style of figure painting, which falls into the category of *meishu kaogu* 美術考古 (art-historical archaeology; art archaeology). Art-historical archaeology was a new method of research introduced to China during the Republican period and further developed in the early 1940s by artists like Wang Ziyun 王子雲 (1897–1990), who participated in some government-sponsored expeditions in northwest China.\textsuperscript{166} From 1940 to 1944, Wang led an expedition sponsored by the Ministry of Education to make stele rubbings, note tomb motifs and architectural structures, and trace religious iconography from monuments and ruins as *yishu wenwu* (art [as] cultural relics) in Shaanxi, Gansu, Ningxia, and Qinghai provinces. About half of this four-year expedition was spent solely in Shaanxi, where Wang focused on the tomb monuments and ruins of the ancient capitals of Western Zhou, Qin, Han, and Tang dynasties.\textsuperscript{167} Another focus of the expedition was the Buddhist sculptures and murals...
in the Cave of Thousand Buddha in Dunhuang. Wang saw in these ancient remains “the spirit of native Chinese culture,” even if both the tomb sculptures and the Buddhist murals also embodied “influences from the West.” For the most part, somewhat in contrast to Wang, Zhang’s project of copying Dunhuang murals focused on the murals of the northwestern frontier that were made by anonymous artisans and that had few links to important historical figures or a grand historical narrative. Similar to Zhang, Pang exhibited a preference for the motifs of early periods no later than Tang dynasty, a preference that was based on his imagination about the “national spirit” embodied in these archaeological objects. In fact, in the early 1940s Zhang Daqian’s paintings of beautiful women based on the copies he made of the Dunhuang murals (Fig. 1.53) had directly inspired Pang’s 1940s project of making fine-line paintings of *Dancing Ladies of the Tang Dynasty* (Fig. 1.54).

As discussed above, a main purpose of the national-sponsored Investigation of Guizhou “folk art” conducted the IHP scholar Rui and Pang from 1939 and 1940 was ethno-historical – that is, to define the Han Chinese Self by studying whether the southwestern ethnic cultures were cultures of the pure “Other” or “alter-ego” of the Han Chinese culture. In the IHP online digital

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168 The seventh volume of *Han-Tang lingmu diaoke ji* is a catalog of the murals in the Cave of Thousand Buddha in Dunhuang.


archive of the ethnographic photographs of the “Miao” people taken in 1939 during Rui and Pang’s investigation in Guizhou, there are two photographic images of two rubbings featuring motifs of “Drum Dance” that Dong and his colleagues made in Nanyang, Shandong (as the Confucius’s native place), and published in the book that Sun Wenqing compiled. One of the two photographs, is exactly the same image based on which Pang made his boldly colored and highly cropped graphic design which gives the ancient pattern a modern context (Fig. 1.55 and Fig. 1.50, respectively). In this archive, moreover, these two photographic reproductions of the Nanyang rubbings, as a group of images of “cultural relics,” are placed right before a group of ethnographic photographs taken by Rui and his assistant Yong Shiheng earlier in 1933 in Guizhou which feature some Miao people performing ethnic rituals with copper drums (Fig. 1.56 – a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j in a row). This specific way of juxtaposing these two groups of photographic images forms a highly suggestive viewing context of cultural display and studies in which, working with a Han Chinese ethno-historical framework and building on the Japanese ethnographer Torii’s argument about the Miao-Han cultural exchanges made in the 1920s (based on the visual similarities of the “Miao copper drum” and the “Han ethnic feather drum”), the IHP scholars would compare and connect their perceived “primitive” Miao rituals to the early Han Chinese rituals performed in the Central Plains in northern China.

This anthropological and ethno-historical inflected way of comparing and connecting cultures, in turn, seems to have inspired Pang in forming his mode of displaying Guizhou
Mountain People and Dancing Ladies of the Tang Dynasty in his solo exhibition in 1943. On September 11 and 12, 1943, less than one year after the Third National Fine Arts Exhibition in Chongqing, Pang held a solo exhibition in Chengdu, Sichuan, where some pieces of Guizhou Mountain People and this series of Dancing Ladies of the Tang Dynasty were shown in parallel to the public for the first time. Pang claimed in his “Self-Analysis” published for this exhibition that his “taste” at the time “skewed toward the classical (gudian de 古典的).” Situated in this viewing context, Pang intended to display the two series—Guizhou Mountain People and Dancing Ladies of the Tang Dynasty—as a pair to convey to the wartime audiences his alternative vision—or redefinition—of the “classical” value of Chinese art as a national tradition. Most artists of the late Qing period in Shanghai, such as Ren Bonian 任伯年 (1840–96), pursued Chinese ink painting without feeling that their craft had to face the unprecedented challenge posed by European art and photography. They attempted to modernize Chinese ink painting from a sense of good faith that they were doing something authentically Chinese. To them, the way forward was a purposefully “neoclassical” Chinese painting, one that incorporated an intensely Chinese antiquarian taste for ancient epigraphy and that was rooted in Neo-Confucian practices among Han Chinese literati of the Song dynasty. However, the “neoclassicism” that Pang conceptualized through his wartime experiments was obviously of a different kind. He explained that the paintings on display in his 1943 solo exhibition “could be

171 Pang Xunqin, “Zipou (Self Analysis),” published in Zhongyang ribao (Central Daily), September 12, 1943.
roughly divided into two groups: one group depicting the (contemporary) Guizhou compatriots, the other the dancing costumes of the Tang Dynasty (of ancient China)." If the Dancing Ladies of the Tang Dynasty series represents Pang’s antiquarian desire to reimagine the classical, “extinct dance of the Han Chinese” (in his words), then the Guizhou Mountain People series epitomizes his impulse to rediscover an alternative national antiquity embodied in the attributes of the costumes and customs of his contemporary Guizhou compatriots in China.

Pang’s way of categorization explains partially why one of the visual focuses of some paintings of the series of Guizhou Mountain People is the clothing of these people. Displayed as a pair in the exhibition, the two series of images could serve as a painterly collection of China’s “classical” decorative art traditions. Even though the artist called his contemporary ethnic others as his “Guizhou compatriots,” in his painting the Miao people were not entirely perceived as modern citizens of China who were culturally equal to the Han majority at the time. Rather, one important reason why they were portrayed is that the clothing of them as ethnic others could be viewed as ethnographic specimens showcasing visually a kind of rediscovered “primitive (state of the) civilization” of the Han Chinese “we.”

1.4. Trans-Media Appropriation: From Ethnographic Photography to Guizhou Mountain People

According to current art-historical scholarship on Guizhou Mountain People, Pang based

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172 Ibid.
this series of paintings on a number of European-style plein air sketches drawn from life that the artist had made during his 1939 expedition to Guizhou.\(^\text{174}\)

That is, Pang’s paintings of *Guizhou Mountain People* could be conceptually and technologically defined as “drawings from life.”\(^\text{175}\)

However, it is worth noting that in Pang’s memoirs, he mentions instances during the 1939–40 expedition in which he was not given permission to sketch various individuals but in which his research partner was permitted to take a photograph.\(^\text{176}\) In fact, as the anthropologist Wang Peng-hui points out, Pang’s paintings of *Guizhou Mountain People* were not made based on “drawings from life” but rather represented a creative appropriation from a number of ethnographic photographs taken by Rui during their expedition in Guizhou from late 1939 to early 1940.\(^\text{177}\)

By focusing on the unfolding role the IHP ethnographic photographs played in Pang’s project of painting the Guizhou mountain people, my research in the following explores the impact of Republican Chinese neocolonial expansion on Pang’s primitive cosmopolitanism, in comparison with Paul Gauguin (1848-1903)’s fin de siècle project of painting French colonial Tahiti as a French counterpart in which photography also played a crucial role.

Photography was introduced into China in 1844 as a new visual media and technology. Since the 1920s and 1930s, to establish the position of photography as “art” in China, some

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\(^{174}\) Huang Zongxian, *Dayouhuan shidai de jueze—kangzhan shiqi dahoufang meishu yanjiu* (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2000), 113.


\(^{176}\) It is worth questioning the truthfulness of this statement: were the photographs, in fact, taken without the consent of the photographed? And/or were the photographs perhaps taken surreptitiously?

urban elites had been experimenting with *yishu sheying* 藝術攝影 (artistic photography), which was paradigmatically similar to the photographic pictorialism prevalent in mid-nineteenth-century Europe. Early Chinese photographers who engaged in photographic pictorialism frequently drew on the aesthetics of traditional literati painting. The most influential among them was Pang’s friend Lang Jingshan 郎靜山 (1892–1995), who had originally trained in traditional literati landscape painting. Lang’s *huayi sheying* 畫意攝影 (photographic pictorialism) epitomizes his celebration of the traditional motif of cloudy mountain in the poetic style of traditional Chinese landscape painting. As in the case of Paul Gauguin and some other European modernists at the turn of the twentieth century, Pang’s position in the debate over the value of photography to art was contradictory. On one hand, he dismissed photography as a medium that was mechanical and unexpressive, claiming that “painting would never be replaced by photography” as the technical character of photography seemed to preclude subjective judgment and individual imagination, all of which were central to his European-inflected modernist credo as well as the traditional literati concept of art in China. To him, a true “painter should not be acting like a camera,” in that “the inner world of a painter” and a painter’s “imagination” could only be captured by his or her “own brush” “no matter how

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Due to these beliefs, he cracked a joke in 1943 about two of his friends, the French-trained oil painter Yan Wenliang 顏文樑 (1893–1988) and the photographer Lang Jingshan: “Yan Wenliang depicted a butcher’s shop, bedroom, and kitchen on a tiny painting surface; he painted it so meticulously that it looks like a photo. Lang Jingshan’s photography is blurry, which looks like an ink wash painting. [If so,] why does not Jingshan [simply] study painting? [And] why does not Wenliang [simply] study photography?” To Pang, painting and photography as different media have different specialties and aesthetic problems to solve. Our contemporary understanding of photography as an agent of subjectivity that always bears the mark of its maker and its time and place was an insight that neither the French post-impressionist Gauguin nor the Chinese modernist Pang Xunqin shared.

On the other hand, Pang was unequivocally appreciative of Rui’s work as photographer during their expedition of late 1939 to early 1940. He wrote: “in order to facilitate the research work, Rui Yifu of the IHP was temporarily assigned to assist me as he was a specialist in ethnic minority languages and was also experienced with fieldwork. Moreover, he knew how to take photographs. With his assistance, I was much more relieved.” Rui’s main mission was to catalogue the material culture of the non-Han peripheral nationals in situ. His assistant Yong Shiheng was under instructions from Rui to capture, with precision, the Guizhou mountain

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182 A short essay by Pang Xunqin, originally published in Huaxi Wanbao (Western China Evening Newspaper); reproduced in Pang Xunqin, Lun yishu, sheji, meiyu, 60.
183 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zougulaide, 182.
people’s daily, festival, and ritual activities, as well as ceremonial costumes, ritual objects, and any other remarkable cultural artifacts that the researchers were to study and, when and where possible, collect. A large number of the photographs taken from the 1939–40 expedition are blurry, which largely seem to have been photographed while moving. Judging by the sometimes annoyed or bemused expressions on the faces of photographed subjects, some, if not all, were interrupted by the researchers as they went about their daily chores, or asked to pose, albeit briefly, from multiple vantage points, so that the researchers could properly catalog their dress, ornamentation, tools, or activities. The photographer seems to have followed a policy of first photographing material objects while in use and then again, separately, if possible, as isolated objects presumably for purposes of continued formal study (Fig. 1.57 and Fig. 1.58, respectively). A large percentage of Rui’s photographs are in pairs or larger groupings. Such series range from those taken during rituals or large community events to repeated views of moving figures, perhaps with the purpose of documenting select objects in motion. In the case of rituals, festivals, and other community events, the activities engaging specific objects were captured from various points of view—front, side, and back—perhaps with the purpose of documenting not only the select objects in motion but also the dynamic movements, no matter whether the persons photographed were dancing or walking (Figs. 1.59 - 1.61).

Visual analysis of Pang’s paintings of Guizhou mountain people suggest that he

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184 Pang’s memoirs describe that he and Rui were openly referred to as “embroidery lace dealers” in the very first stop of their trip (suburban Guiyang), so transparent was their interest in acquiring the good favor, which they solicited with candies, and the material goods of the people they encountered. Ibid.
appropriated widely from the visual elements of Rui’s photographs taken during their expedition. In a time of expansion by the Nationalist government and its research institutes into the multiethnic southwest inner frontier of China, the medium of photography provided Pang with a crucial element of control and visual privilege. Ethnographic photography assumed an important role in Pang’s procedure of painting *Guizhou Mountain People* after his expedition: it functioned as a mimetic visual source that documented and authenticated the appearance and culture of the non-Han ethnic people, which he could easily reference at any time. Yet, as I will demonstrate in what follows, in many cases this seemingly “scientific” aspect of ethnographic photography was actually romantic and imagined in nature. Many of the photographic images of the Guizhou people were staged for the photographs.

The “traces of collage,” accurately described by Tao Yongbai, are absolutely present in many pieces in the series of *Guizhou Mountain People*.185 The attribute of collage, however, is by no means a failed aftermath but rather a visual strategy persistently applied in a range of ways in Pang’s experiments to fulfill the artist’s modernist desire to refashion Chinese painting from the early 1930s through the 1940s. From his earlier paintings made in Shanghai—*Such is Paris* (1931) (Fig. 1.6) and *Such is Shanghai* (1931)(Fig. 1.62)—to the series of *Guizhou Mountain People* made in the wartime southwestern inner frontier, fundamentally, collage is a visual language that continually epitomizes Pang’s vision of the vastly changing themes before and

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185 Tao Yongbai, “Dui Pang Xunqin de lishi sikao (Historical Consideration on Pang Xunqin),” *Zhuangshi*, no. 3 (August, 1994), and republished in *Yishu chizi de qiusuo*, 18.
during the war. In this sense, many paintings of *Guizhou Mountain People* could be considered to be Pang’s painterly appropriation of Rui Yifu’s fieldwork photographs, *collages* of character portraits drawn from ethnographic types. In Pang’s paintings, separate elements are appropriated from multiple ethnographic photos in order to composite a painting. But the techniques and strategies through which these originally separate elements are painted, rearranged, or respatialized are crucial to the innovations made in Pang’s creative compositions. How and by what means did Pang reimage the peoples, native places, and lives of the southwestern non-Han ethnic groups in his painterly appropriation of ethnographic photographs?

One of the earliest paintings in Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* series, *Huangguoshu Waterfall* (Fig. 1.2), represents his most arresting appropriation and manipulation of Rui’s photographs. In the painting, a woman carrying a shoulder yoke can be seen taking momentary respite from her work and looking out towards Huangguoshu’s cascading falls. The painting relies on a minimum of two of Rui Yifu’s photographs: the first, a photograph taken in February 1940 of a Zhongjia ethnic woman turning to her left, before the entry of a house, and the second, an undated photograph of the Huangguoshu waterfall (Fig. 1.63 and Fig. 1.64, respectively). The former photograph captures a (perhaps posed) gesture of a Zhongjia ethnic woman’s day-to-day labor *within* her secular, specific living environment: she is framed in a natural

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186 It is worth noting that the second photograph has been left unattributed and undated within the IHP’s archive, but one might assume, because the waterfall’s location is in the Anshun, Guizhou province, that the photograph is a Rui Yifu image from the expedition. It is documented in Rui Yifu and Pang Xunqin’s fieldwork that they did indeed visited the well-known Huangguoshu waterfall and took pictures of the waterfall. Wang Peng-hui, “Ethnographic Encounters in the Marketplace: Rui Yifu’s Ethnographic Photography in Southwestern China”, 14.
surrounding not alienated from her. The dirt ground where she stands, the stairs toward the door where a puppy stands, and the wood table at which she looks should all be reasonably familiar elements in this woman’s life. In contrast, the woman in Pang’s painting is isolated from her daily life and relocated to a poetic space of natural landscape. A gesture captured from her daily laborious life is abstracted into a moment of her contemplation in front of the majestic natural landscape. As for the waterfall, insofar as Pang has painted the falls from a vantage point nearly identical to that seen in Rui’s photograph, there seems to be very little ambiguity as to whether the photograph may be a referent. By silhouetting the woman against what was otherwise Rui’s figure-free scenic view, Pang sutured together portrait and landscape so as to embolden his characterization of the Guizhou mountain people. Pang’s paintings of the Guizhou mountain people, even when the subjects are not identified as such, are romanticized translations of Rui’s photographs.

The resemblance of Pang’s painting’s perched figure to the former photograph’s central figure is nearly exact. Pang has even transferred the peculiar flop of the wrap the woman wears on her head, as well as the tilt of her yoked baskets, which, on first viewing, may have simply the product of an awkward tipping of the picture plane, a way to reveal what lay within the baskets. Furthermore, the dirt carried in the woman’s baskets in Rui’s photograph was transformed into red fruits in Pang’s painting. This specific iconographical alteration in Pang’s painting, to its contemporary audience, may have borne an intriguing relation to traditional iconography of
artistic exchange in Inner Asia, an iconography that inhabits a cultural borderland that synthesizes the Chinese and the European. Whether in the High-Tang Dunhuang Buddhist mural paintings featuring a heavenly attendant (Fig. 1.65) or the Quattrocento pictures of *Florentia figurata* in Florentine civic paintings (Fig. 1.66), a young woman bearing ripe fruits and vegetables is an iconography that conventionally allegorizes something blissful for a community, especially common wealth and fortune.\(^{187}\)

According to the ethnic classification system of the Republican period, the female subject featured in the photograph referenced by Pang was a Zhongjia ethnic woman. The photograph was taken in Huaxi 花溪 (literally: “floral river”), a scenic tourist spot famous among the Han Chinese elites at the time. When Pang and Rui arrived in Huaxi, they found that there were multiple southwestern ethnicities inhabiting Huaxi. The ethnographers at the time had divided the majority of these people into two ethnic groups, the Zhongjia and the Miao; ethnographers from Daxia University in Guizhou had been producing a lot of research on these southwestern ethnic minorities. With assistance from these ethnographers, Pang and Rui visited a local family of Zhongjia people in Huaxi to record “the ethnic art and customs of the Zhongjia ethnicity.”\(^{188}\) Pang learned from the ethnographers that “the Zhongjia ethnic people had been highly sinicized, yet their ethnic art tradition retains certain characteristics of their own ethnicity.”\(^{189}\) However,

\(^{189}\) Ibid.
based on his own observations during his stay with the Zhongjia family, Pang found that,

the style of the ordinary garments of the Zhongjia women looks very similar to that of the Han women of the late Qing period. [They wear] right-lapel coats embroidered with cross-stitched patterns and trousers. [Along] all the edges of the sleeves and trousers there are cross-stitched patterns, but the style of these patterns is different from that of the Miao. Some of the Zhongjia ethnic families are comparatively rich, and, comparatively, there are more literate people. In the time of the Qing dynasty some people of Zhongjia ethnicity even passed the imperial examinations to become scholar-officials.¹⁹⁰

In accordance with local custom, an unwedded girl would braid her hair in a circle around the head, tying it with wool thread, while those who were married would add a kerchief.¹⁹¹ The selected model for Huangguoshu Waterfall (Fig. 1.2) was a married woman. Since the early 1930s, the Zhongjia women, influenced by the New Life Movement that had been launched nationwide in 1934 by the KMT government, had changed their apparel to the modern style featuring a knee-long blouse, with a chest cover and trousers.¹⁹² That is to say, actually, the “ethnic characteristics” of the Zhongjia women’s clothing that Pang captured in his painting recall the style of certain late Qing Han female fashions, which combined the ethnic characteristics of the Manchu and the Han. Despite his knowledge of the historical sinicization of the southwestern multiethnic people under the reign of the Qing Empire, Pang’s Huangguoshu Waterfall—a feminized allegorical image of the modern Guizhou mountain people—actually betrays the mixed reality of the historical multiculturalism in this region, rather than portraying a

¹⁹⁰ Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolaide, 187.
¹⁹² Yincan qiancai: Guizhou shaoshu minzu fushi, 55.
pure Han or non-Han culture.

Along the diagonal from upper right to lower left, the empty space left between the waterfall and the woman creates a poetic atmosphere of mist rising. It could be argued that, inspired by Gauguin’s primitivism in works such as *Mysterious Water* (*Pape Moe*) (1891–93)(Fig. 1.67), Pang might have found in the image an exotic variant of the traditional European trope that aligned the Feminine with Nature. This trope was typified by recurrent scenes of women at waterfalls in nineteenth-century oil painting from Ingres (Fig. 1.68) to Courbet (Fig. 1.69). However, the compositional attributes of *Huangguoshu Waterfall* likely reminded its knowledgeable Chinese viewers of the poetic landscapes in Southern Song court paintings with the theme of lyric journey, such as *Chanting Poem Along the Bank* 湖畔行吟 (Fig. 1.70), a silk scroll dated to the thirteenth century and traditionally attributed to Liang Kai 梁楷. By means of their simplified composition and lack of narrative details, these paintings invite the viewer to imagine the form of landscape as the resonance of the depicted figure’s spiritual world or the projection of his emotional response to the landscape. ¹⁹³ Unlike its Southern Song compositional models, however, the lyrical human subject depicted in Pang’s painting is not a male of elite status—neither a retired official nor a monk, the figures traditionally represented in lyrical Southern Song paintings. The subject depicted is an ordinary female member of the Guizou mountain people, a group of marginalized nationals of modern China in the southwestern interior.

¹⁹³ James Cahill explores the visual means in which Southern Song painters managed to create poetic painting that resonates with the inner world of the viewer. James Cahill, *The Lyric Journey: Poetic Painting in China and Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).
From the viewer’s point of view, the size of the figure made her as prominent as the magnificent natural landscape that she is facing. However, comparing to the *rückenfigur*, in Caspar David Friedrich’s *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (Fig. 1.71), who assumes a position as both the master of and yet also in awe of the expansive landscape of the sublime Nature, the standpoint of the Guizhou mountain woman in the panoramic view is much lower. Her gesture looks more reserved and humbler than the *rückenfigur* in *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, which nevertheless assigns to her a sense of dignity. As an ordinary mountain woman taking a short break from her daily labor, she is contemplating what she is viewing, hearing, and feeling when she is facing the majestic landscape of her native lands.\(^{194}\)

Pang rendered the coloring of the woman’s clothing in the same grays and blues as the water, rocks, and mountains that fill the majority of his picture plane. The only alternative accent of color in the painting is found in the bounty of the woman’s baskets. Importantly, Pang left the painting’s composition open, refusing to bridge the divide between the woman and the powerful landscape in the background. Yet, Pang resolved this juxtaposition of the figure and landscape symbolically through his play of colors and through the unambiguous placement of housing settlements in the far distance. By these visual means, Pang presented the majestic natural scene as a symbol of the Guizhou mountain woman’s constitution and her people.

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However, Pang’s works are not so easily labeled under romanticism. Compared to Friedrich’s romanticist composition, Pang’s composition lessens the theatricality, expressed through the figure’s pose and the dynamic natural landscape. Friedrich’s juxtaposition of the magnificent, yet restless, landscape with the stick-holding gentleman standing on the mountain peak leaves a contradictory impression with the viewer, “suggesting at once mastery over a landscape and the insignificance of an individual within it.” In Friedrich’s painting, as in Pang’s, “we see no face, so it is impossible to know whether the prospect confronting the young man is exhilarating, or terrifying, or both.” But, in contrast with Friedrich’s composition, in Pang’s painting the encounter of the mountain woman and Nature is undoubtedly much quieter and mutually harmonious. Instead of indulging in the beauty of the landscape with a strong desire to unite spiritually with Nature, as what the depiction of the lyrical human subject in Friedrich’s painting suggests, the composed yet tired-looking pose of the mountain woman implies that she is just taking a short break from her laborious work by viewing the landscape.

Pang’s series of paintings during the 1940s can convincingly be shown, again and again, to have appropriated striking visual elements from Rui’s photographs of the 1939–40 expedition. Such photo-to-painting translation and alteration to some extent defined Pang’s *Guizhou*
Mountain People series. Pang’s frequent appropriation of Rui’s photographs is central to our understanding of Pang’s paintings in relation to the ethnographic imaginary. Pang’s painterly translations marked liberties, particularly his reimagining and redistribution of the physical features, ornamental details, and, perhaps most strikingly, landscapes of Rui’s photographs, which demand to be questioned in politically and psychologically probing terms. To best suit his own representational purposes, in cases such as Huangguoshu Waterfall, Pang populated grandiose photographed landscapes with the photographed subjects of less imposing scenes, while, in other cases, he displaced photographed subjects to an abstracted and, as such, even more geographically disorienting space. For example, in Pang’s 1944 ink drawing entitled Mother and Child, he clearly feminized and refashioned the figures of Rui’s February 1940 photograph of the profile view of a floral Miao man and child (Fig. 1.29 and Fig. 1.72). Despite Pang’s radical change to the man’s gender, he maintained the proportions, contours, and even the general patterning of the baby carrier, as well as the overall positioning of the pair’s bodies. A similar ethnographic impulse links the painting and the photograph, evident in Pang’s meticulous attention to the details and structure of the particular object of material culture that was most likely the focus of Rui’s photography in the first place: the exquisite baby carrier.\(^{197}\)

Much like Pang’s displacement and resituating of Rui’s yoke-carrying farmer’s wife within Huangguoshu Waterfall, here Pang excised, transformed, and displaced the floral Miao man and

\(^{197}\) It is also worth noting that the IHP archive of the expedition includes numerous photographs in which the primary subject of the photograph is a baby carrier worn by a parent or another adult with the child in tow.
child in Rui’s photograph from their mundane domestic setting. However, unlike in *Huangguoshu Waterfall*, Pang used the ink-mediated format of traditional *baimiao* (fine-line drawing with ink brush on silk or rice paper) for his *Mother and Child*, thereby leaving the reimagined figures floating in a scenic void. As such, the result is an isolated yet intimate portrait of the ornate, imaginatively enhanced and feminized beauty of the floral Miao. Meanwhile, some photo-to-painting translations can be found in some other cases in Pang’s oeuvre in which he first transformed and abstracted Rui’s photographed subjects in an ink or watercolor figural study, and then later transplanted the figure (or figures) into one imposing painterly scene (see Fig. 1.26, Fig. 1.73 and Fig. 1.23 for one such series). The piece of *Mother and Child* in fine-line ink drawing might also have served as a study to be transplanted later into a watercolor composition with lush natural landscape.

In addition to Pang’s penchant for displacing a given photographed subject from his or her photographed setting, in some other cases he also recomposed the space of the landscapes and background settings in Rui’s photographs. That is, in some of Pang’s drawings and paintings, unlike in *Huangguoshu Waterfall* or *Mother and Child*, he retained the selected photographed elements—figure(s) or setting(s)—only to exaggerate and distort these elements in order to create a pictorial space according to his own representational purposes. For example, in *Drinking*, a 1941 watercolor, Pang depicted a group of young women, loosely gathered around a table at
the side of a dirt road, flanked by a series of straw- or similarly thatched houses (Fig. 1.11). The IHP archive includes a photograph of white Miao women (Fig. 1.74) that resonates with Pang’s painting in terms of subject matter and composition. Admittedly, the similarities may at first seem to be a happy coincidence, for surely the photographer and the painter worked in tandem as they went about cataloging their expedition. However, close inspection confirms that Pang’s image is consciously drawn from Rui’s photograph, especially given the general distribution of women and structures within the scene and, more strikingly, the women’s peculiar arrangement around the table on which can be seen drinking cups. Pang altered the referenced photograph’s original scene in his painting. Obviously, he removed the photograph’s periphery male figures. Meanwhile, in the middle ground of his painting, Pang added a walking female figure, whose silhouette and gesture echo the left male figure in another photograph in the IHP archive. (Fig. 1.75) Perhaps to compensate for the resulting marked isolation of the women on the road, he also added trees. A tree motif, to offset the represented figures, is presented throughout the series, as can be seen, for example, to the right of the yoke-carrying woman in his *Huangguoshu Waterfall*.

Photography offered Pang a surrogate world of “authentic” native experience in the Guizhou province in the southwestern inner frontier where the non-Han ethnicities were

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198 Elsewhere Michael Sullivan referred to another version (with slight alterations in brushstroke) of this painting *Miao Girls*, and dated it to 1944. *Miao Girl* was painted with ink on paper, and *Drinking Water* was painted on silk. It is quite possible that Sullivan owns his own copy of the work, as Pang was known to have made several versions of works within the series. See Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-century China*, 95.
undergoing an intensive process of sinicization executed by the Nationalist government. This surrogate experience enabled him to form an ethnographic imagery that was “native” and yet “primitive” Chinese. Here, Edward Said’s description of “imaginative geography” as “the invention and construction of a geographical space,” is applicable to an exploration into the type of probing political and psychological questioning of Pang’s appropriations. Pang’s recomposing and repopulating of Rui’s photographed scenes and figures can be understood to have imaginatively reconfigured Guizhou’s geography. Reference to Said’s concept of imaginative geographies permits a more attentive understanding of Pang’s appropriations of Rui’s photographs. Pang’s painterly reconfiguration of the photographed visual elements secured an alluring and temporal-spatially inaccessible place in the minds of urban onlookers interested in the multiethnic southwestern mountain people.

Pang’s reimagining of the sights and locales in Rui’s photographs could be seen as an early, painterly example of the “ethnographic imaginary.” The neologism ethnographic imaginary is found in contemporary theorizations of the way in which early, popular films both fantasized and reified misinformed conceptions of the far-away peoples of ethnographic research. In contemporary theorization of the ethnographic imaginary, the idea is defined as “a broad historical and cultural construct for examining the construction of ethnographic realism and

ethnographic spectacles.”²⁰⁰ By wresting the idea from its current filmic monopolization and thinking of it as a conceptual tool for understanding a much broader practice of representational fancy with ethnographic subjects, we can see how Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* series is paradigmatic of the mechanisms by which the ethnographic imaginary functions.

Chapter 2. Transnational Approaches: Entangled National and Social Concerns in *Guizhou Mountain People*

2.1. Painting Native Women in Traditional Costumes: Nationalist Gender Politics and Pang’s Neo-classicism in *Guizhou Mountain People*

Complementing the ethnographic eye in Pang’s 1940s experimental “Chinese paintings” featuring the multiethnic “folk” in the southwestern inner frontier was a *gendered* tendency. As perceptively noted by Michael Sullivan, who got acquainted with Pang during their shared wartime sojourn in southwestern China, “the Miao people depicted in his paintings are rarely men.” In Sullivan’s words, “most” of the *Guizhou Mountain People* paintings represent “young, attractive women,” epitomizing “the ideal feminine beauty in Pang’s mind” that was “expressed as well in the series of brilliant paintings of *Dancing Ladies of the Tang Dynasty*” that Pang painted during the same period.201 On September 11 and 12, 1943, less than one year after the Third National Fine Arts Exhibition in Chongqing, Pang held a solo exhibition in Chengdu, Sichuan, where some pieces of *Guizhou Mountain People* and *Dancing Ladies of the Tang Dynasty* were shown in parallel to the public for the first time.202 Before the show, the prettiness of the women in these two series of paintings had generated some negative responses from critics, who discerned a politically degenerate tendency in the artist’s “pictures of pretty women” (*hua*

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202 During the wartime displacement in Chongqing and Chengdu, from October 1941 to February 1946, Pang Xunqin held four solo exhibitions in total.
Indeed, Pang’s special interest in painting female subjects might have appeared to be driven by the same male passion for painting female beauty that had gripped the court of the Tang dynasty and the literati circles and commercial centers of the Ming dynasty. In the dynastic practices of elite connoisseurs and collectors in imperial China, the majority of whom belonged to the Chinese male educated class, paintings of women were “so unstudied and so misunderstood” that “we ‘cannot even tell the portraits from the pinups.’” As the main “Chinese writers on painting,” as James Cahill noted, “when they mentioned pictures of women at all,” they would refer to them “loftily and without differentiation as shinu hua 仕女畫 or ‘paintings of gentle-women.’ And no one had written seriously about them.” The modern knowledge and modes of experiencing ancient “Chinese painting” are directly connected with the tradition of connoisseurship and the taste of collecting in the imperial period. The traditional system of connoisseurship epitomizes a hegemony of taste constructed by the dynastic courts and circles of literati elites—which together constituted the major art patrons in imperial China. This system filtered and rejected other diverse traditions of painting, such as Chan (Zen) Buddhist painting, Zhe School painting, as well as meiren hua 美人畫 (paintings of beautiful women). This last category was not highly regarded by the court patrons whose tastes best represented the orthodox Chinese attitudes toward painting and the value system of “high culture.” In some cases,

204 James Cahill, Pictures for Use and Pleasure: Vernacular Painting in High Qing China (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2010), 2.
nevertheless, the paintings rejected by this system would become mainstream in the traditions of connoisseurship outside of China. All the aforementioned kinds of “rejected” paintings had been transported to Japan and enthusiastically appreciated by Japanese audiences for centuries. As a secular kind of commercial painting, *meiren hua* was manufactured to be highly formulated and frequently (but not always) pornographic. Even if Pang’s paintings were not equated with the eye-pleasing *meiren hua*, his images of beautiful women would have appeared to certain audiences as possessing a sweet simplicity far from the harsh reality of wartime China.

Entirely aware of the potential critiques, Pang responded in “Self-Analysis,” an essay he published in *Central Daily* on September 12, 1943 (that is, the second day of the exhibition), that he could only “gratefully refuse this new ‘official designation.’” He declared, “not only am I not an aesthete, I actually oppose aestheticism.” “Aestheticism” had been introduced into China’s east coastal urban areas like Shanghai and Beijing in the 1920s as a literary and art trend popular at the turn of the twentieth century in European countries including England and France. Pang’s close friend Shao Xunmei was a writer who represented the school of “aestheticism” in prewar Shanghai. Shao advocated for a nonpartisan attitude toward literature and art making, centralizing the aesthetic value of art without a particular political stance—neither the nationalist ideology promoted by the Nationalist party-state, nor the proletarian ideology promoted by the

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205 Pang Xunqin, “Zipou (Self-Analysis),” published in *Zhongyang ribao* (Central Daily), September 12, 1943.
206 Ibid.
Communist or pro-Communist liberal Leftists. In an age of violent turmoil, the cultural environment of which was suffused with revolutionary rhetoric, disparate groups were busily formulating programs and theories to awake the people, educate the masses, and build the nation, the political insensitiveness of some “aesthetes” of this camp, who emphasized on the sensual pleasure aroused by artworks, was severely fought against by Leftist critics, writers, and artists as the national crisis gradually rose. The Leftists, as a group of pro-proletarian cultural revolutionaries, tended to consider the aesthetic tenet “art for art’s sake” as a manifestation of the morally degenerated indulgence among the capitalist elite of the urban petite bourgeoisie.

The social function of aestheticism, to the Leftists, might have resembled that of the yuefenpai (calendar posters) portraying beautiful pinups in modern garb, which were popular in Shanghai, Canton, and Hong Kong in the 1920s and 1930s, the “golden age of the Chinese bourgeoisie.” As a form of commercial art, the color lithographic posters advertising Quaker Oats and cigarettes as “nationalistic commodities” ushered in the years of the “Shanghai modern.” The posters, with their unprecedented use of female bodies, represent a medley of cosmopolitan consumerism and derivative cultural patterns of Euro-American high modernism. A cigarette poster by the famous yuefenpai painter Hang Zhiying (1900–47), exemplifies how women were almost all depicted as “cheerfully smiling” and fashionably dressed “modern girls,” displayed as “visually pleasing” objects in the yuefenpai posters from the

207 Shao Xunmei, “Secai yu qizhi (Colors and Banners),” release words for Jinwu yuekan (January, 1929).
early 1930s. (Fig. 2.1) In the mass production of these highly formulated “glossy and candy-colored” posters, what was changing rapidly was the up-to-date clothing fashion of the depicted female subjects.

Before the War officially broke out, there had been harsh Leftist criticism against the production, mass reproduction, and spread of such ultra-commercial images of “beautiful modern girls” in the overtly westernized urban culture of China’s east coast. The images appeared in calendar posters, cigarette advertisements, and certain modern paintings in the realm of “fine arts” that drew inspiration from the commercial images. On February 21, 1930, the liberal Leftist intellectual Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936) gave a lecture at the Chinese University of the Arts (Zhonghua yishu daxue), a private school founded in Shanghai by Japanese-trained yoga artists Chen Baoyi 陳抱一 (1893–1945) and Ding Yanyong 丁衍庸 (1902–78). In this talk, Lu discussed his thoughts on the future development of modern art in China. There is no extant visual record of this talk—neither photograph nor video—but we do have written notes taken by three artists. Lu Xun presented his audience with a well-conceived juxtaposition of several paintings of women: a Shanghai yuefenpai depicting “a fashionable Shanghai lady”; a reproduction of Des glaneuses (Gleaners, 1857) (Fig. 2.2) by Jean-Francois Millet (1814–75), which featured three female gleaners in rural France; and an oil painting from the Soviet Union.

of a female worker. Lu argued that, compared to the yuefenpai images, the latter two paintings of women could be seen as “art for society” rather than “art for art’s sake.” They were “socially meaningful” because, by representational means, they reminded the viewers of the “social events” happening in contemporary life to which otherwise the masses would have not paid much attention. Therefore, he argued, these latter images would evoke in the viewers “positive, subliminal thoughts and emotions.” Through his provocative juxtaposition of these three paintings of women, Lu criticized the image of the fashionable Shanghai lady in yuefenpai as “morbid” and “unhealthy,” revealing its nature as an image of modern, Western, urban capitalism and consumerism. In Lu’s observation, “it is not that there is no healthy woman in China nowadays, but that the yuefenpai [chose to] depict morbid women as extremely delicate and fragile.” Therefore, he argued that the “morbid state” represented by these female images cannot characterize the society but the painters [who made these images].” To get rid of this “morbid state,” Lu maintained, it is crucial for the Chinese “painters nowadays” to “paint New Women” and “highlight the beauty of New Women” based on solid training in “skills.”210 Lu’s opinion represents the Chinese Leftist idea at the time that the highly commercialized images of “New Women” circulated through yuefenpai was primarily “playthings” to be consumed by the bourgeois class as a “leisure class.” In contrast, Lu encouraged Chinese modern artists to draw inspiration from the realistic representation of the poor by the “French farmer painter” Millet.

According to Lu, the “universal” and “deep” humanistic meaning that “the poor peasants cherish the result of their laborious work” was effectively conveyed by the female image. Millet’s Christian-inflected humanist concerns with the social welfare as conveyed through realistic visual means, in Lu’s reading of *Des glaneuses*, was proletarian in nature, because the social meaning of the painting was “understandable” to “all people”—including Chinese workers and peasants. Another example that Lu introduced to the young Chinese artists was an oil painting of a female worker by “an artist of the Soviet Union.” Without existing visual documentation of Lu’s lecture, again, it is hard to identify the exact painting that he talked about. What we know from the lecture notes taken by a student is that the painting depicts a “bust of a young female looking to her left, with her right hand on her waist.” He called this image of the proletarian female worker a painting of the “New Woman.” It is quite possible that the painting that Lu was talking about was *A Miner’s Wife* (1894) (Fig. 2.3) by Nikolai Alekseevich Kasatkin (1859–1930). Lu argued that by adopting the pictorial idioms and aesthetics of “revolutionary realism,” paintings like this one were “positive”—that is, socio-politically useful—because they could provide “realistic” representations of the “healthy” worker class and “facilitate the propagation of social revolution” through making sublime and monumentalized images of “New Women.” All in all, the Leftist Lu maintained, only the women represented in the latter two kinds of paintings were truly “beautiful.”

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211 For the notes recording Lu Xun’s talk at the China College of Art (Zhonghua yishu daxue) by Xu Xingzhi, Lu Hongji and Liu Ruli, see Xu Xingzhi, “Huiyi Lu Xun xiansheng zai zhonghua yida de yici jiangyan (Recollection of
Intriguingly, Pang’s female images do not have much to do with either of these paradigms of painting women that were common in China’s east coastal urban area in the early 1930s—neither “commercially aesthetic” nor “socialist revolutionary.” According to art historian Zheng Gong, “during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the modernists’ formalist exploration continued. [But] this was the end stage of this [modernist] phase. In the wartime rear front where national consciousness was unprecedently aroused, the penetration of ethnic and folk art [in the modernists’ formalist exploration] lead to the formation of a distinctive stage with a unique visual landscape.” Zheng used Pang’s wartime experimentation as an example of “the formalist exploration of Chinese modernists during the wartime,” revealing how, compared to his pre-war works, “Pang Xunqin’s aesthetic exploration of formalism gained another layer of meaning in the initial period of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression—that is, absorbing nutrients from the traditional folk art of the Chinese nation.”

The adjective “formalist” and the noun “formalism” employed here in Zheng’s historical writing in 2002 imply a biased judgment embedded in the post-1949 historiography of twentieth-century Chinese art, filtered through the official ideology. This historiography adopts phrases from Xu Beihong’s strong attack on European modernisms to which, in Sullivan’s words, “his eyes were

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213 Ibid., 212.
closed” and he “never opened them again.”\textsuperscript{214} The art that Xu called “formalist” was that of the French modernist avant-garde at the turn of the twentieth century, including Renoir, Cézanne, and Matisse. To Xu, their paintings reflected the degeneracy of Western capitalism and the bourgeois ideology, which separated art from life by insisting that art is no more than “a reflection of the thought of the artist.”\textsuperscript{215}

Although in the Republican era some Chinese Communist cultural theorists and leftist intellectuals turned to the state-sponsored art practices of the Soviet Union to introduce the paradigm of “Revolutionary Realism” to Chinese writers and artists, most of the Chinese artists who studied abroad during this period received their training in Western Europe, America, and Japan. Since the First Opium War (1838–40), the concept of “opening eyes to see the world (Zhengyan kan shijie)” had increasingly become the consensus and common choice among the people who attempted to reform China with foreign paradigms. Around the time when the First Sino-Japanese War began (1895), several pioneering artists including Li Tiefu 李鐵夫 (1869–1952), Li Shutong, Feng Gangbai 馮鋼百 (1883–1984), Li Yishi 李毅士 (1886–1942), and Wu Fading 吳法鼎 (1883–1924) had traveled abroad to study European art. With Paris as the art capital of the world, Europe attracted numerous Chinese young art students, as did neighboring Japan. According to current statistics, up until 1950 around 120 to 130 art students studied painting, sculpture, or art history in Western European countries such as France, Britain,

\textsuperscript{214} Michael Sullivan, \textit{Art and Artists in Twentieth-Century China} (\textit{Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China} (Berkley: University of California Press, 1966).

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid.
Germany, and Belgium. This training had a tremendous impact on their later careers. After they returned to China, some of them took important positions in newly established art schools in the Republican period and actively engaged in the construction of modern Chinese art. However, due to the impact of the Cold War on the international stage and, especially, to the radical Leftist class struggle in China’s domestic intellectual and cultural realms, many Chinese artists with earlier training from Western Europe and America were under suspicion throughout successive political movements. Labeled as “bourgeois academic authorities,” both Lin Fengmian and Pang Xunqin were subjected to severe interrogation and criticism. Therefore, as these artists passed away, the narratives of their study in Europe became blurred and distorted, restricting our understanding of how their European experiences impacted the modern transformation of China.

In the age of war and revolution, individual interests in formal experimentation were vulnerable to radical critics who saw them as merely “formalist” and “art for art’s sake.” For a long time, accordingly, their art was seen as irrelevant to the well-being of the state and the collective causes of jiuguo (national salvation) and geming (social revolution) in twentieth-century Chinese art historiography.

In wartime Chongqing and Chengdu, Sichuan, there was a sudden emergence of an unprecedentedly large number of artists and exhibitions. Like many other artists of the Republican period, Pang had to rely on painting, in addition to teaching, to support his family. Also, like other professor-artists, Pang remarked unabashedly that making and selling art was
one of the economic realities of life. Most Chinese artists in the first half of the twentieth century, regardless of their styles, eked out a living by teaching and by selling their work. Despite their largely unrespectable position in China’s traditional elite system of art evaluation, paintings of “beautiful women” were among the most salable subjects in the traditional art market of vernacular paintings. However, it would be too arbitrary to assume that Pang’s paintings were made merely or primarily to sell. By refusing to identify himself as an “aesthete” in 1943, Pang implicitly declared to wartime audiences that he chose not to close his eyes to the semicolonial experiences of China and the class struggles against the international and domestic powers of oppression associated with the increasingly autocratic Nationalist party-state. The fact that Pang showed these paintings to the public by holding exhibitions in wartime Sichuan in the 1940s could not be explained by the artist’s financial concerns. If these paintings were not intended as “art for art’s sake,” what did they mean?

Pang emphasized in his preface for the exhibition that, “in recent years my interest has turned toward ancient patterns, and even toward clothing.” Importantly, none of the female subjects—including their clothing fashion (i.e., costume) and activities (i.e., customs)—depicted in Pang’s paintings represent the lifestyle of the urban, Western-inflected modernity in the east coastal cities of Shanghai or Nanjing. “In terms of costume,” Pang “tried as hard as possible to

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216 See Fu Baoshi’s recollection of the art scene in wartime Chongqing in Fu Baoshi, “Chulun Zhongguo huihua wenti (An preliminary discussion of the problems of Chinese painting),” speech delivered to the art department of the normal school, Nanjing University, 19 July 1951. Reprinted in Ye Zonghao, Fu Baoshi meishu wenji (Collected Essays by Fu Baoshi on Art), (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003), 362; See Pang Xunqin’s recollection of the art scene in wartime Chengdu and Chongqing in Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguloaide.

217 Pang Xunqin, “Zipou (Self Analysis),” published in Zhongyang ribao (Central Daily), September 12, 1943.
preserve their original appearance.” His interest in traditional patterns and clothing as “folk art” partially explains why he would choose the female Guizhou mountain people as his main human subjects. During the war, many intellectuals and artists moved in exodus with the Chinese Republican government to the country’s southwestern interior. As discussed earlier, the new proximity to the southwestern multiethnic people provided these artists with new materials for redefining and refashioning Sino-modernity. The specific way in which Pang looked at and conceptualized the local style of female clothing in the southwestern interior as a marker of cultural identity is connected with his experiences of working with the IHP ethnographers and the archaeologists at the Preparatory Office of the National Central Museum. In the 1930s and 1940s, one approach used by IHP ethnographers to rediscover alternative Chinese cultural traditions was to collect and comparatively analyze the styles of the southwestern multiethnic female clothing, which had been undergoing the long process of sinicization since the late imperial period. In a 1941 letter to Fu Sinian, the IHP ethnographer Hu Qingjun 胡慶鈞 (1918-2015) quoted the words of Confucius from a millennium earlier: “our lost ritual or propriety can be found with the Barbarians (lishi qiu zhu ye 禮失求諸野).” By this, Hu meant to describe the essential nature of the recent enterprise in the state-sponsored scholarship on the southwestern mountain people.

Hu’s point reveals an underlying premise of Chinese studies on southwestern ethnic

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218 Ibid.
culture at the time: the best component of Chinese culture was Han culture, while the most essential elements of a purer Han cultural tradition would be best preserved by the ethnographic “primitive”—by non-Han ethnic peoples—due to their inhabitation of the inner frontiers, out of touch with recent technological advances and culturally inferior to the mainstream Han people (who were largely living on the east coast). This argument is seemingly an odd one to make—that the Chinese (Han) cultural tradition is best preserved by an inferior and marginal sector of it (non-Han culture)—but it makes sense if one considers the thrust of the argument in terms of political conditions. That is, because earlier, out-of-date trends trickled to backward places where trends are slow to change, then in the worst of times, when the Japanese were invading, the dominant culture could rediscover itself by going back to the frontier among the less civilized, primitive cultures.

It was thus proposed that the native material culture that was rediscovered and collected in the southwestern inner frontier could provide an ideal site of purity and cultural simplicity for the Han Chinese to locate the essence of China’s own past, a primitive cultural tradition beyond the pressures of a Western-style modernity. The effectiveness of this approach was further confirmed by a “specifically interesting example” that Hu noticed in the IHP’s recent findings in

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220 In “Buddhist Archaeology in Republican China: A New Relationship to the Past,” Sarah E. Fraser discussed about this rationale why the frontier in China during the Second Sino-Japanese War became a site of purity and cultural simplicity evoking an early period, where a lot of artistic and scholarly efforts were made to locate primitive cultural traditions beyond the pressures of the war and a Western-style modernity. “Buddhist Archaeology in Republican China: A New Relationship to the Past,” Proceedings of the British Academy (The British Academy) 167 (2010): 155-198.
the multiethnic southwestern interior. The social and cultural fabric of the “Miao area,” uncovered by government-sponsored ethnographic fieldworks—including Pang and Rui’s 1939–40 expedition—made Hu, a Han Chinese intellectual, “notice the ‘sinicization’ problem in the Miao area.” 221 “As a result of the Western invasion of China in the past century, the progressive thrust of the Han people is ‘Westernization,’ or so-called ‘modernization’; whereas the impetus for Miao’s progression is sinicization, not modernization.” 222 “Therefore,” Hu proposed, recalling the Confucian famous quote that “Our lost ritual or propriety can be found with the Barbarians,” the current trends that he “heard from the Shanghai-Nanjing area” – “country girls [who] always imitate the Shanghai style, but they’re not similar; when they are finally similar to Shanghai, the fashion of Shanghai has already developed a new style” seemed to “be applicable here.” 223 Hu offered a typical modern Han Chinese intellectual discourse about relations of power, domestically and internationally analogized by a system of hierarchies that had been established since the late Qing: between “Miao” and “Han” cultures, “country” and “Shanghai” female fashion, and Han Chinese modern experiences as opposed to Western-style modernity. The changing fashion in the urban spaces on the east coast of China was considered by the Han Chinese intellectual to be a cultural symptom of the national crisis of modern China.

What underlaid Hu’s joke about the women’s fashion trends was a constructed “modern”

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standard of implicit ordering and categorization, a global order in which races, sexes, and nations occupied fixed places assigned to them according to modern European standard of “civilization.” By ranking, rationalizing, and objectifying different societies and their cultures—including the “modern” West, the “westernizing” Han Chinese, and the “sinicizing” Miao—the IHP ethnographer’s letter epitomizes the sense of responsibility shared by some Han Chinese intellectuals to preserve traditional Chinese culture during the war. In ancient Chinese classics, clothing was considered to be a way to distinguish Human from Beast, Chinese from Barbarians. For centuries, the style of clothing had been seen as a sign of the “Chineseness” of the wearers, signifying a collective sense of cultural superiority in the face of “barbarian” outsiders to the Chinese “civilization.” As John Hay points out, in China, different from the situation in mainstream European culture in which “the nude” was one of the pillars of European art, the cultural appreciation of the clothed body is regarded as a more true representation of the person.224 Given this tradition, clothing in China had been generally taken as an important component of social, gender, national, and racial identities. To many Chinese intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the westernized style of clothing in Shanghai—a world metropolis and China’s economic center that had been a semicolonial treaty port since the late Qing period—best signals the peripatetic pace of change along China’s east coastal urban areas. In particular, in late Qing and Republican Chinese vernacular fictions, some

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Western-trained Chinese male intellectuals would see the Shanghai female fashion that mixed Chinese and Western elements as a sign of the anxiety about the social chaos and the disordering of cultural identity in China at the time.\(^{225}\) In these fictions of the late Qing and Republican China, the traditional Chinese concept of *wenming* 文明 (translated in English as “civilization”/“civilized”) was radically transformed. Under such circumstances, clothing was no longer a reliable marker of social groups, an inner world, or the racial and gender identities of an individual. In pre-modern times, *wenming* referred to the idealized societal condition of the Three Ages—the three dynasties of the high antiquity period, which was well recognized as the axial age of the Chinese civilization and diligently pursued by later generations.\(^{226}\) In contrast, in the second half of the nineteenth century, *wenming* had come to mean “modernity”/“modern”—that is, something newly imported from the Euro-American countries in the early twentieth century Chinese context. This term then started to be used in European terms to imply movement, transformation, modernization, and progress in China.\(^{227}\) As a “return-graphic loan word,” in Lydia Liu’s term, the changing meaning of *wenming* provides an example of how, since the late Qing, a Euro-American worldview was translated into China. This worldview categorized different groups of people into a linear, hierarchical, and social evolutionary system of “progression” with several stages of “civilization”—from “savage,” “barbarian,” and


\(^{227}\) Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity, China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 308-309.
“half-civilized,” to “civilized” and “enlightened.” To many Chinese reformers who accepted this Eurocentric standard of “civilization,” China was at best in a “half-civilized” state.

Since the May Fourth New Culture Movement, the dominant social discourse in China had admired the ideology of “Science” as something “modern” and “progressive” imported from the West. To a large extent, China’s own “tradition” was deemed as a rival to China’s “modernization” and thus as the residue of a backward society that should be discarded. Meanwhile, however, the influx of foreign cultures since the late Qing period, when European, American, and Japanese political and commercial institutions had occupied China’s semicolonial ports on the east coast, had become culturally problematic for many modern Chinese intellectuals. The subjugation of China under a modern system of unequal treaties as a result of the Opium and Arrow Wars (1839–40; 1856–60) led the Western forces to devalue Chinese culture, particularly the significance of its modern experience. In the post–May Fourth era, the West was admired for its scientific achievement, while science was promoted as a tool to overcome the limitations of the traditional cultural system of the Chinese classics. Meanwhile, a tension between nostalgia for the past and pursuit of the future persisted in the intellectual realm. Fundamentally, the psychological tension between two desires—that is, to “modernize” China or to preserve China’s

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229 Ibid., 255.


“cultural heritage”—had been haunting most modern Chinese intellectuals. This psychological tension characterized a series of issues of Chinese modernity in the intellectual history of twentieth-century China, which contributed to the post-1920 establishment of some modern academic disciplines in China, each with its respective paradigm, methodology, institution, and ideology. These disciplines were established by Chinese reformist intellectuals like Hu Shi and his followers, especially Fu Sinian, who became in 1928 the first director of the IHP.

Hu’s letter to Fu in the early 1940s not only reveals an intellectual anxiety about the danger of uprooting Chinese culture in the process of westernization, but also Han-Chinese nationalist concerns that this complex of cultural inferiority might be compensated by rediscovering—or rather, reinventing—certain alternative traditions besides the orthodox Han-Chinese classics. In the early twentieth century, the burgeoning of Western-style modern culture in technologically and commercially advanced spaces such as Shanghai’s International Concessions intensified the collective nationalistic anxiety about the existence of Chinese culture. This persistent sense of loss of cultural identity finally culminated when the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression broke out. Following the early twentieth-century collapse of the orthodox classical studies of Chinese antiquity, China’s inner frontier in the northwest and southwest became an ideal place to relocate alternative, “primitive” cultural tradition in the newly institutionalized academic framework. It was expected that, by a series of salvage projects undertaken by the scholars of the modern academic disciplines of anthropology, archaeology,
and ethnography, the national history of Chinese culture could be rewritten.

Having worked with IHP ethnographers and archaeologists during the late 1930s, Pang saw the native female bodies clad in native clothing in the southwestern inner frontier as a kind of cultural heritage or “relics” of China’s national antiquity. In the Republican nationalistic frame of ethnographic body politics, these female bodies were perceived as objects with a cultural “essence” unavailable under the more recent Chinese cultural system. From these bodies, an unadulterated primitive cultural tradition preserved in the southwestern interior could be uncovered in the face of Western colonial culture and the fear of the extinction of Chinese traditions under the Japanese invasion. Therefore, a recurrent motif of both Pang’s *Dancing Ladies of the Tang Dynasty* and *Guizhou Mountain People* is his special focus on female subjects.

Furthermore, Pang’s gendered preference in his images of Guizhou mountain people resonated with the gendered discourse on “folk art” promoted by some Republican Chinese intellectuals, who saw “decorativeness” to be the core of this category of art. This belief was based on a general assumption that no matter the Han or Miao concentration in the regions, more often than not, the handicrafts to be collected and studied by urban modern Chinese elite artists as “folk art” were made by female laborers. Importantly, in pioneering Chinese art historical narratives of the 1930s, “Chinese decorative art” was not only considered to be a component of “Chinese folk art” but also gendered as feminine. In Lei Guiyuan’s 1934 treatise on “the decline
of Chinese decorative art and its current way out,” “Chinese decorative art” was personified as “ naïve, virtuous folk women.” From 1929 to 1931, Lei trained in painting, textile dyeing, and lacquer making in France. After he returned to China, Lei began teaching a course on tu’an (graphic design) at the West Lake National Art Academy in Hangzhou. During the war, he moved to the southwestern interior, teaching in the SPSA together with Pang, who became his colleague and close friend. In Lei’s historical narrative of Chinese decorative art, “folk art” motifs were invested with an unspoken patriarchal ethos in which metaphors of class and gender are seamlessly intertwined.

Pang worked to recover the “inner beauty” of the collective mentality of the austere southwestern mountain women by (re)situating their handicrafts in a more pristine place of “origin,” free of the contamination of recent history. He operated in a salvage paradigm of representing marginal indigenous culture, in which the present state of the ethnographic primitive or “folk culture” offered evidence of the purity and cultural simplicity of the modern Chinese nation’s primordial past. In the realm of Chinese wartime culture, the images of patriarchal femininity were vulnerable to the gendered national imagination: female bodies were used to convey the virtues of traditional Chinese culture as in need of preservation by the Chinese modernizers, who were mainly male elites. In her Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading Between West and East, Rey Chou noted the gender politics of the modern Chinese

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literary institution as epitomized by mainstream studies on the popular fiction of the so-called *Yuanyang Hudie* (Mandarin Duck and Butterfly) School. These literary studies did not take women’s questions as a breaking point or an entry point for alternative ways of interpretation. In such studies, Chou argues, even though the issues of women were talked about, they would have to be placed in such “grander” topics as history, society, and tradition. One key problem is that, in art, how did the perspective of gender impact the expression of a certain theme? When a writer, an artist, or a critic self-identified as a member of the “revolutionary and modernizing intellectuals”—most of whom were male—was gazing with pity at women, how could he penetrate the experiences of the female others? To most of these intellectuals, issues of gender and class/gender were almost a blind point when they were concerned with the grand questions such as nation-state building, class struggle, global capitalism, and cultural tradition. This negligence was derived from the gender roles that they were unconsciously playing. The gender-blind dimension of their enlightenment project, which was designed by these intellectual spokesmen for the “folk,” obscured the aspects of oppression and exploitation of the project. To bear in mind this gender-blindness, as Lydia Liu points out, is not to argue that the enlightening and modernizing intellectuals of the May Fourth generation ignored the problems of women; rather, as self-conscious builders of modern Chinese culture, these intellectuals were concerned with and felt sympathetic toward the circumstances of women’s life in Chinese society. Their

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problematic unawareness about their gender roles should not be equated with a self-consciousness about changing society through literature and art. In the 1930s and 1940s, the artists Pang Xunqin and Lei Guiyuan both analogized the oppressed and marginalized position of “Chinese folk art” to that of the “good folk women” in traditional Chinese society. The issue is that this patriarchal power structure, as a form of “politics of universal representation,” penetrated into their textual and visual representation and conceptualization of the “folk” motifs.234 Their gendered practices of art criticism and art historiography in the 1930s and 1940s thus became a site in which not only the anti-imperialist nationalist discourses but also the Leftist discourse about class struggle promoting the proletarian revolution among farmers and workers could be produced. Meanwhile, however, these practices never clarified their own gendered vision as male.

The exploitation of gender roles is germane to the theoretical stakes of this research, in which Pang concentrated on portraying a large number of female native people in Guizhou as his Chinese “compatriots.”235 In Pang’s Mother and Child (Fig. 1.27), for example, the gender of the male subject in Rui Yifu’s ethnographic photograph (Fig. 1.72) would be transformed into a female one in Pang’s painterly appropriation, creating an idealized image of the “good mother” rather than “father.” Pang’s image of motherhood in Mother and Child fits perfectly into the

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234 In Lydia Liu’s term, the gender-blindness is a “politics of universal representation.” Refer to Lydia Liu, Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity-China, 1900-1937 (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

235 Pang Xunqin, “Zipou (Self Analysis),” published in Zhongyang ribao (Central Daily), September 12, 1943.
Neo-Confucian-inflected gender norms in traditional China. Whether conscious or unconscious on Pang’s part, his female image accorded with the gender role assigned to women according to the ethical norms of the new Republican citizens, as advocated by the wartime Nationalist governmental ideology and many other Chinese intellectuals.

Since the late Qing period through the 1920s, intellectual elites had been pioneering a social/discursive construction of the ideal woman. An essay published in the late Qing period on “Women’s Education” (1897) by the reformist intellectual Liang Qichao triggered discussions on the “Women’s Question” in the public sphere, including issues of the “New Women.” In the reformist proposals made by influential intellectuals including Liang Qichao, 婦女 ("women") were constructed as the crucial support for the grand plans of strengthening China. Many efforts at reformation since the late Qing period questioned how to cultivate women to be the “virtuous wives” and “good mothers” of the Chinese citizens of the future, and how to involve them in the process of industrializing the country. To build the modern Chinese nation-state, in the early period of Republican period, the modernizing project directed by the KMT government tended to measure the society, culture, and citizens of the Republic of China from the perspective of the Enlightened Other. A gender politics had been cloaked in a nationalist agenda promoted by the KMT government before the war of resistance against Japanese aggression officially broke out. Since the mid-1930s, the women policy promoted by the KMT

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government was integral to the New Life Movement, which claimed women’s gender role to be 
*(liangmu)* 良母/*(xianmu)* 賢母, or “good mother,” and which prioritized women’s “central role in 
household” in the whole society.²³⁷ As a culturally embedded concept of patriarchal femininity, 
the Neo-Confucian female ideal of *Xianqi Liangmu 賢妻良母/Liangqi Xianmu 良妻賢母* 
(Virtuous Wife and Good Mother) had been highly controversial in the post–May Fourth era. In 
the realm of public opinion in Republican China, which was largely controlled by male Han 
Chinese intellectuals, most of the discussions about the “Virtuous Wife and Good Mother” were 
inherently connected to a set of gender roles that women “should play.”²³⁸ Fundamentally, the 
framework of these discussions was defined by an androcentric ideology, the extreme form of 
which saw the female types of virtuous “wife” and good “mother” as the ultimate gender roles of 
every woman. During the war, particularly from the mid-1930s through the 1940s, the 
government promoted the “central role of women in the household,” which attracted the attention 
of Chinese intellectuals of different ideological camps beyond the government. Meanwhile, 
pro-Communist Leftist intellectuals were harshly criticizing the wartime KMT government’s 
ideology that encouraged women “to go home.” In fact, as Xu Huiqi’s research shows, at the 
time the Nationalist government did not intend merely to confine women to serving in the 
household as opposed to in public. Rather, the ideal woman of the time as promoted by the 

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government was more of an amalgamation of virtuous women serving the interest of the nation-state building in both the private and the public spheres. Nevertheless, a consensus reached among the majority of patriotic Chinese intellectuals with different political stances was that the image of the “Modern Girl,” a symbol of overtly Westernized urban culture and consumerism, should be fought against for the collective cause of national salvation, especially during wartime. The governmental and individual promotions of the image of “good mother” from the mid-1930s through the 1940s reflected the Neo-Confucian-inflected Chinese nationalist ideology.

During the war, internal divisions among the multiple ethnic groups construed as “minorities” tended to be obscured by a discursive construction that prioritized the wholeness of the Chinese nation. The influential concept that “the Chinese nation is holistic” was declared in 1939 by the aforementioned sociologist and historian Gu Jiegang, who was affiliated with the Academia Sinica. Even though certain scholars such as Fei Xiaotong and Jian Bozan did try to stress the diversity of Chinese society at the time, the significance of their theories was not widely recognized at the moment of national salvation. Without a detailed fieldwork record from Rui or Pang, it is hard to tell if the social norms in

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240 Ibid., 351-358.
241 Originally a classmate at Peking University earlier and a colleague with Fu Sinian in the Institute of Linguistic and Historical Studies at Zhongshan University in the late 1920s, Gu was not invited by Fu to join the IHP later but became a scholar at the Department of History at the Academia Sinica.
terms of the household gender roles in the multiethnic southwestern frontier were different from the Han-concentrated eastern region during the 1930s and 1940s. However, Pang’s choice to change the gender of the baby-carrying male subject from Rui’s photograph in his own painting reveals that, based on assumed definitions of gender-appropriate behavior at the time, Pang considered a female image of the baby-carrying “good mother” to be “better” and more appreciated.

2.2. Female Image as National Tradition in Modernity: Transnational Circulations of Decorative Realism

Since the 1980s, some scholars in China have realized that the foundation for research on modern Chinese art in the early twentieth century is weak, and they have begun to make every effort to carry out investigations on the artists who trained abroad in the Republican period. However, under the circumstances when China reopened to the world after the Cultural Revolution, the meaningfulness and scope of “Chinese modernism” has been defined throughout this time within a frame of reference of European modernisms. In Croizier’s research, the works of Chinese artists could only be considered as examples of modernism if their forms and styles’ shared some patterns with modern European art. According to this standard, “Chinese modernism” during the Republican period could only be seen as a derivative of Western modernism, one created “in the center of everything modern in China, Shanghai,” the “Eastern metropolis” that offered urban scenes of Western-style modernity in China. In recent years, some
alternative voices have emerged that argue for the existence of other value systems beyond Euro-American centrim. These other value systems emphasize the local aspects of the political, social, historical, or cultural contexts of China’s modernization. The literary historian Shin Shu-mei rejects the presumption that only when Chinese modernists took after Western modernism was “modernism” supposed to exist in China. Following Shin’s path, the art historian Aida Wong argues that such Eurocentric presumptions have become entrenched in the periodization of modern Chinese art history and the definition of “Chinese modernism.” However, Wong’s efforts to redefine “Chinese modernism” beyond the Eurocentric scope only focused on the formations of guohua (national painting) based on Sino-Japanese artistic exchanges before 1937, the year when the War officially broke out. How could Chinese modernism have been abruptly terminated by the war when Chinese modernist artists continued their experimental artistic practice in the war years? Is it possible that certain wartime modernist experiments of creating “Chinese paintings” belong to a different mode of modernism, one that at once transcends the essentially Eurocentric as well as the potentially Japan-centric modes that existed before the war in the urban areas of eastern China? The following part of this chapter examines how the transnational circulation of “decorative realism” might have inspired Pang in his making of an alternative paradigm for Chinese modernism.

The 1930s saw a rise in a nationalistic impulse to study national antiquity through newly

established disciplines such as archaeology and ethnography. It is therefore tempting to assume that, due to the wartime condition in which the nation should have closed itself off and focused on defending its territory against foreign invasion, all Chinese artists might have been detached from foreign influence, allowing them to thoroughly embrace the “indigenous culture and art” of their own country in the inner frontier. Accordingly, it might be assumed that Chinese artists’ images of “native Chinese” women clad in “traditional” clothes—no matter Han or non-Han—in their wartime “Chinese painting” experiments in the western “rear front” were drawn exclusively from indigenous visual resources. Nevertheless, transnational and transcultural artistic inspirations continued to play an important role in individual Chinese artists’ construction of national cultural identity in the late 1930s and the 1940s. My further analysis attends to the specific way in which and the extent to which Pang’s images of Guizhou mountain people struck a chord with East Asian Neo-Confucian patriarchal conceptions in the visual regime during the early twentieth century, by examining Pang’s work in comparison with some modern nihonga (Japanese-style paintings) of Japanese native women. In both the Chinese and Japanese cases, “native” women were visualized as a crystallization of a primitive, purer cultural tradition beyond the pressures of Western-style modernity.

China began to be simultaneously semicolonized during the late Qing period by the imperialist powers of six European countries, America, and Japan. Since that time, the modernizing elites in the Chinese art world had been anxiously thinking about the transformation
of “old” into “new,” including how to study the foreign, modernized countries as global powers. During 1898 and 1899, the foreign imperial powers intensified their pressures on China as part of their general wave of imperialist expansion. China underwent a series of attacks in international affairs, among which the most complicated and longest lasting ones are the issues surrounding the Sino-Japanese relationship. In a moment when China became a colonial target for the imperialist projects launched by various global forces, the first great exodus began of Chinese students to Japan. So effective had been the sweeping economic and institutional reforms of the Meiji Restoration beginning in 1868 that Japan could now bring superior military force to bear on China. After Japan’s defeat of the Chinese in 1894 and its shattering defeat of Russian forces at Lushun in 1904, the extremely shocked nation of China began to rethink Japan as an attractive model in its new search for self-identity. As Julia Andrews observes, Confucian tradition “with its assumption that morality required members of the educated class to contribute their talents and wisdom to government service, led naturally to the involvement of some modern Chinese artists in political affairs.”

Chinese artists who had traveled and studied in Japan at the turn of twentieth century, including Li Shutong, Gao Jianfu 高劍父 (1879–1951) and Feng Zikai 豐子愷 (1898–1975), were all aware of the strong efforts the Japanese government had made since the Meiji Restoration to reform art as a force for social improvement. These Chinese artists brought such ideas about art’s possible social function back to China. What could art do to aid

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the transformation of China into a new republic? Could a civil society be developed in which art played a central role in the construction of the new nation-state in the face of foreign imperialist invasions? Based on their international travel and study, many intellectuals promoted new forms of art education and practice as accompaniments to the new political order in the early years of the Republic of China, beginning in the 1920s.\textsuperscript{244}

Since the mid-1920s, after the Nationalist Party had consolidated its power base in Nanjing, the reign of the Nationalist government entered an era of political tutelage. Meanwhile, partially as an ideological attempt to counteract the subversive power of Chinese Communist revolutionaries, the Nationalist government launched the New Life Movement in May 1934. Following the New Life Movement, the Chinese Cultural Construction Association (Zhongguo wenhua jianshe xiehui 中國文化建設協會, CCCA) was established. The objective of this association, an influential peripheral organization associated with the C. C. clique of the KMT, was to reinforce the Three People’s Principles as the cultural ideology of the KMT’s governance, against the pro-Chinese Communist proletarian cultural movement. On January 10, 1934, the CCCA launched the Chinese National Cultural Construction Movement (Zhongguo benwei wenhua jianshe 中國本位文化建設), which, as an influential government-sponsored cultural movement before the war, triggered a debate on the future development of “Chinese culture” that would last through the 1940s. The goal of the movement, according to the manifesto published under the

\textsuperscript{244} Yang Xiao, “Yishu wei ‘fangbian,’ huihuwei xinmin (Painting as ‘Skillful Means,’ Painting for a Republic of New Citizens),” \textit{Wenyi Yanjiu} (Literature and Art Studies), no. 2 (2014): 131-140.
names of the ten university professors sponsored by the CCCA, was to “ensure the cultural
development of China by endowing Chinese politics, society and ideology with national
characteristics.” Importantly, and ironically, as the manifesto suggests, the cultural ideology of
the Nationalist government promoted the experiences of modern Japanese national cultural
construction as an ideal model. In particular, it strongly encouraged Chinese artists to draw from
Western-inflected modern nihonga 日本画 (Japanese-style painting) as they made new art for
the Chinese nation: “[modern] Japanese painters usually say, ‘Westerners might dislike the
overly strong color palette that is characteristic of nihonga. Nevertheless, without such an intense
color palette, what else could characterize [the national style] of nihonga?!’ We also need to
have such kind of understanding [and quest for cultural distinctiveness] in our [own country’s]
cultural construction.”

Artists like Fu Baoshi 傅抱石 (1904-1965) and Zhang Daqian had traveled to Japan
earlier, before the war officially broke out; they had been drawing heavily on nihonga in their
formation of “national painting” since the early 1930s. Similar to Fu and Zhang, Pang chose to
paint a large number of his perceived “Chinese beauties” clad in “traditional clothing” during his
wartime displacement in the temporary capital of the KMT-controlled rear front. Partially

245 “Zhongguo benwei wenhua jianshe xuanyan (A Manifesto of Chinese Cultural Construction),” signed by ten
professors affiliated to the KMT party-state and published in Wenhua jianshe (Cultural Construction) on January 10,
1934. For more information about Wenhua jianshe as an institutional publication affiliated to the KMT government,
see Chen Qisheng, Dangyuan, Dangquannu Dangzheng: 1924-1949 nian Zhongguo Guomindang de Zuzhi Xingshi
(Members, Powers, and Struggles of the Party: Organizational Forms of the Chinese Nationalist Party, 1924-1949)
(Beijing: Huawen chubanshe, 2010), 284-285.
246 Aida Wong, Parting the Mist: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China
(Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006).
inspired by Zhang, as discussed in the previous chapter, Pang painted *Dancing Ladies of the Tang Dynasty* to evoke the High Tang Dunhuang murals; nevertheless, he was different from Zhang at the same time in his choice to paint a series of Guizhou mountain women. In contrast to Fu and Zhang, Pang never traveled to Japan to study art. It was Pang’s earlier European training and his wide exposure to the international art scene in Europe during the 1920s that equipped him to paint the *Guizhou Mountain People*. However, closer inspection of Pang’s wartime experimental paintings reveals not only his sophisticated quotations from European modernisms, but also his appropriations of pre-twentieth-century European artistic resources and modern *nihonga*. One direct channel through which Pang gained access to original works of modern *nihonga* was an exhibition of modern Japanese art held in Paris in 1929. From June 1 to July 25, 1929, an international exhibition of modern Japanese art was held in Paris, which featured 195 modern Japanese-style paintings and 157 works of applied art. Pang visited this exhibition in June, which made him so excited that he was “unable to calm down.” Among all the exhibitions he visited in Europe, this 1929 exhibition was as impressive to him as the famous International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Art (April–October 1925) that he had visited immediately after arriving in Paris in 1925. In Pang’s own words, if the 1925 International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Art made him “become interested in decorative art,” then the 1929 exhibition of modern Japanese art made him decide to return to China later in
the same year to study “China’s national art traditions.” Nevertheless, none of the current scholarship on Pang Xunqin has paid attention to the connections between this 1929 exhibition of modern Japanese art in Paris and Pang’s own artistic enterprise. Here I examine Pang’s experiences of viewing the 1929 exhibition of modern Japanese art to explore the possible impact of this exhibition on Pang’s own way of making modern “Chinese painting” in wartime China, within the broader political context of Sino-Japanese conflicts and exchanges from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century, a time when Japan attempted to make itself the new “land of the rising sun” in the world and, especially, the leading country in Asia.

After the Meiji period (1868–1912), there were some major changes in Japanese governance and foreign policy. Art began to play an important role in Japan’s foreign affairs strategy. The 1929 exhibition that Pang visited in Paris was entitled “L’Exposition D’Art Japonais: Ecole Classique Contemporaine” (Japanese Art Exhibition: Contemporary Classical School). According to the Japanese governmental report of the year, it was organized by the Japanese government as the first international exhibition promoting “typical works of modern Japanese art” as part of “the world of art” to “the people in the West” who previously “only knew about ancient Japanese art,” in order to “shift their attention to present

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day Japanese art.” Supported by the Japanese government in collaboration with the French government, this exhibition was a diplomatic event designed to show the West an image of modern Japan as a newly emergent, powerful nation-state. In 1922, an earlier exhibition, the Exposition D’Art Japonais Ecole, had been held at the Salon la Societe Nationale de Beaux-Arts in the Grand Palais. However, before the Shōwa period (1926–89) there had not been any overseas exhibition that included artwork by any contemporary, living Japanese artists. From 1929 to 1931, three government-sponsored, grand-scale, international exhibitions of modern Japanese art were held in succession in Paris, Rome, and Berlin, with the purpose of introducing modern Japanese art to the European countries that held glorious positions in Western art history.

As the first of this series of exhibitions, the 1929 exhibition in Paris was held at the Tuileries of Paris and the Musée du Jeu de Paume. The next year, this exhibition was followed by a second in Rome, and the following year a third was held in Berlin. The main goal of such state-sponsored exhibitions of modern Japanese art was to provide an opportunity for “the vast majority of Occidentals” to view, understand, and appreciate “contemporary art of the Japanese nation.”

Many Japanese artists who until that point had been working as independent citizens...
started to become more involved with state art policies.

The allure of *nihonga* to the Chinese practitioners of the traditional format of *guohua* (national-style painting) in Republican China has been the subject of some sophisticated research in current scholarship.\(^{252}\) Yet some questions remain unexamined, including how modern *nihonga* might have appealed to “the West” and how its reception in “the West” might have shed light on its attraction to the Chinese artists originally trained in *xihua* (Western-style painting) in the Republican period. The neo-traditionalist trend of *nihonga* arose in Japan during the 1880s, spearheaded by the American Japanophile Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908) and his student and collaborator Okakura Tenshin 岡倉天心 (Okakura Kakuzo, 1862–1913), with the aim of elevating Japanese artistic achievements to the status of national symbols. Between the 1880s and 1890s, to the centuries-old distinction between Chinese (*kara*) and Japanese (*yamato*) art, the Meiji art system had added a formalized split between *yoga* (Western-style painting) and *nihonga*.\(^{253}\) Over the next six decades, into the Taishō and Shōwa periods, *nihonga* increasingly flourished. As for the paintings on display in the 1929 exhibition in Paris, Pang noted, “all the works were *nihonga* selected strictly for their high technical level and artistic taste. Every selected painter has his specialties and personal style. Meanwhile, the mounting of every artwork was very refined and sophisticated.”\(^{254}\) Pang did not specify in his memoir the contents or

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themes of the paintings on display in the exhibition. But the pages in the catalogue of this exhibition clearly show that Japanese renderings of the image of the “Orient,” with themes drawn from not only native Japanese but also Chinese histories, cultures, and sceneries, abounded in the paintings on display. Different from the war images that overtly propagandized Japanese superiority, such Japanese-produced images of the “Orient”—whether from Japanese or Chinese sources—satisfied a prevailing taste for the exotic, which was fostered in no small measure by official competitive exhibitions sponsored by the Japanese government.

As Pang perceived it, this show was “an exhibition showcasing not merely paintings but also the prestige of the Japanese nation and state,” as “the layout and decoration of the exhibition hall fully demonstrated the style of Japan.” Therefore, “everything was arranged so thoughtfully and deliberately,” from the paintings on display to the clothing of the Japanese women attending the opening ceremony. Pang wrote in length about his viewing experiences of the exhibition in his memoir in the 1980s: “The opening ceremony of this exhibition was grand; Gaston Doumergue, then president of France, attended to cut the ribbon. Diplomats of many countries and celebrities in art circles within Paris and abroad attended the ceremony.” Pang paid special attention to the colorful kimonos worn by all the Japanese women who attended the opening ceremony. As he recalled, “many of the [male] Japanese artists whose works were on display brought their wives from Japan to Paris to attend the ceremony. These artists’ wives were

255 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolai de, 85.
256 Ibid.
all dressed in kimonos. The colors of their clothes were very beautiful, which made the ceremony more exciting.” Even “the female receptionists were all dressed in kimonos.”

For Japanese diplomatic events in Europe, only Japanese women—not men—were expected to wear traditional attire like kimonos. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Japanese women in kimonos had been common in European and American Japonisme. In such female images, artists found a representation of beauty that was at once sensual and exotic. Since the late 1880s, when the Meiji government (1868–1912) began propagating “Japan” as a national concept, female receptionists in kimonos and “Japanese-style” showroom decorations had become standard Japanese fare at international expositions. After the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), the Mitsui kimono shop started a campaign to market luxurious kimonos to urban, bourgeois women in Japan. Henceforth, the kimono was reinvented as a “national dress” or wakufu (Japanese clothes) that indexed Japanese tradition and cultural identity. Even under the modernizing climate of the Meiji period (1868–1912), women were supposed to be “exhibited” along with lacquer wares and other Japanese artifacts displayed for foreign consumption at international fairs. In the opening ceremony of the 1929 exhibition of modern Japanese art in Paris, which featured Japan’s “contemporary classicism,” the Japanese women in kimonos were “exhibited” for similar reasons, with the purpose of attracting the European audience’s attention.

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257 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolai de, 85.
258 An interview I did with Pang Tao at her home in Beijing, December 29 2012.
260 Ibid., 102.
to something “authentically Japanese.” While elite urban Japanese men had been donning Western clothes daily for their public duties as a sign of modernity since the late nineteenth century, Western dress for women did not start to have an appreciable market until the 1930s.

In the 1929 exhibition, these Japanese women in kimonos were intended to mirror the image of modern Japanese art on display as Classique Contemporaine or “contemporary classical” art. Serving as an image of national cultural identity, these Japanese women in kimonos were objectified and represented by the Japanese nation-state and Japanese modern male elites as something with a function similar to that of the Japanese-style paintings on display. In fact, the rise and fall of such biased gender relations in the Japanese art world paralleled the development of *nihonga*. From 1886 through 1946, admission to national art schools in Japan, including the Tōkyō bijutsu gakkō (Tokyo Fine Arts School, founded in 1887 with the support of the Ministry of Education) was limited to men. Images of beautiful Japanese women in kimonos were not only prevalent in Japanese-style paintings throughout these years, but also tended to be commonly displayed in overseas diplomatic exhibitions. In the 1929 exhibition in Paris, the paintings on display featuring beautiful women in kimonos included Tsuchida Bakusen 土田麦 (1887–1936)’s *A Maiko of Kyoto* (Fig. 2.4), Kakiuchi Seiyō’s *Dressing in Spring*, Kobayakawa Kiyoshi’s *A Maiko*, Terashima Shimei’s *Faded Beauty*, Kadoi Kikusui’s *A Maiden*, Ito Saiko’s *Book of A Long Epic Song*, Koda Saika’s *Young Girl* (with *Le couture* as the French

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title in the catalogue), Uemura Shoen’s *Young Girls*, Horii Koha’s *Standing Position* (with *Le kimono noir* as the French title in the catalogue), Miki Suizan’s *Snowy Day*, and Kaburagi Kiyokata’s *Akashi Town* and so on.\(^{262}\) The iconography of women in kimonos, which had been popularized in various European and American media, was repeated, and the self-orientalist idea that Japan was a land of beauties and the beautiful was reinforced.

The French reception of the exhibition was quite positive—as many as 37,000 visitors paid for admission to visit this exhibition, and ninety paintings and thirty-five other types of artworks were sold in total. Of the paintings sold, fourteen were purchased by the Musée du Jeu de Paume.\(^{263}\) Both of Tsuchida Bakusen’s paintings on display, *A Maiko of Kyoto* (Fig. 2.4) and *Morning Glories*, were purchased by the museum. Moreover, of all the Japanese artists who sent their works to the exhibition, Bakusen appears to be the only one who sold more than one painting to the museum, which reflects the favorable reception of his distinctive Japanese-style painting among the European audiences in Paris. As Pang’s 1980s memoir reveals, he was fascinated with “the coloring of the Japanese-style paintings,” “most of which were applied in mineral pigments.”\(^{264}\) He was interested in the “special” way of “making these pigments,” which was so “refined” that “although the colors used were very rich, the feeling evoked by the colors

\(^{264}\) Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolai de, 86.
was very composed.”²⁶⁵ Importantly, Pang concluded, “all visitors evaluated the exhibition highly. Japanese painting had developed its own style through the study of Chinese painting in the Tang dynasty, including the technology of making pigments.”²⁶⁶ In the stylistically synthesized decorative realism of modern nihonga Pang found a locale where artistic elements of Medieval China, Japan and modern Europe converged. This understanding led Pang to wish that, “if my own country could hold a grand exhibition of painting with such a high level as in Paris, that would be wonderful!”²⁶⁷ It was based on this understanding that he made a decision that had never come to him before—that is, to “go back, go back” to China to study “China’s national art tradition.”²⁶⁸

Later in the 1940s, just like the Taishō Japanese male artists, when Pang painted the motifs of his female “Guizhou compatriots” in the Guizhou Mountain People series, he had his wife Qiu Di 丘堤 (1906-1958) dress in the southwestern ethnic clothes that he had collected from the Miao tribes, in order to pose as a model for his painting. Pang also used Qiu Di and his daughter Pang Tao as the female models for the Tang beauties in his Dancing Ladies of the Tang Dynasty series.²⁶⁹ According to Pang Tao, Qiu Di acted as the chief model for not only Dancing Ladies of

²⁶⁵ Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolai de, 86.
²⁶⁶ Ibid.
²⁶⁷ Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolai de, 86.
²⁶⁸ Ibid.
²⁶⁹ Sullivan noted that the “inspirations” for these paintings were not only from the copies of “the Dunhuang murals (that Zhang Daqian and some others made and exhibited in the early 1940s), the hand scroll ascribed to Gu Kaizhi,” but “perhaps also his beautiful wife Qiu Di and his daughter Pang Tao.” Pang Jun, “Juelanshe yu juelanhou xianxiang (Art Phenomena of Storm Society and Post-Storm Society)”, See Pang Xunqin Art Museum, Association of Pang Xunqin Studies in Changshu, eds., Yishu chizi de qiusuo, 399-401.
the Tang Dynasty but also Guizhou Mountain People. Qiu Di, an artist who had received her art education in Taishō Japan and who had become recognized as a gifted painter in Shanghai during the early 1930s, served mainly as a housewife for the Pang family—her husband Pang Xunqin, her son Pang Jun, and her daughter Pang Tao—and almost abandoned her own career as an artist (in the sense that she painted much less works than before) during the war.

Before the war, in 1929, a considerable number of paintings by female artists were featured in the First National Fine Arts Exhibition sponsored by the KMT government, which aroused public attention to the position of women artists in the society of Republican China. Among the numerous articles published in Funu Zazhi 婦女雜誌 (Women Magazine) that examined the position of female artists in modern Chinese society, the Japanese-trained female sociologist and painter Jin Qijing 金起静 (1902-1982)’s “Women and Fine Arts” is representative. The author pointed out that, given the long history in which Chinese female artists were “bounded by Confucian ethics,” “it was hard for them to develop their pure artistic talents; it was only under the name of cultivating temperaments that their talents could find a chance to survive. However, nowadays they are liberated from the old, closed environment, and can enter into society and take the path of professional careers, mainly due to the attraction of arts. Therefore, all [the fields of arts], such as literature, music, and painting, should accept women with open attitudes, where women can follow their own nature to develop their gifts and

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270 An interview I did with Pang Tao at her home in Beijing, December 29 2012.
271 For the artist’s chronology, see Schudy (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2006).
present their amazing creativity.” According to the author, “the art world should not consider women to be merely objects for (men’s) painting, but rather be aware of women’s artistic talents; meanwhile, women should be encouraged to walk out of their occlusive boudoir and to exert their abilities to the maximum.”

Regardless of such voices that supported active participation by female artists in the art world, however, as a member of the first generation of women in oil painting (i.e., the so-called Western-style painting) in China, Qiu Di’s experiences testifies again the fact that during the war many female artists almost entirely gave up their own artistic careers due to the hard labor entailed for running the household at this time. Like many male intellectuals and social reformers who argued for women’s rights in the three principle East Asian entities—China, Japan, and Korea—male artists argued for women’s artistic competence mainly in academic terms.

In their own households, as Pang’s case testifies, patriarchal dominance to some extent remained.

Pang did not write in his 1980 memoir about any specific artist’s painting from the 1929 exhibition of modern Japanese art in Paris, nor did he seem to have had the habit of writing in a diary. However, some modern Japanese-style paintings that he viewed in the exhibition, including Bakusen’s critically acclaimed work, must have attracted Pang’s attention. In the 1920s, with the return of some Parisian-trained Japanese artists to Japan, Post-Impressionist paintings by Cézanne, van Gogh, and Gauguin became a trend followed by Japanese artists.

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273 For instance, Lu Xun, the giant of Chinese left-wing liberalism, insisted that his “modern” lover Xu Guangping, who had literary aspirations, put his domestic (and secretarial) needs over her desire to develop a writing career.
Within a circle of younger and much less conservative Japanese-style artists of the Kansai area (including Kyoto), the nihonga painter Tsuchida Bakusen also engaged in the heated discussion with his Western-style peers on the new art trends introduced from Europe. In the 1910s, such domestic and local contact with a metropolitan and international avant-garde clearly led to formal explorations in his work.\(^{274}\) Following his teacher Takeuchi Seihō 竹内栖鳳 (1864–1942), a Kyoto-based nihonga painter who studied in Europe in 1900–1, Bakusen went on a Parisian trip from October 1921 to May 1923.\(^{275}\) Seihō’s *Posing for the First Time* (1913) (Fig. 2.5) and a preparatory study for it (1913) (Fig. 2.6) epitomize the Western-inflected pictorial paradigm of the Kyoto inheritor of eighteenth-century Edo-period decorative realism, which formed the foundation of Bakusen’s training.\(^{276}\)

As evidenced by the black-and-white catalog reproduction of the original work from the 1929 Parisian exhibition, Bakusen’s *A Maiko of Kyoto* (Fig. 2.4) purchased by the Musée du Jeu de Paume, is a partially colored drawing depicting the same dancing girl (*maiko*) as in the fully colored *Bugi Rinsen* (A Maiko in a Japanese Garden, 1924) (Fig. 2.7). *Bugi Rinsen* epitomizes how Bakusen appropriated formal European strategies to capture the image of “native” or “traditional” Japan as an exotic spectacle. After Bakusen’s visit to the Imperial Household Museums in Kyoto and Nara, a new enthusiasm for classical Japanese art overtook him.\(^{277}\) He

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\(^{275}\) Ibid., 162.


noted that, “I was pleased to be able to have a fresh interest in looking at Japanese people and landscapes these days as if I was a stranger.” In particular, Bakusen was “stunned by the beauty” of “the maiko hairstyles and by the ways oharame wear their scarves.” Accordingly, his paintings tended to romanticize the primitive and traditional elements of Japanese culture that he perceived to be crystalized in the images of highly decorative landscapes with native women in “traditional” clothing. As the Japanese art historian Kaoru Kojima points out, in his geometric compositions one could detect the influence of not only modern European artists like Cézanne in the geometric composition but also traces of Early Renaissance aesthetic.

The visual connections between Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* and Bakusen’s paintings that feature “native women in traditional costume” indicate the impact of 1920s *nihonga* on Pang’s experimental “Chinese painting” from the mid-1930s through the 1940s. Bakusen’s *Bugi Rinsen* depicts a Kyoto maiko sitting in a garden, the stones and trees of which are rendered with carefully built-up, geometric forms. One could identify the same structural rigor created with a modernist sense of formal design in Pang’s compositions like *Washing Clothes* (Fig. 1.12) and *Carrying Water* (Fig. 1.13). If the maiko’s round face in Bakusen’s painting reminds the viewers of paintings by Fra Angelico, then the southern mountain women’s tilted heads and their dancing-like poses in Pang’s paintings such as *Splendid Attire* (Fig. 1.1), *The Season When Oranges Turn Red* (Fig. 1.18), *Spreading a Net* (Fig. 1.3), and *Coming Back* (Fig. 1.30) not only

278 Tsuchida Bakusen, “*Kicho-go no Dai-ichi Insho*” (The First Impression after Coming Back to Japan), Chuo bijutsu (Central Art) 9, no. 9 (1923): 140-1.
recall certain goddesses in the Buddhist murals in Dunhuang but also certain female figures in Botticelli’s paintings, especially the heroine in *Birth of Venus* (1486) (Fig. 2.8) and the Graces in *Primavera* (ca. 1482) (Fig. 2.9).

In the early 1930s, after Pang returned from Paris, he would have found that some updated Japanese art publications were available to Chinese artists in the Eastern metropolis Shanghai. Like his close friend Ni Yide in the circle associated with the Storm Society, who brought back from Japan a large number of modern art publications, Pang also owned a book series of *Sekai bijutsu zenshū* 世界美術全集 (World Art Collection). Volume 34 of this book series, published in 1930, reproduced in full color Bakusen’s painting *Oharame* 大原女 (Women Peddlers from Ohara, 1927) (Fig. 2.10). The triangular composition of the three figures in this painting might be compared with certain altarpieces of the Madonna and Child with saints. Similarly, in Pang’s *The Season When Oranges Turn Red* (Fig. 1.18), the way in which the two sisters with tilted heads look at each other is reminiscent of the compositional elements in certain Italian Renaissance paintings depicting the (albeit sitting) Madonna and Child, such as Botticelli’s *Madonna of the Book* (Fig. 2.11).

Despite Pang’s special emphasis on the “Chinese” nature of the materials adopted in

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279 In the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957, Pang was labeled as a rightist. During in the Cultural Revolution, the book series of *Sekai bijutsu zenshū* as his private collection was taken away when his home was raided. It was not returned to him until the Cultural Revolution ended. And, as he recalled, when the book series was returned to him, “the three volumes of Japanese art [in the series] were lost.” See Pang Xunqin, *Jiushi zheyang zouguolaide*, 270.


In *Taking a Break* (小憩, 1944) (Fig. 1.23), Pang’s rendering of the woman’s facial features and her foreshortened, sitting pose reveals the traces of the artist’s efforts to apply some basic skills of realist oil painting: the anatomical precision, the attention to shading, and the presence of spatial relationships. Despite the application of illusionistic skills such as chiaroscuro, which was used with economy in the modeling of the fine-line silhouetted figure, however, the meticulously recorded patterns on the woman’s headdress and cloth, and a woven basket on her back all give a strong sense of flatness, which indicates the artist’s attention to the decorative components in the composition. In the foreground of Pang’s composition, the flowers and leaves are deliberately sketched like decorative patterns, rhythmically arranged along the baseline toward the background. However, in comparison with the composition of Bakusen’s *Oharame* (Fig. 2.10), in which groups of dandelions and other flowers covering both the ground and the background are disproportionally large, the way that the plants are arranged along the foreground and the background in Pang’s painting does not alter the viewer’s perception of depth. Pang’s placement of vegetation better resembles the perspective view of floral and decorative elements in certain late-nineteenth-century French symbolist and poetic paintings inflected by the Quattrocento Italian Renaissance. In these nineteenth-century French paintings, such as *Les Foins* (Haymaking, 161).

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1877) by Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848–84) (Fig. 2.12), rural scenes are depicted with more naturalistic techniques.

In the early 1930s, the Japanese invasion of China had already begun and the Sino-Japanese War was imminent, although it had not officially broken out yet. Meanwhile, however, in the cultural realm there had been academic voices supporting the KMT governmental propagation that, to endow modern paintings with Chinese identity, Chinese artists could and should learn from modern nihonga painters in their self-consciousness preservation and protection of national cultural identity through art making. Cultural and artistic communications continued, unaffected by the tightening political situation, between Chinese practitioners in certain guohua societies such as the Hushe 湖社 (Lake Society), which practiced traditional ink painting, and the Japanese community of artists. After a violent clash between the Japanese Imperialist Army and the National Revolutionary Army in Jinan, Shandong, in May 1928 and the immediate assassination of Marshal Zhang Zuolin in June of the same year, an exhibition of Sino-Japanese Modern Painting co-sponsored by the Lake Society and the Japanese art community was held in the Xu Garden in Shanghai as originally planned. The guohua artist and art historian Zheng

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283 Japanese policy toward China after the beginning of the First World War underwent a number of swings. During 1914 and 1915, Japan’s seizure of the German concessions in Shandong and issuing of the Twenty-one Demands had shown complete intransigence. The Washington Conference of 1921-1922 saw a more conciliatory Japan withdrawing its harsher demands and returning the former German possessions and railways to China. But in 1927-1928 the hard line resurfaced, partly in response to the belief that the Republican National Party—Communist Party alliance would usher in a new era of anti-foreignism that might damage Japan’s privileged reading position in central China and its dominating military presence in southern Manchuria. The violent clash with Nationalist Revolutionary Army troops at Jinan in May 1928 and the assassination of Marshall Zhang Zuolin in June the same year gave ample proof of the new mood. See Jonathan D. Spence, The Searching for Modern China (New York: Norton & Company, 1990), 388.
Wuchang 鄭午昌 (1894–1952), for example, who visited the show, published an essay in 1936 in which he mentioned that modern Japanese painting excelled in emphasizing “the distinctiveness of national character.” Zheng argued that, by effectively incorporating elements from “European painting,” modern nihonga achieved success in its “[enhanced] vivid colors, refined delineation, beautiful rendering, and excellence in achieving the effect of verisimilitude.” To Chinese artists like Pang who visited the 1929 exhibition of modern Japanese art in Paris, Bakusen’s images of women would look “Japanese” at first glance, but closer inspection would reveal sophisticated quotation of European art. Bakusen’s typical motifs and visual strategies likely directly inspired Pang’s imagination of Chinese “national characteristics” in his wartime “Chinese painting.”

To viewers familiar with Renaissance paintings, meanwhile, the mysterious facial expression of the Miao woman sensitively executed in a muted palette in Pang’s Splendid Attire (Fig. 1.1) might have reminded them of the Italian Quattrocento model of female beauty in Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510)’s renowned Birth of Venus (Fig. 2.8). The breeze-encountering female figure in Pang’s Splendid Attire embodies a sense of largo, dancing-like movement. Pang’s depiction of this frontal female figure’s floating fabric recalls Botticelli’s pattern of suggesting movement in his depiction of the swirling draperies of the female subjects in Birth of Venus. As early as the late 1920s, during his stay in Paris Pang had made copies of Botticelli’s

paintings displayed in the museums and found Botticelli to be his favorite European Renaissance artist.\textsuperscript{285} In \textit{Splendid Attire} (Fig. 1.1), the flatness of the mountainous landscape as background enhances the flavor of decoration of this painting; meanwhile, however, the flowing hair on the female figure’s temple is echoed by the flowing willow leaves added in the left upper corner as background, which brings a sense of dynamic motion to the composition. That is to say, there exists a visual tension between the “natural” subjects of the woman and the landscape and the “artificial” quality of the meticulously rendered decorative style. Pang’s technical solutions here seem to draw from Botticelli’s treatment of body movement of the rising Venus; especially, that both artists intended to suggest a sense of motion is revealed by their renderings of the female figures’ flowing hair and the slightly unbalanced weight on the two sides of their female figures’ bodies. In the composition of \textit{Birth of Venus} (Fig. 2.8), too, a sense of dynamic motion is counterbalanced by the rigidly delineated contour lines. According to Pang’s “Self-Analysis” composed for his 1943 solo exhibition as well as his memoir written in the early 1980s, his favorite European artist was Botticelli, whose paintings caught his special attention when he was in Paris due to their “excellent decorativeness” (\textit{zhuangshi xing} 裝飾性).\textsuperscript{286} Although Botticelli is not an artist who was active in the twentieth century, many of his paintings began to enter the permanent collections of British and French museums in the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{287}

\textsuperscript{285} Pang Xunqin, \textit{Jiushi zheyang zouguolaide}, 57.
\textsuperscript{286} Ibid.
Therefore, Chinese artists studying in France in the early twentieth century would have had easy access to Botticelli’s paintings.

A “comparatively unknown” Florentine painter under the patronage of Lorenzo de’ Medici, Sandro Botticelli had a relatively low posthumous reputation until the late nineteenth century, when his work began to be “rediscovered” in Europe—in particular in Germany, France, and England—in the late nineteenth century as a perfect embodiment of the linear “grace” of Early Renaissance painting. Meanwhile, some British and French literati and artists saw in the expressive attributes of the figures depicted in Botticelli’s paintings a mood of “melancholy” characteristic of *fin de siècle* Europe.\(^{288}\) The English writer Walter Pater (1839-1894) was one of the important English-speaking interpreters of Botticelli beyond the scholarly world of art historiography in the late nineteenth century. Pater’s search for the distinctive qualities of Botticelli’s art spirit drew attention to his personal reactions and, as a characteristic gesture of aestheticism, was resistant if not antithetical to the conventional Vasarian treatment of the paradigmatic artist’s life as a heroic struggle or conspicuous participation in the events of the age.\(^{289}\) He discovered in Botticelli’s life and art an almost morbid sympathy with un-heroic

\(^{288}\) Ibid.

\(^{289}\) Although Botticelli’s inclusion in Giorgio Vasari’s *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects, from Cimabue to Our Times* guaranteed a degree of posthumous recognition, Michael Levey writes, “Between Botticelli’s death and 1800 the references to him were brief, sporadic, and largely uncomprehending,” owning to the painter’s awkward placement temporally and stylistically, difficult to situate in Vasari’s biological model of art’s evolution. Refer to Michael Levey, “Botticelli and Nineteenth-Century England,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23, no. 3/4 (July—Dec., 1960), 291-306. When Walter Pater published his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* in 1873, few of his subjects were better poised for critical reappraisal than Sandro
human circumstances. In this sense, Pater’s Botticelli was one who was “modern” in his own time, even as Pater positioned him as a still-emerging phenomenon in Victorian England. Pater’s criticism is of course a palimpsest of Botticelli’s work, in which the dual temporalities—the “modern” of Pater’s present and the “modern” of the newly emergent Renaissance—interweave in a double-helix pattern that images what Pater perceived as history’s dialectical structure: the artist’s struggle to assert individuality against larger historical forces. According to Pater, Botticelli managed to avoid the fate of the “mere naturalists” who surrounded him in Quattrocento Florence. Pater placed him among the “visionary painters”—those with an inward-turning eye—as distinct from the “dramatic painters” like Giotto and Masaccio, who transcribed the outward form of things. Pater called Botticelli a Quattrocento “surrealist” who not only transcribed reality but also represented dreams as an image of reality by recombining elements of reality according to his ideas, moods, and visions. According to Pater, Botticelli’s “morality is all sympathy,” as he was interested in men and women “in their mixed and uncertain condition, always attractive, clothed sometimes by passion with a character of loveliness and energy, but saddened perpetually by the shadow upon them of the great things from which they shrink.” To Pater, Botticelli’s figures take on an exilic air, adrift in the gray, purgatorial space


between heaven and hell, “that middle world in which men take no side in great conflicts, and
decide no great causes, and make great refusals.” These “great refusals” become the
delimiting walls around Botticelli’s art, but they are also liberating, curing him of any tendency
toward moral ambition or conventional piety. This seems to be what Pater has in mind when he
wrote that in Botticelli’s religious paintings there is “an undercurrent of original sentiment,
which touches you as the real matter of the picture through the veil of its ostensible subject.”

Partially due to the promotion of Botticelli’s art by writers like Pater, a modern fascination with
Botticelli’s “curious charm” took root in late-nineteenth-century Europe, as his followers
imagined an archetype of “fleshless,” pallid, and sickly beauties for “all [their] quaintness, pallor,
and deformities.” Several key motifs structuring Pater’s psychological interpretation in his
1870 essay on Botticelli are the wan beauty, pallid coloring, and compelling deficiencies of
Botticelli’s female figures. Some specific themes discovered by Pater and his followers in
Botticelli’s paintings include the “silent melancholy in the face” of the Mother of Christ in the
Madonna of the Magnificat (Fig. 2.13). From the Madonna of the Magnificat, Pater moved
directly to The Birth of Venus (Fig. 2.8), a transition that deliberately connects the Christian and
pagan, sacred and profane, using the likes of a pallid beauty who embodies Botticelli’s “ineffable
melancholy.”

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292 Ibid., 50
Besides melancholy and grace, a spirituality that recalled Asian art also became a key aesthetic concept in the writings of fin de siècle Euro-American writers as they sought to characterize Botticelli’s paintings as a singular model of the Quattrocento Renaissance. The American art historian Bernard Berenson (1865–1959) was pioneering in a trend emerging in Euro-American art historiography at the turn of the century to detect the impact of the East on the Early Renaissance. In 1903, Berenson started to reconcile East and West in his writing. After he helped unpack a shipload of Chinese pictures that had been procured by Ernest Francisco Fenollosa for the Boston Museum of Art, Berenson composed a famous article on the Sienese artist Sassetta, comparing a twelfth-century Chinese Buddhist painting with Sienese Renaissance painting. Berenson asked questions such as, “why is Christian art so unreligious, so unspiritual, as compared with the art of Buddhism?” His answer was that Western art had “a fatal tendency to become science” and “an inherent incapacity for spiritual expression,” and he began collecting Chinese paintings thereafter. Particularly, as his Japanese student Yashiro Yukio 矢代幸雄 (1890–1975) described, “according to Mr. Berenson’s way of thinking, in Botticelli’s art one senses a spiritual element akin to the poetic or perhaps mystical properties of Eastern art, and

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294 Even earlier, in Venetian Painters of the Renaissance, publishing as early as March 1894 in Europe and the United States, Bernard Berenson had made analogy between the forms of the work by some Venetian and “Asian” art.

295 Berenson’s session with Fenollosa viewing a series of Chinese painting from the twelfth century in Boston actually opened up a whole new world of Asian art. From then on, Berenson became primarily interested in Chinese art, largely ranging from the Tang dynasty through to the Song. The series of Song paintings from Daitoku-ji—some of which were purchased for Boston Art Museum—were later the impetus for the comparison between Siena and the art of the East. Joseph Connors and Louis A. Waldman, eds., Bernard Berenson: Formation and Heritage (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2014).
which one does not usually find in Western art.”²⁹⁶ From the early 1900s through mid-century, intellectual practices of making broad cultural comparisons between Far Eastern and Western art, based on an aesthetic dichotomy constructed between the “spiritual” Asian and the “rational” European cultures, persisted in the Euro-American world. In a 1955 Pelican volume on Japanese art, Robert Treat Paine, an American author and art curator in Boston, asserted that “the Japanese feeling for art is summed up in the problem of decorative designing . . . If one thinks of European parallels . . . the analogy is again between arts dependent on faith and feeling rather than on reason and science.”²⁹⁷

In 1925 (the year when Pang arrived in Europe), the Japanese scholar Yashiro Yukio, who studied under Bernard Berenson’s supervision during the early 1920s, published a monograph on Botticelli in London and in English. In this book Yashiro gave much emphasis to the linear style of Botticelli’s art and its parallels with Asian art. However, in contrast to his American teacher, Yashiro perceived in Botticelli an embodiment of “the universality of art,” and argued that “we must not exaggerate the influence of the Orient on Botticelli” and what was “of more importance” in his vision “was the spontaneous confluence in his (Botticelli’s) genius of the Oriental and Occidental ideals.”²⁹⁸ Instead of identifying a direct “influence” of the East on the Early Renaissance, he considered the rhythmic harmony and decorative beauty of Botticelli’s paintings

²⁹⁸ Yukio Yashiro, Sandro Bottecelli (London: The Medici Society), 1925.
as a hub where aesthetic parallels could be made between the East and the West. In this way, as Jonathan Nelson suggests, Yashiro challenged Okakura Tenshin’s approach to world art which became so influential in the West in the late nineteenth century and in Japan during the early twentieth century that many “Eastern writers” then held “sharply contrasted views and consider that Western Art is the apotheosis of material welfare, and Oriental of the spiritual.”  

Okakura’s idea that “the glory of the West is the humiliation of Asia,” and his identification of the impact of European civilization as “the White Disaster,” established an intellectual foundation for Japanese Pan-Asianism in in the first years of the twentieth century and later led to the Japanese imperialist expansion in Asia and militarist invasion of other countries including China and Korea. In contrast to Okakura and his followers who desired a compelling image of a united Asia, in the cultural wars over Western values in the 1920s and 30s Yashiro “took the side of internationalism” by arguing that “in reality…leaving geographical distinctions behind, Art is Universal.”

Pang likely learned about the writings by Pater, Berenson, and Yashiro during the late 1920s in Paris or the early 1930s in Shanghai, through his extensive communication with Fu Lei (1908–66), one of the most significant translators and literary and art critics in the Republican

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period who studied European literary and art theories at the Paris-Sorbonne from 1928 to 1931.\textsuperscript{303} After studying in Paris, Fu returned to China in 1931, where he lectured on “Western art history” at Shanghai Art College (Shanghai Meishu Zhuanke Xuexiao) from 1931 to 1934. His lectures on “Western art history” then epitomize how Fu translated these aesthetic concepts inscribed with Botticelli’s work. Portions of his manuscripts prepared for these lectures were published in *Meishu Xunkan*, a journal he coedited with Ni Yide; also in the same journal, in 1932, Fu Lei published “Xunqin’s Dream” for Pang Xunqin’s first solo exhibition in China, arguably the first critical review on Pang’s art in China.\textsuperscript{304} A half century later, Fu’s *Twenty Lectures on the Famous Artworks in the World*, a collection of his manuscripts composed for his 1931–34 Shanghai lectures, was finally published in the People’s Republic of China in 1983, after the Cultural Revolution of the Mao era.\textsuperscript{305} In an essay that Pang composed to introduce this volume, Pang singled out a quote from Bernard Berenson in Fu Lei’s 1930s lectures, which both Fu and Pang believed to be summarizing the “common spirit of Renaissance painting.” Moreover, when introducing Fu Lei’s lecture draft on Botticelli, Pang rephrased Fu’s point that “whereas the forms in Botticelli’s work is graceful, spiritually his work is shrouded in a gloom of


\textsuperscript{304} Fu Lei, “Xunqin de meng (Xunqin’s dream)” (September 1931), *Yishu Xunkan*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1931).

\textsuperscript{305} In 1957, during the Anti-Rightist Movement launched in the CCP regime, Fu Lei was labeled a rightist. In 1966, at the start of the Cultural Revolution, he and his wife committed suicide.
These words not only echoed Pater’s point but also expressed Pang’s personal feeling that “Botticelli’s work is like a solitary yet elegant orchid in the garden of art.” The metaphor of “a solitary yet elegant orchid” that Pang used to describe the position of Botticelli “in the garden of art” was borrowed from Chinese classical literature and art in which literati painting conventionally used the image of an orchid to allude to a set of noble characters and humanistic spirit cultivated through a Confucian-style ethical education. By using this metaphor, Pang’s introduction to Fu’s 1930s lectures implicitly set the aesthetics of the work of Botticelli, the Quattrocento Renaissance artist, in dialogue with that of the humanistic tradition of Chinese intellectual art rooted in the pre-Qin ethical philosophy of ancient China. Such an analogy suggests a cross-cultural dialogue made between the art West and the East, which recalls Yashiro’s internationalist vision that had presented Botticelli as an expression of “the universality of art” in the mid-1920s.

Yashiro’s internationalist approach to world art and his reinvention of Botticelli’s art “reflects his familiarity with the woodblock prints, artistic education, fine arts publications, and the religions of Japan” through his close readings of “small details as a key to the artist’s ‘concealed spirit’” as “that side of Botticelli which … was never … appreciated by European connoisseurs.” “Some of the details in the monograph reveal the same stylistic traits found in

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307 Ibid.
308 Jonathan Nelson, “Introduction,” Yashiro and Berenson: Art History between Japan and Italy, accessed online at http://yashiro.itatti.harvard.edu/Presentation
the Japanese woodblock prints that Yashiro compared to Botticelli,” and even though “the author himself does not discuss the compositional qualities of the photographs or prints, both are characterized by a lack of perspective or shadow.”

Likewise, in his paintings such as Splendid Attire (Fig. 1), Pang took a cross-cultural perspective of fusing the “decorative” elements of Botticelli’s painting with the motifs of China’s “native” tradition of “folk art” in his humanistic and universalizing vision resonates with Yashiro’s reading of Botticelli’s painting. Similar to the case of Yashiro’s monograph on Botticelli in which the images of many details of the artist’s paintings were “highly cropped,” Fu Lei wrote in his 1930s manuscript that Botticelli’s pictorial narrative seemed to have “juxtaposed the details of some different brisk and beautiful stories” in his composition without making a logical connection among them. But Fu compared this feature of Botticelli’s painting to that of some lyric songs in Latin, arguing that Botticelli “did not care about organizing a whole bunch of flowers [in his composition], [as] he only focused on every flower [depicted in the painting].” Pang’s inspirations drawn from Botticelli’s Birth of Venus (Fig. 2.8) are fragmentary and detailed – as exemplified in the flowing hair on the central female figure’s temple depicted in Splendid Attire. This formalist gesture, I suggest, enabled Pang to propose a utopian and cosmopolitan vision that China’s “national art of the new age” should be constructed “towards the future of the great unity of the world,” which

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310 Ibid.
311 Fu Lei, “Botiqieli de wumei (Botticelli’s grace),” reprinted in Fu Lei, Shijie Meishu Mingzuo Ershi Jiang (Twenty Talks on World Art Masterpieces) (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 1998), 55.
recalls Yashiro’s search for universal values embodied in the art West and East. Like in the case of Yashiro, in Pang’s vision the essentialist dichotomy between a “material” Western art and a “spiritual” Eastern art would be proved out of the point.

The highly stylized formal language of Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* also calls to mind Fu Lei’s reading of the “meaning and origin of the grace of Botticelli.” Recalling both Berenson and Yashiro, Fu wrote in his lecture draft for the Shanghai Art Academy in the 1930s that Botticelli’s “grace was generated from his harmonious lines.” In Pang’s *The Season When Oranges Turn Red* (Fig. 1.18), the two sisters are looking at each other with their heads tilted. The rhythmic compositional mode in which Pang arranged the two figures recalls Fu Lei’s description of the “group of fairies in a forest” in Botticelli’s *Primavera*. Like Berenson and Yashiro, Fu associated Botticelli’s mode of depicting “a group of fairies in the forest in *Primavera*” with a “more ancient, magically transcending, and immaterial spirituality.” The “refreshing, elegant charm” and “grace” of the fairies, according to Fu, are “clearly revealed by their tilted heads.” The result is that Pang’s depiction of the Guizhou mountain women with tilted heads would share the same sense of refreshing charm and graceful simplicity that Fu Lei saw in the stylistic attributes of *Primavera*.

312 Pang Xunqin, “Luetan tu’an (Brief Talk on Designed Patterns),” *Zhongyang ribao* (Central Daily Newspaper), Chengdu, February 13, 1944.
314 Ibid., 54.
315 Ibid., 55.
316 Ibid., 54.
Meanwhile, it has to be emphasized that Pang’s formal interests was directly connected to his social concerns, in making an aesthetic image of melancholy in Guizhou Mountain People in the wartime. Somewhat echoing Pater, Fu Lei saw in the early 1930s “the facial expressions of all the human subjects in Botticelli’s paintings” – “especially his depictions of all the Virgin Mary in his paintings” – a “melancholic” mood.\(^\text{317}\) In Botticelli’s Madonna of the Magnificat, for example, Fu found that “all the faces are depicted with the grace that is peculiar to Botticelli’s painting.” Unlike Yashiro, who was not much interested in contextualizing the stylistic traits of Botticelli with the “characters of life in Florence” (as what Herbert Horne did in his seminal 1891 monograph on the artist\(^\text{318}\)) or studying “Art-History” as “illustrations to the history of civilization” (as what Aby Warburg did in his doctoral dissertation on Botticelli submitted in 1891\(^\text{319}\)), Fu tried to understand Botticelli’s visual qualities within the philosophical and intellectual histories of the Early Renaissance. Fu wrote that the “melancholic” image created in Botticelli’s paintings is not only “the reflection of his individual mind” but also “the sign of a kind of philosophy,” that is, “the revival of the Epicurean philosophy.\(^\text{320}\) That is to say,

\(^{317}\) Ibid., 58.

\(^{318}\) Herbert P. Horne, Botticelli, Painter of Florence (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980); see also Sandro Botticelli and Herbert Horne, Rab Hatfield, ed. (Florence: SUF, 2009).


\(^{320}\) Epicurus (341-270 BCE) is mentioned as a hellenistic philosopher in the twentieth century literature on asceticism who led an ascetic – “almost monastic” -- life. This interpretation is based on the report given by Diogenes Laeotios, the main source for the original Epicurean philosophy. According to this text from Late Antiquity, Epicurus chose the notion of hedone or “pleasure” as the basis for his ethics, interpreting it, however, in such a way as to lead not to a luxurious lifestyle but rather to a modest, if not ascetic, way of life. See Asceticism and Its Critics: Historical Accounts and Comparative Perspectives, Oliver Freiberger ed. (Oxford University Press, 2006), 43.
Fu connected an ethic education with the image of fin de siècle “melancholy” in his reading of Botticelli’s female figurations. Under the influence of the Epicurean philosophy, Fu wrote, in Botticelli’s time “there was the disdain for sensual pleasure and an aversion to vanity” which might have caused the artist to make his “melancholic” images. Situated in this framework in which Botticelli’s female figurations were envisioned as an image of “grace” and “melancholy,” Pang’s sophisticated borrowing of Botticelli’s visual strategies in his wartime paintings of the Guizhou mountain women – such as Splendid Attire (Fig. 1.1) – not only epitomize the artist’s aesthetic ideal of a cross-cultural, universal art (in Yashiro’s term) but also convey a sympathetic image of the mental status of the ordinary Chinese people who were austerely experiencing the wartime reality of China.

In Fu Lei’s view, which also echoes Yashiro’s reading, “in Botticelli’s compositions the figures are not placed in a rigorous way in which they are connected [to form a coherent narrative], because he pays more attention to the harmonious lines [themselves] applied in depicting each figure.” Images with this formal quality, to Fu, tended to evoke in the viewers a pristine vision of the spirituality of ancient culture no matter whether in the East or the West. In Pang’s paintings like Splendid Attire (Fig. 1.1), resonating with this interpretation of Botticelli, the human subjects are arranged in the composition without interaction with each other, and their positions are detached from the background of the shallowly tinted, distant mountainous

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322 Fu Lei, “Botiqieli de wumei (Botticelli’s grace),” 54.
landscape. Pang’s patterns of placing and depicting figures with inner tension recall the classicizing compositional modes in not only Botticelli but also Chavannes. Furthermore, importantly, what also recalls both Chavannes and Botticelli in Pang’s work is the specific bluish-gray palette applied in *Guizhou Mountain People*. In Pang’s own words, his use of the muted tone of “bluish gray” contributed to “a tin layer of melancholy” in his wartime paintings.\(^{323}\) In Pater’s reading, the “peculiar quality” of Botticelli’s painting was credited to the artist’s use of “wan” colors. Color, Pater explained, is not merely mimetic, “no mere delightful quality of natural things,” but rather an expressive vehicle for the artist, a “spirit” that touches the viewer’s spirit, through which “you will find that quaint design of Botticelli’s a more direct inlet into the Greek temper than the works of the Greeks themselves even of the finest period.”\(^{324}\)

Pater accounted for this singular quality of Botticelli in his fortuitous historical context: the artist was present at the very nascence of the Renaissance, and *The Birth of Venus* (Fig. 2.8), with the quality of a fresh inquiry, offers “a record of the first impression made by [the Greek temper] on minds turned back towards it, in almost painful aspiration, from a world in which it had been ignored so long.”\(^{325}\) Pater, the avowed enemy of clichéd conventions and formulas in art and criticism, was drawn to Botticelli’s aesthetic and ethical struggle to reconcile the forms and ideas of medieval Christianity with those of Neoplatonic humanism. In Pater’s reading, Botticelli marked a significant moment in the gestation of the Renaissance, before the Greek temperament

\(^{323}\) Pang Xunqin, “Zipou (Self Analysis),” published in *Zhongyang ribao* (Central Daily), September 12, 1943.


\(^{325}\) Ibid., 58
had ossified into an unthinking academicism.

In his memoir completed in the early 1980s, Pang Xunqin attributed his special interest in “decorativeness” to the impacts of Botticelli and Puvis de Chavannes. These two artists’ works, in Pang’s own words, drew his “attention to the decorativeness in painting for the first time.”

In Pang’s memoir, he recalled that he had audited *Cours de Civilisation Francais* in the late 1920s at the Sorbonne. This should have been a class offered in the Extension Universitaire of the Sorbonne. The syllabus of this class included a course on French art history offered by M. Schneider, introducing the origin of French art as “the art of Roman Gaul” as well as the French art’s historical development from ancient periods to the art of “romanticism,” “impressionism and its derivatives” and finally “social art.” Therefore, Pang should have been familiar with the European – especially French – context in which the meaning of the term “decorative” changed over the decades from the 1850s through the early twentieth century. Contradictory and overlapping notions of the “decorative” have entered both the visual vocabulary and critical lexicon and to this day have not been sorted. In particular, “decorative” was a term proffered by Chavannes to describe his own innovative non-mural work in 1879, though he was not the only artist to so introduce his work. By the beginning of the 1870s non-murals had been called “decorative” in France, and they were not necessarily considered less important for being so: at

that time, “decorative” did not have the derogatory significance that it would have later. When certain nouveau paintings appeared, they might be called “decorative” to indicate that the designation “tableau” simply could not be stretched enough to include features that seemed contemptuously arbitrary in the fanciful compositions. Being “decorative” was an accusation used in 1876 against the Impressionists, who were “exclusively” concerned with “decorative and coloration”; “decorative painting” was neither historical painting nor anything with intellectual complexity, not an adequate representation of the external world. By the 1870s the term “decorative” could also be coupled in the critical literature with whatever seemed empirically wrong and arbitrary—whether color, composition, surface texture, visible artist’s touch, or lack of illusory depth. In short, being “decorative” was an all but obligatory road to tread on the way to modernism, as something “decorative” in painting was not governed by verisimilitude or descriptive necessity.\(^{328}\) That is to say, viewed in the European context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a special interest in “decorativeness” would also suggest a modernist identity against a cliché in artistic paradigm and an unthinking academicism.

In Fu Lei’s 1930s writing, Botticelli was understood as an epitome of Early Renaissance artist who “would pursue ideal Beauty on one hand and be truthful to Reality on the other. [They would pursue] ideal Beauty, because they [would] observe Nature with Humanist eyes, and they [would] never forget the ancient [classics]; [they would] be truthful to Reality, because [these

artists] after Giotto have been painstakingly working on how to achieve perfection in [the expressiveness of form].”

By evoking “the decorativeness in painting(s)” by Botticelli and Puvis, Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* shows his quest for a pictorial paradigm reconciling the “East” and “West,” the “idealistic” and “realistic,” and the “decorative” and “realistic.” Furthermore, by drawing inspiration from diverse European and Japanese models, Pang’s paradigm of “decorative realism” differentiated itself from the nineteenth century French academic paradigm of mimetic realism based on verisimilitude. In this sense, I suggest, Pang’s paradigm of refashioning modern Chinese painting should be considered as an implicit response to the relatively dominant paradigm of mimetic realism promoted by Xu Beihong and his followers. For these Chinese artists trained in French academicism during the early twentieth century, incorporating the paradigm of mimetic realism into the reformation of Chinese painting based on their own earlier training in France was crucial to the development of modern Chinese art. In contrast, in Pang’s 1943 “Self-Analysis,” he tended to link the synthesized style of his paintings with the qualities of traditional “literary painting,” arguing that the “Zhen (the real) does not lie in [one’s emphasis on] verisimilitude [or a mimetic, illusionary surface] but [the subjective expression of one’s] Xin (Mind) [in response to reality].”

Since the late 1920s, Xu Beihong made every effort to institutionalize a specific kind of *xin guohua* or “new national painting” in national art education through his teaching and administration at the Department of

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330 Pang Xunqin, “Zipou (Self Analysis),” published in *Zhongyang ribao* (Central Daily), September 12, 1943.
Art at the National Central University. Since 1942, Pang had been teaching graphic
deign—rather than painting—in the same Department of Art at the National Central University.
Facing the fact that the mimetic paradigm of realism that Xu promoted had become prevalent in
Republican Chinese art education, he lamented in a short essay published in August 1944,
“Realism [as it has developed now] in China has become [merely] a shelter for Academicism.”
In 1947, the skills of drawing, shading, and modeling—the basis of training in
nineteenth-century European academic realism—were established by Xu Beihong in the
curriculum of Department of Arts at the National Central University to be “the foundation of all
kinds of fine arts” including guohua. All the students who studied painting there—no matter
xihua or guohua—would start with how to draw from life and sketch with pencils.

It is true that Xu Beihong’s paradigm of realism later in the 1950s became one of the
most dominant models, partially based on which the pictorial paradigm of a state socialist
realism was constructed by the CCP and was institutionalized in the newly established People’s
Republic of China. Yet, before the collapse of the KMT government in China, it was still one of
the competitive, diverse paradigms of making modern Chinese painting in the Republican period.

Even within the Department of Art at the National Central University, where from 1935 through

331 A short essay by Pang Xunqin, originally published in Huaxi Wanbao (Western China Evening Newspaper) on
August 11, 1944; reproduced in Pang Xunqin, Lun Yishu, Sheji, Meiyu, 70.
332 Xu Beihong, “Xin guohua jianli zhi buzhou (Procedures of Constructing the New National Painting),” Xu
Beihong wenji (A Collection of Essays by Xu Beihong) (Shanghai: Shanghai huabao chubanshe, 2005), 138. Wu
Xueshan examines how Xu’s conception of “new guohua” in the 1940s to a large extent could be seen as a part of
the previous movement of guohua reformation [in the 1930s], which focused more on the formal qualities and
technical aspects, with no much attention to reforming the contents [of painting].” See Wu Xueshan, “Xin guohua --
Xu Beihong yu ‘xinxing zuojia’ de chuchang (New guohua: Xu Beihong and the emergence of ‘a generation of new
the end of the Republican period Xu and his student Lv Sibai 呂斯百 successively held the position of chair, some other artists had different views about how modern Chinese painting should be developed. Pang’s approaches to refashioning Chinese painting “with the help of Western painting” were different from those Chinese artists who had mainly trained in French academicism, in terms of what constituted a “realist” painting. Pang’s wartime attitudes toward the mimetic paradigm of reforming Chinese painting, again, might have some connections with his close friend Ni Yide’s Post-Impressionist-inflected modernist interpretation of “realism in painting” in the 1930s. In 1932, Ni Yide published “On the Spirit of Modern Painting” (Xiandai huinha de jingshen lun) in Yishu Xunkan, the art magazine that he edited and that was affiliated with Shanghai Art Academy. In this essay, he introduced Cézanne’s modernist reformulation of the realism of painting, explain that in Cézanne’s conception, realism is not an imitation of the appearance of the object through a mimetic painting surface. Rather, according to Ni, Cézanne would refer to the spiritual expression of an artist toward the object as the “realism” of painting or the “expression of the spirit of painting.”

The inspiration that Pang sophisticatedly drew from Botticelli and Chavannes and from Picasso’s period of neoclassicism epitomizes the specific ways in which the resurgence of

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333 Wan Xinhua, “Yetan guoli zhongyangdaxue shifanxueyu xishuxue xia de zhongguohua jiaoxue (An alternative perspective on the teaching of Chinese painting at the National Central University),” in Wan Xinhua, Tuxiang, Fengge, Guannian: Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi yanjiu congcao (Image, Style, Concept: Collected Essays on Chinese Modern Painting) (Jinan: Shandong meishu chubanshe, 2013), 1-16. Xu Beihong served as the Chair of the Department of Arts at the National Central University from 1935 to 1936.

classicism in the European art world after World War I impacted Pang’s highly symbolic 
paintings that he “made for the people living in deep misery” (in his own words) in the late 
exemplified in his series of *Guizhou Mountain People*, epitomizes the specific transnational 
trajectories that the artist took for refashioning the so-called modern Chinese painting by fusing 
selective elements of European ancient and modern aesthetics other than the mimetic realism 
derived from the nineteenth century French academism.

2.3. “Damaging the Image of the Nation”? Social Symbolism of *Guizhou Mountain People*

In October 1944, Pang held another solo exhibition in Chongqing, where more paintings 
featuring “people’s life in Guizhou in China’s inner frontier” as part of the *Guizhou Mountain People* series were shown to the public.\footnote{See Michael Sullivan’s description in *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1966).} On this occasion, these paintings were accused of 
“damaging the image of the nation” by Zhang Daofan, the aforementioned minister of 
propaganda of the KMT government, who visited the 1944 exhibition in person.\footnote{Pang Xunqin, *Jiushi zheyang zonguolaide*, 203.} Zhang was 
by no means an outsider to painting. Before his tenure as the minister of propaganda of the 
Nationalist government began in 1942, Zhang was an artist who trained at the Slade School of 
Fine Art at University College London and the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts,
respectively, from 1912 to 1926. During his study at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, his paintings had three times been accepted by the annual Salons de Printemps. What might have been the political implications of Zhang’s accusation of Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* in 1944? As my further analysis in this chapter will demonstrate, Pang’s cosmopolitan interest in formal experimentation could not be simply labeled as “formalist” in that he did not simply incorporate the formal attributes of the European and Japanese legacies that inspired him but also engaged with the intellectual content of the visual sources from which he drew. His stylistic and aesthetic solutions for refashioning modern Chinese painting were made not only for the purpose of the national but also the social.

It is true that one main goal of Pang’s project of painting *Guizhou Mountain People*, as discussed above, was to celebrate the local people’s “folk art” as an alternative national art tradition. To some extent, Pang’s modernist endeavor in uncovering the “beauty” of the handicrafts made by the southwestern mountain villagers shares the same logic as the Republican nationalist anthropological and ethnographic scholars who believed that ancient objects excavated from archaeological sites could evoke a certain early period of national history.

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Nevertheless, given Zhang’s position as an official minister of foreign affairs, his negative comments on Pang’s paintings regarding the “ethnic art tradition” might have implied that Pang’s depictions of the Miao, an ethnic minority, could not be used to represent the majority of the Chinese nation, namely the Han Chinese. That is to say that during the wartime the harsh critique that these paintings received from the KMT official reveals an age-old cultural and racial belief in the supremacy of the Han culture, which held that minorities were peripheral and less civilized. More complicatedly, as discussed earlier in the previous chapter, in the period of Republican China, the popular Han Chinese image of the Miao people had been hovering between exotic “other” and assimilated “alter-ego.”

The notion of “cultural assimilation”—the hanhua or sinicization of the southwestern non-Han ethnic groups by the Han—was particularly prevalent in the Han Chinese historical narrative of imperial China. It is true that in the early Republican period (before 1928 when the KMT consolidated its power base and “reunited” China by establishing the Nationalist government in Nanjing), the twenty-two provinces included in the territory inherited from the Qing Empire had included many multiethnic-concentrated southwestern provinces such as Guizhou, Yunnan, and Sichuan. However, as current scholarship shows, not until 1935 did the KMT truly achieve its centralized rule over Guizhou. During the Republican period, Guizhou was the only multiethnic southwestern province where the KMT government thoroughly realized its centralized governance. It was also the only province

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339 During the Civil War between the Nationalist and the Communist parties ensuing the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the historical narrative of China as a “cultural nation” whose principal constituent was the culture of Han originated in the Central Plains gain more and more currency.
throughout China in which the KMT government’s ethnic policies were effectively implemented.\footnote{Lou Guipin, “Yang Sen zhuqian shiqi Gui Zhou minzu zhengce de zhidong (Yang Sen’s Ethnic Policies Designed for Guizhou during the period when he was in charge of Guizhou),” in Guizhou Minzu Yanjiu (Guizhou Ethnic Studies), No. 3 (2009): 23-27.} In 1935, the KMT military administration in the southwestern regions had started to implement ethnic policies facilitating the assimilation (tonghua 同化) or sinicization of the non-Han ethnic “frontier peoples,” including sinicizing their language through school education and regulating local customs, clothing, and even hairstyles. Corresponding to the New Life Movement that the KMT government launched in 1934, which promoted the “preservation of inherently old morality” and the “civilization of the citizens,” a body politics cloaked in the ideology of Han-centered Chinese nationalism was engaged in the Han nationalist project of assimilating the Miao. At the same time, also as part of the Nationalist government’s ethnic policies, Han-Miao intermarriage was highly encouraged.\footnote{Siu-woo Cheung, “Subject and Representation: Identity Politics in Southeast Guizhou” (PhD Diss., University of Washington, 1996), 108-20.} The Nationalist government’s tonghua policies, executed through a series of steps to “civilize” and “cultivate” the southwestern non-Han ethnic groups, gained some support from native peoples in these regions. In 1937, Ms. Gao Yuzhu 高玉柱, the chieftain of the southwestern “Miao-Yi” groups (i.e. – the multiple southwestern ethnic groups in general), and Yu Jiecai 喻傑才, a representative selected from the Miao-Yi common people, visited factories, schools, libraries, newspaper offices, and buildings of the municipal administration in Shanghai. Their activities and speeches during their visits, well reported with photographs in the newspaper Shenbao, indicate their appeals to facilitate the
construction of a modern, multiethnic Chinese nation. Ms. Gao Yuzhu related that, “before [the establishment of the Republic of China], foreign powers had been instigating the chieftains of Miao-Yi and local people to separate from the Han [race], promising to provide them with money and the most up-to-date weapons.” “After the Xinhai Revolution [in 1911],” according to her, “the central government [of China] lost its connection with the Miao-Yi groups, letting them deal with their own business. Imperialists, taking advantage of this estrangement, instigated the Miao-Yi ethnic groups to separate themselves from China.” Seeking “national unity” between the Miao-Yi groups and the Han, Gao identified herself as “Chinese” and initiated a petition to the central government, claiming that “the Miao-Yi ethnic groups, which are actually [part of] the Chinese nation, have a deep connection with the Han.”342 As for the spread of the principle of uniting “five ethnic groups,” Gao complained, “our Republic of China is an amalgamation of Han, Manchus, Mongols, Muslims, Tibetans, and southwestern Miao-Yi ethnic groups. However, many people only acknowledge five ethnic groups—Han, Manchus, Mongols, Muslims, and Tibetans; they have never heard of the Miao-Yi groups as a huge ethnic community.”343 During the war, Republican China’s public media broadcast a particular historical narrative of the ethno-relation between the Han and the Miao:

343 Ibid.
The Miao people were originally seen as a native (that is, an aboriginal) ethnicity in China. After they were invaded by another ethnicity (which was the so-called “Han Chinese” led by the Huang Emperor in this narrative) in the Central Plains, they were driven into the remote, barren area in the southwest to continue their lives. Later on, as the population [of the Miao] gradually increased, they expanded their living area. Given the difference in living environment [between the Miao and the Han people], they [the Miao] were gradually separated from the local [Han] people. [This situation] had led to the ethnic division of Han and Miao [within China] and frequent conflicts [between the two ethnicities]. . . . The areas where the Miao live were the borderlands between China and the areas controlled by America and France [as colonies]. [The Miao], originally a backward ethnicity without the concept of nation-state at all, was then inducted by the [Euro-American imperialist] powers. . . . [So,] some [educated and thus] civilized Miao people had already abandoned the primitive style of clothing and begun to dress in Western-style suits and ties. Because there was no way for them to get access to indigenous Chinese culture anymore.344

It is likely that the term “indigenous Chinese culture” mainly referred to the norms of Han Chinese culture that originated in the Central Plains of early China.345 In light of this historical narrative, Pang’s ethnographic-inspired images of the southwestern ethnic minorities ran the risk of being taken by the KMT government official Zhang Daofan as denigrating Han efforts of nearly two thousand years to sinicize the “Miao.”

As a member of the Han Chinese elite in the Republican China, Zhang’s accusation of

345 The Han (or Sinitic), the majority of Chinese, are usually considered as the culturally Chinese who established the written form of the Chinese language and are in the mainstream of Chinese culture. For the genealogy and cultural construct of the term Han, refer to Leo J. Moser, The Chinese Mosaic: The Peoples and Provinces of China (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985), 1-49.
Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* reveals the continued persistence of the age-old bias which took the Han literati class as the social group responsible for constructing the official record and discourse of Chinese history, and “believed in the supremacy of the Han culture and regarded the minorities as peripheral and less civilized culturally.” More importantly, Zhang Daofan’s harsh critique of Pang’s paintings was based on particular political concerns at the time, which indicates that Pang’s ethnographic impulse would only be highly valued by the KMT government when it could serve for the ethnographic collecting, “scientific” study, and display of “primitive ethnic” objects in the National Central Museum. In contrast, when Pang incorporated the ethnographic elements into paintings that represent the hardship and poor life of the Guizhou mountain people as marginal citizens of the modern Chinese nation, the distinctive non-Han ethnic cultural elements would look problematic to the Han Chinese officials in charge of national propaganda. It is true that the task of some anthropologists and ethnographers since the early 1930s was to show that there had been an age-long tradition of the non-Han ethnic groups’ assimilation of various Han Chinese practices and traits. However, meanwhile, the Chinese assimilationist policy, which had been active in this region since the late imperial period, was expanded in the Republican era after the loss of Manchuria during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. To KMT officials, the “primitive” cultural elements accurately documented

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in Pang’s wartime experimental “Chinese paintings” might serve to emphasize the image of China as backward and socially unjust during the 1930s and 40s, which went against the sinicization policies that the KMT government was fervently promoting and executing at this time in the southwestern multiethnic inner frontier—especially Guizhou. In 1939, a KMT ordinance asserted that, “in our country, the fusion of racial, cultural, and blood among different groups has long been completed and should not be arbitrarily analyzed.”348 Likewise, the 1939 national-sponsored investigation in Guizhou, conducted by the IHP ethnographer Rui and the National Central Museum professor-artist Pang, mainly concentrated on “folk art” as an ethnographic or cultural anthropological – rather than a physical anthropological – aspect of the local culture. In 1943, Jiang Jieshi declared in his book China’s Destiny that “the Chunghua nation . . . has grown by the gradual amalgamation of various stocks into a harmonious and organic whole.”349 In the 1947 English edition of China’s Destiny, published in the United States, this idea had been edited such that these various stocks were “originally of one race and lineage” and that “the distinction between the five stocks is territorial as well as religious, but not ethnological.”350 By 1947, in Jiang Jieshi’s formulation, the Chinese nation was “an enduring and all-embracing culture,” whose nationals share a common ancestry that “can be traced far

back to the Huang Emperor."351 Culture and race supplied each other in the logic of the Republican nationalist cultural narrative of the history of China.352 However, the reality did not always accord with the harmonious cultural narrative of the Miao’s voluntary assimilation into the Han during the Republican period. In the southwestern inner frontier where the KMT was headquartered during the War, there were many cases in which the Republican government’s ethnic politics of nation building and assimilation did not succeed in sinicization but rather forced local people back into the poorer lands after they refused to give up their traditional costume, clothing, and hairstyles.353

Under such socio-political circumstances, some of the “folk” motifs featured in Pang’s paintings during the 1940s might have evoked some sociopolitical messages beyond the ethnographic ones, which made the KMT officials anxious. Sponsored by the increasingly authoritarian KMT government, one of the main objectives of the aforementioned “Chinese Cultural Construction Association” established in the mid-1930s was to use the party-ruling culture of the Three People’s Principles to the resist the revolutionary cultural movement led by the CCP and pro-CCP leftist intellectuals. Compounding the New Life Movement at the time, this nationalist movement of cultural construction was instrumental to the stabilization of the increasingly authoritarian KMT government. The KMT government’s literature and art policy

351 Ibid.
after the official break out of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression mainly followed the nationalist literary and art theory, appealing to people in Chinese society by the rally-under-the-flag effect, consensus-building, and eliminating conflicts among different classes. As the War turned into a “protracted war,” the KMT regime reinforced its coercive authoritarian rule in the KMT-controlled “rear front” and refocused its political agenda on anticommunism, despite of the second official united front with the CCP formed in 1938. In January 1941, the Wannan Incident broke out as a military conflict in which the CCP suffered a substantial loss due to the sudden offensive of the Nationalist Army in Jiangsu. The tension within the second KMT-CCP United Front was escalated; shortly after, in September 1942, “The Literature and Art Policy We Need (Wo’men suo xuyao de wenyi zhengce 我們所需要的文藝政策),” an editorial signed by Zhang Daofan, was published in Chongqing in the first issue of Wenhua Xianfeng 文化先鋒 (Cultural Pioneer) issued by the KMT party-state, proposing that “the Three People’s Principles is the survival of the whole nation, so our art should take the whole nation as the object ...... Who did we create the art in the Three People Principles for? The ‘entire nation.’ In the past writers usually belonged to some class. We have to be absolutely devoid of any trace of class and create art for all.”354 This literature and art policy seems to have been launched in direct response to the CCP leader Mao Zedong’s “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Arts” given in 1942 at Yan’an, Shaanxi, as the wartime CCP-base. In Mao’s talks, the struggle

354 Zhang Daofan, “Wo’men suo xuyao de wenyi zhengce (The literature and art policy we need),” Wenhua Xianfeng (Cultural Pioneer), September 1, 1942.
between “the people” and the ruling class of the KMT party-state was emphasized as the main subject for “revolutionary” artistic creation in order to expose the dark side of society and the social conflicts among the high and low classes. To put it briefly, “All the dark forces harming the masses of the people must be exposed and all the revolutionary struggles of the masses of the people must be extolled; this is the fundamental task of revolutionary writers and artists.” In the following in this chapter, I will examine the ways in which Pang Xunqin created his series of *Guizhou Mountain People* with entangled concerns hovering between a national imagination of the past and a leftist-inflected social critique of the present of China, and, accordingly, how the visual traces of the coexisting concerns conveyed through these paintings invited varied critical receptions under the domestic political circumstances in the KMT-controlled region during the 1940s.

When the two series—*Guizhou Mountain People* and *Dancing Ladies of the Tang Dynasty*—were shown for the first time in Pang’s 1943 exhibition in Chongqing, his self-composed preface published on the *Central Daily* (Chengdu) on September 12, 1943, portrayed his complex motivations during his encounters with the mountain people in Guizhou:“

I will not mince words: the Guizhou compatriots as I depict them are nothing like how they actually appear in real life. [But] these works cannot be evaluated ethnologically [either]. Indeed, the brush cannot but paint [the subjective judgment of] the artist himself. And yet in terms of costume, I have tried as hard as possible to preserve their original appearance. On account of this I gave myself many

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limitations, and in some cases the pictures have unavoidably lost their liveliness. Looking back at our forefathers often leaves us with mistakes. I do not wish delude myself, nor do I wish to fool those who will come after. And so, like an embroiderer, I have had no choice but to render these patterns exactly as they appear, even if they are themselves mistaken. I feel depressed and feebleminded!”

Despite his special interest in recording the original appearance of the patterns on the ethnic costumes of the southwestern minorities, Pang did warn the audience of this exhibition that his images of the “Guizhou compatriots” in “these works cannot be evaluated ethnologically,” as “the brush cannot but paint [the subjective judgments of] the artist himself.” From these words, one can tell that Pang did not intend to present his depictions of the Guizhou people merely as “scientific” or “exotic” ethnographic specimens. Rather, he attempted to convey something “subjective” and socially engaged—that is, he wanted to express his sympathy for the hardships and poor “life” of his “Guizhou compatriots” as a group of contemporary, marginal citizens of modern China.

Even before Pang visited the Miao tribes, he had heard that “ethnic hatred” between the southwestern multiethnic groups and the Han people was still deep. When he visited the Miao tribes, Pang discovered that the people there would relax their original hostility toward him after they heard that he was not a KMT governmental official who wanted their tribes for

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357 Ibid.
358 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolaide, 183.
During his expedition to Guizhou, he astutely noticed that there were class conflicts underlining the ostensible ethnic hatred. These class conflicts separated the southwestern mountain people as national peripherals and laboring poor from the Han social elites who represented the interests of ruling class of the Nationalist government. An intriguing paradox embedded in Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* paintings is that, on the one hand, he clearly saw the multiple and contradictory perspectives of these paintings, epitomized by the cognitive gap between his images of the social reality of the Guizhou mountain people as his own “Guizhou compatriots” in Republican China and his images of them as ethnographic specimens of an idealized, primitive past of Han Chinese culture in the same series, and, on the other hand, he did not attempt to close that gap. In some paintings of the series, as discussed earlier, Pang preferred to meticulously document the “original appearance” of the embroidered “patterns exactly as they appear.” In so doing, in his own words, he gave himself “many limitations, and in some cases the pictures have unavoidably lost their liveliness.”

As Sullivan noted, many liberals in the 1930s were not pro-Communist, but they were also not prepared to support the KMT in its suppression of dissent. Pang was among those liberal artists who struggled for a “middle way” to reconcile the national consciousness (with national identity) and the social concerns (with social injustice) independent from partisanship.

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359 Ibid.
360 Pang Xunqin, “Zipou (Self Analysis),” published in *Zhongyang ribao* (Central Daily), September 12, 1943.
As my analysis will further reveal, Pang’s dual perspectives, epitomizing the artist’s attempt to balance his national and social concerns, complicated the messages conveyed through his selection of subjects and his approaches to representing them in the paintings of *Guizhou Mountain People*. In certain paintings of this series, nevertheless, the two somewhat-contradictory perspectives coexist and counterbalance each other. In *Splendid Attire* (Fig. 1.1), for example, Pang’s ambivalent and paradoxical implications are revealed by his different ways of treating the female bodies and their facial expressions. His multiple visual emphases also separate the figures in the foreground from the natural landscape as background, indicating his somewhat-conflicting motivations. In this painting, Pang designed a minor figure to be a mirror of the frontal major figure, in order to show the major figure’s hairstyles. This mirror-like grouping transforms the individual figures into representatives of a specific ethnic group, a type of the Miao aborigines. It is true that Pang gave special attention to the traditional embroidered patterns and design of the ethnic female costume, headdress, and jewelry. Nevertheless, his deliberate depiction of the unhappy gaze of the woman in the foreground does give some emotional depth to the figure’s inner world. Paintings like this reveal that female figures in this series were not merely intended to be representing exotic beauties, but also the mountain people in Guizhou, a group of marginal citizens and laboring poor. Based on his own observations of the severe social conflicts in the southwestern interior of China from this sociological perspective, in his 1980s memoir Pang reminded younger Han scholars and artists
that they “should not” look at and represent the southwestern multiethnic people only in an “exotic, ethnographic mode.”362 In some of his paintings made with a perspective other than ethnographic, social realism tended to be his chief goal.

Importantly, a critical reason for Minister Zhang’s accusation should be that the motif of the “mountain women” featured in Guizhou Mountain People could be clearly seen as a southwestern variant of the subaltern peasant women featured in Pang’s earlier paintings of social symbolism. Since the early 1930s, peasant woman clad in native clothes had been a recurrent image in Pang’s paintings like Son of the Earth (1934) (Fig. 1.10) and Squeezing Machine (1935) (Fig. 1.9). During the early 1930s, a shift of focus to the specified social subjects of lower class in China had been taking place in Pang’s work. It is true that, in early 1930s Shanghai, some of Pang’s paintings including Such is Paris (1931) (Fig. 1.6) and Such is Shanghai (1931) (Fig. 1.62) demonstrated his interests in the Western-style urban modernity through depictions of subject matter with “strongly exotic flavors.”363 In Ni Yide’s words, Pang’s beloved subject matter in his pre-war paintings in oil or gouache include “flirtatious dancers and mixed race people” in “intoxicating atmosphere of cafés, and chaotic scenes in bars.”364 In Such is Paris, one could easily detect the face of Josephine Baker in the composition of collage by Pang, the Parisian-trained artist. Nevertheless, this subject matter completely

362 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolaide, 186.
364 Ibid.
disappeared in his wartime paintings in the southwestern inner frontier. In contrast, the image of peasant women wearing clothes and accessories with local decorative patterns was recurrent from the mid-1930s through the 1940s, serving in Pang’s social symbolism to represent the mental life of the rural society of China. Peasant is the very form of Reality in Chinese culture from ancient times—this culture which more and more saw itself as defined by its wish, and ability, to stick to the world of things. The peasant is the Real, meaning Earth, Matter, Primitiveness. Hearing about the news that “a great drought in the Jiangnan region made land the crack,” Pang conceived and painted Son of the Earth. This work, which he spent several months creating, was on display in the third group exhibition of the Storm Society in Shanghai in 1934. The act of depicting “refugees’ hard lives” when “drought” happened, in fact, had been coded in Chinese pictorial convention by dynastic rulers since the Song dynasty (960–1279) as dangerous behavior with the potential to trigger social turmoil. This pictorial convention can be traced back to the Northern Song official Zheng Xia 郑侠 (1041–1119), who allegedly presented the Painting of Refugees that he commissioned to the emperor of Shenzong and thereby initiated a specific tradition of political painting—that is, painting refugees to advise the emperor about social illness. In the memorial to the throne that Zheng sent with the Painting of Refugees, he wrote about the natural disaster of drought that had existed “since last autumn and winter” and the “foreign aggressions” to the country that had taken place in the meanwhile.

365 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolaide, 141.
Immediately following these descriptions, he ascribed these disasters to a perceived political illness—that is, at the time some court officials’ derelictions of duties and the social problems brought by the “new regulations” that were being experimentally implemented. Simultaneously, a “drought” that was framed as a kind of “natural disaster,” in the discourse associated with this specific political art tradition, would be perceived as an omen of “social disaster” in the country. In the case of Pang’s *Son of the Earth*, once the painting was shown to the public, it suffered severe blows from the KMT government. This painting was not allowed to be published in the press, and Pang received a threatening letter saying that, “You must leave Shanghai, or be careful of your life.” Pang’s artist friend in the Storm Society, Zhang Xuan, also received an anonymous phone call warning that the Shanghai police headquarters was going to arrest Pang.

A “modern Pietà,” *Son of the Earth* is the first painting in Pang’s oeuvre to epitomize the artist’s understanding of and concerns with the social reality of China. Peasant and rural China had become a frequent subject in poems and novels since the late 1920s, when the Chinese Communist Party launched successive revolutions in Hunan, Jiangxi, Guangzhou, Hubei, Henan, Anhui, Fujian, Zhejiang, and Shaanxi provinces to redistribute land among peasants. It was with

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366 Jiang Yuehong, “Tu liumin yi jian?: Zheng Xia ‘Liumin tu’ jiqì tuxiang he jiedu zai houshi de liubian (‘Painting refugees as an act of remonstrance?’: Zheng Xia’s *Painting of Refugees* and its receptions in the periods after its creation)” (2016). I thank my friend Jiang Yuehong for sharing her unpublished paper with me.

367 Pang Xunqin, *Jiushi zheyang zouguolai de*, 141.

368 Ibid.

this series of “earth revolutions” that the Chinese Communist Party formally declared its general principle, which was to be “the Earth Revolution and Armed Struggle against the Reactionary Regime of the KMT.” The decay, impoverishment, and revolutionizing of the rural society of China became hot topics in literary works of the time. It is almost sure that the title of Pang’s 1934 canvas was consciously borrowed from Li Guangtian 李廣田 (1906-1968)’s “Son of the Earth,” a modern vernacular poem composed in 1933. In Li’s poem, like in many other poems composed at the time, the imagery of “mother and son” is employed to describe the relation between the male writer (a Chinese intellectual) and the peasant/rural China who “gave birth to” him. Likewise, Pang stated: “I painted them (the peasant mother and father) not as morbid, ragged, but as healthy people. I use them to symbolize China. I use the child to symbolize the Chinese people at the time.” In Pang’s Son of the Earth, the peasant mother, wearing a patterned kerchief, stands in contemplation next to the peasant man, who holds the motionless body of their dying son.

The compositional mode of Son of the Earth, in which three people lean against and triangulate each other, had been devised by Pang for earlier paintings that had evoked the collective social consciousness. A painting entitled Daughters of the Time, painted in oil in 1934 (Fig. 1.8), features three young women with black hair, yellow skin, and bluish-green clothes. The motif of three contemplating women and the composition of the three female bodies leaning

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370 Even earlier in 1928, a book entitled Son of the Earth was published as a collection of Tai Jingnong (1903-1990)’s novels.
371 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolai de, 141.
against and triangulating each other seem to be drawn from Fernand Léger’s *Le Grand Dejeuner* (Three Women, 1921) (Fig. 2.14) and Georg Schrimpf’s *Auf der Treppe/Amm Abend* (On the Steps/Evening, 1924–25) (Fig. 2.15). The three female bodies in Léger’s *Le Grand Dejeuner*, structured and textured like something between metallic tubes and marble columns, are endowed with monumentality. Appearing “neoclassical” in the language drawn from classical prototypes, Schrimpf’s “magic realism” represents a brand of German *Neue Sachlichkeit* (“New Objectivity”) painting of the mid-1920s.\(^\text{372}\) This German trend of figuration was an interwar version of realism that sprang up in response to the intellectual and social disillusionment that followed World War I. It was a German counterpart to the French *rappel à l’ordre* — the return to classical traditions, order and “true” cultural patrimonies of France—that was called for by Jean Cocteau (1889-1963) and André Lhote (1885-1962). Classicism thus appeared again in avant-garde art—most notably, perhaps, in the self-reflective cubist Picasso’s classicizing compositions of the 1920s such as *Three Women at the Spring* (Fig. 2.16)—yet it would inevitably entail an archly self-conscious quality of pastiche. In the wake of the postwar disillusionment in Europe, many modernist artists from varying points of the ideological spectrum attempted to explore the contradiction—or to recalibrate the relation—between the academic appeal to timeless order and the modernist address to the present, as they tended to realize that order was paradoxically inherent in the anarchy of cubism. Meantime, such post-WWI modernism was consciously carried out in the

studio and not *en plein air*, which served as a parody of the artificial contrivances of illusion as the European tradition of pictorial realism.\(^{373}\) In the German movement of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, too, the capacity of academic tradition in Europe for the figurative rendering of human image in universalizing, symbolic terms answered to contemporary political demands.\(^{y}\)

From the classicizing modernist paintings by Picasso and Schrimpf, Pang not only appropriated the composition and motif but also the grayish-blue and bluish-green color palette, aiming to evoke among his audiences the melancholic and depressing mood and feeling of “the Time,” as suggested in the title of the painting, *Daughters of the Time*. The term *shidai* 時代 or “time / age” used in the title implied by the pictorial language was meant to be about the real, as it encompasses all that makes up the present. Yet it could also be argued that in this painting, the dimensions of subjectivity and social existence of the depression and melancholy of a time (or age) are abstract. The inclusion of subjectivity here is to emphasize that a crucial aspect of the realism of modernism was its highlighting of spectatorship, that is its highlighting of the viewer’s own responsive and subjective presence before the painting. The imaged women in Pang’s *Daughters of the Time* don’t provide any iconographical hints of their imaged bodies as corporeality of the present, the specific spatial-temporality of the “time” depicted, so the psychological status about *the* time could be timeless and universal, too—not just about a specific moment of *the* time or age of the twentieth century in which the paintings were made but

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also an universal condition of human life throughout many times or ages.

It is in this sense that, in contrast to the subjects depicted in *Daughters of the Time*, the patterned kerchief that the woman wears in *Son of the Earth* became an iconographical marker, signifying a modernism localized as “Chinese” and socialized as the rural subaltern. In this sense, Pang’s abstract notions of humanism first expressed in his symbolist works such as *Daughters of the Time* began to be integrated with concrete perceptions of the life of the lower classes in China during the early 1930s. The headdress with blue-and-white batik patterns, which would be a sign repeatedly used in Pang’s 1930s and 1940s paintings, is a mark for its contemporaneous audiences to identify the social status of the peasant women as “Chinese folk,” that is, the “common people of this country” who accounted for the largest number of the population of China at the time.374 His focus had shifted from generalized human beings to specified figures with particular social identities. In *Squeezing Machine* (1935), a headdress-wearing peasant woman reappears. This woeful “peasant woman,” as Pang designed, was to “symbolize the backward agricultural China,” that is, an unindustrialized (and thus “premodern”) China, which was faced the threat of “three powers repressing the people of our country”—“imperialism, reactionary politics, and feudalism.”375 In the collage-like, surrealist composition of *Squeezing Machine*, a peasant woman is squeezed toward the recessional space, and three huge fingers,

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374 The urban population never surpassed the rural population throughout the twentieth century in China. Only in the 2013 Chinese demographic census did the urban population surpass the rural population for the first time. In another chapter I have discussed about the implication of the word “folk” in its context in early twentieth-century China.  
pressing the squeezing machine painted along the upper edge above the head of the peasant woman, were intended to symbolize the three repressing powers.\textsuperscript{376} Around the center of the space of recession from the foreground to the middle ground, the headdress-wearing peasant woman is positioned as being squeezed by a robot in the foreground. Pang’s shading of the robot’s polished head, cold-tone sheens, and steel texture through graduation of colors seems to have been inspired by the modeling of the robot in the futuristic style designed by Aenne Willkomm for the 1927 film \textit{Metropolis} (Fig. 2.17). After premiering in Berlin, this film was released in other metropolises in Europe and America, including Paris, and was celebrated as a landmark in the history of sci-fi film. During Pang’s stay in Paris and Berlin from 1925 to 1929, it is almost certain that he watched this avant-garde hit. If the machine aesthetics of Léger’s painting expresses a European-modernist vision of the industrialized and mechanized sensibility of form in modern societies, then this aesthetics was appropriated by the Chinese modernist Pang Xunqin to “symbolize the [effect of the] depression of the developed industry of the capitalist countries” upon agricultural China.\textsuperscript{377} In order for Pang’s canvas to escape from the public exhibition censorship, it was retitled \textit{Untitled} for the fourth show of the Storm Society in Shanghai in 1935.\textsuperscript{378}

On September 4, 1932, the day of the opening ceremony of Pang’s first solo exhibition, which was held in Shanghai after he returned to China, an essay of art criticism that Fu Lei

\textsuperscript{376} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{377} Pang Xunqin, \textit{Jiushi zheyang zouguolai de}, 142.
\textsuperscript{378} Ibid.
composed for Pang’s exhibition was published. In this essay, the much-admired Shanghai intellectual, literary and art critic, independent curator and major patron of modern art commented on the surrealist pictorial idiom of Pang’s painting. Fu wrote: “Xunqin’s dream is beyond the mountain. It is like a paradise in the human world. Xunqin, you are so blessed!”

However, regardless of Pang’s sincere respect for and gratitude to Fu, Pang disagreed with the latter’s view in this aspect. Many of Pang’s works do evoke a sense of uncanny or dreamlike reality—which might have recalled the aesthetic way in which European Surrealism responded to social reality, however, just like the European surrealist counterparts, his works were modeled by his anxiety towards the pathos of the social reality of China, rather than happiness. In particular, the sense of an uncanny or dreamlike reality is conspicuously true of his works inspired by the post–World War I French and Italian neoclassicist “Return to Order” and German “New Objectivity.” The dreamlike state is a persistent quality of Pang’s social symbolism.

The motifs of melancholic women in contemplation and sorrowful women with tears account for a considerably large amount of Pang’s paintings produced in the 1930s and 40s. Another example is a sketch in graphite and watercolor on paper, *Untitled/Bombing* (1937; destroyed in 1937) (Fig. 2.18), which depicts a woman silently crying with tears on her face. While staring up at a bomber on the upper right edge above her, she firmly holds her child using her large arms and hands. *Untitled/Bombing* was shown in the Second National Fine Arts

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379 Fu Lei, “Xunqin de meng (Xunqin’s Dream),” published in *Yishu Xunkan*, September 4, 1932.
Exhibition in 1937. As Pang recalls, “the title then (in the exhibition) was ‘Untitled,’ but, in fact, the painting was intended as a statement of opposition to the invasion. I painted a young mother holding a small child, and the background was a plane dropping bombs. I never imagined that a few months later, the invading Japanese armies actually would bomb so many Chinese cities in such a crazy way.”

In contrast with *Son of the Earth* (1934), which similarly features the entangled bodies of a mother, father, and child, placing them in front of a rural landscape, this 1937 painting depicts the three members of the family in front of some pillars in the style of Roman columns. In China, then, such European neo-classical architectural style was an iconography that alluded to the urban landscape of Shanghai—a world metropolis and China’s economic and cultural center in the early twentieth century, based on its historical experience as a semicolonial treaty port.

It is true that in the political atmosphere of the late 1920s and early 1930s, when the CCP had launched successive revolutions and thus been under brutal suppression by the KMT government, a cultural act could imply a political choice between the polar opposites of social revolution and nationalist consolidation: either the system was to be overthrown or it was to be restructured, in the name of the nation. However, since the KMT government announced its second collaboration with the Communist Party in September 1937, a period when national salvation from the imperialist Japanese invasion became the predominant

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381 After the Qing Empire was defeated by the British Empire in the First Opium War (1840), the Bund became the location where the British Empire chose to designate as its first concession in China. In Republican China, during the 1920s and 30s in Shanghai there were four foreign concessions in total designated by the British, the American, the Japanese, and the French imperial powers. In the Bund there was an area of international concession shared by the British and the American imperial powers.
issue, the motifs of cultural-nationalist concerns came to coexist and intertwine with the persistent socialist concerns in many nonpartisan artists’ artworks.

In *Fragmenting Modernisms: Chinese Wartime Literature, Art, and Film, 1937–49*, Carolyn FitzGerald’s research on wartime culture demonstrate that “although many intellectuals sought to merge the individual ego with the national collective and distance themselves from their ties to Westernized cosmopolitanism, they were often unsuccessful in their attempts to do so.”³⁸² In Pang Xunqin’s case, the modernist interest in new forms is evident in his paintings drawn from European modernisms during the 1930s and the 40s. After Pang’s travel-study in Paris and Berlin, the rendering of surfaces with the texture and shape of a mechanical tube became a stylized language persistently used in his work, from the early 1930s in Shanghai through his wartime displacement in the southwestern frontier. In Pang’s 1935 canvas *Squeezing Machine*, the vertical tube and rolling gear of the squeezing machine are shaded with metallic tones, drawing formal elements from Léger’s *Woman Holding a Vase* (1927) (Fig. 2.19) and *The Baluster* (1925) (Fig. 2.20). In Pang’s *Taking a Break* (1944) (Fig. 1.23), the way in which the pole of the grass fork held by the woman is modeled and shaded reveals the impact of the French modernist painter Fernand Léger, whose paintings were partly motivated by his interest in machinery.

Besides the “formal” interests, the realist concerns, motifs, and strategies of Pang’s modernist paintings from the early 1930s are also evidenced in the *Guizhou Mountain People* series, which

signals the continuation of his expression of social concerns in painting. That is to say that, even if it is true that “when war with Japan became imminent, expectations of artists began to revolve much more around issues of nationalism,” it is not necessarily true that “nationalism was fundamentally antithetical to the individually driven content and stylistic innovations at the core of modernism.”

Considering Pang’s earlier experiences in France, it is tempting to see a connection between his symbolic imagery of melancholic women and the late nineteenth-century French fin de siècle symbolist school. When Pang re-spatialized Rui’s photographic elements in his Huangguoshu Waterfall, for example, he seemed to have drawn from the neoclassical mode of fin de siècle French symbolism. The southwestern ethnic woman carrying a load is silhouetted from behind, echoing the ways in which the city goddess of Paris is figured in the composition of Sainte Genevieve dans sa pieuse solicitude veille sur la ville endormante (Genevieve in her Pious Solicitude Watches over the Sleeping City) (Fig. 2.21). During his trip to Paris from 1925 to 1930, Pang frequently visited the Panthéon. Almost a half century later, in the 1980s, he published his impressions of viewing the murals by Puvis de Chavannes for a cycle dedicated to Saint Genevieve, the patron saint of Paris, in the Panthéon, especially the section depicting Sainte Genevieve dans sa pieuse solicitude veille sur la ville endormante:

Some of the murals [in the cycle] were painted by Chavannes; the

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383 Ralph Crozier, “Post-Impressionists in Pre-War Shanghai: The Juelanshe (Storm Society) and the Fate of Modernism in Republican China” (1993), John Clark (ed.) Modernity in Asian Art (Sydney, Australia: Wild Peony), 135-154.
most famous of which is [about] Saint Genevieve watching over a small town—this town later on became Paris. Chavannes’s work is characteristically of muted color scheme, simple and plain composition, and high elegance. There is only a silhouette of a woman clad in a saint robe depicted on the painting surface; like a loving mother guarding her sleeping child, she is overseeing the town below in the midnight.\(^{384}\)

Moreover, even in the late 1920s before the war, it seems that excellence in using a bluish-gray hue had been widely recognized as Chavannes’s signature style, by many Chinese painters who trained in oil painting at French and Japanese art schools. To these Chinese artists, adopting a Chavannes-like bluish-gray color palette would enhance the emotional expressiveness of a painting, which would better serve the nuanced exploration of psychological depth when portraying certain melancholic or sorrowful social atmospheres or personal mental states. For example, when the First National Fine Arts Exhibition was held in Nanjing in 1929, Tang Yunyu 唐蕴玉 (1906–92), a female Chinese painter who first trained in yoga in Japan (1928–29) and later entered the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts (1930), expressed her opinion that “[whether or not] a painting is successful is determined by its thematic choice, hue, and composition. I am particularly interested in the hue of painting, which could [effectively] convey personal styles [of individual artists]. For example, the muted and elegant hue that [Puvis de] Chavannes liked to use always bears a sense of sadness.”\(^{385}\) Tang was a close friend of Wang Jiyuan, who would become one of the major supporters of the Storm Society in the early 1930s.


\(^{385}\) Tang Yunyu, “Cun’gan (Some Scattered Thoughts),” *Fumu Zazhi* (Women Magazine), Vol. 25, No. 7 (Jiaoyubu guanguo meishu zhanlanhui tejihao [a special issue of the National Art Exhibition]) (July 1929).
Conceptually, Pang’s social symbolism and his visual strategy of painting unhappy, melancholic, and contemplating women as a symbol of wartime China drew upon Kuriyagawa Hakuson 講川白村 (1880–1923)’s theorization of literature and art as a “symbol of depression,” an idea introduced to China in the early 1920s. Hakuson wrote a book entitled *Kumon no Shōchō* 苦悶の象徴 (Symbol of Depression), which was variously translated into Chinese by Lu Xun, Feng Zikai and some others, and published in China after Hakuson’s death. The discourse of literature and art as symbols of depression became prevalent in the intellectual world of Republican China in the 1920s and 1930s. In the early 1930s, shortly after Pang Xunqin returned from Europe to China, he read Lu Xun’s 1924 Chinese translation of *Kumon no Shōchō.* Drawing on Henri Bergson’s philosophy of life and Sigmund Freud’s theories of psychoanalysis, Hakuson argued that the foundation of literary and artistic creation lies in the feeling of being depressed, while the feeling of being depressed is caused by human vitality being repressed by social institutions and individual freedom being suppressed by “the supremacy of statism” and “omnipotent capitalism.” According to Hakuson, the fundamental method of expressing this feeling of being depressed is “symbolism in a general sense.” In his opinion, “the abstract thoughts and ideas that are ubiquitous could never be art. The most

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387 Pang recalled that he read Lu Xun’s translation of this book during the early 1930s in his memoir. Pang Xunqin, *Jiushi zheyang zongguolai de*, 140.

388 See the Chapters 2 and 4 of “On Artistic Creation,” in the Chinese translation by Lu Xun of Kuriyagawa Hakuson’s *Kumon no Shōchō*.
significant component of art lies in its figurativeness.” That is, it is only through a process of “figuration,” by rendering “living things” as figures, events, or landscapes, that “the content of thought” could be transformed into art. In Hakuson’s definition, an abstract thought is “figured” or “given a form” through symbols. Therefore, the so-called symbolism should not be merely equated with the “-ism” promoted by the specific school of fin de siècle France. Rather, “all literature and art through the ages has been using symbolism as a universal expressive means.” In the ubiquitous use of symbolism, “the symbols with relatively complex form are ‘allegory,’ ‘fable,’ ‘parable,’ and so on.” A symbol, as a “vehicle” that “conveys the things in the writer’s and artist’s inner world to its appreciator,” is “provoking and suggestive.” 389 That is, “symbolism” in a general sense could be understood as a universal means of expression in all different cultures, ages, and schools of literature and art. This theorization of symbolism facilitates our understanding of the way in which imagery is formed as symbol in Pang Xunqin’s art.

To a large extent, the recurrent motifs of Guizhou mountain women wearing batik headdresses and embroidered costumes could be seen as a localized version of Daughters of the Time, one that embodies the experiences of wartime hardship. When Pang’s Guizhou Mountain People was exhibited in Chongqing in 1943, the muted color palette with a “bluish-gray tone,” in Pang’s words used in his self-introduction to this exhibition, that he deliberately adapted for

389 Ibid.
these paintings would look depressing as it captured the melancholy of the wartime everyday psyche in the rear front. As the wartime capital of “Free China,” in Sullivan’s words, the city of Chongqing was a “grey, muggy, bomb-shattered city,” “systematically pounded by the Japanese bombers for several years.” The serene scenes depicting the mountain people’s daily duties are suggestive—not just of the fact that ordinary “life went on amid the ruins,” but also of the fact that life was depressing and full of hardship.

Despite Pang’s deliberate employment of ink and paper/silk as “Chinese” media, it seems that during this period he also drew directly from Picasso’s compositions created in the years of his Blue Period in Paris. Paintings of Picasso’s Blue Period (1910s) depict poor people in urban areas, including clowns and street artists. When juxtaposed with Picasso’s Poor People on the Seashore (Fig. 2.22), Pang’s ink-and-color painting Literati’s Children in a Hard Time (1945) (Fig. 2.23) appears in a Picasso-like idiom: each work offers a composition dominated by a limited color range with bluish tone and features classicizing figures of sad, somber-looking human subjects with elongated bodies and melancholic faces.

Inspired by Picasso, as Sullivan recalls, Pang called this wartime period his “grey” period. More often than not, the paintings of Guizhou Mountain People featuring the working life of southwestern mountain women—including Drinking (Fig. 1.11), Selling Firewood (Fig.

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392 Ibid., 97.
393 Michael Sullivan, Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China, 97.
1.16), *Carrying Water* (Fig. 1.13), *Cold Forest* (Fig. 1.20), *Spreading a Net* (Fig. 1.3), *Boating* (Fig. 1.19), and *Pulling a Pig* (Fig. 1.28), among others—feature a subdued, somewhat depressing bluish-gray palette, giving a sense of isolation and loss. It is true that, compared to Pang’s other wartime images of ordinary life for intellectuals and artists, such as *Literati’s Children in a Hard Time* (1945), his wartime paintings of *Guizhou Mountain People* seem to be constructed in a much more pastoral or elegiac mode of lyrical composition. However, if one considers the sociopolitical metaphor that had been established by liberal Leftist intellectuals in the 1920s, one could understand why these paintings would still convey strong messages regarding the social tragedies of subaltern life in a semicolonial China that had been under the yoke of multiple foreign imperialist powers for several decades and, in particular, faced the Japanese colonialist invasion during the 1930s through the 1940s. In an essay published on November 19, 1927, the Leftist intellectual Lu Xun analogized the semicolonial experience of the Han Chinese of his own time to the fate of the ancient “Miao-Yao” ethnic people. Lu wrote, “[our] ‘natives’ are silently laboring and suffering. Among them, the capable ones die in the metropolis infested with foreign adventurists [that is the semicolonial, commercial city of Shanghai], [whereas] the ones unable to bear [the life in semicolonized Shanghai] would flee into the mountains. [In this sense] the Miao-Yao people are our precedents.”

The historical narrative of the Miao-Yao people that Lu appropriated was derived from the then-prevailing

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394 Lu Xun, “Zaitan Xianggang (Talk about Hong Kong again),” published in *Yusi* Weekly no. 155 (November 19, 1927), 283-288.
social Darwinist narrative of the Western origin of the modern Chinese nation. In a series of
treatises in 1903 through 1907, some Chinese intellectuals including Liu Shipei 刘师培
(1884-1919), a scholar and anti-Manchu propagandist, argued that the ancient Chinese had
emigrated from Babylonia more than four thousand years earlier. According to this narrative, it
was the Yellow Emperor of the ancient myths who first led his people, the Huaxia or Han race,
across the mountains and deserts to the Yellow River. The history was not a biblical exodus,
however, but a saga of migration, struggle, conquest, and colonial expansion. In Liu’s account,
for example, the Miao people had settled in the region of the Central Plains before the Han
people arrived. The latecomers, however, tried to dislodge the Miao, and the two races were
locked in a series of wars. Eventually, the Han, being the stronger race, won, so they successfully
displaced the Miao and pushed its remnants into the mountains of South China. For Liu and his
comrades, this Darwinian narrative affirmed that the (Han) Chinese were originally a strong race
just like the European imperialists of the modern times. Moreover, it demonstrated the reality of
the zhong zhan 種戰 (race war), which, they believed, the (Han) Chinese were facing again in
the twentieth century. The anti-Manchu intellectuals used this theory to raise racial
consciousness, pride, and vigilance. According to this theory, only the Han, and not any other
ethnic group residing in China, were the true Chinese. The Han were originally a strong race, and
they now had to rise to the challenge. The political circumstances had changed since the 1911

Fourth Era,” in Kai-wing Chow, et. al., eds., Beyond the May Fourth Paradigm: In Search of Chinese Modernity
Xinhai Revolution, however, and the urgent task now for Chinese intellectuals was to seek an ideological scaffold to buttress the crumbling architecture of the defunct Qing Empire. They readily admitted that there had been conflicts between the Han and the ethnic minorities, but they claimed that these conflicts were only eddies in a broad and irreversible stream of the history of the “Chinese people” who formed the Chinese nation (*zhonghua minzu*). They were eager to promote a historical recognition of continuous intermingling of physical and cultural elements among the ethnic groups residing in the political territories of modern China. This national narrative emphasized that the Chinese were an amalgam of several ethnic groups (or, rather, that the Han had gradually assimilated the others) and that the process of assimilation was as natural as rivers flowing into the ocean.  

Even though the theory of the Han’s Western origins had been in decline since the 1920s, some of Pang’s images of the mournful southwestern mountain women could effectively resonate with the Leftist discourse in which the fate of the ancient Miao people was analogous to the semicolonial experiences of the Han Chinese under the foreign imperialist invasion.

In contrast with the feminized images of pastoral scenes in *Guizhou Mountain People*, during the Republican period, wars, uprisings, movements, and disruptive incidents occurred in virtually every part of what was previously the Qing, central Asia, and the Southeast.  

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in the wartime context from late 1930s to the 1940s, with its highly suggestive visual details, Pang’s paintings of *Guizhou Mountain People* appeared to the KMT governmental officials as not only evocative of the issues of foreign colonialism but also of the domestic depression of the poor Chinese people under the KMT government. Pang wrote later in his memoir that the Miao and other minority people were hostile at first when he and Rui entered their villages but welcomed them as soon as they knew that they were not Nationalist governmental officials in charge of conscription. Informed by his lived experiences—albeit limited to a short period—in the villages of the southwestern minorities, Pang’s social realist concerns with the poor and the deprived people at the bottom of Chinese society during the war is evident in the series of *Guizhou Mountain People*. The painting *Taking a Break* (Fig. 1.23), for example, depicts a mountain woman taking a break in the interval of her laborious work. The woman looks quiet and tired, with her eyes downcast, sitting close to the viewer. As its title suggests, the painting concentrates on a momentary break in the mountain woman’s enduring hard work.

It is true that, to “accurately record the original” patterns on the female ethnic costumes and celebrate them as an alternative “national tradition,” Pang might have directly drawn certain thematic and formal strategies from modern Japanese paintings. He beautified the subjects depicted in the series with a strong interest in designs with intricate shapes and forms. Nevertheless, meanwhile, to effectively evoke in his audiences a sympathy for the wartime...
hardship of the ordinary Chinese people at the bottom of society, Pang worked to convey the psychological depth of his female subjects. He explored how to enhance the overall melancholic atmosphere through a series of designs for the detailed rendering of facial expressions, gestures, and coloration in a manner that is differed from Japanese bijinga (paintings of beautiful women).

As discussed above, some works of nihonga on display in the 1929 Parisian exhibition that Pang visited actually exhibited a self-Orientalized image of the East to its Western audiences, which internalized a Western-refracted view of the Japanese Self. Although Pang consciously combined Eastern and Western formal strategies, he did not borrow the bright and sensual color palettes that had been frequently (and conventionally) used for depicting female beauties clad in traditional clothing in modern Japanese paintings. Instead, Pang’s paintings of Guizhou Mountain People are generally subdued or muted in tone, which distinguishes his Chinese painting from its Japanese counterparts. The atmosphere he rendered, as he intended it, often “contained a thin layer of melancholy.” Similar to the case of Gauguin’s primitivism in his search for fin de siècle tahitienne, a mood of nostalgic contemplation is common to Pang’s depictions of contemporary Guizhou mountain people. However, when they were situated in the wartime context, as Sullivan perceived, these nostalgic images would lead wartime viewers to see in Guizhou Mountain People the artist’s expression of sympathy for “the everyday laboring of the Miao men and women in the years of the war” and the emotion with which he tried to

400 Pang Xunqin, “Zipou (Self-Analysis),” published in Zhongyang ribao (Central Daily), September 12, 1943.
“record with his brush the warmth and dignity of humanity.”*401

The mournful nature of Pang’s poetic image of the mournful southwestern mountain women marked it as quite modern, and in many respects it resembled the nostalgic image of the southern native people, a Chinese version of the “noble savage,” which prevailed in a number of prewar literary works that were opposed to a Western-style modernity. The 1934 “modern pastoral” novel Biancheng 邊城 (Border Town) by Shen Congwen best epitomizes the reflections by this “native-soil” or “rural” literary school of writers on the social and cultural problems raised by the obsession with Western-style modernization in Chinese urban areas during the early twentieth century.*402 Born and raised in Fenghuang, a multiethnic region of western Hunan, Shen migrated to Beijing in the 1920s and became Pang’s friend around the mid-1930s. As mentioned in the previous chapter, during their wartime sojourn in Kunming in the late 1930s, Shen was the first who showed great respect to Pang’s innovative approaches to China’s ancient art tradition after viewing Pang’s Chinese Design Collection in 1939 and encouraged Pang to continue on his project of writing the first “history of Chinese patterns,”*403 a history of ordinary, anonymous artisans’ artistic creation that had been neglected in the dynastic literati treatises on Chinese painting.

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*403 Sun Yan, Pang Xunqin Qiu Di lungao (Collected Essays on Pang Xunqin and Qiu Di) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2015), 141.
In a modern literary style that combined Western avant-garde, classical poetics, and modern Chinese vernacular, Shen’s novel defies classification in the dichotomy of realist versus romantic. Like many modern Chinese intellectuals, Shen was concerned with the problem of modern China’s national identity formation, spiritual revival and cultural renaissance. Composing his novel in poetic prose that combining earthbound themes with ethereal aesthetics, Shen attempted to search for a primitive past of the Chinese nation in his nostalgic tales of his southern Chinese homeland. He believed that the mental status of a more vital young China was long forgotten and preserved in the life of his native country peoples and the grand landscape of the southern internal cultural frontier, in the ethnic minority’s primitive culture on the margins of the modern Chinese nation. To revitalize contemporary China, he intended his novels to evoke in his urban Chinese elite readers an idyllic image of that idealized past of young China. He depicted his southern Chinese homeland as a beautiful land inhabited by a community of beautiful people, who seemed to be living in a timeless “utopia of peach blossoms” beyond the logic of change and moral “degeneration” that had been endemic in the process of Western-style modernization and urbanization of the semicolonial east coastal treaty ports of China since the late Qing period.

In the late 1920s and 1930s, a new generation of Chinese writers and social scientists rediscovered the Chinese peasant. Among these intellectuals, “the loudest literary critics and

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social ideologues, like their political leaders, were moved by conflict-based theories of class struggle and national survival: Marxism and nationalism, left wing and right wing. On one hand, Shen’s criticisms of the KMT government in the 1930s made some officials suspect he was a Communist; on the other hand, Shen called himself “naïve” and a “provincial,” and announced that *Border Town* was “a tribute to China’s farmers and soldiers written in defiance of the ideologues.” In subsequent decades, Shen’s *Border Town* was considered by the Marxists, who controlled China’s intellectual world, to be an insult to their ideas of rural class conflicts.407 After political pressure induced him to attempt suicide in 1949, Shen prudently took up a new career in art history at the National Historical Museum in Beijing. Let us now turn back to the 1930s, though, when *Border Town* was most critically acclaimed. In 1936, the American author Emily Hahn and Pang’s close friend Shao Xunmei translated *Border Town* into English.408 Shen’s novels were at the peak of their reception in the late 1930s that they might have encouraged his friend Pang to decide to carry out his 1939 fieldwork in the multiethnic tribes in Guizhou without fears.

An active writer and a literature professor at Peking University in the early 1930s, Shen undertook an imaginative quest for the vitality and creative spirit of a young China by

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405 Ibid.
407 *Border Town* was banned in China ca. 1949-1979, and in Taiwan until 1986. What is ironic is that, in the first case, that is, in the People’s Republic of China before the 1980s, Shen’s novels were considered by the Chinese Communist to be “anti-revolutionary.” While in Taiwan before the middle 1980s, the Nationalist government held that Shen was a Communist because he stayed on the mainland. See Jeffery C. Kinkley, “Notes to *Border Town*,” in Shen Congwen, *Border Town*, translated by Jeffery C. Kinkley (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009), 163.
408 Ibid., vii.
rediscovering the life and customs of the folk in China’s multiethnic southern frontier. In this quest, Shen shares a sense of national purpose with the IHP scholars who desired to “find with the Barbarians our lost ritual or propriety” through ethnographic studies on the southwestern ethnic people’s “primitive” cultures. To many intellectuals of the May Fourth generation, including the IHP scholars, admonishments to study Confucian classical texts sounded blinded, clichéd, pompous, and hypocritical. In Shen’s romantic view, too, the authentic human spirit of China was embodied in the Miao culture (of his time) and the pre-Qin Han culture as the state of young China. The rationale for his romanticization of the early period of Chinese culture was that, if the creativity of the Chinese nation in the past could be revived in the present, China would become powerful and independent again, not only developing itself but also influencing other national cultures.

Pang’s paintings of the Guizhou mountain people looked “cordial” to Shen’s nephew Huang Yongyu 黃永玉 (1924–), a non-Han ethnic minority writer and painter who was born and raised, just like Shen, in Fenghuang, western Hunan.409 Before the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, Huang had studied painting with Lin Fengmian during the latter’s decade-long tenure (beginning in 1927) as the head of the National Academy of Art in Hangzhou, a school known for being “an incubator for modernism.”410 The images of the beautiful yet

mournful Miao maidens in Pang’s paintings must have reminded Huang of Shen’s literary
depictions of the hopes and endeavors of China’s country peasants, like “Cuicui,” the humble
and full-of-life heroine of Border Town. In 1947, after the War of Resistance against Japanese
Aggression and when the Chinese Civil War (1946–1949) was in full swing, Huang, a member
of the democratic Association of Shanghai Artists and Writers that Pang and some other Leftist
and liberal artists organized, frequently joined Pang’s family gatherings with their common
friends in Shanghai. As Huang recalled, in the late 1940s a painting depicting “two whispering
Miao women” was hanging on the left wall of Pang’s living room. “Every time” he visited Pang,
Huang would “pick a seat close to the painting,” “appreciating it while having a meal.”

Since the early 1930s, even before the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression
officially broke out, tourist and journalist photographs featuring the landscapes and peoples of
the peripheral regions had been circulated inside China proper (neidi) as a mode of wider, more
popular stimulation of interest in and nationalistic feelings for these remote marginal spaces.
These photographs augmented the many ethnographic and descriptive essays that already filled
the pages of public media. In the third volume of New Asia 新亞細亞, for instance, editorial
commentary called upon readers to transform their view of the peripheries from the clichéd
imagery of desolation to a strategic appreciation of their “limitless mysteries” and “inexhaustible
treasures,” derived from the editorial writers’ interest in material exploitation. These photographs

411 David Der-wei Wang, “In the Name of the Real”, 35.
and writings were much desired by the urban readers in China proper who were strangers to the peripheries. Meanwhile, the landscape and peoples of these peripheral regions became popular subject matter in visual arts—particularly in paintings—that were produced and disseminated in the circles of the Han elite, as well as when the Chinese Republican government, artists, and intellectuals moved in exodus to the country’s interior during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. In the late 1930s and the 1940s, working in a wide range of media—oils, pencil or ink sketches, ink and watercolor, the Chinese artists who identified themselves as Han Chinese—as the majority ethnic group of the Chinese nation—portrayed the folk who were considered minority ethnic groups, including Kazak herdswomen, Miao girls, Tibetan dancers, and Mongol horsemen, against the vast grasslands of the northwest and southwest that they visited during their wartime displacement (Fig. 2.24)(Fig. 2.25)(Fig. 2.26)(Fig. 2.27)(Fig. 2.28)(Fig. 2.29). The multiethnic native women of the southern frontier became a popular subject in the travel sketches and new Chinese paintings of many of these artists, who were all male. One can tell from these artists’ works that female subjects of the southern and western frontier became a quite prevalent theme in the wartime practices of experimental Chinese painting among Han Chinese male elite artists as they were exiled or traveled to the multicultural frontier. To early folklorists in Republican China, the ethnic minority folk songs resembled Han folk songs, which were cherished not primarily for their content but for the state of mind they

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412 Postscript to *Xinyaxiya* (New Asia) 1, no. 3 (1930): 15.
conveyed. To these folklorists, the ethnic minority folk songs were almost all “impromptu works” that were “outspoken and natural,” “short and simple.” The songs were on varied themes but most of them were love songs. It was believed that the ethnic folk literature represented a world of free love and passion because the minds of the non-Han ethnic minorities were rarely bound by Orthodox Confucian values. Meanwhile, the ritual and festive dances attracted the folklorists’ attention. For example, a kind of Miao festive dance called *tiaoyue* 跳月 (dancing to the moon), was conventionally performed under the moonlight from the sixteenth to twentieth day in the first month of every Lunar New Year.413 The folkloric and ethnographic knowledge produced by early Chinese folklorists filtered through the art world. In many 1940s paintings featuring the folk of the southwestern and western frontiers—including Dong Xiwen’s *Miao People Dancing to the Moon and Playing Instruments* (1945) (Fig. 2. 29) and *Kazak Herdswomen* (1948) (Fig. 2.27) and Han Leran’s *Dancing in Front of Labrang Monastery* (1945) (Fig. 2.29)—the southwestern and northwestern multiethnic peoples were represented as puppet-like ethnographic types, showcasing their colorful ethnic costumes, distinctive dancing gestures, and poses of playing instruments. In these works in search of exotic flavor, the individual characters of the human subjects are not explored. More often than not, the subjects’ faces were depicted as widely smiling or simply turned back to the audience, which reinforced the stereotype of the cultural inferiority of the frontier. On the contrary, Huang, a native southwestern non-Han writer,

decisively distinguished Pang’s stylized way of looking at and painting the southern mountain people from that of other contemporary artists who traveled to the southern interior to sketch the multiethnic people during the war.

In Huang’s words, Pang was totally different from those who were “merely interested in exoticizing [the Miao people] by focusing on their colorful clothing, dances, and silver jewelries, out of their superficial curiosities” with “philistine” motivations. As discussed earlier, Pang appropriated some of the ethnographic approaches from the IHP scholars in painting his *Guizhou Mountain People*, with a special research interest in the folk art of the multiethnic southwestern people. However, scrutiny of Pang’s *Dance of the Blue Miao in Huaxi* (1944) (Fig. 1.22), which depicts the frequently painted festive scene of a group of Miao people “dancing to the flowers” before the beginning of the Lunar New Year, reveals the complexity of Pang’s perception of and concern for the Guizhou mountain people. Pang did pay attention to the ethnographic themes that could be explored regarding the subject of the so-called Blue Miao people. In his memoir, he recalled that, “there were many Miao people who call themselves ‘Blue Miao’ in Huaxi.” According to Pang, “right before the beginning of the Lunar New Year, these people would ‘dance to the flowers’ as a ritual prayer for the harvest for the coming year.” To make his painting, as the anthropologist and historian Wang Penghui points out, Pang did appropriate the black-and-white ethnographic photographs taken by the IHP ethnographer Rui Yifu (Fig. 1.22)
(Fig. 2.30)(Fig. 2.31). Nevertheless, the subdued and even muted color scheme he applied was entirely his own choice. What is the reason behind this choice? Pang was not satisfied with observing these peoples through an ethnographic eye. He noted the fact that the everyday “clothing of the Miao women there is austere,” “without any accessories.” He went a step further, noting that, although “the Miao girls would do the ‘dance to the flowers’ as their entertainment, their life was so hard that there was no smiles on their faces even if they were dancing.”

To Huang, the subdued color palette with which Pang rendered the southwestern mountain people make these peoples look “very graceful,” which implied the artist’s self-conscious avoidance of the clichéd, exoticizing strategies of lurid coloration that characterized the other painters’ depictions of the southern and northwestern minorities. The overtone of Pang’s paintings, as Huang discerned, was “a warm, ink-blue tone” rendered through his “meticulous tinting” of the “indigo of the local-plant-dyed Miao ethnic clothing.” Compared to the richer colors that were applied only for some rare events such as festivals or weddings, the grayish indigo characterizing Pang’s series was a much more quotidian color used for the local plant-dyed everyday clothing. This singular style of coloration endowed his paintings with a sense of authenticity—in Huang’s words, Pang “once stayed in Yuanling (in western Hunan) at the beginning of the war, when he was teaching at the National Academy of Arts [which was

moved from Hangzhou to the interior then]; [during the war] he also tasted the bitterness of the everyday life [of the southern multiethnic country folk] in Guizhou, Yunnan, and Sichuan.”

Huang saw in Pang’s paintings “a deeper understanding of the real life of the Miao people,” especially their “spiritual beautifulness” and “their composure and kindness.” Among the other contemporary, colored paintings featuring southwestern multiethnic peoples around the period, perhaps only Dong Xiwen’s *Miao Woman Going to the Regional Market* (1942) (Fig. 2.32) and Guan Shanyue’s paintings used a similar subdued tone (Fig. 2.33 – Fig. 2.34 – Fig. 2.35). The choice of muted color scheme epitomizes these artists’ concern for the hardship of this marginalized social group’s living conditions under the wartime circumstances.

To Huang, Pang’s depictions seemed so close to the real-life world of his native southern people that these paintings ignited his “nostalgia” for his southern “native land.” In some aspects, western Hunan is quite similar to Guizhou, where Han Chinese mixed with Miao, Tujia, and other formerly tribal mountain peoples who once spoke unrelated languages and whose women still wore exotic clothing. Pang’s images of the Guizhou mountain people would look like the characters described in Shen Congwen’s novel *Border Town*. But, just like in Shen’s novels, Pang’s paintings of the Guizhou mountain people did not only concentrate on the exotic aspects of the subjects as national minorities of southwestern China. Pang not only chose to depict boatwomen (Fig. 1.25)(Fig. 1.34) but also tillers of the soil (Fig. 1.33)(Fig. 1.24); these scenes

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could not be defined as non-Han ethnic ways of life but rather as quite common to the southern Chinese peasant existence—whether Han or non-Han. Similar to the heroine Cuicui in Shen’s *Border Town*, the mountain women depicted in Pang’s paintings are beautiful maidens with dark skin. It is true that their dark skin might make them exotic beauties within Chinese literature. However, the darkness is not characteristically tribal or ethnic in this part of rural China, where most local peasants tend to have dark skin due to their longtime exposure to sunshine when laboring. Comparing to the Qing court painter Xie Sui’s picture of the floral Miao in *Zhigongtu* (Fig. 1.45), in which the face of the “southern barbarian” woman is tinted with white powders by following the highly formulated mode of picturing beautiful women in the court of the Qing empire, the dark skin of the southwestern mountain women in Pang’s painting was portrayed based on more “objective” observation with more “realistic” concerns.

Moreover, the markers of ethnicity are blurred in *Border Town*, to the point that more recent generations of scholars had been debating Cuicui’s ethnic ancestry. In *Border Town*, as Jeffrey C. Kinkley points, minority ethnicity has been sublimated into a broad, regional, local color; this serves national purposes because Shen’s western Hunan exemplifies the diversity and creativity of China as a multiethnic universe—a blended nation more than an ethnic mosaic.417 Similarly, in many of Pang’s paintings of *Guizhou Mountain People*, such as *Splendid Attire* (Fig. 1.1), the physiognomy of the female figures is characteristic of their racial ambiguity: the generic

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nature of their facial traits code the figures as a type of idealized “Chinese beauty,” which does not necessarily categorize the figures’ ethnicity as either Miao or Han. If we compare the female figures’ facial traits as “ethnic mark” with those photographs of the Miao woman that were taken by Rui, the former and the latter do not share much in common. Also, there is no clear hierarchical order in physiognomy established between the different groups of Pang’s perceived “classical” Chinese beauties—whether the graceful, dancing Tang ladies, or the “noble savages” of the Guizhou mountain women. Pang did not emphasize the physical, racial differences but rather the cultural characteristics that were embodied in their different traditional costumes.

As observed by the Leftist intellectual and artist Wen Yiduo 韓一多 (1899–1946), who was also a friend of Pang’s, due to the wartime displacement of urban elites and institutions to the inner frontiers that were not occupied by the Japanese, “the whole population of the nation was involved in the urgent circumstances. All the ordinary people inhabiting in the backcountry became aware that we have been fighting the Japanese.” Therefore, “there was no longer any need (for the intellectuals and artists) to make propaganda” to wake the Chinese people in marginal areas. Meanwhile, “it became frequent (for the elites) to get close to the ordinary people.” “However,” as Wen implicitly criticized, most urban elites who took advantage of this “wartime proximity mainly paid attention to the costumes, clothing, language, and historical remains of miaoqu (the Miao region).”

My analysis of the nuanced differences between

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418 Wen Yiduo, “Banian de huiyi yu ganxiang (Memories, feelings and thoughts in these eight years),” in Lianda banian (Eight Years of Xinan Lianda) (Kunming: Xinan Lianda xuesheng chubanshe, 1946), reprinted in Wang Jiaju,
Pang’s paintings and the clichéd contemporary Han Chinese elite representations of the southwestern multiethnic people is not to say that women as a dominant subject in Pang’s paintings were no longer imagined but “real.” Rather, I suggest, the singularity of Pang’s representation of the southwestern ethnic people lies in its intended visual complexity. If most of the other Han Chinese elite’s main focus was on the exotic characteristic of the Other’s “primitive” culture—rather than the social reality of the local people’s life under the wartime circumstances, then in *Guizhou Mountain People*, the details the artist paid attention to actually reveal a socially engaged modernist’s continuous social concerns with the reality of wartime Chinese society, particularly the hardships of living conditions of the contemporary laboring poor Chinese people—both Miao and Han—under the KMT regime in the face of the Japanese invasion. In Pang’s non-series paintings of the same period such as *Family Letter* (Fig. 2.36) and *Panniers* (Fig. 2.37), the ethnic features of the figures’ costumes are entirely blurred; the women depicted look just like ordinary female peasants from anywhere in southern rural China.

In most of the paintings of *Guizhou Mountain People*, such as *Splendid Attire* (Fig. 1.1), *Catching Fish* (Fig. 1.34), *Harvest* (1944)(Fig. 1.24), and *Spreading a Net* (1946)(Fig. 1.3), the distant mountains are rendered with gradual shades of varying grayish blue washes along the fine-line contours. This method of drawing and shading resonates with that of certain Southern Song court paintings that depicted dreamlike scenes with the West Lake and distant mountains in

the mist, which characterized the moist local landscape of the lower Yangzi region (Fig. 2.38)(Fig. 2.39)(Fig. 2.40). In the “Self-Analysis” for his 1943 solo exhibition, Pang said, “I was born in (Changshu in Jiangsu in the lower Yangzi region, a place close to) Yu Mountain. To the people born in the southwestern and northwestern [frontiers], Yu Mountain [in my native place] is like a little mound. This is perhaps why I could not paint things with majestic monumentality.” Pang went a step further, directly connecting the aesthetic styles of his early 1940s paintings of the southwestern Guizhou mountain people with the local landscape of his native land of Changshu. He said in the same essay, “I love the lake and mountain of my hometown. [If you ask,] why do I love employing the grayish-blue tone [in my paintings], you had better [also] ask the lake and mountain of my hometown.” Pang’s painting method and textual explanation demonstrate how the artist intended to push the symbolic meaning of the grayish-blue color scheme of this series of paintings beyond an exotic image of the Other, in order to evoke a collective nostalgia and patriotic sentiment among the wartime sojourners from the east coast of China who shared his experiences and feelings.

Pang conceptualized his wartime experimentation with modern zhongguohua (Chinese painting)—as exemplified in Guizhou Mountain People—as an attempt to “familiarize” himself with the “real life” and “technically” fuse the “the realistic and the decorative, the Chinese and the West.” This way of conceptualization indicates the artist’s concern with reconciling his

419 Pang Xunqin, “Zipou (Self-Analysis),” published in Zhongyang ribao (Central Daily), September 12, 1943.
420 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolai de, 161.
ethnographic and social interests in this wartime project. As Pang recalled in the early 1980s, as a liberalist artist who “had not read any books of Marxist and Leninist thoughts” before the War officially break out, he was “unfamiliar with Chinese Revolution” going on at the time. However, as his Japanese-trained artist friend Wang Manshuo 王曼碩 (1905-1985) went to Yan’an, Shaanxi, as the wartime CCP base in 1938 to join the CCP and teach at the Lu Xun Art Academy there, Pang began to rethink about the social role of painting in China and increasingly realized that “painting should not be aimed only to express oneself.” The multiple visual focuses and multivalent style of *Guizhou Mountain People* epitomize an uneasy counterbalance between his coexisting concerns of the national and the social. The same kind of counterbalance between different concerns could also be seen in Guan Shanyue’s series of ink sketches (Fig. 2.33 – Fig. 2.35) and his *gongbi* painting featuring the Guizhou Miao people around the same period (Fig. 2.25). To viewers like Huang Yongyu, who expressed sympathetic, mixed feelings towards Pang’s ways of painting *Guizhou Mountain People* and recalled the bittersweet life of his native southern country folk upon viewing these paintings, Pang did find an effective common ground for his multiple concerns—the national and the social. As a witness to Pang’s creation of this series of paintings in wartime Sichuan, Sullivan offered a review of *Guizhou Mountain People* that captured part of the complexity and counterbalanced focus of Pang’s project. In Sullivan’s words, *Guizhou Mountain People* is “a series of paintings and drawings that was ostensibly an

421 Ibid.
ethnographical record but it is in fact much more than that, for these works combine accuracy with human appeal, a slightly romantic touch, and a concern for formal design that he had acquired in his Paris days.”

The detailed depiction of the frayed edges of the cuffs and pants of the female figure in *Taking a Break* (Fig. 1.23) and the full patched outfitter and trousers of the female figure in *Corn Harvest* (Fig. 1.32), for example, indicate that the artist attempted to draw his audience’s attention to the reality of the life of the laboring poor in China’s wartime interior. As such, the solutions chosen and combined with the different visual emphases and expressive purposes within Pang’s compositions epitomize the artist’s efforts to reconcile his cultural objective of bringing to public attention a forgotten folk art tradition with his social objective of representing contemporary life. Somewhat paradoxically, the disparate concerns—a cultural-nationalistic one and a social-realistic one—are entangled in such a singular way that it is hard to separate them from each other anymore.

Despite the common attempt to study China’s national art tradition shared by Pang and Zhang Daqian in the 1940s, in 1944 Pang explicitly expressed his worries about the wartime reception and popularity of the overtly antiquarian (*fugu*) impulse of Zhang’s copies of images from the Dunhuang murals. Zhang’s stated purpose was to *fuyuan* or “restore the original appearance” of the past—in particular the High Tang aesthetic system of figuration and coloration—based on an imaginative reconstruction of the original palette used for the Dunhuang...

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murals. In an essay composed in 1944, Pang criticized Zhang Daqian’s choice to copy the Dunhuang murals: “Frankly speaking, that Mr. Zhang Daqian went to make copies of the Dunhuang murals is not necessarily a gratifying event.” Pang explained that he “personally would not encourage a talented artist to put aside his own creation and partially [spend his time to] copy some Dunhuang murals instead.” Pang maintained that, “it is absolutely true that, to create a new culture” through artworks with “national character,” “contemporaneity,” “emotion,” and “vitality,” “one should have a clear understanding of one’s native culture.” But based on his wartime experiences of working with archaeological and ethnographic materials and scholars, he argued that “the Dunhuang mural is only one of the integral parts of Chinese culture” and it should not be isolated, specialized, and “blindly imitated.” Pang concluded in the same essay:

I think, by introducing the Dunhuang murals, Mr. [Zhang] Daqian might hope to introduce a great spirit inherently embodied in these works. What is this inherent, great spirit? These works absorbed numerous foreign cultures and immediately transformed them into [our] own culture. This is the greatest spirit of the Chinese nation, it was also because of this spirit that the Chinese nation did not become extinct, [while] the historical invaders embraced the Chinese nation and became its siblings. Meanwhile, only the creative spirit could make the nation progress. Therefore, [mere] imitations of ancient [native culture] and other [cultures] should be strongly opposed.423

Pang believed that his stress on “creative spirit” in making modern Chinese art was much more significant than Zhang’s “mere imitation” of ancient native culture and foreign cultures.

In sharp contrast to the positive reception enjoyed nationwide by Zhang’s Dunhuang-inspired “national paintings” in the early 1940s, Pang’s Guizhou Mountain People appeared

more “Western” and “primitive” Chinese than “national” to the KMT government and certain nationalist scholars who had been promoting the ancient creative power embodied in the national antiquity of the Han and the Tang, which they viewed as the most vigorous and powerful dynasties in the national history of China. Different from that of Zhang, the discursive practice of Pang does not one-sidedly emphasize the antiquarian intention to “restore the original appearance” of the national antiquity. Pang was explicitly constructing an aesthetic dialogue and stylistic fusion between the elements of national antiquity and foreign art conventions. It is true that, in a time of national crisis when indigenous folk sources were preferable to the modern European painting styles circulating in China’s coastal academies, it was natural that many artists during their stay in the wartime northern and southern interior would draw their motifs from indigenous ancient and medieval monuments, making possible an art that was both modern and Chinese. However, if primitivism in its European form is linked to a fascination with African art among modernist painters during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, then in Zhang Daqian’s case it was a neocolonialist and nationalist expansion in the interior, rather than foreign styles, that fueled one arm of the pictorial revolution in modern art. To Pang, in contrast, a Chinese artist’s “creative spirit”—which he claimed to be inherited from the “national spirit” of China—lies in the ability to “absorb numerous foreign cultures and immediately transform them

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424 Refer to the art and exhibition reviews on Fu Baoshi’s painting during wartime by influential authors including Zhang Daofan and Xu Beihong.

into [our] own culture.” Despite the war, during the late 1930s and 1940s, he continued to take advantage of the global circulation of foreign artistic resources in order to develop a brand of modern art that could be called distinctly Chinese but that was in dialogue with global modernisms.

The fluent, rhythmic, fine outlines and graded color wash applied in Pang’s 1940s paintings are evidence of the artist’s interest and training in the meticulous method of *gongbi*. Based on this visual evidence, it is tempting to recognize in Pang’s two series of paintings the techniques of *gongbi*, which allows for a possible association of Pang’s paintings with traditional Chinese painting. A fastidious painting method, *gongbi* uses the traditional media of ink and mineral pigments, usually applied on a non-water-absorbing rice paper, to create a carefully drafted style emphasizing structure and color coordination over spontaneous expression. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the *gongbi* style fell out of favor (except in court) as the literati taste for sketchier images executed in the *xieyi* style held sway. Nevertheless, Pang’s paintings from the late 1930s through the 1940s could not be equated simply with an attempt to revive the dynastic models of the *gongbi* style that had been applied, developed, and institutionalized in the system of court-painting practices of the Song academic realism as a forgotten artistic past. Pang’s wartime paintings exhibit a self-training in line drawing, which has been understood by Chinese critics since the 1990s purely as a grounding in the traditional technique of *gongbi*.

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426 A short essay by Pang Xunqin, originally published in *Huaxi wanbao* (Western China Evening Newspaper) on August 20, 1944; reproduced in Pang Xunqin, *Lun yishu, sheji, meiyu*, 73.

427 As the Chinese art historians like Tao Yongbai already did.
However, Pang’s line drawings were also influenced by his long-term practice in making croquis drawings. Croquis is a French term that Ni Yide translated into Chinese as *chuncui sumiao* 純粹素描 or “pure sketch.” When Pang was in Paris at the art school La Grande Chaumiere in the late 1920s, he and fellow Chinese artist Chang Yu (Sanyu) frequently made croquis drawings using a Chinese brush. As early as 1936, Ni had seen in Pang’s paintings a transcultural dialogue between the charm of Pang’s works in croquis and that of “China’s ink painting,” both of which are “only rendered in few seemingly simple lines and yet convey the artistic spirit of the painter.” In Pang’s wartime exercises of rendering the dancing ladies of the Tang Dynasty in fine-line drawing based on his earlier practices of croquis, Pang not only drew from the ancient models widely perceived as distinctively Chinese—including the female figure painting traditionally attributed to the Eastern Jin legendary artist Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (348-409) (Fig. 2.41) and the Buddhist murals in Dunhuang, but also tried to find an intermediary form that could break down the cultural boundaries between the East and the West. Pang’s specific approach to make aesthetic connections between the East and the West seems to have been drawn from the European art historical and theorist formation reconciling the East and the West as well. As discussed above, the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century European art

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428 Ni Yide, “Juelanshe de yiqun (The Group Artists of the Storm Society),” published in *Yitan jiaoyou ji* 藝壇交遊記 (Records of My Friends in Art Circle), Shanghai: Liangyou tushu gongsi (Young Companion Book Company), 1936.


theorists and art historians such as Bernard Berenson had begun to link the graceful linear
drawing styles of the Early European Renaissance and Medieval Chinese religious paintings.

The rationale behind Pang’s wartime experimentation was that the most essential
component of the national character of Chinese culture was its capacity to communicate with and
synthesize in harmonious proportion other cultures—no matter whether that of ethnic minorities
or the West. To him, it was precisely this cosmopolitan openness to the possibilities of cultural
hybridity that made the ancient Chinese culture from the Neolithic period to Tang Dynasty
flourish and become glorious throughout the world. Based on the same logic, Pang published
an essay in support of Cai Yuanpei’s idea that Chinese modern art should “fuse the styles of the
past, the present, the Chinese, and the foreign to create a unique style.” Cai suggested the “the
advocates for preserving national essence” should “promote the creation of innovative styles
based on a thorough comprehension and synthesis of different cultures throughout the world.”
Because, in Pang’s opinion, “as for ‘national essence,’ [we] should know that this [multi-cultural
synthesis] was the greatest cultural achievement of the Chinese nation [throughout history],” he
believed that only by preserving this specific “national character” could Chinese culture be
rejuvenated and distinctively Chinese modern art be created.

Pang was comfortable with redefining the southwestern material culture as an alternative

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“classical” art tradition, rather than merely a “primitive” past of the national culture. His cosmopolitan framework for understanding national antiquity endowed his work with the conceptual potential to break the hierarchy established between the civilized and the uncivilized in the worldwide imperialist discourses. Despite Pang’s perception of his highly synthesized style as “modern Chinese,” the hybridity of the formal qualities of Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* that sophisticatedly appropriated both European and Japanese visual resources, was perceived by the KMT officials as at once “primitive” Chinese and “Western.” To Minister Zhang, for instance, the meaningfulness of the thematic choices and formal qualities of these paintings was so ambivalent that it had little to do with the glorious parts of the Han-centric Chinese tradition. In the words of art historian Michael Sullivan, the formal qualities of Pang’s painting rendered it “ambiguous about its authentic identity.” Meanwhile, however, it is precisely the visual hybridity of Pang’s wartime paintings that contributed to their positive reception at the time among Western scholars like Sullivan, who saw in Pang’s paintings something that was both modern and distinctly Chinese. In terms of how to create Chinese paintings “with modern forms and styles while keeping the essential feelings and emotions of the Chinese people,” Sullivan considered Pang and Lin Fengmian to be the most accomplished among the Chinese artists of the 1930s and 1940s. *Guizhou Mountain People* resonated with a

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435 In Sullivan’s view, Pang’s wartime paintings embody a quality that is hard to describe, in terms of form it is summary in the sense that the contract between light and dark is de-emphasized and the brushworks executed give a sense of freshness. See Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists in Twentieth-Century China* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1966).

436 Ibid.
number of—predominantly male—audiences, including Euro-American, urban Han Chinese, and some modernizing Miao intellectuals. As Pang recalled, in his 1943 solo exhibition the only two buyers of his paintings were both foreign strangers.\textsuperscript{437}

Indeed, Pang’s singular approach to his experimental paintings of the southern mountain people could neither be defined as clearly primitivism nor clearly neoclassicism. From compositional modes to figural representations, the \textit{Guizhou Mountain People} paintings reveal the ways in which Pang referenced the aesthetic concepts and formal languages of European Renaissance painting and \textit{fin de siècle} European neoclassicism. By so doing, he intended his experimental modern Chinese painting to bridge and bring into dialogue the classical aesthetics of China and Europe. Pang’s 1943 “Self-Analysis” also reveals his critical reflections on his experiments and his vision for the future development of world art and increasing global cultural exchanges. He believed that,

to [the development of art] all over the world, an age greater than the Renaissance is coming in the near future, due to the cultural exchanges between the East and the West. I find myself tiny [in preparation for the coming of this great age], working step by step while feeling nervous [at the present]. Although I wanted to embrace wholeheartedly the Eastern and the Western cultures, I am too tiny [in my own competence]. Perhaps I will be like the quicksand, which would be engulfed by the coming flood [of the great time]. But I understand that this is originally my fate.\textsuperscript{438}

Beyond the exhibition hall, Pang’s major collectors in the early 1940s were wartime urban sojourners in Chengdu and Chongqing who felt sympathetic toward the artist’s cosmopolitan

\textsuperscript{437} Pang Xunqin, \textit{Jiushi zheyang zouguolai de}, 204.
\textsuperscript{438} Pang Xunqin, “Zipou (Self-Analysis),” published in \textit{Zhongyang ribao} (Central Daily), September 12, 1943.
outlook and feelings. These collectors included Michael Sullivan (1916–2013), arguably the first art historian to write about twentieth-century Chinese art in the Western world; some American soldiers of the Flying Tiger Air Alliance, who were introduced to Pang’s work by Sullivan; and the British ambassador Gu Weijun 顧維鈞 (1888–1985). In Sullivan’s private collection are at least two paintings of the southern female peasants that Pang painted during the wartime—a version of *Drinking* (1941) (Fig. 1.11) and *Family Letter* (1944–45) (Fig. 2.36). To Sullivan, this series of wartime paintings was modern Chinese painting that had been refashioned by incorporating traditional elements of indigenous culture while also riding on the crest of modernity.

In 1946, Pang returned to Shanghai after the war and renewed his acquaintanceship with Fu Lei, who highly evaluated *Guizhou Mountain People* and the rest of Pang’s wartime paintings. In the same year, he curated Pang’s solo exhibition in Shanghai soon after they met. The modern literary critic Song Qi 宋淇 (1919–96), who was introduced to Pang’s work by Fu Lei, became one of the most enthusiastic collectors of Pang’s paintings in this period. Song’s private collection holds a copied version of *Splendid Attire* from the late 1940s. In an essay that Fu published for Pang’s solo exhibition in 1946 in Shanghai, he wrote:

> Mr. Pang Xunqin from Yu Mountain [in Changshu] engaged in painting for more than twenty years. He never restricted himself to a certain school or style, experimenting with different ideas and

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440 An interview I did with Pang Tao at her home in Beijing, December 29 2012.
varying styles . . . During the period of the anti-Japanese war, he was displaced in Hunan, Guizhou, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces. He explored deep into the Miao-Yi concentrated regions [in the southwest], where he gathered materials for painting. His paintings [featuring the southwestern frontier] focus on the honest and vigorous spirit of the primitive ethnicities. From the very beginning he was not satisfied with recording the customs and the lines and colors of the local costumes; [his work is] realistic yet elegant, fastidiously composed yet uniquely charming. In terms of his fine-line drawings of ancient dancing [figures], they are delineated with dynamic and concise strokes in a style that emulates the styles of [figure painting in the] Jin (317–420) and Tang (618–907) dynasties. He has been studying [China’s] art antiquity for years, from the patterns on the bronzes [of the early ancient period] to the decorations of the Tang and Song dynasties. Therefore, his art is successful in synthesizing the East and the West, which is distinguished from those who adopt the modern [Western academic method of linear] perspective and superficially combined the techniques of Chinese and Western paintings. Now, he is presenting seventy pieces of painting in Shanghai for five days, so that audiences will be able to see the achievement of modern art in our country.441

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Fu Lei maintained that modern Chinese art should be made based on long-term study, thorough understanding, and the selective fusing of certain “essences” of Western art “to our own needs.” In 1931, when he began to teach the course on Western art history at the Shanghai Art Academy shortly after he returned to China from France, the French-trained art critic and cultural theorist publicized his opinion that “studying Western art is a way of preparing for the creation of modern Chinese art, rather than a way of creation itself.” In 1934, Fu cautioned Chinese modern artists that the “so-called fusion of Chinese and

Western art, which had become a popular slogan, is still too early to discuss [at the current stage in Chinese art world]. Nowadays, Chinese artists are trapped in the whirlpool of Chinese-Western cultural conflicts from which they are still unable to extricate themselves, not to mention fuse [the two cultures]. Without a truly profound understanding of Western art, how could one create [anything meaningful by fusing the two cultures]? To better explain his ideas, Fu took Manet, van Gogh, and Gauguin as three Western exemplars for modern Chinese artists, who should “create new art” by drawing inspiration from other cultures. In Fu’s words, “it was by studying Japanese prints in the cases of Manet and Van Gogh, or by drawing from African art in the case of Gauguin, that these [European] artists finally created new art.”

Intriguingly, all three Western examples provided by Fu are Post-Impressionists who were renowned for their practices in the European-modernist paradigm of primitivism in the early twentieth century. Primitivism, the search for a simple, elemental human state and its material culture, cast in an ahistorical frame, has its roots in a fascination with African objects in French artistic circles during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Within the European context of modernism, primitivism is an act on the part of artists seeking to celebrate features of the art and culture of

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442 Fu Lei’s self-composed introduction to his manuscript on “Shijie meishu mingzuo ershi jiang (Twenty Talks on World Art Masterpieces)” completed in June 1934. This manuscript was published as a book in the early 1980s, after the Cultural Revolution. As Pang Xunqin recalled in his introduction written in 1983 for the publication of this book, “Shijie meishu mingzuo ershi jiang and Mr. Fu Lei,” Fu composed this manuscript during his teaching at the Shanghai meishu zhuankan xuexiao and the manuscript also constituted a part of his lectures given there in the course of Western art history. Some parts of this manuscript were published in Yishu xunkan, a journal co-edited by Fu Lei, Ni Yide and some others during that period. See Fu Lei, Shijie meishu mingzuo ershi jiang (Twenty Talks on World Art Masterpieces) (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 1998).

443 Jack Flam and Miriam Dauich eds., Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art, a Documentary History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 1-5.
peoples they deemed “primitive” and to appropriate their supposed simplicity and authenticity to the project of transforming Western art.\textsuperscript{444} From 1931, when Fu voiced his caution to the Chinese art world, to 1946, when he saw Pang’s \textit{Guizhou Mountain People} in Shanghai after the war, fifteen years passed. Fu must have noticed the initial realization of his own idea about how to make modern Chinese art in Pang’s wartime experimental paintings. However, it is worth noting that the specific manner in which Fu mapped out his artistic topography of the relations among modern Western (especially French), Japanese, African, and Chinese cultures in his early 1930s lecture did not necessarily imply the Eurocentric assumption that all non-Western cultures were “uncivilized” or “pre-modern.” Nor did he imply that Japanese, African, and Chinese art was “less civilized” than French art. That is to say that, in Fu’s original theoretical formulation, different cultures throughout the world were not ranked with fixed relational positions in a hierarchical system constructed by the European colonialists, in which “civilized” Western cultures, “half-civilized” Asian cultures, and “primitive” African cultures constitute each other in a relation of contrast.

Fu’s hyper-cosmopolitan view held the potential to provide the theoretical basis for a future paradigm of making modern Chinese art which could traverse the hierarchical boundaries constructed not just among all the Western and non-Western cultures but also among the Han and the non-Han ethnic cultures within China. In Fu’s preface written for Pang’s 1946 exhibition,

cited above, we could find how he felt that Pang’s visual hybridity works in line with his own idea about how to make dialogue among different cultures without hierarchy. Indeed, Pang made some breakthroughs in the modern Chinese painting project of the *Guizhou Mountain People* series, both in terms of the expanded scope of native subject matter and the cosmopolitan nature of his technical solutions. In imperial China, following the doctrine of Confucianism, as discussed in Chapter 1, very few Han Chinese court or literati painter would depict a southern non-Han “barbarian” woman as the lyrical human subject of their elite paintings. In this sense, Pang’s selective themes, which tended to break out of the limited thematic range of traditional painting as refined in imperial China, could be viewed as political intervention linked with cultural production. Different from the Paintings of Official Tribute in the system of court painting, however, in which the southwestern subjects of the Chinese Empire are represented as “outer barbarians,” Pang attempted to elevate these subjects’ social status as the citizens (albeit still ethnically peripheral and socially marginal) in the new Chinese nation-state. Comparatively, as revealed earlier, Pang did not simply abstract his human subjects into shallow figures with universally happy faces, showcasing certain styles of dancing and gestures of playing instruments. In this sense, Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* paintings are different from the Paintings of Official Tribute in Qing court because he began to take these people’s handicrafts as objects of “folk art” made by his “Guizhou compatriots” and consciously recognize the
craftspeople as “gifted artists” with “artistic intelligence.”

Nevertheless, as analyzed earlier, Pang’s way of seeing the non-Han ethnic minorities partially filtered through an ethnographic eye did not entirely get rid of the long-established primitive paradigm that existed in Han culture. After all, part of the reasoning behind Pang’s gendered focus is the ethnographic hypothesis that in China’s borderlands, men are often more prone than women to accepting Han culture. According to Rui Yifu’s records of his ethnographic fieldwork among the southwestern ethnic tribes, some Miao men told the ethnographers that their genealogies were tightly connected with those of certain Han families since the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). It was assumed by these local people that, comparatively, men served as the index for the recent sinicization, whereas women best exemplified a “purer” traditional Chinese culture. Similar to Rui’s ethnographic photographs, some of Pang’s paintings were made with an interest in ethnographic motifs, especially embroidered patterns, which showcased the material culture of the specific ethnic people depicted. Different from the black-and-white nature of the ethnographic photographs taken by Rui, however, the colors of patterns are richly documented in Pang’s paintings. At a time when the technology of color photography had not yet been popularized, painting was obviously a more capable means of documenting colors. In some

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445 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolai de, 193.
446 Li Guangming and Wang Yuanhui, Chuanxi minzu diaocha jilu 1929 (Taipei: Academia Sinica Institute of History and Philology, 2004).
cases, such as *Splendid Attire* (Fig. 1.1), *The Season When Oranges Turn Red* (Fig. 1.18), and *Dancing Floral Miao in Guiding* (Fig. 2.42), the patterns and colors on the southern mountain women’s clothes were carefully delineated and tinted with precision. Pang made “embroiderer-like” efforts to “render the patterns exactly as they appear” when painting the costumes of the female figures in *Guizhou Mountain People*. In many cases, such as *Splendid Attire* and *The Season When Oranges Turn Red*, the embroidered patterns depicted were handcrafted and worn by the Miao mountain women exclusively for special events like ritual festivals and weddings, and not for ordinary use. To viewers familiar with the exotic and erotic flavors rendered by European primitivism, the perspective of Pang’s paintings of the contemporary southwestern mountain people in Guizhou had certain recognizable elements. Primitive cosmopolitanism was originally a European cultural and intellectual phenomenon that emerged as a result of colonial experiences in Africa and Asia, in which a preference was expressed for the arts of emerging cultures; this led to a fascination within European “civilized” metropoles for “primitive” design and ethnographic themes. *Dancing Floral Miao in Guiding* is a typical case in which Pang’s exoticizing ethnographic perspective resembles that of Gauguin’s work. The composition of this painting is quite crowded, as it depicts a festive scene from a close-up perspective, centered on one of the female characters with some other people dancing in a circle around her. In this painting, one of Pang’s main points of focus is obviously the exotic...

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448 Ibid.
beauty of the intricate and colorful patterns on the woman’s festive costume—from which he could study the patterns and colors of the representative physical artifacts of the primitive culture he had been seeking. Pang noted that “the Miao people of Guiding would call themselves ‘floral Miao.’ Their tops are Chinese-style jackets that reveal the neck, with a wide border of decorative fabric lining the shoulders and even the arms, not cross-stitched but embroidered. Kerchiefs wrap their heads, creating a square shape. Their everyday clothing is quite humble, and even in the depths of winter, they still wear but a single layer.” In this case, his textual depiction of the women’s daily clothing indicates that the “costumes” he was interested in visualizing were festive and not ordinary. Some attributes of the central female figure, not only her accessories but also her vacuous, disinterested expression that relieves both the depicted onlookers and the painting’s urban viewers of a direct psychological encounter with an individual, seem to be drawn from an ethnographic portrait that Rui took during his expedition in February 1940 of “a maiden of the Blue Miao in Anshun” (Fig. 2.43), which both categorized and subjugated the non-Han people. In Pang’s own words, “the Guizhou compatriots as I depict them are nothing like they actually appear in real (everyday) life.”

With such local knowledge on the part of the artist, Pang’s project of documenting southwestern primitive culture did resonate with the classic episodes of European modernist primitivism, such as Gauguin’s search for a “pure” and “authentic” paradise, frozen in some

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449 Pang Xunqin, Jiushi zheyang zouguolai de, 190.
450 Pang Xunqin, “Zipou (Self Analysis),” published in Zhongyang ribao (Central Daily), September 12, 1943.
vague, mythic past, in fin de siècle Tahiti. The close-up perspective of Pang’s composition, depicting a festive scene of an exotic Other, resembles the compositional device by which the peasant women dressed in the Breton clothing were depicted in the foreground of Gauguin’s *The Vision after the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling with the Angel)* (1888) (Fig. 2.44). In the mid-1880s, Gauguin imagined his move from metropolitan Paris to rural Brittany as a rediscovery of the uncorrupted, medieval roots of the “overly civilized” Western civilization. Gauguin’s story was widely spread during the early twentieth century among Chinese artists who trained in Paris. For example, when Chang Shuhong was studying at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris from 1933 to 1936, he frequently went with his friend to view patterns on dyed fabrics. They would associate the forms and colors of the cloth patterns with certain schools of European painting. In particular, the color change caused by the process of silk-dyeing made them discuss how Gauguin’s symbolism drew inspiration from the colors of the native clothing of fin de siècle *tahitienne*.⁴⁵¹ Regardless of the differences in their training in Paris, Chinese artists like Pang Xunqin and Chang Shuhong shared their knowledge about the dynamic interaction between decorative arts and crafts and modernist painting during the 1920s and 1930s. These Parisian trends clearly impacted early Chinese artists trained in France. Zheng Tirong 鄭體容, the daughter of Pang’s landlord in Chengdu and a female viewer of some paintings of *Guizhou Mountain People* in the wartime, recalled that “Pang Xunqin painted various ethnic clothes and

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⁴⁵¹ Chang Shuhong, *Chang Shuhong zizhuan: Jiushi chunqiu, Dunhuang wushinian (Autobiography of Chang Shuhong: Ninety years of his life, and fifty years of which were spent in Dunhuang)* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2011), 12.
sell them to (the members of) the American Flying Tiger Alliance in Chengdu.”  

Her impression as such reveals that, after all, it is hard to deny that one unspoken yet visible role of the female bodies depicted in some of Pang’s paintings of *Guizhou Mountain People* was to serve as clothes hangers.

To Pang, as discussed above, the artifacts made by the multiethnic local people of the southwestern interior were reminiscent of the primitive past of Han Chinese culture that was uncomplicated by the Western-inflected, semicolonial modernity on the east coast of China. Therefore, one goal of his paintings was to document the factual details—the unique ethnic details of the embroidered patterns and the coloring on the costumes—of the artifacts produced by the mountain people as primitive ethnic groups in Guizhou, a long marginalized, multicultural inner frontier of China. On Pang’s 1939–40 expedition to Guizhou and in his research and painting of *Guizhou Mountain People*, as we can tell from his own words in his 1943 solo exhibition preface, Pang considered the southwestern mountain people to be his “Guizhou compatriots.” Yet, like the European painters who were not invested in seeing African artists or their art as truly equal, Pang viewed the patterns and colorations of the Guizhou people’s clothing as a vast source of anonymous folk art. Similar to his European counterparts, Pang never made a portrait of any Guizhou mountain woman as an individual “woman artist” or had these women sign their names on the paintings that depicted them. That is, these female folk artists

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Dai Jun, “Chengdu siren ditu zhi ba—Zhengjia huayuan sicang fanhua jiushì (private map of Chengdu, no.8: bustling anecdotes of the garden of the Zheng family),” supplement of *Huaxì dushibao* (City newspaper of Western China), December 18, 2006.
were kept anonymous in the modern system of categorizing art; their presence is cast in an ethnographic device which “abstracts cultural expression from the flow of historical time and hence collapses individuals and whole generations into a composite figure alleged to represent her fellows past and present.” The multiethnic folk cultures of the wartime inner frontier, as captured by the literary and artistic imagination of the time, were still rife with the tension between extending a measure of respect for the cultures of fellow ethnic peoples within China’s national boundaries on the one hand, and assimilation on the other.

On the level of epistemology, the ethno-historical methods that Pang applied to his studies of “folk art” in the Republican era were problematic. Nevertheless, meanwhile, his sympathy for the lower-class common people was conveyed through his images of the Guizhou mountain people. Methodologically, Pang’s persistent interest in graphic design drove him to study archaeological and ethnographic objects ranging from the carved patterns on excavated archaeological objects such as pottery, bronzes, lacquers, to the rubbings made from stone monuments, to the embroidered patterns on southern ethnic costumes. Conceptually, his approaches to these objects took them to be creative cultural forms of the past, which constituted the so-called national art traditions. Pang’s cultural practice across his projects of painting and scholarship overlapped with Shen Congwen’s in terms of the conceptual and methodological approaches to the so-called folk art that they encountered and worked with. Both professor-artists

paid special attention to the *image* that they encountered in viewing the archaeological and ethnographic objects, instead of drawing only from ancient *texts* as the primary historical resources. As the art historian Li Jun argues, originally a novelist, Shen referred to the May Fourth New Cultural Movement as “a renewal of the tools,” including the renewal of his own tools, which was marked by his adaption of colored crayons in 1934 as a starting point for his engagement in cross-media cultural practice.\(^{454}\) Shen’s most accomplished scholarship is represented by his *Studies on Ancient Chinese Costume* 中國古代服飾研究, which was composed during the early years of the People’s Republic of China but not published until 1979 after the end of the Cultural Revolution. In comparison, as we discussed in the previous chapter, Pang’s project to document and study the archaeological and ethnographic objects had been initiated even earlier in the 1930s by his interest in exploring the meaningfulness of colors and patterns in traditional China.

\(^{454}\) See Li Jun, “Shen Congwen de tuxiang zhuanxiang – yixiang kuameijie de shijue wenhua yanjiu (Shen Congwen’s Pictorial Turn: A Visual Cultural Study in the Cross-Media Perspective),” in *Huawen wenxue* (Literatures in Chinese), no. 3 (2014): 89-119. Before Shen moved to Beijing in 1922, in his hometown in western Hunan Shen Congwen served as a keeper for the local official Chen Quzhen’s private collection of calligraphy and painting. During the period when he lived in Beijing in the 1920s and 1930s, Shen frequently visited the antique shops in Liulichang; meanwhile, he also read a number of art archaeological catalogs in the Municipal Library of Beijing (Jingshi tushuguan) and viewed exhibitions of antiques (i.e.- the objects which originally constituted the former imperial collection) held in the Palace Museum. During the mid- and late 1930s, when Shen became a well-known novelist, he began to form his own private collection of ceramics. Then, during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, he collected a number of lacquer wares in Kunming. After the establishment of the PRC on October 1, 1949, Shen was assigned to the Chinese History Museum (Zhongguo lishi bowuguan) where he got access to hundreds of thousands of objects as “national treasures” and “cultural heritage.” In comparison, shortly after the establishment of the PRC, Pang proposed to to establish the first school of applied art in China and was approved by the new government. Meanwhile, he completed a number of historiography of Chinese decorative painting and applied art, such as *Lidai Zhuangshihua Yanjiu* (Studies on Decorative Painting of All Dynasties [of China]). During the period from the early 1950s to the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Cultural Revolution, when he was labeled as a rightist and thus prohibited from doing any academic and educational activities, Pang concentrated on two fields other than painting – that is, studies on Chinese arts and crafts and teaching on design in the field of applied art.
Although история материальной культуры or “History of Material Culture” was a term that had emerged and been institutionalized as a discipline of social science in the State Academy of the History of Material Culture in the Institute of Archaeology in Russia in 1919 (shortly after the 1917 Revolution), Pang and Shen were among the first Chinese scholars and artists who paid attention to and studied the body of objects that this specific term would refer to. In the 1950s, the discipline of material culture studies was transplanted from the Soviet Union into Chinese academic institutions. That is to say, before the wide exposure to political documents had filtered through the mainstream ideology of the Chinese Communist Party in the 1950s and 1960s, these professor-artists had begun to conduct their historical studies on material culture. Furthermore, it could be argued that Pang is among the very first modern Chinese artists who took a transculturally comparative and cross-media approach to studying the material culture of non-Han ethnic groups in the multiethnic frontier. Compared to Shen, who didn’t conduct image-based historical scholarship on ancient Chinese costumes as the “work of the ordinary working people” until after the 1940s, Pang had begun to appropriate and transform photographic images and archaeological diagrams into his own paintings and graphic designs as early as the late 1930s.

Chapter 3. Han-Chinese Perspective, Transnational Approaches: Fu Baoshi’s *Mountain Spirit* as An Image of “National Spirit”

3.1. Sinicizing Mountain Spirit?: The Quest for the Root of Chinese Painting in the *Admonitions Scroll*

From the mid-1930s through the 1940s, Pang Xunqin’s artistic project of reinventing national antiquity drew from interdisciplinary fields imported from Euro-American countries and Japan, including cultural anthropology and archaeology. Displayed together with a series of paintings of *Dancing Ladies of the Tang Dynasty* in his solo exhibition held in 1943 in Chengdu, Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* epitomized a strongly ethnographic impulse to document the “folk art” tradition of the local ordinary people in the southern inner frontier. Due to the surge of wartime nationalism, that is to say, he was repositioned as a modern “reviver”—or “reinventor”—of China’s “classical art” tradition, who reconceptualized the specific body of non-Han ethnic material culture as another national antiquity, alternative to the classical Han Chinese tradition of literati art. In the institutionalized official art system of the KMT party-state, however, Pang’s series of *Guizhou Mountain People* was deemed as unqualified to be considered *guohua* (national painting), despite the artist’s self-definition of these paintings as “Chinese” and “modern.” Intriguingly, concurrent with Pang’s project of *Guizhou Mountain People*, the artist Fu Baoshi 傅抱石 (1904–65), who had trained in Chinese art historiography in the early 1930s in Japan, made a series of female figure paintings featuring his perceived “authentic Chinese beauties” during his years in Chongqing when he was displaced to the wartime capital.

At first glance, it is tempting to argue that Fu might have shared Pang’s “nativist”
impulse, as his paintings similarly feature a number of “southern Chinese” women clad in “traditional” clothes with mountainous landscapes as backdrops. However, in contrast to Pang, who was interested in visualizing the contemporary female folk who inhabited the long-marginalized southern inner frontier, Fu drew his female subjects from classical Chinese literature (composed in the Han Chinese classical language), especially the *Nine Songs* compiled in the *Chuci* 楚辭 (Songs of the South), which had been traditionally ascribed (since the second century AD) to the politician-poet Qu Yuan 屈原 of the Southern Chu Kingdom of the Warring States Era (475 BC–221 BC). As Fu Yiyao 傅益瑤 (Fu Baoshi’s daughter) explained, it was during his wartime displacement in Chongqing, Sichuan, that Fu started to paint “his ‘authentic Chinese beauties’—including [those on the themes of] ‘Lady of the Xiang River’ (Xiang furen 湘夫人), ‘Mountain Spirit’ (Shangui 山鬼), and ‘Lady in the Cloud’ (Yunzhon jun 雲中君).”

(Figs. 3.1-3.3)

Fu was different from his contemporaries such as Zhang Daqian and Pang Xunqin, who had earned their fame as painters before the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression officially broke out. In the 1930s Fu was primarily known as a Japanese-trained scholar who pioneered the field of Chinese art historiography as a newly emergent modern discipline. From August 1933 to June 1935, Fu studied Chinese art history with Kinbara Seigo 金原省吾 (1888–1958) at the Japanese Imperial Art School (Nihon teikoku bijutsu gakkō 日本帝国美術学校) in

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Tokyo. On June 24, 1935, Fu went back to China immediately upon hearing the news that his mother was dying; thereafter, due to lack of financial support, he never managed to return to Japan to continue his study as he originally planned.\textsuperscript{458} In October 1935, upon Xu Beihong’s invitation, Fu began his job as a lecturer at the Department of Art at the National Central University (NCU hereafter), offering courses such as “Chinese Art History,” “Introduction to National Painting (guohua)” and “Seal Carving.”\textsuperscript{459} On November 20, 1937, shortly after the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression officially broke out, the KMT government announced Chongqing to be the wartime capital, finally relocating there around early December that year. In April 1938, upon reading a newspaper article by Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), Fu’s close friend, mentor, and patron during his time in Japan in the early 1930s, Fu realized that Guo had returned to China to join the anti-Japanese resistance and was looking for him. To answer Guo’s call, Fu immediately went to Wuhan, where he joined the Third Department of the Central Propaganda (TDCP), led by Guo. As a symbol of the united political front that existed between the KMT, the CCP, and the progressive intelligentsia from February 6, 1938, until January 1941 when the Wannan Incident broke out, the TDCP was founded to help the KMT government obtain a social consensus in light of the official outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression.\textsuperscript{460} Serving as Guo’s secretary, Fu became fully engaged in the

\textsuperscript{458} Ye Zonghao, \textit{Fu Baoshi nianpu} (Chronology of Fu Baoshi’s biography) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2012), 43.

\textsuperscript{459} Ibid., 44.

\textsuperscript{460} Ye Zonghao, \textit{Fu Baoshi nianpu} (Chronology of Fu Baoshi’s biography) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2012), 57-58. In the Wannan Incident as a military conflict, the CCP suffered a substantial loss due to the sudden
work of war propaganda. In October 1937, before the Japanese occupied the capital Nanjing in mid-December, the NCU was moved to the Shapingba District of Chongqing. Fu and his family arrived in Chongqing in April 1939 after his year working in the TDCP. In September 1939, Fu resumed teaching courses on Chinese art history and seal carving in the Department of Art at the NCU, upon the invitation of Xu Beihong’s disciple Lv Sibai 呂斯百 (1905–73), who had been serving as the temporary chair of the Department of Art since July 1938 (through mid-1942), while Xu traveled to Guilin, Hong Kong, Singapore, and India to hold philanthropic exhibitions for wartime fund-raising. In July 1940, Fu followed Guo in resigning from the TDCP, due to their common refusal to become party members of the KMT, after which Fu became a full-time professor at the NCU.

In October 1942, Pang Xunqin also moved to Chongqing with his family, to teach courses on graphic design in the same Department of Art at the NCU (although in March 1943 Pang moved to Chengdu, a comparatively less-political but culturally dynamic wartime center not far from Chongqing in the KMT-controlled rear front). Taking a look at Pang’s Splendid Attire (1942)(Fig. 1.1), a relatively celebrated painting of his Guizhou Mountain People series, in comparison with Fu’s 1946 painting Mountain Spirit (Fig. 3.3), Fu’s favorite among his multiple “Mountain Spirit” themed paintings of the 1940s, one will see the similarities and differences between these projects of modern Chinese painting. Both female images seem to have been offensive of the Nationalist Army in Jiangsu. The tension within the Nationalist-CCP United Front was clearly escalated, resulting in a widespread sense of disillusionment among the people in the Nationalist-controlled region, especially among the Chinese intelligentsia.
executed in a poetic mood; certain psychological dimensions of the depicted female subjects are explored by both artists, if not to the same extent. Both paintings address the female figure and natural landscape as the main subjects, and the female figure in each is depicted as slightly raising her head and looking into the distance. Monumentality seems to have been embodied in the proportion, gesture, and emotional expression of the female figures in the foregrounds of both pictorial spaces. However, these paintings are disparate in technical solutions and aesthetic styles. Compared to Pang’s Splendid Attire, Fu’s Mountain Spirit is much grander in scale: it is 163 cm tall and 82.8 cm wide. The shabby house where Fu lived with his family in the western suburbs of Chongqing was located in Jingangpo on the slope of Gele Mountain; the roof of their house was low and the interior was narrow and dark, within which Fu was not able to paint in large scale. Therefore, Fu’s paintings made during his stay in Jingangpo are normally smaller than 138 cm by 69 cm.461 Among all of Fu’s wartime paintings, his 1946 Mountain Spirit is exceptionally monumental.

Among the subjects of Fu’s figure paintings, themes drawn from the Chuci—“Lady (or Ladies) of the Xiang River” and “Mountain Spirit”462—were arguably his favorite during the 1940s. Fu’s paintings of the “Lady (or Ladies) of the Xiang River” account for the largest number in his oeuvre, and “Mountain Spirit” is another recurrent theme from his paintings of the

462 Fu completed many paintings on the same set of themes during the 1940s. In this chapter, quotation marks are used for “Lady of the Xiang River” and “Mountain Spirit” when referring to the themes, while italics is used to refer to specific paintings.
time. In the 1940s, the possibly complicated implications of Fu’s seemingly archaistic interest were noted by some of his audiences. In a review of Fu’s exhibition of paintings published on October 26, 1947, for example, the influential Chinese novelist Laoshe 老舍 (1899–1966) commented that in the field of “reforming Chinese painting,” “we could not ignore his [Fu’s] success” in “figure painting” “based only on the fact that he never painted any female figure dressed in the latest fashion.”

Fu’s wartime paintings of “native” Chinese “southern” women, different in their thematic, stylistic, and aesthetic choices from Pang’s paintings of the same period, invited a series of critical responses from Chinese audiences of various social and political statuses during the 1940s, which deserve to be examined in juxtaposition with Pang’s project. By 1942, after Fu held his solo exhibition in Chongqing (October 10–12, 1942), he began to be recognized by the Republican Chinese official and academic art institutions as a neo-traditionalist in guohua. Since then, he has been widely acclaimed as a modern master who efficiently conveyed China’s “national spirit.”

In contrast to Pang, in the early 1940s Fu began to be widely acclaimed in the public sphere of the KMT-controlled area, as almost the only artist comparable to Zhang Daqian in his mastery of guohua. In January 1937, when the Second National Fine Arts Exhibition was held in Nanjing, before the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression officially broke out, Fu had been invited to be a member of the preparatory

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463 Laoshe, “Fu Baoshi xiansheng de hua (Mr. Fu Baoshi’s painting),” *Da Gong Bao* (Newspaper of the Public), Shanghai, October 16, 1947.

464 See Ye Zonghao, *Fu Baoshi nianpu* (Chronicle of Fu Baoshi) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012), 84, 158.
committee of the exhibition. For the Third National Fine Arts Exhibition, held in Chongqing in 1942 a little before his solo exhibition, Fu was invited to serve on the Censorious Jury Committee by its chair, Zhang Daofan. Fu was put in charge of selecting works for the *guohua* section—the same *guohua* section that regarded Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* paintings as un-Chinese.\(^{465}\) Zhang Daofan, the Minister of Propaganda of the KMT government, would harshly criticize Pang’s *Guizhou Mountain People* in 1944, as paintings “damaging the image of the nation.”\(^{466}\)

Beyond the official art institution, importantly, critics applied a particular term—*xiandai zhongguo wenrenhua* 現代中國文人畫 (modern Chinese literati painting)—to describe Fu’s aesthetics of painting at the time. After viewing Fu’s painting exhibition held in Chongqing, November 9–11, 1945, shortly after the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, Chang Renxia 常任俠 (1904–96), a Japanese-trained art historian at the NCU specializing in Art Archaeology and Eastern Art History, commented in his diary that “in the field of modern Chinese literati painting, Fu Baoshi is distinguished. He could be considered together with Zhang Daqian as the most eminent masters (in this field).”\(^{467}\) The rationale of classifying Fu and Zhang as such seems to be that in the 1940s both artists were recognized as the most successful neo-traditionalist *guohua* artists reinterpreting the national classical antiquity of China with

\(^{465}\) Ye Zonghao, *Fu Baoshi nianpu* (Chronology of Fu Baoshi’s biography, updated version) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2012), 84.
\(^{466}\) Ibid., 53. Zhang was also the Chair of the Censorious Jury Committee for the Second National Fine Arts Exhibitions held in Nanjing in 1937.
\(^{467}\) Ye Zonghao, *Fu Baoshi nianpu* (Chronicle of Fu Baoshi) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2004), 158.
traditional ink medium. However, although under the same banner of “modern literati painting,” Fu’s approach to refashioning modern Chinese painting was quite different from that of Zhang Daqian. Zhang made numerous copies of the anonymous artisan-made murals in Dunhuang in the northwestern frontier in the early 1940s, whereas Fu declared on September 22, 1942, in his preface composed for his solo exhibition in Chongqing that “the spirit of Chinese literati painting” could represent “the fundamental spirit of zhongguohua (Chinese painting).”

Fu was originally a traditional-style artist skilled in seal carving and landscape painting. The current historiography of twentieth-century Chinese art has canonized him as a modern master in landscape painting. In particular, Fu is renowned for innovating the time-honored techniques of brush and ink by creating baoshi-cun 抱石皴 or “textured ink strokes in Baoshi’s manner”—a novel technique of brushstroke widely recognized as his signature style—in the suburb of Chongqing between the late 1930s and 1946. Nevertheless, concurrent with this landscapist project, as his daughter Fu Yiyao noted, Fu’s “figure painting appeared in large numbers only after his arrival in Sichuan.” Comparatively, Fu’s wartime figure paintings have not yet earned as much critical attention as his landscape paintings from the same period. In imperial China, figure painting as a classical genre had waned after the Yuan dynasty due to literati biases. Artists in the Ming and Qing dynasties who achieved canonical status as figure

468 Fu Baoshi, “Renwu chongqing huazhan zixu (Preface for the 1942 exhibition of my paintings),” September 22, 1942, published serially in the supplements of Shishi xinbao on October 8, 12, and 20, 1942.
469 I learnt about this from an interview with Fu Yiyao in the winter of 2013. Also see Fu Yiyao, Wode fuqin Fu Baoshi (My Father Fu Baoshi) (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2006), 131.
painters, such as Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬 (1599–1652) and Ren Bonian 任伯年 (1840–96), were few and far between. In particular, as mentioned earlier, the scale of literati artistic values in imperial China conventionally held the painted pictures of “beautiful woman” in extremely low esteem. Then, why did Fu make a relatively large number of figure paintings in the 1940s, especially those featuring female figures wearing archaic costumes?

Earlier, in Fu’s *Historical Outlines of Chinese Painting*, completed in 1929 and published in 1931, shortly before his travels to Japan, he had emphasized the Chineseness of *Zhongguo huihua* (Chinese painting).\(^{470}\) Compared to Pang, whose goal in experimenting was to reconcile and synthesize the East and the West, Fu was more interested in exploring the distinctiveness of Chinese painting. His discourses on Chinese painting positioned it, first and foremost, as a culture-specific tradition, arguing that because “China has a long history of several thousands of years,” it was impossible to understand “Chinese painting” without an understanding of the specific historical context of China, from which the *minzu xing* (national character) of “Chinese painting” had been developed by “Chinese people” throughout the long history of China. “The future development of Chinese painting,” he argued, “should be dependent on its own past” because “it is impossible to truly understand Chinese painting based on the knowledge that is ‘non-Chinese.’” This is a bold statement about the centrality of “Chineseness” embodied in Chinese painting, addressing the necessity of viewing the study of Chinese art as fundamentally

\(^{470}\) Fu Baoshi, *Zhongguo huihua bianqian shigang* (Historical Outlines of Chinese Painting) (Shanghai: Nanjing shudian, 1931); reprinted in *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji*, 2-52.
historical and social— that is, the study of Chinese art must involve the investigation of the distinct cultural paradigms of China as a given tradition. As Kuiyi Shen argues, Fu’s strongly nationalistic tone is understandable even if this book itself is flawed and premature, because the period between 1929, when he wrote the book, and 1931, when it was published, was a time during which Japan gradually occupied China’s northeastern provinces. In this book completed in late 1920s, Fu claimed, “the national characters of Chinese painting are different from the paintings of other guozu (nation states).” In 1935, shortly after receiving his training in Chinese art history in Japan, Fu published an essay in which he reiterated the idea that “Art is the greatest declaration of a nation’s culture,” and “the spirit of Chinese painting” could represent “the spirit of Chinese national culture.”

When faced with a national crisis of the overly Westernized semicolonial modernity, how to develop modern Chinese culture without losing Chinese national identity? Fu was exploring how the future of Chinese culture could be developed primarily from China’s native tradition, and argued that cultural makers did not have to be iconoclasts in order to be modern. Fu’s claim that “everything about Chinese painting should be done by Chinese people” somehow echoes Pang Xunqin’s statement that “as a Chinese artist, it is indeed necessary to learn the cultural heritage

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473 Fu Baoshi, Historical Outlines of Chinese Painting (Shanghai: Nanjing shudian, 1931); reprinted in Fu Baoshi meishu wenji, 2-52.
of our nation.” Nevertheless, as John Clark wrote, regarding the meaning of one’s native “tradition,” “[it is] little more than that ‘we’ like, when ‘we’ think of ourselves as a culture, people or nation historically transmitting or receiving ‘our’ values.” In their 1940s female images, both artists intended to build a logical relationship between their paintings and the past, through which history was visually coded as national. Nevertheless, a juxtaposition of their female images embodying different aesthetic qualities epitomizes how different these artists were in their conceptions of the so-called Chineseness or “national character” of China. In contrast with Pang, who reinvented “folk art” as a new category in the modern system of classification of Chinese art to challenge the traditional aesthetic canon established by Han Chinese court and literati elites, Fu championed the effort made to rejuvenate or “modernize” wenrenhua  or Chinese literati painting. In the 1940s, Fu played the dual role of scholar (art historian) and painter, interpreting “Chinese” art tradition textually and visually during his wartime displacement in the southwestern inner frontier. Reading his Chinese art historiography and figure painting in dialogue with each other, in this chapter I study how his archaistic figure paintings drawn from the Chuci constitute an integral part of his project of modernizing Chinese literati painting. In particular, I study Fu’s conception of “Chinese literati painting” and China’s “national spirit” as embodied in his 1940s archaistic female figure paintings drawn from the

Chuci—especially his 1946 painting *Mountain Spirit*, with his 1943 painting *Lady of the Xiang River* as a secondary example. To be sure, Fu’s “artistic efforts and art historical research were directed toward protecting cultural heritage” and, in turn, “contributed to the construction of national culture in twentieth-century China.” However, I argue, what deserve deeper theoretical interrogation are the artist’s specifically Han Chinese cultural concerns. In the first part of his manuscript “Zhongguo gudai huixia zhi yanjiu (Studies on Chinese ancient painting)” completed on November 8, 1941, Fu traced the “origin of Chinese painting” back to “the place” and “the time” in which *han minzu* 漢民族 or “Han [Chinese] nationality/ethnic group/race” originated, based on the idea that “the foundation of Chinese culture was constructed by the distinctive national characteristic of the Han [Chinese] nationality/ethnic group/race, despite its absorption of the Western Asian and ancient Greek cultures imported from Western Asia.” The aesthetic link that Fu formulated between his archaistic figure painting and “Chinese literati painting” provides a key to understanding how the artist was repositioned in the wartime nationalistic wave of refashioning modern Chinese painting when, after the culturally iconoclastic May Fourth Movement, the tradition of “Chinese literati painting” had been negatively labeled as an individualist and socially detached art form.

Fu’s displacement in Chongqing from 1939 to 1946, the period of heightened national

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477 Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo gudai huixia yanjiu (Studies on Chinese ancient painting).” This manuscript was unpublished during Fu’s lifetime and later on published in Ye Zonghao, ed., *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji*, 209-225.
consciousness and anxiety over cultural identity, caused the artist to reflect on the fate of “Chinese painting.” In an article entitled “Chinese Painting in a Great Age,” he asked a series of questions concerning the future fate of Chinese painting:

Chinese painting nowadays appears somewhat like a laughingstock. What era is it now? You are still arguing over “mountains and waters,” “birds and feathers.” But can they fight against the Japanese? Stepping backward [for self-defense], do they have any relevance to “war-resistance” or “construction of a nation?” . . . So, Chinese painting that existed prehistorically and has shared the longevity of history is now facing the possibility of vanishing.478

Anxiety about the disappearance of “Chinese painting” as a cultural symbol of the nation caused Fu to develop his signature style not only in landscape painting, the genre he had long practiced, but also figure painting, which was a relatively new field to him. In the realm of figure painting, in particular, Fu raised questions about how to rejuvenate the long tradition of indigenous ink painting in modern China so that it could effectively engage with a dashidai 大時代 (Great Age).

In twentieth-century China, “the idea of a national awakening helped to link a variety of distinctive cultural fields with one another and with the world of political action.”479 Indeed, in this sense, it was a “Great Age” of ongoing Chinese Revolution. Particularly after the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression broke out, the reevaluation of national antiquity—especially the Pre-Qin era—was a major concern of intellectual politics in China. The

revisitation of national antiquity of the Pre-Qin time became a highly politicized and contested domain where “Chinese Marxism, national learning, Neo-Confucianism and many other major intellectual schools all experienced a profound re-orientation due to the surge of nationalism in the wartime.”⁴⁸⁰ Guo Moruo, Fu’s close friend and mentor, featured as a central figure in this cultural-political domain, whose historical studies and wartime dramaturgy kept in close dialogue with the ongoing debates about how to understand, characterize, and reevaluate the Warring States period in the Pre-Qin era, a time of profound social transformations in ancient China that had been long considered the golden age of Chinese thought. Qu Yuan, the legendary politician-poet of the Chu during the Warring States period who allegedly composed *Chuci*, featured prominently not only in Guo’s historical discourses to modernize the cultural and intellectual historiography of ancient China but also as a protagonist in Guo’s historical drama *Qu Yuan* staged in 1941. Working hand in hand, his historical and literary projects were intended to combine Marxist social analysis of the past with ideological critique of the present.

It is tempting to feel that Fu made his first *Lady of the Xiang River* in 1943 and first *Mountain Spirit* in 1945 “independently” in the sense that neither painting was commissioned by any of his patrons. Fu’s first painting of the “Mountain Spirit” (Fig. 3.2) was made in the spring of 1945 without specific commission, before the end of the War of Resistance Against Japanese

Aggression, and it was never shown to anyone except family until two years later.\textsuperscript{481} On February 14, 1947, the second day of the Chinese Lunar New Year, this painting was shown to some others for the first time during a gathering of family and friends at Fu’s home in Nanjing. At this gathering, Fu showed this painting along with other two paintings to his friends, for them to choose as their New Year gifts; the 1945 painting \textit{Mountain Spirit} was chosen by the journalist photographer Luo Jimei 羅寄梅, who was then the director of the KMT-affiliated Bureau of Photography of the Central News Agency.\textsuperscript{482} In contrast, his 1946 painting \textit{Mountain Spirit}, which Fu considered to be his favorite among the paintings with this subject, was neither sold to any of his patrons nor given as a gift to any of his friends. However, I suggest, Fu’s “Mountain Spirit” paintings drawn from \textit{Chuci} were impacted by his exchange with Guo Moruo during the 1940s. As I will discuss later in this chapter, shortly after Fu’s creation of his 1943 painting \textit{Lady of the Xiang River}, Guo assigned to this painting a patriotic, pro-CCP message by inscribing it with his Chinese calligraphic brush. It is highly possible that, in turn, Guo’s interpretation of this female image helped shape Fu’s way of visualizing another female subject drawn from \textit{Chuci}, the “Mountain Spirit,” in the mid-1940s. By contextualizing Fu’s project of painting archaistic female figures against wartime Chinese intellectual politics, I will examine

\textsuperscript{481} Fu inscribed on the painting that before the time when it was given to Luo Jimei in 1947, “it was never shown to anyone since it was created” in 1945. This painting belongs to the Huai Shi Lou collection, New York.

\textsuperscript{482} The Central News Agency (CNA) was founded in 1924 in Guangzhou as the official news agency of the KMT. The CNA’s Bureau of Photography was established in May 1938 in Wuhan. Invited by Xiao Tongzi, the President of the Central News Agency, Luo Jimei was hired as the Director of its Bureau of Photography. In late 1938, Luo moved with the CNA’s Bureau of Photography to the wartime capital Chongqing.
how, thematically and stylistically, Fu’s 1946 *Mountain Spirit* functioned as a visualization of his studies of national antiquity and communicated to his wartime Chinese audiences a vision of the current national crisis. In this sense, Fu’s archaistic female figure painting in the mid-1940s offered not only an artistic brand of Sino-modernity in dialogue with global modernisms but also a political allegory of the Chinese Revolution.

“Mountain Spirit” is the mysterious lyrical protagonist of the ninth song of the *Nine Songs* compiled in *Chuci*. The title of the song (also “Mountain Spirit”) and its full text are inscribed vertically on the lower right portion of a hanging scroll on which Fu Baoshi had depicted a beautiful woman with Chinese brush in ink, water, and very few colors while at his wartime home in Jinggangpo in the western suburb of Chongqing in April 1946 (Fig. 3.3). The full text of the song, as inscribed, reads:

There seems to be someone in the fold of the mountain  
In a coat of fig-leaves with a rabbit-floss girdle,  
With eyes that hold laughter and a smile of pearly brightness:  
‘Gentleman, your allurements show that you desire me.’

Driving tawny leopards, leading the striped lynxes;  
A car of lily-magnolia with banner of woven cassia;  
Her cloak of stone-orchids, her belt of asarum:  
She gathers sweet scents to give to one she loves.

‘I am in the dense bamboo grove, which never sees the sunlight,  
So steep and hard the way was, therefore I am late?’  
Solitary she stands, upon the mountain’s summit,  
The clouds’ dense masses begin below her.

From a place of gloomy shadow, dark even in the daytime,
When the east wind blows up, the god-spirit sends down her showers:
‘Dallying with the Fair one, I forgot about returning,
What flowers can I deck myself with, so late in the year?

I shall pluck the thrice-flowering herb among the mountains,
Where the arrowroot spreads creeping over the piled-up boulders.
Sorrowing for my gentleman, I forgot that I must go.
My gentleman thinks of me, but he has no time to come.’

The lady of the mountains is fragrant with pollia;
She drinks from the rocky spring and shelters beneath the pine trees:
‘My gentleman thinks of me, but he holds back, uncertain.’
The thunder rumbles; rain darkens the sky;
The monkeys chatter; apes scream in the night;
The wind soughs sadly and the trees rustle.
‘I think of my gentleman and stand alone in sadness.’

This poem reached us in an anthology of Chu poetry edited and annotated by Wang Yi 王逸, a librarian employed in the Imperial Library at Luoyang by the Eastern Han emperor Shun Di. Wang attributed the poems that he compiled for the first time in Chuci to Qu Yuan, a legendary nobleman and loyal official of the Chu Kingdom (1042 BC–223 BC) in the southern region of the anarchic world of the Eastern Zhou era (770 BC–221 BC) during the Warring States period of the Pre-Qin era. Prior to Wang’s compiling of the Chi ci, the most important work of poetry in China was the Shi jing 詩經 (Book of Songs), which owes its present arrangement to court musicians of the Eastern Zhou and which was canonized as one of the orthodox Five Books of Classics during the time of the Western Han dynasty, directly preceding the Eastern Han. It was widely believed among Confucian scholars that the “Three Hundred Songs” of the Shi jing,

allegedly edited and compiled by Confucius, constituted an indispensable part of every nobleman’s education in political philosophy in the Zhou court. From the perspective of the orthodox Confucian exigesis, the poems that Wang Yi later compiled into the *Chuci* during the Eastern Han dynasty would be deemed as outlandish and unorthodox. Although *Chuci* belonged to no canon during the Zhou and Western Han dynasties and originated outside the area of sanctified Western Zhou tradition, generations of Confucian scholars beginning in the Eastern Han dynasty felt justified in looking for ancient sources of Chinese poetry in *Chuci* as much as they conventionally did in the much earlier *Shi jing*. That is to say, in the Eastern Han dynasty the Confucian exegetists initiated the hermeneutic tradition of reading the songs compiled in *Chuci* in the same way that early Confucian exegetists read the political implications of the literary imagery in the poems in *Shi jing*. According to Wang Yi, Qu Yuan authored the *Nine Songs* in the outskirts of the southern Chu Kingdom “near the Yuan and Xiang Rivers” during the period in which Huai King exiled him there, by appropriating the “lewd native folk songs” originally performed in the area’s “religious rites.” By composing the *Nine Songs*, Wang suspected, Qu Yuan attempted to “express not only piety for the ancestral gods [of the Chu] but also his own grievance. The metaphors employed in these songs were intended to convey his remonstrance [to his king].” 作《九歌》之曲，上陳事神之敬，下見己之冤結，托之以諷諫”

Based on the suspicion that the Chu nobleman who wrote the early *Chuci* poems would, like all

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484 Wang Yi (Eastern Han), Hong Xingzu (Song), *Chuci zhangju buzhu* (Annotated chapters and sentences of Chuci) (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 2005), 56.
educated noblemen of his day, have been thoroughly familiar with the songs of *Shi jing* and with the various ways of interpreting them allegorically, later generations of Confucian exegetists believed that the Chu nobleman’s “bizarre” use of symbolism might have derived from the thoroughly Northern habit of looking for allegorical meanings in *Shi jing*. The exceptionally influential Southern Song dynasty neo-Confucian exegetist Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), for example, read the *Nine Songs* as the textual representation of “the persistent loyalty of the courtier to his king,” expressing the Confucian ideal that the courtier “should respect his king even if [he] is abandoned by the king; [the courtier] should be loyal to his king even if [he] could not get along well with the king. "以事神不答而不能忘其敬爱，比事君不合而不能忘其忠"**

Far before the twentieth century, there had been a long tradition of visualizing themes drawn from the *Chuci*, possibly beginning with the *Illustrations of the Nine Songs* 九歌圖 by Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1049–1106) of the Northern Song dynasty, according to the historical record. The earliest extant paintings drawn from the *Nine Songs* are some anonymous hand scrolls of the *Illustrations of the Nine Songs* traditionally attributed to Li Gonglin (Fig. 3.4) (Fig. 3.5). A copy of Li Gonglin’s work, now attributed to Zhang Wo 張渥 (ca. 1340–65) of the Yuan dynasty, adopt the format of a hand scroll depicting the themes of the songs in a complete sequence (Fig. 485

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485 Zhu Xi, *Chuci jizhu* (Collected Exegeses of Chuci) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979), 34.
486 As the official record of imperial art collection of the Northern Song court compiled during the Emperor Hui Zong’s reign, *Xuanhe huapu* recorded the title of Li Gonglin’s *Illustrations of the Nine Songs*, without detailed information and description of how the paintings look.
In this Yuan copy, each section of each painting features the theme of one song of the *Nine Songs*, accompanied by the original text of the song inscribed in calligraphic brushwork. In the earliest of Li Gonglin’s multiple versions of hand scrolls of the *Nine Songs*, according to Del Gais’s research, Li would have originally depicted the theme in a “narrative” mode. In this mode, elements of landscape like trees and stones are meticulously placed, creating a dynamic pictorial environment for audiences to engage in the movement of the figures depicted. Later, when Li returned to the same themes again to paint another hand scroll, he depicted the theme with a comparatively more “lyrical” mode. One could see in Zhang Wo’s fine-line-drawn hand scroll of the *Nine Songs* the characteristics of the so-called lyrical mode (Fig. 3.6). In this copy, which allegedly represents Li Gonglin’s later hand scroll of the *Nine Songs*, the poetic protagonists are depicted as tall, close-up figures. Compared with the narrative mode, the lyrical mode concentrates more on the psychological and emotional expression of the figures, with less dynamic renderings of the landscape as the backdrop for their activities. Different from the earlier style in which the viewer could only passively look at the narratives about the figures, the lyrical style creates a viewpoint from which the viewer could focus more on the deeper, psychological aspects of his or her communication with the figures depicted. However, there seems to be no direct eye contact between these figures and the viewer. The aloof facial

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489 Ibid.
expressions and body gestures of the figures depicted, accordingly, help to alienate them from the audiences.\(^{490}\)

From the Northern Song dynasty through the later imperial periods including the Ming and Qing dynasties, the themes of the *Nine Songs* were increasingly considered a favorite source of inspiration by dynastic scholar-officials as well as (un-official) literati-professional artists who highly respected and were well-versed in the traditional Chinese classics—that is, the orthodox doctrine of Han Chinese culture originated in the Central Plains of China during the Pre-Qin time. The scholar-official tradition of drawing from the *Nine Songs* originated in the Northern Song period, as exemplified by the Yuan copies of Li Gonglin’s paintings, largely followed the Confucian hermeneutic legacy of reading *Chuci*. Besides the copies by Zhang Wo, there are some other illustrations of the *Nine Songs*, including a hand scroll formerly attributed to the Northern Song scholar-official Zhang Dunli 张敦礼 (? -1107)(Fig. 3.7) and a hand scroll with an inscription formerly attributed to the Yuan official-scholar artist Zhao Mengfu 赵孟頫 (1250–1322) (Fig. 3.8). These paintings reveal that by the time of the Northern Song dynasty (through the Yuan dynasty), the texts of *Nine Songs* had become common themes in official-literati paintings. According to *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 (Records of Celebrated Paintings Through the Ages) by the Tang dynasty scholar-official Zhang Yanyuan 張彦遠 (815–907), the official-court painter Liu Bao 劉褒 of the Eastern Han dynasty drew from the

poems compiled in *Shi jing* (Book of Songs) for his paintings *Northern Wind* 北風圖 and *Galaxy* 雲漢圖.⁴⁹¹ As the earliest poetic anthology compiled in the Pre-Qin time, *Shi jing*—with its more than three hundred poems—is a major text in the Confucian canon. As was the case in Chinese literature, that is, the court and literati paintings drawn from *Chuci* as a Confucian-inflected pictorial tradition began around the Northern Song dynasty, much later than the tradition of picturing the themes of *Shi jing* which was initiated no later than the Eastern Han dynasty.

The civil service system and its related policies, so effectively institutionalized by the court of the Northern Song dynasty, centralized the scholar-officials’ role in governing the society in collaboration with the Emperor. This institutional design, accordingly, endowed the scholar-officials with not only political power but also the cultural authority to set up a new system of aesthetic standards for appreciating, evaluating, and creating art.⁴⁹² Being self-positioned as a group of intellectuals with political power connected to and yet relatively independent from the imperial court, the Northern Song scholar-officials tended—through their cultural practices of painting and aesthetic writing as “amateur artists”—to strategically construct a particular “scholarly” taste that not only differented them from but also affected the court and professional painters in general. The Northern Song scholar-officials would select and interpret specific themes, according to the social and cultural values that they intended to convey.

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Moreover, as some paintings by artists like Li Gonglin and Zhang Dunli demonstrate, some scholar-officials of the Northern Song almost had the same level of expertise in techniques or skills as those of professional painters.

To many scholar-officials and (unofficial) literati-scholars of late imperial China during the Ming and Qing dynasties, the pictorial tradition of illustrating the *Nine Songs* from the *Chuci*—which shared a close affinity with the Confucian hermeneutic tradition of interpreting *Shi jing* through visual means—epitomized the aesthetic-political concerns of the scholar-officials and the exchanges between the court and the scholar-officials in the aesthetic construction of social and cultural norms. As was typical of artists at the time, Li Gonglin, who allegedly initiated this pictorial tradition of the *Chuci*, identified as both a scholar-official and a court painter in the Northern Song dynasty. In the Ming dynasty, Zhang Chou 張釵 (1577–1643) wrote in *The Boat Containing Calligraphy and Painting in Qinghe County* (Qinghe shuhua fang) that,

from the ancient to the present, the canonical themes of painting were successively initiated and are now almost complete in our Great Ming [dynasty]. It is hard to see the [early] paintings made in the Western and Eastern Han dynasties (202 BC–AD 220). In the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420), [certain] historical events of the past became the themes for painting; for example, Gu Kaizhi (ca. 344–ca. 405)’s painting *Gathering in the Western Garden on a Serene Night* 清夜遊 西園 [which depicts a gathering of the Cao brothers Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226) and Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232) in the western Tongjue Garden in the Palace of Flourishing Civilization during the period of the Three Kingdoms] initiated the canonical tradition of painting historical events [of court and official elites]. Some new topics were
added in the Tang dynasty (618–907), such as Li Sixun 李思訓 (651–716)’s *Supernatural Mountains with Pavilions* 仙山樓閣. In the [Northern] Song dynasty (960–1279), certain themes of the [Confucian] Classics were painted, such as in Li Gonglin’s [paintings of the themes of] *Nine Songs* [in *Chuci*] and Ma Hezhi 馬和之’s [painting drawn from] *Shi jing* (Book of Songs) annotated by Mao Heng [which was a canonical version beginning in the Han dynasty].”

In terms of compositional mode, one might argue that Fu’s *Mountain Spirit* (1946) could be connected to the aforementioned modes developed in the Song and Yuan dynasties. Observed in the analytical framework set up by Del Gais, it seems to be focused more on the “lyrical” than the “narrative.” The multivalent or even ambivalent interrelation between the viewer and the figures depicted in Li Gonglin’s later version of the *Nine Songs* scroll composed in the “lyrical” mode is frustrating, resonating with the symbolism of the literary imagery of the *Nine Songs* in Confucian exegesis on “kong-official relationship” since the Eastern Han (or Later Han) dynasty. Besides the ink paintings with calligraphic inscriptions, several sets of illustrations for the *Nine Songs* circulated during the Ming and Qing dynasties in the reproducible medium of woodblock prints. These included illustrations by the literati-professional artist Chen Hongshou 謝誠之 (Fig. 3.9) and a set of illustrations entitled *Jiuge tu* (Illustrations of the *Nine Songs*) that were started by Xiao Yuncong 蕭雲從 (1596–1673), active during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties.

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493 This is one of the major textual evidences used to prove that Li Gonglin initiated the pictorial tradition of making Illustrations of the Nine Songs. Also see Julia K. Murray, *Mirror of Morality: Chinese Narrative Illustration and Confucian Ideology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).

period, and that were later on completed by Men Yingzhao (active during 1736-1795) in the Qing dynasty. (Fig. 3.10) Multiple images among these works, including the printed picture of Xiao Yuncong’s work, depict the mysterious protagonist of “Mountain Spirit” as a female figure wearing a long robe. Importantly, these paintings use a common iconographic “marker” to identify a “southern barbaric” nature in this subject, ethnically and culturally: fig leaves decorating the female figure’s shoulders and the leopard she rides. In some other cases reviewed above, the subject is depicted as a half-naked, leaf-wearing barbarian with ambiguous gender identity. In Zhang Wo’s hand scroll and Chen Hongshou’s printed image, this subject is depicted as a male, grotesque figure. (Fig. 3.6) (Fig. 3.9). It might also be argued that, in terms of format, Fu’s Mountain Spirit (1946) shares certain similarities with a hanging scroll featuring this subject from the Qing literati-professional painter Luo Pin (1733–99), which depicts a full-length standing figure in the foreground. Different from the Pre-Qing existing pictorial modes in which the images with this theme had always been depicted in succession with other themes of the Nine Songs on a long hand scroll, Luo’s hanging scroll exclusively features the subject matter of Mountain Spirit (Fig. 3.11). Luo was famous for painting eccentric and hilarious images of ghosts, yet he did not choose to paint Mountain Spirit as an eccentric-looking, grotesque ghost. Instead, the Mountain Spirit in his painting looks like a graceful maiden executed in a highly formulated mode of the Ming and Qing painting tradition of shinu hua (painting of court ladies or gentry ladies of the boudoir). Without the leaves decorating her
shoulders and the tiger standing behind her, she could be any stereotypical, homogenized “portrait” of ideal beauty in the late imperial period of China. Despite his similar use of the hanging scroll as a material format, it seems, Fu did not draw his female archetype from Luo—neither in terms of physiognomy and body type nor that of fashion style.

In the original text of “Mountain Spirit” compiled in *Chuci*, the gender of this subject is unidentifiable and debatable, as the pronouns employed in the song (in classical Han Chinese language) are noncommittal about gender. The subject’s gender was thus subject to different visual interpretations based on different aesthetic, social, or political needs throughout the ages. A thematic consensus vaguely reached among these visual interpreters seems to be that this subject should be a Pre-Qin-period literary subject derived from the local folkloric tradition of the Chu Kingdom on the southern margin of the Central Plains. In contrast with this consensus, however, Fu did not draw his female archetype from any of these earlier pictorial models of visualizing this subject.

Meanwhile, iconographically, Fu’s “Mountain Spirit” paintings made during the 1940s also do not recall the contemporaneous paintings by other painters with the same subject. Besides Fu, in the realm of *guohua* during the 1940s, Xu Beihong and Zhang Daqian also painted this subject. All three artists depicted the subject as female. Yet the female bodies of the “Mountain Spirit” depicted in Xu and Zhang’s paintings are vastly different from that in Fu’s paintings. Both Xu and Zhang depicted this subject as a half-naked female figure riding a leopard, indicating her
“barbaric” identity with the leaves decorating her body. The female body depicted in Xu Beihong’s *Mountain Spirit* (1943) (Fig. 3.12) looks more like a female nude drawn from real life, revealing the artist’s skill in outlining and modeling human bodies according to the anatomical principles of nineteenth-century French Academicism. Applied in ink line drawing with Chinese brush, meanwhile, this painting epitomizes Xu’s proposal to “reform” traditional Chinese ink painting with the infusion of the “realism” (*xie’shi* 寫實) that he perceived in nineteenth-century French academic painting.\(^{495}\) In 1926, upon returning from France, Xu began to promote a mimetic paradigm of what he thought was realist European painting in a highly technique-focused orientation. By so doing, meanwhile, Xu attempted to lead modern Chinese artists in making paintings with more “scientific” and “objective” attitudes.

In terms of iconography, similarly, Zhang Daqian painted “Mountain Spirit” as a leopard-riding naked young woman in 1946 (Fig. 3.13). Despite this similarity in iconography, however, Zhang’s techniques and styles applied are different from Xu’s. In preparation for painting the themes from the *Nine Songs*, Zhang allegedly consulted both the versions by Zhao Mengfu and Zhang Wo.\(^{496}\) Nevertheless, his skills in fine-line drawing, along with the physiognomy and body type of his female figuration—including her round chin, neck profile, broader shoulders, and slender waist—mainly drawn from the High Tang style painting of

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\(^{496}\) “Jiuge tu (Illustrations of the Nine Songs),” in *Meili de fenben yichan – Zhang Daqian shinv ce* (Beautiful Legacy of Painting Drafts – Zhang Daqian’s Female Figure Paintings) (Beijing: Beijing shifandaxue chubanshe, 2008), 115-117.
Buddhist deities and attendants that he admired and copied from the Dunhuang murals during the first half of the 1940s. (Fig. 3.14) By comparing his female figure paintings made before and after his copying of the murals during his trip in Dunhuang, one could find that, he began to “pay more attention” to the skills of “line drawing,” while the female figures he portrayed in his post-Dunhuang paintings became “healthier (or plumper) beauties” with fuller bodies, as Zhang himself described it. On one hand, Zhang’s 1946 Mountain Spirit, again, epitomizes the artist’s persistent efforts to “restore” his perceived “High Tang” painting style in the 1940s. On the other hand, Zhang shared in common with Xu Beihong an understanding of the ethnically and culturally exotic qualities of this subject. Portraying the Mountain Spirit as an almost-naked young woman, both Xu and Zhang emphasized the cultural and ethnic attributes of this subject as a shamanic deity worshipped by the early Chu people, who were thus understood as a group of ancient “southern barbarians.”

These female images by Xu and Zhang, in their embodiment of aesthetic qualities that are exotic and erotic, resonate with some mythological readings of Chuci that emerged after the May Fourth Movement. Liang Qichao’s Qu Yuan yanjiu 屈原研究 (Studies on Qu Yuan; published November 3, 1922) interpreted the Mountain Spirit as a shamanistic deity conventionally worshiped in the folkloric rituals of the people of the Chu Kingdom, who were seen as a manyi

497 According to Zeng Keduan’s record of Zhang Daqian’s talk, based on his own experiences Zhang believed that the Dunhuang murals had ten significant influences on modern Chinese painting, among them “the second is that lines are paid more attention,” and “the seventh is that the figures of women become healthier beauties.” See Zhang Daqian, Zeng Keduan, “Tan Dunhuang bihua (On the Dunhuang murals),” reproduced in Dongfang Zaobao (Eastern Morning Newspaper), January 13, 2014.
minzu 蠻夷民族 (barbarian ethnic group) inhabiting the southern marginal region of the zhongyuan (Central Plains) in the Bronze Age, the early phase of China’s “national” history. The Chu, one of the vassal states of the early Zhou (that is the Western Zhou) dynasty, was the southern mountainous area of the Central Plains in Bronze Age China proper. It later became one of the increasingly independent “kingdoms” competing with each other to claim stronger political powers beginning in the Spring and Autumn Annals period through the Warring States periods (ca. 475 BC–221 BC). In Liang’s view, the poetry of the Chuci could represent a regular pattern of the “history of civilization/culture” of a Han Chinese nation with the so-called huaxia minzu 華夏民族 allegedly inherited from the legendary Huang Emperor as its ethnic-cultural origin. He saw the poetry of Chuci as a result of the history of hanhua in the Pre-Qin time—that is, the history of the sinicization of the “barbarians” on the marginal regions to the zhongyuan or Central Plains where the “Han Chinese nation” supposedly originated. “In my observation,” Liang wrote, “every time, after a process of [Han] assimilation, the literary world of our huaxia minzu [Han Chinese nation] would blossom as a result. During the early years of the Spring and Autumn Annals period, the Chu Kingdom was purely barbarian; after the middle of the Spring and Autumn Annals period, [the Chu] was increasingly assimilated into the zhu’xia 諸夏 (the Han Chinese political and cultural domain).”

In Liang’s historical framework of “Chinese civilization,” only the Han Chinese culture that developed in the Central Plains of northeastern China—and not the other cultures that were
located and developed on the borders of the Central Plains—could represent the cultural essence of the civilization of *zhonghua minzu* or the “Chinese nation.” A southern kingdom powerful enough to meddle with its northern neighbors by the beginning of the sixth century BC., the Chu was the seventh kingdom beyond the southern limits of the old Shang and Zhou empires. The Chu was gradually accepted as an equal and sometimes as an ally by the other six states (or rather, independent kingdoms during the Warring States periods). The time of Qu Yuan’s exile by the Huai King of Chu, according to Wang Yi, was the period when he composed the poems collected in *The Songs of the South*. This was the moment, in the fourth century BC, when the Chu Kingdom was at the peak of its greatness; and yet, as the sole southern rival of the Qin Kingdom, the Chu finally became the last kingdom eliminated by the Qin in the latter part of the following century. According to this criterion of classifying and ordering “civilized” v.s. “barbarian” cultures, the Chu culture would be seen as “originally barbarian” and then assimilated by the civilization of the Han “Chinese nation,” thus becoming “civilized” in the middle of the Spring and Autumn Annals period.

In the early twentieth century, in parallel to the nation-state building project of Republican China, *minzushi* 民族史 or “ethnic historical studies” on “ancient Chinese ethnicities” emerged as a modern discipline dealing with the “ethnic components” of the “national history” of China. For instance, historian Lv Simian 呂思勉 (1884–1957) published *Zhongguo minzu shi* 中國民族史 (History of Chinese Ethnicities) in the late 1930s and
Zhonghua minzu yanjin shi 中華民族演進史 (History of the Evolution of Chinese Nation) in the 1940s. In the former book, drawing on the perspectives and methods of European sinology, 
Lv provided a systematic analysis of the historical relationships among “China’s multiple ancient ethnicities,” which he divided into twelve groups, the first as “Han” and the seventh as “Miao.”

The latter of these was intended to popularize among wartime Republican Chinese audiences a grand historical narrative of the origin and formation of the Zhonghua minzu 中華民族 or “Chinese nation” by tracing the “ancient multiethnic exchanges and assimilation” in the past and the “foreign imperialist attacks” to the “Chinese nation” since the late imperial period. By so doing, Lv intended to call his readers’ attention to questions about the building of the Chinese nation in the twentieth century, with the goal of the future “revival” of China. Within this framework of writing the “national history” of China, the specific historical narrative of the Chu as a southern kingdom of “ancient ethnicity” and its relationship with the Zhou in the Central Plains in the Pre-Qin period had long been debated. According to the first-century official-historian Ban Gu 班固 (32–92) in the Eastern Han court, who composed the canonical history of the Han dynasty as well as a brief survey of the history of the Chu, the early Chu people were “barbarians” who “believed in the power of shamans and spirits and who are much addicted to lewd religious rites.” The Eastern Han official-historical writing implied that before the Spring and Autumn Annals period, when the sinicizing process of the Chu happened, the

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498 Lv Simian, Zhongguo minzu shi (History of Chinese Ethnicities) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008).
native Chu culture was much less “civilized” than that of the other states of the Eastern Zhou in the northern Central Plains, where the *huaxia* 華夏 (Han Chinese civilization) allegedly originated. That the native Chu people’s belief in spirits was relationally “barbarian”—that is, as “uncivilized” in comparison with the Han civilization—and that they were fond of shamanism and “lewd rites” were ideas that were already notorious when the *Chuci* poems were being written, and they would remain so for centuries afterward. Suppression of shamans and destruction of their holy places were part of the “civilizing” policy vigorously perpetrated by Confucian administrators in this area even in the early years of the Tang dynasty (618–907).\(^500\)

No matter whether shamanism was more an outlandish regional aberration or *de facto* the Old Religion of China, it had been dethroned since the Han dynasty when Confucianism became a state orthodoxy. Shamanism was driven into the countryside where it fared much as paganism did in Christian Europe.\(^501\)

Based on early textual evidence composed in the classical Han Chinese language, Liang Qichao’s conclusion about the relation between the *Chuci* and the “history of Chinese civilization and culture” was that,

> Qu Yuan was born about 250 years after the completion of the [Chinese] assimilation [of the Chu]. The Chu people at his time could be seen as a newly emergent member of the *zhonghua minzu* 中華民族 (Chinese nation), just like the generation of the New Youth [in the May Fourth New Culture Movement] who have just become


adults in a society. Earlier, in the past [before they were Sinicized],
the Chu people as a [barbarian] group believed in Shamanic Spirits
the most. So, there were many mysterious conceptions and unrealistic
ideas [in the Chu culture], as the [primitive] Chu people were like
children who love fictional fairy tales. When the [primitive] culture
of the Chu made contact with the realistic and ethical culture of
zhongyuans jiuminz u 中原舊民 族 (the older ethnicity [of the
Chinese nation] that originated in the Central Plains), naturally new
things would happen [in the contact zone]. Literature [of the Chu] at
the time could represent the new thing; moreover, literature also
represents the position of the Chu in the history of civilization/culture
[of the Chinese nation] during that period. As for Qu Yuan [the
alleged author of the poems compiled in the Chuci]—since he was a
nobleman [of the Chu royal family], it is natural that he could fully
understand and assimilate the newly imported culture from the
Central Plains.502

By “the old ethnicity that originated in the Central Plains,” Liang was referring to the Han
Chinese people. The historical notion of a “Chinese nation” as culturally Han Chinese with its
origin in the Central Plains was clearly emphasized.

Following the path of Liang as a pioneer in “New Historiography,” Gu Jiegang, a leading
Chinese historian of the May Fourth generation, founded the journal Gushi bian 古史辯 and
began leading the influential movement of the “Doubters of Antiquity” in the 1920s. Impacted by
his teacher Hu Shi at Peking University, Gu went a step further than Liang; a main goal of Gu
and some other historians involved in this movement—including IHP Director Fu Sinian—was
to demonstrate in detail the mythic nature of much of the early Chinese historical tradition
through a sophisticated elucidation of the ideological character of such myths. On one hand,

502 Liang Qichao, “Qu Yuan yanjiu (Studies on Qu Yuan),” originally a manuscript for Liang’s talk given in the
wenzhe xuehui at the Dongnan University in November 3, 1922; included in Liang Qichao, Yinbingshi wenji
these historians attempted to deconstruct the canonical tradition by dismantling the meta-narrative of early Chinese historiography, exposing the myths behind the origin of Chinese civilization, and denying the validity and historicity of much of the classical canon. On the other hand, their new historical scholarship constitutes a creative force in constructing a new myth about the “national” history of China.⁵⁰³ In a collective attempt to create a modern history of the Chinese nation that would meet the Euro-American standards of civilization, the Chinese scholars desired “to create a viable Chinese mythology, one that could stand side-by-side with the great mythic traditions of the Greeks and Romans on the stage of world history.”⁵⁰⁴ Therefore, beginning in the Republican era, Chinese literati attempted to articulate a coherent Chinese mythology, primarily based on ancient texts but eventually to some extent drawing from ethnographic materials and folklore as well, and all much beholden to European examples such as Greek and Norse mythology.⁵⁰⁵

From the three Republican Chinese artists’ paintings of the “Mountain Spirit,” one can see that, in terms of iconography, both Xu Beihong and Zhang Daqian emphasized the primitive—defined as “pre-sinicized” from a Han Chinese perspective—characteristics of the subject by depicting her as a “shamanic” goddess from the “barbaric” rituals of the folk customs of the Chu, a southern “barbaric ethnicity.” To their audiences, in particular, the iconographic

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 680.
⁵⁰⁵ Robin McNeal, “Constructing Myth in Modern China,” 679-704.
attributes of their female images with this theme would resonate strongly with the burgeoning mythological reading of the *Chuci* in Republican China.

In the wake of the May Fourth New Culture Movement, in the early 1920s influential enlightening intellectuals including not only Liang Qichao but also Hu Shi reinterpreted *Chuci* as “the earliest text of Chinese literature,” a “New Literature” created by a generation of “New Youth” who newly emerged as members of the Han Chinese nation “just like the generation of the New Youth [in the May Fourth New Culture Movement] who have just become adults in a society.” The Chu culture of the mid-Spring and Autumn Annuals period and Warring States period, was imagined as “originally primitive” and yet being in the process of Sinicization. In this sense, the poetry of *Chuci* was conceptualized as an epitome of a vigorous “barbaric civilization” derived from the Han Chinese nation, and thus desired by the Republican Han Chinese intellectuals in order to rejuvenate modern Chinese culture – just like the aforementioned “the Han and the Tang” in modern Chinese intellectual discourse. Accordingly, the lyrical protagonists in the *Chuci* received interpretations from the perspective of European-inflected mythology, with the Mountain Spirit attracting special attention. According to the textual description of the song, this subject is clad in “a coat of fig-leaves with a rabbit-floss girdle,” a “cloak of stone-orchids” and a “belt of asarum.” “Driving tawny leopards, leading the striped lynxes,” according to the literary narrative, the subject takes a difficult, perilous path to meet a lover but is late for the tryst. In the late 1920s, the pioneering Chinese mythologist Su Xuelin 蘇
Su Xuelin (1897–1999) argued that “the ‘Mountain Spirit’ [in the Nine Songs] and the ‘Dionysus’ in ancient Greek [mythology] have many similarities.” Drawing from French Orientalist Albert Etienne Jean Baptiste Terrien de Lacouperie (1844–94), who had been promoting the theory of “the Babylonian origin of all civilizations” since the late nineteenth century, Su’s comparative framework took the texts of the Chuci as having mediated certain elements of ancient Western culture. Lacouperie’s theory argued that Western and Eastern civilizations shared the same origin—that is, ancient Babylonian civilization. In the early years of Republican China, this theory of the “Western origin as the single origin of the World civilization” was influential among Chinese scholars in the modern academic disciplines of mythology, ethnography, and folklore that had been imported from Euro-American countries. In Su’s reading of this theme in comparison with Greek mythology, the image of “Mountain Spirit” was reinterpreted as a Chinese translation of the image of Dionysus, because, according to her etymological analysis, “the first half the name ‘Dionysus’—‘Dio’—means ‘deity,’ whereas the latter half of the name—‘-nysus’—means ‘governing the mountain.’ Therefore, the name [Dionysus] refers to

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506 Su Xuelin, “Chuci jiu ge’ yu zhongguo gudai heshen jidian de guanxi (The relation between the Nine Songs in Chuci and the rituals worshipping River Gods in ancient China,” in Xiandai pinglun (Modern Review), Vol. 8, no. 204-206(1928).

507 Albert Etienne Jean Baptiste Terrien de Lacouperie argued in Western Origin of the Early Chinese Civilization, from 2300 B.C. to 200 A.D. (London, 1894) that the legendary Emperor Huang, as the earliest ancestor of the Han Chinese people, originally migrated to the Central Plains from Babylon. See detailed introduction of this racial historical theory of the “western origin” in Jiang Zhiyou, Zhongguo renzhong kao (Research on Chinese Race) (Shanghai: Shanghai guangzhi shuju, 1906); also see Lin Huixiang, Zhongguo minzu shi (History of Chinese Ethnicities), Vol. 1 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936), 50-57.
‘the deity governing the mountain.” Wen Yiduo’s 1940 essay “How to Read the Nine Songs” reveals the important influence of Su Xuelin’s theory on Chinese mythology in the Republican period. In Wen’s opinion,

Ms. Su Xuelin’s reading of the motifs of the Nine Songs as the “love affair between human and deity” is the most significant view in modern studies on the Nine Songs because she provided the [primitive] religious background for most of the contents of the eight chapters. What my research attempts to supplement [in her work] is that the motifs regarding a “love affair between human and deity” were only the religious background but not the content of the eight chapters themselves. In other ords, the songs in the eight chapters [should be read as the] performance of the stories of the “love affairs between human and deity,” rather than the religious activities of the “love affairs between human and deity” in reality.

Wen’s reading of the “religious background” of the Nine Songs intended to differentiate “the Nine Songs as mythology [songs of worship in the shamanic rituals of the Chu Kingdom]” from “the Nine Songs in Chuci.” In his opinion, the “Nine Songs as mythology” should be differentiated from the “poems” of the “Nine Songs in the Chuci.” He explained: “as for the Nine Songs as mythology, their forms rigidly stick to the classical principles in which the shamans performed the ritual songs for worshipping deities during the period of primitive society, whereas their contents were developed in the opposite direction into the didactic ‘Songs of Nine Virtues’ [as court music in the Zhou Dynasty recorded in the Confucian Classics such as The Spring and Autumn Annals]. [In contrast,] as for the Nine Songs in Chuci, their forms almost

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508 Su Xuelin, “Chuci jiuge’ yu zhongguo gudai heshen jidian de guanxi (The relation between the Nine Songs in Chuci and the rituals worshipping River Gods in ancient China),” in Xiandai pinglun (Modern Review), Vol. 8, no. 204-206(1928).
entirely abandoned the old patterns; whereas their contents, which still keep the original passionate impulse, were refined by culture and sublimed into poetry.”

In terms of iconography, Fu’s 1940s female figuration of “Mountain Spirit” is distinguished from all the other models of visualizing the subject analyzed above. Earlier, in the late Qing period, some philologists had argued that the prototype of this subject in the *Chuci* was the Lady of Gao-tang—that is, the “Lady Yao,” the Goddess of the Shaman Mountain (Wu-shan巫山) above the Yangtze gorges near the eastern border of Sichuan. The name of “Lady Yao” had appeared in some classic texts of myths and mythic geography of High Antiquity, including *Shan Hai Jing* (Classics of Mountains and Seas). In the *Ode of Gao-tang* (Gao-tang fu 高唐赋), traditionally attributed to Chu poet Song Yu (298 BC–222 BC) in the Warring States period, the same goddess offered herself to the Xiang King of Chu (Chuxiang-wang 楚襄王, d. 263 BC). Qing scholar Gu Chengtian considered the “Mountain Spirit” in *Chuci* to be the “Lady Yao” in ancient mythology. Another Qing classicist Wang Kaiyun (1833-1916) argued that since “the ‘Spirit’ (as a ‘ghost-like’ supernatural being) referred to the early ancestor [of the Chu kingdom] while the ‘Mountain’ was an image of the king,” so this subject should have been a song “worshipping the kingly ancestor of Chu who [as the mother of the ancestral king] might have

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509 Wen Yiduo, “‘Zenyang du chuci (How to read Nine Songs),’” in *Guowen Yuekan* (Chinese Monthly), January 16, 1941, Vol. 1, no. 5.
510 As a geographical and cultural account of pre-Qin China as well as a collection of Chinese mythology, various versions of the *Shan Hai Jing* was assumed to have existed since the fourth century B.C. But its present form was reached in the early Han Dynasty. Leo Bagrow, R. & A. Skelton, *History of Cartography* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 204; John Lust, *Chinese Popular Prints* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 301.
had no shrine.” Synthesizing the previous scholarship, Sun Zuoyun argued in the mid-1930s that, “the ‘Spirit’ in ‘Mountain Spirit’ originally was a term used to refer ‘early ancestor.’ This is because the name ‘Mountain Spirit’ referred to the deceased mother of the Chu king, while the deceased mother [of the Chu king] could only be referred as ‘Spirit’ according to the ritual norms.” However, the female subject depicted in Fu’s 1946 painting seems not have been executed as an imaginative “portrait” of the shamanistic goddess “Lady Yao” either.

Different from both the earlier painters and his contemporaries, Fu emphasized the culturally Han Chinese attributes of this subject by appropriating from the female archetype traditionally attributed to the legendary Eastern Jin artist Gu Kaizhi, an eccentric litterateur recorded in the Book of Jin Dynasty. In particular, Fu drew from the Admonitions of the Instructress to Court Ladies (the Admonitions scoll hereafter) (Fig. 3.15), a hand scroll that has been in the collection of the British Museum since the first years of the twentieth century, in his depiction of his favorite subjects from the Chuci—not only the “Lady of the Xiang River” but also the “Mountain Spirit.” Fu’s 1943 Lady of the Xiang River (Fig. 3.1) seems to be the singular case in which Fu indicated in his inscription that he directly modeled the fashion style of the figure of the Lady of the Xiang River in this painting on the female archetype of the Admonitions scroll. Nevertheless, the 1943 inscription does not imply that Fu did not appropriate from the

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512 See Wang Kaityun, Chuci shi (Annotations of Chuci) (Shanghai: Guangwen shuju, 1886).
513 Sun Zuoyun, “Jiuge shangui kao (Research on the Mountain Spirit in the Nine Songs)” (1936) in Qinghua xuebao (Journal of Tsinghua University), Vol. 11, no.4. Sun’s research was built on Wen Yiduo’s argument made in “Gao-tang shenm v chuanshuo fenxi (Analysis of the Legend of the Lady of Gao-tang).” In Wen’s opinion, the “gaomei” worshipped by various ancient Chinese ethnicities were the female ancestors of these ethnicities as, according to textual evidences, the spirits of these female ancestors were believed to be residing on mountain peaks.
Admonitions scroll when he painted other female figures drawn from the Chuci around the same period.

In Fu’s 1946 Mountain Spirit, his favorite piece among the multiple paintings he made of this subject during this period, the standing posture and the slender body type of the female figure, as well as the brushstrokes executed in depicting the contour lines of the trailing gown, all allude to the female archetype of the court ladies depicted in the Admonitions scroll. Fu’s limited color scheme for tinting the female clothing—especially the vermilion for the fluttering ribbon—recalls the palette applied in coloring the Han court costume of the ladies depicted in the Admonitions scroll. Moreover, the posture of the figure, depicted as stepping with light grace indicated by the gentle ripple of her garment’s long train and fluttering silk scarves, seems to have been modeled on the moving female bodies of two ladies in the court of the Eastern Han dynasty portrayed in scenes 4 and 5 of the Admonitions scroll (Fig. 3.15) (Fig. 3.16). By quoting from what Fu perceived as Gu Kaizhi’s model, the iconographic attributes of Fu’s Mountain Spirit (1946) recall early Republican Chinese readings of the Han Chinese civilization, especially Liang Qichao’s Studies on Qu Yuan (1921). The stylistic and aesthetic references that Fu made in his 1946 painting epitomizes his celebration of the process of “civilizing”—that is, “Sinicizing”—and the aesthetics born as a result of the Han cultural assimilation of the southern “barbarian ethnicities” narrated in the Han-centric nationalist version of Chinese history. That is to say, the cultural past of “China” to be evoked in Fu’s female figure painting is Han-centered.
As Fu Yiyao recalled, every time that her father drew from classical poems or historical stories for his paintings, he tried to make sure that the iconography of the figures he depicted corresponded to the norms of the historical periods when the poems were composed or the stories happened. However, instead of portraying “Mountain Spirit” as a primitive goddess in a shamanistic religion, as Fu Yiyao describes it, the female figure is depicted as if she has *linxia zhifeng* 林下之風 or “the behavior in the style of [the Seven Worthies] beneath the [Bamboo] Grove [in the Eastern Jin dynasty].”

*Linxia zhifeng* is an idiom quoted from the chapter “Worthy Beauties” in *Shi Shuo Xin Yu* (A New Account of Tales of the World), a collection of old stories depicting persons in the Jin dynasty edited by the royal clansman Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444) of the Liu-Song periods during the time of Southern dynasties. It was conventionally used to describe women who shared characteristics with the Lady Wang of the noble Wang family in the Jin dynasty. In contrast to another noble family woman who was described as the “full flowering of wifely virtue,” Lady Wang was respected as a woman whose “spirit and feelings are relaxed and sunny.” By depicting the elongated shape and standing manner of the female body, Fu characterizes his female subject as a beautiful person with heroic spirit beyond feminine beauty.

The High Antiquity model of Gu Kaizhi’s female figuration, as exemplified in the *Admonitions* Scroll attributed to the legendary Eastern Jin artist, is different from some other

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514 Fu Yiyao’s retelling of Fu Baoshi’s words; recorded in my interview with Fu Yiyao in Beijing in 2013.
models that emerged in later periods, including the paintings of sensuous and delicate court ladies made in the Tang court and some of the literati-professional Ming paintings of courtesans. In the Ming literati-professional paintings, such as Tang Yin 唐寅(1470-1532)’s *Tao Gu Presenting a Lyric to Qin Ruolan* 陶穀贈詞圖 (Fig. 3.17), the sensuous female body of a courtesan does not occupy the dominant space in the pictorial space. The courtesan’s face and clothes are accented as brightly white, emphasizing her position as a tender entertainer accompanying her male client and an exotic plaything objectified for male gaze. In contrast to these models of visualizing the female body, which emerged during the later periods of imperial China, Fu considered it to be more suitable to draw the female archetype from the *Admonitions* scroll in order to depict the literary imageries of the *Chuci*. This pictorial solution suggests a link between Fu’s archaistic image of “Mountain Spirit” and the classical trope of *xiangzao meiren* 香草美人 or “fragrant herbs and beautiful persons” in the Confucian hermeneutic tradition of reading the *Chuci*, as established in the Han dynasty.

In Fu’s *Mountain Spirit* (1946), besides Gu Kaizhi’s model appropriated for female figure, various visual elements were quoted from dynastic styles and aesthetics alluding to the Han Chinese cultural patrimony. Constituting a cultural symbol of the Han Chinese civilization, these visual elements include not only painterly and calligraphic period styles but also pictorial motifs traced from newly discovered or excavated archaeological materials in Republican China. A scholar-painter trained in the field of Chinese art history in the early 1930s in Japan, Fu
translated and published Japanese scholarship on topics such as “Tomb Art of the Han, Wei, and the Six Dynasties” in 1936 and 1937, which explains his mastery in appropriating related archaic motifs and patterns to serve the current project. Except for the central female figure’s face, the texture executed by Fu’s signature brushstrokes shares the visual efficacy of jinshi qi with antiquarian rubbings made from the engraved inscription on ancient stone-carved patterns on tomb monuments (especially those of the Han dynasty and the period preceding it). Moreover, to the lower right horizontal edge, the two traditional Han Chinese characters “shangui 山鬼 (Mountain Spirit)” are inscribed in a comparatively larger size than the inscription of the original text of the song in the style of Chinese calligraphy known as zhuanshu 篆書 (seal script). Zhuanshu as an early Chinese calligraphic style evolved originally out of the Western Zhou dynasty, gaining in popularity later in the Qin Kingdom during the Warring States period, and finally had its name coined in the Han dynasty. With their intrinsic qualities of specific Han Chinese learning, these specific painting and calligraphic styles were defined as cultural heritage. These appropriated visual elements work together to define the artist’s perception of the “national character” of “Chinese painting.” All these legible citations from the past were intended to evoke a strong sense of national pride for a culturally specific “Chinese civilization.” In his archaistic painting of the supposedly “southern barbarian” mythological subject, Fu visually coded his perceived national history of the Han Chinese culture which expanded from

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515 Ye Zonghao, *Fu Baoshi nianpu* (Chronology of Fu Baoshi’s biography) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2004), 34, 35.
the Central Plains to its borders where marginalized, “barbaric” cultural groups were located.

3.2. Archaistic Female Figure Painting as History Painting of National Spirit

Fu Baoshi’s archaistic figure paintings appropriating images from the Admonitions scroll were created in parallel to his art historiography concentrating on Gu Kaizhi in the 1930s and the 1940s. In the preface for his solo exhibition in 1942, Fu categorized the themes of his paintings into four kinds: “first, drawing from nature; second, communicating poetic vision with painting; third, drawing from historical stories; fourth, imitating the ancient artists.” Particularly, he explained that the third category (historical stories) constituted the main axis of his figure painting during this period. His paintings made during the 1940s, as he pointed out to his audiences further, mainly “drew on themes from two periods”—that is, the periods of “the Eastern Jin” and “the Ming-Qing transition.”

His 1940s paintings, in Fu’s terms, could be understood as the “visualization” of his historiography of Chinese painting, which “contain strong implications of [Chinese art] history.” His 1943 painting Lady of the Xiang River and 1946 painting Mountain Spirit are both drawn from the Chuci, meaning that they might easily fall into Fu’s second category (poetic vision). In this section, however, I study Fu’s conceptions of China’s “national spirit” embodied in “national form” as exemplified in his Chinese art historiography and his archaistic female figure painting drawn from the Chuci. Appropriating

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516 Fu Baoshi, “Renwu chongqing huazhan zixu (Preface for the 1942 exhibition of my paintings),” September 22, 1942, published serially on the supplements of Shishi xinbao on October 8, 12, and 20, 1942.
517 Ibid.
selected archaistic models, these paintings could constitute a specific kind of history painting through which the artist communicates to Chinese audiences a vision of wartime China endowed with both a celebration of “national spirit” and a critique of sociopolitical conditions.

Even though the tradition of visualizing the themes of the Nine Songs may have begun no earlier than the Northern Song dynasty, it is clear that Fu chose to draw the female archetype for his image of “Mountain Spirit” from the Admonitions scroll collected in the British Museum, which had been traditionally attributed to the Eastern Jin legendary artist Gu Kaizhi. Fu’s preference for a pre-Song, archaistic model epitomizes a strong interest in tracing the roots of “Chinese painting” back to medieval China. One might also argue that this figure’s physiognomy—especially her round face—are rendered by incorporating the elements from certain Tang court paintings, such as Court Ladies Wearing Flowered Headdresses by Zhou Fang 周昉 (ca. eighth–early ninth century) (Fig. 3.18). Fu’s art historiography in 1940 indicates that he learned that in the 1930s the Japanese government assigned Miki Fukui 福井利吉郎 (1886–1972), a scholar at Northeastern University in the Japanese colonial puppet state of Manchukuo, to do research on the Admonitions scroll in London’s British Museum. The result of Fukui’s authentication of this work was that it might have been “a copy made no later than the middle of the Tang dynasty.”\textsuperscript{518} With the museum’s agreement, Fukui reproduced the work based on the size and colors of the original and brought it back to Japan. Fu’s knowledge about

\textsuperscript{518} Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo gudai shanshuihua shi de yanjiu (Studies on the history of ancient Chinese landscape painting)” (1940), reprinted in Fu Baoshi, \textit{Fu Baoshi meishu wenji}, 294.
the possibility that the *Admonitions* scroll collected in the British Museum might have been a copy made in the Tang dynasty explains why he might base the technical solution for his female figuration upon the *Admonitions* scroll—a proto-model from Gu Kaizhi—as well as upon certain Tang dynasty female figure paintings. That is to say, even though in his wartime art historical writings he claimed that the *Admonitions* scroll in the British Museum was more than 1500 years old, in his wartime practices of painting he was also open to the possibility that it might have been a Tang copy.

One might argue that there are also some similarities between the female physiognomy and makeup style in Fu’s 1946 painting and that of some female beauties featured in modern *nihonga* painting made in Taishō Japan, such as Kawasaki Shōko 川崎小虎 (1886–1977)’s *Densetsu chūjō hime* 伝説中将姫 exhibited in Teikoku Bijutsuin Tenrankai (Imperial Japanese Art Exhibition) in 1920 (Fig. 3.19). A stylistic feature of Kawasaki’s paintings is his rendering of *hikime kagibana* 引目鉤鼻 (slit eyes and hook nose) of the female beauties, which epitomizes his training in this traditional method of Japanese painting from the Heian period through the Kamakura period, most notably in *yamata-e e-maki* 大和絵絵巻 such as *Genji Monogatari E-maki* 源氏物語絵巻 (Illustrated hand scrol of The Tale of Genji) (c. 1120-1140). (Fig. 3.20) Long perceived as a native tradition of Japanese painting, *hikime kagibana*’s influence can be traced up to the Edo period *ukiyo-e* 浮世絵 as well.519 This style does not allow a full-frontal

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view of the face, rather using only two main viewpoints to depict faces; it would have been suitable for rendering the face of the female figure in Fu’s 1946 painting in which she is depicted from an oblique angle of about thirty degrees from the front. I argue, nevertheless, that the Japanese connection is comparatively weak. Importantly, Fu’s rendering of the elongated body type and the straight standing, heroic posture of the Mountain Spirit fundamentally differentiate his female figuration from the overtly feminine beauty depicted in modern bijinga 美人画 (Japanese paintings of beautiful women).

From 1935 to 1941, Fu composed a manuscript entitled “Chinese Art History: From High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties” for a series of lectures given in the Department of Art at the NCU when he taught the course there on Chinese art history. Besides the introduction, the first four chapters discuss the development of artwork in various mediums from the “High Antiquity” (from the Pre-Qin periods of the Three Dynasties—Xia, Shang, and Zhou—to the end of the Warring States period), the Qin dynasty, the Han dynasty, and the period of the Three Kingdoms, respectively. Then, Chapter 5 focuses on the paintings and calligraphic works from the Six Dynasties (420—589) to the Sui dynasty (before the Tang). In 1938, shortly after the official outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, Fu went on his journey to Wuhan, where he served as Guo’s secretary. He wrote the rest of this chapter, focusing on the Northern and Southern dynasties and the Sui dynasty, from late 1939 to 1941 when he was teaching Chinese art history at the NCU again, upon Lv Sibai’s invitation. As exemplified in this
manuscript, Fu’s way of conceptualizing Gu Kaizhi’s model recalls his Japanese teacher Kinbrara Seigo and some other Japanese scholars in the early twentieth century – such as Ōmura Seigai who had argued in the 1920s that wenrenhua (literati painting) as a culturally specific aesthetic paradigm was originated in the period of transition from Eastern Jin to the Southern Dynasties. In the section “Painting of the Jin Dynasty,” completed in the late 1930s and drawing upon Japanese scholarship, Fu argued that the Eastern Jin legendary artist Gu Kaizhi’s paintings and his theories on painting could fundamentally “explain what Chinese painting was about” – that is, they should be viewed as the epitome of a distinctively “Chinese” paradigm of painting.\footnote{Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo meishu shi: shanggu zhi liuchao (Chinese Art History: From High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties),” in Fu Baoshi meishu wenji xubian (Sequel of the Collection of Fu Baoshi’s Essays on Art), ed., Ye Zonghao (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2014), 78.}

In this section, particularly, Fu wrote in length about the Admonitions scroll “collected in the British Museum.”\footnote{Ibid.} He not only called the Admonitions scroll a “precious national treasure,” but also provided the reasons in detail for his special emphasis on the historical and cultural significance of Gu Kaizhi’s paintings and art theories. Originally an object in the Qing imperial collection, this specific painting was lost to foreign hands no later than 1900 during the imperialist plundering of late Qing imperial palaces and gardens as an aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion. No later than 1904, it had been bought by and taken into the possession of the British Museum. “How sad it is,” Fu lamented, “that today we can not see the light colors applied in the
composition of the authentic piece which is more than a thousand and five hundred years old!”

In fact, from the year in which Fu was born in the late Qing period through the end of the Republican period in 1949, he never visited the British Museum to view this hand scroll in person. Methodologically, Fu’s study of this painting was based on secondhand experiences of viewing the printed reproduction of the painting. In this sense, his approach to studying the painting is different from the more “empirical” archaeological and ethnographic approaches to material culture in situ as in the case of Pang Xunqin or Zhang Daqian. Comparatively, Pang and Zhang’s ways of working with material culture would be perceived as more “scientific” approaches—and thus more “authentic”—in the context of Republican Chinese academia. Perhaps it was in considering the possible challenges to the authenticity of his study of this painting, then, that Fu argued that all his contemporary Chinese audiences would realize that the “composition and brushworks applied” in this painting were “exceptionally dignified” upon viewing the “photocopy reproductions” of it. Fu’s wording here reads so ambiguous that it would have been hard for his wartime Chinese audiences to tell whether he viewed this painting in person in the British Museum.

It is likely that in the first half of the twentieth century Fu did not get access to the original piece of this scroll but rather to the printed reproductions of it in Japan or China. Shortly

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522 Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo meishu shi: shanggu zhi liuchao (Chinese Art History: From High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties),” in Fu Baoshi meishu wenji xubian, 75-80. See Li Song, “Zuihou zhai de guozi yao chengshu xie – fangwen fubaoshi bilu,” in Zhongguohua yanjiu (Studies on Chinese Painting), no. 8, “Sepochial issue of Fu Baoshi studies” (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1944), 256.

523 Ibid.
after this scroll was purchased by the British Museum, both woodblock reproductions and scholarly publications with multiple photographic reproductions of some sections of this painting started to circulate in both Japan and China. The second volume of Stephen W. Bushell’s *Chinese Art*, published in London in 1906 and translated into Chinese shortly after, included reproduced images of some sections of the *Admonitions* scroll. No later than 1908, only about four years after the painting joined the collection in the British Museum, the *Journal of National Essence* (*Guocui xuebao* 國粹學報), the most important vehicle for late-Qing intellectual discussion of (and frequently prescription for) Chinese culture and history, also published images of two paintings in the possession of the British Museum. One of these paintings was the *Admonitions* scroll, with the journal featuring only the last section depicting the instructress’s act of writing admonitions for court ladies (Fig. 3.21). The image of the hand scroll printed in this journal, as the art historian Wang Cheng-hua argues, might have been reproduced from Bushell’s book. After the painting was purchased by the British Museum, photographic reproductions of it appeared in some Japanese publications with which Fu was familiar, such as Ise Senichiro’s *Shina no Kaiga* 支那の絵画 (Chinese painting), published in 1922. It is sure, moreover, that Fu viewed the four illustrations of the *Admonitions* scroll compiled and published in the fourth

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volume of the *Sekai bijutsu zenshū* 世界美術全集 (World Art Collection).

Informed by his training in Chinese art history under Kinbara Seigo in Japan, as well as Japanese scholarship of the period, Fu considered the *Admonitions* scroll to be not only the “earliest,” “extant work by Gu Kaizhi from around the late fourth to the early fifth century” but also, more importantly, an epitome of the “yuanshi chuxing 原始雏型 (primitive schema) of our [China’s] national form” and the “earlist model” of a “distinctive national form.” Fu wrote that, “Gu Kaizhi’s time was the middle of the fourth century. There is no other East Asian painter as ancient as him whose theories and paintings are both extant in our time. Compared to him, there was no earlier, self-conscious theory on the conceptions and learning of Chinese painting.” Fu went a step further, arguing that, “of all the fourth-century painters of all the guozu 國族 (nations) throughout the world, Gu Kaizhi’s paintings and painting theories should be seen as the most sophisticated and the earliest.” Fu was confident about this argument, so much so that he claimed that “there might be no space left for debate.”

Today we know, of course, that this hand scroll should be a post-sixth-century copy that was attributed to Gu Kaizhi during the late imperial period, especially in the late Ming and

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526 In his essay “Zhongguo gudai shanshuihua shi de yanjiu (Studies on the history of ancient Chinese landscape painting)” (1940), Fu mentioned that the illustrations no. 94-97 in the fourth volume of *Sekai bijutsu zenshū* (World Art Collection), Vol. 4, were the reproduced images of the *Admonitions* Scroll. Fu Baoshi, *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji, 294.*

Fukui’s authentication in the 1930s had made the argument that this painting likely was a copy made in the middle Tang period. After all, no medieval Chinese document has been discovered to prove that Gu Kaizhi ever made a painting entitled *Admonitions of the Instructress to Court Ladies*. Zhang Yanyuan’s treatise, which evaluated Gu Kaizhi’s painting as the epitome of the superior art style of “High Antiquity,” was composed during the Tang period and thus also postdates the Eastern Jin dynasty (in which legendary Gu Kaizhi lived). Furthermore, Zhang’s treatise, like most ancient Chinese treatises on Chinese painting and calligraphy, was not composed for the purposes of dating or authenticating certain earlier paintings but for appreciating them aesthetically with specific cultural concepts and social values. Moreover, no passage in Zhang’s treatise mentions the *Admonitions* scroll. Nevertheless, a contextualized examination of Fu’s conception of Chinese painting and the Chinese nation as exemplified in his art historiography and painted appropriation of Gu Kaizhi during the 1930s and 1940s will prove key to understanding how the artist engaged with the national causes of salvation and revolution in the cultural realm of wartime China.

Fu’s knowledge about the British *Admonitions* scroll as an original work by Gu Kaizhi was drawn not only from late imperial literati treatises but also the Japanese art historian Seiichi Taki 濱精一 (1873–1945), the first chair of the Department of Art History at the Imperial...

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University of Tokyo (the first art history department established at a Japanese university) and the editor in chief of Japan’s *Kokka* 國華 magazine. In March and June of 1911, Seiichi published two articles in *Kokka* about two paintings attributed to Gu Kaizhi—the *Admonitions* scroll and the “Illustration of the Poem of Lo-shen.”

Drawing from the information provided by Seiichi, Fu traced the social history of the *Admonitions* scroll in collections from the eighth century (the pre-eighth-century ownership history of this painting is unknown) to the beginning of the twentieth century when it was discovered in the Qing imperial palace (the Forbidden City) and looted by the British imperialist army as it invaded Beijing during the Siege of the International Legations (May 28, 1900–July 9, 1901). Fu wrote in detail about how the painting was finally “bought at an extremely low price” by the British Museum “convinced by Sin Sidney Coluin [about its value]” so that it became “a prestigious piece in the collection of the [British] museum” in 1903. It was after tracing the twists and turns of this painting’s history in various collections that Fu began to situate it in the historical context in which it was produced, in order to talk about its possible social functions and aesthetic values in its own time. The order of Fu’s narrative is unusual for the normally chronological format of art historical writing, since it does not prioritize the historical exploration of how this painting was made and viewed in its “original context,” which was assumed to be around the middle of the fourth century. What did Fu intend to communicate to his audience by flashing back through this retrospective narrative tracing the

social history of this painting’s ownership?

A main reason why Fu emphasized the history of the *Admonitions* scroll as a collected object may have been that this manuscript served not only as an outline for his own teaching at the NCU from the late 1930s to the early 1940s, but also as an integral part of a government-sponsored project of official textbook writing.\(^{531}\) In April 1937, Fu Baoshi and Teng Gu 滕固 (1901–42)—another influential Chinese art historian who received a doctorate degree at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in 1932 but was also impacted by Japanese scholarship on Chinese art history in the early twentieth century\(^{532}\)—were assigned by the Ministry of Education of the KMT government to compose in collaboration a two-volume textbook on the subject of Chinese art history. Fu was responsible for writing the first volume, which focused on Chinese art history from “High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties.”\(^{533}\) The pattern in which Fu narrated the social and cultural history of the *Admonitions* scroll ascribed multilayered symbolic meanings to this painting.

Fu’s particular mode of historical narrative epitomizes his conceptions of this painting as a national symbol in multiple senses—not only did it embody the “national pride” of ancient China, but it also embodied the “national humiliation” of modern China. To better understand the

\(^{531}\) Fu never published his manuscript “Zhongguo meishu shi: shanggu zhi liuchao (Chinese Art History: From High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties)” during his lifetime. The original manuscript is now collected in the Nanjing Museum. See Ye Zonghao’s annotation following the reprinted version of this manuscript in Fu Baoshi, *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji xubian*, 97-98.


\(^{533}\) Fu Baoshi, *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji xubian*, 97-98.
multilayered symbolic meaning ascribed to the Admonitions scroll in the twentieth century as an embodiment of the sorry state of modern China, one has to consider the sociopolitical context in which this painting became visible to the public of China in the first years of the twentieth century. In the global context of imperialist expansion and competition between the British, Japanese, Russian, French, German, Italian, Austrian-Hungarian, Belgian, and Spanish empires and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Admonitions scroll was said to have been looted by the British army when the collapsing Qing Empire was invaded by an alliance of these foreign imperialist powers. With the collapse of the Qing dynasty in the early years of the twentieth century and the founding of the Republican government in 1911, the Qing imperial collection went through a major transformation that represented one of the greatest political and sociocultural processes in modern China—that is, the transformation from imperial to national.

As Wang Cheng-hua points out, the Qing imperial collection was deeply enmeshed in the new intellectual framework, which reconceptualized artworks and historical objects in light of the formation of national cultural heritage. Under such circumstances, the abstract concept of the “collection” entered into the discourse of heritage preservation and exhibition culture, and it was hoped that the objects in the collection as a whole would be transformed from imperial possessions to objects of national heritage intended for exhibition to the public.\(^\text{534}\) Due to the public media of Republican China such as *Journal of National Essence*, the image of some

sections of this specific painting had been circulated, and redefined as both an embodiment of the concept of “national heritage” in public media and a symbol of “national humiliation” since the first decade of the twentieth century. A pair of seemingly mutually exclusive tropes, “national pride” and “national humiliation” has continued to feature prominently in the politics of remembering in modern and contemporary China. In the case of Fu’s textbook on Chinese art history, commissioned by the Nationalist government, the multilayered national symbolism of the Admonitions scroll collected in the British Museum was implicitly reinforced and emphasized. It is true that the attention that Japanese scholars had lavished on the Admonitions scroll must have reinforced Fu’s perception of the importance of Gu Kaizhi’s model. But what is equally significant to understanding the timeliness of Fu’s writing on the Admonitions scroll in the British Museum is the entangled cultural and political symbolism of this painting as national pride and humiliation at once in the specific context of modern China.

On one hand, a significant portion of Fu’s understanding of the Admonitions scroll was directly drawn from Japanese scholarship. On the other hand, Fu’s study of the Admonitions scroll was also composed to argue against certain works of Japanese scholarship from the early twentieth century that were negative about Chinese art history—such as Ise Senichiro 伊勢專一郎 (1891-1948)’s analysis of the history of “Chinese landscape painting” in his book Ko Gaishi yori Kei Kō ni itaru Shina sansui gashi 顧愷之より荊浩に至る支那山水画史 (From Gu
Kaizhi to Jing Hao: History of Chinese Landscape Painting), published in 1934 in Kyoto. Ise claimed that his goal in this book was to trace the major direction of the historical development of the five hundred years of Chinese landscape painting from the period of Gu Kaizhi in the Eastern Jin Dynasty to that of Jing Hao (b. ca. 850) in the Five Dynasties. After its publication in the early period of Shōwa Japan, Ise’s book received certain critical acclaim from pioneering Japanese scholars in the field of Tōyō bunka-shi 東洋文化史 (History of East Asian Civilization/Culture), such as Naitō Konan 内藤湖南 (1866–1934). Naitō composed a poem after reading Ise’s study: “[Chinese painting] has long been divided into two factions—the School of Court Painting Academies and the School of Literati Officials and Scholars; in recent years there have been many voices repeating this point of view. Would anyone have expected that, after three hundred years, there would be a scholar like you (Ise Senichiro) who was able to wipe out all the clichés of previous scholarship?” Beginning in the early 1880s, Fenollosa introduced and promoted an ideal synthesis of Japanese painting with “the good points of Western painting,” causing more and more artists and scholars to reflect on traditional East Asian paintings with an European-trained eye equipped with the knowledge of European academic painting such as atmospheric perspective and chiaroscuro. The implication of Naitō’s positive comments was that, as a “modernizing”—or rather westernizing—Japanese scholar, Ise’s scholarship surpassed the clichéd notions of Chinese painting that had been formulated in the

535 Ise Senichiro, Ko Gaishi yori Kei Kō ni itaru Shina sansui gashi (Kyoto: Tōhōbunkagakuin Kyōto kenkyūjo, 1934).
536 Naitō Konan wrote this comment in the form of classical Chinese poem as the frontispiece of Ise’s book.
Ming and Qing Chinese literati discourses.

In his study, Ise took a European-inflected formalist approach to Chinese art history which eschewed the divide between the Northern and Southern schools of painting articulated by Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555-1636) in the late Ming period. In the mid-1930s when Ise’s book was published, the political and military tensions between China and Japan were heightened. There were several schools of Japanese sinologists in the newly constructed academic discipline of Tōyō bunka-shi in modern Japan, who expressed differing attitudes toward the issues of Chinese cultural tradition. The scholars of the Shina gakuha 支那学派 (School of China) led by Naitō Konan at Kyoto University continuously argued against the scholars of the Tōkyō gakuha 東京学派 (School of Tokyo) represented by Shiratori Kurakichi 白鳥庫吉 (1865–1942) at Tokyo University. In contrast to the opinion of the Tōkyō gakuha, Naitō argued that the cultural history of Japan was derivative from the history of “Chinese civilization.” That is, in his opinion, in the cultural sphere of Tōyō, Chinese culture could be identified as the origin of a monolithic “East Asian civilization.”

However, that Japanese scholars even of the Shina gakuha applauded the fact that Ise

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537 Japanese policy toward China after the beginning of the First World War underwent a number of swings. During 1914 and 1915, Japan’s seizure of the German concessions in Shandong and issuing of the Twenty-one Demands had shown complete intransigence. The Washington Conference of 1921-1922 saw a more conciliatory Japan withdrawing its harsher demands and returning the former German possessions and railways to China. But in 1927-1928 the hard line resurfaced, partly in response to the belief that the Republican KMT – CCP alliance would usher in a new era of anti-foreignism that might damage Japan’s privileged reading position in central China and its dominating military presence in southern Manchuria. The violent clash with National Revolutionary Army troops at Jinan in May 1928 and the assassination of Marshal Zhang Zuolin in June the same year gave ample proof of the new mood. See Jonathan D. Spence, The Searching for Modern China (New York: Norton & Company, 1990), 388.

argued about the “shortcomings” of “Chinese landscape painting” by referencing the paradigm of European academic painting, indicates at least two tendencies in Japanese scholarship at this time: first, the criteria for evaluating and the framework for historicizing Chinese art history had changed due to the introduction of Western epistemological system; second, there was a general tendency in the early period of Shōwa Japan to criticize traditional Chinese learning of the late imperial period in not only the political but also the cultural realm.

Discontented with Ise’s scholarship, Fu published his study on Gu Kaizhi in 1935 in response to the Japanese scholar. Ise attempted to trace the root of “Chinese landscape painting” by examining the British Admonitions scroll. Drawing a set of appraisal standards from his perceived “scientific,” European classicist organizational paradigms of painting based on linear perspective, Ise argued that the spatial representation in the Admonitions scroll indicated a “lack of differentiation between the foreground and the background.” Based on this observation, he claimed that from the very beginning, the practices of Chinese landscape painting had been “keeping distance from verisimilitude.” Arguing against Ise’s point of view, Fu pointed out in his article “Issues of the History of Landscape Painting from Gu Kaizhi to Jing Hao,” first of all, that the Admonitions scroll was primarily a work of “figure painting,” as the main theme of the painting is human activities rather than the landscape. That is to say, “it is doubtful whether this painting could be considered the epitome of the origin of landscape painting [in China].”  

Fu Baoshi, “Lun Gu Kaizhi zhi Jing Hao zhi shanshuihuashi wenti (Issues of the History of Landscape Painting from Gu Kaizhi to Jing Hao)” (1933), reprinted in Fu Baoshi meishu wenji, 54-61.
argued, therefore, “it is really shocking that [Ise’s] book used some [European organizational] principles—such as ‘realism,’ ‘naturalism,’ and ‘relation between foreground and background’ [in linear perspective]—to measure and discuss the value of ‘Chinese painting.’” Fu attempted to provide a more “native” point of view in terms of understanding “Chinese painting.” In his vision, the practice of his perceived “Chinese painting belongs to the transcendental realm. If one were to disdain the exceptional [qualities of the] lines, shapes, and colors, in accordance with modern knowledge [imported from the West], one would learn nothing [about Chinese painting].” Fu originally composed this article in Japanese during the winter of 1933 as a review of Ise’s *From Gu Kaizhi to Jing Hao: History of Chinese Landscape Painting*, submitting it to a Japanese journal, but it was not accepted. In October 1935, he published the Chinese version of this essay in the autumn issue of *Dongfang zazhi 東方雜誌* (Eastern Miscellany), one of the most influential Republican omnibus cultural publications. Later, in 1936, his original essay in Japanese was published in Japan. Published both in China and Japan, respectively, this essay spoke to the academic audiences in both countries about the biased historical assessment of “Chinese painting” in modern Japanese academia. On one hand, Fu’s study of Chinese art history was based on his training in Japan and familiarity with Japanese scholarship in this field. On the other hand, his study was intended to offer a more “native” point of view

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540 Ibid.
541 Fu Baoshi, “Lun Gu Kaizhi zhi Jing Hao zhi shanshuihuashi wenti (Issues of the History of Landscape Painting from Gu Kaizhi to Jing Hao)” (1933), reprinted in *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji*, 55.
542 See Ye Zonghao’s annotation made in *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji*, 61.
543 Kuiyi Shen, “The Japanese Impact on the Construction of Chinese Art History as a Modern Field: A Case Study
that challenged the arguments made by certain Japanese scholars on Chinese art history in the early twentieth century. In the section “Painting of the Jin Dynasty” in his manuscript composed from 1935 to 1941, again, Fu argued that “in terms of art type or genre” the Admonitions scroll attributed to Gu Kaizhi should be considered “mainly” as “a case of figure painting.” That is to say, “Ise Senichiro was wrong in tracing the root of [Chinese] landscape painting to the Admonitions scroll.”

In the same section, he further argued that “(Gu) Kaizhi’s works not only show the great accomplishment of painting in the history of High Antiquity in our country; more importantly and relevantly, he laid out the theoretical foundation for the later on [development of Chinese] painting forever. This is why we definitely should elaborate his theories (as later practitioners in Chinese painting).” Fu claimed that, “[although] there are some Japanese scholars who have spent many years studying painting theories with Gu Kaizhi as their central focus, every time [I] read the reports of their studies, [I feel that] their works do not illuminate the [significance of] this great artist at all.”

The “theoretical foundation” that Gu formulated for “the later development of Chinese painting theories forever,” in Fu’s vision, could “explain” and thus define “what Chinese painting was” in general. In Fu’s historical formulation, “literati painting” was theorized as the best representative of “Chinese painting,” and Gu Kaizhi’s model is crucial in defining

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544 See Ye Zonghao’s annotation made in *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji xubian*, 97-98.

545 Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo meishu shi: shanggu zhi liuchao (Chinese Art History: From High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties),” in *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji xubian*, 81.
what Fu perceived as “literati painting.” His celebration of Gu Kaizhi’s model as the “primitive schema” of “literati painting” resonates with, if not being directly inherited from, modern Japanese scholarship of the early twentieth century, especially Ōmura Seigai’s “The Revival of Literati Painting” (Bunjinga no Fukkō 文人画の復興). As mentioned earlier, this essay was translated by Chen Hengke into Chinese in 1922. Ōmura argued that the visual and aesthetic discourses of Chinese literati painting were initiated by the Eastern Jin Gu Kaizhi, the Southern dynasties Xie He, and the Liang emperor Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (508-555). To a certain extent, Fu shared the opinion of certain Japanese scholars such as Ōmura Seigai who conceptualized the “literati painting” in China and Japan to be an embodiment of the “Oriental Modern.”

In his paintings such as *Lady of the Xiang River* (1943), Fu silhouetted the female figures with extremely fine, gossamer-like lines applied in ink with Chinese brush. The contour lines appear to be rounded and flexible, without clear changes in their degree of thickness, which recalls the linear style exemplified in the *Admonitions* scroll in the British Museum. According to Fu, he originally began to paint figures for two reasons: the first was to study the history of Chinese painting, the second was to serve his landscape painting. In his self-introduction composed for his 1942 solo exhibition in Chongqing, he recalled that,

> Originally, I was not able to draw human figures with fine lines. It was about ten years ago, when I was studying in Tokyo and researching the history of line in Chinese painting, that I began to practice fine-line drawing for a short period of time. [This is] because one could find many different types of line drawing in [both] the

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546 See Aida Wong, *Parting the Mists*, 54-76.
depiction of draperies [and] the artistic developments, from archaic bronzes with linear patterns to Qing flower images with bounding contour lines. [These examples of linework] demonstrated different types of lines that vary in “speed,” “pressure,” and “area.” All such variations have their different backgrounds and meanings. To study all of these aspects of lines, I concentrated on figure painting. . . . In order to meet the needs of [completing the compositions of] my landscape painting, I occasionally paint figures.547

During the 1940s, to draw inspiration for his figure painting from archaistic models, Fu turned to his knowledge gained during the period of his training in Chinese art history with Kinbara Seigo in the early 1930s in Japan. His study in Chinese art historical research in Japan increasingly informed him of the diversity of genre, line or brushwork, and the treatment of ink in traditional schools of Chinese painting. In particular, he took great interest in Kinbara’s Kaiga ni okeru sen no kenkyū 線の研究 (Study of Lines in Painting) published in 1927, which he planned to translate.548 Kinbara published his Study of Lines in Painting only about two years after the aforementioned publication of Yashiro Yukio’s studies on the art of Botticelli in 1925. Inspired by his teacher Bernard Berenson, Yashiro considered the formal qualities of the linear style of Botticelli’s paintings in dialogue with the “spiritual” aesthetics of ancient Asian religious paintings. After Yashiro completed his monograph on Botticelli in the 1920s, he returned to Japan and devoted himself mainly to the study of Asian art.549 Drawing upon

547 Fu Baoshi, “Renwu chongqing huazhan xuzu (Preface for the 1942 exhibition of my paintings),” September 22, 1942, published serially on the supplements of Shishi xinbao on October 8, 12, and 20, 1942.
549 Akira Takagishi, “A Twentieth-Century Dream with a Twentieth-First-Century Outlook: Yashiro Yukio, a Japanese Historian of Western Art, and His Conception of Institutions for the Study of East Asian Art,” in Vishakha
cross-cultural methodologies from in his studies on *seiyō bijutsushi* 西洋美術史 (Occidental art history), he published a series of articles and books on the issue of connoisseurship in Chinese and Japanese painting. Particularly, Yashiro’s European-inflected cross-cultural framework—within which the linear grace frequently encountered in East Asian figurative painting was analyzed in comparison with Botticelli’s “swift flame-like yet modeling lines that were almost unique in European art” (in the words used in his teacher Berenson’s dedication to the Japanese edition of his *Italian Painters of the Renaissance* in the form of a letter to Yashiro in 1954)—became so influential that Japanese scholars in the field of East Asian painting may have been inspired by Yashiro’s scholarship. Kinbara Seigo’s study on the “lines in painting” demonstrates how, as a Japanese scholar studying Chinese art history in the later 1920s, Kinbara took European modernist-inflected formalist approaches to researching how the “lines” were applied in Chinese painting. However, different from Yashiro, who saw the linear grace embodied in both early Renaissance and Japanese art as an element suggesting “universal” values of art, Kinbara focused more on the linework of Chinese painting as a culturally distinctive idiom of East Asian ink painting. Kinbara’s approach also reveals the powerful influence of Okakura Tenshin’s idea of pan-Asianism in early twentieth-century Japan.

Kinbara equated the “lines” applied in East Asian ink painting with the *gufa yongbi* 骨法

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用筆 (Bone Method which is [a way of] using the brush), which was originally articulated by Xie He (active in the Liu Song and Southern Qi Dynasties) as the second of the “Six Laws” in his guidebook for connoisseurs and artists, *Guhua pinlu* 古畫品錄 (Classified Record of Paintings of Former Times). In Kinbara’s reading, the “lines”—that is, “the Bone Method which is [a way of] using the brush”—was the crucial means by which one achieve the aesthetic quality of *qiyun shengdong* 氣韻生動 or “spiritual resonance (which means vitality).” As the highest aesthetic concept and standard for evaluating painting, *qiyun shengdong* is listed above the other five laws in Xie He’s “Six Laws.” Compared to numerous interpretations provided by dynastic literati scholars in imperial China before the twentieth century who, as painters, tended to mystify the meaning of *qiyun shengdong*, Kinbara’s interpretation of this concept looks more concrete in its signification. Furthermore, Kinbara’s interpretation was not only about Chinese painting theories of High Antiquity; he put this theory forward to be an overarching framework in which, he argued, “Chinese aesthetics and painting theories,” as a whole cultural system, had developed historically.

As mentioned earlier, figure painting as a classical genre increasingly waned due to literati biases after the Yuan dynasty; in contrast, landscape was established as the canonical genre of “literati painting” during the post-Song, later imperial period. Moreover, also as

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552 Various English translations of these six laws have been offered. Among them, William Acker’s might be seen as a classic version from 1954: “First, Spirit Resonance which means vitality; second, Bone Method which is (a way of) using the brush; third, Correspondence to the Object which means the depiction of form; fourth, Suitability to Type which has to do with the laying on of colors; fifth, Division and Planning, i.e. placing and arrangement; and sixth, Transmission by Copying, that is to say the copying of models.” William Reynolds Beal Acker, *Some T’ang and Pre-T’ang Texts on Chinese Painting* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954), 4.
mentioned earlier, Fu claimed that “literati painting” could best represent the “national spirit” embodied in “Chinese painting.” That is to say, on one hand, Fu argued against Ise that the Admonitions scroll “primarily features human subjects;” on the other hand, he still perceived Gu’s painting and theories as the epitome of “the primitive schema of our national form.” How can we understand Fu’s seemingly contradictory claims about Gu Kaizhi?

A main reason for Fu’s concentration on Gu Kaizhi beginning in the early 1930s was so that he could study the history of Chinese painting, especially the history of landscape painting, which developed in later imperial periods as an canonical genre of literati painting. By studying the Admonitions scroll traditionally attributed to Gu, Fu attempted to trace the history of Chinese landscape painting as exemplified in the “renowned paintings of the Wei, Jin and Six Dynasties” and, therein, to search for the root of Han Chinese literati landscape painting “which gradually developed to be a symbol of China’s national spirit” in the later dynastic periods.553 In the 1940s, Fu completed an (unpublished) essay on the history of Chinese landscape painting, arguing that the evaluation of ‘the aspect of landscape” in the Admonitions scroll by Ōmura Seigai, “a Japanese leading authority in the studies on Chinese painting,” was both “prudent” and “clear.” Ōmura’s argument was that the elements of landscape in the Admonitions scroll show that “landscape painting at the time (in the Eastern Jin dynasty) had not been developed enough yet, so [the elements of landscape in this painting] were not executed with textured brushworks but [in

553 Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo gudai shanshuihua shi de yanjiu (Studies on the history of ancient Chinese landscape painting)” (1940), reprinted in Fu Baoshi, Fu Baoshi meishu wenji, 294.
Fu noted that important Japanese scholars in Tōyō painting history, such as Ōmura and Seiichi Taki—who had been proposing “the revival of literati painting” since the 1920s—all traced the origin of Chinese landscape painting to the period of the Six Dynasties. In particular, these scholars considered Gu Kaizhi to have initiated the tradition of Chinese landscape painting. Their theory, as Fu also noted, resonated with Chinese scholar Zheng Wuchang’s argument published in the 1920s. Meanwhile, Fu observed, the origin of Chinese landscape painting was also traced to the period of the Six Dynasties in the “introduction to traditional Chinese calligraphy and painting” in the third volume of the catalogs of the grand-scale, KMT-government-sponsored “International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London” (Lundun zhongguo yishu guoji zhanlanhui) in 1948. Fu emphasized the diplomatic role of national identity formation that this catalog would play on the international stage. In his words, this catalog was “the first official historiography [of Chinese art] compiled and edited [by the modern Chinese government] since the Shiqu Baoji 石渠寶笈 and Midian Zhulin 秘殿珠林, compiled in the ninth year of the Qianlong reign [in the period of the High Qing]. Furthermore, it is [an official publication] introducing [Chinese art] to international audiences.” However, he pointed out that although this catalog indicated briefly that “paintings concentrating on [the subject of] landscape emerged during the Six Dynasties, the rest of this introduction drew from the old treatises by [the Ming literati connoisseur and artist] Mo Shilong. Such an unclear [manner

554 Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo gudai shanshuihua shi de yanjiu (Studies on the history of ancient Chinese landscape painting)” (1940), reprinted in Fu Baoshi, Fu Baoshi meishu wenji, 294.
in which] the origin of [Chinese] landscape painting was discussed, actually, represents the [state of the field of] international scholarship on [Chinese] landscape painting.” Based on his research into a treatise attributed to Gu Kaizhi on landscape painting, *Hua Yuntaishan ji 畫雲台山記* (Painting the Mount Yuntai), Fu emphasized that “it was Gu Kaizhi who began to use the term *shanshui* 山水 (“mountain and water” as a Chinese concept of landscape) in [theories of] painting; in the case of appraisal treatises recording painters, this term first appeared in the late Tang period in Zhu Jingxuan’s *Tangchao Minghua lu*, rather than in *Xuanhe huapu* [as the official record of imperial art collection of the Northern Song court compiled during the Emperor Hui Zong’s reign].” Therefore, he propose that “it is not that the renowned paintings of the Wei, Jin and Six Dynasties had nothing to do with [the emergence of Chinese] *shanshui* (landscape) painting.”

The ultimate goal of Fu’s scholarship, that is to say, was to communicate to the public—not only in the domestic but also in the international sense—an authoritative historiography “made in China” on the history of Chinese literati painting.

By studying Gu’s linear style and his theories of painting, Fu attempted to trace the history of “Chinese painting” from its “primitive schema” embodied in the Eastern Jin Gu Kaizhi’s paintings to its “perfection,” as realized in the transitional period of the late Ming and early Qing in the landscape paintings by iconic literati painters such as Shitao. In the early twentieth century, some Japanese scholars had analyzed Shitao as an exemplary Chinese “literati painter.” In these

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555 Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo gudai shanshuihua shi de yanjiu (Studies on the history of ancient Chinese landscape painting)” (1940), reprinted in Fu Baoshi, *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji*, 291.
scholars’ formal analyses, Shitao’s brushwork were discussed as the embodiment or trace of the artists’ autonomy and subjectivity, or an embodiment of the “Oriental Modern” set to a premodern tune. In comparison, however, Fu’s particular emphasis on China’s “national spirit” embodied in Shitao’s expressive art forms differentiated his vision of these ancient Chinese artists from that of the Japanese scholarship on “literati painting.” In Fu’s theoretical formulation of “Chinese painting,” he did not simply adopt the model of formalist analysis of the Japanese scholarship that emphasized the individualist quality of the autonomy and subjectivity of the late Ming and early Qing artists like Shitao. Instead, Fu termed these artists China’s minzu yiren 民族藝人 or “national artists” in the history of his perceived zhonghua minzu or “Chinese nation.” As a modern Chinese artist, Fu identified himself with these historical models. In his reading, it was the “national spirit” that conceptually and aesthetically connected dynastic Chinese artists practicing in different genres in separate historical periods. What, exactly, was the “national spirit” embodied in the exemplary “Chinese paintings” in Fu’s vision? Accordingly, what is the conceptual connection between the “national spirit” embodied in the art by the late Ming and early Qing literati artists like Shitao and the art by Gu Kaizhi as an archaistic model of Medieval China?

Termed wenrenhua 文人畫 in China and bunjinga 文人画 or nanga 南画 in Japan, literati painting developed as largely separate practices in the two countries. It was during the

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556 See Aida Wong, Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 54-76.
early twentieth century that these two traditions were discussed together as an embodiment of the “Oriental Modern,” through a series of linguistic and epistemological shifts that occurred in the process of cross-cultural contact.557 From the mid-1910s to the 1930s, Japanese scholars who endeavored to revive bunjinga discussed the practices of “literati painting” in China and Japan as the quintessential Oriental art in which special attention was paid to ink expression, poetry, and subjective emotions. However, an important difference between Chinese and Japanese traditional practices of “literati painting” is that, in the traditional Chinese context, the term wenren referred specifically to a distinctive group of traditional Chinese intelligentsia as shi 士 (Confucian humanist intellectuals).558 In contrast, in the Japanese context, bunjin (written with the same kanji characters as wenren) could mean anyone with a taste for Chinese culture; artists who claimed a bunjin identity included “Confucian scholars, professional painters, soldiers, physicians, monks, bankers, brewers, and merchants, an admixture inconceivable in China.”559 That is to say, compared to Chinese practices of wenrenhua, whose development was closely tied to the social and political practices of Confucian scholars, the Japanese practice of bunjinga was developed in

557 See Aida Wong, Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 54.
558 There are nuanced differences between the Chinese concept of shi which emerged in the pre-Qin period (21-221 BC) and the Western concept of “Intellectual” which emerged not earlier than the eighteenth century. However, there exists a significant intercommunity between the two – “they are specialized in the studies of certain kinds of knowledge, however, their interests in knowledge are not restricted to their professions. … Besides their commitment to their professional career, they must be always deeply concerned for the public goods of their countries, societies, and the world. And their concerns must have been gone beyond their self-interests and the specific interests of the communities to which they are affiliated.” See Yu Yingshi, Shi yu zhongguo wenhua (Shi and Chinese Culture)(Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1987).
559 Aida Wong argues that paintings by the Japanese bunjin identified with a much broader social base than those produced by the Chinese wenren. See Aida Wong, Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 59.
a mode of brush formalism. Building on the culture-specific tradition of Chinese wenrenhua, in this aspect, Fu’s historiography of Chinese painting and his own wartime projects of ink and brush painting epitomizes how, as a Chinese intellectual artist well versed in the Classics of Confucianism, Fu identified himself with the cultural value of shi by emphasizing the centrality of ethical and moral concerns of artist in traditional Chinese literati aesthetic discourses. By so doing, he attempted to call wartime Chinese audiences’ attention to the social role of Chinese intellectual art at a time of “national crisis.”

In 1935, Fu published an article on “the prospective construction of the art of the Chinese nation,” proposing that “visual artists should be pioneers of their own time and energetic members in the movement of [constructing] national culture! [As] they have different minds, [they] were able to guide the public close to the indigenous national art.” In 1938, shortly after the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression officially broke out in China, Fu published Biographies of the Late Ming National Artists. This book concentrated on the patriotism of the legendary and historic literati artists who were loyalists to the Ming court, a Han Chinese regime threatened and defeated by the Manchu “barbarians” during the period of Ming-Qing transition. The publication of this book demonstrates the tremendous efforts that Fu made to communicate to wartime Chinese audiences his ideas of the social role of the artist at a moment of “national crisis.”

560 Fu Baoshi, “Zhonghuaminzu meishu zhi zhanwang yu jianshe (Proespectus on the cultural construction of the Chinese nation)” (completed in March 1935 in Tokyo), originally published in Wenhua jianshe (Cultural Construction) in May 1935; reprinted in Fu Baoshi meishu wenji, 71.

561 As the Chinese art historian Zhang Changhong points out, Shitao was in fact not a “loyalist” in this sense. See Zhang Changhong, “Sanbainian lai Shitao de shehui xingxiang yanjiu (A study on the social image of Shitao in the three hundred years),” in Yishu tansuo (2015) no.4.
crisis.” Somewhat ironically, the information about the Late Ming loyalists compiled in the book was largely translated from an index book on famous calligraphers and painters during the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, co-authored by Japanese collectors Yamamoto Teijirō and Kinari Toraichi. In October 1938, Guo Moruo composed a preface for Fu’s book in October 1938. Guo argued that “no matter the so-called qiyun 氣韻 (spiritual vitality) or jingjie 境界 (aesthetic state of artistic expression), [it] could only be [the natural] effluence from an author with lofty renge 人格 (moral character). Not only the artwork but also the social conduct of [such an author] would be [lofty]. Currently the national crisis that [we encounter] is no less [emergent] than before [that is, in the late Ming period]; it is our responsibility to fight the war [against Japanese invasion] and build the [Chinese] nation.”

Here, Guo’s discussion on the causal relation between artists’ “moral character” and the “spiritual vitality” embodied in their paintings drew from the agelong, Confucian literati aesthetic discourse that had appeared in the Northern Song dynasty, if not earlier. The Northern Song Guo Ruoxu, for example, argued in Tuhua jianwen zhi that, “given that [an author’s] renpin 人物 (moral character) is of high level, it is impossible that the qiyun 精神 (spirit) [of his or her artwork] is not as high. [Accordingly,] given that the qiyun 精神 [of the author’s artwork] is of high level, it is impossible that shengdong 生動 (vitality) is not achieved [in his or her artwork].” Drawing on traditional literati...
discourse about the moral character of the late Ming literati loyalists, Fu and Guo repositioned these iconic figures as the historical models of “national artists” in wartime China. Importantly, they introduced Shitao as one of these historical models of “national artists,” whose moral character and painting both embodied the “national spirit.” By so doing, Fu and Guo attempted to make this book appeal particularly to their wartime Chinese audiences—especially the intellectual audiences among whom a majority were Han Chinese elites— and to evoke feelings of national pride of the Han Chinese cultural continuity.

During the early 1940s, as discussed earlier, in order to inject a sense of vitality into guohua paintings, artists like Zhang Daqian appropriated the styles of figure painting of the High Tang period. Zhang’s painting style alludes to the “High Tang” art as a specific cultural past of China’s “barbaric civilization” in the Republican Chinese national imagination—a China that was the most powerful nation throughout the world, economically and militarily. Intriguingly, Fu was also searching for certain “powerful” aesthetic qualities in the “Chinese painting” of the past. However, different from Zhang Daqian and some others, Fu found the aesthetic epitome of such qualities—including “national strength”—first in the archaistic models of the Eastern Jin and Southern dynasties, and later transformed and perfectly realized in the landscape paintings of Ming literati loyalists (as he perceived them) in the transitional period from the late Ming to the early Qing. Particularly, Fu’s reference to Gu Kaizhi in figure painting and to Shitao in landscape painting was intended to visually communicate to wartime Chinese audiences another kind of
national past—that is, two separate historical moments of “national crisis” in the history of China as a culturally Han Chinese nation. In Fu’s historical vision of zhongguo minzu 中国民族 as a Han Chinese nation, the period from the Eastern Jin to the Southern Dynasties and the late Ming period were the darkest episodes in which a Han Chinese state had been threatened by certain non-Han “barbarians” from the frontiers—either the Tuoba clan of the Xianbei ruling northern China as the so-called Northan Dynasties [threatening the Eastern Jin regime in southern China] of the former period, or the Manchus [which finally conquered the Ming and established the Qing Dynasty] of the later period.

Fu’s 1930s and 1940s historical formulation of the “Chinese painting” of the Eastern Jin and Southern dynasties epitomizes his special interest in how the chaotic, sociopolitical turbulence of this specific historical period had served as a particular environment that might have stimulated “the Confucian scholar-officials’ responses to their time in art form.” Following the section “Painting of the Jin Dynasty” where he preferred to “exclusively talk about Mr. Gu (Kaizhi) in detail,” Fu proceeded to the section on the Southern and Northern dynasties, in which he discussed how “the painting style fashioned by artists Wei Xie and Gu Kaizhi of the Jin dynasty became a stable trend [in the Southern dynasties].”\(^\text{564}\)

In Fu’s vision,

\[\text{this [stable] inheritance and development [of painting style] was not only realized through technical training; more importantly, it was realized by the turbulent [sociopolitical] environment of this time period. From a historical perspective, following the perished [Eastern]}\]

\(^\text{564}\) Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo meishu shi: shanggu zhi liuchao (Chinese Art History: From High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties),” in *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji xubian*, 75.
Jin, [there was the time when] the Southern and the Northern regimes coexisted. Before the Sui regime united [the north and the south] again, there was a long period of two hundred years from the fourth to the sixth century during which military powers persistently fought with each other, no matter whether in the south (in the valley of the lower Yangzi River) or the north (in the valley of the Yellow River); politically, there was also a lack of long-term stability. The Confucian scholar-officials living in this time period would naturally respond to this situation in art form.\textsuperscript{565}

Fu proposed that while it is true that the “tradition of the art form in a narrow sense” “deserves to be treated with certain respect”; a sociological approach would deepen our understanding of the circumstances of “the time of the Southern and Northern dynasties” that served as a main element contributing to the development of the art tradition at that time. As for the “taste” of art typical of this period, in his characterization, “the spirit embodied in the art of the Northern dynasties” is “majestic and solid, mostly represented by sculptures and murals,” whereas “the spirit embodied in the art of the Southern dynasties” is “elegant and graceful, mostly represented by painting.”

These words of aesthetic evaluation read as objective. However, what follows this evaluation is a discussion focusing on the practices of painting—rather than that of mural—during this period, emphasizing the idea that “in the realm of painting …[the level reached by the artists] in the Northern dynasties was not on par with that of the Southern dynasties.”\textsuperscript{566} Why was there this difference in quality? Fu explained that, geographically, with Jiankang (Nanjing) as the capital, flourishing in the lower Yangzi valley, “the territory of the Southern regimes almost exactly

\textsuperscript{565} Ibid., 82
\textsuperscript{566} Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo meishu shi: shanggu zhi liuchao (Chinese Art History: From High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties),” in \textit{Fu Baoshi meishu wenji xubian}, 83.
overlapped the land of its preceding Eastern Jin dynasty. Most of the [elite] members of the upper strata of this society were those who migrated to this southern area with the Jin court [during the period of the Western-Eastern Jin transition]. [Therefore,] the customs and habits of these people both maintained the original *hanzu jingshen* 漢族精神 (spirit of the Han nationality/ethnic group/race) and exchanged with the local costume and scenery of the Jiangnan region (the southern area of the lower Yangzi valley).” Comparatively, “the costumes of those [non-elite Han people] who remained in the north were impacted by the national spirit of the *yizu* 異族 (the Other groups [who were non-Han]).”

A modern appropriation and transformation of terms such as *Hanren* 漢人 (Han people) which appeared in ancient texts, the term *Hanzu* 漢族 (Han nationality/ethnic group/race) itself is a neologism coined by the late Qing revolutionaries who adopted an ethnic-nationalist slogan against the Qing Empire as an ethnically Manchurian regime. Fu applied this term to characterize the “national spirit” embodied in the paintings of Eastern Jin and Southern dynasties as ethnically Han Chinese regimes, concluding that, “inheriting from the pictorial models set up by the Eastern Jin Gu Kaizhi and Wei Xie,” the painting of the Southern dynasties constituted “a splendid page of art history.” Fu’s historical formulation epitomizes his conception and value system of “Chinese painting”—in his vision, the literati painting of the culturally Han Chinese

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567 Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo meishu shi: shanggu zhi liuchao (Chinese Art History: From High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties),” in *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji xubian*, 83.
elites—as an embodiment of the “national spirit” of China. Fu’s analytical framework, which did not apply a Social Darwinist mode in its historical evaluation of certain period styles, differentiates his Chinese art historiography from the Republican Chinese intellectuals who were longing for the national spirit embodied in the style of the High Tang period when China was powerful militarily. “Although some scholars argued that a socially and politically stable environment is better for the development of art,” Fu maintained that “[the art developed in] the Six Dynasties—in particular the Southern dynasties—did not follow this mode. [From this, we] know that the complicated foundation for the undercurrent of the art [of a nation] is the national spirit, which could not be modified by external forces. In other words, art is the way in which the national spirit of a certain age could be expressed more profoundly and clearly.”

In his analysis, the Southern dynasties were considered to be an age of national crisis for the Han Chinese nation; by celebrating the art of the Southern dynasties, Fu attempted to convince wartime Chinese audiences of the lack of causal relation between “accomplishments in literature and art” and “the military strength of a country’s armament.”

As in the case of Pang Xunqin who projected his imagination of China’s “national spirit” into his wartime Chinese art historiography, nevertheless, the cultural and the ethnical were intertwined in Fu’s wartime Chinese art historiography. Fu’s choices of terms such as Hanzu and Zhonghua minzu in his academic writing have to be historicized and contextualized in the

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569 Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo meishu shi: shanggu zhi liuchao (Chinese Art History: From High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties),” in Fu Baoshi meishu wenji xubian, 82-83.
Republican Chinese intellectual discourses of national identity formation in the early twentieth century. In his wartime writing during the early 1940s, he juxtaposed Zhonghua minzu (Chinese nation) and Dahe minzu 大和民族 (Chinese translation of Yamato minzoku or “Japanese nation”). On April 10, 1940, Fu published an essay entitled “The Reasons Why the War of Resistance Against Japan Will Win: From the Perspective of Chinese Art” in the Shishi xinbao newspaper in Chongqing. In this highly political and propagandist essay, by discussing China’s “national spirit” embodied in “Chinese painting,” Fu attempted to articulate to wartime Chinese audiences the way in which a jingshen zhan 精神戰 or “spiritual war” between two minzu (nationalities/ethnic groups/races)—the Zhonghua minzu and the Dahe minzu —could be fought as an integral part of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. This specific way of juxtaposing China and Japan reveals how the Meiji Japanese and the Republican Chinese discourses constructing ethnic-histories of a Yamato-centred modern Japanese nation-state and a Han-centered modern Chinese nation-state, respectively, impacted his conception of Zhonghua minzu or “Chinese nation” as a culturally-cum-ethnically Han-centered nation. The term Dahe minzu or Yamato minzoku, signifying the modern Japanese nation-state in this twentieth century context, indicates how the Yamato zoku 大和族 or Yamato nationality/ethnic group/race had been used to refer to the major ethnic group constituting the “Japanese nation” since the nation-state building period of Meiji Japan. As the aforementioned theories by Liang Qichao and

Sun Zhongshan on grand v.s. narrow Chinese nationalism (in Chapter 1) suggest, the Republican Chinese ethnic discourses on national identity formation were largely drawn from Japanese concept of *minzoku* (nation) translated from Europe; these theories viewed the *Zhonghua minzu* as Han’s corollary. That is to say, respectively, both the modern meanings of *Yamato minzoku* and *Zhonghua minzu* were constructed during the processes of building Japan (since the Meiji period of Japan) and China (since the Republican period of China) as modern nation-states in the global system of nation-states. If the modern construction of the concept *Zhonghua minzu* in its Chinese context implies that the major constituent of the Chinese nation is *Hanzu*, then the modern construction of *Yamato minzoku* in its Japanese context implies that the major constituent of the Japanese nation is *Yamato zoku*, the ethnic majority of the Japanese nation-state in relation to the Japanese minority groups such as the Izumo, Ezo, and Kumaso. In both contexts of national identity formation, these national concepts were constructed for the purpose of building a multiethnic amalgamation as a singular modern nation-state.

Fu’s essay articulates his conceptions of “Chinese painting” and how the specific “national art spirit” embodied in “Chinese painting” could serve the War of Resistance “in the cultural realm.” In this essay, Fu argued that throughout history, “Chinese art had been endowed with three elements of great national spirit: first, [the value system underlying] Chinese art mostly appreciated the [ethical and moral] cultivation of the artists; second, [the practitioners of] Chinese

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art were the most capable ones both to absorb [the valuable elements] from and resist [the cultural assimilation of] other nations and countries; third, the [aesthetic qualities] expressed in Chinese art are *xionghun* 雄渾 (grandiosity and vigor) and *pumao* 樸茂 (sincerity and honesty).” Again, drawing from the established literati discourse about the causal relation between the *qiyun* of a painting and its author’s *renpin*, Fu reinforced that “Chinese painting” should be seen as the embodiment of the “national spirit” of the unspokenly Han-centered *Zhonghua minzu* (Chinese nation) due to the central role played by the *renpin* (moral character) of the artist. “The spirit of Chinese painting,” in his vision, “was rooted in China’s vast land and the thoughts of the [Chinese] nation; the most significant and distinctive character of [Chinese painting]—which [the arts of] all the other countries in the world lack—is its emphasis on the extreme importance of artists’ moral character. Three thousand years ago, this [system of value] played a significant role during the Zhou Dynasty, which considered what was represented in paintings to be a mirror of the moral characters of the artist.”572 Fu’s conception of “Chinese painting,” which emphasizes the moral centrality in “Chinese painting” as the epitome of China’s “national spirit,” also resonated with neo-Confucian philosopher Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895–1990), who articulated a comparative framework about the superiority of the morality-centered traditional Chinese culture around the same period.

Fu argued for the superiority of the national spirit of Chinese art over that of Japanese art by

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theorizing the aesthetic qualities of his selected samples of Chinese painting. Stressing the Chinese cultural strength in morality, his theorization of the aesthetic qualities of *xionghun* and *pumao* embodied in Chinese painting was endowed with an optimistic vision of the war for national salvation. In this essay, the examples of pictorial art that he chose to describe as the embodiments of China’s “national spirit” are the works by his perceived Ming loyalist literati painter Shitao and Southern Song court painters Ma Yuan 馬遠 (c.1160－1225) and Xia Gui 夏圭 (c. 1195-1224). He emphasized that these artists were famous in Japan and influenced Japanese *nanga* tradition significantly. Specifically, he argued, “the consciousness [of the artist] embodied in Chinese painting is seemingly *xiansan* 閒散 (idyllic) and *xuwu* 虛無 (nihilistic), without engagement with its time. In other words, [to many audiences] Chinese painting is passive and escapist. However, after careful contemplation, I find that the expression of Chinese painting is absolutely positive and forward looking. It is positive in a way that is calm rather than impetuous, composed rather than riotous—no matter in organizational composition or brushwork. [Since] the process of making Chinese art is rooted in the self-cultivation of the moral character of the artist.” Based on these aesthetic qualities that he perceived as a distinctively Chinese national spirit embodied in the Chinese art tradition, Fu claimed that “the tough process [of the War of Resistance] over several years makes us believe in the greatness of the [Chinese] nation.

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which cannot be shaken by the feeble and disordered national spirit of our enemy state [Japan].”

Based on his conception of the “national spirit” embodied in “Chinese painting,” Fu found in the extant figure paintings traditionally attributed to Gu Kaizhi the ideal archaistic model which could provide his own painting with an ideal female archetype. Thematically and stylistically, the Admonitions scroll fits perfectly into Fu’s vision of the epitome of Han Chinese elite art of the Jin dynasty in the realm of figure painting. Drawing from the standard of evaluating painting that had been established in Northern Song scholar-official discourse, thematically, Fu emphasized that the Admonitions scroll “served as an illustration of [the Western Jin scholar-official] Zhang Hua’s original text.” In his manuscript composed from 1935 to 1941 on “Chinese Art History: From High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties,” Fu talked in detailed about the sociopolitical role that Zhang Hua’s prose Admonitions of the Instructress to Court Ladies was intended to play during the late period of the Western Jin dynasty. As Fu explained in his lecture and textbook manuscript, Zhang Hua’s prose was composed to “satirize the tyrannical and cruel Jia empress” in the court of the foolish Hui Emperor. He emphasized the “greater historical significance” of Zhang Hua’s remonstrative prose presented to the Hui Emperor and Gu Kaizhi’s painting as an illustration of this prose in “admonishing later generations.” Aesthetically, meanwhile, in Fu’s vision “if one inspected every section of this painting, [including] the

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composition and the expression of each figure, [one would feel] the *jingmu* 靜穆 (serene dignity) and *kongling* 空靈 (ethereal beauty) effectively conveyed through [the pictorial representation applied] on this plain silk scroll." These aesthetic concepts suggest how Fu projected his vision of the moral dignity and spiritual strength of the legendary artist Gu Kaizhi as a Han Chinese proto-litteratus, the early ideal epitome of China’s “national artist.” By appropriating the female archetype from the *Admonitions* scroll, Fu attempted to endow his archaistic female figure painting with the potential to evoke the age-old political role of social critique that had been played by early Han Chinese scholar-official literature and art of the Jin dynasty.

Similar to his contemporaries like Pang Xunqin and Zhang Daqian, Fu Baoshi applied the methodology of art arcaheology to studying the historical development of the “application of lines” in “Chinese painting,” comparing the formal elements of the *Admonitions* scroll with the pictographic elements traced from archaeological remains. Specifically, he compared the linear style applied in the female figurations in this painting with the figurative images carved on the stones of tomb monuments on Xiaotang Mountain and the shrine of Wu Liang, both of which dated to the Han dynasty (202 BC–AD 220). By such visual comparison between these materials executed in different media, he attempted to prove that “around two thousand years ago, the ‘lines,’ ‘colors,’ and ‘ink’ applied in Chinese painting had developed to a state of considerably

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high-level—especially the [high-level] application of lines with roundedness and freshness.”

On one hand, he cited from archaeological evidence, such as the pictorial motifs of the Han dynasty stone carvings, to prove that “the technique of ‘line drawing’ had developed to a state of high level; the magnificent beauty in this aspect could be seen in multiple areas—including architectures, carvings, or patterns of crafts.” On the other hand, he compared the features of these archaeological pictorial motifs to the pictorial element of the Admonitions scroll then attributed to Gu Kaizhi, arguing that this painting was truly the epitome of “the earliest transformation of technique in Chinese painting.”

Importantly, drawing on Japanese scholarship such as Ōmura Seiga’s reading of the Admonitions scroll, which attended to the landscape depicted in this hand scroll as the visual epitome of the origin of Chinese landscape painting, Fu conceptualized the “earliest transformation of technique in Chinese painting” that he saw in the Admonitions scroll as the epitome of the culture-based aesthetic value of xieyi (sketch conceptualism). It is in this sense that Fu argued that derived from Gu’s “brush idioms developed along with the application of line drawing” was the “yuanshi chuxing (primitive schema) of [our] national form.”

577 Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo huihua ‘shanshui,’ ‘xieyi,’ ‘shuimo’ zhi shi de kaocha [Observation of the Historical Development of shanshui (landscape), xieyi (sketch conceptualism) and shuimo (water and ink) in Chinese Painting]” (1940), reprinted in Ye Zonghao ed., Fu Baoshi meishu wenji, 184.
579 Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo huihua ‘shanshui,’ ‘xieyi,’ ‘shuimo’ zhi shi de kaocha [Observation of the Historical Development of shanshui (landscape), xieyi (sketch conceptualism) and shuimo (water and ink) in Chinese Painting]” (1940), reprinted in Ye Zonghao ed., Fu Baoshi meishu wenji, 184.
place in around the first century due to the frequent [Chinese] exchange with the West and the eastward spread of Buddhism [from India to China]. The latter’s impact [on Chinese painting] is particularly significant. Although we could not find clear evidence of the Buddhist impact of the relics on painting of the Eastern Han period, the foreign impact [from Buddhism] continued to be accepted in the transitional period from the Wei to the Jin Dynasty by the [Han Chinese elite] class of scholar-officials given the social reality [of this period].” In particular, “the Eastern Jin dynasty was a time when in the realm of art [artists] tended to favor the beauty of nature” due to “the displacement of the Jin court [from the north to the south of the Yangzi River]” and “the activities of the scholar-officials [who moved along with the Jin court].” Gu Kaizhi, according to him, “thus emerged as a gifted artist [whose works represented a Han Chinese] assimilation and fusion of the two surging trends.”

Understanding and evaluating Gu Kaizhi’s artistic accomplishment in a series of historically, culturally and socially specific terms, Fu saw in Gu’s model a philosophical and aesthetic combination of the early Han Chinese conception of qi and the Buddhist-inflected literature and art in Medieval China. The term kongling, epitomizing a cosmological fusion of the early Chinese concept of qi 氣—a mainly Daoist-inflected concept before and in the Han dynasty of the vital energy circulating through all things and the driving forces for the pervasive and sonorous rhythms of the universe—and the Buddhist concepts translated at the time, had been used in medieval Chinese texts. It refers to a sense of ethereal and immaterial beauty created
through harmonious resonances between the human body and the universe through the participation of human life and breath in the breath of the cosmos. Fu’s aesthetic characterization of Gu’s figurative style indicates that he perceived in Gu an incorporeal or immaterial sense of beauty—which he chose to describe with the concept of kongling. This experience of viewing the Admonitions scroll thus significantly contributed to Fu’s choice to borrow Gu’s female archetype to render his image “Mountain Spirit.”

As Tamaki Maeda and Aida Yuen Wong briefly noted in their essay coauthored for the catalog of the international loan exhibition of Fu Baoshi’s paintings held in the Cleveland Museum of Art (October 2011–January 2012), some of Fu’s techniques applied in his paintings of “ghost-like” figures were likely drawn from the school of Chan Buddhist apparition painting that emerged in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Building on this argument, here I examine how and why Fu’s ink and brush methods and organizational mode applied for accenting the contour of the female figure in his 1946 Mountain Spirit would recall the artistry of certain Southern Song Chan Buddhist-inflected literati-scholar paintings. The artistry of inkwork associated with this specific genealogy of Chan Buddhist painting can be reflected in several remarkable ways, summarized by the art historian Yukio Lippit as follows: first, “an extraordinarily pale use of ink to depict subject matter;” second, “jet-black accents to the face

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and select attributes;” third, “a blank background;” and fourth, “a relatively detailed rendering of the face, combined with abbreviated brushwork for the clothing.” This set of pictorial modes of apparition painting, which problematized the dualistic paradigm of understanding cosmic processes by skillfully enhancing the sense of immateriality through a ghostly, tenuous quality that defies other pictorial solutions in representation, invoked the classical parable concerning a conversation between Penumbra (wangliang 帽兩, designating “a shadow of a shadow”) and Shadow (ying 景/影, designating “a shadow”) in the pre-Qin classical text of Zhuangzi 莊子 (ca. 369–216 BC). In this classical exchange in Zhuangzi, both Penumbra and Shadow personify the qualities of in-between-ness through their immateriality. Some Southern Song ink paintings, such as The Six Patriarch Carrying a Pole (Fig. 3.22) attributed to the Chan monk painter Zhizhong Ruojing, typically would depict the Chan Buddhist figures as wraithlike forms slowly blanching into or emerging from vacancy by using highly abbreviated brushwork. These paintings are characteristically lacking in setting, which added to the sense of an ethereal and incorporeal figure. The ink works executed by Chan Buddhist monk painters in this pictorial mode were highly regarded by some Southern Song literati scholars. These literati scholars felt that, by appreciating Chan paintings of this kind, which were jiliao xiaosan 寂寥蕭散 (desolate and tranquil) and yet filled with shengyi feidong 生意飛動 (vitality and dynamic movement), they could come to admire the “lofty thoughts and untrammeled ideas” of the Chan Buddhist

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monk painters—similar to what Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) had claimed of Wen Tong 文同 (1018–79). Some Southern Song literati-scholar paintings have a close kinship to this specific type of Chan Buddhist painting. The versatile Southern Song painter Liang Kai might have drawn from this pictorial mode of Chan Buddhist ink painting to depict the High Tang master poet Li Bai who was renowned for his unlimited creativity and lofty ideas. Liang’s Li Bai Chanting a Poem 李白行吟 (Fig. 3.23), as an early-thirteenth-century ink painting executed in the so-called yipin 逸品 (untrammeled style), could provide one of the most impressive material manifestations of the inspiration that this Southern Song scholar-painter might have drawn from the Chan Buddhist practice of apparition painting.583 In the Northern Song litteratus Huang Xiufu 黃修復’s Yizhou Minghua lu 益州名畫錄 (A Record of the Famous Painters of Yizhou [that is, Sichuan]), dated 1006, the author continued to use the traditional grading system in which painters were assessed on the basis of quality in three classes: shen 神 (the inspired), miao 妙 (the excellent), and neng 能 (the competent). However, an original contribution of Huang’s work to the classification system is the placing of the class of yi 逸 (the untrammeled) at the top of the listing. The untrammeled class of painting, according to the author, is the most difficult to group, since in this class of works the “regulated” drawing and the “minute thoroughness in coloring” are disdained; “form” could be completed through “abbreviated

brushwork” and attained through “spontaneity.” In later literati treatises on ink painting, excellence in using “abbreviated brushworks” to capture not only the form but also the “spirit” of certain subjects was increasingly taken as the technical means coined in the term xieyi (sketch conceptualism). Because of the “untrammeled style” shared among them, the Chan Buddhist monk painters would be compared to the most famous scholar painter in literati lore therefore.584

Fu’s female figuration in his 1946 Mountain Spirit borrowed these archaistic technical solutions to outline the clothed female body with abbreviated brushwork in pale ink. Inspired by the intended dimness of Chan Buddhist painting, the extremely fine-line strokes constituting the draperies of her floating ribbons, and even more so those of her trailing gown, are executed in an exceedingly low saturation of ink, so much so that the details of the figuration are perceptible only with difficulty. The extremely thin contour line delineating her narrow shoulders becomes invisible as it reaches the area of the wind-blown long and wide sleeves. In contrast to the dim surrounding applied in dark ink washes, the space for the female figure’s face is left empty and looks glimmering. The sad-yet-faithful facial expression of the figure is accentuated by the black touches of ink applied to her hair floating in the wind, her slightly frown willow-shaped eyebrows, upper eyelids, pupils, and her red lips that are slightly pursed and tightly drawn together. Fu’s technical solution here, again, recalls how, in the practices of Chan Buddhist apparition painting in the Southern Song period, the first “two strokes” applied in figure painting

to depict the eyes were emphasized as the epicenter of a figure’s “aura of inhabitation.”

Intriguingly, to testify to their aesthetic commonality, it is worth noticing that this abbreviated method of bringing to a figure the sense of vitality using limited strokes in Chan Buddhist painting, from when it was first applied by the monk painter Zhirong (whose paintings have unfortunately all been lost, to our current knowledge), had been compared by the Southern Song litteratus Luo Yue (1137–1213) to the figure paintings by the legendary ink painter Gu Kaizhi of the Eastern Jin dynasty. As we know from Zhang Yanyuan’s treatise, Gu Kaizhi had been idealized in the literati aesthetic discourse on painting and calligraphy since the Tang period, as the epitome of the gentleman-painter whose works were canonized as the superior art of “High Antiquity.” An early treatise by Gu himself had emphasized that “dotting of the eyes” was the most crucial act in a figure painting to determine whether the sense of vitality could be injected to a figure in pictorial representation. It would therefore be natural for Southern Song literati scholars to associate the untrammeled manner of the ink paintings by Zhirong with the literati aesthetic ideal ascribed to Gu Kaizhi, the great master in painting who was said to have had the habit of “chew[ing] sugarcane upside down”—that is, he would “violate the ink convention through a highly cultivated manner.”586 It was through this aesthetic device that, in the Song

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585 Hui-shu Lee called attention to this particular passage quoting the words of the elusive Zhirong, a Song Chan Buddhist monk-painter Zhirong who is considered to be an early practitioner in the genealogy of apparition painting mapped out by Shimada Shujiro. See Hui-shu Lee, *Exquisite Moments: West Lake and Southern Song Art* (New York: China Institute Gallery, 2001), 124.

586 As Yukio Lippit pointed out, the phrase “chewing sugarcane” is closely associated with Gu Kaizhi, who was fond of eating sugarcane in unorthodox fashion, from the ends toward the sweeter midsection. When asked why, he said that one should “enter gradually the realm of delights.” See Yukio Lippit, “Apparition Painting,” in *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 55/56, Absconding (Spring – Autumn, 2009), 66; see also Fang Xuanling, *Jin shu*
period, literati aesthetics were traced back to the Eastern Jin Gu Kaizhi’s figurative work as an epitome of the “literati” art model of “High Antiquity.”

Such nuanced yet visible aesthetical resonance between the Southern-Song Chan Buddhist-inflected ink painting and the legendary Gu Kaizhi model, as established in literati discourse since the Tang-Song periods, might have led Fu to apply his selected Southern Song ink idioms to depict his archaistic female figure painting appropriating Gu Kaizhi’s female archetype. By synthesizing these formal elements from multiple, resonating styles of traditional literati painting, the aesthetic quality associated with Fu’s perception of the literati art model of “High Antiquity” would by no means be diminished. Penetrated by the heavy rainstorm applied in intensely textured ink washes, the elongated slender body of “Mountain Spirit” is almost invisible. In contrast, the figure’s eyes are dotted carefully with a tiny brush in pitch-dark ink. The technical contrast between elaboration and abbreviation reminds the viewer of Gu Kaizhi’s aesthetics centralizing “dotting of the eyes” that “[in figure painting the depiction of] clothes, bodies, and appearances is not very important. The eyes are the decisive factor [for the painter] to convey the spirit [of a person].”

From the Han Chinese perspective of cultural nationalism, compared with Xu and Zhang’s figurations of this subject, the aesthetic ideals embodied in the female body in Fu’s 1946 Mountain Spirit

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587 According to mentions in the Jin shu (Book of Jin Dynasty) as “Biography of Gu Kaizhi.”
made the painted figure look “culturally” rather than “sensually” appealing.

Drawing on these early and medieval Chinese models of figure painting, Fu’s technical solution epitomizes his understanding of a culture-based, classical Chinese conception of the body—a body made of the invisible movement of the *qi*, the aforementioned concept of the vital energy of both human body and the universe, rather than a corporeal body made primarily of physical components. As John Hay perceptively notes with a comparative cultural perspective, a distinctive “Chinese” concept of *qi* might have led to the ancient Chinese representation of a body without visualizing its physical or corporeal components. Fu’s treatment of the female body in his ink painting epitomizes the same culturally distinctive way of visualizing the body in which “it is the rhythmical Chinese brush line, not the solid volumes or textured surfaces of Western painting, that best represents the existence and energy of those seemingly ‘bodiless’ Chinese figures.” This early Chinese paradigm of visualizing the body is embodied in Fu’s rendering of archaic female bodies in his 1940s female figure paintings, such as *Mountain Spirit* and *Lady of the Xiang River*. Fu’s technical solutions thus visually epitomize his quest for the root of Chinese painting and his understanding of “Chineseness,” both achieved through the study of archaeological evidence of early Chinese art and the medieval and late imperial literati treatises on painting—the materials to which he got access in Japan and China. In this sense,

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Fu’s female figure paintings in the 1940s serve as an index of the artist’s emphasis on the cultural specificity of a classical Chinese perception and representation of the body as it emerged from early Chinese philosophy and was developed later by Chinese literati aesthetics in Han-Chinese classical language texts.

Chan Buddhist apparition painting and Chan-inflected scholar painting—which emphasized the “untrammelled spirit” through highly abbreviated brushworks applied in “so pale an ink that it verged on complete indistinction” and embodied an aesthetic quality of transcendence in seemingly plain and yet subtle tonalities executed in a considerably “free” or spontaneous-looking style—were not highly evaluated by the court and major art patrons when they emerged in the Song period. In contrast, as a tradition, these Chan-inflected ink paintings were highly esteemed by a majority of Japanese audiences beginning in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially by traveling Japanese monks and merchants. Accordingly, the organizational principles of this type of Chan Buddhist painting went unrecognized in later Chinese aesthetic discourse and survived into the modern era only due to its canonization in Japan. The expressive ink methods that Fu applied in his 1940s paintings were not unfamiliar to him because he traveled twice to Japan (from September 1932 to June 1933 and from August 1933 to June 1935) and trained in Chinese art history with Kinbara Seigo. By adopting the

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artistry of Chan Buddhist ink paintings, Fu encountered the question regarding the national identity of his painting—that is, should such a painting method be considered to be primarily a localized “Japanese” style or an indigenous “Chinese” style of painting? It seems that Fu did not think that there was any logical paradox here. He attempted to rediscover certain “Chinese” elements in the “Japanese” visual resources that he encountered during his training in Japan in the early 1930s. In his opinion, “even if Japanese [modern] artists did not make paintings purely in Chinese style, the methods and materials they used were mostly ancient Chinese. Especially, their way of rendering, [what they used] was completely the methods of the [ancient Chinese] artists of the Song dynasty.” To Fu, “in terms of painting methods, specifically, adopting the methods of painting from Japan could not be called ‘Japanization’; rather, it should be considered to be [a way of] studying our own [methods]. Because these methods [that originated in China] are not prevalent anymore, or even lost and not applied now [in China], so [we have to] turn to Japan to rediscover and retrieve them.”

That is to say, when situated in a broader regional setting and an earlier historical context of Sino-Japanese contacts and exchanges, Japan could be perceived to have had been embedded in the early twentieth-century China’s identity formation as a nation, rather than remaining something external as a mere source of influence.

The visual efficacy created by the application of the organizational principles of Southern Song Chan Buddhist ink painting resonates with the “spiritual” sense of beauty characterized by

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591 Fu Baoshi, “Minguo yilai zhongguohua zhi de kaocha (Research on the history of Chinese painting since the Republican period),” in Ye Zonghao, ed., Fu Baoshi meishu wenji, 142.
the term *kongling*—the specific kind of spiritual beauty that Fu saw in Gu Kaizhi’s figure painting executed in rhythmically linear strokes. As a culturally specific Han Chinese concept of immaterial and thus “transcendent” beauty, as mentioned above, the concept of *kongling* had been developed and highly regarded by poets and critics during the High Tang period, when the aesthetic taste of the literati group was strongly impacted by Chan Buddhism.\(^\text{592}\) Therefore, to a Han Chinese audience with a “native” point of view of Chinese literati culture, it would be easy to perceive that the visual effect of Fu’s rendering of “Mountain Spirit” accords well with the textual description of the aesthetic values of *kongling* in the classical literary and artistic treatises of medieval China. Furthermore, again, the aesthetic notion of “transcendence” applied by Fu in his characterization of Gu Kaizhi’s linear figurative painting recalls the cross-cultural comparative approaches that Berenson and Yashiro took to reconcile the East and the West, especially the parallels and dialogues that they found between certain early European Renaissance paintings and medieval East Asian religious paintings in their spiritual beauty.

The specific ink painting technical solutions analyzed above reveal the fact that, despite his discursive emphasis on the distinctive “Chineseness” of Chinese brush and ink painting, Fu’s practice of refashioning modern Chinese painting in the 1940s also involved a process of transnational migration of imageries and ideas during a time period of epochal change and

intensified interaction with the West and modernizing Japan. In 1935, shortly after his travels in Japan, Fu made the point that in “world art history (shijie meishu shi 世界美術史),” “an especially charitable merit of the culture of our Chinese nation” had been its capability to transform its own culture by openly absorbing the merits of the cultures of other nations. In his view, “as long as [the cultural practitioners of China] had the opportunity to encounter the cultures of other nations, [they] were not only good at learning from them but also at creating something new and even better than the other cultures they originally learned from.”

Here, essentially, when discussing the modern concept of “world art history” Fu’s point of view echoes Pang’s characterization of what he perceived as the “greatest” national character of China around the same time (discussed in the previous chapter). Perhaps the difference between their projects of refashioning modern Chinese painting did not lie primarily in whether they took a “transnational” or “transcultural” approach to making painting “Chinese” and “modern.” After their travel abroad both of them selectively drew from inspiration originally “foreign” to them. Nevertheless, the final goals of these two artists’ engagements with transnationalism and transculturalism were different. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Pang was interested in achieving a nonhierarchical form of transculturalism even if he decided to study his “native traditions” first—that is, he attempted to reconcile different cultural traditions and

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593 Fu Baoshi, “Zhonghuaminzu meishu zhi zhanwang yu jianshe (Proespectus on the cultural construction of the Chinese nation)” (completed in March 1935 in Tokyo), originally published in Wenhua jianshe (Cultural Construction) in May 1935; reprinted in Fu Baoshi meishu wenji, 65.
finally synthesize them without prioritizing any of them. Pang’s art-historian friend Michael Sullivan perceptively points out that the features of his wartime paintings were hard to identify. Indeed, as my discussion of the cosmopolitan quality embodied in *Guizhou Mountain People* demonstrates, to many of his wartime audiences the national identity of his paintings was extremely hard to identify. In comparison, in full consideration of the highly politicized and nationalistic wartime circumstances in the 1930s and 1940s, Fu was self-positioned as a “national artist” more interested in searching for a distinctive “Chinese” paradigm of painting and reclaiming thereby the superiority of the indigenous Chinese art tradition. In Fu’s practice of modern Chinese painting in the 1940s, as discussed above, the specific “Chinese” art tradition to be rejuvenated primarily meant the traditional literati ink painting that he perceived to be the epitome of Han Chinese gentleman-scholar culture. Accordingly, therefore, disparate critical receptions of Fu and Pang’s painting exhibitions emerged among the social and cultural Han Chinese elites in wartime China. Beginning in the early 1940s Fu became well recognized as a great “master” in “modern Chinese literati painting,” whereas Pang’s paintings were not really recognized as “Chinese.”

In the 1940s, Fu referred to his archaistic figure paintings as pictures of figures clad in “the costumes of High Antiquity.” The term “High Antiquity” was carved by Fu in one of the seals that he frequently applied in his paintings in the 1940s; in this seal, four Han Chinese characters—“shanggu yiguan” 上古衣冠 (meaning “Costumes of High Antiquity”)—constitute
the full content (Fig. 3.24). Through such phrasing, Fu consciously linked his project to the traditional archaistic and antiquarianist literati discourse of “High Antiquity” of the Tang period through the Ming and Qing periods. If the “neoclassicist” aesthetic that Pang Xunqin pursued in *Guizhou Mountain People* is a modernist and primitivist interpretation of the classical Confucian notion of *lishi qizuji ye* (“our lost ritual or propriety can be found with the Barbarians”), then, comparatively, the aesthetic sense of “High Antiquity” that Fu tried to evoke among his wartime audiences through his archaistic female figure painting was a collective historical memory of the Han culture of the pre-Qin period. According to this classical concept of “civilization” recorded in traditional Han-Chinese texts, as discussed earlier, Chinese civilization had reached its peak during the Three Ages—especially in the Western Zhou Dynasty, the last of the three dynasties of the High Antiquity.

Since the Northern Song dynasty, generations of Chinese literati artists had continuously appropriated the idea of “High Antiquity” in service of their specific “archaic interest” in evoking the “past” to serve the “present,” by claiming to draw on Gu Kaizhi’s model of figure painting. As an aesthetic ideal that Fu intended to revive, the concept of “High Antiquity” referred to certain specific period styles of early China associated with—or rather, defined by—the Han Chinese cultural tradition that originated from the Central Plains in China. Some significant treatises on calligraphy and painting that adopted the temporal concept “High

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595 A famous example is the late Ming literati-professional painter Chen Hongshou.
Antiquity” include the “Treatise on Calligraphy” (Shuduan 書斷) by Zhang Huaiguan 張懷瓘 (active ca. 713–41) and Records of Celebrated Paintings through the Ages (Lidai minghua ji 歷代名畫記) by Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (815–907). Tang calligrapher Zhang Huaiguan conceptualized the development of the art of calligraphy as successive inventions of script types through the Three Ages of Antiquity (Sangu 三古). In Zhang Huaiguan’s historical formulation, the Yellow Emperor, who claimed his authority in the Central Plains, invented guwen 古文 or “archaic script” in “High Antiquity.” The “cult of the past” is immediately visible in this method of periodization and is closely related to Zhang Yanyuan’s formulation of “Three Ages of Antiquity” in painting.\(^\text{596}\) However, because painting as an art form had a much shorter history than calligraphy, Zhang Yanyuan no longer associated High Antiquity with a mythical past, but rather placed it in historical times, around either the Han and Wei or Jin and the Liu-Song periods.\(^\text{597}\) Zhang wrote:

> In the High Antiquity of painting, workmanship was summary [i.e. concise] while the themes were at once tranquil and noble. Such was the school of Gu [Kaizhi] and Lu [Tanwei 陸探微 (active ca. 450–90). In Middle Antiquity, paintings were fine-scaled, exquisitely finished, and exceedingly beautiful. Such was the school of Zhan [Ziqian 展子虔 (fl. sixth century)] and Zheng [Fashi 鄭法士 (fl. sixth century)]. In recent times, paintings have been a blaze of splendor, with completeness as their goal. The painting of modern men is chaotic and without meaning, the work of mere craftsmen.\(^\text{598}\)


\(^{598}\) Translated from William Reynolds Beal Acker, trans., Some T’ang and Pre-T’ang Texts on Chinese Painting
With a few exceptions, this standard of categorizing the painting of “High Antiquity” is typical of the discourse of art historical writings in the Tang and Song dynasties: the overall formulation of the historical narratives habitually yielded moral and artistic authority to the past. The painting style of “High Antiquity,” which signifies the most remote past in which the origin of the art of painting in Chinese history took root, was perceived as superior to later and contemporary painting styles. Zhang devised a different set of criteria in evaluating painters from different periods, according to which some painters who lived in the earlier period of the Tang dynasty were also given prominence only because painting of his own time had degenerated to mere “craft.” It seems that a hierarchical order was established between the painting style of “High Antiquity” and that of later periods. However, a significant criterion underlying this historicizing formulation and specific mode of periodization is the judgment that the paintings of High Antiquity, due to their pursuit of “tranquil and noble” aesthetic qualities, are superior to the styles of works by “craftsmen.” In general, cultural politics of antiquarianism prevailed in the courtly culture and literati circles in the Song dynasty (960–1279). Written and painted works by canonical authors in the two separate dynasties of the Jin (266–420) and the Tang (618–907) were highly recognized and canonized as the embodiment of a lineage of classical antiquity of the previous Han native elites who reigned the Central Plains. By assembling their collections of existing painting and calligraphy from antiquity—in particular those by authors of the Jin and

Tang dynasties—and studying them as classical models, the Song elites laid implicit claim to the glorious previous dynasties, and made doing so a test of fitness for rule. This culturally Han Chinese literati vision of classical painting style became even more evident in the late Northern Song, when there was a cultural practice of archaistic painting. The scholar-official literati artists Li Gonglin and Mi Fu (1051–1107) were both important antiquarians in this archaic movement, who used their knowledge of antiquity to facilitate their artistic pursuit of reviving specific ancient styles. However, to Mi Fu—a renowned scholar-official, collector, connoisseur, calligrapher, and painter all in one—there was still a disparity between himself and Li Gonglin: “because Li modeled himself on Master Wu [DAOZI 吳道子 (ca. 710–60)], he was never able to escape his influence. I (Mi) chose Gu [KAIZHI]’s High Antiquity instead and did not let one brushstroke be in Master Wu’s manner (emphasize mine).”

Meanwhile, Mi also demonstrated his preference for the archaic style of High Antiquity by his anachronistic style of clothing; sometimes he wore a tall official hat in the style of the Tang dynasty. Looking eccentric to many others who called him MI-DIAN 米癲 (Crazy Mi), Mi’s antiquarian taste attracted the admiration of some literati scholars. For example, his contemporary litteratus Zhang Daheng 張大亨 eulogized Mi as a respectable scholar who loved “following the institutionalized dress code of the Tang and acting in the untrammeled style of the [Eastern] Jin [lofty and eccentric scholars]

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During periods such as the Southern and Northern dynasties and the Song-Yuan and Ming-Qing transitions, when certain Han Chinese regimes—the Song or the Ming—were severely threatened (or finally taken over) by certain non-Han political powers (the “northern barbarians” according to the Han Chinese classical term), archaistic or antiquarian art was enthusiastically practiced by certain loyalist literati artists as a kind of cultural-political practice evoking the remote past of “High Antiquity,” the so-called Golden Age of ancient Chinese civilization in the Three Dynasties. By describing his paintings as depictions of archaic figures clad in shanggu yiguan, conceptually Fu connected his own painting to the age-old cultural tradition among Han Chinese literati of archaistic practices in calligraphy and painting. As discussed above, the term “High Antiquity” had been famously used in the writing of Tang litteratus Zhang Yanyuan, who linked the aesthetics of “High Antiquity” to the painting style of the legendary Eastern Jin painter Gu Kaizhi, the epitome of gentlemen-painters. Zhang’s canonical response to Gu Kaizhi’s model reveals that, to the Han Chinese elite of imperial China from the Tang dynasty and later, due to Gu’s concise workmanship rooted in art forms of the Han and Six Dynasties, he was not interpreted as an artist whose art represented any “primitive” or “uncivilized” state of culture. Rather, Gu’s model was interpreted in the Han Chinese convention as the epitome of the highest, classical state of the Han Chinese “civilization” that had originated and developed during the so-called Three Dynasties—Xia, Shang, and Zhou.
periods—in the region of the Central Plains. According to the Confucian classics, the liyue (ritual and propriety) of the Western Zhou court represented the Golden Age of China that could only be imitated and would never be surpassed by later periods of time. Fu’s response to the legacy of Gu Kaizhi resonates with this persistent literati aesthetic taste in “High Antiquity,” rather than the “High Tang” period style idolized by many other Chinese neo-traditionalist painters in the Republican era. Accordingly, Fu’s conceptualization of Gu’s model as the “primitive schema of our national form” and the aesthetic links between Gu’s model and the literati ink idioms of later periods reveals his centralization and celebration of his perceived classical Han Chinese concept.

Furthermore, within this archaistic framework drawn from traditional Chinese literati cultural practices, one can understand Fu’s rationale for proposing to refashion Chinese painting as an alternative to the mimetic paradigm of realist European painting that Xu Beihong had promoted and institutionalized in the art world of Republican China beginning in the 1920s. In 1935, upon Xu Beihong’s invitation, Fu started teaching “Chinese art history,” “introduction to guohua (national painting)” and “seal carving” in the Department of Art at the NCU. Given the largely positive reception of his paintings since his solo exhibition held in Chongqing in 1942, Fu attempted through his teaching to promote his proposal for refashioning modern Chinese painting. However, Xu Beihong, the chair of the department, politely refused his proposal to
teach courses on the “practice of Chinese painting.” Xu commented privately to his disciple Ai Zhongxin 艾中信 (1915-2003) at the NCU in the 1940s that, “[Fu] Baoshi’s painting is romanticist (langman zhuyi de 浪漫主義的).”

In the early 1930s, Fu received the precious opportunity to study in Japan when he earned a national fellowship from the KMT government, primarily due to Xu’s warmhearted recommendation. Later, when Fu returned to China, it was also upon the invitation of Xu and Xu’s student Lv Sibai that Fu got the teaching position at the NCU, which directly provided a superior platform for him to become an influential scholar in the modernization of Chinese art historiography. Nevertheless, Xu’s private comment on Fu’s painting illuminates the difference between these artists in their conception, evaluation system, and technical solution for creating “modern Chinese painting” in the 1940s. In his teaching, Xu encouraged his students to draw their subjects directly from modern social life; he promoted an infusion of what he perceived as a “realist European” means of mimetic representation, chiefly through academic drawing and oil painting techniques, with Chinese media and to Chinese subjects. In the early 1940s, Xu reformed the curriculum of the Department of Art at the NCU to promote his idea that “academic drawing should serve as the foundation for all kinds of plastic art.” He institutionalized the mimetic realist paradigm of European academic drawing in not only the foundational courses of

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601 Information provided by Chang Renxia in an interview. See Lin Mu, “Fu Baoshi Xu Beihong guanxi tan – cong Fu Baoshi renwu huazhan tanqi,” in Association of Fu Baoshi Studies (Fu Baoshi yanjiuhui) ed., Fu Baoshi yanjiu wenji (Collection of Studies on Fu Baoshi) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2009), 233.

602 Ibid.
oil painting and watercolor in the major of xihua (Western painting) but also the first two years of mandatory, foundational courses of zhongguohua (Chinese painting).  

Personally, Xu recognized Fu’s works of ink painting as highly accomplished. Nevertheless, under the wartime circumstances of the 1940s, it is highly possible that the aesthetic quality of “transcendence” and spiritual beauty that Fu’s painting conveyed, to Xu, revealed a strong interest in searching for an “ideal” state of archaistic beauty—to the extent that the artist might have almost lost sight of the social reality “here and now” in which he was living. Such an “idealistic” attitude of art creation seems to have developed in a direction opposite to that of the socially engaged paradigm of Realism (Xian’shi zhuyi 現實主義) that Xu was promoting at the time. In the 1940s, Xu highlighted the socio-critical strain of Realism in his teaching, encouraging his students at the NCU to depict people who lived at the bottom of society, as in the art of critical realists such as the French painter Courbet in the middle nineteenth century. Accordingly, the “Realist” attitude of the artists toward social concerns was strongly emphasized in Xu’s teaching in the 1940s.

In the 1920s, while discussing different paradigms of French painting, Xu used the Han Chinese opposing concepts of xieyi and xie’shi to refer to the paradigm of “idealism” that he saw in Chavannes’s work as opposed to that of “realism” that he saw in Rodin’s work. In Xu’s

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603 Wan Xinhua, “Yetan zhongyang daxue shifanxueyuan yishuxuexi de zhongguohua jiaoxue (On the issues of teaching Chinese painting in the Department of Art at the National Central University (then named Teacher’s College at the Central University),)” in Meishu yu sheji (Art and Design) (2011) no.1: 141-146.
theoretical formulation, the classical Chinese literati concept and aesthetic paradigm of *xiéyì* was thus equated with the modern Chinese concept of *lìxiàng zhuyì* 理想主義 (idealism). The latter, as an ideological concept, was closely associated with the European literary and art schools of “romanticism” (translated into Chinese in the Republican era as *lǎngmàn zhuyì* 浪漫主義) that emerged in the eighteenth century. That is to say, Xu analogized the conceptual dichotomy constructed between the European paradigms of “realism” and “romanticism” to that of different schools of traditional Chinese ink painting. As Shane McCausland’s comparison between the female figure paintings by Xu Beihong and the Japanese painter Murakami Kagaku 村上華岳 (1888-1939) reaveals, Xu’s understanding or “belief” was that the expressive ideal of “spiritual resonance” or *qìyún* in a painting was founded in mimetic realism, which was remarkably close to modern *nihonga* painting practices.⁶⁰⁵ Both the Chinese artist of *guohua* and the Japanese artist of *nihonga* attempted to marry the traditional Asian ink-outline drapery styles of China and India with their trainings in life drawing of the nude. In contrast, despite of Fu Baoshi’s inspirations drawn heavily from Japanese scholarship on East Asian art history and his borrowing of certain pictorial elements of *nihonga*, he attempted to take a locally historicized approach to understanding what “reality” meant in traditional Han Chinese cultural domain and how the consciousness of artists should be asserted in their engagement with the “reality” of their own time. In the realm of figure painting, Fu appreciated the quality of “transcendence”

conveyed through his selected line and ink methods of the medieval Chinese models of “literati painting”—a culturally Han Chinese tradition of painting that he perceived to have been initiated in the period of the Jin dynasty, developed from the Southern dynasties through the Southern Song dynasty. To him, xieyi was a distinctively Chinese paradigm endowed with his ideal “national spirit,” a “transcendental” way of perceiving things in human life and the cosmos. Meanwhile, the development of the paradigm xieyi exemplified in his selected archaistic models of “literati painting” epitomizes a culturally Han Chinese pattern in which the scholar artists identified as shi responded to social reality during moments of national crisis.

Positioned against “Western realism” in the discursive field of the Republican Chinese art world, the Han Chinese literati aesthetic paradigm of xieyi was considered to be an “Oriental” modernist style set to a premodern tune, similar to the case of the discoursive construction of bunjinga that arose in Japan in the 1920s.606 It was to this classical Han Chinese mode of subjective expression based on the aesthetic value of abstraction in calligraphic brushworks that some Chinese and Japanese scholars and painters harked back as the evidence of Eastern “progress” or “modernity” when they saw that Post-Impressionist painting in Europe crossed over to paradigms beyond representation.607 It is true that in the early practices of painting during the Eastern Jin Dynasty, Fu admitted, “yijing 意境 [the concept conveyed through

artistic expression] was not yet prioritized as much [as the very standard of high quality art like in the case of literati art from the time of the Song dynasty].” Nevertheless, drawing on Japanese scholarship, Fu argued that Gu had already painted with a self-awareness of the conceptual implication of his formal style. In the later practices of literati painting in imperial China, an increasing self-consciousness of the artists in their prioritization of yijing, in Fu’s view, led this brand of “Chinese painting” to “transcend” the superficial concern for mimetic realism. By quoting the Tang litteratus Zhang Yanyuan’s *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記, Fu emphasized, “[Gu] Kaizhi’s works were excellent in ‘expressing through conceptualism.’”

Fu’s preference for the period styles of the figurative art of the “Han and Six Dynasties” in his female figure paintings of the 1940s should also be contextualized in the larger neo-traditionalist discursive formulation in the art world of Republican China of the origin of “Chinese painting.” In the early 1930s, theoretical discourse surrounding traditional literati painting as one specific category of “national art” linked the theories of painting proposed by two early Chinese artists and theorists—that is, Gu Kaizhi’s emphasis on the significance of “dotting the eyes” in figure painting and Xie He’s “spiritual resonance” established as the highest principle of painting in his “Six Laws.” This aesthetic connection, for example, was theorized by the intellectual and artist Feng Zikai 豐子愷 (1898–1975) in his 1934 essay “Reading the History of Chinese Painting.” Feng opened his essay by stating that, in figure painting, Chinese painters paid specific attention to the method of depicting the eyeballs—the so-called ‘dotting
the key point of the eye.’ Because depicting the eyeballs was [conventionally] considered to be extremely important, [Chinese] painters were normally hesitant to dot them and would wait until the last phase [of completing the painting]. Two ancient painters were famous for their hesitance to dot the eyes of the figures they depicted—Wei Xie of the Jin dynasty and his disciple Gu Kaizhi.”

Feng quoted from the Book of Jin Dynasty that Gu Kaizhi “would dot the eyes of the figures he painted several years later. Someone asked him [why the eyeballs were not dotted for years], he answered that ‘[in figure painting the depiction of] clothes, bodies and appearances are not very important. The eyes are the decisive factor [for the painter] to capture the spirit [of a person].’” Based on this early Chinese art theory, Feng considered “figure painting” to be the traditional genre for showing viewers how qiyun could be attained in “Chinese painting.” As he explained, “it is hard to describe how to depict the shenyun 神韻 (spiritual resonance) of mountain and vegetation, but it would be easier to explain how to depict figures. Because the spirit and charm of figures mainly lie in the expressions of their eyes.” Moreover, he argued, “certain body posture is particularly applicable for certain eye expression.” At the end of the article, Feng concluded that, “[one who is] reading Chinese painting history should not rigidly adhere to the facts but understand the intention [underlining the narration of the facts]. Just like in viewing a Chinese painting, one should not limit his or her vision to verisimilitude but rather


609 Feng Zikai, “Du huashi (Reading the history of Chinese painting),” 615.
appreciate the *shenyun* of it."\(^{610}\) The *shenyun* that Feng adopted could be easily taken to be a combination of two painting theories formulated in the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420) and the Southern dynasties (420–589): the *shen* 神 (spiritual) in Gu Kaizhi’s theory of *chuan’shen* 傳神 (conveying the spirit [of a person or any other living object in painting]) in the Eastern Jin and the *yun* 韻 in Xie He’s theory of *qiyun* 氣韻 (spiritual resonance) in the Southern dynasties. In this context, the terms *qiyun* and *shenyun* are even to some extent interchangeable, as both stress the centrality of “inspiriting” certain living objects in a painting—rather than a mimetic paradigm of verisimilitude which, in reality, might also be applied to achieve such a “inspiriting” effect.

In his 1934 “Reading the History of Chinese Painting,” Feng intended to generate a resurgence of the traditional literati artistic value ascribed to *xieyi* in the late imperial period of China, by emphasizing Gu Kaizhi’s alleged centralization of the step of *dianjing* 點睛 (dotting the eyes) in his process of figure painting. This legendary story about Gu Kaizhi was formulated in Song dynasty literati discourse on the “untrammeled” state of mind and the “spontaneity” embodied in “abbreviated brushworks.” In his theoretical formulation, that is to say, Feng attempted to connect the emphasis on “dotting the eyeballs” proposed in Gu’s painting theory during the Eastern Jin with the post-Tang literati disdain for verisimilitude. Feng rationalized: “I think the reason for the special emphasis on dotting the eyeballs in Chinese painting is that,

\(^{610}\) Feng Zikai, “Du huashi (Reading the history of Chinese painting)”, 617.
essentially, the goal of Chinese painting is not to achieve *xing’si* 形似 (verisimilitude) but *qiyun* (spiritual resonance)." Nevertheless, in fact, this was a distorted understanding of *qiyun*, since in its traditional usage *qiyun* or spiritual resonance was not always antithetical to verisimilitude. Huang Xiufu’s *Yizhou Minghua lu* argued, in contrast, that verisimilitude and spirit resonance were equally important. Moreover, it is noteworthy that both Gu and Xie were painters who excelled in figure painting. Situated in their original contexts, Gu Kaizhi’s theories and Xie He’s “Six Laws” were not composed to disdain the value of verisimilitude or the paradigm of mimesis. Gu and Xie’s principles of painting were not exclusively theorized according to the aesthetic values of the scholar-official class in the social hierarchy of the Eastern Jin and Southern dynasties.

Fu’s writing on early Chinese art history in the late 1930s and 1940s reveals that he entirely understood that the theoretical analogy between Xie He’s “Six Laws” and “literati painting” could only have been constructed by the generations of literati artists and writers who came later than the Six Dynasties. In his manuscript “Chinese Art History: From High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties,” Fu suggested that Xie He’s “Six Laws” were theorized partially based on the practices of some artists including Xie himself as experts in the field of “figure painting with a

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612 As Aida Wong pointed out, Huang’s *Yizhou minghua lu* argued that “Of the Six Laws, verisimilitude and spirit resonance are the most important. If spirit resonance is there but verisimilitude is absent, then character is greater than refinement; if verisimilitude is there but spirit resonance is absent, then the painting is beautiful but lacking in substance.” See Aida Wong, *Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 61.
Buddhist theme” during the Six Dynasties. Nevertheless, Fu also argued that, although “the so-called qiyun (spiritual resonance), gufa (bone method) and so on [listed in Xie’s Six Laws] were theorized based on figure painting practices, artists and connoisseurs in the later periods considered varied due to different concerns.” Fu’s figure paintings in the 1940s reveal that he shared the opinion of Feng Zikai that the emphasis on “dotting the eyes” was a crucial aspect of Gu Kaizhi’s theory of chuan’shen (conveying the spirit) in figure painting. This shared understanding should be considered in relation to Fu and Feng’s experiences of studying in Japan during the early Republican period, around the 1920s and early 1930s. In Meiji Japan, as discussed earlier, Fenollosa and Okakura launched the trend of pan-Asianism in the fields of philosophy and art, which involved making an image of toyo or the “Orient.” To introduce the aesthetic “ideals of the Orient” to Euro-American audiences, in particular, Okakura engaged in the reinterpretation of East Asian art as “spiritual.” In 1903, Okakura composed in English and published in London his book The Ideals of the East: With Special Reference to the Art of Japan. There is a chapter in this book on the art of Han and the Six Dynasties of China, “the first wave of continental influence which swept over the art of primitive Japan” before the sixth century. In this chapter, Okakura introduced Gu Kaizhi’s painting theory of chuanshen to Euro-American audiences. He wrote that Gu Kaizhi “was the earliest one who made the point that in the process of painting there must be a concentrated tone. He said that the secret of portraiture lies in the

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613 Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo meishu shi: shanggu zhì liuchao (Chinese Art History: From High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties),” in Fu Baoshi meishu wenji xubian, 85.

614 Ibid.
expression conveyed through the eyes of the depicted figure." During the 1920s, inspired by Japanese scholarship on bunjinga (the Japanese version of “literati painting” that was a localization of Chinese ink painting in Japan), Chinese scholar-painter Chen Hengke reassessed the value of Chinese literati painting, emphasizing qiyun as its primary tenet. In this neo-traditionalist discourse aimed at reviving Chinese literati painting, the term “literati painting” was frequently referred to as (and thus equated with) “Chinese painting.” To these Japanese-trained Chinese artists and theorists, it was self-evident that the neo-traditionalist revival of Chinese literati painting—rather than of any other traditional paintings in China—was the most relevant, exemplary model of “national painting” in China. According to their rationale, not only the decline of the scholar-officials as a social class after the fall of the Qing dynasty but also the introduction of Western realist painting as an embodiment of the objectivity in scientific and empirical study had led to the waning of literati painting as a tradition. In Fu’s writing in the 1930s and 1940s, the term wenrenhua (literati painting) was sometimes equated with the term xieyi hua (painting executed in the paradigm of xieyi), resonating with Feng Zikai and Chen Hengke’s theories about how “literati painting” was concerned with “spiritual resonance” rather than the “verisimilitude” favored in ink painting. This Japanese-inflected discourse surrounding literati painting stressed xieyi as a distinctively “Chinese” paradigm of painting that was both alternative and superior to the mimetic paradigm of European Academicism.

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It was in this sense that Fu expressed his dissent about the tendency to understand *xie’shi* as a narrow, mimetic European academic paradigm of realism. In an essay published in 1947, Fu argued that the relation “between Chinese painting and *xie’shi* is not only a problem about fine art in terms of idea, tool, material, technique, and form, but also a serious issue about Chinese culture.” In 1948, Fu gave a lecture in the Department of Art at the NCU, in which he articulated his thoughts about the relationship between Chinese painting and *xie’shi* in the cultural context of traditional Chinese painting, implicitly in response to the mimetic paradigm of realism that Xu Beihong had begun pioneering in the mid-1920s. Against the prevailing idea that “traditional Chinese painting is not excelled in depicting things realistically,” Fu argued that Chinese “painters, historians, connoisseurs of all the succeeding dynasties have been discussing the relationship [between painting and realism] since the early Tang period.” That is to say, whether a painting could be considered “realistic” depended on how one would define what “reality” really was. Fu stressed that the literati aesthetic discourse of *xieyi*, which he took to characterize the paradigm of “Chinese painting,” prioritized the “subjectivity of the painter” that was conveyed through artistic expression. “Compared to [traditional] Western European painting,” he argued, “[traditional] Chinese painting is more interested in expression than in representation.”

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617 Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguohuihua zhi lijie yu xinshang,” published in Nanjing in *Guoli zhongyang daxue xiaokan* (Journal of the National Central University), no. 53 of the resumed issues of this journal in 1948.
between European modernism and the Han Chinese tradition of literati painting as Oriental Modern. To Fu, the paradigm of *xieyi*, which is fundamental to the practice of literati painting, epitomizes the untrammeled mind of those traditional Chinese intellectuals who considered themselves to be “amateur artists,” and who took up their everyday writing tools—Chinese brush and ink—to express in their paintings their attitudes and thoughts on social reality. Fu identified himself with this group of traditional Han Chinese literati artists by applying the paradigm of *xieyi* to refashioning modern Chinese painting in his time.

If Fu’s neo-traditionalist discourse of Chinese painting was intended to be instrumental in “wartime propagation” or patriotic mobilization, it would have served this social function by communicating among Han Chinese intellectuals. Indeed, the majority of Fu’s contemporaneous audiences and patrons were Han Chinese male intellectuals, who constituted the main elite class of Republican China—regardless whether they were part of the ruling (pro-KMT) or the revolutionary (pro-CCT) sub-class of this main elite class. As the primary archetype for Fu’s 1940s female figure painting drawn from the *Chuci*, the female figures in the British *Admonitions* scroll are depicted as playing out moralizing tales that teach proper behavior for women according to the Confucian canon at the heart of traditional Chinese society and intellectual thoughts. Given its female archetype’s close ties with the Confucian moral and aesthetic ideals of womanhood, it is tempting to infer that Fu’s making of archaic female images was mainly impacted by three entangled factors in wartime Chongqing, the temporary capital of
the Nationalist-controlled region. The first factor was the traditional local convention of China, common since the late imperial period, in which ink painting was made, viewed, and used as “elegant debts” in various exchanges among social elites and government officials who were mainly male Han Chinese.618 The second was the wartime trend of promoting the past highlights of Chinese art as “national glories.” These first two factors provided impetus for most of the guohua practices in Chongqing during the 1940s. Then, as the wartime political and cultural center in the rear front controlled by the KMT party-state, Chongqing became the new center of modern Chinese art. The peculiarity of wartime Chongqing as a significant ecosystem for the development of modern Chinese art lies in its population, who constituted the main audiences of the burgeoning art exhibitions and other cultural events. As a news report published on March 25, 1945, in the Central Daily in Chongqing pointed out, “since the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, almost every week there have been two or three art exhibitions held in the wartime capital of Chongqing in the rear front. [Among these exhibitions] guohua (traditional Chinese ink painting) have accounted for 85%, followed by xihua (oil painting) and woodblock print [exhibitions], and a few calligraphy [exhibitions].”619 Obviously, traditional Chinese ink painting was at the time much more profitable than other forms of visual art including oil painting and woodblock prints in the Chongqing art market. Among the wartime refugees who


had been displaced to Sichuan from urban areas of the eastern coast, there were large numbers of
government officials and intellectuals and scholars who moved with their related political and
cultural institutes, as well as ordinary urbanites. Therefore, like in the imperial Chinese
convention in which ink painting was made, used, and understood as “elegant debts,” guohua
that inherited the traditional Han Chinese format of ink painting was frequently found in the
Republican Chinese elite circles of exchanges among social celebrities, high officials, and
painters. Meanwhile, wartime practices of guohua were centralized in the public sphere by
governmental ideology, as part of the mainstream cultural trend of promoting “national pride”
among mass audiences. Official art exhibitions directly sponsored by the Nationalist government
(and some other exhibitions that were indirectly sponsored by it), such as the Third National Fine
Arts Exhibition and exhibitions organized by the Zhongguo meishuhui or “Chinese Association
of Art,” were closely controlled by high officials in charge of propaganda in the KMT party-state,
including Zhang Daofan and Liang Hancao 梁寒操 (1898–1975). A considerably stable
mechanism of the supply and demand of art was developed in a chain of different spaces in this
crowded and chaotic wartime capital—from the governmental institutes to the art academies to
the civil art market. In this mechanism, different artists’ works catered to different tastes from
widely divergent segments of society; accordingly, they would choose different locations for
their exhibitions and have different audiences and regular clients. The third factor was the
wartime promotion of the neo-Confucian ideal of womanhood in the New Life Movement
launched by the Nationalist government. Zhang Hua’s *Admonitions* text and the associated scroll, attributed to Gu Kaizhi, both set out that by submissively and loyally serving their lord, women are following the cosmic order that allows them to play a key role in promoting the social welfare and harmony for family and state. Furthermore, as some scholars point out, it may have also been assumed that the elite women’s responsibility was illustrated in order to influence men toward moral behavior. Although the moral lessons presented in Zhang Hua’s prose and its illustration focus on women’s conduct, the lessons were conceived to instruct both genders about morality and individual responsibility for promoting social order.\(^{620}\)

In the 1920s, Fu had emphasized the centrality of Confucian ethical and moral concerns in early Chinese figurative illustrations. Fu’s historical narrative of the development of “Chinese figure painting” is a culture-based Han Chinese one, operated in a neo-Confucian intellectual framework that centralized the emergence and development of the aesthetic culture of the Han Chinese as its narrative axis. In his *Historical Outlines of Chinese Painting*, Fu attempted to trace the original “position” of “art”—especially “painting”—in the history of Chinese culture through the records in two early Chinese texts that had been established as the orthodox Classics of Confucianism in the twelfth century during the Song dynasty: the *Analects of Confucius* and the *Rites of Zhou*. By the end of the Han dynasty, the *Analects of Confucius* had been recognized as one of the key texts of Confucianism; in the Song dynasty its status as one of the *Four Books* of

orthodox Confucianism was raised above that of the older (Han dynasty) *Five Classics*. As for the *Rites of Zhou*, it was also in the Song dynasty that it was given special recognition by being placed among the Five Classics as a substitute for the long-lost sixth Classic work, the *Classic of Music*. Fu did not consider early practices of “Chinese painting” within the framework defined by the term *yishu*, a modern Chinese term appropriated from the Japanese translation of the Western concept of “arts.” Rather, he chose to associate early practices of “Chinese painting” and “Chinese music” with the subject of *yi* (arts) used in the passages of the *Analects of Confucius*: “The Master said, Set your heart upon the Way, support yourself by its power, lean upon Goodness, seek distraction in the arts.” In Fu’s reading, *yi*—listed in the *Analects of Confucius* as the last (and least important) part of the cultivation of a Confucian intellectual—shared its meaning with *yi* in the term *liu yi* (Six Arts) that was recorded in the *Rites of Zhou*. In the *Rites of Zhou*, *liu yi* referred to six courses listed in the curriculum of the aristocratic school in the Western Zhou court. In this way, Fu reconceptualized the training in the Six Arts, originally designed for young members of the Western Zhou royal family, as the prototype of his perceived classical Han Chinese concept of arts. Accordingly, his narration of the history of “Chinese painting” also operated within this cultural tradition that he perceived to be authentically Chinese.

In the aforementioned manuscript, “Chinese Painting: From High Antiquity to the Six

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Dynasties,” composed from the late 1930s through 1941, Fu talked about how the didactic messages of Zhang Hua’s prose and Gu Kaizhi’s illustration in his Admonitions scroll were “not only applicable in his [Zhang’s] own time but also established the model of proper behavior as the norms of womanhood for later generations.”623 His reading emphasized the social function of the arts for moral and ethical cultivation in the political-philosophical frame of the Confucianism, which resonated with some other neo-traditionalists during the wartime—including Feng Zikai, who offered a reading of yishu (arts) during his wartime displacement in Guilin, another province in the southwestern interior of the KMT-controlled rear front. In 1938, Feng gave a talk there to state his understanding of the major social function of art. In this talk, Feng adapted a nationalist ideology that emphasized patriotism to legitimize his wartime ideal of making art informed by Buddhist and Confucian thoughts. Feng implicitly rejected the understanding of yishu (Art) as pure form or something only of artistic concern, arguing that “art can build the nation” due to its social function in the “cultivation of spiritual life” and the “collective preservation of righteousness and humanity.” In this sense, Feng argued, art could give people the spirit that “controls the range of life,” which meant that, during the wartime, art was all the more important for its potential function in the nation’s conservation and reconstruction.624

623 Fu Baoshi, “Zhongguo meishu shi: shanggu zhi liuchao (Chinese Art History: From High Antiquity to the Six Dynasties),” in Fu Baoshi meishu wenji xubian, 80.
Earlier in his 1929 *Historical Outlines of Chinese Painting*, Fu had traced the origin of “Chinese painting” to the culture of ritual and arts recorded in the Confucian texts that had been canonized in the Song dynasty as the orthodox Classics of Confucianism. Fu quoted the Northern Song scholar-official painter Zhang Dunli, whose words echoed the social values ascribed to the practices of painting by Confucianism: “it is true that painting, as a kind of *yi* (Art), might look trivial; however, it [can] persuade people to study from the good and keep away from the evil by visual means. How could we equate [this art] with those [made by] ordinary artisans?” Then, Fu commented, “thus we know that during the [ancient] time the purpose of painting was vastly different than it is today. Nowadays, [given the fact that] Science is promoted and thus flourishing, it seems that this historical fact [of the significant role of art in moral education in ancient China] is disdained accordingly.”  

Fu’s thread of quotations and commentary like this implicitly connects his historical narrative of “Chinese painting” with the legacy of the Han literati culture from High Antiquity to medieval China. As for the “rapid development of Chinese painting and music” in early China due to the fact that the Classics of Confucianism promoted the social function of art as an auxiliary instrument to “political admonition and moral cultivation,” Fu then commented, the “[later] development of art [in China] was toward the direction far beyond being a [mere] ‘auxiliary,’” but one still had to recognize that “this was the
road that art must have followed during its early development.”

Given the wartime context of the Nationalist-controlled area where the related ideologies of Han Chinese nationalism and neo-Confucianism were promoted by the KMT party-state, it is tempting to think that Fu’s artistic enterprise was basically following the KMT party line in the 1940s.

However, Fu’s appropriation of Gu Kaizhi’s model was not intended to nostalgically evoke a cultural memory of imperial China in general or to propagate the kind of neo-Confucian ideology promoted by the authoritarian KMT party-state in the 1940s. To explore this nuance, let us first revisit Fu’s 1929 *Historical Outlines of Chinese Painting*. After the 1919 May Fourth Movement, when a new generation of intellectuals introduced the category of “folk art” and the Marxist-inflected concept of “proletarian art” to China, the scope of and frame of reference for “Chinese art” and “Chinese art history” were radically changed. In these iconoclastic paradigms of reconceptualizing “Chinese art,” “literati painting” as an artistic past of China was simply criticized as either “aristocratic art” or “art about mountain and woods”—that is, an art that was mistaken as purely individualist and antisocial by certain May Fourth cultural reformers. In response to such contemporary, iconoclastic discourse on traditional “literati painting” as “aristocratic” and “escapist,” Fu attempted to explore the ontological revolutionary potential of “literati painting” as a culturally Han Chinese intellectual art tradition. By so doing, he believed that “literati painting” as a Han Chinese cultural tradition could be transformed into a socially

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626 Ibid.
engaged type of intellectual art in modern Chinese society.

Fu’s summary of the three characteristics of literati painting in this book demonstrates that such specific social concerns underlay his study of literati painting. He argued that “the so-called literati painting” meant “the so-called Southern School,” which was on behalf of “[the interests of] the civilians.” In contrast, “the so-called Northern School” was on behalf of “[the interests of] the aristocrats” in “the court.” In this system that he reconceptualized for evaluating “Chinese painting,” “court painting” was characterized as “focused on coloration and contour drawing, purely objective, complicated and difficult to make, lacking revelation of individuality, and [undertaken on behalf of the] aristocratic.” In contrast, he characterized “literati painting” as an art “focused on ink washes, more subjective than objective, easily executed in ink splashes, self-expression, and [undertaken on behalf of the] civilian.” He claimed in his preface for the book that the first goal of this book was to “promote the Southern School.”627 Fu explicitly drew from the discursive construction of literati painting as part of the “Southern School,” a term established by the late Ming Dong Qichang. Dong’s treatises taxonomied landscape paintings into the so-called Southern and Northern Schools, terms that drew upon the medieval Chinese discursive division of Buddhist teaching into schools of “Gradual” and “Sudden” Enlightenment. The term “Southern School” was thus equated with what Dong perceived as “literati painting.” Drawing from Dong’s theoretical model, the standards of historical evaluation and art criticism

627 Fu Baoshi, Zhongguo Huihua bianqian shigang (Historical Outlines of Chinese Painting) (Shanghai: Nanjing shudian, 1931); reprinted in Fu Baoshi meishu wenji, 2.
that Fu applied in his art historical narrative reinforced the binary dichotomy of “court painting” and “literati painting.” With such a series of dichotomies, Fu argued against the iconoclastic attack on traditional “literati painting” as aristocratic and escapist in nature. Fu’s theory, which was actually as simplistic as that of his opponents, epitomizes a May-Fourth-inflected neo-traditionalist way of constructing “literati painting” as a native “art for the people,” practiced by Chinese literati-scholars as a traditional counterpart to the community of Republican Chinese intellectual artists among whom Fu himself was a member.

This conceptual framework of opposition that Fu established between “court painting” and “literati painting” in the late 1920s provides a key to understanding the symbolic and social meanings that Fu ascribed to Gu Kaizhi’s model. At first glance, there seem to exist certain contradictions within Fu’s arguments. One of his main arguments was that Gu Kaizhi’s model represented the “primitive schema of [our] national form” and could explain “what Chinese painting was.” The other argument was that the Han Chinese tradition of “literati painting” characterized by the paradigm of xieyi was the epitome of China’s “national spirit” embodied in painting. If this argument is logically self-sufficient, then Gu Kaizhi’s model is proven to be the “primitive schema” of xieyi. Even though the extant paintings associated with Gu Kaizhi were figure paintings characterized by a graceful linear style rather than “ink washes,” the literati

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628 As pointed out by Yin Jinan, during the Ming period some “court painters,” such as Xie Huan, would make paintings that would be categorized to be “literati paintings” technically and conceptually. Yin Jinan, “Mingdai gongting huajia Xie Huan de yeyu shenghuo yu fang Mi-shi yunshan huihua (The Ming court painter Xie Huan’s spare time and his paintings of cloudy mountains after Mi Fu’s style),” in Yishushi yanjiu (Studies on Art History), No. 9 (December, 2007)(Guangzhou: Zhongshan University Press, December 2007).
discourse of the Southern Song ink painting in yipin (untrammeled) style could provide Fu a historically grounded device to argue that the tradition of “literati painting” was distant from that of “court painting.” This argument, accordingly, could help to bridge the Eastern Jin Gu Kaizhi’s figurative model as a “primitive schema” of China’s “national form”—that is, the paradigm of xieyi—with the Ming-Qing literati painting (as represented by Shitao’s landscape) as the full development of this distinctively “Chinese” schema or paradigm.

The yipin style of ink painting—a specific period style that Fu perceived to be associated with the Han Chinese literati tradition of painting—had been highly regarded in the Han Chinese literati milieu. In contrast, this yipin style was not really welcomed by the imperial art institution established by the court. In Han Chinese literati discourse since the Song dynasty, the relatively abbreviated and somewhat “amateurish” or “spontaneous” looking of literati paintings and calligraphy had been highly regarded as ink works in the yipin style. By associating the aesthetics of their ink works with Gu Kaizhi’s model as the aesthetic epitome of “High Antiquity,” these later literati groups projected their imagination onto the legendary Eastern Jin artist Gu Kaizhi as a lofty scholar and literati artist with autonomous subjectivity who would “violate the ink convention through a highly cultivated manner.” Within this literati discourse, accordingly, the ink works in the later periods that were executed in a highly abbreviated style tended to be considered an expression of the authors’ untrammbled mind as shi—not only gentlemen-artists highly cultivated and well versed in Han-Chinese classical literature but also Confucian scholars
and/or politicians concerned with public affairs.

Fu’s Chinese art historiography from the late 1930s through the 1940s, by linking together aesthetically and socially in a historical context selected period styles relating to traditional literati painting, attempted to reconceptualize *xìeyì* as a culturally Han Chinese intellectual paradigm of art. Within this art historical framework, Fu reconceptualized the “transcendental” style of the extant paintings traditionally ascribed to Gu Kaizhi as “the primitive schema of [our] national art form” embodying the “national spirit,” which defined the central relevance of “Chinese painting” in modern China.

3.3. Fu Baoshi’s *Mountain Spirit* as a Political Allegory of Chinese Revolution

During the 1940s, intriguingly, Fu’s archaistic female figure painting received acclaim not only from KMT officials but also the CCP-affiliated intellectual Guo Moruo and the CCP leader Zhou Enlai 周恩來 (1898–1976), who was at the time a primary patron of Guo’s cultural activities in Chongqing. These prospective audiences of Fu’s were all Han Chinese male elites active in political and intellectual realms. In terms of political stance, however, they belonged to competing parties. Among the multiple paintings featuring “Mountain Spirit” that Fu made in the mid-1940s, the one painted in 1946 was obviously his favorite one. Fu inscribed on the upper left: “Of all the versions [of Mountain Spirit that] I painted, this one is relatively the most satisfactory. Does a ghost really exist?” Why did the artist question (both to himself and his audience) if a
“ghost” “really exist[ed]?” It is worth noting that, although Fu’s 1946 *Mountain Spirit* drew the female archetype from the *Admonitions* scroll in British Museum, the seal applied on the bottom right corner of this painting is not the one featuring *shanggu yiguan*. Instead, the term featured in the seal applied is *qiming weixin* 其命維新, classical words cited from a pre-Qin ritual song eulogizing Wen Wang 文王 (the Sage-King Wen [of the Western Zhou]) compiled in the *Shi jing*. The second line of the ode reads: “Zhousui jiubang 周雖舊邦 (Zhou is an old people), *qiming weixin* 其命維新 (but its charge is new).”⁶²⁹ The words *qiming weixin* literally mean “the vitality of life lies in revolution.” The term *weixin* 維新 was appropriated by Japanese reformers to refer to the concept of “restoration” in the Meiji Restoration (*Meiji ishin* 明治維新) in the late nineteenth century. In the context of Japanese modernization, *weixin* (in classical Chinese) / *ishin* (in Japanese) meant to make internal changes while maintaining the current system, in contrast with revolution. Although the meaning of *weixin* could be multiple, what is definitely signified by this term is the act of renewal. In the following, I study the political implications of Fu’s 1946 *Mountain Spirit* by contextualizing the painting in the highly politicized and contested intellectual discourse of the 1920s through the 1940s on the historical significance of the Warring States period, particularly Qu Yuan’s position in this period of great social changes in ancient Chinese history. Some novel iconographic and aesthetic attributes of this female image, I argue, resonate strongly with Guo Moruo’s Marxist-inflected historical

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studies on national antiquity from the 1940s and his historical play *Qu Yuan*, which was staged in Chongqing in 1941. Thematically and stylistically, Fu’s seemingly archaistic female figure painting drawn from the *Chuci* was endowed with a visual potential to communicate to Chinese audiences a vision of Chinese Revolution in the mid-1940s.

To be sure, in the dynastic history of Fu’s envisioned “Chinese nation” as a Han Chinese cultural domain, there is an extremely long tradition in which the historical episodes when the text of the *Chuci* received special attention among Confucian scholars were the same moments of “national crisis” when certain Han Chinese regimes underwent political instability or even collapsed, especially when certain Han Chinese regimes were threatened by non-Han “barbarian” powers. For example, in his late age, the Confucianist Guo Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) of the Southern Song dynasty composed *Collected Exegesis of the Chuci* (*Chuci ji zhu* 楚辭集注) in response to the political crisis that he perceived to be encountered by the Southern Song regime. For another example, in his late age, the Confucianist Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–92) wrote *Comprehensive Explanations of the Chuci* (*Chuci tongshi* 楚辭通釋) in response to the political crisis after the Ming Empire was conquered by the Manchu, who then established the Qing Empire (the Ming-Qing transition). From the late Qing through the Republican era, in the wake of the difficult sociopolitical crises that China encountered on the world stage, discussions and debates on the political implications of the *Chuci* became prevalent among Chinese

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intelligentsia again. As the civil service system and many of its related policies were abolished, the position of the Classics of Confucianism as the official-orthodox and mainstream ideology in Chinese society underwent a collapse from the late Qing period through the iconoclastic May Fourth Movement in the Republican era. Accordingly, as opposed to dynastic Confucian scholars who had identified with Qu Yuan, Republican Chinese intellectuals, engaging with this period of unprecedented sociopolitical transformations, debated about the “authentic” historical position of the *Chuci* and even the existence of Qu Yuan as a historical figure in *guoshi* 国史 or national history during their reevaluation of *guogu* or national antiquity.

Hu Shi, the prominent promoter of the May Fourth New Culture Movement, proposed in the early 1920s the idea that, “Qu Yuan is a composite, an arrow-mound-like figure.” Hu’s point was made in a speech that he gave on the *Chuci* in 1921 and published in his article “Reading the *Chuci*” in 1922.⁶³¹ Although Hu did not deny the existence of Qu Yuan directly, he attempted to “emancipate” the *Chuci* from the political-moral view of Confucian exegesis and redefine it as a masterpiece of “literature.” He argued that, “Qu Yuan might have been the author of some of the twenty-five poems in the *Chuci*. Nevertheless, at that time Qu Yuan was merely an arrow-mound in literature. Later on, the old pedants of the Han dynasty read the ‘appropriate sense of righteousness between the monarch and his ministers’ [as the main theme promoted in Confucianism as the official ideology of] their own time into the texts of the *Chuci*. Since then,

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Qu Yuan has been used as an arrow-mound in [the Confucian education of] ethics.” Against this age-long Confucian-moralist way of reading, Hu Shi emphasized the “literary value” of the *Chuci*. “To find out the literary interest of the *Chuci* itself,” he proposed, “we have to overthrow the legend of Qu Yuan by breaking down all the old [Confucian] exegesis [surrounding him]. Then, the literary value of the *Chuci* could gain the possibility to be recovered.” On November 3, 1922, Liang Qichao published his *Studies on Qu Yuan* in which, in the opening paragraph, he followed the path that Hu Shi suggested, emphasizing the “literary” value of the *Chuci* and claiming that Qu Yuan was “the ancestor of Chinese men of letters, [so] to search for [literary works] that express personality and individuality, the first to research should be Qu Yuan.” Nevertheless, Liang did not go as far as Hu who denied the authentic existence of the legendary poet Qu Yuan as a historical figure. On the contrary, he argued that all but one poem compiled in the *Chuci* were composed by Qu Yuan as a Chu politician-poet. Based on the explanation provided by Wang Yi in the Eastern Han dynasty, Liang argued that the term *Nine Songs* did not literally mean “nine pieces of songs” but “the old name of a chapter” of the “folk ritual drama in the area around the Yuan and the Xiang Rivers in the Southern Chu Kingdom.” Therefore, it was not a contradiction that the poems compiled under the title of *Nine Songs* were ten in total. Liang found the *Nine Songs* to be “the most romantic” poems collected in the *Chuci*. More importantly, he argued that “Mountain Spirit” was the poem in which “Qu Yuan depicted his own personality using a symbolic style of writing.” Why did he single out this subject? Because, in Liang’s
reading Qu Yuan,

was a person with a psychological monophobia who died for his love. He loved a person so sincerely that he was determined to marry him; however, he kept in mind an ideal prerequisite without fulfilling which his marriage with his lover would not be realized. However, his lover always ignored him! Would he thus end up giving up due to his ignorance? No, no! He would never give up! His love and hate feelings towards his lover became increasingly intense, so that the contradictory feelings battled every day. The result is that he took his own life to martyrdom the ‘unrequited love!’ Who was his lover? It was the society at his time. A pair of paradoxical elements characterized Qu Yuan’s mind—one was sublime ideal, one was intense emotion.

Liang saw in the literary image of the “Mountain Spirit” a spiritual portrait of Qu Yuan as a historical figure.

Intriguingly, following these passages in Studies on Qu Yuan, Liang provided a detailed suggestion for “any artist who were to paint Qu Yuan.” In his opinion, “what the artist needs to do would just be to extract the spirit of Mountain Spirit depicted in this poem and represent it in painting.” As discussed earlier, even though the song describing “Mountain Spirit” seemed to be on its surface merely about the theme of love, denoting a fleeting relationship between a deity and a spirit medium, since the Eastern Han dynasty, Wang Yi had initiated the Confucian-inflected hermeneutic tradition of “encoding” the Chuci. Accordingly, the elegant goddess in the form of a lovesick maiden or anxious wife, with beautiful flowers and fragrant herbs as her setting or accessories described therein, started to be understood as an allegory of the moral perfection of virtuous sages, loyal scholars, and wise rulers. Chinese scholar-officials
and literati writers within and beyond the imperial court further developed this specific trope in their literary writing from the Song through the Qing dynasty. Incorporating the *Chuci*’s poetic trope of *xiangcao meiren* (fragrant herbs and beautiful persons), these later Chinese literati scholars continued this literary tradition associated with the Confucian intellectual tradition of the *shi*. In their poetic description of certain kinds of fragrant herbs or beautiful persons in the model of Qu Yuan, these scholars expressed their grievances about the political circumstances of their own time and society. Liang Qichao’s *Studies on Qu Yuan* drew on this conventional trope of *xiangcao meiren* to describe his envisioned image of “Mountain Spirit.” Based on the motifs adapted in the original text of the poem, Liang reiterated that this subject would have “dignified herself” only with fragrant herbs since she “loves natural things by nature” and “would not be polluted by any dirty things.” In the realm of visual art in the Republican period, Fu’s portrayal of “Mountain Spirit” as an elegant classical beauty standing on the mountain peak resonates strongly with the somber and wistful figure that Liang envisioned in his description of “Mountain Spirit”, in which this subject “stands alone on the mountain peak, with clouds and fog under her feet.” Nevertheless, Fu did not decorate the female body with motifs of vegetation. Instead, more culturally Han Chinese attributes were inscribed into Fu’s painting.

Drawing on the Confucian exegesis, Liang analogized the spiritual world of Qu Yuan to the image of the Mountain Spirit as a tragic lover. Liang singled out the literary image of the Mountain Spirit to analogize to the spiritual world of Qu Yuan because he found that “the wind
and rain in her [the Mountain Spirit’s] heart that never stops” resembled the psychological pattern of Qu Yuan. The “wind and rain” occupies the whole inner world of the Mountain Spirit, which “lasts forever” in the form of roaring “thunders, rain, and wind” as she “continuously sends her love to the one for whom she longs.” The miserable yet loyal lover who “does not care whether her beloved person loves her or not” but “always says, ‘you are missing me too,’ while ‘you are too busy’ and ‘you are doubting whether I truly love you,’” resembled, to Liang, the mixed feelings of the loyal noble official (Qu) toward a fastidious king who had lost trust to him.

After incorporating a full transcription of the poem “Mountain Spirit” and the analogies made above, Liang then cited some passages from the other poems compiled in the Chuci to narrate and explain Qu Yuan’s political cause. In his reading, Qu Yuan “attempted to reform society, and he started with politics. As a member of the loyal family [of the Chu Kingdom] who shared common interests with the country, he used to be trusted by the Huai King. Therefore, naturally, [his political career] could have been very promising.” “However, the Huai King was so fatuous” that he lost his trust in Qu Yuan due to rumors spread by treacherous court officials. Therefore, adopting the traditional Confucian trope of xiangcao meiren, Liang wrote, Qu Yuan’s “relationship with the Huai King resembles the relationship between two lovers who already got engaged yet one of them suddenly changed his or her mind.” “With his talents, Qu Yuan could have gained huge room for his development if he was willing to slightly accommodate [himself] to society.” However, “since the day when he made the decision [to reform society], he had
already had the great revelation that this thing was not easy to do. He had vowed to fight the evil society to the end, and he acted as he promised. He never made the slightest concession.” He “identified with Truth and Justice, incompatible with the laity.” By appropriating from the “Ode of Orange” also ascribed to Qu Yuan in the Chuci, Liang argued that Qu Yuan “kept his vow to be ‘independent and never go adrift.’” Through his analogy of “Qu Yuan’s relationship with the Huai King” to the love affair of “Mountain Spirit,” Liang emphasized Qu Yuan’s determination to “reform society.”

In Studies on Qu Yuan, Liang described the Chuci as “the greatest” work of literature, a masterpiece which perfectly synthesizes the artistic features and social functions of “literature.” Specifically, he argued that the “literary form” of the Chuci was “romantic,” while the ideas it conveyed pointed to politics as they existed in reality. Liang read the Chuci as Qu Yuan’s spiritual autobiography and saw “Mountain Spirit” as Qu Yuan’s spiritual portrait, whose perspectives share much in common with the Confucian exegesis. However, he considered Qu Yuan to be the symbol of the determined will and independent mind of a social reformer. The significance of the mind of Qu Yuan as a “social reformer” was particularly stressed in his writing. Liang himself was arguably one of the most influential cultural critics during the transitional period from the late Qing to the early Republican period; his own enterprise as a social reformer could explain his reception of Qu Yuan. In particular, the literary imagery of “Mountain Spirit,” due to the analogy made by Liang Qichao, was reinterpreted as a spiritual
portrait of the intellectual independence of “Qu Yuan” as a “social reformer.” Arguably the most important scholar in the studies on Qu Yuan in the twentieth century, Guo Moruo began to do historical studies on Qu Yuan and the *Chuci* around 1934. Early twentieth-century intellectuals generally agreed that a significant achievement of Qu Yuan was a “literary” one, epitomized by the lyrical protagonist in the *Chuci*, whom he allegedly created in his self-image as a righteous man in political exile, a talented poet of melancholy, and an unpolluted soul enmeshed in a corrupt world. In the case of Guo Moruo, Guo agreed with Liang Qichao that Qu Yuan was a “historical” and “political” figure rather than a “legendary” and “literary” one, which thus resolutely separates his way of reading the *Chuci* from that of Hu Shi’s. Yet, Guo’s reading of Qu Yuan’s historical position and political identity was more radical than Liang’s, due to his application of Marxism to the historiography of Chinese national antiquity since the 1930s.

By reinterpreting the *Chuci* and Qu Yuan, Guo Moruo attempted to open a dialogue between the political philosophies of the Confucian intellectual tradition and that of the leftist revolutionary thinkers. In 1942, he published “Qu Yuan’s Art and Thoughts,” in which he proposed that “Qu Yuan’s thoughts, to put it simply, could be divided into two parts: first, [literary] rhetoric—namely, [his] art; second, [his] Confucian ideals.” Here, implicitly building upon Liang’s “cultural historical” theories of Qu Yuan’s synthesis of the “primitive” Chu and the “civilized” Han Chinese culture in the pre-Qin period, Guo clearly defined the “realistic and ethical culture of the older Chinese nation that originated in the Central Plains” as “Confucian
ideals,” using Liang’s terminology. Guo argued in this essay for the historical significance of Qu Yuan in launching a “literary revolution” in the Spring and Autumn Annals and Warring States periods. In his opinion, the literary revolution that Qu launched in the Bronze Age was akin to the “vernacular poetry” revolution in the heyday of the May Fourth New Culture Movement. This was because, in Guo’s view, the literary revolution that Qu launched “expanded vernacular language to new literature compatible with real life, replacing old-fashioned aristocratic culture with lively new literature.” Therefore, Guo argued that “Qu Yuan was not only a minzu shiren (national poet) in our Chinese literary history but also, indeed, a revolutionary poet with revolutionary character. What was his art like? It was like the art of revolution.”

As for the two labels that Guo ascribed to Qu Yuan—if “national poet” refers to the patriotism of Qu Yuan in his loyalty to his country, then “revolutionary poet” emphasized his “revolutionary character” toward the “evil society” that he was determined to change. Guo’s studies on Qu Yuan constitute an integral part of his studies on the social ideology of ancient China. From the perspective of Marxist historiography, Guo argued that the Spring and Autumn Annals was a transitional period during which China developed from a “slavery society” to a “feudal society.” The “creativity of the Chuci” and the “revolutionary character of Qu Yuan,” in his opinion, had to be understood in the historical framework in which “an epoch-making change happened in society [and] must have been followed by a certain change happening in
In June 1945, Wen Yiduo, another leftist intellectual at the time, wrote “People’s Poet: Qu Yuan.” Sharing Guo’s idea that Qu Yuan’s historical significance lay in his “revolutionary character,” Wen went further to define Qu Yuan as “a poet for the people.” In 1942, when debating with Hou Wailu 侯外盧 (1903–87), another leftist Chinese historian, about whether Qu Yuan’s thoughts were “progressive,” Guo further emphasized that at Qu Yuan’s time, “intellectually,” Qu was “a realistic Confucian” intellectual in the style of “northern China,” whereas “artistically,” Qu was “a romantic poet” in the style of “southern China.” Guo wrote: “his thoughts were progressive as he was a Confucian intellectual in the South. Confucian ideas were progressive at his time, as [Chinese society] was under the transformation from slavery system to feudal system. We should not denounce his thoughts as reactionary from [an ahistorical] modern point of view, not to mention dubbing Qu Yuan ideologically reactionary because of that.” In Guo’s opinion, the conflicting tendencies in Qu Yuan’s thoughts and his art represent the contradiction between his “progressive ideas” and the “backward habits and costumes” of his society. Guo argued that, on one hand, Qu Yuan incorporated the “progressive” ideas of the Confucian culture from the Central Plains into his writing of the *Chuci*; however, on the other hand, when he attempted to use specific literary images to convey these thoughts he customarily appropriate from the ancient folkloric myths that had been popular in the “primitive”

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632 Guo Moruo, “Qu Yuan de yishu yu sixiang (Qu Yuan’s art and thought),” published in Zhongsu wenhua (Chinese and Soviet Cultures) Vol. 11, no. 1-2 (1942). As for more detailed analysis of the debate between Guo and Hou, see Huang Nengwu, “1942 nian Guo Moruo yu Hou Wailu guanyu Qu Yuan sixiang de lunzheng (Debates between Guo Moruo and Hou Wailu in 1942 on Qu Yuan’s thought),” in Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan no. 6 (2006): 152-166.
local rituals of the Chu Kingdom. Guo’s leftist image of Qu Yuan was that of a “patriotic,”
“progressive,” and “revolutionary” Confucian humanist all in one.

In the mid-1940s, as discussed earlier, Fu’s female image of “Mountain Spirit” did not
emphasize the ethnic attributes of the Mountain Spirit as a southern “barbarian,” a mythological
or folkloric figure who originated in the Han-perceived “primitive” Chu culture in the Bronze
Age of China. Instead, his female figuration of this subject appropriated the Han Chinese literati
aesthetic values traditionally associated with Gu Kaizhi’s model of High Antiquity. To his
contemporary leftist Chinese audiences, these iconographic attributes would unmistakably
transfer Fu’s image of “Mountain Spirit” into a spiritual or symbolic portrait of Qu Yuan,
corresponding to Guo Moruo’s Marxist-inflected socioeconomic discourse of Qu Yuan in the
1940s. Fu and Guo had become close friends when Fu studied in Tokyo in the early 1930s.

Having converted to Marxism and participated in social movements since 1924, Guo was
politically active in the National Revolution (1926–27) under the banner of the first united front
of the KMT and the CCP, and was commissioned to oversee political propaganda for the
Northern Expedition. On March 31, 1927, shortly after the KMT launched a nationwide

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633 Guo Moruo, “Qu Yuan sixiang (Qu Yuan’s thought),” in Zhongsu Wenhua (Chinese and Soviet Cultures) Vol. 11, no. 1-2 (1942). Huang Nengwu’s analysis points out that Guo’s reading of Qu Yuan’s art drew largely from Marx’s analytical framework applied in his discussion of the relationship between Greek mythology and Greek art in Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie (Fundamental Criticism of Political Economy) (Moscow: Marx-Engels Institute, 1939).

634 For a biography of the early Guo Moruo in the English-speaking world that characterizes his life journey up to the point of the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, see David Tod Roy, Kuo Mo-jo: The Early Years (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).
massacre of the CCP, Guo denounced his “boss” Jiang Jieshi by publishing a pamphlet called “Look at Today’s Jiang Jieshi (Qing kan jinri zhi Jiang Jieshi).” In response to the KMT’s betrayal of the united front, which Guo perceived to be a “revolutionary failure,” Guo joined the CCP. He and other members of the Creation Society—an influential literary society he cofounded in 1922—engaged deeply in debates about “revolutionary literature” and the introduction of Marxism to Republican China. Guo was forced into exile in Japan in 1928; he lived there under the surveillance of Japanese police and secret agencies till 1937, when he fled back to China upon the official outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan. In 1934, the year when Guo started to study Qu Yuan, Fu carved a seal with a line of the third song in Nine Songs—“cai fangzhou xi duruo 採芳洲兮杜若 (plucking the pollia on a fragrant island)”—as its content. Three of the four side surfaces of the seal are inscribed with the full text of Lisao 鄰騷 (“Lament”), a poem compiled in the Chuci as Qu Yuan’s autobiography in poetic form. According to Fu’s inscription carved following the poem, earlier in 1928 he had carved a seal in 1928 with the same content (Fig. 3.25). The year of 1928 was the exact year when Guo was forced into exile in Japan.

Current scholarship has associated Fu’s 1940s paintings portraying Qu Yuan and the Lady (or Ladies) of the Xiang River with Fu’s lifelong, close friendship and intellectual and artistic exchanges with Guo Moruo. According to Fu’s inscription on his 1943 painting Lady of the Xiang River, the painting was made “when the tough Japanese enemy was invading the area
between the Yuan River and the Li River [in Hunan province].” Shortly after he made this painting, Fu was invited to Guo Moruo’s birthday party that was held on November 16, 1944. On this occasion of gathering and viewing Fu’s paintings at Guo’s home, Zhou Enlai liked Fu’s 1943 Lady of the Xiang River so much that he asked Fu for this painting to be in his private collection. Fu agreed, so Zhou took the painting with him when he returned to the CCP-controlled area in Yan’an in the Shaanxi province of northern China. On November 22, 1944, upon Zhou’s departure for Shaanxi, Guo Moruo inscribed a layer of wartime patriotism into the painting by writing his own poem on it: “The Lady [of the Xiang River] left the Xiang River with a determined will, [her braveness which could] churn up the winds and thunders would touch Qu Ping (i.e., Qu Yuan) so much. Chan Juan 嬋娟 will not lament in vain, she would devote her life [to the cause of the war of resistance] like the ancient young rangers wandering in the northern wilderness to guard their country.” The “Chan Juan” mentioned in Guo Moruo’s calligraphic inscription designates a fictional female character that Guo created in his Qu Yuan, the first of his series of “historical plays” composed in the 1940s in wartime Chongqing.

Guo completed and published Qu Yuan in January 1942, while the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression continued well into another year of deadlock, and while the KMT reinforced its coercive authoritarian rule in the KMT-controlled region and resumed its anti-CCP agenda (despite the official united front with the CCP). The early 1940s was a moment of sudden
flowering of historical drama in modern Chinese culture, during which numerous historical plays were published and staged in not only urban areas (where they were staged in the prewar period of Republican China) but also in the vast area of rural China. In this wartime blossoming of historical plays, a number of female images were created as “female symbols of resistance,” which effectively served the patriotic wartime propaganda.\textsuperscript{635} At first glance, the maiden Chan Juan in Guo’s Qu Yuan was one of these female images. However, different from other dramas featuring the female symbols at this time, Qu Yuan and several other historical plays that Guo composed in the early 1940s constituted “a cycle of tragedies about the Warring States Era.” Critics have long acknowledged that by inventing the genre of “historical tragedy” in the 1940s, Guo created a lyrical mode of political allegory for the cause of Chinese revolution. In Guo’s Marxist-inflected social historical reading of national antiquity, “the Warring States Era, as a whole, was a tragic age. Our ancestors struggled to strip themselves of the bondage of slavery, trying to liberate themselves from that iron fetter, but the whole effort met the result of changing it for another set of shackles.”\textsuperscript{636} In this play, Qu Yuan was invited to direct the rehearsal of the singing and dancing rituals of the Nine Songs at the palace of the Chu, without knowing that Queen Zheng Xiu and other courtiers were plotting a conspiracy against him for his anti-Qin attitude. During the rehearsal, Queen Zheng Xiu blames Qu Yuan for an attempt to harass her

\textsuperscript{635} Chang-tai Hung, “Female Symbols of Resistance in Chinese Wartime Spoken Drama,” Modern China, Vol. 15, No. 2 (April, 1989), 149-177.

\textsuperscript{636} Guo Moruo, “Xian gei xianshi de pantao (Peaches offered to Reality),” 1943, collected in Guo Moruo Yanjiu Ziliao (Selected Materials about Guo Moruo) (Beijing: Zhichi chanquan chubanshe, 2010 [1986]), 286.
sexually. Humiliated by the King Huai and betrayed by his pupils, Qu Yuan is seen by many as a madman. But Chan Juan and other ordinary people, knowing his innocence, remain in deep support for Qu Yuan. Qu manages to confront King Huai and Qin Prime Minister Zhang Yi in public, in the final hope of preventing Chu’s capitulation to Qin. However, captivated by Zhang Yi (famous diplomat in the Warring States period) and the courtiers bribed by Qin, King Huai again condemns Qu Yuan as a man of dementia and frenzy, and orders his imprisonment in the Temple of the Eastern Emperor (the Sun god in the Chu culture). Chan Juan comes to his rescue, and, by mistake, she drinks the poison wine prepared for him, dying in Qu Yuan’s place. A guard, who is also Qu’s supporter, decides to escort Qu Yuan to flee to the northern part of the kingdom. With the temple on fire, Qu Yuan departs in deep sorrow, indignation, and love for Chan Juan, who then turns into the symbol of resistance and self-sacrifice of the ordinary people. The curtain then falls with a mourning song. To be sure, the message—not only patriotic but also pro-CCP—was clear to wartime audiences, who received it well. The theatre thus became a pedagogic site for a collective forum of denouncing the KMT’s alleged capitulation to the Japanese and persecution of the progressive forces. The staging of Qu Yuan, a modern re-imagining of national antiquity in which “the principle of historical faithfulness gives way to the poet’s imagination” and in which “historical characterization and political allegorization are intermingled,” immediately became a political event in Chongqing.\footnote{Wang Pu, The Phenomenology of “Zeitgeist:” Guo Moruo and the Chinese Revolution, Doctoral Dissertation, New York University, 2012, 273.}
In Guo’s Marxist-inflected “ideological cleaning” of the Warring States period, this was a historical period marked by the transition from slavery to feudalism in ancient China, a transition in social formation and production mode that turned the period into a revolutionary age. The themes of the age, according to Guo, were the “liberation of the people (renmin jiefang 人民解放)” and the discovery of human values. He argued that Confucian humanism was the revolutionary thought of the Spring and Autumn Annals and the Warring States period, when “the people were making a revolution [and] Confucius spent his life amid the torrent of revolution.” The people had strived for liberation, but the rising warlord class (represented by the First Emperor of Qin) usurped the fruit of revolutionary change.

In the 1945 *Ten Critiques*—Guo’s first published historical project—he claimed that his own age was also a transitional period, a revolutionary age for the people. Guo’s historical studies and playwriting, that is to say, were both intellectual critiques and political interventions in the actual political situation in China in the mid-1940s. Toward the end of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the KMT and the CCP had different agendas for China’s future under their fragile “united front.” As early as 1940, Mao Zedong had proposed a “new democracy,” according to which the workers, peasants, petit bourgeoisie and patriotic capitalists would constitute the “revolutionary renmin 人民 (people).” In Guo’s historical formulation, the Warring State

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638 Ibid., 328-329.
640 Mao Zedong stated in 1949: “Who are the people? At the present stage in China, they are the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie.” See Mao Zedong, “On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship,” in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, vol. IV (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1961), 417.
period was “a tragic age” in that the people remained oppressed and thus the revolution was unfinished. The uncanny and anachronistic appearance of renmin in Guo’s discourse of ancient China characterized Guo’s “people-centered” analysis of ancient society, which produced a cultural-political image of history as a genealogy of the people’s unfinished revolution and, importantly, could be analogized to the current sociopolitical situation of his own time. Zhou Enlai is reported to have supervised Guo’s production of Qu Yuan and its stage interpretation in 1943. He claimed that Guo’s dramatic reflection of the historical truth was largely in tune with historical materialism and that “the evaluation of this play [Qu Yuan] is not only a matter of artistic creation, but most importantly, it concerns the current political struggle.”

In Guo’s historical tragedy Qu Yuan, Chan Juan was a fictional female figure of great importance, symbolically occupying the site of renmin. When searching for figurations of renmin (people) in his Warring States plays, Guo resorted to gender politics. Chan Juan, as the best example of this kind, acted in Qu Yuan as more engaged than the male figures—symbols of progressive thought—but her fate or ultimate action is self-sacrifice. Of a lower status than the others, Chan Juan is yet the true admirer of Qu Yuan (the representative of progressive humanism), more “revolutionary” than Qu Yuan’s students, and sometimes even more active than Qu Yuan. Chan Juan comes to Qu Yuan’s rescue and drinks the poisoned wine originally

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642 Shanghai shifan daxue zhongwen xi (Chinese literature department of Shanghai Normal University) ed., Guo Moruo zhuanshi Vol. 2(Special collections on Guo Moruo, 1980), 3.
prepared for him. On one hand, as a female symbol of the self-sacrificial people, Chan Juan epitomizes Guo’s imaginary of the feminine in the 1940s as a redeeming force. The gender structure in *Qu Yuan* and Guo’s other Warring States historical plays is not only a symptom of male-centered politics and an ideological ode to the feminine, but it also conceals a political tension. As a male revolutionary intellectual, Guo glorified the pioneering role of revolutionary intellectuals (symbolized by male protagonists who were costumed as ancient Chinese *shi* or Confucianists); simultaneously, however, Guo self-consciously identified the “people” (symbolized by self-sacrificial female figures), an emerging subject of Chinese Revolution, as the true “motivating force” of history. That is to say, even though Guo’s cultural-political self-positioning did not yet allow for the full theatrical visibility of the “motivating force” of history that he envisioned, the self-sacrifice of the fictional female character Chan Juan is the true source of the tragic power in *Qu Yuan*. On the stage of *Qu Yuan*, the solidarity between the male tragic protagonist and the female tragic protagonist, and the sacrifice of the latter and the redemption of the former, suggests the complicated relationship between the revolutionary intelligentsia and the Chinese people.643

By mid-1943, the authoritarian KMT party-state, exasperated by the sweeping theatrical success of *Qu Yuan* and some other historical dramas by Guo, hastened to censor Guo’s historical tragedies. It is unsurprising, then, that in this specific cultural-political context of 1943,

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Fu’s *Lady of the Xiang River*, a female figure painting drawn from the *Chuci*, invited Guo’s imagination to take the mythological female figure depicted in Fu’s painting as a pictorial female figuration of Chan Juan, the heroine whose braveness “could churn up wind and thunder” and who “would touch Qu Ping (Qu Yuan) so much.” On the occasion of Guo’s birthday celebration, Zhou got this painting from Fu; therefore, furthermore, Guo assigned a clear pro-CCP message into Fu’s female figure image drawn from the *Chuci* by inscribing on the painting: “as the Hunan province has been occupied [by the Japanese invaders], the Lady of the Xiang River must feel fortunate that she could participate in the guerrilla warfare [led by the CCP in the northern area].”

From the late 1920s through the 1940s, Fu repeatedly mentioned “Mr. Qu Yuan in the period of the Warring States” in his publications on Chinese art historiography. By so doing, he made “Mr. Qu Yuan in the Warring States periods” a historical model for respectable “national artists” who would “reform” their art in response to social and political changes. In the late 1930s, while Guo Moruo played the role of a leading propagandist in the Anti-Japanese United Front of the KMT and the CCP, Fu answered Guo’s call to serve as his secretary in the Third Department of the Central Propaganda (TDCP). The CCP leader Zhou Enlai’s acclaim of Fu’s archaistic female figure painting in 1944 reveals how he read a pro-CCP message into Fu’s idea, shared with Guo, that “national artists” should take the arts as effective tools for the cause of

644 Fu Baoshi, *Zhongguo Huihua Bianqian Shigang* (Historical Outlines of Chinese Painting) (Shanghai: Nanjing shudian, 1931); reprinted in *Fu Baoshi meishu wenji*, 7.
national revolution. To Zhou, Fu’s gesture to commemorate Qu Yuan and his female figure painting drawn from the *Chuci* was not only meaningful in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, but also in the Chinese Revolution led by the CCP.

No evidence shows Fu’s opinion toward the cultural-political identification that Guo ascribed to Fu’s 1943 *Lady of the Xiang River*. Nevertheless, to be sure, there are some facts to prove that Guo’s cultural-political practices by means of historical projects in the 1940s did constitute the most significant intellectual references for Fu’s creation of female figure paintings drawn from the *Chuci*. In July 1942, only about one year after the time when Guo’s *Qu Yuan* was first staged in Chongqing, Fu brought some of his paintings—including a portrait he made of Qu Yuan—to Guo’s home and asked Guo to inscribe poems on them.645 Guo’s poetic inscription on Fu’s portrait of Qu Yuan referred to the historical tragedy of *Qu Yuan* (the play), emphasizing the political implication of Fu’s painting this portrait at a time of national crisis, when Chinese leftist intellectuals were passionately defending the country from political corruption and Japanese invasion. Since 1942 when Fu painted *Qu Yuan*, that is to say, his painting had been inspired by Gu’s interpretation of *Qu Yuan* in his historical play staged in the same year, which adopted the historical theme to express patriotic sentiment and criticism of the KMT government’s wartime policies.646 Then, is it possible that, when he was repeatedly painting the

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subject of “Mountain Spirit” in the mid-1940s, Fu also took into consideration Guo’s political thoughts conveyed through his historical tragedy of *Qu Yuan*?

The compositions of Fu’s 1945 painting featuring “Mountain Spirit” (Fig. 3.2) and his 1946 painting of the same subject are different—the 1945 paintings are horizontal and the 1946 one is vertical. However, these paintings share a compositional schema in their rendering of pictorial space; in each of the compositions, the female figure is placed similarly in the lower foreground, whereas the chariot is depicted at the top background. Importantly, there is another iconographic attribute shared by these paintings that might have looked idiosyncratic to audiences, as it never appeared in other paintings with the same theme: in the upper right portion, parallel to the diagonal line from the left, there are several male figures sporting the hats and robes of ancient *shi*, Confucianists who seem to be waiting for the female protagonist along the two sides of the chariot carried by tiger-like monsters in the dark rainstorm. In the “idiosyncratic” iconographic and compositional elements of the pictorial space, one could see an innovative device through which Fu’s “Mountain Spirit” paintings of the mid-1940s strongly resonated with Guo’s creation of Chan Juan as a political allegory of *renmin* (people), an image that had been linked imaginatively by the Chinese Marxist writer to Fu’s 1943 archaistic female figure painting drawn from the *Chuci*, his *Lady of the Xiang River*.

As in the case of his *Lady of the Xiang River* (1943), Fu’s *Mountain Spirit* (1946) referenced a female archetype from the *Admonitions* scroll traditionally attributed to Gu Kaizhi.
In the early 1940s, as discussed in the previous chapters, after the *Admonitions* scroll was possessed by the British Museum, it attracted worldwide attention as an object symbolizing China’s “national treasure” and “cultural heritage.” A copy made by Pang Xunqin of one section of this painting in 1941 epitomizes how Pang studied the skills of fine-line drawing and coloration from this painting, too, as part of the preparation for his project to reconcile the East and West in “decorative art” making (Fig. 2.41). In their self-training in the ink techniques of fine-line drawing, Fu and Pang shared the interest of Japanese *nihonga* painters in the early twentieth century who enthusiastically studied the *Admonition* scroll by viewing and copying it in the British Museum in London. However, their ways of studying the *Admonitions* scroll reveal how conflicting responses to the legacy of classical antiquity directly informed their distinctive styles in painting. Pang Xunqin’s travel-study experiences in Europe and the later application of his self-trained fine-line drawing technique to delineate the female bodies in his Guizhou Mountain People paintings are similar to that of the Japanese artist Maeda Seison 前田青邨 (1885–1977), who copied the *Admonitions* scroll in collaboration with Kobayashi Kokei 小林古径 (1883–1957) in the British Museum in 1922–23.647 In his *Flower Vendors* (1924)(Fig. 3.26), Seison made use of Gu’s uniform outlining technique to delineate the figures of two local peasant women of Kita-Shirakawa, a flower-growing district not very far from the central city of Kyoto. Similar to Pang, Seison visualized his “native Japanese” female subjects with an

ethnographic eye. While creating *Flower Vendors*, Seison made numerous careful sketches of women from Shirakawa in various poses, and even bought an example of their traditional costume to sketch as he refined his concept.\(^{648}\) In the cases of Pang and Seison, the *Admonitions* scroll traditionally attributed to Gu Kaizhi served primarily as a technical reference. In comparison, by referencing the female archetype from the *Admonitions* scroll in his paintings of female figures drawn from the *Chuci* in the specific context of the mid-1940s, Fu appropriated and transformed the mythological subject drawn from the Pre-Qin literature composed in Han Chinese and the female archetype drawn from ancient art tradition of the Han dynasty into a female allegory of the modern socio-political reality of ongoing Chinese Revolution. The political implications of Fu’s archaistic female figure paintings drawn from the *Chuci* would be transparent to many of his contemporary Chinese audiences, particularly those who were social-reform intellectuals. Even without knowing Guo’s inscription on Fu’s 1943 female figure painting drawn from the *Chuci*, they would be easily drawn into his painting with so many culturally specific, coded sociopolitical messages.

By appropriating archaistic styles from his selected legacy of “literati painting” and innovatively fusing them together in a harmonious composition, Fu’s seemingly archaistic painting transforms the classical iconography into an image of modern China not only culturally but also sociopolitically relevant to the present cause of Chinese Revolution. Drawing upon

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methods from Chan-Buddhist-inflected yipin-style painting to render the female figure modeled upon the female archetype from the *Admonitions* scroll, as analyzed above, Fu ascribed a quality of unconformity to the otherwise orthodox Confucian female image in his painting. However, meanwhile, Fu did not follow the organizational mode of Chan Buddhist painting by leaving the background empty, since he did not envision his 1946 *Mountain Spirit* as an aesthetically “desolate and tranquil” image of Chan-Buddhist awakening or as a lofty literati-scholar mode of self-cultivation and contemplation. Instead, Fu filled his composition with a skyscape of rains and storms by adding ink-washed textures with various shades to the background. Against the roaring natural landscape, the female subject’s trailing gown and ribbons are almost entirely penetrated by the massive ink traces that sweep over them.

Drawing selectively from traditional ink idioms crossing different genres, here Fu’s compositional method applied is highly eclectic. As he described in 1942, when “painting shanshui (landscape), [I would] do my best to make full use of the contrast between two different kinds of bimo (ink and brush methods) to create [a composition in which] the [elements depicted in the] painting [constitute a visual dynamic of] ‘move’ (dong 動). [In a painting,] if [I were to] create an aesthetic of zongzi cangmang 縱恣蒼茫 (wilderness and extensiveness) by painting [the elements of] cloudy mountain peak, trees and stones, then [I would] make sure to depict [the elements of] figures and houses in a jingxi zhengzhi 精細整飾 (refined and meticulous) manner. As for the traditional [ink idioms of] Chinese painting, I tend to draw the techniques of painting
landscape and clouds from Yuan and post-Yuan paintings (i.e. paintings dated later than the second half of the thirteenth century); whereas I would draw the skills of painting figures, house, and some other tropes [of the figures] from paintings dated to the Southern-Song or earlier periods (i.e. paintings dated earlier than the second half of the thirteenth century).”

In the pictorial space of *Mountain Spirit* (1946), Fu treated the figural and landscapist elements with exactly such technical and formal strategies as he described them, contrasting and interrelating these elements to form an innovative and yet harmonious composition. This compositional device contrasts the female figure drawn in slightly and partially accented pale ink lines sharply with the heavily ink-washed and richly textured mountainous rainscape, making the clothed female body look almost translucent. The faint, broken outlines applied to delineate the contour of the figure effectively blur the boundary between the human form and the landscape setting, which enhances the sense of synesthetic exchange between the figure and the natural phenomenon echoing her mind-state.

Meanwhile, despite of Fu’s emphasis on the “Chinese” identity of his ink painting, Fu’s treatment of the spatial relationship of the distant background and close-up foreground in his horizontal pictorial space seems to have drawn from certain European principles such as atmospheric perspective. In the foreground of the composition, the female figure looking into the far distance is monumentalized by the slightly upward-looking angle from which she is designed

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649 Fu Baoshi, “Renwu chongqing huazhan zixu (Preface for the 1942 exhibition of my paintings)” (September 22, 1942, published serially on the supplements of *Shishi xinbao* on October 8, 12, and 20, 1942.)
to be viewed. Moreover, the stormy natural environment is rendered with relatively thicker brushworks to create a compelling supernatural atmosphere resonating with the inner world of the Mountain Spirit as she “solitary, stands upon the mountain’s summit” at the moment depicted. The method that Fu adopted for rendering the natural environment in this painting was frequently applied in his landscape paintings of the same period that featured rainy scenery in the twilight (Fig. 3.27). Broad ink washes were swept along the diagonal of the composition from the top left to the bottom right, adding to the precarious dynamism of the stormy weather—that is, vividly capturing the moment in which nature surrounds the female figure, when “the clouds’ dense masses begin below her,” “the east wind blows up,” and “the god-spirit sends down her showers” in “a place of gloomy shadow, dark even in the daytime.” The organizational mode of painting applied in Fu’s work is thus decisively distinguished from that of the early Chinese figure painting that he drew upon. The Admonitions scroll in the British Museum, which Fu perceived to be the “earliest case” of Chinese figure painting, presents clearly outlined shapes of the primary human figures in ink against an unpainted background. In contrast, Fu made every effort to create a total spatial environment by constructing a continuous patchwork of lit and textured surfaces through washes of varying shades.

Although the shape of “rumbling thunder” is not literally depicted along with the rain that “darkens the sky” in Fu’s painting, the vocal dimension of the literary imagery of the roaring thunder is suggested by the artist’s rendering the stormy sky with heavily applied, splashed ink
washes. As the backdrop for the emergence of the female figure, the vocal imagery of the thunder is thus visually hinted at, during this moment of sorrow when “Mountain Spirit” longs for her “gentleman” while “standing alone in sadness,” as “the wind soughs sadly and the trees rustle.” Fu’s deliberately executed textured brushstrokes, spontaneous-looking ink washes, and splashes applied to the landscapist theme of rainstorm fulfill a compelling aesthetic image of Chinese Revolution, which recalls the famous plot of Qu Yuan chanting the “Ode to the Thunders” (Lei Dian Song 雷電頌) in Guo Moruo’s historical play. In the 1940s, moreover, “thunder and rain” became a recurrent image of Chinese Revolution in leftist cultural and political discourse. For example, Hou Wailu applied the term baofengyu shidai 暴風雨時代 (“an age of thunder and rain”) to not only the Warring States period (Qu Yuan’s time) but also the modern period of the Northern Expedition (1926–28), during a 1942 debate with Guo Moruo about the position of Qu Yuan as “a Confucian figure” in Chinese intellectual history. Some scholars link the recurrent motif of rain and mountains in Fu’s wartime landscape painting to his national consciousness of resistance. The melancholic image created by Fu’s landscape paintings seems to have been drawn from the classical Chinese literary tradition of bi 比 (comparison) and xing 興 (affective image) initiated by the poems compiled in the Shi Jing, in which the recurrent literary imagery of fengyu ruhui 風雨如晦 or “dark night with rainstorm”

became a trope signifying trouble times. In the political climate when the Civil War followed the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, is it possible that Fu’s 1946 *Mountain Spirit* embodied an “allegorization of the ancient for contemporary causes?” That is, did Fu, like his close friend and mentor Guo Moruo, also champion the effort of “making the past serve the present?” As for landscape painting, Fu once wrote in 1940, “At stormy and shaky moments of our country, who would have the state of mind to engage in the work of ‘five days for a mountain and ten days for water? Who would still need [paintings with] ‘elaborate, beautiful, and brilliant’ pictorial surfaces?” As discussed above, Fu’s heightened political consciousness in a time of “national crisis” led him to emphasize two patterns in the history of Chinese literati painting: first, the moral integrity of artists as “national artists”; and second, an abandonment of mimetic realism (verisimilitude) in favor of ink sketch conceptualism. These patterns, in turn, led him to apply Southern Song and early Qing literati ink painting techniques to the landscapes he created for the Republican era. Painted during the Qing Ming Festival of 1946 when it was apparent that China’s “dark night” did not end with the end of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, Fu’s deliberately rendered dark weather with heavy rainstorm in *Mountain Spirit* looks highly suggestive of the gloomy or sad mood of the artist toward the Civil War. In the painting, the steady female figure looks sad, yet still waits, full of hope. What is she waiting

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652 See “Fengyu (Rainstorm),” one of the Songs of the Zheng region in the Central Plains compiled in *Shi jing*.
It should be pointed out that, compared to the numerous historical plays staged in theaters of Chongqing or the modern woodcut prints and cartoons which were obviously made with realistic themes and revolutionary aesthetics, the archaistic formal qualities of Fu’s ink painting executed with Chinese brush look much more “traditional.” It is thus tempting to think that there was no conflict between Fu’s project of modern Chinese painting and the nationalist cultural ideology promoted by the KMT government after the 1935 launch of the Chinese National Cultural Construction Movement. Shortly after the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, on November 12, 1945, Zhang Daofan even published an essay in the *Chongqing Central Daily* in which he argued that Fu Baoshi, “never bothers to restrict himself in [the meticulous record of] the superficial appearance of [a figure’s] gorgeous clothing; what he truly concentrates on is vividly depicting the emotion and life of the figure. He is successful because of this; [his painting] is out of the ordinary also because of this.” Nevertheless, if one were to compare Fu’s 1946 *Mountain Spirit* with his 1954 painting of the same subject (Fig. 3. 28) in terms of their historical context, one would see clearly that in 1946 Fu was making an allegory about the turbulent political climate during the Civil War. In Fu’s 1954 painting featuring the same subject, the body type of the female figure is fuller, bearing almost no iconographic connection with the female archetype of the *Admonitions* scroll. The melancholic female image in his 1946 painting has

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654 Zhang Daofan, “Lun Fu Baoshi zhi hua (On Fu Baoshi’s painting),” published in the *Central Daily* in Chongqing, on November 12, 1945.
disappeared, replaced by an innocent-looking, smiling female figure with fuller face tinted with pink shades. She stands along above lush groves of green pines, without any leopards, chariots, or, importantly, the Confucian-style scholar-official-looking male figures waiting behind. Moreover, the gentle wind and drizzle executed in pale ink washes suggest no sign of the darkness and hardship of the “time of rainstorms.” Fu’s calligraphic inscription on this painting reads: “a lady is standing on the mountain peak, in a coat of figleaves with a rabbit-floss girdle, with eyes that hold laughter and a beautiful smile, her gentle temperament is really lovely.” These four lines of inscription were quoted from the first four lines of the vernacular Chinese version of “Mountain Spirit” translated by Guo Moruo in 1953.655

Shortly after the establishment of the PRC, in 1953, upon the occasion of the 2230th anniversary of Qu Yuan’s death, the vice president of the World Peace Council proposed to promote Qu Yuan’s life and art across the world. The World Peace Council adopted a resolution to nominate Qu Yuan, Nicolaus Copernicus (Poland), François Rabelais (France), and José Julián Martí Pérez (Cuba) as the four Cultural Celebrities of the Year, calling on people throughout the world to commemorate them. In response to the World Peace Council, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of the PRC assigned Guo Moruo, You Guoen, Zheng Zhenduo and some others to organize a “Team of Qu Yuan Studies” to collect, compile, and translate Qu Yuan’s literary work

655 Wan Xinhua, “Fu Baoshi houqi shinvhua chuangzuo fengge shanbian yanjiu – yi ‘jiu ge’ ticai wei zhongxin (A study of the stylistic transformation of Fu Baoshi’s female figure painting in his later period: taking the paintings with the themes of the Nine Songs as a central example),” in Zhongguo shuhua (Chinese Calligraphy and Painting) no. 141 (September 2014): 41-42.
into vernacular Chinese for publication. In June 1953, Guo published his vernacular translation and annotation of Qu Yuan’s poems in *Modern Translation of Qu Yuan’s Poetry*. His annotation of “Mountain Spirit” in this book did not talk about the Confucian-inflected political allegory traditionally associated with the poetic theme. Rather, he only drew upon the conventional mythological reading that this was a song with the theme of a love affair of the Goddess of the Shamanic Mount, performed for Chu ritual. Correspondingly, therefore, Fu’s 1954 *Mountain Spirit* concentrated on the lovely look of the female subject, rather than the “dark rainstorm” as a political allegory. The female figure in this painting stands peacefully amid the pine grove shaded with dark green colors that resonate harmoniously with her light green clothes. The comparatively bright palette of this painting recalls the typical style of *xinguohua* 新國畫 (New National-Style Painting) that was under reformation in the 1950s, epitomizing Fu’s efforts to adjust to the demands of a new age when the PRC had been established as a socialist state by the CCP.

In comparison with this somewhat static, “peaceful” image made in 1954, the seemingly pale and fragile female body in Fu’s 1946 painting was executed in a compelling manner, in which she appears to be emerging from the earth and stone and standing steadfastly in the rainstorm. By accenting the dominant portion of the pictorial space with saturated ink washes

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656 Guo Moruo, *Qu Yuan fu jinyi* (Modern Translation of Qu Yuan’s Odes) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1953).
and broad strokes of various tones, Fu created a shadowy visual efficacy of the female figure moving above the mountain peak and gradually coming into view. Balanced by dark and light contrast, the atmospheric effect of the natural phenomenon added to the dynamic of the figure’s movement. The scene of the rainstorm merges with the female figure in the foreground, which evokes in the viewers the feeling that the performance of nature echoes the sadness of the figure. Fu’s technical and aesthetic solution for this painting epitomizes his goal to reinject the visual dynamic of moving into modern Chinese painting in the 1940s. In 1942, in the preface Fu composed for the solo exhibition he held in the wartime capital of Chongqing, he wrote that it was essential to “make Chinese painting ‘move’ (dong 動); only by ‘moving’ (dong qilai 動起來) could [one] find some solutions.” What does the word “move” mean here? It should be taken as a specific proposal made by Fu during the 1940s about how to rejuvenate Chinese painting. In his opinion, “painting could not be changeless. Time, thoughts, materials, tools would all indirectly or directly agitate [the painting to change].” He proposed “injecting warmth into Chinese painting as soon as possible, so that the consciousness of the ossified [Chinese painting] could gradually be recovered.” “Warmth,” metaphorically, should be injected into a painting in order to generate vitality or energy, which would make a painting look like it was moving—that is, to visually convey a sense of dynamic movement. Fu’s 1940s figure paintings visually constituted an integral part of his reconceptualization of and emphasis on qiyun.

Fu Baoshi, “Renwu chongqing huazhan zixu (Preface for the 1942 exhibition of my paintings),” September 22, 1942, published serially on the supplements of Shishi xinbao on October 8, 12, and 20, 1942.
shengdong 氣韻生動 (spiritual resonance), “the original, ultimate goal of Chinese painting” in Xie He’s “Six Laws.” In Fu’s view, a “Chinese painting” could be called “a piece of art” only when it conveyed a sense of qiyun shengdong. There were multiple interpretations of the meaning of the term qiyun shengdong in the Republican era. What is the sense or state of qiyun shengdong in Fu’s understanding? He took the linear forms carved on the Han-dynasty stone monuments, which he perceived as “fully embodying life energy,” as an excellent example of the sense or state of qiyun shengdong that is achieved in what he perceived as the culturally “traditional Chinese” standard. By so doing, Fu once again stressed the significance of reinterpreting the aesthetic standard of the culturally Han Chinese art tradition in the current project of rejuvenating Chinese painting in wartime China, when a collective sense of vitality and “life energy” was urgently demanded for the national causes of salvation and revolution. Perhaps based on the Euro-American modernist taste in the “spiritual beauty” of the linear style of medieval Chinese ink painting as a hub where the “expressive” aesthetic of “East” and “West” converged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Fu added that, “time and space could not limit [the life energy conveyed by] these [Han-dynasty stone-carved images]. Even today, the Han-dynasty stone carvings still look moving to me, as they look full of life energy. The Americans would feel just the same way if they were invited to view them.”

The monumentality embodied in the romanticized gesture of the female subject in Fu’s

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Fu Baoshi, “Renwu chongqing huazhan zixu (Preface for the 1942 exhibition of my paintings),” September 22, 1942, published serially on the supplements of Shishi xinbao on October 8, 12, and 20, 1942.
1946 painting echoes the way in which the goddess-like heroic female figure was represented in Eugene Delacroix (1798-1863)’s *Liberty Leading the People* (Fig. 3. 29). In this painting made by Delacroix in 1830 to commemorate the July Revolution of that year, the artist personified France as a woman of idealized strength and beauty, bearing the tricolor flag as she leads the citizens of Paris against tyranny. The dramatic composition, its foreground filled with a mass of surging figures, creates a sense of immediacy that engages the viewer and promotes identification with the depicted action. In Delacroix’s painting, French viewers had reflected back to them the ideals of liberty and fraternity and the idea of themselves as heroic bearers of those ideals. Since the 1880s, the American Japanophile Ernest Fenollosa had argued that Japan, like Western artistic canons of the nineteenth century that prized history paintings for their appeal to patriotic sentiment and civic morality, needed powerful civic paintings.\(^{660}\) Fenollosa promoted Japanese artistic achievements as national symbols worldwide and promoted an art education that encouraged artists to select modes of traditional painting that stressed the importance of studying historical models—themes, formats, and styles—and innovation through creation and appropriation.\(^{661}\) In Fu’s career, after he returned to China from Japan, one could find, on one hand, that the Meiji legacy imported from Euro-America that painting should

\(^{660}\) The neo-traditionalist current of *nihongga* (Japanese-style painting) arose during the 1880s, spearheaded by the Japanese pan-Asianist philosopher and aesthete Okakura Tenshin and his teacher Fenollosa who held the view common in the late nineteenth-century Europe and America, that art represented nation. Victoria Weston, *Japanese Painting and National Identity: Okakura Tenshin and His Circle* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, the University of Michigan, 2004), 23 – 25.

somehow express national identity, that it be recognizably “Japanese,” inspired Fu in his making of art as an instrument and expression of “Chineseness.” On the other hand, when considering Fu’s 1946 *Mountain Spirit* in the frame of “revolutionary romanticism” as a legacy of the art of the era of the French Revolution, the connection between Delacroix’s powerful civic painting and Fu’s work might have been not only theoretical but also historically grounded in Fu’s knowledge about Japanese national painting reform in the 1880s, which he gained when he was studying Chinese art history in Japan. By capturing a critical moment of sorrow as “the thunder rumbles, rain darkens the sky,” Fu visually transforms the miserable lover who is “turning her back and yearning for her lover” into a melancholy heroine. The hanging scroll of Fu’s 1946 *Mountain Spirit* is 163 cm tall and 82.8 cm wide in size, which, as discussed above, is relatively large compared to the other paintings Fu made in the same period. The theatricality and monumentality that Fu added to his female image, which is already grand in size, differentiate it from both ancient and contemporaneous paintings of the same theme.

Executed in April 1946, when the Second Sino-Japanese War was ended and the Civil War between the KMT and the CCP had resumed, Fu’s *Mountain Spirit* effectively combined the sorrow of war with the mystery of nature. Embodying the aesthetics of pathos and hope, Fu communicated to his prospective audiences a female figuration of China (and its “people”) in an age of Chinese Revolution. Drawing from selected thematic and stylistic models that had been coded conventionally as the epitome of an “untrammeled” subjectivity in culturally Han Chinese
literati discourses, Fu’s female figurations were endowed with a revolutionary spirit of unconformity to the status quo. Originally narrated in the *Chuci* as a supernatural being longing for unity with her love, the “Mountain Spirit” is accordingly transformed by Fu into a female figuration of the unfinished Chinese Revolution (to be motivated by the revolutionary *people*), suffering yet still full of hope. To wartime Chinese audiences in the mid-1940s who were CCP members or pro-CCP leftist liberals, Fu’s archaistic female images potentially conveyed a political allegory of modern China in “a great age” (in the artist’s own term) of social and political transformation marked by wars – not only the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression but also the Civil War between the authoritarian KMT party-state and the revolutionaries led by the CCP.
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![Image of a rubbing featuring the motif of “Drum Dance”](image1)

**Fig. 1.56-a** Fig. 1.56-b Fig. 1.56-c Fig. 1.56-d Fig. 1.56-e

**Fig. 1.56-f** Fig. 1.56-g Fig. 1.56-h Fig. 1.56-i Fig. 1.56-j

**Figure 1.56 (a-j)** These oversized thumbnail images are reproduced here in the way resembling how the photographic reproductions of the Nanyang rubbings with motifs of “Drum Dance” (Fig. 1.56-a and Fig. 1.56-b) are juxtaposed and compared with a series of ethnographic photographs featuring the “Drum Dance” performed by the Miao people in Guizhou (taken by Rui Yifu’s assistant Yong Shiheng, June 1933) (Fig. 1.56-c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j) to form a highly suggestive viewing context of display in the IHP archive of ethnographic minorities. Source: IHP digital archive of ethnographic minorities in southwest China, No. 00000640 - No. 00000649

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**Figure 3.5** Anonymous, *Illustrations of the Nine Songs*, formerly attributed to Li Gonglin. Detail. 32.1 × 467.4 cm. Hand scroll; ink and color on silk. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

**Figure 3.6** Zhang Wo, *Illustrations of the Nine Songs*, 1361. Detail. Hand scroll; ink on paper. 28 × 438.2 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.

**Figure 3.7** Anonymous, *Illustrations of the Nine Songs*, formerly attributed to Zhang Dunli, dated to Southern Song or Jin dynasty (second quarter of the thirteenth century). 24.7 × 608.5 cm. Hand scroll; ink and color on silk. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Figure 3.8 Anonymous, *Illustrations of the Nine Songs*, formerly attributed to Zhang Dunli, dated to the Yuan dynasty (around the fourteenth century). Album of eleven paintings; ink on paper. 26.4 × 15.9 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

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Figure 3.10 Xiao Yuncong, “Mountain Spirit,” in *Illustrations of the Nine Songs* compiled in *Qinding buhui Xiao Yuncong Li Sao quantu* (The Imperially Ordered Complete Illustrations of Li Sao Supplementing the Sketches by Xiao Yuncong), reprinted in Vol. 1062 of the *Wenyuange siku quanshu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987).
**Figure 3.11** Luo Pin, *Mountain Spirit*, Qing dynasty. 91 × 35 cm. Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper. Tsinghua University Art College, Beijing.

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**Figure 3.15** *Admonitions of the Instructress to Court Ladies*, traditionally attributed to Gu Kaizhi (c. 344–406). 24.37 × 343.75 cm. Detail. Panel-mounted hand scroll; ink and color on silk. A Song-dynasty copy of a fifth – sixth century work. The British Museum, London.

**Figure 3.16** *Admonitions of the Instructress to Court Ladies*, traditionally attributed to Gu Kaizhi (c. 344–406). 24.37 × 343.75 cm. Detail. Panel-mounted hand scroll; ink and color on silk. A Song-dynasty copy of a fifth – sixth century work. The British Museum, London.
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