

Educating the New China: Writing and Rewriting Qing History in the History Textbooks of the
People's Republic of China, 1949-2023

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Introduction

In 2017, the news that Qu Yuan was removed from the latest middle school history textbooks ignited the Chinese Internet.¹ A poet and politician during the Warring States period (475 BC—403 BC), Qu Yuan committed suicide when his motherland was defeated. Today, he is recognized as a critical patriotic figure in Chinese history and is thought to be the founder of the Dragon Boat Festival.² Netizens and scholars were infuriated because the omission of Qu Yuan could result in the loss of crucial traditional Chinese cultural identity.³ The People's Education Press (PEP), the textbooks' publisher, had to placate the public by clarifying all the places Qu Yuan was referenced in the curriculum.⁴

From this controversy, we see that Chinese people take education very seriously; they are sincerely concerned about the country's young generations learning the right things to cultivate a sense of patriotism—although what exactly the “right” things to know are have been subject to constant debate. More importantly, this incident raised the critical question of how textbooks relate to and cultivate a country's national identity. The primary function of textbooks is to convey knowledge to young students, but because young children have less agency to discern information quality, textbooks should, in theory, be authoritative and unbiased. In practice, however, school textbooks are bitter battlegrounds for political influence. Textbook producers—whether they are individuals, political parties, or governments—can take advantage of the

¹ He Xin 何新, “he xin nudui jiaoyubu: jingwen quyuan yicong xinban lishi jiaocai chuming” 何新怒怼教育部：惊闻屈原已从新版历史教材除名 (He Xin Angry at the Ministry of Education: Surprised to Hear That Qu Yuan Has Been Removed from the Newest Edition of History Textbooks), June 23, 2018, <http://www.szhgh.com/Article/wds/culture/2018-06-22/173184.html?from=groupmessage>.

² Sabina Knight, *Chinese Literature: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 32–34.

³ He, “he xin nudui jiaoyubu: jingwen quyuan yicong xinban lishi jiaocai chuming.”

⁴ Cao Ying 曹滢, “quyuan zhangheng cong tongbian jiaocai zhong xiaoshi le? renjiaoshe huiying: quandouzaine!” 屈原张衡从统编教材中消失了？人教社回应：全都在呢！（Did Qu Yuan and Zhang Heng Disappear from the Latest Textbook? People's Education Press Responded: All Are There!），December 12, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-12/12/c_129763918.htm.

authoritativeness and imperceptibly assert their political ideologies. Humanities and social science subjects, like history, are particularly subject to these political influences. The reason is simple. According to Benedict Anderson, a nation can be viewed as an “imagined community” where people share a common national identity. Such identity could result from common historical or cultural roots, or through cultural mixing in some creole communities. This identity is further enhanced by print culture; for example, people from different parts of the country read the same newspaper at the same time, creating a sense of simultaneity despite the geographical separation.⁵ In alignment with Anderson’s argument, history textbooks not only cultivate national identity by narrating the country’s history and deciding who and what gets to be remembered—and in what ways—but also create simultaneity among the country’s youngsters as the books are often used in many schools across the nation. Thus, while professional historians often agitate to guard against politicization in history education, it is hard to deny that history textbooks have been, and always will be, an essential tool for nation-building.⁶

Politicized history textbooks are no news to the world—almost every country has them. For example, the Japanese history textbook is notorious for politicization. In Japan, publishing houses submit their textbook drafts to the government for screening and approval, and the schools can use the approved ones. After the 2000s, Japan’s politics saw a rightward shift, and conservative politicians, including the recently assassinated Shinzo Abe, promoted pro-nationalism narratives in discussing Japan’s war history. This included whitewashing and downplaying Japan’s military aggression in Eastern Asia, the comfort women (women from China, Korea, the Philippines, and other countries forced to be sex slaves for the Japanese army

⁵ Benedict R. O’G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed (London ; New York: Verso, 2006), 161–206.

⁶ William A. Callahan, “History, Identity, and Security: Producing and Consuming Nationalism in China,” *Critical Asian Studies* 38, no. 2 (June 2006): 179–208, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672710600671087>.

during the wars), the Nanjing Massacre, and a variety of other issues. These narratives have elicited significant diplomatic and civil resistance from neighboring countries such as China, Korea, Russia, and even within Japan.⁷ On the other side of the globe, the United States textbooks suffer from partisan political and ideological conflict. Similar to in Japan, commercial publishers commission textbook writing in the US, but it is state legislatures and regional school boards that have the right to screen and order revisions. As a result, the McGraw Hill American History textbooks used in Texas differ from the versions used in California on slavery, gun rights, and racial issues.⁸

Therefore, it is no surprise that China, a country that celebrates its history and perceives history as a matter of national stability and security, would also tailor history education to facilitate nation-building.⁹ This thesis will trace how the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), the last pre-modern imperial regime, has been represented in the People's Republic of China (PRC) secondary education history textbooks from 1949 to 2023. The thesis will reveal changes in the country's political landscape and nation-building strategies during its 74-year history, especially at two critical junctures: first, how the PRC government constructed a new regime under the leadership of Mao Zedong following decades of wars and the Chinese Communist Revolution, and second, how the country moved onto a new economic development-focused route after the Cultural Revolution and Mao's death. This work draws on the interaction between politics,

⁷ Yangmo Ku, "Japanese History Textbook Controversies, 1995-2010: Transnational Activism Versus Neo-Nationalist Movement: Japanese History Textbook Controversies," *Pacific Focus* 29, no. 2 (August 2014): 260–83, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pafo.12030>; Gi-Wook Shin and Daniel Sneider, *History Textbooks and the Wars in Asia: Divided Memories*, Routledge Contemporary Asia Series 31 (London ; Routledge, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203831663>.

⁸ Dana Goldstein, "Two States. Eight Textbooks. Two American Stories.," *The New York Times*, 2020.1.20, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/01/12/us/texas-vs-california-history-textbooks.html>.

⁹ Callahan, "History, Identity, and Security."

nationalism, and education, providing insights into how past political and social developments shaped the PRC today.

The Qing dynasty provides a unique lens to understand the PRC because it has been an ongoing concern for the PRC's rule. First, the Qing dynasty was the last manifestation of an imperial system that had defined a "China" for over two thousand years. Its collapse and overthrow in 1911 marked the end of imperial China. Following the Qing, the Republic of China (ROC, 1912-1949) ruled China for 37 years. Though short-lived, it was filled with internal and external conflicts, such as the warlords versus the Kuomintang (the Chinese Nationalist Party), the Second Sino-Japan War, and the Chinese Communist Revolution. In 1949, the Communist Party of China (CPC) founded the PRC. During these four turbulent decades, China transformed profoundly from a traditional imperial empire to a modern, socialist nation-state. Thus, the PRC government faced the impending task of justifying its rule: how to present a revolution that turned a page on the past, what was the PRC's relationship with the imperial dynasties, and why the new PRC political system was more suitable for China? In addition, the Qing dynasty was ruled by the Manchu minority, instead of the majority ethnicity, the Han Chinese. The Manchu-dominated Qing government also expanded its territory to almost twice as large as its predecessor, the Han-ruled Ming empire (1368-1644), incorporating many non-Han frontiers and ethnic groups such as Tibetans or Uyghurs. This expansion—led by a non-Han Manchu military—helped define a "China" that went far beyond the traditional settlement areas of the Han Chinese people but continued to form the basis of the PRC territory. Therefore, another concern for the PRC was why it should assume rule over an expanse that had been defined and unified by the Qing and ROC and how it best to govern these ethnic minorities and integrate a

diversified state. To address these concerns, one of the PRC's key strategies involved history textbooks.

Previously, many scholars have researched the nation-building strategies of different countries in history, and they noted the common phenomena of changing historical narratives in post-revolution societies. For example, in his masterful work *Peasants into Frenchmen*, historian Eugen Weber argues that external developments such as World War I and the Industrial Revolution had transformed France into an integrated nation-state.¹⁰ With the discussion of many social transformations, such as infrastructure, schooling systems, and the workforce, that brought peasants who lived in rural France into an interconnected modernized country, Weber indicates that revolutions and social changes redefined the French national identity and challenged the traditional way the French thought about their country's past and present. While France and China differ on many levels, national stories, to which the schooling systems contribute, play a central role in both countries' identities. Weber's work suggests that analyzing some fundamentals of the revolution's impact on the Chinese national memory will be insightful.

Similar observations have been made on Russia as well. Russia in the twentieth century had multiple critical developments, such as the rise and fall of Stalinism, the subsequent reforms by various leaderships, and the collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR). Scholars have revealed that Russia's national historical narrative has changed after each political change. Roger Markwick has traced several waves of national historiography changes in the USSR from Stalin to Khrushchev and Brezhnev administrations. His scholarship has focused on how leadership changes combined with politically-influenced scholarly publications have prompted the country

¹⁰ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France; 1870-1914*, Nachdr. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 2007).

to reshape its use and interpretation of Marxism and Leninism to narrate its history.¹¹

Complementing Markwick's work, Olga Malinova traced the three major stages of the evolution of the Russian official historical account after the fall of the USSR to 2016. The country constructed the "New Russia" concept immediately after the fall of the USSR. It switched to highlighting the continuity of the civilization by promoting the "Thousand-Year-Old Russian State" in the 2000s, before Vladimir Putin aspired to make the official historical account more consistent since 2012.¹² Many issues regarding reinterpreting history raised by Malinova were directly relevant to the PRC's situation. For example, how could Russia both inherit its imperial past and use it to legitimize a novel Russian Federation? How should it deal with the country's negative past, such as political repression during the USSR, while painting a bright future for the nation? Malinova also used a variety of government documents to show how fluctuating politics affected the reinterpretation process.

In many ways, Russia presents a good parallel for China, given the regime changes in the two countries over the course of the twentieth century. Both countries saw the historical transformation from imperial to socialist and then to post-socialist developments; both countries have a dominating party that governs the state; and both countries have a centralized system to provide official history. In fact, the PRC modeled itself after the USSR in its initial years. As a result, many forces or political events that led to official historical account changes in Russia, such as leadership changes, Party congresses, or even political agenda changes within one leadership, are also directly relevant to China.¹³ While scholars such as Markwick have directly

¹¹ Roger D. Markwick, "Cultural History Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev: From Social Psychology to Mentalites," *Russian Review* 65, no. 2 (April 2006): 283–301, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9434.2005.00400.x>.

¹² Niklas Bernsand and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, *Cultural and Political Imaginaries in Putin's Russia* (BRILL, 2019), 85–104, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004366671>.

¹³ Markwick, "Cultural History Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev"; Bernsand and Törnquist-Plewa, *Cultural and Political Imaginaries in Putin's Russia*, 85–104.

engaged the Russian official history provided by the government, this thesis will analyze state-approved textbooks as a reflection of China's official history and explore the role of education in writing and rewriting a national story.

For China, historian Paul Cohen has traced and contextualized the discursive changes in historical narratives of the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 during several vital junctures in the twentieth century: the New Culture movement (1910s-20s), the anti-imperialism period (1920s-30s), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in *History in the Three Keys*.¹⁴ Drawing on newspapers, intellectual writings, and political propaganda materials, Cohen agrees with the scholars above that the past is malleable in the social construction of historical events. The mass public's understanding of history, or public history, can be treated as a historical subject, as it depends on and reflects the political and social environment. This thesis builds on Cohen's work by examining a portrayal of a longer historical period (the Qing dynasty) in a specific genre (history textbooks and education) over a specific regime's history (the PRC).

Another key area of scholarship this study engages with is the history of education. Scholars have revealed that history education is a crucial platform for nation-building and collective memory formation in the US, Eastern Europe, and Eastern Asia.¹⁵ For China, scholarship on education has demonstrated the link between education and nationalism.¹⁶

¹⁴ Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys the Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ James W Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 2018), <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1828018>; Eric Foner, *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World*, 1st ed (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002); Mateja Režek, "The Ideologization of History Education and Textbooks in Slovenia (Yugoslavia) During Socialism, 1945–1990," in *Nationhood and Politicization of History in School Textbooks: Identity, the Curriculum and Educational Media*, ed. Gorana Ognjenović and Jasna Jozelić (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 17–42, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38121-9_3; Shin and Sneider, *History Textbooks and the Wars in Asia*.

¹⁶ Ichisada Miyazaki and Conrad Schirokauer, *China's Examination Hell: The Civil Service Examinations of Imperial China* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1981); Jonathan Unger, *Education Under Mao: Class and Competition in Canton Schools, 1960-1980*, Studies of the East Asian Institute (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Suisheng Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen

Textbooks are also an integral topic in this area of historiography, such as Peter Zarrow's *Educating China*.¹⁷ In his book, Zarrow analyzed the history textbooks and teachers' guidebooks by different editors during the late Qing and the ROC to reveal the different nation-building strategies, providing both the chronological textbook changes and a horizontal comparison between different textbook narratives around the same time. Zarrow argued that textbook historiography was influenced by the overarching political climate and used to justify a regime's legitimacy—whether it was through establishing a political lineage or challenging the previous regime with revolutionary rhetoric. *Educating China* suggests further directions for textbook studies in the PRC period because, unlike the ROC period, in which the textbook editors had significant control over the textbook, textbook production and selection in the PRC were much more centralized and standardized.¹⁸ While Zarrow showed that the editors' voice constitutes a large part of the textbook historiography—which meant the editors and publishing houses asserted their political influence and carried out political propaganda in a broader sense—the PRC textbooks represented the government's official voice more than the editors and reflected the nation's political climate from the ruling party's perspective.

Currently, few studies of PRC history textbooks exist in English scholarship, and no study similar to Zarrow's has been done on the PRC period. Among the sociologists,

China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 3 (January 9, 1998): 287–302, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0967-067X\(98\)00009-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0967-067X(98)00009-9); Robert Weatherley and Qiang Zhang, *History and Nationalist Legitimacy in Contemporary China: A Double-Edged Sword* (London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Fei Yan et al., "Grafting Identity: History Textbook Reform and Identity-Building in Contemporary China," *Journal of Educational Change* 22, no. 2 (May 2021): 175–90, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-019-09365-z>; Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2004).

¹⁷ Peter Gue Zarrow, *Educating China: Knowledge, Society, and Textbooks in a Modernizing World, 1902-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 147–213.

¹⁸ Shi Ou 石鸥 and Liu Xueli 刘学利, "Diedang de bainian: xiandai jiaokeshu fazhan huigu yu zhanwang" 跌宕的百年: 现代教科书发展回顾与展望 (A Tempestuous Century: Scan the Development of Modern Textbooks), *hunan shifan daxue jiaoyu kexue xuebao* 湖南师范大学教育科学学报 12, no. 3 (May 2013): 28–34.

educationalists, and historians who have begun contributing to the topic, Nimrod Baranovitch and Lu Zhaojin have tracked the evolution of the concept of Chinese citizenship and nationality in history textbooks since the 1950s.¹⁹ Though the two studies proved the significance of the PRC history textbook changes, more is needed to situate these changes within the political background. Alisa Jones has taken a different approach by contextualizing each of the textbooks in its era of production, although she has focused on the history curriculum as a whole, without detailed analyses of the textbook texts.²⁰ Moreover, Robert Weatherly and Coirle Magee have contextualized and analyzed history textbooks in detail but only focused on one set of textbooks.²¹ Thus, this thesis examines and traces how the textbooks portray one dynasty and explains the changes vis-à-vis the construction of a new nation within the country's broader political context.

Without a doubt, the core primary sources of this project are the PRC secondary education history textbooks. In 1951, the People's Education Press (PEP), a state-owned publishing house specializing in textbook writing, published the first national textbooks for primary and secondary schools. Ever since, PEP has undertaken most of the national textbook rewriting and production.²² Unlike in the US, Japan, or the ROC, these PEP textbooks are used

¹⁹ Nimrod Baranovitch, "Others No More: The Changing Representation of Non-Han Peoples in Chinese History Textbooks, 1951–2003," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 1 (2010): 85–122, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911809991598>; Zhaojin Lu, "The Changing Definition of China in Middle School History Textbooks," *Nations and Nationalism* 23, no. 3 (2017): 571–98, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12278>.

²⁰ Alisa Jones, "Politics and History Curriculum Reform in Post-Mao China," *International Journal of Educational Research* 37, no. 6–7 (January 2002): 545–66, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-0355\(03\)00050-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-0355(03)00050-8).

²¹ Robert Weatherley and Coirle Magee, "Using the Past to Legitimise the Present: The Portrayal of Good Governance in Chinese History Textbooks," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 47, no. 1 (January 2018): 41–69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810261804700102>.

²² "jiaocai zonglan" 教材纵览 (Overview of Textbooks), jiaocai zonglan 教材纵览, n.d., <https://www.pep.com.cn/tjgl/jc/>.

across the entire country, from thriving metropolises to rural villages.²³ Thus, these textbooks carry special weight in constructing a new national history and identity, serving to unify the country after decades of turbulence and wars. The thesis will engage eight sets of national secondary education textbooks spanning the entire history of the PRC. The selected textbooks are approximately nine years apart so that they can demonstrate trends in the narrative change. A brief introduction to the textbooks is provided below, and more detailed context will be provided in the chapters.

The first three sets of textbooks were produced during Mao's period. The first set is the 1953 middle school and high school history textbooks, the first history books written and used after the PRC's foundation in 1949.²⁴ However, the book only discussed Chinese history until 1911, the collapse of the Qing empire. Due to time limitations, the textbook writers derived many materials from the textbooks used in the CPC-controlled regions during the Communist Revolution or the ROC period. The textbook writer also referenced the USSR secondary education history textbook.²⁵

The second set of textbooks is the 1956 middle school and high school history textbooks, which were systematically rewritten from the previous one, as stipulated by *The Outline of Middle School History Education* (1955) by the Ministry of Education (MOE).²⁶ This set of

²³ There were several waves of textbook diversification promoted by the Ministry of Education in the PRC, and some provinces or municipalities, like Shandong or Shanghai, may choose to use a non-PEP textbook. However, the default is to use the PEP textbook, and the non-PEP textbooks are subject to being screened and approved by the Ministry of Education.

²⁴ Li Gengxu 李庚序, ed., *chujuzhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi disance* 初级中学课本：中国历史 第三册 (Junior High School Textbook: Chinese History Book Three) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1953).

²⁵ Hongzhi Wang 王宏志 et al., eds., *xinzhongguo zhongxiaoxue jiaocai jiansheshi 1949-2000 yanjiu congshu* 新中国中小学教材建设史 1949-2000 研究丛书 (Research Series on the History of Primary and Secondary School Textbook Construction in the People's Republic of China, 1949-2000), vol. History Volume (Beijing: People's Education Press, 2010), 9-11.

²⁶ Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe 人民教育出版社 (People's Education Press), ed., *chujuzhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi dierce* 初级中学课本：中国历史 第二册 (Junior High School Textbook: Chinese History Book Two) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1955); Qiu Hansheng 邱汉生, Chen Lesu 陈乐素, and Wang Lu 汪麓, eds., *gaoji*

textbooks was produced after 1953, the year the PRC started the socialist transformation and the first Five Year Plan. The textbooks were used during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) and the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-1959).²⁷ The Great Leap Forward was a political movement aimed at rapidly industrializing the country and collectivizing agriculture that contributed to widespread famine within the country from 1961 to 1963. The Anti-Rightist Campaign was a campaign for political purging and a prelude to the Cultural Revolution.²⁸

The third set of textbooks is the People's Publishing House middle school textbook from 1972.²⁹ As the PEP was paralyzed and did not publish any textbooks during the Cultural Revolution, the People's Publishing House's books were chosen instead.³⁰ The People's Publishing House is also a state-owned publisher, so it could still represent the government's

zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi dierce 高级中学课本：中国历史 第二册 (Senior High School Textbook: Chinese History Book Two) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1957); Li Longgeng 李隆庚, ed., *20 shiji zhongguo zhongxiaoxue kecheng biao zhun jiaoxue dagang huibian lishi juan* 20 世纪中国中小学课程标准·教学大纲汇编 历史卷 (Compilation of Curriculum Standards and Syllabus for Chinese Primary and Secondary Schools in the 20th Century History Volume) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 2001).

²⁷ Angang Hu, *The Political and Economic History of China (1949 - 1976)*, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Singapore: Erich Professional Publ, 2013); Li, *20 shiji zhongguo zhongxiaoxue kecheng biao zhun jiaoxue dagang huibian lishi juan*.

²⁸ Zhihua Shen 沈志华, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi disanjuan sikao yu xuanze, cong zhishifenzi huiyi dao fanyoupai yundong (1956-1957)* 中华人民共和国史 第三册 思考与选择——从知识分子会议到反右派运动 (1956-1957) (The History of the People's Republic of China, Volume 3, Reflections and Choices: The Consciousness of the Chinese Intellectuals and the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1956-1957)), vol. 3, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Shi* 中华人民共和国史 (The History of the People's Republic of China) (Hong Kong: Research Center for Contemporary Chinese Culture, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2008), 523–680; Yunhui Lin 林蕴晖, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi disijuan wutuobang yundong cong dayuejin dao da jihuanguang (1958-1961)* 中华人民共和国史 第四卷 乌托邦运动——从大跃进到大饥 (1958-1961) (The History of the People's Republic of China, Volume 4, The Utopian Movement: The Great Leap Forward and the Great Famine (1958-1961)), vol. 4, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Shi* 中华人民共和国史 (The History of the People's Republic of China) (Hong Kong: Research Center for Contemporary Chinese Culture, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2008), 1–254.

²⁹ Beijingshi jiaoyuju jiaocai bianxiezu 北京市教育局教材编写组 (Textbook Compilation Group of the Beijing Municipal Education Commission), ed., *beijingshi zhongxue shiyong keben: lishi diyice* 北京市中学试用课本：历史 第一册 (Beijing Middle School Trial Textbook: History Book One) (Beijing, People's Publishing House, 1972).

³⁰ “renjiaoban shiyitao zhongxiaoxue jiaocai zonglan (disitao)” 人教版十一套中小学教材纵览 (第四套) (Overview of the Eleven Sets of Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Schools by the People's Education Press: The Fourth Set), renjiaoban shiyitao zhongxiaoxue jiaocai zonglan (disitao) 人教版十一套中小学教材纵览 (第四套), n.d., https://www.pep.com.cn/rjgl/jc/201008/t20100831_843601.shtml.

voice, but a different publisher could also mean different authors, emphases, and perspectives. This set of textbooks is the only one used in the study not published by PEP.

The Cultural Revolution ended in 1976 with Mao Zedong's death the same year, and the country started to recover from the destruction and strived to find a new direction. The fourth set of textbooks used in this study captures the critical transition moment in PRC history—the middle school textbook from 1978.³¹ At the time of the publication of this textbook (August 1978), PRC's next prominent leader, Deng Xiaoping, had yet to assume power, and Mao's thoughts still had a significant influence on the country. Thus, the 1978 textbook was produced during the political vacuum following Mao's death. It was not until December that Deng functionally came into power in the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC and led the country into the Reform-and-Opening-Up period.

The following four sets of textbooks were all produced under Deng's China. The fifth and sixth set is the middle and high school textbooks from 1987 and 1993, respectively.³² Even though the country primarily focused on economic development at that point, the PRC still witnessed major political developments between 1987 and 1993, such as the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989 that temporarily put the country in instability. Nevertheless, Deng's 1992

³¹ zhongxiaoxue tongyong jiaocai lishi bianxiezu 中小学通用教材历史编写组 (History Group of General Textbooks Writing for Primary and Secondary Schools), ed. *quanrizhi shinianzhi xuexiao chuzhong keben: zhongguo lishi dierce* 全日制十年制学校初中课本：中国历史 第二册 (Junior High School Textbooks for Full-Time Ten-Year Schools: Chinese History Book Two) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1978.8).

³² Su Shoutong 苏寿桐 et al., eds., *gaoji zhongxue keben: zhongguo gudai shi* 高级中学课本：中国古代史 (Senior High School Textbook: Pre-Modern Chinese History) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1991.10); Wang Hongzhi 王宏志 et al., eds., *jiunian yiwu jiaoyu sannianzhi chuji zhongxue jiaokeshu: zhongguo lishi disance* 九年义务教育三年制初级中学教科书：中国历史 第三册 (Nine-Year Compulsory Education Three-Year Junior High School Textbook: Chinese History Book Three) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1994); Wang Hongzhi 王宏志 et al., eds., *jiunian yiwu jiaoyu sannianzhi chuji zhongxue jiaokeshu: zhongguo lishi dierce* 九年义务教育三年制初级中学教科书：中国历史 第二册 (Nine-Year Compulsory Education Three-Year Junior High School Textbook: Chinese History Book Two) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1994).

Southern Tour rejuvenated the country's development momentum. The differences between the two textbooks, this study will reveal, were marked by these events.

The last two sets of textbooks are from after the new millennium: one from 2007 and another from 2016-2019.³³ The 2007 middle school and high school textbooks, which I personally studied, were produced during the high point of China's engagement with the US-led liberal globalization after joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, and the books were anticipating the 2008 Olympics. In contrast, the 2016-2019 textbooks aligned with Xi Jinping's China. Produced during a trade war between China and the US, the book witnessed the resurgence of conservative values and China's quest to be a more prominent player in the great power game. The middle school textbooks were published in 2016, and the high school textbooks were published in 2019. The 2016-2019 textbooks are currently the only version used across the country, as mandated by the MOE.³⁴

All textbooks consider the First Opium War as the start of modern Chinese history, so they include Qing history from 1644 to 1840 in the pre-modern section and 1840 to 1911 in the modern section. 1840 is a hard division in history research and education in China, and the

³³ Ji Bingxin 姬秉新 et al., eds., *putong gaozhong kecheng biao zhun shi yan jiao keshu: lishi bixiu yi* 普通高中课程标准实验教科书：历史 必修一 (Standard Textbook for General High School Curriculum: History Book One) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 2007); Ouyang Zhongshi 欧阳中石 et al., eds., *putong gaozhong kecheng biao zhun shi yan jiao keshu: lishi bixiu san* 普通高中课程标准实验教科书：历史 必修三 (Standard Textbook for General High School Curriculum: History Book Three) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 2007); Chen Wutong 陈梧桐, Li Weike 李伟科, and Xu Bin 许斌, eds., *putong gaozhong kecheng biao zhuan shi yan jiao keshu: lishi bixiu er* 普通高中课程标准实验教科书：历史 必修二 (Standard Textbook for General High School Curriculum: History Book Two) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 2007); Qu Lindong 瞿林东 et al., eds., *yiwu jiaoyu jiao keshu zhong guo lishi qinianji xiace* 义务教育教科书 中国历史 七年级 下册 (Compulsory Education Textbook Chinese History 7th Grade Book Two) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 2016); Yan Shaoxiang 晏绍祥和 Zhang Shunhong 张顺洪, eds., *putong gaozhong jiao keshu lishi bixiu zhong wai lishi gang yao (shang)* 普通高中教科书 历史 必修 中外历史纲要 (上) (General High School Textbook: History Compulsory Outline of Chinese and Foreign History Book One) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 2019.12).

³⁴ "xinbian daode yu fazhi, yuwen, lishi jiaocai jiuyue yiri quanguo touru shiyong" 新编道德与法治、语文、历史教材 9 月 1 日全国投入使用 (The Newly Revised Moral and Legal Education, Chinese, and History Textbooks Will Be Implemented Nationwide on September 1st.), August 28, 2017, <http://edu.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0828/c367001-29498973.html>.

textbooks adopt such periodization because of the First Opium War (1840-1842). In the resulting unequal treaty, the 1842 Treaty of Nanking, the Qing government ceded Hong Kong to Britain, which the textbook considered the “onset of China’s degeneration into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society.”³⁵ However, this periodization is unique to the PRC historiography; scholars from other countries are not as fixated on the 1840 divide. Recently, some Chinese Qing historians have also pushed to evaluate the Qing dynasty without the divide.³⁶

Most textbooks follow a chronological order in discussing Qing history. In the pre-modern section, the textbooks discuss the Qing empire’s rise, territory, internal policy, economy, and culture; in the modern section, the textbooks consider the collapse of the empire and the numerous social movements amid constant foreign invasions, including the Self-Strengthening Movement (洋务运动), the Taiping Rebellion, the Hundred Days’ Reform (戊戌变法 百日维新), the Boxer’s Rebellion, and the Xinhai Revolution. The only exception is the 2007 high school textbook, in which the textbook writers chose a theme-based structure, but the scope of the content remained the same, and the 1840 division was still present. This thesis seeks to compare and contrast the textbooks’ discussion of these topics through time.

All textbooks devote a few lessons to the Qing dynasty’s political, economic, and cultural history. Within these lessons, I seek to analyze how the textbook builds its arguments, which consist of four aspects. The first is the length of the discussion on different topics relative to the entire discussion of Qing history, which indicates how much emphasis is given to each topic. The second is the content selected, including historical events and supplemental materials. As the

³⁵ Wang Hongzhi 王宏志 et al., eds., *gaoji zhongxue keben: zhongguo jindai xiandai shi shangce (bixiu)* 高级中学课本：中国近代现代史上册（必修） (Senior High School Textbook: Modern and Contemporary Chinese History Book One (Compulsory)) (Beijing: People’s Education Press, 1992.11), 1–10.

³⁶ Yang Jianli 杨剑利, “2021 Qingshi Yanjiu Zongshu” 2021 清史研究综述 (Review of 2021 Qing History Research), *qingshi yanjiu* 清史研究 6 (2022): 139–56.

content selection is driven by the editor's argument, including and omitting certain historical events is crucial to the textbook's historiography, and the different elaborations of history also indicate the editor's attitudes. The third aspect is language. All the textbooks provide conclusive historical evaluations, which are the most direct indication of the editor's argument.³⁷ In addition, the diction and tone subtly demonstrate the editor's attitude. The fourth aspect is the design of the textbook, including figures, maps, or fonts in the textbooks that could emphasize or deemphasize certain information. Through these four aspects, one can clearly understand the textbook's argument on the Qing government and how the argument is supported; by tracing the arguments and evidence, one can extract the changes in the textbook narrative.

In addition to the textbooks, the study also seeks to engage the teacher's guidebooks published along with the textbook.³⁸ The teachers' guidebooks scrutinize each lesson's learning objectives, suggest pedagogy designs, and provide supplemental materials to support teaching, all of which are crucial modifications to the textbook's information. Thus, in a way, the teachers' guidebooks indicate the textbook's historical narrative more because they show what information is stressed to the students. Due to the limited availability of these materials, this thesis will only engage the 1978 and 1993 teachers' guidebooks, but even the two guidebooks reveal essential context for the textbooks.

³⁷ The conclusive historical evaluations refer to the textbook's main argument on certain historical events. For example, the 2016 textbook evaluates the Qing government's ruling on Tibet as "legalized and institutionalized." These evaluations are the key learning objectives that the students need to memorize and understand for the course. See Qu et al., *yiwu jiaoyu jiaokeshu zhongguo lishi qinianji xiace*.

³⁸ zhongxiaoxue tongyong jiaocai lishi bianxiezu 中小学通用教材历史编写组 (History Group of General Textbooks Writing for Primary and Secondary Schools), ed. *quanrizhi shinianzhi xuexiao chuzhong zhongguo lishi dierce jiaoxue cankaoshu* 全日制十年制学校初中中国历史第二册教学参考书 (Junior High School Textbooks for Full-Time Ten-Year Schools Chinese History Book Two Teaching Guide) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1978.8); Shi Mingxun 史明迅 et al., eds., *jiunian yiwu jiaoyu sannianzhi chuji zhongxue jiaokeshu zhongguo lishi dierce jiaoshi jiaoxue yongshu* 九年义务教育三年制初级中学教科书：中国历史第二册 教师教学用书 (Nine-Year Compulsory Education Three-Year Junior High School Textbook Chinese History Book Two Teachers' Guidebook) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1994).

With the textbook historical narrative identified, this study seeks to contextualize the textbook information in the broader political landscape, which usually consists of two steps. First, it identifies the governmental documents that inform the country's political climate and focus, including major government reports, party resolutions, party leaders' speeches and writings, and laws and regulations concerning education. These documents proved influential to the textbook's narratives and historical arguments. Second, to connect the political climate to the textbook changes, it researches curriculum standards, as well as plans and circulars by the MOE.³⁹ While they may not have affected the historical evaluations, they did influence how the historical information was presented. For example, the curriculum standards issued by the MOE synthesized what the government wanted to emphasize to the students, with the textbook writers tailoring the textbook to these standards.

A brief overview of the chapters of this study is as follows. Chapter one will trace the Chinese education system in pre-modern times, the ROC period, the Maoist era of the PRC, and the post-Cultural Revolution PRC. It seeks to lay the foundation for the study by exploring the critical question: who and how people use history textbooks at different times? In pre-modern China, the Civil Service Exam system cultivated a tradition of valuing education, and history writing was used to express Confucian ideologies, the guiding ideology in pre-modern China. The abolition of the exam in 1905 started modern history textbook writing in China, and history textbooks have been contributing to the Chinese national self-image. In the ROC period, history textbooks, for the first time, cultivated a new nation out of the traditional, imperial state. In the Maoist era, the simplification of Chinese characters and the establishment of a new socialist

³⁹ Li, *20 shiji zhongguo zhongxiaoxue kecheng biao zhun jiaoxue dagang huibian lishi juan*.

education system allowed more people to access education, but these efforts were hindered by the Cultural Revolution. After Mao died in 1976, the country restored its education system. The rejuvenation of the National College Entrance Exam (Gaokao) in 1977 and the implementation of the nine-year compulsory education in 1986 allowed a much broader audience of the textbooks. Thus, these critical changes in the Chinese education system rendered the ever-increasing significance of history textbooks in building national memory.

The following two chapters will dive into the textbooks. Chapter two, named “The ‘New’ China,” focuses on how the textbooks during Mao’s era contributed to constructing the concept of a new, revolutionary China, in contrast to the old, imperial China. The chapter finds that the textbooks generally adopted a negative evaluation of the Qing government, criticizing it as oppressive and aloof. These negative remarks indicated that the PRC wanted to sever its ties with the Qing and used a “regime-contrast” model to justify its political legitimacy. In addition, the textbook also introduced a new historical analysis perspective based on class struggle, which corresponded to the country’s heightened political movements. All of these strategies were part of a much larger revolution by the CPC to educate its citizens about a new socialist ideology.

Subsequently, chapter three, named “The ‘New Era’ of the ‘New China,’” focuses on how the textbook changes facilitated the developments following the collapse of the Cultural Revolution and Mao’s death. The chapter finds significant rewriting of Qing history during the late 1970s and early 1980s, including the omission of class struggle, the reversal of some key evaluations of the Qing, and increased focus on economic policies. Not only did these changes correspond to the country’s new direction of economic development during Deng’s era, but they also suggested that the PRC started to align itself with the imperial dynasties to cultivate a

glorious Chinese national image and a peaceful internal environment for economic prosperity. These changes were sustained despite the political disturbances in the late 1980s.

On October 1st, 1949, Chairman Mao announced the foundation of the PRC at the Tiananmen Gate. Over the next seventy-four years, the PRC citizens enthusiastically defended the country's honor: both internally, like the incidence of Qu Yuan, or externally on international social media, in the periodic anti-Japanese boycotts, or in supporting the One-China policy. Through one set of official textbooks used across the country at a given time, the government managed to educate its citizens to love their motherland and be willing to serve the country. Even more essential is that the expression of national pride was constantly evolving under the influence of internal and external politics. These changes in the connotation of national identity matter for understanding China today; thus, we will retell and reconstruct the story of the PRC through its education and the history textbooks.

Chapter 1—Textbooks, Education, and Nationalism in China

Before diving into the textbook analysis, we should first consider an important issue. For any textbook to play a role in constructing a national memory or asserting influence, it has to reach a variety of students who study the textbooks carefully. Thus, questions of who and how people use history textbooks are central to this thesis, and both concern the education system. Having a well-established education system since pre-modern times, China is a country that values education significantly. This chapter seeks to trace crucial changes in the education system through four different periods—the pre-modern era, the Republic of China, the Maoist era of the PRC, and the Deng Xiaoping era of the PRC—and quickly consider the different roles the history textbooks played. As a result of developments in the education system, history textbooks since the Chinese Communist Revolution have reached a wider audience and gained greater authority among students, making their nation-building messages all the more significant.

A Tradition of a Millennium

To understand Chinese education, one must trace back to Confucianism, the orthodox school of thought in pre-modern China since the Han dynasty (202 BC—220 AD). Confucius considered education and learning two core requirements for being a “gentleman (君子).” He also crafted the lifelong goal of a gentleman—“cultivate the self, regulate the family, govern the state, and then lead the world to peace.”¹ As a result, almost all intellectuals in pre-modern China aspired to be imperial government officials and serve the imperial state. Hence, education was closely associated with patriotism in China early on.

¹ Confucius and James Legge, *Confucian Analects: The Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 368–73.

Pre-modern intellectuals could attain their goal of working for the government through the Civil Service Examination (CSE) system, commonly known as the Keju (科举) system. Established in the Sui Dynasty (581-618), the CSE replaced the previous corruption-prone, personal recommendation-based talent selection system, the Nine-Rank system (九品中正制). By the Ming Dynasty, the CSE matured to be a three-level exam system—the prefectural exam (乡试), the metropolitan exam (会试), and the palace exam (殿试). Those who passed the first two levels or impressed the emperor in the palace exam could receive high positions in the regional or central imperial governments and much social recognition.² Nevertheless, the three-level exam was only held once in three years, so it was extremely competitive: over the Qing dynasty's 294 years of CSE administration, only an estimated 26849 people passed the palace exam.³

Scholars have amply documented the legacy of the CSE system in pre-modern Chinese society. Though many noticed the negative effects, such as being an obstacle for China to modernize, one undeniable contribution of the exam system was that it helped to sustain the pre-modern Chinese society.⁴ For the state, it supplied the ruling class with a steady stream of talents—maintaining, strengthening, and even improving imperial rule. In addition, through close study of Confucian texts, the exam reinforced the orthodoxy of Confucianism and preserved a Chinese culture that lasts until today. Though preparing for the exam could take a tremendously long time, one could enjoy significant economic rewards and rise in class if he passes one level

² Jin Yingkun 金滢坤, *zhongguo keju zhidu tongshi. suitangwudai juan* 中国科举制度通史.隋唐五代卷 (General History of China's Imperial Examination System. Sui Dynasty, Tang Dynasty, and the Five Dynasty Volume), vol. 1 (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 2015), 9–20.

³ Li Shiyu 李世愉 and Hu Ping 胡平, *zhongguo keju zhidu tongshi. qingdai juan* 中国科举制度通史.清代卷 (General History of China's Imperial Examination System. The Qing Dynasty Volume), vol. 5 (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 2015), 272.

⁴ Li and Hu, 5:40–42.

of the CSE. In some senses, the CSE system provided a way of upward social mobility for everyone, regardless of occupation, wealth, or age, so it was a balance for the autocratic imperial rule.⁵

More importantly, the CSE helped construct the pre-modern Chinese identity, which was expressed primarily through the shared Confucian civilization or ideology. The CSE required the test takers to have a comprehensive command of the Confucian classics because the questions were based on specific quotes; the test takers needed to use the classics texts to construct their arguments in alignment with Confucianism.⁶ For example, in the Tang dynasty (618-907), the test takers could choose the discipline of History and master classics such as *Records of the Grand Historian* (史记) and *Book of Han* (汉书).⁷ In the Ming and Qing dynasties, all three levels of exams were based on the Four Books and Five Classics (四书五经), a collection of Confucian texts selected in the Han Dynasty (202 BC-8 AD) that embodied the highest moral, ethical, and intellectual values of the Chinese civilization. One of the five classics was the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (春秋), a historical chronicle of the Lu Kingdom during the Spring and Autumn period (770 BC-476 BC).⁸ Thus, Confucian classics were the core curriculum for the education of Chinese scholars, officials, and literati. Though secondary to the classics, the orthodox histories contributed to the Confucian ideology as they were written to embody

⁵ Li and Hu, 5:37–42; Miyazaki and Schirokauer, *China's Examination Hell*, 111–29; Benjamin A. Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2013), 95–102.

⁶ Li and Hu, *zhongguo keju zhidu tongshi. qingdai juan*, 5:25–32.

⁷ Jin, *zhongguo keju zhidu tongshi. suitangwudai juan*, 1:659. *Records of the Grand Historian* (史记) is a historical text written by Sima Qian in the Western Han dynasty (202 BC-8 AD) detailing the two-thousand years' history between the Yellow Emperor to Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty. *The Book of Han* (汉书) was written by pre-modern historian Ban Gu and his sister Ban Zhao. It details the history from the Western Han dynasty to the end of the short-lived Xin dynasty (9 AD-23 AD).

⁸ Li and Hu, *zhongguo keju zhidu tongshi. qingdai juan*, 5:27. The Four Books include *the Analects of Confucius*, *the Doctrine of the Mean*, *the Great Learning*, and *the Book of Mencius*. The Five Classics include *the Book of Changes*, *the Book of Poetry*, *the Book of Documents*, *the Book of Rites*, and *the Spring and Autumn Annals*.

Confucian values. Therefore, even though pre-modern China did not have history education in the contemporary sense, in which the national identity was more dependent on the narrative of national history, people have been using historical narratives to convey and promote national identities.

However, the CSE started to deteriorate toward the late Qing dynasty, especially with the adoption of the “Eight-Legged Essay” (八股文), the required genre of writing in the Qing dynasty CSE. While the genre could standardize the exam, it made the exam formulaic and discouraged critical and original thinking of applying Confucianism to governing the country; it favored privileged, pedantic, yet strategic test-takers and fell short of selecting talents.⁹ After the Eight-Nation Alliance’s invasion of China and the Boxer Indemnities, the Qing government initiated a round of reforms to revitalize the country in 1901, historically known as the New Policies of the Late Qing. One of the main areas of reform was education.¹⁰ In 1905, the Guangxu Emperor announced the termination of the CSE, ending a testing system that accompanied imperial China for over 1300 years.¹¹ Despite the beneficial impacts, the CSE’s last manifestation, the Eight-legged essay, suffers from a negative connotation in contemporary Chinese society.¹²

⁹ Li and Hu, 5:25–32.

¹⁰ Li and Hu, 5:740–59.

¹¹ Li and Hu, 5:744–49.

¹² Gao Mingyang 高明扬 and Zou Min 邹敏, “ershi shiji yilai baguwen yanjiu pingshu--cong jiqingde pipan dao lixingde sikao” 二十世纪以来八股文研究述评——从激情的批判到理性的思考 高明扬 邹敏 (An Overview of the Researches on the Eight-Part Essay Since the 20th Century), *shanxi shida xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 山西师大学报 (社会科学版) 33, no. 5 (2006): 102–7.

New Nation, New Narrative

Accompanying the abolition of the CSE system, the Qing government also promoted the construction of new schools following the Western model. Hence, history textbook writing in the modern sense started in China during the Qing's final years.¹³ In 1904, the Qing government's curriculum standard indicated that the history subject should “especially discuss the benevolent governance of the dynasty” and “enumerate the virtues and good governance of the saints of the dynasty (陈列本朝列圣之善政德泽).”¹⁴ Evidently, the Qing government desperately tried to hold the falling empire together through the New Policies.

Less than one decade after the New Policies, the Xinhai Rebellion led by Sun Yat-sen overthrew the Qing and founded the ROC. Even though the education system was less unified in the ROC than in the PRC, the ROC government issued many guidelines to regulate education and textbook writing. Many influential scholars published their own textbooks in accordance with the guidelines, and as a result, history textbook writing flourished during the ROC.¹⁵

ROC history can be further divided into two periods. Immediately after the Xinhai Revolution, the ROC was ruled by the Beiyang Government (based in Beijing) led by Yuan Shikai. The Beiyang Government never truly unified the country; its power extended only over northern China. From 1926 to 1928, the Kuomintang led the Northern Expedition that defeated the Beiyang Government, and since then, the ROC was unified under the Nanking Nationalist Government. Hence, the ROC under the Nanking Government can be seen as the first unified, revolutionary, and nationalist regime in post-imperial China. How the history textbooks under

¹³ Liu Chao 刘超, “minguo lishi jiaokeshu zhongde minzurentong he zhegnzhirentong — yi ‘qingchaoshi’ xushu wei zhongxin” 民国历史教科书中的民族认同与政治认同 ——以“清朝史”叙述为中心 (National Identity and Political Identity in Textbooks of the Republic of China--In Center of the Narratives about the History of Qing Dynasty), *xueshu yuekan* 学术月刊 46, no. 3 (March 2014): 148–58.

¹⁴ Li, *20 shiji zhongguo zhongxiaoxue kecheng biao zhun jiaoxue dagang huibian lishi juan*, 6–7.

¹⁵ Zarrow, *Educating China: Knowledge, Society, and Textbooks in a Modernizing World, 1902-1937*, 11–40.

the Nanking Government portrayed the Qing dynasty is essential for this study because they faced the problem of defining a “new China” for the first time, a similar task that the CPC would later face as well. Textbooks under the Nanking Government and PRC should share many discourses and nation-building strategies. More intriguing, however, are the differences between them, as they could highlight the unique, socialism-influenced nationalism and patriotism of the PRC. This section will explore how the Qing empire was differently portrayed around the 1928 government shift and reveal the nation-building strategies of the Nanking Government textbooks.

Comparing the 1923 and 1929 curriculum standards can give us a clue of what aspects of the national story each government wanted to emphasize. In 1923, the Beiyang government’s curriculum standard stated that the goal of the history subject was to cultivate empathy and fraternity and teach students adaptivity and the pursuit of the truth of things.¹⁶ In contrast, the curriculum standard in 1929 indicated that learning Chinese history aimed to stimulate the students’ commitment to national rejuvenation, promote the Three Principles of the People (三民主义), and let students carry forward the Chinese civilization.¹⁷ The Three People’s Principles was a political ideology developed by Sun Yat-sen to modernize China and build a democratic society. It included nationalism (民族), democracy (民权), and people’s livelihood (民生).¹⁸ Regarding world history, the 1929 curriculum standard indicated that the country should not be mystified by Confucian ideals of how the world should be; instead, world history should prompt the students’ “courage and effort to liberate [the country] from the shackles of imperialism.”¹⁹ “Shackles of imperialism” could be interpreted as the remnants of Qing influence, while it could

¹⁶ Li, *20 shiji zhongguo zhongxiaoxue kecheng biao zhun jiaoxue dagang huibian lishi juan*, 14.

¹⁷ Li, 21, 30.

¹⁸ The three phrases all contained the word “People” in Chinese, so it was regarded as the Three People’s Principles.

¹⁹ Li, *20 shiji zhongguo zhongxiaoxue kecheng biao zhun jiaoxue dagang huibian lishi juan*, 37.

also be threats of imperialism from the West, especially after the Paris Peace Conference. Nevertheless, it was clear that the 1929 curriculum was much more nationalism-heavy than the 1923 curriculum; it contained three strategies for promoting nationalism: breaking away from Confucian classics, criticizing imperialism, and emphasizing its own political agenda.

In addition, the periodization of the 1929 standard implied a criticism toward imperial China. The 1923 standard combined the Qing and the ROC as “modern Chinese history (ending in contemporary),” whereas the 1929 textbook denoted the Qing as “modern” and the ROC as “contemporary.”²⁰ Despite the 1929 standard claiming that periodization was only for “pedagogic convenience,” historian Peter Zarrow argues that the 1929 separation of the ROC and the Qing signified that the Nanking government perceived the Qing as a failed modernization program and that the ROC would do more to help the Chinese civilization progress.²¹ To add to Zarrow’s argument, in the 1929 standard, modern history in the West started with the Renaissance and ended with the Congress of Berlin, with the latter half underscoring imperial colonialism. The start of contemporary Western history was the years preceding WWI, with much emphasis on post-war national movements.²² Paralleling Chinese history, modern Western history also failed to bring liberty to the world, which was left for the contemporary world to fix.

The curriculum standards differences materialized into the pre- or post-1928 textbooks, as Zarrow and Liu Chao noted. Both scholars observed that textbooks during the Beiyang Government period criticized the Qing government’s autocratic rule through literary inquisition (文字狱), a regime of speech censorship including the persecution of authors and their families and friends, but also credited the Qing government’s measures in lessening taxation and allowing

²⁰ Li, 14–15, 34.

²¹ Li, 26; Zarrow, *Educating China: Knowledge, Society, and Textbooks in a Modernizing World, 1902-1937*, 154–56.

²² Li, *20 shiji zhongguo zhongxiaoxue kecheng biaoqun jiaoxue dagang huibian lishi juan*, 25–27.

the country to recuperate from the civil uprising and turbulences during the late Ming dynasty. However, the Nanking government textbooks adopted an entirely negative attitude toward the Qing government, analyzing the Qing policies through the lens of the conflicts between the Manchu and Han ethnicities. The textbooks highlighted the Qing's measures in oppressing and discriminating against the Han people. Even regarding the economic, cultural, and educational policies, for which the Beiyang government textbooks praised the Qing, the Nanking government textbooks denied them outright, interpreting them as disingenuous soft policies to win over the Han people.²³ As Liu argued, the reason for such change was the transformation from the “republic system” during the Beiyang government to the “party-state system” during the Nanking government. In the initial years of the ROC, the Beiyang government emphasized the harmony between the ethnicities within China, more commonly known as the “five races under one union (五族共和).” Thus, the textbooks criticized policies that harmed the harmony but affirmed the constructive measures.²⁴ This could also explain why the 1923 standard indicated empathy as the goal of history education. Nevertheless, the Nanking government, under the leadership of the Kuomintang, was more concerned with ruling the people under the party's agenda. Since the party promoted Sinicization and wanted to modernize the country out of the Qing empire, the textbooks and curriculum standards treated the Qing as calculating and failed to develop the country.²⁵ As we will see in the following two chapters, the textbooks during Mao's era in the PRC would have a similar portrayal of the Qing government as the Nanking Government, but that would change after the Cultural Revolution.

²³ Zarrow, *Educating China: Knowledge, Society, and Textbooks in a Modernizing World, 1902-1937*, 185–95; Liu, “minguo lishi jiaokeshu zhongde minzurentong he zhegnzhirentong — yi ‘qingchaoshi’ xushu wei zhongxin.”

²⁴ Liu, “minguo lishi jiaokeshu zhongde minzurentong he zhegnzhirentong — yi ‘qingchaoshi’ xushu wei zhongxin.”

²⁵ Liu.

Education Under Mao

Upon the foundation of the PRC, Mao realized the importance of an education that matched the country's new political ideology and, thus, initiated educational reform. Though there were regional schools prior to 1949, years of wars have rendered the country destitute, and less than 20% of school-age children entered primary school.²⁶ The Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the functional constitution of China in 1949, stipulated that the PRC's education shall be "new democratic, national, scientific, and popular," and "Universal education shall be carried out, and secondary and higher education shall be strengthened."²⁷ In this regard, the schooling system began to be reformed under Mao's leadership. In 1951, the PRC government issued the "Decision on Reforming the Academic System," establishing the five-year primary school, three-year middle school, and three-year high school system (the 5-3-3 system). After this decision, China started to see a significant increase in enrollment in all levels of schools. By the mid-1960s, before the Cultural Revolution, the country had more than 80 million students in primary education and 12.5 million students in secondary education.²⁸

Historian Jonathan Unger has closely examined the education system in Guangzhou (Canton) from the 1960s to the 1980s. Unger noticed that the school's admissions and student

²⁶ Ding Yasong 丁雅颂 and Wang Zheping 汪哲平, "cong xinzhongguo chengli zhichu 80% de wenmanglv, dao rujin 94.2% de jiunian yiwujiaoyu gonggulv, jiaoyu youxian zhuzhi fazhan (dashuju guancha huihuang 70 nian)" 从新中国成立之初 80% 的文盲率, 到如今 94.2% 的九年义务教育巩固率 教育优先 筑基发展 (大数据观察·辉煌 70 年) (From the 80% Illiteracy Rate at the Beginning of the New China to the 94.2% Consolidation Rate of the Nine-Year Compulsory Education Today--Prioritizing Education and Solidifying Development (Big Data Perspective · 70 Years of Glory)), *renmin ribao* 人民日报, October 25, 2019.

²⁷ "zhongguo renmin zhegnzhi xiehang huiyi gongtong gangling" 中国人民政治协商会议共同纲领 (Common Program of The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) (1949), <http://www.cppcc.gov.cn/2011/12/16/ART11513309181327976.shtml>.

²⁸ Ma Rong 马戎 and Long Shan 龙山, eds., *zhongguo nongcun jiaoyu wenti yanjiu* 中国农村教育问题研究 (Study of Education in Rural China), vol. 17, *shehuixue renleixue conglun* 社会学人类学丛论 (Sociology and Anthropology Series) (Fuzhou: Fujian Education Press, 2000), 44–48.

assessment criteria were politically influenced. In addition to academic performance, the students were also judged on their political performance and family class-origins. The family class-origins was a ranking system of how aligned the students' familial background was to the CPC's agenda. The most advantageous category was the politically red inheritances, such as revolutionary cadres or proletariat, like former poor and lower-middle peasant families. Revolutionary cadres were people who took on leadership positions or contributed significantly to the Communist Revolution. In contrast, the worst category was families of former capitalists, including rural landlords and merchants, who were deemed counter-revolutionaries. However, while these background checks would accompany the student in their entire education, it was not the sole factor deciding whether a student could attend a school.

Unger also revealed interesting features of how textbooks functioned in the system. Once the students entered primary school, they would start climbing the 5-3-3 academic ladder through a rote education focused much on memorization and tests. The memorized materials, without a doubt, were the textbooks. The PRC government also introduced the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) system, or the Gaokao examination, in 1952, so the students' cramming would prepare them for the exam and lead them to higher education. Yet, Unger also noted the dichotomy between rural and urban education. While the urban primary education participation rate was very high, rural students were relatively neglected. These students could opt for a half-farming/half-study program in rural areas, but their education quality was not comparable to their urban counterparts. Thus, the textbook information reached the urban elite students more than the rural population.²⁹

²⁹ Unger, *Education Under Mao*.

Another reform during the country's early years that also influenced the accessibility of textbooks was the simplification of Chinese characters. The party leadership had been concerned with the national 80% illiteracy rate upon the country's foundation.³⁰ Hence, the party decided to simplify the traditional Chinese characters to make writing and reading easier. In 1952, the government gathered a group of experts to simplify some commonly used characters, which was published in 1956.³¹ For example, the character for "country" was simplified from "國" to "国," and the word for "history" went from "歷史" to "历史." While the efficacy and impact of this simplification are still under debate, some studies reveal that simplified Chinese is easier for foreign language learners to acquire, suggesting the same for young Chinese students.³² In addition, the simplified characters boosted the efficiency of communication. Combined with other efforts to promote education, China's illiteracy rate dropped to 38.1% in 1965.³³ The change in characters was reflected in the textbooks, as the 1953 textbook used in this study was written in the traditional characters, whereas the 1956 textbook was written in simplified characters.

Despite these progressive reforms, the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 left the education system paralyzed. Many teaching materials became political propaganda, and studying was once regarded as counter-revolutionary. The textbook writing group was dismissed, and the

³⁰ Ding and Wang, "cong xinzhongguo chengli zhichu 80% de wenmanglv, dao rujin 94.2% de jiunian yiwujiaoyu gonggonglv, jiaoyu youxian zhuzhi fazhan (dashuju guan cha huihuang 70 nian)."

³¹ "hanzi jianhua diyibiao" 汉字简化第一表 (Simplified Chinese Characters (First Table)), *renmin ribao* 人民日报, January 31, 1956.

³² Li-Jen Kuo et al., "Acquisition of Chinese Characters: The Effects of Character Properties and Individual Differences Among Second Language Learners," *Frontiers in Psychology* 6 (March 8, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00986>.

³³ Wu 吴, "huihuang 60 nian: 'saomang' ziyande xiaoshi yige luohou shidai de yuanqu" 辉煌 60 年:"扫盲"字眼的消失 一个落后时代的远去 (60 Years of Glory: The Disappearance of the Phrase "Ridding Illiteracy" and the Passing of a Backward Era); China's illiteracy rate further dropped down to 3.6% in 2015 and 2.67% in 2022. For more information, see "shinianlai quanguo putonghua pujilv tigao zhi 80.72%, wenmanglv jiangzhi 2.67%" 十年来全国普通话普及率提高至 80.72% 文盲率降至 2.67% (Over the Past Ten Years, the National Mandarin Penetration Rate Has Increased to 80.72%, and the Illiteracy Rate Has Dropped to 2.67%).

NCEE was suspended in 1966.³⁴ During this time, the students were regularly sent to work in rural areas by the government upon graduation; those categorized as “intellectuals” were deemed suspects and often targeted for deportation and “reeducation” through hard labor. As a result, the students’ career outcomes were not correlated with their academic performance in schools, so they did not need to work hard, and the country’s education was hindered.³⁵

The Nine-Year Compulsory Education and “Gaokao is the Baton”

After the collapse of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, China’s education system started to recover. In this section, we will focus on two major changes to the PRC education post-Cultural Revolution: the implementation of the nine-year compulsory education in 1986, which concerned primary and middle school education, and the resumption of the NCEE in late 1977, which concerned high school education. Both reforms changed who and how the textbooks were used in schools, which further impacted how nationalism was conveyed to the country’s young generations.

In 1986, China passed the Compulsory Education Law, mandating every child in the PRC to receive nine years of free primary and middle school education, regardless of “gender, ethnicity, race, wealth, and religion.”³⁶ The direct impact of the law was that it allowed the

³⁴ “zhonggong zhongyang he guowuyuan jue ding gaige gaodengxuexiao zhaokao banfa” 中共中央和国务院决定改革高等学校招考办法 (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council Decide to Reform the Enrollment Methods of Colleges and Universities), *renmin ribao* 人民日报, 1966.6.18; “renjiaoban shiyitao zhongxiaoxue jiaocai zonglan (disitao).”

³⁵ Weihua Bu 卜伟华, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi diliujuan “zalan jiushijie”: wenhuadageming de dongluan yu haojie (1966-1968)* 中华人民共和国史 第六卷 “砸烂旧世界”——文化大革命的动乱与浩劫 (1966-1968) (The History of the People’s Republic of China, Volume 6, “Smashing the Old World”: Havoc of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1968)), vol. 6, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Shi* 中华人民共和国史 (The History of the People’s Republic of China) (Hong Kong: Research Center for Contemporary Chinese Culture, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2008), 751–56.

³⁶ “zhonghua renmin gongheguo yiwujiaoyu fa” 中华人民共和国义务教育法 (Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China) (1986).

approved national history curriculum to reach a much broader audience. As discussed before, the actual primary school enrollment rate in 1949 was less than 20%. In contrast, in 2018, the net enrollment ratio of school-age children in primary schools was 99.95%, a significant improvement from 1949.³⁷ As of today, almost every middle school student in the PRC is studying the national textbooks, as history is a required subject in all middle schools nationwide.³⁸ Middle school students are also relatively young, so they are more likely to be influenced by the information they perceive. As a result, the power of middle school history textbooks in creating a national history was tremendous. In the textbooks used in this thesis, each set contains junior high school history books.

For those who advance to high school, the NCEE is a critical exam that governs the students' studying. Prior to the Compulsory Education Law, the PRC government resumed the NCEE in late 1977, and it has been a critical component in the Chinese education system ever since.³⁹ Today, the NCEE is seen as the contemporary successor of the CSE from imperial times. Though the NCEE does not serve the same function as the imperial-era CSE, the two exams' implications are similar.⁴⁰ Passing both exams is strongly correlated with the person's socioeconomic outcomes and is considered a major life milestone; further, both exams have

³⁷ Ding and Wang, "cong xinzhongguo chengli zhichu 80% de wenmanglv, dao rujin 94.2% de jiunian yiwujiaoyu gonggultv, jiaoyu youxian zhuji fazhan (dashuju guancha huihuang 70 nian)."

³⁸ Some areas also had History in primary schools, such as Shandong province in the 1980s, but some places did not.

³⁹ "quanmiande zhengquede Guanche zhixing maozhuxide jiaoyufangzhen gaodengxuexiao zhaosheng jinxing zhongda gaige" 全面地正确地贯彻执行毛主席的教育方针 高等学校招生进行重大改革 (Comprehensively and Correctly Implement Chairman Mao's Education Policy-Major Reforms in the College Admissions Process), *renmin ribao* 人民日报, 1977.10.21.

⁴⁰ The PRC has another exam called the Civil Service Entrance Examination (CSEE, 公务员考试) or Guokao that selects government officials and civil servants. While CSEE serves a similar function as the CSE, it is generally not considered as the continuation of the CSE because serving as a civil servant is only one of the ways to advance in the country. In contrast, NCEE receives public attention because receiving a college degree is directly linked to higher socioeconomic status and upward mobility, just as the CSE did in premodern China.

served as critical talent selection mechanisms integral to the country’s development and have received immense national attention.

The NCEE content is directly derived from the textbooks. High school teachers would usually ask the students to revisit the textbooks during the senior year review. Especially for social science and humanities subjects, the exam questions present the students with new materials and ask the students to reference the textbook texts in answering the questions. For example, on the 2019 Beijing NCEE Comprehensive Humanities and Social Sciences Exam, one history short answer question asked the students to compare and relate an early Qing philosopher’s anti-feudal ideology with Rousseau’s individual autonomy ideology in *Social Contract*. Both philosophers were deemed key learning objectives in history textbooks.⁴¹ In addition, one of the politics short answer questions explicitly asked the students to answer with textbook material, saying, “Based on material No. 1, using the relevant knowledge from *Political Life* [the name of a politics textbook], explain how our country uses its political advantages to gather Chinese power.”⁴²

One famous saying about the NCEE is “Gaokao is the baton (高考是指挥棒),” which means that the NCEE will dictate students’ learning, and teacher’s teaching has been tailored to what is tested on the NCEE. This is due to NCEE’s relatively straightforward admissions mechanism—universities will admit applicants with the highest scores until all available spots are filled. As the NCEE questions are derived from the textbooks, having excellent command, or even exact memorization, of the textbooks is fundamental to the student’s success on the exam.

⁴¹ Ouyang et al., *putong gaozhong kecheng biao zhun shi yan jiaokeshu: lishi bixiu san*, 16–20, 30–34.

⁴² “2019 nian gaokao wenke zonghe zhenti ji cankao daan (beijingjuan)” 2019 年高考文综真题及参考答案(北京卷) (2019 NCEE Comprehensive Humanities and Social Science Exam Real Questions and Key (Beijing Exam)), October 6, 2019, <http://edu.sina.com.cn/gaokao/2019-06-10/doc-ihvhiew7913208.shtml>.

Hence, the examination significantly raises the importance of the textbook and renders it a good platform for the government to advance its commitments and values.

The competitiveness and reward of the NCEE further prompted the students to study the textbooks carefully. In 1977, 270000 people were admitted to college out of the approximately 5.7 million who registered for the exam.⁴³ Similarly, in 1987, approximately 2.72 million people registered, and 620000 people were admitted.⁴⁴ People who took the exam during those years said they did not have many exam preparation materials, so all they could rely on was the textbooks. Thus, with the 1.08 billion population in China in 1987, the scarcity and value of a college graduate were extraordinary.⁴⁵ Attending college would guarantee decent jobs in major cities and access to money, power, and a stable life, which was especially appealing for people from less-developed areas. More importantly, in the post-Cultural Revolution period, the studying-advance-prosper-success mechanism signified a significant change in China: the students' fate and performance were no longer concerned with their family class-origin.

With the implementation of the Compulsory Education Law and more students in primary and middle schools, China expanded its high school and higher education in the mid- to late-1990s when the students were advancing to these stages of education. By 2005, there were nearly 40 million students in high school, a 14.7 million increase from 2000.⁴⁶ More and more Chinese youths have been studying the high school textbooks analyzed in this project. In

⁴³ “1977-2018 nian linian gaokao baomingrenshu he luqulv tongji huizong” 1977-2018 年历年高考报名人数和录取率统计汇总 (Summary of the Number of College Entrance Examination Participants and Admission Rate, 1977 to 2018), 2019.2.6, <https://gaokao.koolearn.com/20190226/1208064.html>.

⁴⁴ “1977-2018 nian linian gaokao baomingrenshu he luqulv tongji huizong.”

⁴⁵ Guojia tongjiju 国家统计局 (National Bureau of Statistics), “zhonghuarenmingongheguo guojiatongjiju guanyu 1987 nian guominjingji he shehuifazhan de tongji gongbao” 中华人民共和国国家统计局关于 1987 年国民经济和社会发展的统计公报 (Statistical Bulletin of the National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China on National Economic and Social Development in 1987), 2002.3.11, http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/tjgb/ndtjgb/qgndtjgb/200203/t20020331_30000.html.

⁴⁶ “zhongguo jiaoyu shiye fazhan qingkuang” 中国教育事业状况 (The Development Status of China's Education), October 31, 2011, http://www.gov.cn/test/2011-10/31/content_29930.htm.

addition, the national college admissions rate also increased to 56% in 1999 and 81.13% in 2018 (9.75 million students registered for the NCEE in 2018).⁴⁷ Yet, the expansion also meant that a college degree would not distinguish a person as well as it would have in 1987. In some sense, college degrees transformed from a bonus to a necessity for later success. While getting into one college was easier after the 1990s, getting into the top universities was becoming increasingly difficult. Therefore, the students must study the textbooks meticulously to earn the desired spot.

However, one crucial qualification about the NCEE and high school education must be made. Because high school is not included in the nine-year compulsory education, high school textbooks will naturally reach a smaller audience. For many years, the NCEE also mandates high school students to choose between humanities and social science subjects (文科) or science subjects (理科). The science students will only study history for around one year to achieve the high school graduation criteria, and they are not tested for history on the NCEE. The history textbooks will reach these students, but these students may not devote much energy to studying history. In contrast, the humanities and social sciences students will study history throughout and be tested, so these students, in theory, should have a good command of the history textbook materials. Nevertheless, the materials used in this thesis, as indicated by the curriculum standards, are required for every high school student.

History has been integral to Chinese education since pre-modern times, although history was used to express Confucian values in imperial societies. Modern history textbook writing in China started in the final years of the Qing dynasty, and modern history textbooks differed from the pre-modern ones as they functioned individually as tools to construct the national narrative.

⁴⁷ “1977-2018 nian linian gaokao baomingrenshu he luqulv tongji huizong.”

Textbooks in the ROC period faced the problem of cultivating a new China for the first time, and the textbook narratives on the Qing dynasty reflected the changing political landscapes, which was a good parallel for the PRC textbooks in the next chapter. In the Mao era of the PRC, even though students were assessed not only on their academic performance, the education system encouraged students to memorize the textbooks to retain the information, but the system was more accessible for urban students. Additionally, the simplification of the Chinese characters also made studying textbooks easier. After the education-paralyzing Cultural Revolution, the PRC government launched the nine-year compulsory education and resumed the NCEE system, both of which prompted middle school and high school students to study the textbooks carefully and allowed the textbooks to reach a much broader audience. Importantly, since the PRC used a single set of textbooks across the country, textbooks were premium platforms to propagate information, shape the students' outlooks, and provide a unifying force for school-aged children. Thus, despite the fluctuations in the Chinese education system over time, the textbooks remained an ever-increasingly essential connection between students and the government.

Chapter 2—The “New” China

In present-day English settings, people refer to the PRC as “China,” but in China, people often refer to the country as the “new” China. For example, October 1st, 1949, was the foundation of the “New” China. One famous Chinese patriotic song is called “Without the Communist Party, There Would be No New China.” The word “new” implies a contrast between the new People’s Republic and the old, imperial (feudal) China. It is logical for the PRC to choose such diction when it was the new regime, but, intriguingly, the term did not fade in prominence even until today, as seen in daily conversations and official documents.¹ Thus, it raises the question of how the CPC managed to engrave this term into the memory of the nation, especially in the nation’s early years. History education has been an integral part of the construction of this concept because every textbook referred to the PRC as the “new” China. For example, in both the 2019 and 1956 high school textbooks, “PRC” and “the new China” were used interchangeably.² This chapter seeks to evaluate the history textbook’s depiction of the pre-1840 Qing’s political, economic, and culture, primarily from 1949 to 1976, to analyze strategies of the CPC to construct a “new” revolutionary and Communist China out of the “old” China. Specifically, the chapter will explore what implications and meanings the party assigned to the “new” China and what historical features the term reflected about the People’s Republic.

¹ Ding and Wang, “cong xinzhongguo chengli zhichu 80% de wenmanglv, dao rujin 94.2% de jiunian yiwujiaoyu gonggultv, jiaoyu youxian zhujia fazhan (dashuju guancha huihuang 70 nian)”; Liu Jinsong 刘劲松, “xinzhongguo waijiao 70 nian: chengjiu yu jingyan” 新中国外交 70 年: 成就与经验 (70 Years of New China’s Diplomacy: Achievements and Experiences), 2019, <http://www.cpifa.org/cms/book/165>. This footnote only gave two examples. One could simply access one of the PRC’s official websites and search for phrase “the New China” (新中国), and many documents will feature this phrase.

² Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe 人民教育出版社 (People’s Education Press), ed., *gaoji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi disice* 高级中学课本: 中国历史 第四册 (Senior High School Textbook: Chinese History Book Four) (Beijing: People’s Education Press, 1957), 79–83; Yan and Zhang, *putong gaozhong jiaokeshu lishi bixiu zhongwai lishi gangyao (shang)*, 172–85.

China Under Mao

In order to better understand the political stakes of the textbook discussions of the Qing dynasty, it is important to consider how the textbook content was shaped by the broad political dynamics of the PRC's early years. This section provides a brief overview of key events in China during the Maoist era, from the founding of the PRC in 1949 to before Mao's death in 1976.

In 1949 when the PRC was founded, the CPC faced two imminent tasks: to solidify its rule over and salvage the country's economy. In ruins hardly captures the country's state back then; almost a century of wars and instability had devastated the country's economy. Thus, the PRC government did a few things. First, to solidify governance over the country, it wiped out the remnants of the Kuomintang (labeled anti-revolutionists back then) in the south, west, and southwest and initiated a political rectification within the country.³ Second, it started a land reform in 1950, allowing peasants to have land for agricultural production. This nation-wide reform was finished within just three years.⁴ Additionally, China sided with North Korea in the Korean War and defeated the United States. It was a massive boost to the country's spirit.⁵ Many scholars refer to this period as the "New Democratic Construction" period. The state system of "New Democracy" referred to the joint dictatorship of several revolutionary classes led by the proletariat and based on the alliance of workers and peasants, including the petite bourgeoisie, the national bourgeoisie, and other anti-imperialist and anti-feudal people. This was once Mao's core ideology for PRC, and he believed that the "New Democracy" was a necessary step toward

³ Maurice J. Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, 3rd ed (New York, NY: Free Press, 1999), 64–69.

⁴ Meisner, 90–102.

⁵ Meisner, 69–71; Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1991), 469–78.

socialism. Note that during this time, Mao was not entirely against the bourgeoisie; he thought that the development of the bourgeoisie would help the proletariat achieve socialism.⁶

After the initial economic recovery, the CPC started to transform the country from “New Democratic” to socialist, and it implemented the socialist transformation of the ownership of the means of production (三大改造) in 1953. Simply put, the transformation aimed to construct a public ownership system of the means of production, including the publicization or public-private partnership in handicraft and capitalist industry and commerce and collectivization in agriculture.⁷ The transformation signified a change that Mao started to reject capitalism, but it was so rushed and complete that it resulted in a shortage of goods within the country. In 1956, Mao realized the issue and agreed again to loosen constraints on market transactions.⁸ The government also implemented its first Five Year Plan, which heavily focused on the heavy industry from 1953 to 1957, and these developments laid the foundation for the country’s industrialization. In addition to the economic developments, the CPC issued many essential political directives that influenced the country’s political landscape. For example, PRC’s first constitution was promulgated in 1954.⁹ The 1953 textbook used in this thesis was produced during this time.

⁶ Liu Xiuping 刘秀萍, “maozedong dui zibenzhuyi renshi de sixiang guiji tanjiu” 毛泽东对资本主义认识的思想轨迹探析 (Analysis of Mao Zedong’s Ideological Trajectory of Capitalism), *dangde wenxian* 党的文献 3 (2003): 33–37.

⁷ Yunhui Lin 林蕴晖, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi dierjuan xiang shehuizhuyi guodu, zhongguo jingji yu shehui de zhuanxing (1953-1955)* 中华人民共和国史 第二卷 向社会主义过渡——中国经济与社会的转型 (1953-1955) (The History of the People’s Republic of China, Volume 2, Moving toward Socialism: The Transformation of China’s Economy and Society (1953-1955)), vol. 2, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Shi* 中华人民共和国史 (The History of the People’s Republic of China) (Hong Kong: Research Center for Contemporary Chinese Culture, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2008), 75–236.

⁸ Liu, “maozedong dui zibenzhuyi renshi de sixiang guiji tanjiu.”

⁹ Meisner, *Mao’s China and After*, 107–20; Lin, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi dierjuan xiang shehuizhuyi guodu, zhongguo jingji yu shehui de zhuanxing (1953-1955)*, 2:378–476; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 484–93.

In 1956, the CPC indicated that the “principal contradiction” (or defining goal, 主要矛盾) within the country was the “contradiction between the people’s demand for an advanced industrial state and the reality of a backward agricultural country” and the “contradiction between the people’s needs for rapid economic and cultural development and the current economic and cultural inability to meet the people’s needs.”¹⁰ The contradiction could reflect what the CPC thought the country needed the most, and the 1956 narrative was well-aligned with the economic reforms. However, just one year later, the contradiction became between “the proletariat and the bourgeoisie,” signifying the country’s increasing focus on political movements.¹¹

Even though Mao indicated that literature and art were associated with politics as early as 1942, he initiated the Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1956. The movement encouraged people to express their views freely so that the country could be like “a hundred flowers blooming and a hundred schools of thought contending.”¹² However, after a very brief period of flourishing for scientists and artists, Mao initiated a wave of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, in which people who disagreed with Mao’s ideologies were labeled as “rightists,” and these “rightists” were to be politically purged.¹³ As indicated by Mao’s “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,” anyone who was allegedly against socialism, against the rule of the CPC, or who

¹⁰ “Principal contradiction” is a term from Marx’s dialectical materialism. Here, it can be simply understood as the most important problem that needs to be resolved in the country.

¹¹ Mao Zedong 毛泽东, “guanyu zhengque chuli renmin neibu maodunde wenti (yijiuwuernian eryue ershiqiri)” 关于正确处理人民内部矛盾的问题（一九五七年二月二十七日）（On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People (February 27, 1957)）（Beijing, February 27, 1957）, <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/maozedong/marxist.org-chinese-mao-19570227.htm>.

¹² Shen, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi dishanjuan sikao yu xuanze, cong zhishifenzi huiyi dao fanyoupai yundong (1956-1957)*, 3:213–58.

¹³ Shen, 3:461–616.

stood with the bourgeoisie should be deemed rightist and be criticized, especially intellectuals.¹⁴ Historians now think that Mao intentionally plotted the Hundred Flowers and Anti-Rightist Campaign to identify dissidents within the party and further solidify his autocratic control. The political purging of the “rightists” was done through class struggle, which explained the change in the country’s “principal contradiction.” The Anti-Rightists Campaign was a critical precursor for the Cultural Revolution.¹⁵ The 1956 textbook was produced during this time and used throughout the following years before the Cultural Revolution.

In 1958, the CPC started the Great Leap Forward, another critical development in PRC history. The goal of the Great Leap Forward was primarily two-fold: one was to catch up with the US and UK within decades economically, and two was to transform the country from socialist to communist, as envisioned by Mao. To meet these goals, the CPC started to promote industrialization, technological advancements, and people’s communes, in which people in the same commune would work and live together. As inspiring as the goals and measures were, they were simply unattainable and idealistic, and the country’s production significantly decreased. Because the production level fell short of the purpose of the movement and people could not tell the truth (because it would be perceived as criticizing the CPC), the entire country saw systematic exaggeration in production rates. Local governments would report progress and production that were scientifically impossible, like breeding 10000-pound pigs, presenting a false prosperity within a country. As a result, the country experienced extreme famine from 1961 to 1963.¹⁶

¹⁴ Mao, “guanyu zhengque chuli renmin neibu maodunde wenti (yijiuwuernian eryue ershiqiri)”;

Shen, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi disanjuan sikao yu xuanze, cong zhishifenzi huiyi dao fanyoupai yundong (1956-1957)*, 3:673–88.

¹⁵ Shen, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi disanjuan sikao yu xuanze, cong zhishifenzi huiyi dao fanyoupai yundong (1956-1957)*, 3:562–67; Liu, “maozedong dui zibenzhuyi renshi de sixiang guiji tanjiu.”

¹⁶ Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, *gaoji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi disice*, 1–262.

After the famine, the government adjusted its economic policies, but Mao initiated the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. Formally named the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the Cultural Revolution was complex and dynamic, marked by a series of movements and events. Mao's vision for the revolution was to purge China of traditional values, culture, and capitalist elements while promoting the Maoist-Marxist ideology and his personality cult. There were many persecutions of high-ranking officials deemed "capitalist roaders" or supporters of the old regime, including influential figures in Chinese politics like Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping.¹⁷ Mao mobilized students and young people to be Red Guards, who destroyed anything deemed "bourgeois" or "counter-revolutionary," including intellectuals, academics, or anyone perceived as a threat to Mao's ideology.¹⁸ College graduates, professionals, and scholars were sent en masse to rural areas to undertake manual labor, allegedly to facilitate socialist construction instead of putting them in crucial roles in the country. People turned against each other; they could slander others as "bourgeois," and the defamed would be criticized publicly.¹⁹ So, the revolution was characterized by widespread violence, chaos, and social upheaval. Mao also launched the "Four Olds" campaign, which aimed to eradicate old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas. This campaign led to the destruction of many historical artifacts and landmarks, including ancient temples, libraries, and art collections.²⁰ The education system was mostly paralyzed during the revolution. Instead, the country saw the emergence of Mao's personality cult, which elevated him to an almost God-like status in China. *Quotations of Mao Zedong*, commonly known as the Little Red Book, became mandatory reading, and his image

¹⁷ Bu, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi diliujuan "zalan jiushijie": wenhuadageming de dongluan yu haojie (1966-1968)*, 6:468–79.

¹⁸ Bu, 6:140–49, 204–28.

¹⁹ Bu, 6:751–52.

²⁰ Bu, 6:229–54.

was prominently displayed throughout the country.²¹ The 1972 textbook was produced during this turbulent time.

In summary, the Maoist era of the PRC, though only 27 years, was filled with political movements and shifts in the political landscape, partly because the nation was still stabilizing its rule in the initial years. As we will see in the next few sections, these key political developments would leave an imprint on the content and messaging of the textbooks used in the Maoist era.

A Selective and Political Textbook

Before analyzing how the textbooks depict the Qing reign, we should first consider two fundamental questions—what topics were included in the textbooks and why they were selected. The material selection process for textbook writing concerns what history will be remembered, so it is a heated battleground for political influence, and the PRC textbooks are no exception.²²

In discussing the pre-1840 Qing dynasty, the textbooks engaged three themes: Qing politics, economy, and culture. Regarding politics, most textbooks were chronological.²³ The lessons followed the order of the rise of the Manchu people, the Qing conquest of China, the expansion of the Qing territory, and the Qing's internal policies, and the textbooks usually emphasized ethnic minority policies. After discussing politics, the textbooks usually devoted one lesson to the Qing economy and one or two lessons to Qing culture.²⁴ In discussing the Qing economy, the textbook usually broke down the topic into different economic sectors, such as agriculture and handcraft manufacturing, and discussed the developments in each sector.

²¹ Bu, 6:510–14.

²² For example, see the discussion of the USA and Japanese textbooks in the Introduction.

²³ The only exception is the 2007 high school textbook, in which the author followed a theme-based order to discuss Qing history in different books.

²⁴ Usually, one lesson corresponds to one class period (40-45 minutes depending on the school's schedule). In some cases where the material is hard or important, one lesson can also correspond to two class periods.

The textbook depiction of Qing culture reflected political influence. Culture is integral to the nation's history as it contributes to national and ethnic identities, but culture itself is not necessarily political.²⁵ Traditional Chinese culture is so vast and diverse that any secondary education textbook cannot cover it entirely. Thus, choosing to include certain seemingly apolitical cultural elements in the textbook can be a very political process. While each textbook edition discussed diverse cultural achievements, the common topics across all the books were three Qing philosophers and four novels.²⁶ The three philosophers were Huang Zongxi (黄宗羲, 1610-1695), Gu Yanwu (顾炎武, 1613-1682), and Wang Fuzhi (王夫之, 1619-1692). All three philosophers lived during the late Ming and early Qing periods and completed significant portions of their work during the Qing dynasty, and they all advocated for political reforms in the imperial Chinese system. They were a continuation of the Confucian scholars during the Ming dynasty who began to reconsider the Confucian doctrines that had governed China for centuries. The late Qing revolutionaries later championed all three philosophers as anti-Manchu Han intellectuals, and they were also self-reflective and critical of what the Ming imperial system did wrong.²⁷ The four novels included *Water Margins* (水浒传), *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (三国演义), *Journey to the West* (西游记), and *A Dream of Red Mansions* (红楼梦), which were among the most famous literary works in the Ming and Qing dynasties. The most widespread

²⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

²⁶ Su et al., *gaoji zhongxue keben: zhongguo gudaishi*; Ouyang et al., *putong gaozhong kecheng biao zhun shiyan jiaokeshu: lishi bixiu san*. Examples for diversification are that the 1993 and 2007 high school textbooks covering Qing education, drama, Peking Opera, calligraphy, and drawings.

²⁷ Justin Tiwald, "Song-Ming Confucianism (Summer 2020 Edition)," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, March 19, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/song-ming-confucianism>; Ke-wen Wang, ed., *Modern China: An Encyclopedia of History, Culture, and Nationalism*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, v. 1519 (New York: Garland Pub, 1998), 11–12.

versions of the novels were finalized during the late Ming and early Qing periods, except for *A Dream of Red Mansions*, which was finished in mid-Qing.²⁸

Intriguingly, all the cultural achievements featured in the textbooks were by the Han people, and the textbooks even categorized Han people's novels during the Ming as part of Qing culture. Obviously, this was not an accurate representation of the Qing culture. The diverse Qing culture was shaped by the dynamic interaction between ethnicities. For example, the Qing government required all Han males to adopt Manchu clothing and hairstyle, and the Han Chinese used costumes in theatrical performances to preserve Han-style clothing.²⁹ In addition, Manchus had their unique language, folk tales such as the Tale of the Nisan Shaman, and music such as the fold ballad song of Bannerman Song.³⁰ Thus, by only including the Han cultures, the textbooks Sinicized the Qing empire, despite the textbook writers claiming to consider Qing a multi-ethnic state. One could argue that the textbook intentionally created this biased representation to promote Han culture and help build the Han-ruled PRC, but Qing history research in China has been Han-centric since the ROC, and in the PRC, it only started to flourish in the 1980s.³¹ Thus, even if the textbook writers wanted to include more non-Han cultural achievements, there could be few scholarly sources from which to draw. In addition, other subjects could also introduce cultural achievements, such as the Chinese language and literature

²⁸ Most textbooks surveyed in this study cover the Ming dynasty and the Qing dynasty together (termed the Ming-Qing period). Thus, even though three of the four novels were mostly written during the Ming dynasty, they could still be discussed in the lesson.

²⁹ Guojun Wang, *Staging Personhood: Costuming in Early Qing Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

³⁰ Elena Suet-Ying Chiu, *Bannermen Tales (Zidishu): Manchu Storytelling and Cultural Hybridity in the Qing Dynasty*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monographs 105 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018).

³¹ Liu Fengyun 刘风云, "Guannian yu redian de zhuanhuan: qing qianqi zhengzhishi yanjiu de daolu yu qushi" 观念与热点的转换: 清前期政治史研究的道路与趋势 (Transformation of Conceptions and Concerns: The Evolution of Research on the Early Qing Politics), *qingshi yanjiu* 清史研究 2 (May 2015): 41–59.

curriculum that included all four novels as mandatory readings, so it was logical for the history curriculum to present these works from a different perspective.

Defending Territorial Sovereignty

For any government, defending territory and sovereignty are among the utmost priorities. The same applies to China. The Common Program of The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (Common Program), the provisional constitution of the PRC in 1949, stipulated that "...defend[ing] the independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of China" is one of the fundamental tasks of the PRC government and the country's armed forces.³² In contrast, however, the Qing government lost vast territory through unequal treaties after 1840. Therefore, one of the distinctions between the new and the old China was that the new China could defend its territorial sovereignty against foreign invaders. This section will explore how the textbook narratives were modified to convey this distinction—how the textbooks praised territorial expansion, criticized previous regimes for losing territories, and omitted that the CPC lost some territories for political considerations.

The Qing's occupation and expansion of the Chinese territory were done stepwise. In the 1630s to 1640s, amid the fierce civil uprising in late Ming, the Manchu empire rose from the northeast. They fought brutal battles with the Ming and the uprising armies before the last Ming emperor, Chongzhen, committed suicide in 1644. The Manchu army swept into Beijing in June, establishing the Qing dynasty. Over the next three decades, the Qing fought various wars with the remnant Ming armies in southern and southeastern China before finally stabilizing the rule over the traditional Chinese territories. The stabilization led the Qing to shift focus to the frontier

³² zhongguo renmin zhegnzhi xiehang huiyi gongtong gangling.

regions of the empire; Qing's second to fourth emperors—Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong—led various conquests to the traditionally non-Han areas, such as Tibet, Xinjiang, Qinghai, and many other places. Qing territory reached its maximum under Qianlong's rule—an empire spanning present-day China, Mongolia, and parts of Russia and central Asia.³³

Regarding Qing territory, the 1953 textbook discussed the Qing's entry into Taiwan, outer Mongolia, Tibet, Xinjiang, and Qinghai areas. The apparent reason for discussing these areas was to convey that the Qing had ruled these regions for a long time, which subsequently helped legitimize the PRC's rule over these areas. The textbook focused on the Qing's military conquering endeavors but less on the Qing's policies in these regions. For example, for Tibet, the textbook indicated that “Emperor Kangxi dispatched two troops to enter Tibet from Qinghai and Kangding (Xikang Province) and defeated the Zunghar army” but ended with “The Qing's force began to reach Tibet.”³⁴ It was unclear how integrated Tibet was into the empire. The same applied to the discussion of all the other areas. However, even though the textbook indicated that the Qing conquered these places by brutal force, perhaps against the will of the local people, it would not compromise the PRC's rule over these places, because the PRC considered its entry into these places as liberation from oppression. Thus, the PRC could still legitimize its governance over the frontier areas conquered by the Qing.

The 1956 textbook had a different narrative regarding Taiwan, as the textbook added a section called “The Construction of Taiwan” after discussing the Qing's conquer of the island. In this section, the textbook indicated that Taiwan was governed by Han Chinese as early as the Three Kingdoms period (220-280), the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), and the Yuan

³³ Peter Allan Lorge, *War, Politics and Society in Early Modern China, 900-1795*, Warfare and History (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005), 139–73.

³⁴ Li, *chujia zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi disance*, 46–50.

Dynasty (1271-1368). The textbook indicated that Zheng Chenggong, the national hero who expelled the Dutch occupants, brought advanced agricultural techniques, promoted education for children, and significantly contributed to the island's economic development.³⁵ These contents suggested that the Qing not only conquered the island but also well integrated it into the country. This addition is critical for justifying the sovereignty's legitimacy. The 1957 high school textbook made similar additions for Xinjiang and Mongolia, although not as detailed as Taiwan.

The reason for such elevated attention to Taiwan should most likely be attributed to the tensions across the Taiwan Strait in the 1950s. After the CPC won over mainland China, the Kuomintang, led by Chiang Kai-Shek, fled to the Taiwan island, opening the situation of the cross-strait partition. Both political parties wanted to acquire the territory ruled by the other, but all attempts failed. At that time, the PRC had a close relationship with the USSR, but the United States, under the influence of McCarthyism, wanted to contain the influence of Communist nations. Thus, the US sided with Chiang against China and the USSR. From 1954 to 1955, military conflict broke out over the strait. The PRC army gained the Yijiangshan Islands from Chiang and the US, but they could not further acquire the Taiwan island. Later from 1958 to 1959, the PRC army shelled the islands of Kinmen and Matsu but failed again to “liberate,” or unify, the Taiwan island.³⁶ Therefore, the textbook changes could be interpreted as the PRC justifying its military actions, as the changes showed that Taiwan had been part of China for a long time. They could also arouse people's sentiment to unify the country, which would help the PRC government to advance its strategic agenda.

³⁵ Note that this chapter discusses issues currently involving intense geopolitical disputes, in which this chapter does not intend to participate.

³⁶ Lin, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi dierjuan xiang shehuizhuyi guodu, zhongguo jingji yu shehui de zhuanxing (1953-1955)*, 2:652–71; Shen, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi disanjuan sikao yu xuanze, cong zhishifenzi huiyi dao fanyoupai yundong (1956-1957)*, 3:263–306.

In addition, the textbooks also criticized the Qing government for ceding lands to foreign invaders. For example, the 1953 textbook discussed the Treaty of Shimonoseki between the Qing government and Japan in 1895. The textbook first detailed the inability of the Qing government to handle the First Sino-Japan War, which led to the treaty, and then listed the treaty's terms, including Qing China recognizing the complete independence of Korea and ceding Liaodong Peninsula, Penghu Islands, and Taiwan to Japan.³⁷ All three areas are critical sea outlets for China. The Liaodong Peninsula would give Japan direct access to Korea and the Bohai Sea, further granting Japan easy access to major northern Chinese cities like Tianjin and Beijing. The same rhetoric was applied to other territories like Hong Kong, an important trade port for the Qing, across all textbooks used in this thesis.

The textbook's criticism of the Qing for recognizing Korea's independence under political pressure is all the more interesting because a similar situation applied to the CPC during the 1920s regarding Outer Mongolia. Upon the collapse of the Qing dynasty, the ROC claimed that Outer Mongolia was part of its territory. In the early 1920s, the USSR wanted independence for the region due to strategic considerations, so it began a secret diplomatic mission, and the CPC allied with the USSR to leverage support for the Communist Revolution. Together, the CPC and the USSR exerted internal and external pressure on the Kuomintang (the ROC's ruling party then), resulting in Kuomintang ceding the territory. After the foundation of the PRC, the CPC reapproached the USSR to regain Outer Mongolia, but the USSR refused the negotiation.³⁸ Hence, the CPC's political leverage contributed to the loss of territories. However, this anecdote

³⁷ Song Yunbin 宋云彬 and Li Gengxu 李庚序, eds., *gaoji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi dierce* 高级中学课本：中国近代史 (Senior High School Textbook: Modern Chinese History) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1953), 77.

³⁸ Bruce A. Elleman, "Secret Sino-Soviet Negotiations on Outer Mongolia, 1918-1925," *Pacific Affairs* 66, no. 4 (1993): 539-63, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2760678>; Bruce A. Elleman, "Soviet Policy on Outer Mongolia and the Chinese Communist Party," *Journal of Asian History* 28, no. 2 (1994): 108-23.

never made its way into the textbooks or public media. It could be reasoned that the CPC did not want the public to know about this incident, as it would harm the CPC's image of defending the country and its territories. This example shows that while what gets included in the textbook is critical and political, what does not get included is equally essential and, arguably, no less political. If a ruling party decides certain historical events would undermine its image or political agenda, like the CPC's encounter with Outer Mongolia, it will minimize its exposure to the public. Thus, selective omission of history is another way to construct a nation's history or image: while it is not lying, it hides the weak spots of the ruling party.

Scattering the Old World

In Chinese history, a long tradition exists that the succeeding dynasty would recount the preceding dynasty's history, usually through a commission dedicated to compiling and writing official histories. Thus, historical writing has been perceived as a sign of orthodoxy and is strongly associated with establishing political legitimacy in Chinese history. Even though the textbooks used in this thesis are not official history in the strict sense, they are still the PRC government's official accounts of history, and they carry special significance in educating the public, especially the young national citizens.³⁹ Thus, textbooks provide unique insights into the country's self-perception of political legitimacy.

Robert Weatherley and Coirle Magee have analyzed the Chinese middle school history textbooks as means of legitimizing the rule of the PRC. Through examining the 2007 middle school textbook, the authors identified that political legitimacy could be established by portraying "good governance" in pre-modern dynasties and paralleling the PRC governments

³⁹ The PRC government started to compile its official history of the Qing dynasty in 2002.

with the imperial governments. “Good governance,” they argued, consists of four parts: rule by virtue, popular consent, equality, and legality. We can interpret this “good governance” approach as the political lineage model of political legitimacy.⁴⁰

However, by examining earlier textbooks from the Mao era, this “good governance” approach did not characterize the entire PRC period but only became prominent in more recent years. In the pre-1978 textbooks, the depiction of the Qing government was typically the opposite of “good governance.” This does not indicate that the pre-1978 textbooks were not contributing to the PRC’s political legitimacy; rather, it suggests that political legitimacy was established in a different model—what I call the regime contrast model. In this model, the PRC establishes its political legitimacy by distinguishing itself as a new regime that sides with the people oppressed by feudalism. The more harshly the textbooks criticized the Qing government, the more the PRC could sever its ties with feudalism and establish political legitimacy.

The textbooks unjustly portrayed the Qing government regarding its internal policies, especially for governing ethnic minorities. Frontier ethnic history has been an integral part of Qing history because the Qing government acquired a massive yet heterogeneous empire after conquering regions traditionally occupied by ethnic minorities. This created a challenging problem of defining the imperial identity. The same problem has attracted historians internationally, including the New Qing History (NQH) scholars in the United States. Using Manchu documents, these scholars reconstructed Qing history by placing the empire as an inner-Asia empire, as opposed to only a Chinese one. The reason for the placement is that the Qing

⁴⁰ Robert Weatherley and Coirle Magee, “Using the Past to Legitimise the Present: The Portrayal of Good Governance in Chinese History Textbooks,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 47, no. 1 (2018): 41–69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810261804700102>.

incorporated the new regions and became highly multi-ethnic.⁴¹ While this chapter does not intend to engage in NQH, the NQH scholars have indicated that multi-ethnicity is a defining characteristic of the Qing empire, and the Qing frontier ethnic history is central to understanding the Qing empire. The ROC and PRC also mostly acquired the terrain of the Qing empire. Therefore, not only did the PRC need to rule a diverse nation as the Qing did, but it also had the additional problem of justifying maintaining control over the Qing's territories. The justification was for the Chinese people but also the Western countries. In the twentieth century, the Western world saw a surge of national self-determination principles, which meant that people of the same political ambitions or ethnicity could form their own government.⁴² Thus, China had to demonstrate to the world that it could legally rule these ethnic frontiers. The relevant discussions in the PRC history textbooks are worthy of special attention because they reflected the PRC's justifications, which were critical to the country's unity and prosperity.

Three features stood out in depictions of Qing rule in the 1953 textbooks, and similar narratives were found in the 1956 and 1972 textbooks.⁴³ First, at least half of the total content was devoted to anti-Qing struggles, as indicated by the titles of the two lessons—"Qing's Entry into Shanhaiguan and the Han People's Anti-Qing Struggles" and "Qing's Ruling Policies and the Anti-Qing Struggles of all Ethnic Groups."⁴⁴ In the first lesson, the textbook writers spent three short paragraphs discussing the Qing government but devoted five pages detailing the anti-Qing uprisings in southern, southwestern, and southeastern China. The leaders of these uprisings, such as Shi Kefa and Li Dingguo, were regarded as "national heroes." The second lesson

⁴¹ Guo Wu, "New Qing History: Dispute, Dialog, and Influence," *The Chinese Historical Review* 23, no. 1 (February 1, 2016): 47–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1547402X.2016.1168180>.

⁴² Benjamin Neuberger, "National Self-Determination: A Theoretical Discussion," *Nationalities Papers* 29, no. 3 (September 2001): 391–418, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990120073672>.

⁴³ Except that the 1972 textbook included fewer details, which could be attributed to the fact that the selected 1972 textbook was for middle schools, whereas the other two were also for high schools.

⁴⁴ Li, *chujia zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi disance*, 39-46, 51-60.

elaborated on the Qing's various ways to control the Han people and minorities, including brutal military measures, literary inquisition (or speech crime), and the manipulation and sabotage of ethnic relationships.⁴⁵ Consequently, the textbook also wrote about the pushback from all ethnicities: the Hui people's uprising in Gansu, the Miao people's uprising in Guizhou, the Han people's White Lotus Rebellion, and the Uyghur people's rebellion in Xinjiang.⁴⁶

Second, the Qing government was portrayed as a cruel overlord who was unable to govern the country. The textbook writers explicitly stated that the Manchu people's "Economy and culture were relatively backward"; they ruled the country with "the ruling classes and nobles of various ethnic groups."⁴⁷ This was a harsh criticism as during Mao's time—anything that was associated with the feudal ruling class was attacked, and nobles, whose position highlighted inequality among different people, were anathema.⁴⁸ The textbook writers also detailed the Qing government's military actions and destructive policies. For example, when ruling the Tibetans, the Qing government "sent troops to stay there for a long time" and "created hatred between the Tibetans and other ethnic groups." These descriptions conveyed that the Qing rulers used cruel, primitive, and uncivilized ways to govern, which supported the backwardness of the Manchu and explained why there were so many anti-Qing struggles.⁴⁹

Third, the textbook adopted an uprising-people-centric perspective in recounting the rebellions, portraying insurgency as justified and heroic while the Qing army was unjustified and weak. In depicting a rebellion by the Hui people (Chinese Muslims) in northwestern China, the textbook stated, "The rebel army had only 2,000 troops, but it repeatedly defeated the Qing army

⁴⁵ Literary Inquisition was a regime of heavy speech censorship and ideological control including the persecution of authors and their families and friends.

⁴⁶ Li, *chujia zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi disance*, 39–46, 51–59.

⁴⁷ Li, 51.

⁴⁸ Mao, "guanyu zhengque chuli renmin neibu maodunde wenti (yijiuwuonian eryue ershiqiri)."

⁴⁹ Li, *chujia zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi disance*, 51–59.

of more than 10,000 people.” In this sentence, the rebel army was the subject, and the Qing army was the object. So, the textbook described the event from the rebels’ angle, and the insurgents represented China. The Qing government, however, was the oppressor who could not represent the Chinese people. In addition, the textbook also used words such as “fought tenaciously,” “dealt a hard blow to the Qing army,” and “earn[ed] people’s support” to describe the uprising army, in contrast to the Qing army, which was “embarrassed,” “repeatedly defeated,” and “in constant flutters.” Only in the last sentence would the textbook say the uprising failed and “died heroically,” downplaying that the Qing army quelled every single uprising.⁵⁰ In sum, for decades, the PRC textbook writers painted a weak, cruel, yet manipulating Qing government, which provoked numerous anti-Qing revolts; the revolting armies, not the Qing government, were the true representatives of the Chinese people. This portrayal of the Qing was similar to that of the Nanking Government textbooks during the ROC, as discussed in Chapter 1.

When the 1953 textbook discussed in detail the Qing government’s manipulations to undermine ethnic harmony and portrayed the ethnic conflicts from the uprising army’s perspective to condemn the Qing government, it implicitly contrasted them with PRC policies that promoted ethnic relations, which were called ethnic regional autonomy. As early as 1938, Mao indicated that the regime should respect ethnic minorities and treat them equally within the country, instead of a Han-dominant system.⁵¹ While this strategy was similar to the “five races under one union” idea by the Beiyang Government during the ROC (see Chapter 1), the PRC implemented the policy by emphasizing greater ethnic autonomy. Subsequently, in the Common Program, equality, respect, and unity for all ethnic minorities were significantly emphasized.

⁵⁰ Li, 56.

⁵¹ Mao Zedong 毛泽东, “lun xinjiedian (jielu) (yijiusanbanian shiyue)” 论新阶段 (节录) (一九三八年十月) (On the New Stage (Excerpt) (October 1938)), October 1938, <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/maozedong/1968/2-120.htm>.

Article 52 of the Common Program also stipulated that minority regions should enjoy autonomous governance, and minority officials should be proportionally represented in local governments.⁵² These general outlines were retained in all versions of the PRC constitution. Two other laws—the 1952 Implementation Outline of Regional Autonomy of Ethnic Minorities and the 1984 Law of the People’s Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy—provided further details on implementing the policy.⁵³ Thus, the negative portrayal of the Qing elicited people’s sympathy for the ethnic minorities and served as a contrast between the Qing’s pro-conflict policies and the PRC’s pro-peace and pro-unity policies. This justification was critical as stability and governance over the territorial frontier were indispensable for the survival of the newborn nation.

It is also worth noting that in the initial years of the CPC, Mao vaguely agreed with the national self-determination strategy by Marx and Lenin. Each region should declare independence, which could undermine imperialism’s influence in China and advance the party’s agenda. However, as the party gained more political power, it quickly switched to the regional autonomy strategy. The fundamental difference between the two lines was that regional autonomy would place the minorities under the big China “umbrella,” whereas self-determination would mean the ethnic minorities would form their own government.⁵⁴ Thus, Mao

⁵² zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xiehang huiyi gongtong gangling.

⁵³ “zhonghua renmin gongheguo minzu quyu zizhifa” 中华人民共和国民族区域自治法 (Law of the People’s Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy) (1984), http://www.gov.cn/test/2005-07/29/content_18338.htm; “zhonghua renmin gongheguo xianfa (1954)” 中华人民共和国宪法 (1954) (Constitution of the People’s Republic of China (1954)) (1954), <https://law.pkulaw.com/chinalaw/089435da920a5457bdfb.html?type=fb>; “zhonghua renmin gongheguo minzu quyu zizhi shishi gangyao” 中华人民共和国民族区域自治实施纲要 (Implementation Outline of Regional Autonomy of Ethnic Minorities in the People’s Republic of China) (1952), <https://law.pkulaw.com/falv/903e6aaa6e432b49bdfb.html>.

⁵⁴ Dawa Norbu, “Chinese Communist Views on National Self-Determination, 1922-1956: Origins of China’s National Minorities Policy,” *International Studies* 25, no. 4 (October 1988): 317–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020881788025004001>.

envisioned the PRC to be more unified, so the corresponding laws and regulations promoted regional autonomy rather than self-determination.

The textbooks' evaluation of the Qing's economic policies was similar to that of the ethnic policies. Recent scholarship shows that the Qing dynasty saw immense economic development compared to the Ming dynasty, characterized by longer life expectancies, more agricultural production, advanced handicraft manufacturing, and extensive domestic and international trade.⁵⁵ Marketization continued to deepen in the Qing with the emergence of major merchants, complex long-distance trade networks, and banking and finance organizations.⁵⁶ The Qing government was a major player in these processes: facilitating agricultural production, restructuring taxation, and assisting the distribution of goods across the country. However, the textbook painted a different image of the government's involvement.⁵⁷

The 1953 textbook discussed three aspects of the Qing economic development—agriculture, handicraft and industry (ceramics, press, and mining), and commerce. In discussing agriculture, the textbook writers indicated that the Manchus did not participate in agricultural production, so they were a “parasite class.” The textbook stated that the Qing government only promoted production because of the “vigorous opposition by the mass public,” such that the Qing government “had to” encourage cultivating wild lands due to the destructive effects of the wars.⁵⁸ The “had to” rhetoric implied that the Qing government was forced to promote economic development, or the empire would be in danger of uprising. Hence, the motive for such a policy

⁵⁵ Ramon H. Myers and Yeh-chien Wang, “Economic Developments, 1644–1800,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Willard J. Peterson, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 563–646, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521243346.012>.

⁵⁶ Myers and Wang; Meng Zhang, *Timber and Forestry in Qing China: Sustaining the Market, Culture, Place, and Nature Studies in Anthropology and Environment* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2021).

⁵⁷ Myers and Wang, “Economic Developments, 1644–1800.”

⁵⁸ Li, *chuji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi disance*, 60–66.

was not about bringing prosperity to the people but rather preserving imperial rule. This notion criticized the Qing government even though the Qing was helping economic development.

Similarly, in the 1956 textbooks, the textbook indicated that the lengthy peasant war “forced the Qing government to compromise to promote agricultural development,” and the 1972 textbook mentioned that the peasants cultivated wildlands “disregarding the Qing government’s prohibition.”⁵⁹ In discussing the handicraft industry and commerce, the textbook highlighted the accomplishments made during the Qing dynasty without indicating any governmental involvement in these two sectors.⁶⁰ No mentioning of government involvement here implied that these developments were not due to the Qing state but due to the smartness and hard work of the people, which was in line with the Marxist and Maoist ideology of the ingenuity of the masses.⁶¹

Similar to the minority policy example, in describing the Qing’s promotion of economic development as forced and compromised, the PRC stressed its own endeavors to improve the economic status of the people, including the Land Reform Movement during the 1950s and the People’s Commune Movement during the 1960s. The two movements concerned land redistribution and transition to a collective, socialist model of agricultural production, which the CPC perceived as a more advanced production model.⁶² Although this study does not intend to evaluate the effect of the movements, the movements are examples of how the PRC’s active policies were placed in implicit contrast to those of the Qing. The contrast implied that the PRC cared more about its people. However, the textbook credited the Qing government for lessening

⁵⁹ Qiu, Chen, and Wang, *gaoji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi dierce*, 90–92; *Beijingshi jiaoyuju jiaocai bianxiezu, beijingshi zhongxue shiyong keben: lishi diyice*, 205–6.

⁶⁰ Li, *chuji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi disance*, 61–64.

⁶¹ Zedong Mao, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (Eastford: Foreign Languages Press, 2018), 65–73.

⁶² Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World: A Concise History*, Asia-Pacific : Culture, Politics, and Society (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2010).

taxes on people, so it would be inaccurate to say that the textbook only depicted the negative side of the Qing's rule.

On a broader scale, the regime-contrast model corroborates and reinforces Mao's idea of revolution. The term "shattering the past" was one of the goals of the Cultural Revolution. Early in Mao's era, the rule of the CPC was not fully stabilized. Thus, the party's priority was solidifying its control over the country, and Mao chose political movements and revolutionary actions to accomplish this. In *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*, the word revolution was featured throughout the book. For example, Mao said, "Whoever sides with the revolutionary people is a revolutionary; whoever sides with imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism is a counter-revolutionary."⁶³ In this quote, Mao drew a clear distinction between the newly founded socialist PRC with the imperial dynasties, consistent with the regime contrast model of political legitimacy. Embodying Mao's emphasis on revolution, the textbook demonstrated class struggles, civil disobedience, and anti-feudal measures, which explained the extensive narration of anti-Qing struggles in the pre-1978 textbooks. Regarding economic development, Mao's answer was still revolution, as he said, "Poverty gives rise to the desire for changes, the desire for actions, and the desire for revolution."⁶⁴ Therefore, revolution was the country's priority during Mao's era, and textbooks became one arm of the revolution. However, this model came with deficiencies regarding territory issues. The 1953 textbook had a duality in that when the Qing engaged in wars to expand the empire's territories, the Qing army was justified in conquering these areas. However, when the Qing engaged in wars with the uprising army, it

⁶³ Mao, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, 8.

⁶⁴ Mao, 20.

oppressed the people.⁶⁵ As we will see in the next chapter, the narration of Qing frontier history changed dramatically in the 1978 textbook.

The textbook's attack on traditional Chinese society was part of a much larger project of cultural modernization in the PRC. The goal was to create a new culture aligned with socialism, and part of the process was to attack and eliminate any old cultural symbols, however radical the process might be. One example was the destruction of the city wall and fortifications in Beijing. During the Ming and Qing period, the imperial governments built a Beijing royal city, guarded by a city wall and multiple gates for entry. These fortifications reflected the highest architectural technology and excellent aesthetics of imperial China. However, these fortifications were systematically demolished from the 1950s to the 1970s. In the early 1950s, when Beijing was expanding, the Beijing government asked the central government for permission to destruct some city walls to make transportation easier, but this caused significant debate in society. However, Mao indicated in 1958 that "If we don't despise the past and trust the future, what hope is there?... [The] demolition of the Beijing city wall is a political matter," and Beijing should follow Tianjin and Shanghai in "changing the appearance of rural houses." Thus, amid the Great Leap Forward, the Beijing government started to tear down the city wall in 1959. Later in 1965 and the Cultural Revolution, the city fortifications were further demolished. By the end of the 1970s, almost all imperial city walls disappeared in Beijing. As these walls represented China's imperial past, removing them would give the capital city a new, modern look that fitted more with "socialist needs." Yet, ironically, Beijing started to reconstruct some of the walls and gates in the early 2000s.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Li, *chuji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi disance*, 51–59.

⁶⁶ Shen Yurong 申予荣 and Gao Baoyi 高保义, eds., "beijing chengyuan de baohu yu chaichu" 北京城垣的保护与拆除 (Protection and Demolition of Beijing City Wall), *beijing guihua jianshe* 北京规划建设, no. 2 (1999): 51–53.

Reconsideration of Confucian Ethics

Overturing the old world not only came in the flavor of criticizing Qing's internal policies but also in reassessing traditional Chinese values. As discussed earlier in the chapter, one of Mao's core ideologies was modernizing the country's culture, though Confucian ethics were foundational to pre-modern Chinese societies. Therefore, how the textbooks dealt with Confucian ethics could reflect the PRC's perception of its relationships with traditional Chinese societies. One such example was the textbook's comments on "loyalty to the ruler (忠君)," a central theme in the discussion of Qing culture. In pre-modern China, loyalty, along with patriotism, was one of the core virtues. As noted in the *Analects of Confucius*, the ruler should treat his ministers with propriety, and the ministers should serve the ruler with faithfulness.⁶⁷ Even though unconditional loyalty to the person of the ruler was not always a good quality in Confucian classics, and there was a higher loyalty to the people, the narrow-sense loyalty between the ruler and the proprietaries was still one of the fundamental doctrines of Confucianism. Children were also educated to be loyal from a young age. The *Three Characters Classic* (三字经), a Confucian text for kids popular during the Song and subsequent dynasties, included the sentence, "The sovereign should be respectful, and the officials should be loyal (君则敬 臣则忠)."⁶⁸

Though having a longstanding presence in the Chinese culture, loyalty was not always portrayed as a desired quality in history textbooks. One discussion of loyalty was centered on

⁶⁷ Confucius et al., *Lun Yu Ji Shi*, Di 1 ban, Xin Bian Zhu Zi Ji Cheng (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju : Xin hua shu dian Beijing fa xing suo fa xing, 1990). The quote is obtained from Book III-19.

⁶⁸ Xiaofeng Shi, ed., "*San Zi Jing*" *Gu Ti Ben Ji Cheng*, Di 1 ban (Shenyang Shi: Liao hai chu ban she, 2008).

Huang Zongxi and two novels, *Water Margins*⁶⁹ and the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*⁷⁰. In discussing Huang's thoughts, the 1953 junior high school textbook wrote, "To seize the country, the ruler ruined the people's families and caused many deaths; after winning over the country, he cruelly exploited the people for his own pleasure. Therefore, the monarch was a great harm to the people, and it is natural and right for the people to hate the monarch." The textbook also noted that previous Confucian scholars like Zhu Xi treated disloyalty as the biggest sin of people, a deceptive theory that maintained feudal rule. Huang's democratic thoughts, however, rebuked the previous ideas, so it was progressive.⁷¹ Here, readers learned of Qing philosophers questioning the imperial dictatorship. The authors placed much emphasis on the dictator himself, describing rulers in pre-modern China as cruel and selfish. The emperor became a simplified target representing the complex feudal system, so opposition to the emperor himself equaled challenging the system.

In the 1956 junior high school textbook, in addition to the "hatred to the monarch" texts in the 1953 textbook (with slight variation), the authors added, "To protect their property and privileges, monarchs make laws. There are the laws of the monarch, not the law of the people. What a monarch says is right is not necessarily right, what a monarch says is wrong is not necessarily wrong, and it should be judged by the public."⁷² The authors further emphasized the

⁶⁹ Written by Shi Naian, *Water Margins* describes the story of a gang of 108 outlaw men led by Song Jiang, who was driven to banditry due to the corruption and oppression of the government during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). The man came together at Liangshan Marsh to form a rebellion against the corrupt government, although their mission failed in the end. Each outlaw has their own unique background and story, and the novel explores themes of justice, loyalty, and brotherhood.

⁷⁰ Written by Luo Guanzhong, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is a fictional story based on the *Annals of the Three Kingdoms*. The story is set in the late Eastern Han dynasty (220-280) and early Three Kingdoms period. It tells the story of the political and military struggles between the three main kingdoms of Wei, Shu, and Wu, as well as other factions and warlords vying for power and control. The novel features numerous famous historical figures, such as Liu Bei, Cao Cao, and Sun Quan, and explores themes of loyalty, morality, and strategic analysis. The story ended with the foundation of the Jin dynasty in 266. For the introduction of Huang Zongxi, see previous sections in this chapter.

⁷¹ Li, *chuji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi disance*, 74.

⁷² Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, *chuji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi dierce*, 75.

dictatorship as they indicated the specific actions of the emperor that the people should oppose. The narrative reinforced that anti-emperor was equivalent to anti-feudalism.

While similar texts discussing Huang Zongxi's thoughts were used in the subsequent 1972 and 1978 textbooks, the anti-loyalty discussion was further intensified in these two textbooks through the discussion of *Water Margins* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. The 1972 junior high school textbook indicated that "The feudal ideology of loyalty runs through *Water Margins*," suggesting that loyalty was not desired.⁷³ In the context of the Cultural Revolution, anything labeled "feudal" was depicted as backward and contemptible. Therefore, loyalty did not have a positive connotation during that time.⁷⁴ In the 1978 textbook, *Water Margins*'s author's strong loyalty to the ruler was dismissed as "feudal dross (封建糟粕)." With the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, loyalty and filial piety were described as the "feudal poison."⁷⁵

In contrast to the 1972 textbook, in which the authors implicitly suggested that loyalty to a corrupt or oppressive regime was wrong, the 1978 textbook explicitly defined loyalty as feudal rubbish, giving it a concrete historical evaluation that would be taught to the students. However, it is worth noting that the 1972 and 1978 textbooks did not denounce the novels entirely. Much discussion was dedicated to appreciating the novels, including the ingenious plot, vivid characters, and anti-feudalism spirit. Only in the last sentence did the authors mention loyalty. Hence, loyalty was deliberately selected and usually the only thing the textbook disliked.

⁷³ Beijingshi jiaoyuju jiaocai bianxiezu, *beijingshi zhongxue shiyong keben: lishi diyice*, 212–13.

⁷⁴ "zhongguo gongchandang zhongyang weiyuanhui guanyu wuchanjieji wenhuadageming de jue ding" 中国共产党中央委员会关于无产阶级文化大革命的決定 (Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution), *renmin ribao* 人民日报, September 8, 1966.

⁷⁵ zhongxiaoxue tongyong jiaocai lishi bianxiezu, *quanrizhi shinianzhi xuexiao chuzhong keben: zhongguo lishi dierce*, 95–96.

The reason “loyalty to the ruler” was targeted could be attributed to Mao’s vision of a new culture for China. As symbolized by the destruction of the Four Olds (old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits) during the Cultural Revolution, Mao wanted to discontinue many elements of traditional Chinese culture. In addition, Mao envisioned the PRC as the people’s country, so it was not surprising that loyalty to the rulers would be under attack. However, it was ironic that while the textbook dismissed “loyalty” to past emperors, it also promoted Mao’s personality cult, as the 1972 textbook featured many direct, bolded quotes from Mao to demonstrate the correctness of Mao’s thoughts.⁷⁶ Additionally, loyalty dance (忠字舞) was popular during the Cultural Revolution. Accompanied by songs praising the greatness of Chairman Mao, the dance required a group of people to do a synchronized choreography to demonstrate their love for the chairman.⁷⁷ Therefore, loyalty to Mao, and only to Mao, was certainly a mandatory virtue, so part of the “new” China was contingent on the exceptional personality cult toward Mao. However, the 1978 textbook’s criticism of “loyalty to the ruler” had the unexpected connotation of criticizing Mao’s personality cult, aligning with the post-Cultural Revolution ideologies, and the textbook finally reconciled the irony until after the Cultural Revolution.

Constructing a New World

As we have seen in the previous sections, the PRC was on a mission to modernize the country to fit socialism, so it severed ties with its past to release itself from the imperial shackles. Another equally important part of the project was introducing new modes of thinking to help the

⁷⁶ Beijingshi jiaoyuju jiaocai bianxiezu, *beijingshi zhongxue shiyong keben: lishi diyice*, 206, 212–13.

⁷⁷ Tuo Wang, *The Cultural Revolution and Overacting: Dynamics Between Politics and Performance* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 25–27.

country move toward a “new” China. As we will see in this section, the CPC put forward a new framework for historical interpretation to construct the new world of the PRC—class struggle. Class and class struggle was first introduced in *Communist Manifesto*, in which Marx indicated that all history could be understood as the dynamic of class struggle.⁷⁸ Mao inherited the ideology from Marx and Lenin and indicated that class struggle had been the history of civilization for thousands of years. Mao also believed that the CPC and PRC aimed to fight the aristocracy and bourgeoisie and to free the people who had long been oppressed and exploited.⁷⁹ Thus, class and class struggle has been one of the most critical aspects of the PRC’s historical narrative, and it is perhaps not surprising that they are the most prominent themes in the early PRC history textbooks.⁸⁰

Class struggle was featured extensively in the discussion of Qing politics and internal policies, as the textbook writers focused on highlighting the anti-Qing struggles and explaining the evolution of the Qing dynasty from the perspective of class struggle. In discussing the Qing economy, the textbook writers underscored the exploitation by the ruling class of the peasant class, which was another source of class conflict. For example, the 1953 textbook discussed *yanshang*⁸¹ (salt merchants whose enormous profits came from their exclusive access to the state monopoly system) and *piaohao*⁸² (native remittance banks). The textbook indicated that both formed close relationships with feudal dignitaries, so their profit was cruelly reaped from the

⁷⁸ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Martin Rowson, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: SelfMadeHero, 2018).

⁷⁹ Mao, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, 5–12.

⁸⁰ Li, *20 shiji zhongguo zhongxiaoxue kecheng biao zhun jiaoxue dagang huibian lishi juan*.

⁸¹ Yanshang, or salt merchants, were a group of influential traders in the Qing dynasty. In pre-modern Chinese history, the sale of salt was controlled by the government, and the government would license special people to carry out the trade, which was known as yanshang. Because of the special license by the government, the traders could monopolize the salt trade and reap immense profit from it, so these traders were heavily involved in corruption.

⁸² Piaohao (票号) was a preliminary banking system that evolved during the early Qing dynasty. It facilitated trade and transfer of money through a credit system based on cash-note exchanges.

people.⁸³ Similarly, the 1956 and 1972 textbooks all mentioned that the landowning class exploited the peasant class, which obstructed the economic development of the Qing empire.⁸⁴ Not only was class struggle a new angle to analyze many historical themes, but it also had the effect of criticizing the Qing's rule. Thus, the textbook constructed a new socialist culture while denouncing the past.

The most explicit mention of class struggle was in discussing Qing culture, which primarily centered on the four novels. Using historical novels to express political views was common during Mao's period. One famous example was *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* (海瑞罢官), a 1959 play based on the real incident of an official named Hai Rui during the Ming dynasty. Hai Rui refused to give in to the prime minister and maintained his integrity as a judge, though he was later removed from office.⁸⁵ While the play applauded the integrity and righteousness of Hai Rui, Yao Wenyuan from Shanghai published a commentary to criticize the play.⁸⁶ He interpreted the play as a way to reverse the case of Peng Dehuai, who was just removed from office due to political struggles. This commentary is now perceived as the trigger for the Cultural Revolution, and it initiated a wave of assigning political views to novels and history, which also extended to history textbooks. Another important aspect was that the four novels were among the few literary works that people were allowed to read during the Cultural Revolution, while most others were labeled as the "Four Olds" and destroyed. As people knew

⁸³ Li, *chuji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi disance*, 60–66.

⁸⁴ Qiu, Chen, and Wang, *gaoji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi dierce*, 90–92; Beijingshi jiaoyuju jiaocai bianxiezu, *beijingshi zhongxue shiyong keben: lishi diyice*, 205–6.

⁸⁵ For readers who may not be as familiar with the story, the story was about the former prime minister's son who bribed the regional court to exempt him from penalties for illegally occupying peasant lands and abducting little girls. Hai Rui knew about this situation upon his arrival in the area, so he reopened the case and sentenced the son to death. The prime minister pleaded with Hai Rui, but Hai Rui refused. Then, the prime minister impeached Hai Rui. Though Hai Rui was removed from office, he stood by his judgment.

⁸⁶ Yao Wenyuan was one of the people in the Gang of Four.

about the general plots of these novels relatively well, issuing official evaluations of the novels' authors and characters was an important way to promulgate new socialist ethics based on class struggle.

In the 1953 textbook, class struggle was only applied to *A Dream of Red Mansions*.⁸⁷ The textbook indicated that the novel revealed the “corruption, hypocrisy, cruelty, and tyranny of the ruling class.”⁸⁸ At the end of the book, the textbook writers devoted a few pages to summarizing the feudal society of China, in which they noted that the ruling class was one of the key players in the feudal society, and the central social conflict then was the struggle between “the peasant class and the ruling class.”⁸⁹

The 1956 textbook featured more class-related content. In addition to the same evaluation of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the high school textbook also applied class struggle to analyze *Journey to the West*.⁹⁰ One story in the novel is “Havoc in Heaven (大闹天宫),” in which Sun Wukong, or the Monkey King, rebelled against the Jade Emperor, the Rule of Heaven, and his celestial bureaucracy in Heaven after angering the Emperor by consuming the precious peaches. The Monkey King was punished for his disobedience and imprisoned under a mountain, until he was released with the help of his team.⁹¹ The textbook believed the story showed the “people’s

⁸⁷ *A Dream of Red Mansions*, also known as *The Story of the Stone*, was co-written by Cao Xueqing (first 80 chapters) and Gao E (last 40 chapters). The story was about the vicissitude of a wealthy and influential family, the Jia family, during the Qing dynasty. It describes the tragic love story between Jia Baoyu, the heir of the family, and Lin Daiyu, a sickly and talented young woman. The novel is renowned for its complex characters, intricate plot, and poetic language, and is considered one of the greatest works of Chinese literature.

⁸⁸ Li, *chuji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi disance*, 79.

⁸⁹ Li, 80–82.

⁹⁰ *Journey to the West* by Wu Cheng'en describes a fictional story of monk Tang Xuanzang and his four companions, including the mischievous and powerful Monkey King, as they embarked on a perilous journey westward to retrieve sacred Buddhist scriptures. Along the way, the team encountered various obstacles and adversaries and must use their wit and strength to overcome them. The novel is famous for its vivid characters, intricate plot, and a blend of fantasy, adventure, and satire.

⁹¹ Cheng'en Wu and W. J. F. Jenner, *Xi you ji*, Di 1 ban, Han Ying jing dian wen ku (Han Ying dui zhao) = Library of Chinese and English classics, (Chinese-English) (Beijing: Wai wen chu ban she, 2003).

contempt for the feudal ruling... class.”⁹² The reason for the analysis was that the Monkey King’s havoc, in a way, paralleled that of social uprising because both were civilians opposing the people on the top. The addition of this analysis showed that class struggle increased its importance in 1956.

The increase could be explained by the fact that China formally started to construct a socialist society in 1953, and therefore, class struggle and other social messaging were given higher prominence. In the 1956 high school history curriculum standard, the MOE stipulated that one of the key messages of high school history was for the students to appreciate the glory of long-term class struggle led by the people.⁹³ As noted by Wang Hongzhi, history textbooks during the Great Leap Forward, including the 1956 textbook, were influenced by a tendency to “emphasize the contemporary and deemphasize the ancient (厚今薄古),” which could be first traced to an editorial published in the *People’s Daily* in March 1958.⁹⁴ In the editorial, Chen Boda, the associate director of the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the CPC, indicated that one of the ways for philosophy and social science to “leap forward” was to emphasize the contemporary and deemphasize the ancient; the primary focus should be on the contemporary situation, rather than pre-modern history.⁹⁵ After the editorial, many sectors of the country started to embrace the idea, even including mathematics research and education.⁹⁶ Thus, this idea has also been translated into textbooks: the interpretation of the story endowed a

⁹² Qiu, Chen, and Wang, *gaoji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi dierce*, 97.

⁹³ Li, *20 shiji zhongguo zhongxiaoxue kecheng biao zhun jiaoxue dagang huibian lishi juan*.

⁹⁴ Wang et al., *xinzhongguo zhongxiaoxue jiaocai jiansheshi 1949-2000 yanjiu congshu*, History Volume:181–85. *People’s Daily* (人民日报) is the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

⁹⁵ “chen boda tan zhexue shehuikexue ruhe yuejin? houjibogu bianganbianxue” 陈伯达谈哲学社会科学如何跃进? 厚今薄古 边干边学 (Chen Boda on How Philosophy and Social Science Can Leap Forward: Emphasize the Contemporary and Deemphasize the Ancient, Learn along with Labor), *renmin ribao* 人民日报, November 3, 1958.

⁹⁶ Guan Zhaozhi 关肇直, “shuxue yanjiu he jiaoxue yeyao houjinbogu” 数学研究和教学也要厚今薄古 (Math Research and Teaching Should Also Emphasize the Contemporary and Deemphasize the Ancient), *renmin ribao* 人民日报, August 16, 1958.

“modern” class-struggle angle to a classic story, which ultimately served the CPC’s political agenda.⁹⁷

Not surprisingly, the discussion of class struggle peaked during the Cultural Revolution period. In the 1972 textbook, in addition to the previous two novels, the author commented that the author of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* showed the rotten ruling class, and *Water Margins* represented the farmer class’s rebellion against the ruling class. While these evaluations were somewhat arguable, the textbooks devoted a whole page to criticizing the novels’ authors. They first quoted Mao stating that everyone belongs to a class and their thoughts are influenced by their class. For *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the textbook indicated that Luo Guanzhong “stood on the class of landowners and promoted the feudal orthodoxy and idealistic view of historical cycles”; for *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the textbook suggested that Cao Xueqin “[was influenced by] his declining noble, bureaucratic family background...[and his] thoughts were all marked with a distinct brand of the exploiting class.” In the end, the textbook mentioned Mao again, reminding students to critically absorb the “essence” of the novels and discard the “dross” in them. The class-based personal critique also spread to the philosophers: all three philosophers came from the “landowner class,” and their disapproval of peasant uprising “showed their anti-revolution stance.”⁹⁸

The textbook evaluations, in retrospect, seem questionable and forced in many senses, but these evaluations reflected the Cultural Revolution political landscape. In the 1966 “Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,” education and textbook reform were highlighted to “completely change the

⁹⁷ While it seems that the textbook was produced before the editorial, the textbook used for this thesis is the 4th edition of the textbook, which was published in December 1959.

⁹⁸ Beijingshi jiaoyuju jiaocai bianxiezu, *beijingshi zhongxue shiyong keben: lishi diyice*, 208–13.

phenomenon of our schools being dominated by bourgeois intellectuals.” Under the influence of extreme anti-bourgeoisie and anti-feudalism ideologies, textbooks were rewritten to match the broader political climate.⁹⁹ Therefore, the novels were interpreted in a very political way. While the textbooks were undoubtedly influenced by the politicization of cultural works, they also contributed to the spread of these practices through general education, especially among school children. In this sense, the textbooks served as a critical node in constructing the nation: they were both receivers of the political climate and promoters of the “new” China agenda.

Persuading the Chinese people that the PRC was a revolutionary and new regime was no easy task, especially in the founding years of the PRC. As seen in this chapter, the textbook writers strategically chose their words and perspectives. Through carefully selecting textbook content, the CPC managed to create a Han-dominant perspective and conveyed its stance on defending the country’s territories while hiding its contradictory story of losing Outer Mongolia to Russia. In analyzing Qing politics and economy, the textbooks generally adopted a negative view of the Qing government, which helped the PRC to justify its policies and establish political legitimacy through a regime-contrast model. The textbooks also introduced a new historical analysis framework of class struggle, which had increasing prevalence due to the changing political climate of the nation. All three strategies were part of a much larger project of leading the country to a new, socialist ideology. However, as we will see in the next chapter, many of these strategies were reversed or replaced in the “new era” of the “new China.”

⁹⁹ “zhongguo gongchandang zhongyang weiyuanhui guanyu wuchanjieji wenhuadageming de jue ding.”

Chapter 3—The “New Era” of the “New China”

From “Ode to the Socialist Motherland” to “Ode to the Motherland”

In the grand Opening Ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, a little girl’s sweet voice accompanied the Chinese national flag’s entrance to the stadium. The song the girl sang was “Ode to the Motherland (歌唱祖国),” a well-known patriotic song in China regarded as the second national anthem. However, less known is the song’s alternative versions. First written in 1950 by Chinese musician Wang Shen, the song was initially named “Ode to the Motherland.” In 1951, *People’s Daily* formally endorsed and promoted the song, urging the public to learn it for the National Day celebration of 1951.¹ In 1969 during the Cultural Revolution, *People’s Daily* published a new version of the song, changing the lyrics and its name to “Ode to the Socialist Motherland.”² The 1969 version persisted until 1980, after which the song’s name and most of its lyrics reverted to the original version.³ Below is a side-by-side comparison between the 1969 and 1980 versions of the lyrics.

Ode to the Socialist Motherland (1969-1980) ⁴	Ode to the Motherland (1951-1960, 1980-present) ⁵
Five-Star Red Flags are fluttering in the wind, How clear and bright are the revolutionary songs . Singing for our socialist motherland , where the sun shines everywhere. Our great leader Mao Zedong Leads us proceeding forward. Across the mountains, across the plains,	Five-Star Red Flags are fluttering in the wind, How clear and bright are the victory songs. Singing for our dear motherland, From now step towards prosperity and strength. Singing for our dear motherland, From now step towards prosperity and strength. Across the mountains, across the plains,

¹ Sun Shen 孙慎, “guoqingjie changde liangshou gequ de changfa” 国庆节唱的两首歌曲的唱法 (The Singing Method of the Two Songs Sung on National Day), *renmin ribao* 人民日报, September 15, 1951; “geci” 歌词 (Lyrics), *renmin ribao* 人民日报, September 15, 1951; “zhongyang renmin zhengfu wenhuabu guanyu guoqingjie changge de tongzhi” 中央人民政府文化部关于国庆节唱歌的通知 (Notice by the Ministry of Culture of the Central People’s Government on Singing on the National Day), *renmin ribao* 人民日报, September 15, 1951.

² “gechang shehuizhuyi zuguo (gequ)” 歌唱社会主义祖国 (歌曲) (Ode to the Socialist Motherland (Song)), *renmin ribao* 人民日报, January 10, 1969.

³ “Opening Ceremony from Beijing 2008,” *Full Opening Ceremony from Beijing 2008 | Throwback Thursday* (Beijing, August 8, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bufV3EgyPGU>.

⁴ “Ode to the Motherland,” n.d., <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/6592768>. The translation of the lyrics was adapted from the website.

⁵ “Ode to the Motherland.” The translation of the lyrics was adapted from the website.

Over the turbulent Yellow and Yangtze rivers;
700 million people are in high spirits;
The **socialist motherland** is thriving.
The **military and civilians unite** in high morale,
Whoever dares to violate us will be called to perish!

...

The great Proletarian **Cultural Revolution**
Opened a new chapter in **Marxism-Leninism**.
The **revolutionary people** are full of vigor;
A new generation flourish.
Following **Chairman Mao**,
be a **revolutionary**.
The bright red world depends on us to create!

...

With the motherland and the world in mind,
Communism is our ideal.
The glorious and great **Communist Party of China**
is the core force that leads us.
Mao Zedong Thought shines brightly;
Illuminating the course of our victory!

Over the turbulent Yellow and Yangtze rivers;
This vast and beautiful land,
Is our dear homeland;
The heroic people have stood up!
Our unity and fraternity are as strong as steel!

...

We are hardworking, we are brave,
Independence and freedom are our ideals;
We had triumphed over so much suffering,
To achieve today's liberation!
We love peace,
we love our homeland,
Whoever dares to violate us, we shall call for his death!

...

The eastern sun is rising,
The People's Republic is growing up;
Our leader **Mao Zedong**,
Guides us the way forward.
Our **living conditions** are improving day by day,
Our future shines brightly.

It is not difficult to notice that the 1969 lyrics showed many features of the Cultural Revolution, including Mao's personality cult and the intense emphasis on revolutions. These features align well with the previous chapter's textbook analysis because the song was another means of spreading patriotism and being responsive to politics. Yet, the 1980 lyrics removed almost all the Cultural Revolution features: there was only one mention of Mao and one reference to the victory of the Communist Revolution of 1949, and it projected patriotism to the country rather than a political party or individual, such as words like "independence and freedom" and "living conditions." Deleting the word "socialist" from the song's title also indicated the deemphasis on political ideology. These changes signify the profound political change in China during the late 1970s and early 1980s—China entered a "new era," the Reform-and-Opening-Up period. This chapter seeks to analyze how the textbooks changed in order to facilitate the country's critical transformation. The focus of this chapter will primarily be the post-1978 textbooks.

China After the Cultural Revolution

In the previous chapter, we introduced the key political events that contributed to the Maoist era of the PRC. In this section, we will consider the major political events that removed the influence of the Cultural Revolution and Mao, returned the country to normalcy and order, and reoriented the country toward economic development. These crucial political developments will help contextualize the textbook narrative changes after 1976.

China's 1976 was full of ups and downs. In January, a founding father and people's beloved premier, Zhou Enlai, passed away. His death prompted millions to commemorate him in Tiananmen Square in April, which became a non-violent protest known as the April 5th Movement.⁶ Three months later, on July 28th, Tangshan, a city just 180 kilometers east of Beijing, was shocked by a 7.6-magnitude earthquake at 3:42 am. The earthquake, which killed and injured hundreds of thousands of people, devastated the whole country.⁷ Even as China was recovering from the earthquake, Mao passed away on September 9th, sending yet another shock across the country. After Mao's death, Hua Guofeng assumed Mao's role in leading the country. In October, Hua made two significant yet conflicting moves. First, he arrested the notorious Gang of Four and ended the Cultural Revolution on the 6th; second, he mentioned the "Two Whatevers" for the first time on the 26th—"We will resolutely uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and unswervingly follow whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave."⁸ Thus, Hua was a continuation of Mao and his policies.

⁶ Frederick C. Teiwes and Warren Sun, *The End of the Maoist Era: Chinese Politics During the Twilight of the Cultural Revolution, 1972 - 1976*, An East Gate Book (Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 2007), 466–89.

⁷ James Palmer, *Heaven Cracks, Earth Shakes: The Tangshan Earthquake and the Death of Mao's China* (New York: Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2012), 1–2, 127–29.

⁸ "dangshishang de jintian (shiyue ershiliuri)" 党史上的今天（10月26日）(Today in the Party's History (October 26th)), 2007.9.26, http://www.gov.cn/ztl/17da/content_739221.htm; Teiwes and Sun, *The End of the Maoist Era*, 566–89. The Gang of Four refers to a political faction that manipulated Mao and instigated the Cultural Revolution. The faction is comprised of Jiang Qing, Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, and Yao Wenyuan. They were later charged with treasonous crimes after being caught.

After 1976, the country was gradually recovering from the Cultural Revolution, which many historians termed *boluan fanzheng* (拨乱反正, eliminating chaos and returning to normal). During this period, millions of people wrongly persecuted during the Cultural Revolution were rehabilitated, and the country began to return to order.⁹ Nevertheless, the more imminent issue the country faced after 1976 was the political and ideological vacuum—now that the Cultural Revolution had ended and the patriarchal leader was gone, what was next? Notably, the 1978 textbook used in this thesis and its corresponding curriculum standard were drafted during this critical transitional period. This chapter analyzes how the textbook captured the country’s state at a historical crossroads. The political vacuum was resolved by an internal political struggle among the party leadership. In early 1978, Deng Xiaoping voiced his disapproval of Hua’s “Two Whatevers” and launched the 1978 “Truth Criterion Discussion” with Hu Yaobang, a senior party leader who championed social reforms. The famous publication in *Guangming Daily* in May, “Practice is the Sole Criterion for Testing Truth (实践是检验真理的唯一标准),” called for using evidence-based practice to guide the country’s development, directly questioning Mao’s ideology’s ruling status. Historians also interpret this discussion as the contest between Mao’s route championed by Hua and the reform route championed by Deng.¹⁰ Deng soon won, with Hua’s resignation as the country’s top leader.¹¹

Nowadays, when people discuss the “new era” of China, they mainly refer to the Reform-and-Opening-Up period under Deng’s leadership. Historians consider the Third Plenary Session

⁹ Donglian Xiao 萧冬莲, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi dishijuan lishi de zhuangui, cong boluanfanzheng dao gaige kai fang (1979-1981)* 中华人民共和国史 第十卷 历史的转轨——从拨乱反正到改革开放 (1979-1981) (The History of the People’s Republic of China, Volume 10, Turning Point in History: Re-Examination of the Cultural Revolution and the Policy of Reform and Opening (1979-1981)), vol. 10, Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Shi 中华人民共和国史 (The History of the People’s Republic of China) (Hong Kong: Research Center for Contemporary Chinese Culture, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2008), 83–126, 178–94.

¹⁰ Xiao, 10:194–229.

¹¹ Xiao, 10:382–402.

of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in December 1978 the start.¹² After the session, Deng introduced a series of measures to promote economic growth, which are well-characterized by historians and economists.¹³ Deng's measures could be summarized into two main categories: internal reform and economic opening-up. Internally, Deng implemented measures to invigorate agricultural and industrial production; the famous example in agriculture was the switch to the Household Responsibility System (家庭联产承包责任制), in which each family could contract land from the state and freely dispose of the excess produce after handing the contracted amount to the state. This system promoted people's enthusiasm for production better than the previous system during the Cultural Revolution. Another important branch of internal reform was the switch to a market-based pricing system and a market economy compatible with socialism, which was formally termed the "socialist market economy" in 1992. Regarding opening up to the world, Deng set up Special Economic Zones such as Shenzhen and allowed foreign investment and involvement in the country's economy to meet China's need for capital, which significantly stimulated economic development and technological exchange.¹⁴ With the combination of measures, China's annual GDP growth increased to around 10% from 1978 to 1983, a significant achievement for such new policies with a short implementation period.¹⁵ This chapter will explore how the textbooks facilitated the implementation of these policies.

¹² Klaus Mühlhahn, *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), 501.

¹³ Xiao, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi dishijuan lishi de zhuangui, cong boluanfanzheng dao gaigekaiifang (1979-1981)*, 10:720–98.

¹⁴ Mühlhahn, *Making China Modern*, 503–11; Dwight H. Perkins, "China's Economic Policy and Performance," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 495–531, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521243377.007>.

¹⁵ Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).

Accompanying the economic development was cultural liberalization across the country. People started to wear suits and jeans that originated from the Western world and watched films or pop stars from Hong Kong.¹⁶ However, China was hardly uneventful in the 1980s because what reform brought was not only a thriving scene but also uncertainties. In economic reform, one example was the dual-price system in which goods were sold at both planned and market prices. The system intended to facilitate the country's transition from the planned economy of the Cultural Revolution to a more vibrant market economy, but the system caused panic buying, and the difference between the planned price and the market price fueled the black markets and corruption.¹⁷ No less destabilizing were the changes in the nation's thoughts and culture. One example was *He Shang (River Elegy)*, a controversial documentary produced to reevaluate the Chinese civilization. Critiquing various central Chinese cultural symbols, it argued that China's backwardness in the past century should be attributed to ideological burdens from traditional culture. The documentary was well-received by progressive groups like students, but it was harshly criticized by many people with conservative views, including some dignitaries, suggesting that the country experienced a thought division.¹⁸

Encouraged by the critique of traditional culture, some people also started to question the political structure, namely the autocratic system, and began to voice their thoughts on the country in the public sphere, asking for more public involvement in political decisions. One example was the Xidan Democracy Wall. Xidan is an intersection approximately two kilometers west of Tiananmen Square. A broad wall stood next to the intersection before the 1980s. From 1978 to

¹⁶ Vogel; Frankie Huang, "China in the 1980s, When People Felt Free to Speak Their Minds," 2019.8.1, <https://www.goldthread2.com/culture/china-1980s-censorship/article/3021028>.

¹⁷ Mühlhahn, *Making China Modern*, 531; Michael E. Marti, *China and the Legacy of Deng Xiaoping: From Communist Revolution to Capitalist Evolution*, 1st ed (Washington, D.C: Brassey's, 2002), 35.

¹⁸ Xiao Xu, "A Comprehensive Review of the River Elegy Debate," *Chinese Sociology & Anthropology* 25, no. 1 (October 1992): 6–27, <https://doi.org/10.2753/CSA0009-462525016>.

1979, people put big posters on the wall to protest and raise advocacy for political and social issues. These posters further sparked a variety of publications to call for political reforms. However, in 1979, the Democracy Wall was banned by the government, and some people involved were arrested.¹⁹ Toward the second half of the decade, Deng saw these activities as “bourgeois liberalization” risks, including some small-scale student protests. In the meantime, China’s crime rate was high, and public safety and economic integrity were concerns.²⁰ Thus, Deng and the Party’s senior leadership started managing these risks in 1987 to ensure that the economic reform would not undermine the government.²¹ Rather than complete liberalization, the government pursued a controlled liberalization strategy. The 1987 textbook was produced during this time of balancing policies.

The 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident was one of the most infamous events in PRC history. The incident started with the death of Hu Yaobang on April 15th. Hu’s death prompted some university students to mourn for him in Tiananmen Square, but the mourning soon turned political. The students demanded a direct conversation with premier Li Peng and social reforms like press freedom and anti-corruption, echoing Hu’s political agenda. However, in an April 26th editorial, *People’s Daily* defined the students’ protest as a “planned conspiracy” and “turmoil.”²² Infuriated, the protest students went on a hunger strike. Though later evidence suggests that they cheated the strike, it still won them support from people nationwide. At the same time, the senior party leadership had a political struggle: conservatives like Li Peng supported harsh measures to suppress the protesters, whereas reformists such as Zhao Ziyang (the general secretary of CPC)

¹⁹ Xiao, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi dishijuan lishi de zhuangui, cong boluanfanzheng dao gaigekai fang (1979-1981)*, 10:42–48, 229–47.

²⁰ Marti, *China and the Legacy of Deng Xiaoping*, 105.

²¹ Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*.

²² “bixu qizhixianmingde fandui dongluan (shelun)” 必须旗帜鲜明地反对动乱（社论）（We Must Take a Clear-Cut Stand against Disturbances (Editorial)), *renmin ribao* 人民日报, 1989.4.26.

wanted to take a gentler approach to deal with the situation. On May 18th, Li Peng finally conversed with the student leaders, but the conversation was unfruitful. The next morning, Zhao Ziyang went to Tiananmen Square to plead with the students to stop protesting, but this was his last public appearance ever because the conservatives won over the reformists.²³ With Deng's approval, the government issued national martial law on May 20th and a clearance order in Tiananmen Square on June 1st. Many students remained despite the order, and on the morning of June 4th, tanks marched through the square, and two months of nationwide turbulence ended with casualties.²⁴

Unsurprisingly, the 1989 protest attracted global attention. Many scholars have represented the 1989 protest as an ideological catastrophe for China, suggesting that the people were losing faith in the country's political system and reforms.²⁵ Though China's primary focus after 1978 shifted to economic development, the 1989 protest dealt a blow to the reform progress. In 1992, Deng went on his famed Southern Tour (九二南巡) to inspect the progress of development in major cities, during which he made remarks that China would continue its economic reform. China's momentum in the economy has been fierce ever since.²⁶ The 1992 textbook was produced around this time. After 1992, two more sets of textbooks were produced. China formally joined the WTO in 2001, and the country experienced a roaring economy from

²³ Ziyang Zhao et al., *Prisoner of the State: The Secret Journal of Zhao Ziyang*, 1st Simon & Schuster hardcover ed (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009).

²⁴ Liang Zhang, Andrew J. Nathan, and Perry Link, *The Tiananmen Papers*, 1st ed (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).

²⁵ James A. R. Miles, *The Legacy of Tiananmen: China in Disarray* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Robert Benewick and Paul Wingrove, eds., *China in the 1990s*, Rev. ed., [2. ed.] (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 5–20; Joseph Fewsmith, *China Since Tiananmen: From Deng Xiaoping to Hu Jintao* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²⁶ Alexander Pantsov and Steven I. Levine, *Deng Xiaoping: A Revolutionary Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 425; Timothy Cheek, Klaus Mühlhahn, and Hans van de Ven, eds., *The Chinese Communist Party: A Century in Ten Lives*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 183, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108904186>; Xiaoping Deng, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1995), 370–83.

the late 1990s to the 2000s. The 2007 textbooks were produced during this time under Hu Jintao's administration. The 2016-2019 textbooks were produced during Xi Jinping's administration, during which the country saw a rise in conservatism.²⁷ However, as these two textbooks are relatively recent developments, this thesis will not engage with them heavily.

In summary, after an initial ideological vacuum, Deng purged the destructive influence of Mao's personality cult in the post-Cultural Revolution society. He also started to orient the country toward economic development and liberalization. However, while the reform excited the country's future, it also brought uncertainties. As we will see in the following few sections, these key political developments would, again, significantly impact the content and messaging of the textbooks, sometimes even reversing the narratives used in the Maoist era.

Shattering the Old World and Creating a New World, Again

In the previous chapter, the textbook shattered the old world by harshly criticizing the Qing government for legitimizing the PRC's rule; they created a new world by introducing a new "class struggle" perspective in analyzing historical changes. However, this "new" world under Mao's leadership would be shattered again in Deng's era, and an updated new narrative would be created. In the 1978 textbook's discussion of Qing politics, many anti-Qing struggles were deleted: only the White Lotus Rebellion was required for the students. All the resistance movements during the Qing's early years, such as Shi Kefa and Li Dingguo, were omitted, and the Miao people's revolt was written as supplemental material. Regarding the Qing's internal policies, the textbook omitted the destructive ethnic policies. Instead, it focused on the Qing

²⁷ Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "Political Changes in China Since the 19th CCP Congress: Xi Jinping Is Not Weaker but More Contested," *East Asia* 36, no. 1 (March 2019): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-019-09305-x>.

central government's organization, corruption, and the increased feudal dictatorship, similar problems to those raised regarding the Ming government. Regarding ethnic issues, the textbook wrote about the "29-Article Ordinance for the More Effective Governing of Tibet" by Kangxi Emperor in 1793 to indicate that the Qing effectively ruled Tibet. In a striking about-face, it also devoted four and a half pages to the harmonious ethnic relations under Qing rule. In reference, the textbook dedicated only two pages to discussing the Qing government's organization.²⁸ Thus, the Qing government had a more positive image in the 1978 textbook than before. In addition, the 1978 textbook featured much less class struggle discussion, deleting the class-based critique of the three philosophers and interpretation of "Havoc in Heaven" and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.²⁹ Overall, the textbook saw significant reorganization after the Cultural Revolution.

However, the narrative reversal was far from complete. For example, similar to previous textbooks discussing the Qing economy, the 1978 textbook criticized the Qing government's policies that granted Manchu nobles unfair economic advantage, which the people "fiercely opposed." Hence, the Qing government "had to gradually adjust the ruling policy" and promote economic development slowly and surely.³⁰ In this version, regarding Qing culture, *A Dream of Red Mansions* was still said to represent "the cruelty and corruption of the landowning class."³¹ However, all three narratives were deleted or changed in the later textbooks.

Interestingly, many pre-1978 textbook narratives were retained in the 1978 teachers' guidebook, not directly available to the students. For example, in the textbook analysis section, the teachers' guidebook indicated that the Qing's initial pro-Manchu economic policies were

²⁸ zhongxiaoxue tongyong jiaocai lishi bianxiezu, *quanrizhi shinianzhi xuexiao chuzhong keben: zhongguo lishi diece*, 65–67, 79–89.

²⁹ zhongxiaoxue tongyong jiaocai lishi bianxiezu, 93–96.

³⁰ zhongxiaoxue tongyong jiaocai lishi bianxiezu, 73–76.

³¹ zhongxiaoxue tongyong jiaocai lishi bianxiezu, 98.

“anti-revolutionary,” a classic language from the Cultural Revolution. It also suggested that because of “people’s opposition” and the fact that “production was destroyed,” the Qing government could not “expropriate a large amount of wealth from the people.” Thus, to “maintain [the Qing’s] rule and guarantee the smooth progress of feudal exploitation,” the Qing government “had to adjust the anti-revolutionary economic policies.” At the end of the analysis, the guidebook referenced Mao’s words as the 1972 textbook did.³² The philosophers were still critiqued as “philosophers of the landowning class,” so teachers should be careful when introducing them to the students. “Havoc in Heaven” was still interpreted as “peasants’ contempt for the ruling class.” Cao Xueqin was “subject to the limitations of his class and time,” so he could not see “the power of the people,” and he held regret for the collapse of the feudal society.”³³ Therefore, even though the textbooks saw many changes in the historical narrative, the history pedagogy and the students’ information might not have been very different from the Cultural Revolution’s period, as the content was preserved in the teachers’ guidebooks.

Why was there a discrepancy between the textbook and the teachers’ guidebooks? One possible reason was that the textbook writers simply did not have enough time to rewrite both books. In 1977, Deng stressed the importance of improving education and the textbooks used in primary and secondary education, asking for new textbooks for the following fall semester. Thus, the Ministry of Education (MOE) gathered a group of experts to draft a new curriculum standard in September, which was finished in January 1978.³⁴ The curriculum standard required textbook writers to clean out the “pernicious influence” of the Gang of Four.³⁵ Based on this standard, the

³² zhongxiaoxue tongyong jiaocai lishi bianxiezu, *quanrizhi shinianzhi xuexiao chuzhong zhongguo lishi dierce jiaoxue cankaoshu*, 141–44.

³³ zhongxiaoxue tongyong jiaocai lishi bianxiezu, 177–80.

³⁴ Wang et al., *xinzhongguo zhongxiaoxue jiaocai jiansheshi 1949-2000 yanjiu congshu*, History Volume:287–89.

³⁵ Li, *20 shiji zhongguo zhongxiaoxue kecheng biao zhun jiaoxue dagang huibian lishi juan*, 327.

1978 textbook containing Qing history was published seven months later, including printing and production time. Thus, the textbook writers were operating under a very short turnaround time, so they might not have had enough time to rethink every historical narrative, and they recycled materials from the Cultural Revolution textbooks into the teachers' guidebooks.

Another reason to explain the discrepancy and incomplete changes was that the textbook writers might have intentionally used it to adjust the textbooks' historical narrative to fit the transitional nature of 1978. The collapse of the Cultural Revolution caused a sudden ideological vacuum, and no one knew what the future would hold. During the construction of the 1978 textbook, Hua's Two Whatever and Mao's ideology were still influential, but they were under attack by other politicians. There was still much uncertainty regarding the country's political climate and future.³⁶ Thus, the textbook writers did not have a clear direction to rewrite the textbook. They knew that the Cultural Revolution narratives must be replaced, as mandated by the curriculum standard, but what they should change it to and to what extent were unclear. In fact, the curriculum standard and the Ministry of Education (MOE) also had the same problem. The 1978 and 1980 curriculum standards still listed class struggle as the primary aspect of the historical materialistic view that students should master.³⁷ Therefore, no one was entirely sure how to tailor the textbook to the country's changes, so the discrepancy could be a compromise: change the textbook but retain the past in the teachers' guidebooks. This way, the textbook would be prepared for whichever direction the country should take.

³⁶ Xiao, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi dishijuan lishi de zhuangui, cong boluanfanzheng dao gaigekaiyang (1979-1981)*, 10:69–82.

³⁷ Li, *20 shiji zhongguo zhongxiaoxue kecheng biaoqun jiaoxue dagang huibian lishi juan*, 327, 386.

If the 1978 textbook captured the country's transition period, the textbooks from 1987 and later captured the country's new era. One significant change in these textbooks was the significant reduction of class struggle, as the terms "class" or "class struggle" almost disappeared in the textbooks and teachers' guidebooks.³⁸ The curriculum standards in the 1980s also stopped listing class struggle as the primary historical analytical framework. The direct reason for such reduction was the "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China (关于建国以来党的若干历史问题的决议, hereinafter referred to as the Resolution)" in 1981. In the Resolution, Deng Xiaoping refuted the ideology of "treating class struggle as the key link (阶级斗争为纲)."³⁹ Thus, the textbooks made the changes corresponding to the Resolution.

However, because one of Mao's visions for founding the PRC was class struggle and freeing people from feudal oppression through revolutions, the deletion of class struggle indicates a profound change in the foundations of the CPC's political legitimacy. Regarding Qing internal policies, in the 2019 middle school textbook, the anti-Qing efforts were condensed into "eliminating the remnants of the Ming regime and the anti-Qing forces in various places." Additionally, the textbook wrote that the Qing government "followed the practices of the previous dynasties," directly aligning the Qing government with the other Han-ruled imperial governments. In discussing the wars in conquering frontier regions, the textbook indicated, "With the support of the Uyghur and other ethnic groups, the Qing army quelled the rebellion

³⁸ Class struggle was still featured in discussing Qing politics and economy, but it was mostly phrased as oppression or exploitation.

³⁹ "guanyu jian'guo yilai dang de ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi" 关于建国以来党的若干历史问题的决议 (Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China) (北京, June 27, 1981), <http://www.people.com.cn/item/20years/newfiles/b1040.html>; Wang Hongzhi 王宏志 and Xing Kebin 邢克斌, eds., *chuji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi dierce* 初级中学课本: 中国历史 第二册 (Junior High School Textbook: Chinese History Book Two) (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1987.6).

that split the country in two years,” highlighting the Qing army’s success.⁴⁰ Therefore, the textbook’s historical narrative reversed: now, the Qing government could represent the Chinese people, and history was told from the Qing government’s perspective.

Regarding ethnic issues, the 1987 textbook added a section on Torghut’s return to China, in which the textbook indicated that the Torghut people were “manipulated and oppressed by Tsarist Russia,” so they decided to come back to China despite the long and arduous journey, and they were greeted by Qianlong Emperor. This was to show that the Qing was an attraction for minority groups and had “written a glorious chapter for the consolidation and development of a multi-ethnic country.”⁴¹ The 2019 textbook detailed the peaceful and mutually amiable process of Tibet’s incorporation into Qing rule, including the Dalai Lama coming to Beijing to pay tribute and receiving the Qing emperor’s bestowal of title. This supported the textbook’s argument that the Qing’s rule of Tibet “had reached an institutionalized and legalized level” and the subsection title “The Qing’s effective ruling over Tibet.”⁴² Thus, the Qing government evolved from an atrocious government that provoked ethnic tensions in 1953 to a government adorned by minorities and significantly contributed to ethnic unity and peace.

In the previous chapter, we introduced Weatherley and Magee’s work on political legitimacy and the 2007 history textbooks. The two scholars put forth the political lineage model of political legitimacy: political legitimacy can be established by portraying “good governance” in pre-modern dynasties and paralleling the PRC governments with the imperial governments.⁴³ Though the pre-1978 textbook adopted the regime contrast model, the post-1987 textbooks fit

⁴⁰ Qu et al., *yiwu jiaoyu jiaokeshu zhongguo lishi qinianji xiace*, 88–95.

⁴¹ Wang and Xing, *chuji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi dierce*, 79–80.

⁴² Qu et al., *yiwu jiaoyu jiaokeshu zhongguo lishi qinianji xiace*, 90–91.

⁴³ Weatherley and Magee, “Using the Past to Legitimise the Present: The Portrayal of Good Governance in Chinese History Textbooks.”

nicely with the political lineage model. In the textbooks, the Qing government ensured the country's stability and prosperity, was pro-ethnic equality, was endorsed by the people, and used laws such as the "29-Article Ordinance" in Tibet. The textbook also assimilated the Qing government with the Ming government, which included the Qing in the pre-modern Chinese political lineage. Through this strategy, the textbook could convey that, like all previous dynasties that brought China prosperity, the PRC government was working to restore the country to its former glory, thus establishing its authority.

Then came the question of why the PRC government changed the perception of its political legitimacy. From the previous chapter, we know that the PRC's principal contradiction (or the main challenge facing society and the state) in 1957 was the conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. In Deng's era, the primary contradiction returned to being economically focused. In the Resolution, Deng indicated that,

"After the socialist transformation was mostly completed, the principal contradiction to be resolved in our country is the contradiction between the people's ever-growing material and cultural needs and the backward production. The Party's and the state's work emphasis must shift to socialist modernization centered on economic development, great production development, and gradual improvement of the people's material and cultural life on this basis."⁴⁴

Deng further indicated, "Except for massive foreign invasion, [the Party and the state] should never forgo this emphasis."⁴⁵ Because Deng wanted to promote economic development and prosperity, restoring peace and order was critical because they were the prerequisite for

⁴⁴ "guanyu jian'guo yilai dang de ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi."

⁴⁵ "guanyu jian'guo yilai dang de ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi."

economic development. He said, “On the premise of striving for peace, we will wholeheartedly pursue modernization, develop our country, and build socialism with Chinese characteristics.”⁴⁶ Hence, in alignment with Deng’s ideology, it was reasonable for the textbooks to delete the anti-Qing struggles, lower the revolutionary sentiments, and promote peace and stability. In addition, by aligning the Qing and other imperial empires with the current regime, the textbook communicated that China had a glorious history in the past. Contemporary Chinese readers should be confident and follow their ancestors’ steps to achieve great things. Hence, after 1978, the textbooks adopted the political lineage model instead of the regime contrast model of political legality. The 1978 textbook, which stood at the intersection between the two eras, had a combination of both models, capturing the pivotal moment of ideology change in PRC history.

In the previous chapter, we also saw that the textbooks justified the PRC policies, which the 1993 textbook shared the same function. Though most of the discussions on Qing politics, ethnic policies, and culture were the same for the 1987 and the 1993 textbooks, the 1993 book’s discussion of the Qing economy added a new section focusing on the Qing’s “Closed-Door Policy (闭关锁国).” The textbook indicated that the Qing rulers believed China was “rich in products, so there was no need to interact with foreign countries.” They also feared “foreign businessmen interacting with people living on the coast would cause ‘nuisance and trouble,’” so the Qing government severely restricted foreign trade. The textbook adopted a negative attitude toward the policy, saying it made China “lose the initiative of foreign trade and hindered the development of handicraft industry.” The Qing government “could not see the world’s trends and development and could not exchange scientific knowledge and production technology with other

⁴⁶ Deng, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, 3:57.

countries, so China was falling behind.” The only qualification was that the closed-door policy had a “certain role in preventing invasions by Western colonists.”⁴⁷ In addition, the teachers’ guidebooks indicated that this section was one of the lesson’s key points, so the teachers needed to underscore the negative impacts of the policy and let the students comprehend that the policy led to China’s backwardness.⁴⁸

The increased criticism of the Closed-Door Policy echoed the country’s resumed economic reforms. Opening up to the global economy was one of the hallmarks of Deng’s economic reform agenda. As the 1993 textbook was produced right after Deng’s tour in 1992, it supported Deng’s remarks. The textbook description of the Qing’s problems was similar to that of the PRC: China did not have initiatives in international trade nor advanced technology and scientific knowledge. By indicating that the Closed-Door Policy was the culprit for these issues during the Qing dynasty, which resulted in further foreign invasions and national humiliation, the textbook justified the vitality of adopting policies that could promote international interaction, implicitly supporting the country’s economic reform agenda. In the subsequent 2007 and 2016 textbooks, the same section on Qing’s Closed-Door Policy was retained.

Before we conclude that the textbook was responsive and dynamic to the country’s politics, another important point should be clarified: the discussion of Qing history did not change entirely across different textbooks. In fact, much of the textbook content on the Qing stayed relatively the same throughout the 74 years, including the discussion of Qing philosopher

⁴⁷ Wang et al., *jiunian yiwu jiaoyu sannianzhi chujuzhongxue jiaokeshu: zhongguo lishi disance*, 14.

⁴⁸ Ma Zhibin 马执斌 et al., eds., *jiunian yiwu jiaoyu sannianzhi chujuzhongxue jiaokeshu zhongguo lishi disance jiaoshi jiaoxue yongshu* 九年义务教育三年制初级中学教科书：中国历史第三册 教师教学用书 (Nine-Year Compulsory Education Three-Year Junior High School Textbook Chinese History Book Three Teachers’ Guidebook) (Beijing: People’s Education Press, 1994), 21–23.

Wang Fuzhi's thoughts.⁴⁹ In all the textbooks, Wang's thoughts represented the early materialistic view in pre-modern China. One way to rationalize this persistence is that it served as the textbook's strategy to show that materialism was present in pre-modern Chinese history, so communist thought was not foreign to Chinese people. More importantly, however, the persistence indicates that the changes made to the textbooks were deliberate. People would not trust if history textbooks changed entirely due to political events. Hence, when the textbooks needed to be rewritten, the textbook writers only selectively changed things that were not aligned with the political climate, usually in an implicit way. Therefore, with the unchanged material as a control, the textbook changes provided a lens through which we could glimpse and understand the country's evolution.

The Rehabilitation of "Loyalty"

In the previous chapter, we discussed how the textbooks treated loyalty to the ruler in pre-modern times as an undesired quality, yet Mao enjoyed an extreme personality cult during his time. However, the textbook narrative on loyalty started to change between the 1987 and 1993 textbooks. In the 1987 textbook, the author still used words derived from the previous books, including "people's hatred toward the monarch" or "[people] may not necessarily be loyal [to the emperor]."⁵⁰ The criticisms of loyalty in *Water Margins* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* were present, but the authors used milder words and did not characterize loyalty as

⁴⁹ Wang Fuzhi (王夫之) is an early-Qing philosopher. He is considered one of the representative Confucian scholars during the Qing dynasty, and he challenged the previous scholars' focus on Li (理, or principles) and advocated for real learning. He was also anti-Qing, and his works widely influenced social movements in the late Qing period. For more information, see Brian Carr and Indira Mahalingam, eds., *Companion Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1997), 492; Wang, *Modern China*, 11–12.

⁵⁰ Wang and Xing, *chuji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi dierce*, 88.

“feudal dross.”⁵¹ In contrast, the 1993 high school textbook featured a qualification: people should rightly hate those rulers who exploit and oppress the people.⁵² The qualification was crucial as it hinted that people should only dislike cruel monarchs but support the rulers who are good to the people. The criticism toward feudalism focused more on the imperial institution than the monarch himself. In addition, in both textbooks, the evaluation of loyalty when analyzing *Water Margins* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* became positive.⁵³ Only in the teachers’ guidebook did the authors briefly mention that *Water Margins* featured feudal loyalty thinking, but it was unclear whether that point was conveyed to the students.⁵⁴

Following the same trend, the 2007 and 2016 textbooks all featured less and less criticism toward loyalty. The 2007 high school textbook evaluated Huang Zongxi’s thoughts similarly to the 1993 textbook, and the authors quoted Huang’s works (in classical Chinese) to imply the idea of hatred toward the monarch.⁵⁵ Since classical Chinese was more difficult to understand for students, and the quotes were written in a different font, meaning that the students did not need to master them, these discussions were further weakened. In the 2016 high school textbook, the author only used one sentence to describe Huang’s thoughts, featuring no personal criticism toward the emperors.⁵⁶ The word loyalty was nowhere to be found in the discussion of the novels in both textbooks.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Wang and Xing, 88–90.

⁵² Su et al., *gaoji zhongxue keben: zhongguo gudaishi*, 214.

⁵³ Su et al., 219–21; Wang et al., *jiunian yiwu jiaoyu sannianzhi chujing zhongxue jiaokeshu: zhongguo lishi dierce*, 195–96.

⁵⁴ Shi et al., *jiunian yiwu jiaoyu sannianzhi chujing zhongxue jiaokeshu zhongguo lishi dierce jiaoshi jiaoxue yongshu*, 278–79.

⁵⁵ Ouyang et al., *putong gaozhong kecheng biao zhun shiyan jiaokeshu: lishi bixiu san*, 17–18.

⁵⁶ Yan and Zhang, *putong gaozhong jiaokeshu lishi bixiu zhongwai lishi gangyao (shang)*, 85.

⁵⁷ Ouyang et al., *putong gaozhong kecheng biao zhun shiyan jiaokeshu: lishi bixiu san*, 44–45; Yan and Zhang, *putong gaozhong jiaokeshu lishi bixiu zhongwai lishi gangyao (shang)*, 85.

The changes were unlikely to be arbitrary, given that the textbook compilation team stayed relatively constant from 1987 to 2019. Yet, unfortunately, current evidence did not provide a concrete explanation for the change, but we can consider the change from several perspectives. One possibility is that the government adopted a more approving attitude toward Confucian ethics. Though Mao wanted to create a new culture for the socialist state and attacked Confucian ethics as one of the “Four Olds,” Confucian ethics could facilitate Deng’s agenda as it was pro-peace and could boost the students’ cultural self-confidence. Criticizing loyalty toward the monarch was also contradictory to the benevolent image of the Qing government. Another possibility concerns that the change occurred in 1989, so switching to a more qualified narrative can be conditioned perhaps by considering the text’s message to the students. When the textbook attacked loyalty toward the ruler in imperial times, the students could draw a parallel with the PRC leaders and apply “hatred toward the monarch” to them, which could undermine the CPC’s governance. A qualified, institution-based narrative would less likely result in this dangerous loophole because institution is a broader and more abstract concept, and students might not easily find an apparent equivalence to project their dissatisfaction. In fact, the CPC issued a statement in 1980 to reduce the amount of political propaganda centered on individuals, particularly commemorative buildings, books, or materials on Mao. This document was one of the Party’s measures to dismantle Mao’s personality cult and transition to Deng’s leadership. The document also indicated that political propaganda should focus more on the “superiority of socialism,” which was more institution-based.⁵⁸ It is possible that the textbook writers finally

⁵⁸ “zhonggong zhongyang guanyu jianchi ‘shao xuanchuan geren’de jige wenti de zhishi” 中共中央关于坚持“少宣传个人”的几个问题的指示 (Instructions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Adhering to “Less Propaganda of Individuals”) (1980).

identified this individual-targeted narrative and replaced it per CPC's requirements to reduce the potential national security risk.

Though exactly why the narrative on loyalty changed was hard to know without the internal correspondence during the textbook writing process, this change alludes to one crucial question: how has 1989 impacted the textbooks? Previously, scholars have researched this issue but have reached diverging conclusions. Wang Zheng argues that after 1991, the textbook narrative shifted from the previous "class struggle narrative" to the new "patriotic narrative." Topics such as Taiping Rebellion were "no longer important," and the textbook increased emphasis on foreign invasions and patriotism cultivation.⁵⁹ However, Wang's argument requires further corroboration because the omission of class struggle started with the 1978 textbook. Although it took the textbook writers many years to finish, the reason was the collapse of the Cultural Revolution.⁶⁰ For another, the 1992 high school textbook had a whole chapter on Taiping Rebellion, so it was unreasonable to deem that topic unimportant.⁶¹

In contrast, Alisa Jones argues that textbook content remained almost identical before and after the political turmoil, despite the government issuing many resolutions and circulars to reform education, suggesting the tendency toward significant textbook revision. However, Jones primarily focused on the changes in the history curriculum standards.⁶² My analysis agrees with Jones that the 1989 protest was not that transformative toward the textbooks, despite the many circulars and letters by the National Education Commission (NEC, the successor to the MOE)

⁵⁹ Zheng Wang, "National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (December 2008): 783–806, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2008.00526.x>.

⁶⁰ Wang et al., *xinzhongguo zhongxiaoxue jiaocai jiansheshi 1949-2000 yanjiu congshu*, History Volume:357–58.

⁶¹ Wang et al., *gaoji zhongxue keben: zhongguo jindai xiandai shi shangce (bixiu)*, 19–29.

⁶² Jones, "Politics and History Curriculum Reform in Post-Mao China."

and party leaders urging educational changes. From 1989 to 1991, the NEC published the key points of its annual work. In the 1989 key points, strengthening moral and political education was only in the middle of the document, but in the 1990 and 1991 key points, the point was moved to the forefront.⁶³ The 1990 document used the words “vigorously strengthen moral education,” indicating that moral education should “[adopt] anti-bourgeois liberalization as the core,” and listed specific actions to take.⁶⁴ While the internal communication between the PRC leadership and the NEC is hard to obtain, this intensification of moral education signified that the country’s leaders attempted to strengthen national unity in the wake of the Tiananmen Square Incident.

Additionally, in a letter by the PRC leader Jiang Zemin in 1991, Jiang suggested that strengthening contemporary Chinese history education for primary and secondary school students could “raise the teenager’s national pride and confidence.”⁶⁵ In response to the letter, the NEC issued a general outline for strengthening history education, indicating that history education could “prevent conspiracies of the ‘peaceful evolution’ by hostile international forces.” “Peaceful evolution (和平演变)” is a term used in China referring to the United States infiltrating China and Vietnam and using non-violent ways to undermine and overturn the

⁶³ “guojia jiaowei 1989 nian gongzuo yaodian” 国家教委 1989 年工作要点 (The Key Points of the Work by the National Education Commission in 1989), 1989, [http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/moe_164/201002/t20100220_3448.html#:~:text=1989%E5%B9%B4%E7%9A%84%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E6%96%B9%E9%92%88,%E4%B8%BA%E7%A4%BE%E4%BC%9A%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89%E5%BB%BA%E8%AE%BE%E6%9C%8D%E5%8A%A1%E3%80%82](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/moe_164/201002/t20100220_3448.html#:~:text=1989%E5%B9%B4%E7%9A%84%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E6%96%B9%E9%92%88,%E4%B8%BA%E7%A4%BE%E4%BC%9A%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89%E5%BB%BA%E8%AE%BE%E6%9C%8D%E5%8A%A1%E3%80%82;); “guojia jiaowei 1990 nian gongzuo yaodian” 国家教委 1990 年工作要点 (The Key Points of the Work by the National Education Commission in 1990), 1990, http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/moe_164/201002/t20100220_3446.html; “guojia jiaowei 1991 nian gongzuo yaodian” 国家教委 1991 年工作要点 (The Key Points of the Work by the National Education Commission in 1991), 1991, http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/moe_164/201002/t20100220_3440.html.

⁶⁴ “guojia jiaowei 1990 nian gongzuo yaodian.” Moral education (德育教育) in China aims to cultivate the students’ values, political awareness, morality, sense of law, and mental health, and patriotism education is a huge component in moral education. Moral education complements the intense academics in the Chinese schooling system to achieve a more comprehensive education.

⁶⁵ Li, *20 shiji zhongguo zhongxiaoxue kecheng biao zhun jiaoxue dagang huibian lishi juan*, 607–8.

socialist regimes subversively. The document also stressed the importance of supporting the leadership of the CPC, writing that “to improve the CPC’s leadership is to strengthen rather than weaken the party’s leadership, and no excuse is allowed to oppose and deny the party’s leadership.”⁶⁶ This sentence could be read as an allusion to the protesters. Based on the General Outline, the NEC issued the 1992 version of the history curriculum standard, on which the 1993 textbook was based.

Hence, following 1989, the PRC government consecutively issued many documents to enhance patriotism and patriotic education, supporting the expectation that the country would implement significant control and, subsequently, modify the textbooks. However, despite the loyalty discussion, both the 1987 and 1992 textbooks were very similar in discussing topics potentially relevant to the 1989 protest, such as imperial civil uprisings or the foreign invasions during the late Qing period. The reason for such continuity within the textbooks could be the government wanting to minimize the protest’s influence and signaling to the people that things would resume normalcy and stableness. We saw extensive textbook change in 1978 because it was the end of Mao’s era. As the country transitioned to new leadership and focus, it was necessary to reconstruct the historical narratives to support the transition. In 1989, however, no such paradigm shift occurred—Deng was still in charge, and the country continued to focus on economic development, so there was no imminent need for a textbook rewrite. Nevertheless, the teachers could have been told to stress certain things to the students in their teaching, but no such indication was found in the teachers’ guidebooks.

⁶⁶ Li, 609–29. The name of the general outline is “General Outline for Strengthening Modern and Contemporary Chinese History and National Conditions Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (中小学加强中国近代、现代史及国情教育的总体纲要).” In the same year, another document called “Outline of Ideological and Political Education for History Subjects in Primary and Secondary Schools (中小学历史学科思想政治教育纲要)” was also issued. The second document conveyed similar information to the first one.

Who is the Enemy Now?

One common strategy in nationalism construction is enemy identification. By distinguishing between “us” and “them,” national identity through this approach is defined by being the opposite of the enemy. No matter whether the enemy is another country, ethnic group, or even imagined, the aim is to stigmatize or vilify the opposing side in order to contrast the virtue of the national community.⁶⁷ As seen in the previous chapter, the PRC initially considered the Qing dynasty, or in general, the traditional imperial system, as its enemy to justify the righteousness of the new regime. However, in this chapter, we see that the criticism toward the Qing was significantly reduced in the post-1978 textbooks, and the textbook switched to a political lineage model of political legitimacy, so the enemy was no longer the country’s past. Thus, who was the enemy in the textbooks after Mao’s death? As the criticism toward imperial China declined, the Chinese people’s enemies became foreign countries. One example of this change is the textbooks’ discussion of Qing territory.

The 1972 textbook had a small yet intriguing addition discussing Qing territory—Tsarist Russia’s invasion of the northeastern Qing empire. Though the textbook only spent three short paragraphs on the topic, it indicated that the Qing and Tsarist Russian governments signed the Treaty of Nerchinsk, which settled the border and allowed trade between the two countries.⁶⁸ Interestingly, the 1978 textbook continued and expanded this topic into a new lesson named “Lesson Five—The Reunification of Taiwan and Anti-Tsar Russia Struggles in the Heilong River Basin during the Late Ming and Early Qing.”⁶⁹ While the lesson’s discussion of Taiwan

⁶⁷ Pilvi Torsti, “How to Deal with a Difficult Past? History Textbooks Supporting Enemy Images in Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 39, no. 1 (February 2007): 77–96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220270600765278>; John E Bodnar, ed., *Bonds of Affection: Americans Define Their Patriotism* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996), 211–30.

⁶⁸ Beijingshi jiaoyuju jiaocai bianxiezu, *beijingshi zhongxue shiyong keben: lishi diyice*, 206–7.

⁶⁹ zhongxiaoxue tongyong jiaocai lishi bianxiezu, *quanrizhi shinianzhi xuexiao chuzhong keben: zhongguo lishi dierce*, 67–73.

was similar to previous books, it discussed in detail the military interactions between Tsarist Russia and the Qing, portraying an aggressive and arrogant image for the Russians. For example, Tsarist Russia sent “invaders who sneaked into our country,” “forcefully occupied Yaksa,” and “used Yaksa as a den for further invasion.” The Chinese people heroically fought back, and the Qing government’s proposal of peacefully settling the territorial dispute was rejected. Thus, Kangxi Emperor “could not bear it anymore,” organized “self-defense counterattacks,” and “oversaw the defense works himself.” The defense and offense went back and forth a few rounds before the Russian invaders were prevented from realizing their “wild ambition” to occupy Chinese territories, so the two sides settled the issue with the treaty.⁷⁰ Even though Taiwan and anti-Tsarist Russia struggles were featured in previous textbooks, elevating and combining them into a new lesson indicated that these two areas were more critical than the other regions. So, it was no coincidence that the 1972 textbook included this discussion.

The 1978 teacher’s guidebook provided clues as to why the northeast was given increased attention. The guidebook wrote a pedagogy suggestion, “This lesson is closely related to current political developments, so the teacher should teach this lesson clearly and nicely to cultivate the students’ patriotism.”⁷¹ The “current political developments” almost undoubtedly referred to the Zhenbao Island Incident between the PRC and the USSR in 1969. The border disputes between Russia and China over the region originated in the Qing dynasty, but it was pacified initially because of the PRC’s honeymoon relationship with the USSR. However, the situation began to deteriorate after the Sino-Russia split in the 1960s. Matters considered trivial in the past, like fishing disputes, were now viewed as intrusions into foreign borders.

⁷⁰ zhongxiaoxue tongyong jiaocai lishi bianxiezu, *quanrizhi shinianzhi xuexiao chuzhong zhongguo lishi dierce jiaoxue cankaoshu*, 69–73.

⁷¹ zhongxiaoxue tongyong jiaocai lishi bianxiezu, 129–30.

Negotiations between the two sides were unfruitful, so the two countries started to lay in troops in the contested region, and it was not long before civilians were killed in 1968. In March 1969, the conflict broke out surrounding Zhenbao Island (Damansky Island) and quickly escalated to the potential involvement of nuclear strikes. Ultimately, the PRC gained victory from the conflict, and the dispute was finally settled in 2005.⁷² Zhenbao Island Incident likely influenced the 1972 textbook as well.

Understandably, Taiwan deserves special attention, given the geopolitical tensions since 1949 and the strategic significance of the island as an outlet for China accessing the Pacific Ocean, as introduced in the previous chapter. However, why was northeastern China treated comparably in this additional lesson? The reason concerned the region's importance to the PRC. Thanks to Manchuria's vast natural resources, including fertile land, minerals, coal, and oil, it has long been a hotly contested region involving major political powers like China, Russia, Korea, Japan, Mongolia, and multiple ethnicities. Japan even temporarily occupied the region in the twentieth century.⁷³ Upon the foundation of the PRC, the northeast was known as the "cradle of PRC's industry," housing a comprehensive industrial base that pioneered China's economic modernization. The base comprised numerous sectors, including coal, steel, manufacturing, automobile, timber, and electric, so it was indeed the newborn nation's economic engine.⁷⁴ The region was also a matter of national security. In the PRC's early years, the government wanted to

⁷² Neville Maxwell, "How the Sino-Russian Boundary Conflict Was Finally Settled: From Nerchinsk 1689 to Vladivostok 2005 Via Zhenbao Island 1969," *Critical Asian Studies* 39, no. 2 (June 2007): 229–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672710701340079>; Bu, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi diliujuan "zalan jiushijie": wenhuadageming de dongluan yu haojie (1966-1968)*, 6:756–58.

⁷³ Ruth Rogaski, *Knowing Manchuria: Environments, the Senses, and Natural Knowledge on an Asian Borderland* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2022).

⁷⁴ Liu Rixin 刘日新, *xinzhongguo jingji jianshe jianshi* 中国经济建设简史 (Brief History of the Economic Development in the People's Republic of China), Yanque Series (Beijing: Central Party Literature Press, 2006); Hu, *The Political and Economic History of China (1949 - 1976)*; Nicholas R. Lardy, "Economic Recovery and the 1st Five-Year Plan," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 144–83, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521243360.004>.

build strong relationships with USSR, so northeastern China was considered the liaison to the “big brother” USSR. At one point, Harbin, the northmost metropolitan in the region, was even on the roster for PRC’s capital selection. During the Korean War, the region was at the forefront of the PRC’s involvement, and it was also bombed by the United States.⁷⁵ Given how essential the northeast was to the nation, the PRC could not afford to lose stability in the region. Thus, around the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, China started to move the northeastern industrial sectors southwest in 1964 (historically known as the Third Front Construction), partly due to concerns about nuclear attacks from the north, but the region stayed crucial for China’s economic development even well into the 1970s.⁷⁶ Thus, the textbook portrayal of the northeastern region served as an essential strategy to boost the public’s sense of identity with the northeast, subsequently strengthening the PRC’s control over that region. Even though the region has been relatively at peace over the last few decades, the lesson, in a way, reflects how intense and critical the situation was for the PRC government then.

In the 1970s textbooks, foreign countries invaded and undermined the Qing empire’s unity, so the foreign invaders were the enemy. The 1978 textbook’s structure persisted through the following few textbooks, but the discussion was gradually generalized. Discussion of the military conquest by the Qing government was further reduced, and the Qing’s governing strategies were increased. The textbook gradually portrayed the Qing as a caring regime that effectively ruled its frontier regions. In contrast, the foreign countries that disturbed the peace of the frontier were the Qing’s enemies and, thus, the PRC’s. This narrative made sense in the context of the PRC’s new era because it showed that every empire in Chinese history made

⁷⁵ Liu, *xinzhongguo jingji jianshe jianshi*, 55.

⁷⁶ Covell Meyskens, “Third Front Railroads and Industrial Modernity in Late Maoist China,” *Twentieth-Century China* 40, no. 3 (October 2015): 238–60, <https://doi.org/10.1179/1521538515Z.00000000068>.

significant efforts to ensure the nation's prosperity and stability. Naturally, the PRC also had the responsibility to do the same. Even though the country was opening up to the world, it still treated foreign countries as references and tried to catch up with them. By portraying how these countries bullied China, the textbook could elicit the students' patriotism and prompt them to work harder for the country.

The hostile relationship between the PRC and the USSR in the 1970s to 80s was also documented in the textbook account of Russia's carving up of Qing territory in the post-1840 Qing empire. All the PRC textbooks discussed the post-1840 Qing history as a history of Western imperialism's invasion. However, during the Sino-Soviet Split in the 1970s and 80s, the textbooks' post-1840 Qing history was almost a history of Russia's occupation of Chinese land. For example, the 1972 textbook detailed eight unequal treaties between the Qing government and Tsarist Russia since the Second Opium War in 1854, underscoring that Tsarist Russia occupied millions of square kilometers of China's territory. In addition, the textbook also highlighted Tsarist Russia's financial war against China, dumping and other aggressive economic activities, and massacres of civilians.⁷⁷ Russia was also singled out in most of these discussions. In contrast, though Britain was the first to invade the Qing, the textbook only introduced five of Britain's unequal treaties since the First Opium War in 1840, and Britain's invasion was mostly presented along with other nations.⁷⁸ The textbook also quoted Marx, Lenin, and Engels to support its

⁷⁷ The eight unequal treaties between Tsarist Russia and the Qing included the Sino-Russia Treaty of Tientsin (中俄天津条约, 1858), Treaty of Aigun (璦琿条约, 1858), Sino-Russia Convention of Peking (中俄北京条约, 1860), Treaty of Tarbagatai (中俄勘分西北界约记, 1864), Treaty of Saint Petersburg (伊犁条约 or 中俄改定条约, 1881), Li-Lobanov Treaty (中俄密约, 1896), Convention for the Lease of the Liaotung Peninsula (旅大租地条约, or also known as the Pavlov Agreement, 1898), and the Boxer Protocol (辛丑条约, 1901).

⁷⁸ The five unequal treaties between Qing and Britain included were Treaty of Tientsin (天津条约, 1858), Convention of Peking (北京条约, 1860), Chefoo Convention (烟台条约, or the Treaty of Yantai, 1876), Convention of Calcutta (中英藏印条约, or the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890), and the Boxer Protocol (辛丑条约, 1901).

argument that Tsarist Russia committed a crime in China.⁷⁹ Moreover, when discussing the Eight-Nation Alliance's Invasion of China, the 1972 textbook put Russia as the first among the eight nations, whereas in 1953, when China had a good relationship with the USSR, the textbook placed Russia fifth after Britain, France, the United States, and Japan.⁸⁰ Thus, Russia was clearly one of the most significant targets of China in the history textbooks during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1989 amid the protest in Tiananmen, Gorbachev visited China, ending the three-decade Sino-Soviet Split. In a very timely fashion, the 1993 textbook shortened or deleted most discussions on Russia's invasion, and only four of the eight treaties were condensed into a small table, a map, and a photo. Russia was also moved behind Britain in the eight-nation roster.⁸¹

The responsiveness of textbooks to politics regarding territory can still be observed today in the PRC. For instance, the 2019 middle school textbook added a special section on the Diaoyu Island (Senkaku Islands) as part of the Chinese empire since the Ming Dynasty.⁸² The apparent reason was the territorial and political dispute between China and Japan in 2013. Because of Japan's multiple invasions of China, this dispute was highly associated with nationalism. Thus, the textbook has been dynamic and responsive to these incidents that could cultivate patriotism.

As seen in this chapter, the post-Cultural Revolution textbooks underwent significant rewriting to support the country's transition to a new era focused on economic development. The signature class struggle-based narratives were deleted, the political legitimacy of the PRC

⁷⁹ Beijingshi jiaoyuju jiaocai bianxiezu 北京市教育局教材编写组 (Textbook Compilation Group of the Beijing Municipal Education Commission), ed., *beijingshi zhongxue shiyong keben: zhongguo lishi dierce* 北京市中学试用课本: 中国历史 第二册 (Beijing Middle School Trial Textbook: Chinese History Book Two) (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1973.6), 10–72.

⁸⁰ Beijingshi jiaoyuju jiaocai bianxiezu, 67, 70; Song and Li, *gaoji zhongxue keben: zhongguo lishi dierce*, 98, 103.

⁸¹ Wang et al., *gaoji zhongxue keben: zhongguo jindai xiandai shi shangce (bixiu)*, 15–17.

⁸² Qu et al., *yiwu jiaoyu jiaokeshu zhongguo lishi qinianji xiace*, 94.

government switched to the political lineage model, and the textbook increased its emphasis on economic policies. Of course, these changes did not happen overnight; the 1978 textbook captured the transition period during which the country's path forward was still unclear. In addition, the textbook's narratives were relatively stable across the 1980s, even with significant political instability, which signaled the country's dedication to economic reform and loosened political control. With the textbook employing a "great China" narrative and celebrating the Chinese imperial dynasties, the "enemies" of the Chinese people in the textbooks became foreign countries, which helped to unite the country for modernization. Many things have documented China's rise and development in the past 45 years, and the history textbooks are one of the small things that witnessed, experienced, and perhaps even helped to promote China's growth.

Epilogue—History is a Little Girl Whom Anyone Can Dress

In middle school, my mother used to help me memorize the knowledge from history books for exams. Once, she said, “Your history textbook content reads so differently from mine back then.” I thought to myself, “How can history be different since it is about the things that happened in the past, which we could not change retrospectively?” I was proven to be very naïve. Nevertheless, my mother’s inadvertently observation stuck with me over the years and became the motivation for this thesis. I did not realize that the textbooks were documentation of PRC history, part of which I was able to witness myself.

In the most general sense, this thesis argues that history and education have contributed significantly to China’s nation-building efforts. Since pre-modern times, Confucian ethics and the Civil Service Examination have cultivated a culture of valuing education, and history was used as an expression for Confucianism. In the ROC period, history textbooks, for the first time, cultivated a new China out of the old, imperial state. In Mao’s era of the PRC, textbooks and education became more accessible thanks to the simplification of Chinese characters and a new, socialist schooling system. After the collapse of the Cultural Revolution, the implementation of the nine-year compulsory education and rejuvenation of the National College Entrance Exam allowed the textbooks to reach a much broader audience while also ensuring the textbooks were studied carefully by the students. These critical changes rendered more and more significance in textbooks for understanding the national myth of the PRC.

While I was researching for this thesis, one question stood out to me—what does it mean to be a Chinese? While the answer to this question differs person by person, the textbooks’ response, or the national identity fostered by the government, varied with time. In Mao’s China, the person had to love the country, the Party, and Mao himself by being revolutionary; people

were encouraged to devote themselves to building a free (in the Chinese sense) and more equal country in contrast with the oppressive imperial China. Thus, the textbook adopted a regime-contrast model of political legitimacy, introduced class struggle as the primary historical analysis framework, reconsidered Confucian ethics, and used every measure to distinguish the PRC from the Qing. However, most of these narratives were abolished after the Cultural Revolution, as Deng sought to promote peace, stability, and the concept of the grand Chinese civilization to boost economic development. As a result, the textbook adopted a political lineage model of political legitimacy, aligned the PRC with the Qing empire in promoting economic growth, and supported Confucian ethics more. The enemy of the Chinese people during Mao's period was the country's own imperial past, but in Deng's period, it became foreign invaders such as Russia. Though many historical narratives from the two periods were contradictory, they both served the country's political agenda and primary goal at the time.

Therefore, one of the most essential conclusions of this thesis is that patriotism in China is not static; it is dynamic and responsive to the political context. Although many practices of patriotism seem irrational today, such as the loyalty dance during the Cultural Revolution, they made sense in the unique context of their times; textbooks, thus, provide a great lens through which historians can make sense of the country's social context. In addition, we should not overlook the fact that, even though this thesis primarily engages history textbooks, it is the people who consume and practice nationalism. Thus, in a way, we are also studying the people in the PRC, because the textbooks contributed to their identity and reminded us of their experiences in the past.

This study can also help us understand present-day issues. Many people I talked to while writing this thesis indicated that they sensed a more conservative and stricter political

environment since 2018, particularly after the Trump-initiated trade war between China and the United States. This conservative shift, along with the conflict between the US and China, continued, and was even exacerbated, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Textbooks have, once again, been the sensor of the international situation. During the summer of 2022, the Chinese Internet was outraged by some disturbing illustrations in the national primary school math textbooks.¹ Netizens were particularly furious at a few illustrations in which the figures were wearing patterns similar to the Star-Spangled Banner. They regarded them as “poisonous,” fearing that the US could be culturally infiltrating China and cultivating wrong values in the nation’s young generation.² Perhaps in thirty to fifty years, historians can reconstruct China’s late 2010s and early 2020s under Xi’s leadership and evaluate, hopefully through textbooks, whether the conflict with the US influenced Chinese patriotism or the national story.

Additionally, there are many other directions to expand this study further. This thesis only engaged the Qing history in the textbooks, whereas the history textbooks contain much more materials to explore, such as using the world history portion to understand China’s diplomatic history. Additionally, we can also expand to other textbooks, like analyzing the Chinese textbooks to understand how the PRC valued its traditional culture in different periods. Even the math and science textbooks are also involved in cultivating patriotism, as they would highlight the contributions of Chinese mathematicians and scientists. Methodology-wise, this thesis analyzed eight sets of textbooks across PRC history to show the impact of major political

¹ Specifically, some images featured sexual harassment, such as a boy touching a girl’s breast from behind or lifting a girl’s skirt. Some pictures drew the Chinese national flag upside-down.

² Austin Ramzy, “Crude, Ugly and Pro-American? China Investigates Images in Math Textbooks.,” *The New York Times*, May 31, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/world/asia/china-children-textbooks.html?_ga=2.35048677.596887270.1670229001-163651950.1666425170; Cheng Lan 成岚, “renjiaoban xiaoxue shuxue jiaocai chatu wenti diaocha jieguo gongbu” 人教版小学数学教材插图问题调查处理结果公布 (The Results of the Investigation and Handling of the Illustrations of Primary School Mathematics Textbooks Published by PEP), *xinhuashe* 新华社, August 22, 2022, http://www.news.cn/politics/2022-08/22/c_1128935056.htm.

events. However, it was difficult to pinpoint and draw a direct causal connection between specific political developments to textbook changes. One solution to this problem is to trace the multiple updates of one particular set of textbooks. After compiling a textbook set (for example, the 2016 textbooks), the publisher annually modifies the textbooks slightly to catch small errors or ensure the textbook is updated per CPC's latest narrative. By tracking the changes within one set of textbooks and contextualizing them in political events, we can more clearly elucidate how textbook writing interacts with politics. Finally, the unique properties of textbooks in China—the entire country consumes them, they are political but seem not to be, and they are heavily influenced by the government—are shared in many other things, such as the annual Spring Festival Gala organized by China Central Television, a state-owned broadcasting company in China. By comparing and contrasting textbooks with these things, we can further understand the CPC's nation-building strategies.

One analogy I remember from my childhood is that history is like a little girl whom anyone can dress. The equivalent saying in English is Winston Churchill's "history is written by victors." Even though many people disagree with these sayings, unfortunately, much of this thesis is devoted to showing that they are often correct. Not only China but almost every country or political party politicize history. Ironically, they accuse each other of doing it while not acknowledging their own behavior. Professional historians guard against such politicization, but their efforts are often futile because academic history differs from national mythmaking in their objectives: academic history aims to accurately reconstruct the past, while national stories aim to cultivate a shared sense of community. Thus, as consumers of history, we should be more critical and cognizant of the information presented to us, because, at the end of the day, history matters are usually political matters.

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- 今 94.2%的九年义务教育巩固率 教育优先 筑基发展 (大数据观察·辉煌 70 年)
(From the 80% Illiteracy Rate at the Beginning of the New China to the 94.2% Consolidation Rate of the Nine-Year Compulsory Education Today--Prioritizing Education and Solidifying Development (Big Data Perspective · 70 Years of Glory)).
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