

2 Contextualising materiality: patriotic education between the national, the regional, and the local

Abstract This chapter introduces three types of contextualised materiality as used in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system: 1. *in situ* excavation sites of national significance and their potential for local readings (with case studies on Neolithic Hemudu in Zhejiang Province, and Shang dynasty Yinxu in Henan Province); 2. the role of museums displaying objects from different local origins in a given area to forge a regional-provincial identity (with case studies on the Ningxia Museum, the Inner Mongolia Museum, and the Anhui Museum); 3. iconic constructions and landscape transformations in the sense of a ‘cultural landscape’ which were created or later endowed with a supra-local meaning (with case studies on the Great Wall at Shanhaiguan in Hebei Province, the Dunhuang Mogao Caves in Gansu Province, the ancient Dujiangyan irrigation system in Sichuan Province, and the ‘revolutionary’ Red Flag Canal in Henan Province).

The role of material culture in identity construction is less straightforward than it might seem at first glance:¹ material objects do not simply ‘speak for themselves’ but can be read in a variety of ways, either as being connected to the place they are located (e.g., excavated or otherwise placed), or as standing for something beyond the local. In the context of ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ in China, the state obviously tries to convey a ‘national’ reading, appropriating them for national ‘heritage’.² However, local actors might use them to construct a local identity, or mid-level brokers for a regional one.

This chapter will look into three types of contextualised materiality: first we will focus on *in situ* excavation sites of national significance and their potential for local readings. These sites are not very numerous in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system, but we will look more closely into the cases of Neolithic Hemudu in Zhejiang Province, and Shang dynasty Yinxu in Henan Province to observe, how these excavation sites are applied for ‘patriotic’ uses and what kind of readings emerge. Secondly, the role of museums displaying objects from different local origins in a given area to forge a regional-provincial identity will be considered, looking into the cases of the Ningxia Museum and the Inner Mongolia Museum to

1 On material culture and identity, see, e.g., Fowler (2009).

2 For a critical view on conventional ‘authorised heritage discourse’ see Smith (2006).

consider the specific challenges in ‘minority areas’, contrasting this with the case of the Anhui Museum, where possible localised readings are no less relevant, but played out in their own ways. Thirdly, iconic constructions and landscape transformations in the sense of a ‘cultural landscape’,³ which were created or later endowed with a supra-local meaning, will be dealt with, paying particular attention to the cases of the Great Wall at Shanhaiguan in Hebei Province serving as a site associated with ‘military’ aspects, the Dunhuang Mogao Caves in Gansu Province associated with ‘artistic’ genius, and the ancient Dujiangyan irrigation system in Sichuan Province, and the ‘revolutionary’ Red Flag Canal in Henan Province, both associated with Chinese ‘engineering’ capacities. These sites, which we will analyse more systematically in case studies on the basis of the types of materials as described in chapter 1 of the present book to consider their evolution in the whole ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system over time, show in their breadth the possible range of contextualisations such sites are situated in, how this is related on-site to ‘patriotic education’ agendas, and in which sense different readings between the national, regional, and local emerge.

2.1 Excavation sites

The specific nature of an excavation site it capitalises upon is its being tied to the very place it is located: it derives its ‘authenticity’ from its not being ‘touched’, moved etc., but simply being ‘discovered’ there *in situ*. Of course, technically speaking, an excavation *is* a touching of the site and might, e.g., show (or privilege) one layer, and cover (or underprivilege) others, but for our purposes the important aspect for its role in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system is this specific ‘selling point’.

When browsing the list of the first ‘100’ ‘national-level patriotic education showcase bases’, which set the tone for the whole endeavour, one notes very few such sites: Zhoukoudian 周口店 near Beijing, i.e., the *homo erectus* ‘Peking Man’ site; Hemudu 河姆渡 in Zhejiang and Banpo 半坡 in Shaanxi as Neolithic sites; Yinxu 殷墟 in Henan as a Shang dynasty (16th–11th century BC) site; and the terracotta army of the First Emperor (3rd century BC) in Shaanxi. Of course, some more recent historical sites needed some ‘excavation’, too, but are rather ‘(war)

3 Cultural landscape theory goes back to Carl Sauer who defined a cultural landscape in 1925 as a natural landscape which had been modified by a cultural group. Cultural landscape theory is applied today by the UNESCO, but also greatly in favour in China’s heritage conservation system, e.g., with the so-called ‘historically and culturally famous cities’. Cf. Wallenwein (2020).

ruins' or '(mass) graves', whereas these above-named sites were 'archaeological discoveries', and they are connected to the issues of where 'the Chinese' come from and how their early civilisation emerged.⁴

The discovery and use of the 'Peking Man' site at **Zhoukoudian** in 20th century China has been covered in existing literature quite extensively,⁵ so we can limit ourselves here in the context of 'patriotic education' to the observation connected to history education in China: in present-day history textbooks used in school (*Zhongguo lishi* 2016), Chinese children learn that the designation 'Peking Man' (*homo erectus pekinensis*) is not simply referring to the place where the hominin remains were found (the first discovered 'Peking Man' actually being not male but female,⁶ though this is no point in the narrative and presentation),⁷ but that this hominin was the 'representative of Chinese early humanity' since s/he lived on the territory that now is China.⁸

Although the introduction in the present-day textbook vaguely asserts that 'there are different explanations of human origin' (without mentioning anything specific, namely the Out of Africa thesis), the textbook is only concerned with the origin 'on Chinese territory' which suggests to the pupils that there is an indigenous origin without need of any larger 'trans-border' picture, and a straight line to the modern Chinese. Present-day PRC (People's Republic of China) borders are thus implicitly naturalised as an ahistorical given that was somehow relevant all the way through

4 The issue of 'origin' is always connected to excavations in a 'nationalist' paradigm of archaeology as is the case in China. See Liu / Chen (2012: 1, 8, 17–18).

5 For a view to the site's significance for China's modern history, cf. Sautman (2001), Leibold (2006), Schmalzer (2008), beyond the purely scientific literature not concerning us here.

6 Among the excavators, she was dubbed 'Nellie'. An American sculptor, Lucile Swan, made a first reconstruction of her head according to the instructions of anatomist Franz Weidenreich. For a photo of her and the reconstructed head of 'Nellie', see Boaz and Ciochon (2004), p. 140.

7 Schmalzer (2008: 11) emphasises that representations in PRC times are often suggesting a female. However, present-day textbooks do not make this very explicit: although the ever same reproduced bust has breasts hinted at, the angle of the presentation makes the bust's face look less feminine, thus providing a generic hominin representation. See the newly standardised junior secondary textbook version used since the scholastic year 2016/2017, *Zhongguo lishi* (2016: 3). (Compare to Schmalzer 2008: 12 with a front view.) Textbook descriptions also do not use the female pronoun but usually the (male) plural. Here, the main focus is on the current junior secondary textbook, though earlier PRC textbooks have been consulted as well, namely those concurrent with the launch of the patriotic education campaign.

8 For the use of the word 'hominin', see paleolithic archaeologist Dennell (2009: 10).

history.⁹ And people who happened to live there presumably also stayed there to ‘evolve’ through time into the present-day Chinese.

This presentation de facto conforms to the theory of multi-regional human origin prevalent in Chinese scholarship, though this has not gone unchallenged even among Chinese scientists.¹⁰ In spite of excavations in other parts of present-day China in the meantime that go even further back in time than ‘Peking Man’ like ‘Yuanmou 元谋 Man’ (*homo erectus yuanmouensis*) in southwestern Yunnan province, mentioned in textbooks as the earliest site found in China,¹¹ the latter excavation site did, however, not make it into the first national ‘100’ patriotic education showcase bases list (neither does ‘Lantian 蓝田 Man’, likely ‘older’ than ‘Peking Man’ as well,¹² located in Shaanxi Province, nor any other).¹³ So why ‘Peking Man’?

Officially, there are no reasons given for this choice. Judging from the genre of history textbooks used in school where ‘Peking Man’ is addressed since late Republican times,¹⁴ even providing a hypothetical reconstruction of his/her looks,¹⁵ one

9 Needless to say, this view is unscholarly at best. See the pointed remarks by, e.g., Goldin (2018: 2), a scholar focused on ancient China. For a more general take on the ‘spatial trajectory’ of modern Chinese prehistoric archaeology, cf. Leibold (2011).

10 De facto, it had been German anatomist Franz Weidenreich who suggested a straight line from Peking Man to modern-day Chinese. In general, Chinese scholarship favours the multi-regional model. Besides the Out of Africa model, a modified version of the latter with local admixture is also discussed in international scholarship. Cf. the brief summary in Shelach-Lavi (2015), especially pp. 39–43. See also Cheng (2019), chapter 3, about the sociopolitical dimension of recent discussions about the topic.

11 The Chongqing Longgupo 龙骨坡 site which might be even older, though this is still debated, is not mentioned.

12 As Schmalzer (2008: 185) notes, locally in Shaanxi, there is some resentment that ‘Lantian Man’ is not treated prominently like ‘Peking Man’ – and that the original fossils were moved away to Beijing.

13 One may note that further not named but graphically shown sites of Paleolithic hominin discoveries include one in Taiwan as ‘sites on Chinese territory’, with the ‘national border of China’ also explicitly pointed out in the map to drive home the point (*Zhongguo lishi* 2016: 3). (The Taiwan ‘site’ likely intends the ‘Penghu mandible’ fragment, i.e., a very recent casual off-shore discovery first scientifically published in 2015, though still debated as to its affiliation, which means it came to attention only at the very time the new Xi Jinping-era mainland Chinese textbooks were produced. While usually new discoveries are slow to get into textbooks – e.g., the Longgupo site discovered in the earlier is not yet on this map, the ‘Taiwan site’ was apparently too tempting, and thus was included immediately.)

14 Notably, only some of the Republican-era textbooks of the 1930s and 1940s addressed Peking Man. (Cf. also Schmalzer 2008: 48–51). PRC textbooks, though, picked up Peking Man as a subject in history from the start. See, e.g., *Gaoji xiaoxue lishi keben, wunianji yong* (1952), p. 1. For a more recent textbook, see the most wide-spread junior secondary textbook of People’s Education Press in the 2000s: *Zhongguo lishi* (2008). For the Xi Jinping era, see the standardised edition of 2016 (*Zhongguo lishi* 2016).

might consider several factors: ‘Yuanmou Man’, discovered only in the 1960s (like ‘Lantian Man’), i.e., much later than the ‘Peking Man’ discovery, is more difficult to visualise as the excavations only rendered two teeth. In the case of ‘Peking Man’, whole skulls provided a much more detailed picture, making hypothetical reconstructions of head and face possible. In the meantime, bones of around 40 individuals could be found at the Zhoukoudian site (Shelach-Lavi 2015: 37). A bust made in the 1950s by a technician who had been present at the early phase of excavations in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and remakes of that bust have been a staple in PRC textbooks ever since. And ‘Peking Man’ was used in the early PRC as a way to introduce the ‘masses’ to a Marxist materialist-scientist world view of human origin (Schmalzer 2008: 55–56). In contrast, in the preceding Republican times, culturally conservative tendencies worked against too much deviation in the education of Chinese youth from traditional historiography and the legends about the origins of China and Chinese civilisation recorded there (cf. also chapter 3.1 of the present book on the mythical founders’ ‘mausolea’). Republican-era proponents of ‘scientism’ therefore ran up against these ‘cultural’ preferences. Part of the problem was whether ‘primitive’ ‘Peking Man’ should be considered a Chinese ‘ancestor’ which was not to everybody’s liking (Schmalzer 2008: 49–52). Only since the 1950s things changed towards the affirmative in this regard in the PRC era, subscribing to a Marxist materialist worldview.

Another factor is archaeology and its history in China: the discovery of ‘Peking Man’ was a great sensation in the early 20th century. Although Western scholars were at first leading the excavations – a fact notably skipped in present-day Chinese textbooks (*Zhongguo lishi* 2016: 2–5), in the late 1920s Chinese archaeologists partly took over and made the most spectacular discoveries, namely Pei Wenzhong 裴文中 who would also be the key person to discover the near-by Upper Cave with its more recent *homo sapiens* remains. Pei Wenzhong would stay on the mainland after 1949 and would be acclaimed there as a founding figure of Chinese anthropology. In any case, the discovery of ‘Peking Man’ was perceived as a ‘glorious page’ in modern *Chinese* archaeology (and not only of archaeology ‘in China’), and this in itself is a reason for national pride. Furthermore, present-day textbooks assert to Chinese pupils that the ‘Peking Man’ site is the ‘richest and materially best documented *homo erectus*-site known up to now in the world’ and thus contributes also to worldwide understanding of mankind’s origins (*Zhongguo lishi* 2016: 5). While the site has been unquestionably very productive in the many decades of excavations and is internationally acknowledged as a key *homo erectus*

15 This was based on the works of Canadian anatomist Davidson Black, who worked at the site in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and above all his successor, German anatomist Franz Weidenreich.

site worldwide, the present-day textbook's chosen wording strongly recalls the familiar 'Party speak' phrasing of Chinese outstanding and indigenous development and its generous contribution to the world which is repeated once and again, projected here unto pre-history.¹⁶

Although most of the key findings of the original excavation have gone lost during the Sino–Japanese war (above all, none of the originally 5 complete skullcaps has been recovered),¹⁷ this particular history also renders the 'Peking Man' site 'national' in another sense: it becomes part of anti-Japanese 'resistance' – and implicitly accuses the Japanese of even destroying 'China's' pre-history.¹⁸ The fact that the presently displayed skullcaps in the Zhoukoudian site museum are only imitations (based on careful sketches drawn in the early 1930s, photos and replicas) does not in itself seem to pose much of an 'authenticity' problem in perception,¹⁹ and can be used in the above sense of Chinese victimisation by foreigners even as an asset. Furthermore, the Upper Cave excavations near-by of much more recent remains of hominins (Shandong ren 山顶洞人) were used for sustaining the view that there should be somehow a continuity between 'Peking Man' (*homo erectus*) and the more recent Shandong ren (*homo sapiens*) because they lived in the same area, regardless of the large time gap between the two.²⁰

The designation 'Peking Man', in fact coined by Western scholars,²¹ very obviously plays into a 'national' agenda for today's patriotic education, an evocation none of the other Palaeolithic sites on present-day Chinese territory provides. Thus, it seems plausible to choose this site which was also promoted in the Mao years to

16 While this statement may not seem spectacular in itself, pupils who are confronted with certain fixed wordings in various contexts will link this with such other contexts. There is, in other words, a point of mutual reinforcement by this standardising way of handling language. Cf. the work of Michael Schoenhals (1992) on 'doing things with words in Chinese politics'. See also the perceptive comments on language use in Fitzgerald (2022), chapter 2.

17 For the drama of getting lost, see Boaz/Ciochon (2004), chapter 2.

18 Since of all original remains the traces end with an American transport, during the early PRC and its anti-American thrust, namely during the Korean War, the US were the second 'culprits'. For the later shift in argumentation in the 1980s with again more criticism of the Japanese and less the Americans, see Schmalzer (2008: 183). The Japanese, incidentally, restituted objects they had collected during their occupation time, but none of the skulls were found (Xie 2019: 96–97).

19 Schmalzer (2008: 102), however, notes that during the 1950s, entries in (published!) visitor guestbooks addressed the issue of perceived loss of originals (if in the sense of criticism vs the Americans).

20 Though dating is very much debated, 'Peking Man' is given around 500.000 years ago, while Upper Cave humans are dated around 30.000 years ago. (For a tentative dating table of discovered hominins in China, see Shelach-Lavi 2015, p. 37.) In any case, the time gap is very large.

21 'Peking Man' was the popular version for *Sinanthropus pekinensis*, the name given by Canadian anatomist Davidson Black in 1927 which was later changed to *homo erectus pekinensis*.

the Chinese populace very pronouncedly, thus sustaining a further continuity in use, for a national list of patriotic education bases. It is already familiar to generations of Chinese by now, a textbook staple, and due to its Republican-era excavation also a potential bridge to Chinese living beyond the present-day PRC, namely in Taiwan.²² It is also one of the earliest sites the Chinese government had suggested to the UNESCO to be taken up as a world heritage site since it yielded much material and was already well-known, not the least due to the foreign involvement in its discovery and excavations in the 1920s and 1930s (which in this context proved an asset). Thus, the site belonged to the very first batch of such world heritage sites in China, inscribed by the UNESCO in 1987 on the PRC's application (UNESCO [1987a]), and thus marks the 'national' for China also on a global scale. For the national context, Zhoukoudian was also designated, i.a., as a 'first-class museum' (cf. the sample of labels in appendix 3 of chapter 1 of the present book), and efforts were made to turn it into a more attractive science education site for youth, using advanced multimedia exhibition technologies. Given the 'Japanese' background story of the 'lost' skulls, one may also note the curatorial choice to add Japanese as a third language beyond Chinese and English at this site.²³

While Zhoukoudian is a Palaeolithic-cum-Neolithic site ('Peking Man' and 'Shandong Man'), Banpo and Hemudu, in turn, are both purely Neolithic sites in this first list of 'patriotic education bases'. Banpo, excavated in the 1950s, started to appear in the early 1960s in PRC history textbooks, while Hemudu was excavated only in the 1970s. Both are treated in tandem in PRC school history textbooks since the 1980s for the Neolithic times: whereas Banpo in Xi'an in the north-western province of Shaanxi is to show early (primitive) societies' community living,²⁴ Hemudu, located south of Hangzhou Bay in eastern Zhejiang province, is important for pointing out the early cultivation of rice (challenging the older notion held internationally that rice was first cultivated in the Indus valley). Obviously, whereas Banpo in the north and at the very place of later centres of Chinese civilisation again may be used in the sense of suggesting 'continuity', Hemudu is to show that even China's south, traditionally considered as for a long

22 'Peking Man' is also regularly addressed in history textbooks in Taiwan.

23 Cf. Xie (2019: 85). In fact, the language variety choices at single 'patriotic education' sites are sometimes quite telling in terms of agendas (and only on a second line of expected visitors). It does not necessarily mean either that all Chinese texts will be translated in an exhibition, even though those sites being UNESCO nominated 'world heritage' need to consider their accessibility for foreigners.

24 One may note that Banpo in present-day Xi'an, a site identified as of the Yangshao Neolithic culture, is still very much thrust into the received Marxist framework of a promiscuous matrilineal primitive society for which it is made to stand. Cf. Wan / Xue (2019: 82, 87).

time ‘alien’ to ‘Chinese’ culture, was part of ‘China’ early on. Especially here, a local reading of the site is easily possible, as rice cultivation distinguishes Hemudu from millet-based northern China, but also the living in pole houses clearly differs and might precisely be used to show how different the south was, or even connect it to Southeast Asia rather than to northern China as is found in non-Chinese scholarship. That division argument is fundamentally based on climate difference and harks back to the Pleistocene (cf. the recent summary of a key figure in the field of palaeoanthropology, Robin Dennell (2020, chapter 10), who argues that immigration of the human species to Northern China went over Central Asia or Siberia, but to Southern China instead from Southeast Asia, with the Qinling 秦岭 Mountain range being more or less the division line).²⁵ Still, the ‘patriotic’ reading argues with Hemudu for an inclusive concept of ‘China’ which can now lay also claims to the oldest rice cultivation, arguing that the bone plows found suggest that the technique of rice cultivation was not even new at that time but must predate Hemudu. Recent ‘patriotic’ treatments of the site furthermore belabour the point of traces of interaction with Northern China to outbalance the impression of difference. In sum, to prevent the conclusion of a fundamental North–South difference, official Chinese publications go at length to stress that one should rather conclude that it was the conventional notion of ‘China’ that was too narrowly focused on the north and mainly the Central Plain – incidentally a shift in conformity with scholarship,²⁶ and that traces of Hemudu influence can be found also elsewhere (mainly citing pottery as evidence), extending not only to the south but also to the west and even the north.²⁷ Furthermore, parallel later excavations in other parts of southern China, though not connected to Hemudu visibly, are to strengthen the point that at least the Yangzi valley and rice cultivation (including both varieties of short- and long-grained, i.e. the subspecies ‘japonica’ and ‘indica’) were equally ingredients of Neolithic ‘China’ alongside the millet-based North.²⁸ In short, not only the Yellow River (Huanghe) is the ‘mother river’ of ‘China’, but the Yangzi, too. And not India ‘invented’ rice cultivation in Asia, as ‘international discourse’ had it, but China,

25 In fact, the issue of North–South difference is even acknowledged by some treatments of the Hemudu site in the context of ‘patriotic education’, e.g., Wang / Zhou / Xing (1998: 241).

26 In fact, the traditional notion of the Central Plain as the ‘cradle’ of China has been challenged by the many new archaeological findings since the 1970s.

27 See, e.g., Sun (2008), or Zhou (2002). Sun, a noted expert on the site, lends a whole chapter to the issue of connections between Hemudu and other archaeological excavations in a larger area. Both publications are explicitly situated by the respective prefaces in the context of ‘patriotism’.

28 Interestingly, even though some later excavated sites seem to be even older than Hemudu, the latter remained the symbol of ‘Chinese’ ancient rice cultivation which suggests that its symbolic standing is paramount and will not be overthrown easily by a new finding.

even covering different sorts of it. Furthermore, the pole houses so different from the northern housing are framed over their construction technique as nonetheless a link to later Chinese wood constructions since they already use mortise and tenon joints, thus counterbalancing the impression provided by the different housing pattern with a focus on this technique to argue for their unquestionably belonging to the Chinese ‘national’ heritage.²⁹ This, in a way, corroborates the statement of archaeologist Lothar von Falkenhausen (1995) that the ‘regionalist paradigm’ in Chinese archaeology of the post-Mao years is not antagonistic to nationalism but rather a small-scale variant of it, given the ideological and administrative context in which it is played out. At best, it challenges other region’s claims horizontally,³⁰ but not the national ones vertically.

Case study: the Hemudu site

Looking more closely into the **Hemudu yizhi bowuguan** 河姆渡遗址博物馆 (Hemudu site museum) (Zhejiang Province) case, which was listed in the ‘patriotic education showcase base’ system on list 1 (1997), we may base ourselves on various materials (cf. also chapter 1 of the present book) for its ‘patriotic’ framing: the textbook descriptions for pupils they encounter in school and bring with them to the sites; the site’s respective booklet in the benchmark series on the (list 1) ‘100’ ‘patriotic education showcase bases’; the TV film clip in the nationally broadcasted *Ai wo Zhonghua* (love our China) series; the educational video of 1999 in the collection *Zhonghua hun* (soul of China) on (some of) the ‘100 sites’ by the ‘National Centre for Educational Technology’ (NCET), the above all reflecting the state of the late 1990s when the site was nominated; and the updated Xi Jinping-era narrative in the multivolume *Fengbei* series of 2019 on the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’. This can be contrasted with local materials collected on-site, and personal observation in 2016, reflecting the time after the exhibition’s major overhaul of 2009.

Textbook descriptions are by necessity and genre predictably short but present Hemudu today as a counter-balance to Banpo in Shaanxi which was, as mentioned,

29 Pole houses were, however, not used all over southern China, but mainly in swampy areas. (Cf. Shelach-Lavi 2018: 24).

30 The most well-known case is the naming of the neolithic Dawenkou-culture (named after the Shandong site, while in Jiangsu a similar site has been excavated, leading to an alternative naming proposed by Jiangsu archaeologists, though intending the same archaeological culture: Dawenkou won out.)

known earlier (being discovered in 1953).³¹ Hemudu, only discovered in 1973, however was the site that triggered the mentioned shift in understanding of Neolithic China to move away from the exclusive focus on the larger Huanghe (Yellow River) area as China's 'cradle'. Both sites appear together since the 1980s in Chinese history textbooks to form a new narrative of plurality of 'China's' origins. The general societal and in consequence educational climate of the 1980s was more 'antiquity-friendly' than the times before, and – one may add – the textbooks of the 1980s (and ever since) are more detailed in general and have grown in overall length. Thus, there was also more space to deal with 'pre-history'.³² This has to be seen also in the context of shifting educational goals from the 'revolutionary' to a more 'knowledge'-oriented outlook.³³ The stress is put on Hemudu being a proof that the South was 'Chinese' as well and not 'barbarian', that rice cultivation in China was older than assumed before, and that architecture and pottery can prove continuity with times thereafter. Since the presentation of pre-history is focused on excavations, it is in a sense seen as ideal for training pupils in (classical Marxist) 'historical materialism', while the narrative constructs images of living in Neolithic times in accordance to the Marxist vision of evolution of society ('matriarchy' etc., along the lines of Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*,³⁴ basing himself on the theories of Lewis Henry Morgan and Johann Jakob Bachofen popular in the 19th century).³⁵

With this standard textbook narrative in mind, the national TV audience encountered the broadcasted *Ai wo Zhonghua* TV film clip (disc 4) on the Hemudu 'patriotic' site, produced in 1998 by Zhejiang TV with the support of Shanghai TV, the

31 Banpo was treated in textbooks of the early 1960s at the latest. Understandably, an evaluation of findings needs time to 'stabilise' readings before going into a highly authoritative genre like textbooks.

32 In the Chinese context, the conventional delineation of 'pre-historical' and 'historical' along the line of invention and use of writing is maintained.

33 This can be gleaned from the curricula over time. Cf. the collection by Kecheng jiaocai yanjiusuo (2001). For a general overview on post-Mao education in China, see Vickers / Zeng (2017).

34 German original: *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats* 1884.

35 One may note that when translations of Chinese archaeological work, bound to deal with this ideological straightjacket even in scholarship, were published in the West, irritations arose. See the remarkably outspoken critical foreword by British archaeologist Peter J. Ucko in the widely disseminated work of Chang / Xu: *The Formation of Chinese Civilization* (2005). For a more accommodating view, see Shelach (2004). The use of the Chinese translation term for 'matriarchy' (usually *muquan* 母權, lit.: mothers' power / right) is rather avoided in Chinese publications to use the term *muxi* 母系 (which is rather 'matrilineality') instead, already suggesting some uneasiness with the 19th century model. Engels, in fact, had taken some distance from Bachofen's term 'mother's right' (Mutterrecht) himself, though with the argument that there were no *legal* rights, and stated he used it only as a short-hand term. See Engels (1884: 48).

education bureau of the Central Propaganda Department, the societal education centre of CCTV, the academic association of broadcasting, and the study society on audio-visual education programmes. The film clip visually tours the museum with its interpretations of the findings, interspersing some views of the outside real excavation, and adds some imagination on the lives the Hemudu people might have led. A short didactic explanation by the director of the museum points out the ‘contributions’ Hemudu provided for ‘China’ and its archaeology, while a localist reading is strictly avoided (as is a link to Southeast Asia which has been proposed, as mentioned, by some archaeologists outside of China).³⁶ This film clip is addressing the Chinese citizens as a national TV public and has a decidedly nationalist ring, and it is to solicit viewers to consider visiting the site as a tourist in the future.

Compared to this 10 minutes TV film clip, the slightly longer *Zhonghua hun* educational video (disc 7) (14 minutes), designed for classroom use, introduces the intended watching pupils also to the history of the excavation in the 1970s, providing some historical footage (which stresses not only expertise but also the ‘labour’ that went into the excavation),³⁷ using material of Zhejiang TV, too. This educational video, produced on initiative of the Ministry of Education, dwells more soberly on didactic explanation. It highlights Hemudu as ‘home’ to rice production, focuses on pottery, and explains to the intended watching pupils in more detail how ancient tools were used. It also addresses the site as of importance in all sorts of disciplinary histories, from agriculture to architecture to art, to finally end up with politics by pointing out that CCP (Chinese Communist Party) general secretary Jiang Zemin (in office at the time of the late 1990s) had written the museum’s name in his calligraphy, thus endorsing it also from the political side.³⁸

The ‘patriotic’ booklet of 1998 (Shao 1998), which is explicitly addressing youth (like the textbooks and the *Zhonghua hun*-video, while the TV clip had the Chinese citizens at large in mind), spelt out the official reading of the Hemudu site of the Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao eras.³⁹ Like the educational video, it focuses on the

36 E.g., Australian archaeologist Peter Bellwood includes Southern China, i.e., the regions south of the Yangzi, into Southeast Asia (Bellwood 1992: 56) and addresses Hemudu in this regard (92, 96, and 102).

37 As Schmalzer (2008: 125, 140) remarked for the case of Palaeontology, this was also to show that excavations meant ‘labour’, and were done by workers, i.e., a category of people rhetorically privileged during Mao’s time.

38 For calligraphy as a political tool, see Kraus (1991).

39 As will be recalled from chapter 1 of the present book, the booklet series on the single first list sites of ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ was on the stacks of school libraries and reprinted also through the 2000s, with a new layout version started in 2012 at the very end of the Hu Jintao era. These booklets thus can serve as a mirror for the official reading of the Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao eras handed out to Chinese youth. For consistency, I will cite the original layout version throughout.

process of finding the place, to move on to the issue of how the people might have looked like (in reconstructions based on the bones found: one male and one female are presented), since they are deemed ‘ancestors’ of the people now living in the area – thus following the line of thinking mentioned above with ‘Peking Man’ and local ‘continuity’ as a given;⁴⁰ here, the *anthropological* closeness to Southeast Asia is cautiously mentioned, but with the addition that there is enough proof of interaction with northern China to point out the South’s contribution to later Shang and Zhou *cultures* in China (19). Thus, there are ‘local’ special traits without challenging a ‘common’ Chinese *cultural* past. Beyond humans, another focus is on which animals could be certified to have lived there at the time and which of them were domesticated, the tools for hunting and fishing and – most importantly – of agricultural activities, the eating habits with pottery, also introducing the fact that the findings were in different layers, i.e., from different times, alerting the young intended readership to the fact of the need of a diachronic view of the site and its inhabitants. The construction of pole houses (proudly claimed to be the ‘oldest in the world’: 102) is explained as primarily a reaction to the wet climate, linking such findings to similar minorities’ practices of today (by which these minorities are, needless to say, also ‘patriotically’ addressed as representatives of ‘China’). With pottery, e.g., links to Yunnan minorities – and Taiwanese aborigines! – are named (76). Local pride, however, is also stressed, e.g., with the excavation of a well which is significantly older than the first well found in northern China to date.⁴¹ Thus, the long-established narrative of the Yellow River (Huanghe) being the ‘cradle’ of Chinese civilisation is the main point challenged by the Hemudu findings (126). A key theme is the finding of cultivated (and cooked) rice which is to correct the former assumption that rice was cultivated first in India and Japan (hence the subspecies’ naming ‘indica’ and ‘japonica’), to argue that China’s Yangzi region was, in fact, the origin.⁴² Furthermore, from the burial findings, life habits, social arrangements (including stratification and ‘matriarchy’ supposedly sustaining the Marxist version of history’s development), and beliefs are hypothesised. Sun worship, e.g., exemplified in the iconised excavated ivory item interpreted as two birds with a sun, is claimed to be ubiquitous in China all over,

40 Cf. Shao (1998: 13–20). This reflects the research preference to sustain ‘continuity’ to generate an argument for ‘ancestors’. While, as mentioned above, there was no consensus in Republican times whether ‘wild’ Peking Man was ‘desirable’ as an ‘ancestor’, in PRC this assumption was viewed more positively, and for the neolithic Hemudu people, in post-Mao China there was no such doubt.

41 Shao (1998: 91). Here, Hemudu and Shanghai’s Majiabang culture are said to have preceded the North about 1000 years.

42 Shao (1998: 100–101). The ‘origin’ of rice cultivation remains a hotly debated issue in scholarship, though.

from Yunnan to Inner Mongolia (110) (thus reinforcing once more the modern national boundaries), and even worldwide. This way, Hemudu is neatly fit into the historical materialism narrative obligatory to follow.

Finally, the national designation as a heritage site and ‘patriotic education base’, and the construction of the site and museum as such are detailed in this booklet designed for youth (which can be also read as a justification of the curators as to their conforming to the requirements of ‘patriotic education’ as handed out politically in 1994 – cf. also chapter 1 of the present book). Guides were trained to provide the ‘correct’ and ‘patriotic’ narrative first of all to elementary and junior secondary pupils (131). While Hemudu has become part of textbook narratives on ‘China’s’ historical beginnings, as mentioned, the site is, however, also to serve as a study ground for the ‘pre-historical culture of China’s South’ (*Zhongguo nanfang shiqian wenhua* 中国南方史前文化) (115) – a wording that suggests to the reader that somehow there is something like a ‘Southern culture’. Yet, the narrative is careful to stress that all areas in what today constitutes China should be understood to have contributed to the creation of the Chinese nation ‘together’ (123), to prevent too much stress on a ‘Southern’ identity.

A ‘nationalisation’ of sorts is also given by the fact that some Hemudu excavation ‘highlights’ have made it into postage stamps, namely in a series of 1996, stressing the pole houses with wood-pole remnants (for housing), rice cultivation with a shovel bound to a stone handle (for economics), movement on water with a paddle (for transport), and the birds-with-sun ‘worship’ icon for ‘beliefs’ (the ‘superstructure’ in Marxist understanding).⁴³

A common problem Hemudu shares with many excavation sites lies, however, in the fact, that the best pieces have been moved up in the museum hierarchy, first of all to the provincial museum of Zhejiang, and the ‘top’ pieces to Beijing, which means that those are locally available as replicas only. Still, the site tries to interest more tourists to come to the locality: a short documentary was produced for screening at the museum to illustrate the material findings not so easily comprehensible for the average tourist in a more imaginative way (132). Compared to other sites, like the historically much more recent Terracotta Army of the First Emperor (see below), where the visitor sees the original excavation pits with the spectacular artefacts, or to a modern folklore minorities’ village to simulate daily life, the Hemudu exhibition is designed as something in between. To render the site attractive for tourists, it works with replicas and reconstructions (*fuyuan* 复原)⁴⁴

43 The stamp series of 1996 can be found at ‘Hemudu neolithic tools’ (2015).

44 This is one of the most hotly debated terms in Chinese heritage conservation. The ‘China Principles’ for the conservation of heritage sites mandatory to follow since 2000, define the term as ‘resto-

(something deemed necessary),⁴⁵ as otherwise the visitor would not grasp the significance of the findings (129–130).

That the site struggled with attracting tourists is also reflected in the fact that the display was revised and updated in 2009, as the more recent narrative in the Xi Jinping-era *Fengbei* series discloses (Ding / Pan 2019: 62). Above all, more scenic recreations were added for visitors to imagine life at the times, stressing pole housing and its construction, gender-specific division of labour etc. (63). The site, discovered in the 1970s, had become open to the public only in 1993, i.e., only briefly before it was nominated a ‘patriotic education showcase base’. After the 2009 overhaul, the new 2019 Xi Jinping-era narrative shows a further shift with its notable accent on Hemudu as proving that ‘the Chinese’ (*Zhonghua minzu* 中华民族) have demonstrated to be also mobile on water early on, moving on and between rivers and the near sea, thus enlarging the usual ‘earth-bound’ understanding of ‘the Chinese’ with a more pluralistic and less static conception (and thus indirectly also hinting at the maritime agenda so important to recent political concerns in the PRC). Furthermore, art and the esteem of jade objects as a ‘typical’ ‘Chinese’ tradition is also traced back to Hemudu in the new narrative. (Neolithic jade objects, as we will see with Anyang, would be eagerly collected already in Shang times).⁴⁶ Civilisational ‘Chinese’ techniques of weaving, lacquer, and the digging of canals are also pointed out as already present in Hemudu (65–66). In short, the continuities with later Chinese cultural practices are stressed to mark Neolithic Hemudu as an unquestionably ‘Chinese’ civilisational ancestor in the present-day framing.

On-site, as I observed in 2016, the visitor is offered a broad experience: arrival at the site is already part of it, since entry is at the other side of the river which means one arrives at the site itself only by slowly crossing the river with a boat, and thus perceives it as water-directed (and removed from modern motorisation). A huge stone remake of the excavated small ivory item, interpreted as figuring two birds with a sun in between, greets the visitor as the icon of the site. This icon also figures on various book covers on the subject of Hemudu (and was, as mentioned, also turned into a postage stamp design). The viewer is first to visit the museum which is built recalling the architectural ‘Neolithic style’ (if not on poles), to then move to the outside excavations. This way, the main narrative is provided before moving to

ration’ in their new Chinese-English edition (*Zhongguo wenwu guji baohu zhunze* 2015: 44, 113), which clearly is not the meaning here. The literal meaning of restore or return plus original here applies to recreation of imagined life scenes.

45 Cf. Varutti (2014: 61) who also noted the frequent use of replicas not perceived as problematic in Chinese museums since they help sustain the overarching narrative.

46 Cf. Rawson (2023, chapter 1) on jades in the equally Southern Neolithic Liangzhu culture near present-day Hangzhou in the very same Zhejiang Province where Hemudu belongs to as well.

the ‘real thing’, since the remains to be seen are hard to grasp in significance for any non-specialist (see 2.1.1). Thus, outdoor recreations, including one of a possible scene of ancient building work (see fig. 2.1.2), is shown which are to update the ‘persuasiveness’ of the site since the 2009 exhibition overhaul.



Fig. 2.1.1 Outdoor excavation of wooden poles (Hemudu) (photograph by the author, 2016)



Fig. 2.1.2 Outdoor recreation of an imagined scene of Neolithic people constructing a house (Hemudu) (photograph by the author, 2016)

For memorialising how the site was discovered (which would, as mentioned, trigger a rewriting of ‘China’s’ pre-history), the site’s offer is enriched by detailing the archaeological process with photographs of the excavation time. They also sustain the narrative of scientific progress archaeology has undergone in PRC times. In fact, in 1973 when excavations began (and followed by a second round in 1977), the Air Force had to be asked to send someone for taking (birds-eye) photographs (thus marking the PLA as also contributing its share to the final rewriting of ‘China’s’ pre-history). Zhejiang TV was employed for filming, documenting the process and making the site known (which then also served as footage for the two ‘patriotic’ filmic treatments addressed above). Locally sold publications directed at an adult general public also stress with pride that the area had once been seen as peripheral to Chinese culture, due to the lack of archaeological work before the establishment of the PRC. But that all changed with the excavations. This way, local pride is regained by arguing for the Yangzi area being now recognised, due to Hemudu, as a further integral part of ‘China’s genesis’,⁴⁷ adding also rice to the millet of the North as a characteristic food of ‘China’ early on (Sun 2008: 65). Furthermore, since different types of rice have been found, the site can also sustain claims of breadth in this regard, though findings in Hunan of the 1990s are now considered even older than Hemudu (Zhou 2002: 30, 34; Sun 2008: 70). Interestingly, though, Hemudu remained in the Chinese textbooks as the main example, not being replaced by the new findings. Inferring from the ‘Peking Man’ site example above, the role in archaeology, here for revising the former Huanghe (Yellow River)-centred narrative into a more pluralistic understanding of ‘China’s’ origins, trumped the question of dating, and the ‘iconisation’ of Hemudu required more stability in textbook representations to gain force.⁴⁸ Furthermore, as with the ‘Peking Man’ site, Hemudu rendered very rich material remains, including in this case rarely preserved organic material like wood, given the long-term waterlogged condition of the low-laying site (Sun 2013: 556). More problematic (and usually avoided) is the assertion that cannibalism might have been practiced by the Hemudu people, as the locally sold material mentions (Zhou 2002: 50). But other aspects are more prone to take pride in. E.g., excavations of woven fabric prove the respective technology was already available at Hemudu (Zhou 2002: 68). In fact, with women’s burials, spindle whorls have been found which are taken as material evidence for the gendered

47 Zhou (2002: 15). See also the more detailed book by Sun (2008). Sun Guoping has also been asked to contribute the chapter on Hemudu in the *Companion to Chinese Archaeology*, edited in 2013 by Ann Underhill, where he stresses similar points in a more scientific vein.

48 Cf. also Sun (2008: 185) who points out that Hemudu remained the key factor in revising the previous assumptions and was not supplanted by the earlier cases.

division of labour practiced by the Hemudu people (and ‘the Chinese’ thereafter) (Zhou 2002: 73). Thus, the finds are interpreted in ways to reinforce the historiographical framework Chinese citizens know from school, and balancing out local specificities with overarching ‘national’ concerns to fit into a narrative of a regionally inclusive ‘Chinese’ pre-history.

Case study: the Yinxu site

While Hemudu is a ‘pre-historic’ Neolithic site in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system, the excavations put on display in the **Anyang Yinxu bowuyuan** 安阳殷墟博物苑 (Yinxu museum park in Anyang)⁴⁹ (Henan Province) (list 1, 1997), move us into ‘historical’ times (although the definition of boundaries of the latter are tendentially extended backward in the PRC in recent years).⁵⁰ Interestingly, the Shang dynasty (16th–11th century BC) as such receives only a very cursory treatment in Chinese history textbooks – over time even rather decreasing in proportion in PRC textbooks, likely because of the problematic topic of ‘slave-holder society’ once mandatory to dwell upon in history teaching, given the Marxist theory of socio-economic stages.⁵¹ Thus, the textbook narratives pupils encounter in school mostly focus on the Shang’s end and replacement by the succeeding Zhou, but Shang bronzes are presented as icons of ‘Chineseness’. In fact, in textbook presentation, bronzes (Shang to Zhou) are treated in an extra chapter (in the current 2016 textbook version joined by the ever more prominent oracle bones writing),⁵² though

49 The term *bowuyuan* slightly differs from *bowuguan* 博物馆, the usual term for a museum: while *guan* is indoor, *yuan* 苑, meaning park, is outdoor. There is also *bowuyuan* 博物院 which has become a preferred term in recent years with a more ‘courtly’ association, though this, too, is indoor. (Cf. also chapter 2.2 for the regional museums recently termed this way.)

50 The current history textbook picks up on pre-Yinxu sites to spell out more of the preceding periods, including the purported Xia dynasty, suggesting the Erlitou 二里头 site in Henan to ‘reflect the class division and status boundaries of the Xia king’s court’ (*Zhongguo lishi* 2016: 19).

51 A diachronic look into PRC junior secondary history textbooks as the ones virtually every Chinese had to study in school reveals that the Marxist theory of historical stages was the main dividing criterion up to the 1980s and – if less prominently – was still explicitly referred to in the 1990s.

52 The most recent textbook (*Zhongguo lishi* 2016) adds the oracle bones on equal footing (pp. 23–26.) Interestingly, the Sichuan site of Sanxingdui with its spectacular bronzes was addressed in the preceding textbook version (*Zhongguo lishi* 2008) (but dropped again in the most recent 2016 textbook). In any case, the Sanxingdui site is not (yet) included in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system. Sanxingdui has been portrayed in scholarship as clearly different from the Shang and thus from ‘Chinese’ civilisation, if the latter is to be identified with the Shang dynasty. In other words, it is a site potentially rather leaning to a regional identity, though interactions with the Shang are also claimed more recently.

addressing – besides the remarkable technological achievements – also the human cost (in the sense of ‘slave-holder society’ in Marxist terms). Thus, for pupils, Shang times come across as also rather cruel (human sacrifices), though undisputedly outstanding in technology and aesthetics.⁵³ And the excavations at Anyang are cited for both.⁵⁴

Yinxu, the remains of the last Shang capital located at Anyang (‘Yin’ 殷 as the name of the city, *xu* 墟 as rubble or ruins because this is how the succeeding Zhou dynasty termed the former capital after they had ousted the Shang: rubble of Yin) is also presented to the national TV public by the *Ai wo Zhonghua* TV film clips on China’s ‘patriotic education showcase bases’, produced in 1998, in this case by the education department of Henan TV and supported by the same institutions as in the case of Hemudu. Since this film clip was created before the inscription of Yinxu as a UNESCO site (in 2006), it is much more openly focused on the theme of nationalism than it would be feasible later. However, one may note that the *Ai wo Zhonghua* film clips were broadcasted (and sold as DVDs) also well beyond the UNESCO inscription period and thus continue to shape understandings for a Chinese public, all ‘internationalisation’ by the UNESCO inscription notwithstanding. Special stress was put for the Chinese TV audience on bronzes and especially the oracle bones as the beginning of writing. The film clip reveals that at the time of its filming (1998), the exhibition featured paintings in a very popular style to help imagine Shang times, especially for youth, which could be hardly kept for an international UNESCO public (and thus have disappeared on-site in the meantime). The popular style, however, conformed well with the site’s booklet in the ‘100 patriotic education showcase bases’ benchmark series of 1997 – see below, which also celebrated the 10th anniversary of the opening of the site as such (1987), where ‘stories’ about the largely elusive Shang times try to enliven the historical period for youths’ imagination (Yang / Du 1998: 132–161). More tangible issues substantiated by the findings like transportation with horse-drawn chariots are included in the TV film clip’s presentation as well (not mentioning, though, that they are seen as one of the most likely ‘foreign’ imports of the Shang, introduced from Western Asia over the steppe – cf. Shelach-Lavi (2015: 257).) But the TV narrative also does not fail to briefly mention the ‘slave-holder society’ to conform to Marxist dogma for its PRC-socialised audience.

53 Notably, compared to earlier textbook versions, e.g., *Zhongguo lishi* (2008), the cruelty issue is toned down in the very short treatment in the current (*Zhongguo lishi* 2016) textbook version with its stronger accent on Chinese achievements.

54 The more recent excavations of earlier Shang settlements, namely in Zhengzhou, are not yet treated in detail (but do appear in footnotes in the 2016 textbook).

Comparing the *Ai wo Zhonghua* TV film clip with the slightly longer educational *Zhonghua hun*-video on Yinxu, one notes that like in the case of Hemudu, both filmic productions obviously based themselves on the same footage. For this educational video, Henan Normal University's audio-visual education entity is named as responsible, with production time given as July 1998. Different from the more soberly approach of the educational video on Hemudu, however, the Yinxu educational video is heavily charged with elating music. Its take on Yinxu stresses the site as a 'cultural heritage' issue, and it focuses in the beginning on the excavated palace remains as signs of rulership, before moving to the more spectacular 'contents', i.e., the bronzes and oracle bones. Comparing both filmic treatments that show the site in the late 1990s, with the subsequent overhaul of the site for the UNESCO nomination (in 2006), it becomes, however, clear that not only the painted stories, but also many on-site recreations (of buildings, statues with motives of Shang jade pendants etc.) had been removed after the late 1990s to avoid the impression of Disneyfication to international eyes.

The respective booklet in the benchmark '100' patriotic education showcase bases series, in turn, addresses the point of how this site might contribute to history education explicitly. It argues that the Yinxu site in Anyang has a great potential to emotionally engage pupils, showing them – as it is called here without hesitation – the 'slave-holder society' via its cultural relics (Yang / Du 1998: 4). Furthermore, the site is framed as a 'proof' against some Western scholars' arguing for China's culture having come 'from the West' – a more than dated theory, but still emotionally charged and thus fitting to figure in a 'patriotic' narrative to rouse sentiments of indignation and hurt national pride with the pupils.⁵⁵ For its 'patriotic education' potential, the site which has been set up, as mentioned, as a place to visit in 1987,

55 Yang / Du (1998: 3). This likely refers to the theory of Swedish geologist Andersson (and others), who had discovered both 'Peking man' and the Yangshao Neolithic site and assumed that Yangshao pottery showed the Western influence by comparative dating with other sites (which has been successfully challenged thereafter). The debate raged in Chinese archaeology for a long time. See Liu / Chen (2012: 7–8). One may also associate this more historically with the 19th century minor figure in Western academics, Lacouperie, who had formulated this idea of 'Western origin' of Chinese culture which was picked up positively (!) in early 20th century China by some intellectuals for political reasons, to argue that like the Aryans in India, also the Chinese were an in-migrating conquering people, with Huangdi (cf. also chapter 3.1 of the present book) leading them against the local Miao who were pushed by the conquerors towards the Southwest. (Cf. Müller 2008: 62, 66). This theory was quickly dropped after the Xinhai revolution of 1911/12 and the founding of the Chinese Republic. Incidentally, during the Cultural Revolution, the Soviets were accused of still holding up the idea of Chinese culture's 'Western origin' (which should be considered a 'shame'), and therefore the stress on 'local characteristics' of Neolithic pottery was in fact prescribed by national key Chinese museums like the Shanghai Museum. Cf. Lu (2014: 126).

prepared itself in various regards as it shows ancient civilisation by the triad of city building, writing, and bronzes. It also illustrated the living at the time (thus going beyond textual explanation), and offered trained people to introduce certain highlights on spot. National and international activities for research and for summer camps etc. for pupils were organised, and re-creations, e.g., of buildings, added. That way, at the late 1990s, the site tried to conform to the ‘patriotic education’ prescriptions (cf. chapter 1 of the present book). The ‘patriotic’ booklet legitimised the site’s take by referring to *the* authority on ancient history in PRC times, Guo Moruo 郭沫若, who was also a well-known Communist writer, intellectual, and key figure in the PRC cultural heritage system. He dominated the official writing of China’s ancient history, reflected in the textbooks pupils had to study (Dirlik 2011: 74–75; based on Dirlik 1978). Guo, who dedicated himself to the study of oracle bone inscriptions beyond his career as a leftist writer, ever since his long sojourn in Japan in Republican times,⁵⁶ visited Yinxu in 1959 (at the time of the Great Leap Forward, started in late 1957 and officially launched in 1958) and praised it as a perfect place to learn about ancient Chinese culture. He also memorialised his visit with poems. Backed by this Maoist-era scholarly-cum-political authority, the ‘patriotic’ booklet also proudly asserts in the more ‘nationalistic’ vein of the Jiang Zemin years, that Yinxu is also to show many civilisational ‘firsts’, be it in China, sometimes in the world of which one can be proud. For ‘patriotic education’ purposes, continuity up to the present day should be stressed, not the least over character writing, to drive home the point to pupils that their lives today are in fact connected to those times of the Shang (12).

The authority of Guo Moruo is also cited for identifying the Shang with the ‘slave-holder stage’ according to the Marxist paradigm (13).⁵⁷ (In fact, this was an issue Guo had shifted his views on: while he first considered the Shang as still belonging to the primitive society stage in his seminal work of 1930 on ancient Chinese society, by the mid/late 1930s he argued for the Yin–Shang times belonging already to the slave-holder society stage, based on the findings in Yinxu.)⁵⁸ Furthermore (like with Zhoukoudian), the key role of *Chinese*

56 Guo is still credited with deciphering a substantial number of oracle bone characters. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, he worked in Tokyo’s Tōyō bunkō library on materials collected by the Japanese.

57 Although his thoughts on periodisation slightly changed over time, namely when exactly to start the next stage of ‘feudalism’, his basic historiographical views were in line with Mao who supported him in this regard.

58 See Dirlik (1978) chapter 5 on the basic concept of Guo Moruo’s periodisation and its later revisions. In 1930, Guo had his views of the time published as a book on ancient Chinese society. As becomes clear from reading Guo’s own account in 1972 of his changing views on periodisation, the

archaeologists in the excavation is something stressed in the ‘patriotic’ narrative of the booklet, with the first more systematic excavations being in 1928 in Republican times (21). Already before, Chinese intellectuals like Luo Zhenyu 罗振玉 or Wang Guowei 王国维 had started deciphering the oracle bones’ inscriptions after the first oracle bones had been recognised as such in 1899 when sold as Chinese traditional ‘medicine’.⁵⁹ The Yinxu excavations (since 1928) by Chinese archaeologists under the aegis of the newly founded Academia Sinica are today often seen as the starting point of modern Chinese archaeology (Liu / Chen 2012: 6). Academia Sinica would, however, move to Taiwan before the founding of the PRC on the mainland, which also meant that scholars divided: Li Ji 李济, the early important archaeologist, moved to Taiwan and is thus marginalised in PRC accounts, although he was instrumental in the Yinxu excavations, while Xia Nai 夏鼐, a slightly younger leading scholar in archaeology, remained on the mainland and would go on to dominate this disciplinary field in the PRC.⁶⁰

Since both the ‘Peking Man’ site and Yinxu were at the earliest time attracting foreigners, these are only cautiously connected in the ‘patriotic’ narrative in a ‘positive’ vein to the development of early Chinese archaeology by using (and introducing) new Western methods of excavation, but foreigners clearly figure negatively with the issue of colonial ‘theft’. E.g., the ‘patriotic’ booklet on Yinxu highlights that ‘patriotism’ here also means to remember how foreigners cleverly fleeced the Chinese, stole their heritage and scattered it around the world. Thus, pride in early Chinese civilisation is mixed in the narrative with indignation about exploitation (Yang / Du 1998: 34–38). This topic is rhetorically connected to two

main change was, however, about when to *end* the slave-holder stage which he adjusted thrice during the long Zhou period, while the shift regarding the Yin [Shang] period as being already a slave-holder society was stable after the late 1930s, given also the Yinxu excavations with its many human sacrifices which to his mind had clarified the issue. (See Guo Moruo: ‘Zhongguo gudaishi de fenqi wenti’ (The problem of periodisation in ancient Chinese history) 中国古代史的分期问题) which was integrated in the 1972 edition of his book on the slave system he had published several times over the 1950s when he had already affirmed the Yin (Shang) as belonging to this phase.) (See Guo Moruo: *Nulizhi shidai* 1956: 4; for the 1972 evaluation: see *Nulizhi shidai* 1972 edition, ‘instead of a preface’). (Parts of the book had already appeared in the years 1950–1952, and the earliest book edition was in 1954. The 1956 edition referred to here is closest in time to his visit of Yinxu.) Scholars of ancient China have voiced criticism of Guo’s ideology-driven approach. Cf. Falkenhausen (2006: 23n54, 410n29) and on slavery specifically: Yates (2001: 285, 301n27).

59 Yang / Du (1998: 32). See also Liu / Chen (2012: 5–6).

60 On the role of Xia Nai in PRC archaeology and the field’s ‘politics’, see the critical and bitter comments by Tong (1995). However, it seems that in spite of Tong’s portrayal of Xia Nai as the personified leadership of the Party in archaeology, suggesting he ‘did not endure the personal suffering of so many intellectuals of the period’ (Tong 1995: 197), Xia Nai was nevertheless not spared during the Cultural Revolution.

foreign missionaries (who are thus presumably ‘demasked’ as to their intentions in China): Frank Herring Chalfant and Samuel Couling (36),⁶¹ who published early on about the oracle bones’ inscriptions they had collected. However, the intended young Chinese readership is also told that their moving into this field was helped by the fact that the Chinese scholars at the time had not cared enough about it themselves (37) – again a familiar rhetorical device often used to encourage more Chinese commitment. But the topic of colonial and missionary ‘meddling’ is suggested explicitly for ‘patriotic education’ purposes as a good point to stress (since emotionally charged) (38). In the period of 1928–1937, the young reader learns, substantial Chinese activities finally brought more to light in Anyang, not the least the discovery of the oracle bones ‘archive’ pit, also termed ‘the world’s first library’ (39, 59). Thus, this period can be considered the birth of a ‘Chinese archaeology’. In 1938, during the Second Sino–Japanese War, the Japanese, in turn, sent special teams, and they, too, ‘robbed’ the site (40). In sum, the site’s ‘patriotic’ reading points out that the ‘capitalist’ Westerners (including the tsarist Russians), who also used their missionaries, as well as the Japanese ‘plundered China’ since the late 19th century (89), – a narrative fully conforming to the ‘Chinese humiliation’ storyline much stressed in the 1990s (Callahan 2010).

In PRC times, things would finally change for the better, according to the ‘patriotic’ narrative, when CASS (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) established an archaeology department (following Soviet precedent and picking up the work of Republican-era Academia Sinica by then on Taiwan). The excavation at Yinxu of human sacrifices (and people ‘joining’ the dead), however, then led to intensive discussions about their relation to the Marxist ‘slave-holder society’ in China (Yang / Du 1998: 103), which again shows that sites also gain national importance because of their role in the development of PRC scholarship. As mentioned above, Guo Moruo based his revised argument on the Yin (Shang) belonging to the ‘slave-holder stage’ on the Yinxu excavations of human sacrifices, though recent Chinese scholarship points out that there is a difference in treatment between human sacrifices and those ‘joining the dead’.⁶² In PRC times, the tomb of the royal consort Fu

61 Interestingly, the subsequent Canadian Presbyterian missionary James Mellon Menzies, stationed in Anyang, is not named who was to become a leading scholar in oracle bones. On Menzies and his scholarly contributions in this regard, see Dong (2005, chapter 9).

62 As Tang (2009: 144–148) emphasises, there is a clear difference in treatment and placement between ‘human sacrifices’ (presumably POWs, at times beheaded, and without any particular provisions, thrown into mass graves in more distance to the tomb owner), and those ‘joining the dead’ to go on serving him in the afterlife, like wives or concubines, or personal staff who had been with the dead during the latter’s lifetime, all buried at the same time with the tomb owner but with more personal provisions. Furthermore, during repeated rituals after the burial, human sacrifices

Hao 妇好 (Fu Zi) of around 1200 BC,⁶³ discovered in 1976 and not looted before, was one of the major triumphs of Chinese archaeologists at the site (41), rendering some of the ‘top pieces’ available today. (In fact, Fu Hao’s tomb also showed that at her time, ancient, i.e., Neolithic, objects were already treasured, thus marking her as an early Chinese owner or inheritor if not outright collector of antiquities – cf. Linduff 2018: 271.)

The Yinxu site is, like Zhoukoudian, where ‘Peking Man’ was found, a UNESCO world heritage site today, as mentioned, though inscribed later (2006)⁶⁴ – a labelling pointedly stressed on-site.⁶⁵ A key feature of Yinxu is seen especially in the connection to Chinese writing over the excavated oracle bones. The present museum is self-consciously designed to stress those features (and to conform to requests by the UNESCO). It thus tries to combine nationalist interest with ‘internationalism’, as the local brochure of the museum asserts. Strikingly, the visitor is made to walk back in time along a timeline which takes as starting point not the present, but the 1911 Xinhai revolution!⁶⁶ This means one walks from the end of monarchy (1911/12) ‘back’ through all dynasties (including those before the establishment of the Chinese empire in the 3rd century BC) up to the Shang (which also might signal to Taiwanese and Overseas Chinese visitors with the 1911 revolution – cf. also chapter 4.2 of the present book on the Wuchang Uprising site – a ‘common’ starting point prior to the 1949 political and systemic divide!). Central topics to be stressed in the museum exhibition are the bronzes (designs being repeated on the museum’s walls) and the oracle bones, suggestively with a tortoise shell reproduction in a water basin in the underground museum’s court. ‘International standards’ are also invoked with the partition of the exhibition into single halls according to

were offered, too, thus making for some human sacrifices being subsequent to the tomb owner’s burial.

63 Some scholars have argued that the character should be understood as composed of the phonetic right part (and thus read *zi*) and the left part marking her as female. According to Cao Dingyun, this meant she was a daughter from a state or area named Zi (though with the different character 祚). See Cao (2020: 353) and his own referenced work of 1989 there. The common reading of her name, though, is (still) Fu Hao.

64 For the covered area of Yinxu and the buffer zone which comprises the then recently discovered Huanbei site which is supposed to be an earlier Shang capital, see the UNESCO entry ‘Yin Xu’ (UNESCO 2006).

65 Nominations of ‘world heritage sites’ have been high on the Chinese political agenda, turning China into the world’s most active party in this regard. (See Yan 2018). It was deemed a helpful tool for heightening China’s soft power. (Silverman / Blumenfield 2013). But it is, of course, also addressed to the domestic audience to show China’s by now ‘equal footing’ on the international stage.

66 *Yinxu bowuguan*, Anyang, n.d., p. 1. The following description of the museum’s intentions in arrangement is based on this leaflet.

‘accepted’ standards of ‘civilisation’ which are to be shown as fulfilled by the Shang: city building (the city of Yin being the last and longest-used of the Shang capitals, dating back to the 14th century BC, while in 1999 – i.e., after the nomination as a ‘patriotic education showcase base’ but before the UNESCO nomination – a further Shang capital site across the river has been discovered in Anyang: Huanbei 洹北,⁶⁷ said to be possibly the immediate predecessor of Yin: it is now in the buffer zone of the inscribed Yinxu UNESCO site), metallurgy (the bronzes), ritual system (represented mainly by jade objects), and writing (the oracle bones). Accordingly, the visitor is made to walk through these ‘civilisation criteria’.

Looking into the local Chinese-language brochure of the museum, collected during my visit in 2015, which is obviously addressing Chinese visitors, though possibly also those not living in the PRC, the site is by now interestingly presented as defined over the locality, today belonging to Henan province, by pointing out that the Shang’s key territory was ‘Henan province’ (!) (though – apart from the evident fact that provinces as such are a much later invention – this province and its borders are also historically contingent: in fact, at the time of early superficial excavations in the first years of the 20th century, Anyang, then called Zhangde 彰德, belonged to Zhili 直隶 province, then to Henan province, and in the first years of the PRC to the short-lived Pingyuan 平原 province, before becoming once more part of Henan province). In short, the present-day province of Henan also uses this site domestically to pose and brand itself as ‘cradle’ of Chinese civilisation for local pride. The ‘city’ part of the exhibition tries to give some glimpse of ‘daily life’ of the Shang, even if this is very hard to present in material terms. The most spectacular finding in this regard prove the existence of water pipes, while figurines are thought to represent the ‘looks’ of the people at the time and their stratified society. The delicate issue of cannibalism, less prone to solicit pride today, is represented by a cooking vessel with a human skull found inside which was apparently cooked,⁶⁸ which provides a more drastic illustration of the times as also very cruel (a feature typically pointed out also in textbook descriptions of the Shang Chinese audiences are familiar with). The more spectacular exhibition part is, of course, the bronzes, but beyond the ritual items also bronze weapons (with a victim’s pierced skull) show the

67 For a more recent treatment of Huanbei and urbanisation, see Jing et al. (2013).

68 One may, however, question the conclusion whether cooking someone’s head must automatically mean cannibalism (though several instances of cannibalism through Chinese history can be ascertained). As Tang Jigen suggests, the two heads found which had been cooked have distinct features and probably were of important ‘enemies’, and he also mentions an example of a human skull being inscribed as an offering. To write on a skull would logically mean to get rid of the flesh first. That the latter was consumed by the Yin people is possible, but no self-evident conclusion as long as typical illnesses caused by cannibalism are not ascertained with Shang people.

multiple uses metallurgy was put to. Jade, in turn, is presented as a precious item accompanying burials with the often-seen motif of birds.⁶⁹ Finally, the oracle bones lead to the positive climax, i.e., the development of Chinese writing. One of the oracle bones even made it into a national postage stamp – like the ‘top findings’ of Hemudu mentioned above,⁷⁰ while bronzes with inscriptions link the two Shang ‘highlights’: bronzes and writing. Also in the case of Yinxu, the most famous findings have been moved up the museum hierarchy to Beijing: the Houmuwu ding 后母戊鼎 (formerly read as Simuwu ding 司母戊鼎)⁷¹ as the biggest bronze vessel (excavated in 1939 in Anyang and figuring on many book covers as an icon of ancient Chinese culture, having been housed earlier in Republican China’s capital Nanjing)⁷² is now placed in the new National Museum (a combination of the former Museum of Chinese History and the Museum of the Chinese Revolution, see below 2.2) in Beijing. This leaves for Yinxu only a replica, which was installed, the ‘patriotic’ booklet of 1998 already argued, to respond to the pupils’ expectation as they all know this item via their textbooks and want to ‘see it’ there (Yang / Du 1998: 87). And – the museum also points out more recently – some precious pieces excavated at Anyang are still overseas, notably pointing in its brochure to an example of an item now held in Japan.⁷³ Thus, the Chinese visitor is asked to ponder this fact which on the one hand should evoke pride that Shang culture is ‘attractive’ also for non-Chinese, on the other, that these pieces rightfully belong and must be transferred back to China in the future!

Interestingly, head of the Yinxu excavation team and one of the curators of the museum, Western-trained archaeologist Tang Jigen 唐际根, who had been a key

69 One may note that the ‘updated’ short filmic presentation of the site in the newly set up CCTV website (of 2021 – cf. chapter 1 of the present book) represents Yinxu by now with a news programme on an exhibition of jades, i.e., the cruelty factor gives way to the aesthetics.

70 See the 1996 stamp, available at ‘Precious Chinese Archive’ (2015).

71 Characters on oracle bones are sometimes mirrored, and the consensus in the meantime is the reading of Houmuwu ding, also taken over by the National Museum in Beijing by now (cf. National Museum of China n.d.). Notably, the current junior secondary history textbook (*Zhongguo lishi* 2016: 24) still uses Simuwu ding, adding the possible reading of Houmuwu ding only in a footnote. This, again, underlines the ‘conservativeness’ of the textbook genre.

72 Notably, the Houmuwu ding was moved to Nanjing after the Second Sino–Japanese War to celebrate Chiang Kai-shek’s 60th birthday (who then ordered it to be placed in the Central Museum, i.e., today’s Nanjing Museum).

73 One may recall that the Japanese are accused of having fleeced China’s art treasures not the least during the Second Sino–Japanese war. The heavy Houmuwu ding, for one, had been reburied at wartime locally and ‘re-excavated’ after the war when it was moved to Nanjing where Chiang Kai-shek’s government was located. When Chiang moved to Taiwan and took many of China’s art treasures with him, now held in the Palace Museum in Taipei, the Houmuwu ding was not taken, probably given his challenging weight. It therefore has become even more precious to the PRC.

figure in promoting the site for UNESCO inscription,⁷⁴ also wrote a popular book in Chinese which is also sold locally in the museum. In this book addressed to the Chinese citizen at large, designed in the context of the nomination, Tang tries to walk the fine line between the scientific aspect (e.g., evading any mentioning of the Marxist ‘slave-holder society’), and an appeal to a Chinese-socialised readership. The existence of ‘slaves’ is only cautiously addressed as ‘possible’ and if so, numbers are said to have been small (Tang 2009: 59). Connected to this is the issue of human sacrifices and cruelty which Tang Jigeng focuses upon for the Chinese readership as these are aspects of the Shang civilisation most disturbing to modern visitors, namely if one is to consider the Shang as ‘one’s ancestors’ (Tang 2009: 161).⁷⁵ While this aspect is less prone to further ‘pride’, the oracle bones as the earliest known form of Chinese writing do so more easily.⁷⁶ Although it cannot claim to be the oldest writing system in the world, it is at least the only one that is (in adapted form) still in use. In fact, to Tang Jigen, the main issue are the oracle bone inscriptions, which shows that with the UNESCO listing the accent was moved somewhat from bronzes to the evolution of Chinese writing.⁷⁷ (In fact, in 2017 the oracle bones as such were successfully registered in the UNESCO ‘Memory of the World’ documentary list as a further step.)⁷⁸ This accent on writing is now also repeated on site, and in Anyang city a specialised museum on Chinese writing has been established.

The locally available materials show, however, also different historiographical narratives competing with each other. E.g., another popular archaeology book on the famous tomb of Fu Hao sold in the museum as well at the time of my visit in 2015, more clearly directed to readers with a PRC educational background, still

74 A photograph of 2005 shows him explaining the site to the Korean representative of ICOMOS who then reported favourably, leading to the UNESCO inscription in 2006 in the end (Tang 2009: 4).

75 The large amount of killed humans found, be it as sacrifice to the ancestors, as sacrifice during buildings enclosed in the construction, as ‘accompanying’ a high-ranking dead by being buried alive, or the cruel treatment of supposedly subdued enemies by cooking the heads of their leaders are cited (Tang 2009: 72, 150–166).

76 Interestingly, the Chinese and English phrasing of an exhibition on oracle bones are slightly different in connotation: while the English ‘Oracle bones reveal the past’ promises the foreigner a ‘true’ look into an objective past, the Chinese *Yipian jiagu jing tianxia* 一片甲骨惊天下 (An oracle bone startles the world) advertises its character as impressing non-Chinese. (See the reproduction of the poster in Tang 2009: 184). This way, it serves the patriotic education agenda perfectly.

77 This is notable as it might reflect the fact that while there is much discussion whether anything excavated at earlier sites could be counted as ‘writing’, Anyang still claiming to be the ‘first’, there have been other sites excavated in China where bronzes were found and which are likely earlier, if not spectacular to the same degree as the Anyang bronzes. (For the early bronze age, see the recent summary by Bagley 2018).

78 Cf. UNESCO (2017) ‘Chinese Oracle-Bone Inscriptions’.

keeps to the Marxist ‘slave-holder society’ concept and other socialism-inspired ideas, including remnants of ‘matriarchy’ to explain Fu Hao’s range of action! (Gu 2006: 45)⁷⁹ While this book, too, concentrates on the oracle bones,⁸⁰ a notable feature is the accent in this publication on the Communist authority Guo Moruo, whose work on ancient Chinese culture and history had become a dogma of sorts in conventional historiography in PRC times, as mentioned. Guo wrote poems when he visited Yinxu in 1959, i.e., at the high time of the Maoist Great Leap Forward, in that context also stressing his ‘rehabilitation’ of the archetypical bad last Shang ruler Zhou 纣,⁸¹ because of whom the Shang capital Yin thus was turned into ‘rubbles’ (Yinxu) by the succeeding dynasty, arguing that king Zhou had also his merits (in ‘nationalist’ terms), since he extended (if by force) Shang culture to a broader region in the South of present-day China (Gu 2006: 16–17). (This historical re-evaluation of king Zhou as a less negative figure was incidentally also shared by Mao!⁸²)

Overall, interpretations offered in this locally-sold book on Fu Hao’s tomb are feeding more openly into nationalist agendas, e.g., brushing aside any scholarly doubts raised regarding assertions that objects excavated in Yinxu have travelled over thousands of kilometres (to suggest the Shang’s far-reaching contacts). While Tang’s book thus represents a more scholarly approach, if popularised for the Chinese tourist, Gu’s book keeps up the ‘traditional’ ideological viewpoints in line with what the domestic audience is familiar with from school.

For the modern tourist experience, though, the local community has also set up a drama troupe which plays some ‘Shang stories’ (of which the popular paintings had, as mentioned, been taken off after the late 1990s) to enliven the times long ago for Chinese visitors (and focuses, e.g., on the imagined romance between Shang king

79 As Wang (2004: 102) has noted, king Wu Ding’s other wife Fu Jing 妇姘 was ranking higher than Fu Hao but was not recorded as a military leader. Nevertheless, Fu Jing’s tomb, though looted, contained more arrowheads than Fu Hao’s which was not looted. In short, the remarkable role of Fu Hao in this regard was not straightforwardly linked to status or could sustain any dogma of ‘matriarchy’.

80 Obviously to keep respect for China’s ancient civilisation, the author also points out comparisons with the Greeks and Romans, simply sidelining the older cases of Egypt and Mesopotamia. (Gu 2006: 15).

81 Notably, different from the last purported Xia ruler, Han historiographer Sima Qian portrayed the last Shang ruler King Zhou ‘not always entirely negative’. Cf. Birrell (1993: 110). Guo Moruo as much as Mao Zedong valued Sima Qian highly.

82 Incidentally, Mao also shared Guo’s views on the ‘rehabilitation’ of some other typical ‘villains’ in conventional historiography, e.g., of Cao Cao of the 3rd century AD (with whom both, Guo and Mao, furthermore shared the faible for poetry). For an overview of Mao’s views on historical figures, see Ma (2008).

Wu Ding 武丁 and famous consort Fu Hao).⁸³ That way, this UNESCO site tries to market itself also in more ‘popular’ fashion to Chinese tourists.

In the more recent official ‘patriotic’ Xi Jinping-era framing of the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ in the 2019 *Fengbei* series, the presentation of Yinxu has somewhat shifted (and integrates also newer findings after the nomination in 1997): by now, the focus is on Yinxu as the ‘birth place’ of Chinese archaeology, which is also leading the list of the ‘100 most important excavations in China in the 20th century’ promulgated in the meantime (Tian 2019: 39, 41). Interestingly, the place is, however, once more called an ‘excavated typical slave-holder society’ (40), thus ideologically moving back to the Marxist dogma in the ‘patriotic’ reading. While the site is supposedly clearly showing ‘Chinese characteristics’ (*Zhongguo tese* 中国特色) – an evidently modern term, the broader presentation includes beyond the bronzes and the oracle bones also the various architectural foundations and the horse chariots, stressing that ‘China’ had chariots ‘early on’ (43). This likely is a reaction to the argument that the latter might have been introduced for Central Asia as many (foreign) archaeologists hold today (and show that in the Xi Jinping-era, awareness of alternative readings of historical facts is there, causing the perceived need to bring up contrary arguments, at least for the domestic audience). In fact, as I observed on-site in 2015, the chariots are highlighted in the outdoor display.⁸⁴ The 2019 ‘patriotic’ narrative has, however, completely edited out the foreigners in the history of the excavations, focusing only on the Chinese archaeologists. On the other hand, the extensive ‘human sacrifices’ for ritual-religious reasons are also to show the dark side of those times (46–47). That way, the ambivalence of the Shang, tangible also in the textbooks, remains also in the Xi Jinping-era ‘patriotic education’ perspective.

The story of the Yinxu excavations, connected to the history of the development of ‘Chinese’ archaeology in 20th century China, made for its feasibility to be addressed in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system. The excavation the PRC would be most proud of, however, and which is the final one of excavation sites in terms of chronology of the site content to be integrated in the first list (1997) of this system, is the famous terracotta army of the First Emperor (3rd century BC): the **Qin Shihuang bingmayong bowuguan** 秦始皇兵马俑博物馆 (lit.: Museum of Qin Shihuang’s tomb figures of warriors and horses). This spectacular and top tourist site has been extensively treated in secondary literature in many respects, so we

83 See Tang (2009: 171; 176) for some photos of a performance.

84 The introduced horse-drawn chariots were a ‘prime instrument of war’ at the time. Cf. Rawson (2023: 85), discussing the Anyang excavation).

can limit us here again to the educational ‘patriotic’ context, where the site as such, like Yinxu in Anyang, comes across as rather ambivalent: great aesthetics, but a cruel background. In fact, the evaluation of the First Emperor – notoriously contested in Chinese historiography,⁸⁵ most pointedly during the 20th century when the former verdict on him was called into question – is very mixed also in present-day school history, acknowledging his rational policies but decrying his oppressive rule.⁸⁶ The terracotta army is, however, unequivocally praised as an outstanding achievement in sculpture art and ‘shining jewel in the world’s art treasure house’.⁸⁷ It has grown into one of China’s most famous archaeological sites, and given the possibility to send single terracotta statues also overseas, it has generated various overseas exhibitions.

In terms of ‘patriotic education’, the technical skill in the production process, the aesthetics and variegation of the statues and their ‘realism’ are stressed, but the site as such has been also called the ‘biggest military museum of ancient China’,⁸⁸ since it supposedly mirrors ancient warfare arrangements with different types of warriors, weapons, horse-drawn chariots etc.⁸⁹ As with ‘Peking Man’, this site was inscribed on the PRC’s application in the UNESCO list of world heritage early on (1987) and thus functions also externally as a marker of ‘Chineseness’ (UNESCO 1987b). Advertisements of the site rarely fail to mention that Jacques Chirac, later to become French president, purportedly once named it the ‘eighth wonder of the world’.⁹⁰ In present-day endeavours to argue for China’s ancient links to Central Asia (and its claims to the Silk Road, notably reinforced in the Xi Jinping era), the

85 The issue of ‘reversing the verdict’ of the First Emperor, Qin Shihuang, of the 3rd century BC was favoured by Mao, while Guo Moruo was critical towards Qin Shihuang (several of his historical plays had the state of Qin in a negative role: see Guo Moruo’s *Five Historical Plays* [English translation 1984]) and he was therefore reproached by Mao who championed Qin Shihuang. Incidentally, the reverse case was of empress Wu Zetian of the 8th century AD, whom Guo proposed for a positive reevaluation, but given Mao’s last wife, Jiang Qing’s role, in Chinese politics, this became an increasingly sensitive historical parallel.

86 The current textbook (*Zhongguo lishi* 2016) keeps to the division in his assessment in praising Qin Shihuang for ‘unifying China’ (and for the terracotta army) (pp. 42–46), while his brutal rule led to ‘peasant uprisings’ (pp. 47–49).

87 Cf. the current textbook (*Zhongguo lishi* 2016: p. 46): it is highlighted as one of the major excavation successes of China in the 20th century.

88 See Wan / Xue (2019: 54) in the Shaanxi volume of the *Fengbei* series. This recent ‘patriotic’ summary of the site also stresses very much the excavation history (as part of PRC history and ‘archaeological successes’), and the artistic rendering of the various types of troops, while the ‘feudal’ First Emperor remains in the background.

89 For a recent treatment of the archaeological site, see Rawson (2023: chapter 12).

90 Incidentally, this claim of foreigners having called one’s site the ‘eighth wonder of the world’ is a trope to be encountered also elsewhere.

terracotta army with its depiction of various ‘foreigners’ is also a welcome ‘proof’ of China’s openness and ‘internationality’ since ancient times.

Interestingly, in the lists of ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ following the first one of 1997, excavations do not figure any more (but for the special genre of relatively recent atrocity sites where excavated mass graves are to show ‘proofs’ of Chinese victimisation – see also chapter 3.2). Thus, pre- or early history only comes up on these lists indirectly in the form of artefacts collected in museums. Strikingly, even world-famous archaeological sites like the Bronze Age Sanxingdui 三星堆 excavations in Sichuan were not picked for the national ‘patriotic’ lists (and not even yet for inscription on the world heritage list, although in the meantime that site is on the tentative list, while stressing the uniqueness of Shu culture in the Sichuan Basin).⁹¹ The strong localist reading that one may attach to the latter site, rather showing ancient Sichuan’s ‘difference’, makes it a complicated site in terms of nationalism, even though the attached museum, as I observed on spot, does its interpretative best to argue that there has been interaction with Shang culture – a fact more and more sustained by scholarship – to integrate Sanxingdui culture, too, into ‘Chinese’ history nevertheless.⁹² Still, as we observed with Hemudu, the possible localist reading poses some obstacles to a seamless ‘national’ interpretation.

2.2 Translocal museums and their objects

In contrast to excavation sites, translocal museums display objects from somewhere else. The first list of ‘100 patriotic education showcase bases’ (1997) includes big national-level museums, located in Beijing and Shanghai. They, however, tell also a story of rivalry. On the one hand, Beijing as the capital has a clear advantage: the first list of ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ of 1997 includes the Museum of Chinese History and the Museum of the Chinese Revolution (in the meantime merged into the new National Museum of China, opened in 2011),⁹³ as well as the

91 One may, however, note that archaeological large sites have increasingly become a focus of Chinese *heritage* policies since the 2000s, if not in terms of ‘patriotic’ sites. Cf. Zan et al. (2018).

92 Incidentally, the new CCTV website set up in 2021 on the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ (cf. chapter 1 of the present book) points out in its representation of Yinxu via jade objects, that there are ‘proofs’ of interaction between the Shang and Sanxingdui, thus indirectly taking in the latter site into the ‘patriotic’ framework.

93 This case is interesting insofar as the factual merger of two ‘patriotically’ listed sites into one by the creation of the ‘National Museum’ in 2011 entailed an inconsistency in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system: the representations simply went on with the former format of two sites, and

Military Museum and the Old Palace Museum for Beijing. The first and the last of these are in implicit rivalry with the National Palace Museum in Taipei, where the Guomindang shifted the best artwork of Chinese tradition to when fleeing the mainland.⁹⁴ Inside the PRC, due to long contestations and reworking of the Museum of Chinese History in Beijing, the Shanghai Museum could move to the pole position during the 1990s as representing Chinese ancient civilisation. This was mainly due to its able director at the time who attracted funds and had a spectacular new building designed.⁹⁵ And in Shanghai with its formerly many rich private collectors, many priceless art pieces had been ‘collected’ (or ‘donated’) before and during the Cultural Revolution to at least preserve them.⁹⁶ The Shanghai Museum of today exhibits first-class antiques in a modern fashion of display and thus has made a significant step ahead in China’s museum landscape (Lei / Vickers 2015: 231–234). In fact, since the reworking in the 1990s, Shanghai Museum was for the time being the de facto National Museum of China where the highlights of its civilisation were displayed in up-to-date fashion.

However, if belatedly, Beijing, the capital, caught up and now presents with the **Zhongguo guojia bowuguan** 中国国家博物馆 (National Museum of China) (finally opened in 2011, combining the two former museums on history and revolution and adding further exhibition space in an expansion of the original Soviet-style buildings by modern world-class architecture),⁹⁷ not only the ‘biggest museum on earth’, but its section of Chinese antiquity now presents a huge amount of high-class artefacts that display ‘the nation’ as is considered fitting for the capital of an emerging superpower. Display techniques have been updated in the process, and also ‘retrieved artefacts’ from overseas are proudly exhibited, e.g., the two noted zodiac animal bronze heads (of twelve) stolen at the 1860 plundering of the Yuanmingyuan 圆明园 (Old Summer Palace in Beijing) by British and French troops which were auctioned in Paris in 2009 and claimed back in a way causing scandal at the time. At an auction of the art collection of late fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent, a

the new CCTV website set up in 2021 (cf. chapter 1 of the present book) deals with the problem in representing the two sites simply via old news clips of the early 1960s! (That way, the Jiang Zemin-era *Ai wo Zhonghua* film clips could be replaced without hampering the format of two distinct sites listed by simply going back in time to the Mao era.)

94 The transfer of the top pieces to finally end up in Taipei was a saga in itself. Cf. Elliott / Shambaugh (2005), especially chapters 4 and 5.

95 This was an early example of what has been observed for the role of new museum architecture in more recent times in China. For the latter, see Jacobson (2014).

96 Cf. Ho (2018), chapter 6. See also the detailed treatment in Lu (2012).

97 While the Shanghai Museum was built by local architect Xing Tonghe 邢同和 (who was also involved in the case of various CCP-related sites in the city and beyond), the capital invited international architects (von Gerkan, Marg und Partner) for designing the newly added part of the building.

Chinese representative made the bid but then argued the heads had been stolen from China and should be handed back without pay. In the end, a French businessman, i.a. owner of various fashion brands including Saint Laurent, donated them to China's National Museum – and pushed his business in China.⁹⁸ Interestingly, whereas the antiquities section of the National Museum in Beijing capitalises on its artefacts, the 'successor exhibition' of the former Museum of Chinese Revolution is based much more on photographs and didactic texts with only very few artefacts. Although there is a special catalogue for this 'modern history' section, titled *Fuxing zhi lu* 复兴之路 (Road to Revival),⁹⁹ a topic I have dealt with elsewhere,¹⁰⁰ the comprehensive catalogue of the 'National Museum' basically only covers the ancient section and limits itself to just a couple of pages for 'modern history'. This in itself bespeaks the fact that the ancient section of artefacts is seen by the museum itself as much more important for defining China for the world, than the modern, heavily ideological exhibition – which is also much less visited.

All these national-level museums (though less importantly with the Old Palace Museum which capitalises not so much on its collections than on its buildings) share the common feature that they display artefacts which come from all over China. Therewith, the artefacts become de-localised and re-contextualised:¹⁰¹ they do not speak any longer for the locality where they were found but are to illustrate 'Chinese culture'. The focus is less on the uses of the single artefact but rather on its aesthetics: it turns into an object of art (Varutti: 2014: 59–60).

Beyond the national-level museums, there are, however, also several provincial museums that figure in the 'patriotic education showcase bases' system, by this acknowledging that these somehow represent (and materialise) the 'identity' of their province as a contribution to the nation. In fact, this was closely following the Soviet model of regional museums (*krayevedcheskiy muzey*) which engendered a similar system in the PRC in the second half of the 1950s. (For more on this, see chapter 6 of the present book.) In the case of the provincial museums of which some

98 Jones (2013). Further retrieved zodiac animal heads are exhibited in the Poly Art Museum in Beijing, though some of the originally twelve are still missing. (This latter museum, though run by a company, has close ties to the government and the PLA, and pursues a 'lost relics recovery' programme. Cf. Varutti 2014: 49–50.)

99 The official translation now preferred is 'Road to Rejuvenation'. The term *fuxing* means, however, literally 'rising again'.

100 The 'Road to Revival' is not only the topic of the by now standard exhibition of modern Chinese history in the National Museum, but was designed at the same time as a documentary and then was turned also into an epic show. For more on the interrelated productions, see Müller (2013), chapter 3.

101 This has been addressed in scholarship on object 'biographies'. For the Chinese context, see Allard et al. (2018).

are included in the first ‘100’ list of ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ (Shaanxi, Ningxia) and many more in the following lists, mainly the second one, some in the fourth, artefacts and objects from all over the respective province are displayed. Here, on the one hand the provincial identity is to be stressed, but on the other the displays are to focus upon the particular contribution the respective province provided for the whole nation (which closely follows the Soviet model of regional museums).

The provincial museums are a particularly interesting case in the ‘patriotic education’ system since they are an intermediate broker in identity formation between the local and the national by defining the regional. From above, they are also deemed important since, as noted in chapter 1 of the present book, the grouping of sites in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system is officially according to provinces. The large quantity of provincial museums in the ‘showcase bases’ lists suggests that they are seen as a feasible intermediary. On the one hand, provincial identities have been described in scholarship as rather weak and construed by an ‘up-scaling’ process of existing local identities to the provincial scale by elites for specific purposes in China (Oakes 2000).¹⁰² On the other hand, one may recall that, e.g., with personalities, the very first information provided in traditional as well as modern biographies is precisely the region (followed by the county) they hail from. Obviously, historically speaking, ‘province’ boundaries shifted through time – as we already noted in the case of Yin Xu’s supposed ‘Henan’ character.¹⁰³ And in an ethnographic sense, most people would rather group themselves beneath the province level, largely following local ‘dialect borders’. However, the institution of ‘native place organisations’ identified by provincial names so frequently found in late imperial China suggests the provinces had some relevance also historically as identifiers (Goodman 1995), especially in farer away areas for people (temporarily) migrating. As Fitzgerald has noted, the province has become increasingly important at least since the late imperial times, and ‘provincial identities are negotiated within

102 This is put by Oakes in the context of modern-day economic motives since provinces have been assigned by the central government in the context of fiscal decentralisation since the 1980s the task to integrate all areas in their jurisdiction to distribute wealth and opportunities between them. Provinces, on the other hand, try to market themselves in competition with others for attracting capital, thus using certain aspects of ‘culture’ as a tool to distinguish themselves to this end. By this, they often, de facto, just use distinctive traits of one or more localities to stand for the whole provincial administrative entity.

103 The terms for administrative subentities equalling today’s ‘provinces’, changed over time. Fitzgerald (2002: 12–19) argues, that the provinces are nevertheless a rather constant territorial echelon through Chinese history and in spite of not being congruent with social, economic, or cultural patterns are an important site for negotiating identity constructions in a governmental context.

patterns of government as well as those of language and culture’ (Fitzgerald 2002: 13). Thus, the administrative unit of ‘province’ was – if secondarily – ‘filled’ with some identifying traits which might originally only have been characteristic of parts of the province’s territory.¹⁰⁴ The warlord era in early 20th century China also meant that local power-holders tried to mold ‘their’ territory into distinct units, most famously with Yan Xishan 阎锡山 who wanted to turn ‘his’ Shanxi into a ‘model province’. The structure of provinces was finally taken over by the PRC with only minor readjustments, and today, provincial ‘identities’ are taken for granted by most Chinese.

Provincial museums, an institution with strong underpinnings of the Soviet model of regional museums, always located in the provincial capital bespeaking their assigned role in the overall national system, in any case have the task to define and showcase a ‘provincial identity’. Given their integration in the ‘patriotic education’ system, this needs to be calibrated with a view to national agendas. Therefore, a look into listed museums with a strong ‘minority’ component are of particular interest: here, the term ‘province’ is not used but ‘autonomous region’, being on the same level in terms of administrative hierarchy, though. In the following, we will focus on the Ningxia Museum (which is the only such ‘minority’ case on the first list of patriotic education showcase bases of 1997), and the Inner Mongolia Museum (which is included in list 2 of 2001), while the case of the Anhui Provincial Museum exemplifies the more ‘standard’ Han perspective (on list 2 as well).

Case study: the Ningxia Museum

The **Ningxia bowuguan** 宁夏博物馆 (Ningxia Museum) (list 1, 1997), located in Yinchuan, capital of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, was the very first of any such minority regional museums taken up in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ listings. When it was designated in 1997, it was placed in a Buddhist temple of the (Tangut) Western Xia dynasty (11th–13th century AD). The name ‘Ningxia’ (lit. pacify the Xia) refers to the conquest of the Xixia (Western Xia) empire by the Mongols in the 13th century and thus keeps the gone-by Xixia linguistically as the identification marker of the region. The addition ‘Hui’ was given to the autonomous region for crediting the ‘hyphenated’ Sino-Muslims (Lipman 1996) as the major population group since the long gone-by Xixia for whom the region is designed. The Buddhist temple structure, however, does in itself not give any clue to the Sino-

104 One case would be Anhui (see also below) where the ‘typical’ associations of successful bankers and staunch Neo-Confucianists is originally connected to parts of the province only.

Muslim character of the region. In fact, one notes that the Muslim character is largely hidden in the overall presentation. In other words, the Hui play a minor role in ‘their’ region’s museum. Only with the new museum building, opened in 2008 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the autonomous region, the outer appearance started to suggest a more Islamic character, while built in the form of the *Chinese* character *hui* 回.¹⁰⁵

The materials on this ‘patriotic education showcase base’ nominated in 1997, including also the nationally broadcasted TV film clip of *Ai wo Zhonghua* (disc 9) (while the educational *Zhonghua hun* video collection did not cover it), are referring to the original location in the Buddhist temple (which in turn became a heritage site in its own right after the museum’s main exhibitions moved out). The *Ai wo Zhonghua* ‘patriotic’ film clip is striking in so far as it virtually shows nothing of any Islamic exhibits to the national TV audience. It rather starts its ‘patriotic’ narrative with pointing out how Ningxia is geographically connected to the Huanghe (Yellow River), stating only that it developed a ‘special’ kind of Chinese culture. Talking about the population, the film clip shows a busy street, while any special marker of Islam (most easily identified with the head gear) is conspicuously absent. The temple, as mentioned originally of (Tangut) Xixia times and renovated later, also provides visually a fully ‘Chinese’ impression, sustained further by a visual stress on the pagoda and the Chinese-style roof figurines. The exhibition, it is stated, was only opened in 1988 (i.e., at the 30th anniversary of the autonomous region and thus very late for a provincial museum, though de facto a predecessor had been created in the 1950s). The presentation of the exhibition tellingly starts with the Silk Road and the Xixia. Thus, Buddhism, the dominating religion in Xixia times, is stressed, while some glimpses disclose the links to Tibetan Buddhism (the Tanguts being possibly ethnically linked to the Tibetans and in any case for quite some time culturally influenced by them as well as by the Chinese). The Xixia script is shown which is clearly inspired by the Chinese script in form (though deciphering it is an ongoing scientific challenge). An equivalent to the multi-script Rosetta Stone (which helped decipher Egyptian scripts), i.e., a stone bearing inscriptions in Xixia and Chinese characters is shown (which helped to decipher parts of the Xixia script) as one of the exhibition highlights, beyond the artistically appealing famous reclining bronze cow, again of Xixia times. This is to show to the national TV audience (and possible future tourists to the site) that the museum also holds some high-class artefacts (including national-level first-class ones not moved away to Beijing).¹⁰⁶

105 See Peng / Feng in the *Fengbei* series (2019: 152).

106 Artefacts are also labelled hierarchically, with ‘national treasures’ being the highest, followed by first-rate, second-rate etc. labelling on the national and accordingly lower administrative levels.

CGI scenes are interspersed in the film clip to recall the Mongols' conquering the Xixia which meant that empire's end.¹⁰⁷ The ruins of the Xixia necropolis 'pyramids' (as 'foreigners' are said to call them) are shown, with dancers and soft ethnic music added to suggest their attractiveness as a tourist destination. After the Xixia topic, the film clip switches abruptly to Mao and the revolutionary history of Ningxia without filling in anything between the Xixia's demise (by the Mongols) and Mao, i.e., skipping the 'Muslim' history, as the former two topics were suggested to be the main issues in the exhibition.¹⁰⁸ Weapons, including pistols and firearms, dominate as 'first-rate relics' in this 'revolutionary history' part of the museum, besides photos and explanations. Here, normal visitors are shown touring the exhibition, again soliciting the national TV audience to consider visiting as tourists, too. The Chinese translation of the Communist Manifesto by Cheng Fangwu 成仿吾 and Xu Bing 徐冰, in turn, visually focused upon thereafter, is to mark the province in 'red' terms. The Long March which went through Ningxia is also memorialised by a famous poem of Mao (Qingpingyue: Liupan shan 清平乐·六盘山) (Liupan Mountain: to the melody of Qingpingyue) that he wrote there in October 1935 when moving north toward the Great Wall.¹⁰⁹ (Edgar Snow, the American journalist who provided the information on much of all this, is however not mentioned).¹¹⁰ Military topics are stressed in this Long March context, including the (de facto disastrous) Western Expedition of the Red Army (in 1936), only briefly acknowledging the 'good relations' the Communists and the local imam supposedly built up – which at least hints at the topic of Islam and the Hui. The endeavours to spread literacy are

Cf. also appendix 3 of the introduction of the present book for similar graded labellings, e.g., of museums.

107 One may note that in contrast to this image of the threatening riding Mongols extinguishing the peaceful Buddhist Xixia kingdom, the newer summary narrative on the Ningxia Museum in the *Fengbei* series (Peng / Feng 2019: 151–160) turns the role of the Mongols around as absorbing the 'advanced economy and culture' of the Central Plain, i.e., the Han-Chinese one, to then develop Ningxia (there p. 153)!

108 One may note that the Soviet model of regional museums which the PRC took over in the 1950s envisioned three parts of an exhibition: the natural surrounding, the pre-revolutionary history and culture, and the revolutionary one. For more on the Soviet museum model, see chapter 6 of the present book.

109 An annotated translation can be found in Zhang / Vaughan (2002: 64–65). The line 'bu dao changcheng fei hao han' 不到長城非好漢 can be interpreted in various ways. (Literally: if one does not arrive at the Great Wall, one is no real man.) It has been understood also as simply meaning that Mao wanted the course of the Long March to be directed to the North up to where remnants of the 'Great Wall' were, i.e.: we should boldly go that way. The line has, however, come to be also more symbolically interpreted to argue for Mao's appreciation of the 'Great Wall' as such. In this sense, it is usually referred to in recent times.

110 For Snow's role as a crucial information provider on this time, cf. Ishikawa (2022).

one of the few instances when the local population in Ningxia is mentioned at all. Jumping to 1949, the narrative goes on with Ningxia's being 'liberated peacefully' by the PLA (without saying anything of who was ruling the area before – Muslim warlord Ma Hongkui 马鸿逵, a staunch anti-Communist). An only short visual reference to Islam is integrated when showing historical footage on applauding happy people after the 'liberation', where women wearing white head scarfs can be spotted. In the end, brief reference is also made to pre-history and ancient history, i.e., from Neolithic times to the Xiongnu of Han times (206 BC–220 AD), and some later Chinese artefacts held by the museum are also mentioned. But the glaring absence of anything typically 'Hui' in this film clip shown on TV in all of China of the regional 'Ningxia Museum', which was to serve for fostering not only patriotism but also inner-Chinese tourism, is striking. The regional is completely merged into the national in this case, and the regional history is reduced to the long-defunct Buddhist Xixia legacy, and, of course, the Communist one, leaving out the Hui.

The original exhibition, which is also dealt with in the benchmark 'patriotic education' booklet series' respective volume on the museum (Zhong et al. 1999), however, had three parts of which the second (not covered in the *Ai wo Zhonghua* film clip) at least dealt with Hui customs, while the first part focused on the 'common' Chinese history to which Ningxia contributed, be it in premodern times,¹¹¹ be it during the Communist revolution.¹¹²

The last part (equally not addressed in the *Ai wo Zhonghua* film clip) focused on the ancient petroglyphs found in the province (by this going far back in time suggesting the rather recent Sino-Muslims as historically not too important after all). Notably, the colour illustrations attached to the volume in the book series do not include anything specifically Islamic either. However, different from the film clip, the history of the museum is presented in the booklet as longer than suggested there. While the present Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region was set up in 1958, soon after, a predecessor of the museum was founded in the rush to building up museums as in the Soviet model (where the minority 'nationalities' had received attention). However, in the Ningxia case, that predecessor institution did not contain 'Hui' in its

111 Strikingly, the historical nomadic tribes living in the Ningxia area for centuries are called 'minorities' (Zhong et al. 1999: 12), and their archaeological findings are thus de facto incorporated into a historical narrative of 'China'.

112 Notably, the description reveals a Han perspective since, e.g., Mao Zedong is described as 'inspecting' a mosque as he would do at whatever other place, chatting with the imam (Zhong et al. 1999: 33), or Communist meetings held in prayerhalls (Zhong et al. 1999: 39) without even noticing that from a Muslim perspective, entering a mosque's prayerhall as a non-Muslim is usually not acceptable.

name, just ‘Ningxia’.¹¹³ In 1973, notably during the latter half of the Cultural Revolution which had caused a stop to all cultural activities in the preceding years, the name (with ‘Hui’) was set for the museum, and in 1991 Jiang Zemin provided his authoritative calligraphy for the museum’s name (Zhong et al. 1999: 4). The travelling exhibitions the museum was involved in elsewhere, however, also largely evaded the Islamic identity and rather focused on Ningxia’s other legacies.

In recent years, while the Buddhist temple has become secondary as a venue for the museum and is rather visited in its own right, the new imposing museum building is to reflect Ningxia’s ‘specialty’ by referencing Islamic architecture at the outside. According to the museum’s leaflet – which I collected on-site in 2016, the new building was designed to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Autonomous Region (2008).

However, upon entering, the visitor is presented in the entrance hall, again, with another focus than Islam, putting Ningxia in the Silk Road context by a red-haired man with a camel – in 2016 at the time of my visit even more fitting as the Silk Road reference is a central topic for the political agenda of the Xi Jinping era. The whole basement exhibition focuses on non-Islamic factors, namely the Tang dynasty Sogdians who were present in the region, carrying also various religions with them (some now being extinct in China), the strong interaction with the Han, the Buddhist Tangut Xixia kingdom (11th–13th century) which had its capital in modern Yinchuan, and Ningxia’s ‘revolutionary contribution’ of the 20th century, which is quite detailed.

With the revolutionary Liu Zhidan 刘志丹, a (non-Hui non-Ningxia) cadre building up the revolutionary base area covering parts of neighbouring Shaanxi and Gansu,¹¹⁴ it is only pointed out that the Hui and the Han supposedly fought ‘shoulder to shoulder’, and that the CCP respected the Hui, illustrated more directly by a banner they presented to a Hui imam, thanking for the help received (see fig. 2.2.1).

Recreated scenes are to show that Ningxia people also helped by providing shelter to (or ‘welcoming’) Communists, namely Red Army troops led by general Peng Dehuai 彭德怀, and also hosted sympathetic foreigners like the American

113 According to the locally available leaflet of the museum, this precursor was designed in 1959 but only officially established in 1973.

114 One may note that Liu Zhidan, who was nearly executed during an inner-Communist purge, but sustained by Mao, died in 1936 in battle and was declared a ‘martyr’ by Mao. He was connected to the father of Xi Jinping which additionally might have helped to put stress on him in the Xi Jinping era. (The Shaanxi–Gansu base area would cover also parts of Ningxia, if after Liu’s death, and is thus commonly known as Shaan–Gan–Ning Border Region or as the Yan’an Soviet.)

leftist journalist Edgar Snow and the American-Lebanese physician George Hatem (who are shown in a dio-rama).¹¹⁵



Fig. 2.2.1 Red banner ‘love the people like heaven’ presented by the Han Communists to the local imam, Ningxia Museum (Yinchuan) (photograph by the author, 2016)

115 There is a locally sold publication of a popular story-telling kind (Wei 2009) specifically addressing Snow’s visit (and the CCP’s uneasy stand in Ningxia) which was reflected in the Edgar Snow’s famous *Red Star over China* (1937, many times reprinted and later enlarged) which was so decisive for creating Western sympathies for the Communists in China. (On the book and its influence, see most recently Ishikawa 2022). Roughly a fourth of Snow’s travel account was concerning Ningxia. Notably, according to Wei (2009: 88), George Hatem (with his Lebanese background) served the Communists well in dealing with the local Muslims, though the assertion that his Arabic language skills helped in communicating CCP slogans to them is unlikely, given that the Hui do not speak Arabic or read it easily, just studying it in the context of the Koran. From the CCP side, the key figure on the difficult terrain of Ningxia was Peng Dehuai who is credited for tactics to make the Hui accept the Communists without selling them out to the GMD or their own local leaders.

‘National’ concerns are also pointed out by a famous scene of the popular street theatre play ‘Lay down your whip’ on poor refugee street performers,¹¹⁶ shown as Manchurians driven from their homeland by the Japanese occupation: a destitute old father attacking his starving daughter with a whip to go on performing for earning some money (which is going to be dramatically stopped by an actor posing as audience to redirect anger of the spectators at the ‘real culprits’ causing the plight: the Japanese), but here put in a Ningxia setting among locals. The message is: do not attack other Chinese (the CCP’s key slogan to stop Chiang Kai-shek fighting them) but the Japanese – and the Ningxia audience supposedly sustains this plight of their ‘fellow compatriots’ from Manchuria with great sympathy, welcoming the ‘liberation’ of the common people which the Communists suggest to bring.¹¹⁷

Only the upper floor of the new museum addresses the Muslim identity of the Hui more directly, though it clearly points out that the Hui (the ‘hyphenated’ Sino-Muslims) are culturally close to the Han. E.g., Ming-era artefacts show their Islamic identity only via Arabic script used on them, otherwise looking ‘Chinese’, while architecture is the most obvious ‘Islamic’ element in all. Arabic calligraphy in ink brush or hanging scroll paintings also suggest a mix of Islamic and Han-Chinese styles, while eating utensils with yin-yang-formed metal plates and chopsticks underscore that in spite of Islamic flavour provided by Persian-inspired metal work, the substance is still close to the Chinese Han majority culture. Major explanations in the new museum are also provided in Arabic script, though the primary language remains Chinese, in fact drawing the conclusion at the end of the exhibition that the Hui of Ningxia (historically known for being prone to uprisings and rebellions) are special, but still good Chinese ‘patriots’.

The Xi Jinping-era update of the museum’s perceived ‘patriotic’ role as reflected in the 2019 *Fengbei* series on the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ (Peng / Feng 2019: 151–160), in turn, rather stresses the benign influence that Ningxia received from ‘the centre’,¹¹⁸ namely the Central Plain as ‘core’ region of China historically, and that Ningxia was since old a place for various ethnicities to ‘pass through’, thus undermining an exclusive identity construction centering on the Hui who only took roots there since Yuan (13th–14th century) times. In short, the longer historical perspective decentres the Hui automatically. Interestingly, beyond the bronze cow of

116 The street play was originally written in 1931 with an anti-GMD stance, then adapted to the anti-Japanese war and performed all over China. See Hung (1994: 57–64).

117 Since the Hui in Ningxia were used to be governed by their own local strongmen and had a long history of uprisings, to convey to them a notion of ‘patriotism’ to participate in the ‘common cause’ against the Japanese during the war was at issue.

118 This fits well with the perceived stress on ‘gratitude education’ for the minorities current in China today. See Wan / Vickers (2024).

Xixia times as one of the top artefacts of the museum, this new presentation focuses on a late Qing map held by the museum not mentioned in the earlier presentations of the museum, which shows the Qing empire in its largest extension: this piece not only is evidently not specifically ‘Ningxia’, but it clearly puts the nation and its territorial claims upfront, further decentring the Hui identity definition of ‘their’ region. In sum, the case of the Ningxia Museum reflects how ‘patriotic’ readings lead to a not only highly selective, but even distorting representation of local identity and history in the case of an area that has been historically known for its ‘unruliness’ and local strongmen, to make sure national agendas are duly served.

Case study: the Inner Mongolia Museum

While Yinchuan’s Ningxia Museum was the only minority area museum listed among the first ‘100’ of ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ (and as the only site for Ningxia in that list altogether), though with a largely non-Hui narrative, as we observed, more museums appeared on the second list. This included the one in Hohhot (incidentally once called Guihuacheng 归化城 by the Ming dynasty, lit. ‘city returning to civilisation’), the capital of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region which was the very first of the Autonomous Regions in China to be established (in 1947, i.e., even before the PRC itself!). The **Nei Menggu bowuguan** 内蒙古博物馆 (Inner Mongolia Museum) (list 2, 2001) is also the oldest of such museums in a minority area. Like many other provincial museums, this is a so-called ‘comprehensive’ (*zonghexing* 综合性) museum, i.e., presenting the cultural as well as the natural aspects which mark the region (as in fact the Soviet regional museum model suggested). While the Ningxia Museum holds a considerable number of artefacts, in the Inner Mongolia Museum, dioramas play a very eye-catching part in its exhibition.¹¹⁹

The official ‘patriotic’ narrative provided on the second list sites (Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu xuanjiaoju / Zhongguo dabaiké quanshu chubanshe 2002: 274–275), treats the museum remarkably briefly, although it is pointed out that it was the very first minorities museum opened to the public (in 1957),¹²⁰ and is one of the sightseeing spots in Hohhot. The museum presents the historical minorities of the area, but also the revolutionary history, and fossils (for which Inner Mongolia is

119 Varutti (2014: 62) has even called them a ‘characteristic trait’ of Chinese museums, although this is certainly not a singular distinction.

120 One may note that the Ningxia Museum discussed above, though prepared for at that time, too, did not open before the Cultural Revolution.

especially noted).¹²¹ Museum highlights are, in fact, the dinosaur and early mammal finds in the nature section, while exhibited cultural objects come from various nomadic cultures, including a Xiongnu crown, but also objects of various Mongol tribes. Throughout, though, ethnic intermarriage, e.g., with the Manchus, is stressed in the official ‘patriotic’ narrative, while more distinct issues like religion are only briefly mentioned, as is music. For revolutionary times, ‘progressive’ publications concerned with Inner Mongolia are exhibited, including Mao’s 1935 declaration to the Mongols of Inner Mongolia (when the Japanese tried to split Inner Mongolia off from China) to warn them against the Japanese and the warlords and rather join the Communists, and the Mongolian top Communist and PLA general, Ulanhu (Wulanfu 乌兰夫), is given due attention.

The museum (up to 2008 and thus in the official listings called Nei Menggu bowuguan, thereafter Nei Menggu bowuyuan 内蒙古博物院 and in a new more lavish building as we noted also above in the case of the Ningxia Museum) is also visually treated for the national TV audience by the *Ai wo Zhonghua* film clips (disc 11), reflecting the times of the early 2000s. At that time, the museum, established in 1957 in a Soviet-style building, was still housed in that building, with a galloping horse statue on top. According to the film clip’s narrative, the horse is to symbolise Mongol ‘advance and development’.¹²² Inner Mongolia is first characterised as the ‘home of fossils’, the most spectacular being the skeletons of dinosaurs found, while for ancient culture, the contribution of the ‘many ethnicities’ living in the area through time is stressed. For the ancient culture part, stone age artefacts to bronzes of the Donghu 东胡 culture (7th–2nd century BC) (clearly influenced by Han-Chinese bronzes of the simultaneous later Zhou period), are to demonstrate local cultural development early on. The better-documented Xiongnu 匈奴, China’s chief rival in the north through much of Han times (206 BC–220 AD), followed. Here, the famous story of Wang Zhaojun 王昭君, a beautiful court lady presented by the Han emperor to the Xiongnu chief to bolster relations with this problematic neighbour, is interspersed to again make the point of Han-Chinese benign influence.¹²³

121 This conforms to the Soviet model’s triad of nature, prerevolutionary history and culture, and the revolutionary era.

122 Bulag (2002: 12) notes that the horse is shown galloping towards the South (i.e. China proper), not towards the North (the Republic of Mongolia) which would imply ‘national splitism’.

123 One may note that this topic was not only often treated in imperial times but also in the 20th century. On a side note, Guo Moruo wrote also on her, if very early before his full turn to Communism: at that time, he even figured Wang could have liked her time in the steppe. This, of course, was highly untypical a view. Bulag (2002: 72) has called Wang Zhaojun ‘the most heavily and continuously written-about woman in Chinese history’ and devotes a chapter to her (and similar cases of Chinese women married off for diplomatic reasons to ‘barbarians’) and the Chinese male anxieties

The subsequent Xianbei 鲜卑 were the first from the steppe to enter the Central Plain (during China's period of disintegration after the fall of the Han dynasty). This was, according to the film clip's narrative, the first time of ethnic merging (thus easily turning foreign domination of the northern part of China into a positive narrative of how China absorbed the minorities). The relation to the Silk Road also brought the strong influence of Buddhism to the area. The Khitan (Qidan 契丹), grown into formidable northern rivals by the time of the Song dynasty (960–1279), are the next focus, since excavated tombs can be cited to sustain the narrative of close (rather than rivalling) relationship between them and the Han-Chinese, represented in the museum above all via funerary objects: jewellery, jade and celadon objects, or metal work. Genghis Khan also appears tellingly in this narrative as foremost a unifier of the various Mongol tribes (and thus peacefully!). His grandson Khubilai, who established the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) in China, in turn is called the first minority (!) (bespeaking the viewpoint from the present) ruler of the 'unified' country (since the Yuan were the first foreign rulers over the whole of China). Again, the image of a peaceful ethnic unifier is evoked, and this is even hailed as laying the basis for today's multi-ethnic China! Thus, very clearly, history is twisted to breaking point to sustain the 'patriotic' reading – in an effort to take in the Mongols. Thus, the narrative also leaves out the Ming (who drove the Mongols out of the Chinese heartlands, though they remained a source of trouble for the Ming court) to address the Nüzhen 女真 (Jurchen) who were present in the area as well, then evolving into the Manchus. This prepares for the final Qing dynasty (1644–1912), pointing out the important Mongol role at the Manchu Qing court. This role included also descent, as is stressed with the Mongolian princess married to Abahai, the father of the first Qing emperor, Shunzhi 顺治. Thus, this Mongolian consort (Zhuang fei 莊妃), is claimed as the Qing dynasty's 'mother of the nation' (*guomu* 国母) (an evidently modern term)!¹²⁴ Via this condensed and highly problematic presentation of Inner Mongolia's history, the major aim becomes evident: to present the various local historical actors positively as 'contributors' and in harmonic relationship with the Han to prepare for the modern setting of a multi-ethnic China. Consequently, all aspects of conflict are edited out (as we also observed with the Hui in the Ningxia case). The film clip presentation links this up with an equally positive exhibition on folklore, showing types of jewellery and clothing worn by

expressed over this motif through time. See also Bulag's contribution in the exhibition catalogue on the Great Wall (Bulag 2006).

124 Sun Yat-sen – cf. also chapter 5.2 – was called 'father of the nation' (*guofu* 国父), and thus occasionally his wives (Lu Muzhen 卢慕贞 as well as Song Qingling 宋庆龄) were called 'mother of the nation'. Cf. Müller (2022: 230–231).

several minorities living in Inner Mongolia. Finally, revolutionary history is, if astonishingly briefly, brought up, where one however notes that not even the most prominent Mongolian in the PRC, Ulanhu, is mentioned.¹²⁵ In any case, he has his own site in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system and thus his own *Ai wo Zhonghua* TV film clip.

Contrasting this filmic representation done after 2001 (when the second list was promulgated in which this museum – at its old site – was included), with my on-site observation in 2016 at the new site, one notes that the entrance hall sets by now a more general theme of Inner Mongolia: the oral heritage. The visitor is greeted by the statue of a man playing a Mongolian fiddle as a ‘typical’ object representing ‘Mongolianness’ (see fig. 2.2.2), obviously singing a tale to the children at his feet. This stresses the strong oral (intangible) heritage of the Mongols – the intangible heritage being something much on the agenda in present-day PRC heritage policies.



Fig. 2.2.2 Statue of an old Mongolian playing the fiddle and singing to children at his feet in the entrance hall of the Inner Mongolia Museum (Hohhot) (photograph by the author, 2016)

125 One may add that he had been attacked during the Cultural Revolution and since then was removed from Inner Mongolia. Cf. Bulag (2002: chapter 7) on his career.

The main language used in the museum is Chinese. Only for the more important explanations, English and Mongolian is added. Dioramas show the different sub-categories of Mongols and their living in an ethnographic style, while in the historical section Genghis Khan is to show how Mongols would ‘contribute to Chinese culture’,¹²⁶ namely after Genghis when the Yuan dynasty was established in China by his grandson Khubilai, including also a stress on the Mongols’ fondness of Lamaism (which, in turn, binds them and the Tibetans together and in consequence both to China, reinforced by the later Manchus who shared this inclination and brought the areas of Mongolia and Tibet into their Qing empire).

The Mongols (at Yuan times) are also portrayed as the ones through whom exchange with the West was possible (while they are said to have also protected the Northern border, namely against the later Tsars’ ambitions!). The earlier medieval Tuoba 拓跋 as well as the Khitan who established dynastic rules over parts of China at various points in history respectively are seen as ‘proto-Mongols’, thus extending the Mongol–Han relationship backwards. This way, even before the Yuan dynasty, Sino–Mongolian ‘positive’ contacts can be enumerated, with the most glaring case being the portrayal of the ‘alliance’ the Chinese Song dynasty entered into with the Khitan-Liao rulers in 1004 – conveniently sidelining the fact that this was a major loss of face for the Song who had to acknowledge for the first time openly another ruler as equal to the ‘son of heaven’, and in fact ending in the Song losing the North of China altogether. This way, the blatantly forced history representation in the museum becomes obvious. Finally, also with the Mongols, their contribution to the Communist revolution is highlighted in the new museum’s version, here putting a special stress on the Mongolian general and key cadre Ulanhu,¹²⁷ whose Russian copy of Marx’ *Capital* which he used when studying in Moscow’s Sun Yat-sen University, is exhibited. While this prepared for Inner Mongolia’s ‘red’ future, a map on the Japanese ‘perfidy’ to create a separate ‘Mongolia’ (Mengjiang 蒙疆) in 1939–1945, shows the danger the Communists had to fend off (cf. Mao’s declaration of 1935 to the Mongols of Inner Mongolia mentioned above), not because of Mongolian secessionism, but because of foreign interference by the Japanese. This finally leads the viewer to the statement that Inner Mongolia was, in fact, the first autonomous region granted by the CCP (in 1947, i.e., before the founding of the PRC), which ‘liberated’ the area and furthered the integration of Han and Mongols. That Ulanhu, the figurehead of Mongolian Communism, was heftily attacked during the Cultural Revolution is, however, not mentioned, neither that he engendered the programme to have 3.000 Chinese orphaned children adopted by Mongols during

126 One may note that Genghis Khan has been often called in PRC textbooks a ‘Chinese’ hero!

127 On his decisive role for Mongols in the PRC, see Bulag (2002), especially the final chapter.

the Great Famine (1958–1962) following the Great Leap Forward.¹²⁸ (Ulanhu had, in fact, managed to block the introduction of radical Maoist policies into Inner Mongolia, where he was the supreme leader, by arguing for the predominantly pastoral Mongols being a different case than the agricultural Han. This resulted in Inner Mongolia being the least-affected area by the Great Famine, but his blocking of radical policies in his ‘kingdom’ was held against him when the Cultural Revolution set in.)¹²⁹ On the other hand, his strong commitment to Communist China (Chinese being his mother tongue while he did not speak any Mongol himself),¹³⁰ his education in the Soviet Union (he spoke Russian fluently), while keeping Inner Mongolia away from the Mongolian People’s Republic, made him ‘the’ minority cadre for Beijing.¹³¹

Inner Mongolia with its large grass steppe and low population density is, however, also important for the Chinese state for present-day technical reasons, since it is a place where China’s astronauts can safely land, given the country’s ever more important space programme. This, however, also meant, the exhibition suggests, shifting traditional herding Mongols to make room for the aerospace industry, launching satellites or space rockets. Indirectly, this imagery positions the hyper-modern Han against the idyllic, but backward Mongol minority represented by the pastoral nomads – a common trope of representation of minorities. Furthermore, in a more rational assessment, the rich natural resources of Mongolia are also named as a contribution to the Chinese *patria*.

When comparing the exhibition (as of 2016) to the earlier filmic representation in *Ai wo Zhonghua*, it becomes clear that formerly, the aspect of natural history and the spectacular dinosaurs finds were at least seen as important as the cultural historical aspect to engender national as well as local pride. In the end, Inner Mongolia was and is China’s ‘home of fossils’. By now, though, cultural history and intangible heritage (an issue much on the agenda since the Hu Jintao era) has taken centre stage, especially in a ‘patriotic education’ context, as the Xi Jinping-era *Fengbei* summary (Peng / Feng 2019: 9–16) also shows,¹³² and history is seen even more overtly from the present extending backward to rewrite earlier times, e.g., regarding

128 The official stories woven around this programme are set by Bulag (2010, chapter 6) in the context of China’s evolving minority politics to create reciprocal affective bonding in citizenship. For the Great Famine, cf. Dikötter (2010).

129 Still, his family went on being a major player in Inner Mongolia after the Cultural Revolution.

130 He belonged to the Tumed Mongols who had given up the Mongol language and spoke Chinese.

131 Cf. Bulag (2002: 229), referring to Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping who labelled him as such.

132 Peng / Feng (2019: 9–16) only add as a new find of 2010 a Buddhist stupa by now exhibited in the museum.

the issue of inter-ethnic relations. The delicate question of Outer Mongolia's role is evaded throughout. But compared to the Ningxia Museum case, the Mongolian one at least gives 'its' minority an important place, enabling Mongolian visitors (pupils or grown-ups) an easier identification with the exhibition than the Hui in Ningxia who are, as we noted, largely written out of the picture of their own region.

Case study: the Anhui Museum

In contrast to the minority region museums discussed above, the **Anhui-sheng bowuguan** 安徽省博物馆 (Anhui Provincial Museum) (list 2, 2001) in Hefei is to show the more 'mainstream' Han culture, if with local specialties. This museum belonged to the very first provincial museums in the PRC, opened in 1956 on the basis of earlier smaller exhibitions representing northern and southern parts of the province (*Wanbei* 皖北 / *Wannan* 皖南) with a thematic focus respectively,¹³³ which already points at the heterogeneity of the province cut through by the major rivers of the Yangzi and the Huai.¹³⁴ De facto, Anhui province which is one of the more recent administrative creations in Chinese history, dating back only to Qing times, is no self-evident entity: while there is evidence of very early 'Sinitic' cultures living in the area which is celebrated in the museum, Anhui features de facto several distinct regions in terms of geography, from parts connected to the Northern Plain to mountaineous parts in the Southwest, including the famous Buddhist 'holy mountain' Jiuhuashan 九华山 and, above all, the tourist top destination and UNESCO cultural-natural mixed world heritage site 'Mount Huangshan' 黄山 (UNESCO [1990]). But also in terms of language and custom, there are distinct regions, some rather linked to neighbouring provinces,¹³⁵ while the culturally and linguistically most peculiar Anhui-internal region is Wannan (often called also Huizhou 徽州 after the major prefecture's former name, close to the Huangshan, and smaller than today's administrative definition of Wannan as the province's 'South

133 For the predecessors, see the volume in the 'Take you to the museum' series: Anhui-sheng bowuguan (2009: 8).

134 The simple north-south divide (*Wanbei* 皖北 / *Wannan* 皖南) is defined in this (administrative) context by the Yangzi, though the Huai was also an important divide, historically speaking. Furthermore, while Wannan is an established cultural-linguistic entity which de facto covers only a part of the area south of the Yangzi (for a map cf. Moser 1985: 114), the term Wanbei is only an administrative entity.

135 Cf. Moser (1985) who includes parts of his discussion of Anhui people in the chapter on 'Eastern Mandarin Peoples' (intending parts of Jiangsu and Anhui), and Wannan in the subsequent chapter on 'The Wannan, or Huizhou People of Anhui Province'.

of the Yangzi' part) from where the famous 'Hui(zhou) merchants' (*huishang* 徽商) came.¹³⁶ The 'comprehensive' (meaning geographical, natural, and cultural aspects-addressing) Anhui Provincial Museum situated in the centrally located provincial capital Hefei also prides itself as having been pointed out as an exemplary museum particularly by Mao Zedong himself who visited only this one provincial museum in 1958 and commented positively on it.¹³⁷ This, incidentally, gave the museum an edge over competing provincial museums, with the Shandong Museum having been presented in 1957 in the leading Chinese museum journal *Wenwu cankao ziliao* 文物参考资料 (Reference material for cultural relics), as the Chinese trendsetter among the provincial museums in following the Soviet model.¹³⁸ Viewed in hindsight, Mao's visit to the Anhui Provincial Museum where he was shown 'inspecting' one of the museum's top pieces, a huge bronze tripod of the Warring States period (5th–3rd century BC) representing the blossoming Southern Chu 楚 culture, stating that the Chinese people should learn about its history and creative force,¹³⁹ would be a crucial asset for museum staff to fend off destructive campaigns later, especially during the 'destroy the Four Olds' (old ideas, culture, customs, habits) campaign of the Cultural Revolution, and for asserting 'local' cultural traits.

The museum building was in itself already an architectural statement: when it was built in the 1950s, the Soviet style was – like in the case of the Inner Mongolia Museum – the reference which, in turn, integrated neoclassicist elements. The building would be put under architectural heritage protection by Anhui Province in 2007 and declared a tourist site in itself, while, as elsewhere and in the above cases of Ningxia and Inner Mongolia, a larger and more spectacular new museum building was designed which opened in 2011 with the slightly changed name as Anhui bowuyuan 安徽博物院 (Anhui Museum) – the term *bowuyuan* having a more refined touch than the 'normal' *bowuguan*, and leaving out 'provincial', by this taking also distances in name from the formerly stressed museum *hierarchy* to rather stress the regional *identity*.

In terms of 'patriotic education', the 2002 official descriptions of the second list sites deal with this 'showcase base' only briefly (*Zhonggong zhongyang*

136 The 'Hui(zhou) merchants' have been sometimes, if problematically, called by Westerners the 'Jews of China' because of their role in money-lending. On a national scale, they were a Southern counterpart of the northern Shanxi or Jin 晋 merchants.

137 Cf. Anhui-sheng bowuguan (2009) which cites this Mao praise as an endorsement.

138 See the reflections of the latter museum's director on how to learn from the Soviet Union's local museums best (for more on this, see chapter 6 of the present book): Shandong-sheng bowuguan (1957: 19–21).

139 Cf. Anhui-sheng bowuguan (2009: 9). A brief summary of the artefact itself is given *ibid.* pp. 43–44.

xuanchuanbu xuanjiaojū / Zhongguo dabaike quanshu chubanshe 2002: 635–637), like in the case of the Inner Mongolia Museum, suggesting that, after all, museums were deemed the less important sites for advocating ‘patriotism’ vs the more numerous ‘red’ sites in the ‘showcase bases’ system treated more extensively. The presentation points out that the museum was first opened in 1956 and presents nature, history, and society in general, and more specifically, as to its holdings, the bronzes since Shang, the coins of the state of Chu, the Han wall ‘paintings’, the ‘four treasures of the studio’ (brush, inkstick, paper, inkstone), and the commercial contracts of the Hui merchants are the highlights. In conventional Marxist fashion, the exhibits are to show the area’s development from ‘slave-holder society’ to ‘feudalism’. In the pre-historic section, the main object is the palaeolithic Hexian 和县 Man (partial) skull preserved (*homo erectus hexianensis*) (which is scientifically particularly important since, as mentioned above, the ‘Peking Man’ skulls excavated at the Zhoukoudian site have gone lost), and some other fossils are also mentioned, but more important to the ‘patriotic’ agenda is clearly the historical section from ancient China on, including also architecture. The existence of the special collection of Pan Yuliang’s paintings (see below) is, however, only briefly mentioned.

In the ‘patriotic’ *Ai wo Zhonghua* (disc 13) TV film clip, the Anhui Provincial Museum (Anhui-sheng bowuguan), at the time of filming (in the early 2000s) still placed in the old building of 1956, is presented – more attractively than in the above official written summary – to the national audience as a place where Chinese high culture is represented in condensed form (and thus worth a touristic visit). The museum’s standing as an educational base with plaques, including its being a ‘patriotic showcase base’, is pointed out to the viewers, by this underlining its officially endorsed educational role. The museum, featuring exhibitions on culture and nature of this province, Anhui, show, the TV viewer is told, that this province belongs to the South as much as to the North of China, which makes it special according to this narrative (and thus interesting and ‘inclusive’). The area is claimed to have been settled since a very long time, referring to the preserved (partial) skull of ‘Hexian Man’, and showing various stone age tools. The many different cultures leaving traces in Anhui through history are to document the multi-facetedness of the province, from the Bronze culture(s), which include northern and southern styles, over traces of Han times documented with Huaibei (the area north of the Huai river) stone artefacts (stone carved tombs in a peculiar style),¹⁴⁰ to the famous Huizhou

140 In fact, this type of stone carved tombs belonged to ancient cultures that went well beyond the present-day Anhui province’s Northern part to neighbouring Northern Jiangsu, Eastern Henan, and Shandong. Archaeologists have termed this the Qi-Lu region after these two ancient states of the Warring States period. (Cf. Li 2018: 4).

merchants in the South of the province of late imperial times, the typical Ming and Qing architecture of Huizhou, the ‘four treasures of the studio’ for which Anhui is so well-known, shown in the setting of a recreated scholarly ‘studio’, and the embellishing *paifang* 牌坊 (honorary arches) as well as typical carvings in stone, wood, or brick for decoration. This gives the TV audience a quick visual tour through the museum’s highlights for the cultural part of the exhibition. The natural history part, much shorter in this ‘patriotic’ film clip, features the most spectacular excavations and reconstructions of ancient animals once living in the region. Again, ‘northern’ as well as ‘southern’ fauna are there to show that Anhui had both. Only at the end, military visitors are briefly shown to look closely at the exhibition, to suggest that this museum has also a great ‘patriotic appeal’ for the armed forces!

If one compares this filmic ‘patriotic’ reading with presentations by the museum staff and ‘their’ museum as can be gleaned from the museum’s own volume in the *Dai ni zoujin bowuguan* series (Anhui-sheng bowuguan 2009), and addressed to youth as well as a ‘second classroom’ (cf. chapter 1 of the present book), one notes that the curators follow a somewhat different approach: they rather try to point out the Anhui particularities that would distinguish this museum from other Chinese museums. Beyond the heterogeneity of flora and fauna, for the ancient times, the local cultures,¹⁴¹ most prominently Chu culture, are stressed (though carefully interspersing comments on links to China’s ‘Central Plain’, too).¹⁴² Chu culture is not only reflected in the bronzes, including the famous tripod Mao had ‘inspected’, but also with documents written on bamboo providing insights into the inner workings of the Chu state (Anhui-sheng bowuguan 2009: 13). For later times, another ‘top’ artefact of the museum, a Northern Song period glazed wine jug with warming bowl, even made it into a postage stamp,¹⁴³ similar to key artefacts of Hemudu or YinXu, as we noted above (chapter 2.1). However, the museum also presents the ‘nationalisation’ of the local specialties in an international context: the ‘four treasures of the studio’ for which Anhui became famous in the Ming and Qing dynasties, made it into the Panama world exhibition (1915) as representatives of ‘China’, with a coloured world map design on a piece of solid ink winning a prize –

141 Those include the early states of Wu 吴, Yue 越, Qun Shu 群舒 (several small feudatories of early Zhou times, collectively called Qun Shu), and Chu. Pieces from former neighbouring cultures also were found in Anhui and are held by the museum. Notable pieces are, e.g., from Cai 蔡 which expanded into parts of Anhui (and was later swallowed by Chu).

142 This regards mostly Northern Anhui, to where already Shang culture ‘extended southward’ (Anhui-sheng bowuguan 2009: 33–34).

143 This was published in 1991. See Anhui-sheng bowuguan (2009: 14). Cf. ‘Youpiao shangzhe: T.166’ for an image of the 15 *fen* postage stamp.

by this ‘innovative’ piece demonstrating that the traditional art of ink production was also well alive and able to go with the times (Anhui-sheng bowuguan 2009: 14).

On the other hand, the museum also put on a special exhibition section on woman painter (and sculptor) Pan Yuliang 潘玉良 (1895–1977),¹⁴⁴ who went to France and Italy in the 1920s to study painting and sculpture and developed a very Westernised style. She was, however, no Anhui native but born in Jiangsu and sold to a brothel as a child, but bought out and taken in as a concubine by an early Republican revolutionary-minded Anhui official, Pan Zanhua 潘贊化,¹⁴⁵ who also wrote poetry and had connections to Sun Yat-sen as well as to fellow Anhui radical intellectual Chen Duxiu, the later general secretary of the CCP and future ostracised ‘Trotskyist’.¹⁴⁶

From her Anhui patron and ‘husband’ Pan Zanhua, Pan Yuliang took her surname ‘Pan’, and he was the one to realise her artistic skills and finance her training abroad, sending her as a first step to the Sino-French Institute in Lyon,¹⁴⁷ and then to Paris and Rome. Pan Yuliang’s amazing biography has been turned into novels and films, ever since woman novelist Shi Nan 石楠 triggered interest in Pan Yuliang in the early 1980s, making her known to the modern Chinese reader.¹⁴⁸ This spurred further research and filmic treatments, including a film of 1994 by famous director Zhang Yimou 张艺谋, with actress Gong Li 巩俐 starring as Pan Yuliang. In the Anhui Provincial Museum’s volume, Pan Yuliang is also carefully integrated into a more ‘national’ story of early Western-educated students later contributing to China, although her work became controversial in China in the 1930s. In 1937, she would move again to France, where she remained and died in 1977. At the time of her departure, the Second Sino–Japanese War broke out in full, making a return more difficult, but one may also recall that given the Republican government’s legal (if in practice not easily enforced) subscription to monogamy,

144 Her year of birth has been contested, but scholar Dong Song of the Anhui Museum argues convincingly for 1895. See Dong (2013: 2–4).

145 Well-known woman writer Su Xuelin 苏雪林, a classmate of Pan Yuliang in France, who later moved to Taiwan, wrote about Pan Yuliang stating that she was consequently ostracised by Pan Zanhua’s wife. Cf. citations in Teo (2016: 54, 87).

146 There is conspicuously little information on Pan Zanhua, although he contributed to the key May Fourth journal *Xin Qingnian* (New Youth) his former classmate and fellow Anhui native Chen Duxiu edited, and wrote poetry. (Incidentally, art connoisseur Chen Duxiu also would provide three inscriptions in 1937 for Pan Yuliang’s work during his political imprisonment in Nanjing by the GMD – cf. Dong 2018 – particularly praising Pan Yuliang’s use of ink fine-line drawing or *baimiao* 白描, a Chinese painting tradition flourishing since Song times.)

147 For the background of the Sino–French Institute in Lyon, see Müller (2001, esp. 347–351).

148 Shi Nan updated her literary portrait of Pan Yuliang after obtaining new information in Shi (2013).

concubines were particularly vulnerable in times of crisis.¹⁴⁹ In PRC marriage law, concubinage was clearly outlawed. Pan Yuliang's leaving China to never return might also have had this additional personal background.

In any case, with 'modern' and 'Western-style' Pan Yuliang, the Anhui Provincial Museum outbalances the province's more traditional image, namely defined by Huizhou culture, which is historically associated with the rich merchants economically, and with staunch (Neo)-Confucian conservatism culturally, meaning also a very restricted role for women (epitomised in the (in)famous 'chaste widow' arches proliferating in the area).¹⁵⁰ Pan Yuliang with her French-inspired portraits of women, including many nudes (which Republican-era Chinese critics already found particularly objectionable, leading to scandal and even attacks on her exhibitions in Shanghai), are a glaring contrast. It is notable that this Western-style artistic part of the museum is skipped in the 'patriotic' film clip.¹⁵¹ But the museum itself is proud of having received in the 1980s the bulk of the artwork of this exceptional Chinese woman artist posthumously from abroad who, however, did not venture to move back to the PRC in her lifetime.¹⁵² Pan Yuliang's painting style would not have matched Mao-era aesthetics, for sure, though she also had to struggle with preconceptions and expectations in the West where she was put in the exoticising and essentialising 'Chinese' as well as the gendering 'woman artist' category and found it increasingly difficult to sell her art and make a living, dying in rather poor circumstances.¹⁵³

149 For a short discussion of the delicate legal status of concubines between 'marriage' and the newly created legal category of 'household member' at the time, see Tran 2009.

150 Shexian 歙县 (Huizhou) is famous for whole archways with one honorary arch after the other, including those granted to the family of 'chaste widows' that would not remarry and even might rather 'choose' suicide than survive their husband.

151 The 2002 summary of the second list site (Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu xuanjiaojuz / Zhongguo dabaikie quanshu chubanshe 2002: 635–637) at least briefly mentions Pan Yuliang.

152 Pan Yuliang, while in France and also during exhibitions she did internationally, remained connected also after 1949 to the R.O.C.-side which was still the representative of 'China' on the international level at the time. A Chinese friend living in Germany who visited Pan Yuliang in Paris in her last years (when the Cultural Revolution was not yet over) also recalled that she did not dare to apply for an entry permit to the PRC because of her 'bad background' connected to Pan Zanhua's former (GMD) official career. (*Pan Yuliang quanji* vol. 8: 154).

153 Cf. Teo (2016: 66–68). Shi Nan (2013: first illustration section) includes a photo of her tombstone in Paris which also shows that in her final years she lived with Wang Shouyi 王守义 whom she had portrayed and who was a key figure in the Chinese community in Paris, owning a restaurant there. He had helped her over years before, travelled to the PRC after her death to convey some materials to Pan Zanhua's family, and would be buried with her when he died in 1981 (Shi 2013: 3, 191–193). One may note that the *Pan Yuliang quanji* (2015), volume 8, with additional materials

The museum's own volume, addressing youth (Anhui-sheng bowuguan 2009), though, proudly includes this special exhibition part edited out in the 'patriotic' TV film clip, even reproducing several of Pan Yuliang's paintings for the intended young reader. Dong Song of the museum staff and author of a chronicle of Pan's art, whose father had already worked for the museum when Pan's works arrived in 1984 (Dong 2013: 352), unfortunately remains somewhat vague on the background of the transfer of Pan's work precisely to the Anhui Provincial Museum. He only suggests that the key person to arrange for the transfer of her artwork from France back to China was Pan's former student, the noted Chinese woman cartoonist and niece of Republican-era writer Yu Dafu 郁达夫, Yu Feng 郁风, who petitioned the Ministry of Culture to support the transfer (Dong 2013: 311).

In sum, while Pan Yuliang herself was no Anhui native, her affiliation with Anhui resulted from her connection to Pan Zanhua, who had remained with his legal wife and children in China in 1937 when she moved again to France. During early PRC times, Pan Zanhua worked in the Anhui Literature and History Institute, but died already in 1959. With Pan Yuliang living abroad in France (where she remained affiliated with the Nationalist government by then in Taiwan), and given his own former connection to the GMD (Guomindang 国民党 or Nationalist Party) (and to CCP-accused 'Trotskyist' Chen Duxiu), Pan Zanhua would have been a likely candidate for having 'political problems' in the 1950s.

Popular biographies of Pan Yuliang in Chinese remain vague on this point (see, e.g., Yi 2003). A careful reading of the few post-1949 letters Pan Zanhua wrote to her reveals that in the 1950s, things were, in fact, not going too well for Pan Zanhua and his family (cf. *Pan Yuliang quanji* 2015: vol. 8). Pan Yuliang was apparently not expecting his early death in 1959,¹⁵⁴ but the letters she had sent were burned during the Cultural Revolution by Pan's family whom she had regularly sent money to from France after his demise (Dong 2018). The later transfer of many of Pan Yuliang's works to the Anhui Provincial Museum (while other works of hers went to Beijing's National Art Museum of China, i.e., to the 'national' scale) was thus possibly also connected to Pan Zanhua's former role and links to the Anhui heritage system.

from and on Pan Yuliang, evades the role of Wang Shouyi, and the Pan family poses in front of the tombstone in Paris (p. 152), discretely covering Wang's name behind flowers.

154 Pan Yuliang, who frequently wrote to Pan Zanhua, was apparently grief-stricken when she heard of Pan Zanhua's death which she obviously did not expect (Dong 2013: 259–260). The otherwise highly interesting volume in the multi-volume *Pan Yuliang quanji* (2015), containing (selected) written materials on her (volume 8), including also letters and poems from Pan Zanhua mostly before 1949, is clearly tailored along the Pan family's interest, but still discloses that Pan Zanhua and his family did not fare very well in the 1950s.

In any case, the Anhui Provincial Museum was proud of having received these special holdings and did several exhibitions on Pan Yuliang, touring also other cities, including Hong Kong, and a Pan Yuliang exhibition was even held in Taipei in 2006. She thus also ‘served patriotically’ in this sense, and was at the same time an important marketing device for the Anhui Provincial Museum in its self-representation.¹⁵⁵

Beyond Pan Yuliang, a further focus of the museum in its self-representation to Chinese youth is Anhui vernacular architecture, which was less delicate and also figured in the ‘patriotic’ film clip: in this case, too, Anhui could be shown as contributing ‘to the nation’ via its peculiarity, not the least since two Huizhou villages, Xidi 西递 and Hongcun 宏村, had earned the UNESCO world heritage title in 2000 (UNESCO 2000),¹⁵⁶ i.e., shortly before the Anhui Provincial Museum was labelled a ‘patriotic education showcase base’ in 2001. The museum’s exhibition on local ‘typical architecture’ is therefore an important part where the regional feeds into the national.

The narrative also wavers between asserting local (Huizhou) particularity (*difang tese* 地方特色) and representation of typically ‘Chinese rural architecture’ (*Zhongguo xiangtu jianzhu de daibiao* 中国乡土建筑的代表) of Ming and Qing times (Anhui-sheng bowuguan 2009: 58). Since architecture is less easy to present than smaller moveable artefacts, the museum provides some recreations in reduced scale and tries to show the building techniques, coupled with photos and parts of buildings, e.g., to show segments of a typical main hall, or typical embellishments like carvings on stone, wood, and bricks (see fig. 2.2.3).

With the famous arches of honour, notably nothing is said about those for the ‘chaste widows’, concentrating only on the artistically outstanding example for the local luminary, the scholar and official Xu Guo 许国 of the 16th century, sporting the calligraphy of famous Ming calligrapher and painter Dong Qichang 董其昌. This way, Huizhou is also shown as having been acknowledged for producing first-rate scholars for the nation.

155 For Pan Yuliang and her exhibitions from an art historical perspective, see, e.g., Teo (2016, chapter 1).

156 The villages were also often used as settings for Chinese films. For a recent discussion of the differences between the UNESCO viewpoint and Chinese tourists’ perceived ‘cultural moments’ at these sites, see Zhang (2020: chapter 5), going in tandem with Laurajane Smith’s sociological work on ‘emotional heritage’ (Smith 2020).



Fig. 2.2.3 Huizhou architecture represented in parts in the Anhui Museum to stand for Anhui's specificity (Hefei) (photograph by the author, 2016)

The palaeological part of the museum, in turn, is out of itself the most popular with children, figuring a mammoth skeleton and various pre-historic animals of which fossils have been found in Anhui, as well as the (partial) skull of Hexian Man (see above). This part is the basis for the labelling of 'science education popularisation base' the museum received as well.¹⁵⁷ While science education has been especially stressed in the early PRC (Schmalzer 2008), one may, however, note, that the museum itself tends in its self-representation to focus more on the cultural than 'scientific' aspects of Anhui. This conforms to the national trend to reevaluate and step up Chinese 'culture' in education, especially since the 1990s, as science is less prone to show 'national characteristics'.¹⁵⁸

As I observed on-site in 2016, the visitor entering the (new) museum building in Hefei is by now greeted with a new identity marker: Hefei's famous great official of the second half of the 19th century, Li Hongzhang 李鸿章 dominates the entrance hall. Given Li Hongzhang's long-time negative image in the 20th century as a *maiguozei* 卖国贼 (lit: bandit selling out the country) for his signing the

157 See Anhui-sheng bowuguan (2009: 21). For the label, cf. Appendix 3 of the chapter 1 of the present book.

158 The museum, however, notably states that Anhui archaeologists 'received the task' from the state to search for traces of the origin of mankind (Anhui-sheng bowuguan 2009: 30). This has to be seen in the context of trying to challenge the 'out of Africa' thesis discussed above (chapter 2.1) with Peking Man.

'humiliating' treaties of Shimonoseki in 1895 (after the First Sino–Japanese War) and the Boxer Protocoll in 1901, in Deng Xiaoping's era and the changes in historiography on the late 19th century with a more positive view on the self-strengthening movement to which Li Hongzhang belonged,¹⁵⁹ this visual stress on Hefei's disputed 'great son' is a historiographical statement. Beyond him, other famous historical 'Anhui figures' are highlighted as well:¹⁶⁰ the equally controversial strongman of the 3rd century AD, Cao Cao 曹操, who brought down the Eastern Han, usually decried in conventional history but in his case reappraised both by Guo Moruo and Mao; the first Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, another traditionally decried autocratic figure and favourite of Mao; the successful Huizhou merchants of Ming–Qing times (more in line with Deng Xiaoping's reappraisal of China's commercial heritage); 'Anhui' as core of Neo-Confucianism (since the 1990s selectively reappraised in China, too) etc. In sum, the new museum has rewritten its presentation, at least in parts. It does also include some information on Anhui's technological and scientific side, from ancient copper mining to astronomy. Still, Anhui architecture (de facto Huizhou architecture) receives particular attention also in the new museum's version with an extra exhibition, pointing out its clearly distinguishable local flavour. And also the 'four treasures of the studio' retain their extra exhibition, with paper making and the production of the other three 'treasures' (writing brush, ink stick, and ink slab) detailed and visualised with dioramas, to present Anhui as core to Chinese civilisation and tradition.¹⁶¹ The museum thus puts the regional into the service of the nation by posing as one of its classical centres of Chinese (high-)culture (which also likely is to counter the modern image of Anhui as a rather backward and poor province providing housekeepers and nannies for rich families at the East coast, namely in nearby Shanghai).¹⁶²

The 2019 update of the site's official 'patriotic' framing in the Xi Jinping-era *Fengbei* series (Ding / Pan 2019: 155–160), in turn, very much stresses the political link of the Anhui Museum to Mao over the latter's 1958 visit, also legitimating the fact that the new museum's name, opened in 2011, has been written 'in Mao

159 Comparing history textbooks of the PRC through time, this change since the 1980s which asserts late-Qing attempts at 'modernisation' and economic development becomes evident.

160 As mentioned above, the historically late creation of the province 'Anhui' obviously renders any identification of earlier figures as 'people from Anhui' anachronistic.

161 Cf. also Oakes (2000: 678–679) about Anhui posing as an embodiment of 'Chineseness' which also is to serve as a counterweight to 'negative' present-day associations with Anhui, namely 'backward' Northern Anhui.

162 One may, however, note that in the era of Hu Jintao who had links to the province, Anhui developed more quickly and is catching up economically.

calligraphic style'.¹⁶³ In fact, the former name 'Anhui-sheng bowuguan' had been penned by Communist high-level cadre and general Chen Yi 陈毅 (157). (Chen Yi was noted as someone profoundly interested in collecting and preserving China's cultural heritage and, when mayor in nearby Shanghai, also patronised the Shanghai Museum.)¹⁶⁴ Given the heterogeneity of Anhui Province, this is by now solved by contrasting a general historical outline with thematic exhibitions which focus on single topics, mostly connected to the province's southern part. Pan Yuliang has notably disappeared once more from the Xi Jinping-era 'patriotic' framing, while the ancient bronze tripod, the celadon jug, and the late imperial art form of 'iron painting', typical for the Wuhu 芜湖 region, point to various regions in Anhui (to calibrate the Huizhou preponderance). The peculiar art form of iron painting, imitating brush paintings by treating iron rods, was also used for representing China internationally with exhibitions. On a national scale, it is also honoured in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, decorating the latter, i.a., with Mao's calligraphy of his famous poem 'Snow' (of February 1936) in iron (160). That way, the new 'patriotic' framing shifts the accent almost exclusively to culture and arts to define Anhui's contribution to the nation at large.

Taken together, the three regional museums discussed above show how regional identity had to be framed and negotiated vis-à-vis the national one to serve 'patriotic' agendas, but still keep the distinct local selling points for attracting visitors. Different target groups were thus addressed slightly differently, while the material holdings chosen for more detailed presentation in especially filming were more restricted to those 'nationally conducive'. The case of the Ningxia Museum's 'patriotic' framing reflected the uneasiness about the local Hui Muslim identity, while the Inner Mongolia Museum shows a more conciliatory and integrative approach. The Anhui Museum, in turn, poses as an embodiment of 'Chineseness', though largely over Wannan local characteristics, while the unique holdings of 'Western-style' woman artist Pan Yuliang less easily fitting into the 'patriotic' narrative are sidelined for the national audience, though played up locally. In all three cases we could also observe diachronically that the role of natural history (e.g., with fossils), which was a mandatory part of regional museums according to the

163 As Kraus (1991) already noted, Mao's calligraphy was often used in copy-and-paste manner of single characters glued together (generating a rather unharmonic assemblage) since he did not provide inscriptions that often, and obviously also could not provide inscriptions for names and titles given after his death like this new name for the museum, 'Anhui bowuyuan'. The use of Mao's calligraphic style is therefore something the museum had to legitimate.

164 Cf. Ho (2018: 5, 216–217), and Lu (2014: 112).

Soviet example, receded over time in China to put more and more accent on culture in the display, bespeaking also shifts in PRC educational goals.

2.3 Iconic constructions and landscape transformations

The last category of ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ to be addressed in this chapter are those larger material constructions and landscape transformations that were imbued with a translocal meaning or were even already built or engendered with such an aim. These include military as well as cultural and technological aspects. The most famous among Chinas iconic constructions and landscape transformations is likely the ‘Great Wall’, spanning (according to oft-repeated claims)¹⁶⁵ thousands of kilometres, though it never was one coherent entity but rather stretches of fortifications built at various times and most intensively during the Ming dynasty. The ‘Great Wall’ was inscribed as an entity in 1987 by the UNESCO as world heritage and is incidentally a good example of the problem to take over once and for all the descriptions provided by the respective nation-state at the time of application. Thus, to this day the official UNESCO website features several problematic if not outright wrong claims like the notorious one of the ‘Great Wall’ being the ‘only work built by human hands on this planet that can be seen from the moon’.¹⁶⁶ Since the topic of the ‘Great Wall’ that has been particular fascinating in foreigners’ eyes which to a large extent drove its reappraisal in China in the 20th century, has been dealt with in existing literature already extensively as to its historical and cultural aspects,¹⁶⁷ suffice it to say here that the ‘Great Wall’ is treated in recent Chinese school history narrative mainly from the angle of its materiality, how it was built with which type of construction materials, and its building structures etc., which is

165 For the problematic assertions around what has become commonly called ‘the Great Wall’, see the by now ‘classical’ study by Waldron (1990).

166 See the respective ‘description’ entry of ‘The Great Wall’ on the UNESCO [1987c] website. Unsurprisingly, the Chinese public was disenchanted when the first Chinese ‘taikonaut’ who went into space in 2003 (if not to the moon) stated he did not see it. (Other astronauts staying longer in space – again not as far as the moon, however, noted that with appropriate weather conditions and binoculars they could even zoom in on skyscrapers. Either way, the ‘Great Wall’ was no exception to other built structures.) UNESCO, in turn, has simply added a general disclaimer on its webpages, shifting responsibility for contents to the respective nation-states – and thus keeps also such wrong claims without comment.

167 For an intriguing multi-perspective treatment in one volume, see the catalogue of an exhibition in Australia (Roberts et al. 2006).

nowadays to engender pride,¹⁶⁸ and only secondarily from its cultural side which has been for a long time rather negatively associated in China in the sense of exploitation and megalomania, associated with Qin Shihuang, China's first emperor and purported creator of the 'Great Wall'.¹⁶⁹

Emblematic for this view is the famous story of Meng Jiangnü 孟姜女, retold over centuries in China, whose husband was recruited for building the Wall at Qin Shihuang's time and perished there. When she arrived at the Wall to look for him and realised that he was dead, her bitter wailing even moved Heaven and let the Wall crumble to expose his bones so she could at least collect and bury them properly.¹⁷⁰ Vis-à-vis this traditional view, Mao's rather favourable evaluation of Qin Shihuang mentioned above, and his views on the 'Great Wall' which he also mentioned in poetry suggested an at least not negative evaluation,¹⁷¹ and thus during the Cultural Revolution Meng Jiangnü was turned into a figure to criticise, while present-day history textbook versions try to strike a balance between acknowledging the massive labour required to build the 'Great Wall' (thus integrating the traditional 'Meng Jiangnü perspective'), and the ever more prominent pride in the famous 'Great Wall' as a showcase for China and national emblem printed even on Chinese one yuan bills.

Case study: the Shanhaiguan Great Wall Museum

In terms of 'patriotic education showcase bases', the first list (1997) includes the geographically spectacular and very touristic Badaling 八达岭 (lit.: eight eminent peaks) section close to Beijing, and the Gansu 'end point' (of Ming times),¹⁷² i.e., the fortress Jiayuguan 嘉峪关 controlling the Hexi 河西 corridor. The importance attached to the 'Great Wall', however, led to the fact, that in the fourth list (2009), a further 'Great Wall' site was included as 'patriotically' relevant, namely the Eastern

168 A special elective history course on senior secondary level with the topic of 'world heritage' dwells on the 'amazing' Great Wall and its construction in detail: *Putong gaozhong kecheng biaoqun shiyan jiaokeshu* (2007: 52–59).

169 Qin Shihuang had de facto likely constructed only few new walls, but reutilised earlier walls of the Warring States period. Cf. Waldron (1990: chapter 2).

170 For English translations of several versions of the story which received renewed attention in the 20th century in China, see Idema (2008).

171 Mao's respective poems mentioned but were not clearly judging the Great Wall as such. See also below.

172 The older Yumenguan 玉门关 of Han times, more to the West, was beyond the Ming territory and already ruined. Cf. Waldron (1990: 142).

‘starting point’ (of Ming times) at the sea at Shanhaiguan.¹⁷³ Being a very photogenic area and already part of the Great Wall UNESCO listing (see below), the place draws crowds of tourists by itself. The **Shanhaiguan changcheng bowuguan** 山海关长城博物馆 (Shanhaiguan Great Wall Museum) (Hebei Province), which is the site listed, in turn, takes over the task to explain the whole setup of the Ming Great Wall with its antecedents and to provide ‘education’ about the topic. The museum’s exhibition is thus also the focus of the *Ai wo Zhonghua* film clip, produced after the ‘patriotic’ nomination of 2009, presenting this ‘base’ to the national TV audience.¹⁷⁴ In the UNESCO listing of the Great Wall, all three locations, i.e., the ‘starting point’ (Shanhaiguan 山海关, lit.: pass between mountains and the sea) and ‘endpoint’ (Jiayuguan) as well as the famous Badaling section near Beijing, mark the Great Wall heritage entry together.¹⁷⁵ (This may also explain why this third site could not be left out in the ‘patriotic education’ framework.) In fact, when looking into Chinese school history textbooks, they focus on the length and thus more on the ‘beginning’ and ‘end’ points than on sections in between, and the ‘starting-point’ Shanhaiguan offers on-site also a whole ‘Great Wall Park’ for tourists today (where signs include English and Russian translations, bespeaking the main foreign target groups). One may note that with the definition of Shanhaiguan as the ‘starting point’, the part of earlier walls built in Manchuria and thus even further to the east, are by this implicitly left aside,¹⁷⁶ while Shanhaiguan, the ‘pass between the mountains and the sea’, highlights the maritime connection which is becoming ever more important to recent political agendas.

On the other hand, the ‘middle sections’ also involve the problem that there were historically various fortified sections or walls (mostly of rammed earth) at different points in time of which often not much is left and where no one consistent line can be drawn. In any case, the middle sections of Ming times when there was the most intensive wall building, at this point also using bricks and stone, bespeak the rather limited territory the Ming effectively governed in the North, which is not very feasible to stress for ‘patriotic’ uses today. The Manchus, who conquered China in the 17th century, extended the territory far beyond, and in modern China, inheriting to a

173 One may point out that in a sense there are other ‘Eastern starting points’ in Manchuria when sections of what today is collectively called ‘the Great Wall’ were built on lines further to the North, stretching East. See also below.

174 This fourth list site is not included in the DVD collection of *Ai wo Zhonghua* and could therefore be accessed only on the CNTV website ‘Wo de zuguo’ (2009) (which is by now defunct).

175 See the respective map tap of the entry: UNESCO [1987c]: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/438/maps/>.

176 This ‘eastern wall’ was to delineate the Han settlements in Southern Manchuria against the Mongols, the Jurchens, and later the rising Manchus.

large extent this territory, the by now inner-Chinese ‘border line’ is not very convenient to stress and less relevant than showing the extension with the ‘final points’. The Badaling section in between is the exception as it is close to Beijing, geographically spectacular, and was pointed out by Guo Moruo in 1952 as a fitting cultural site to be included for foreign visitors in diplomatic outing tours,¹⁷⁷ given the fame the Great Wall enjoyed abroad.¹⁷⁸ This section was thus restored extensively with its imposing brick-covered structure and was shown to US president Nixon during his historic week in China in 1972 (amid the ongoing Cultural Revolution), broadcasting the by then intensely restored site as a Chinese showcase to TV viewers all over the world.¹⁷⁹ Nixon, at home once known as an anti-Communist hawk, showed himself impressed and commented on the Great Wall as a sign of a ‘great people’ with a ‘great past’ and thus also likely a ‘great future’ – remarks that would be referenced frequently thereafter in China.¹⁸⁰ In this context, one may recall that Mao (who let vice president Li Xian-nian 李先念 accompany Nixon to Badaling) had mentioned (if not clearly judging-ly) the Great Wall also in his poems (though this did not shield the Great Wall from suffering destruction at several of its sections during the Cultural Revolution).¹⁸¹ And after Mao, Deng Xiaoping voiced the famous and in his case straightforward ‘patriotic’ slogan: ‘Love our China, restore our Great Wall’ (*Ai wo Zhonghua, xiu wo changcheng* 爱我中华，修我长城) in 1984 to collect funds for repair in preparation for the UNESCO application. The Great Wall was thus to represent China positively ever since, at least in the official reading (though not necessarily in the popular one).¹⁸²

Shanhaiguan as the geographically strategic point between the Northeastern Plain and the North China Plain where the natural barriers of mountains and the sea

177 This is pointed out, e.g., by the ‘patriotic’ booklet on Badaling (Qiao / Sheng 1999: 71).

178 As has been noted in scholarship, the Western notions of and fascination with ‘the Great Wall’ since the 17th century contributed to the (reluctant) modern Chinese reappraisal. Cf. Waldron (1990: chapter 11).

179 The photographs during this visit boosted the international image of the ‘Great Wall’ as a top touristic site considerably.

180 His speech there was televised and is easily available on the internet. Apparently, though, his visit to the Great Wall lasted only 15 minutes. Cf. MacMillan (2007: 285), who discusses Nixon’s week in China from an American diplomatic history point of view.

181 E.g., cf. Mao’s poem *Qingpingyue: Liupan shan*, written when passing through Ningxia (see above, 2.2) during the final part of the Long March in October 1935. That poem was not per se judging the Great Wall in any way, though the respective line has been twisted to suggest he hailed it. The Great Wall also figured in his poem ‘Snow’ some months later in February 1936, again without judging it per se.

182 Cf. Lovell (2006: conclusion). See also Rojas (2010) for various examples of modern Chinese artists dealing creatively and critically with this ‘icon’ of Chineseness.

come closest, has been historically particularly important since Ming times. The Shanhaiguan Fortress had been built by general Xu Da 徐达 in the early Ming (14th century) who had been a major figure in pushing the Mongols out of ‘China proper’ to establish the Han-Chinese Ming dynasty (1368–1644). It thus can be easily integrated into a ‘patriotic’ narrative. Its epithet of ‘the first pass under heaven’ (*tian xia diyi guan* 天下第一关) displayed over the main gate,¹⁸³ and used in many poems since Ming times to refer to the place, also underlines the self-assertive narrative connected to it as the point from where one ‘enters China’. The many poems written about Shanhaiguan (and the Great Wall in general) embody also parts of the intangible heritage connected to the wall and are displayed on spot in an outdoor exhibition (as I witnessed in 2015).

The military strategic function of Shanhaiguan was tested not the least during the Ming–Qing transition in the 17th century. The extensive protection integrating various kinds of military structures and the sea as a defensive measure are key features stressed at the site. The figure of Li Zicheng 李自成, the 17th century ‘rebel’ (hailed in Communist historiography) who ousted the ‘corrupt’ Ming court in Beijing while trying to stop the Manchus from exploiting the turmoil to cross the Great Wall, ‘nationalises’ Shanhaiguan as the point which should have secured the Han-Chinese from the Manchu invasion.¹⁸⁴ Li Zicheng is thus represented with a statue at the site today. As school history assures the pupil, only treason (by the Han-Chinese general Wu Sangui 吴三桂 stationed there who would not join Li Zicheng’s side) could make the Manchu invasion happen in spite of all the fortifications by opening the gates for them, and prepare the end of Li Zicheng’s attempts to establish himself as a new (Han-Chinese) emperor in Beijing.

Furthermore, the ‘patriotic’ stress on the role of the Great Wall also for maritime protection has a particular ring today in China’s increasing attention to the maritime sphere, pointing out China’s need to ‘protect herself’. Historically, this is linked to Qi Jiguang 戚继光, the famous Ming general fending off the ‘Japanese pirates’ (*wokou* 倭寇) in the 16th century along the Chinese coast,¹⁸⁵ who was also sent to

183 The calligraphy displayed is contested as to its author. Cf. Liu (2019: 196).

184 Notably, the Manchus in turn had themselves a borderline drawn in Manchuria to protect their homeland from (non-bannermen) Han-Chinese immigration (if not as a wall of bricks and stone, but rather commonly known as the ‘willow palisade’, *liutiao bian* 柳条边), i.e., allowed for civilian Han settlement only in Southern Manchuria up to that borderline, at least in theory. Practices, however, varied locally and through time. (A further borderline also had been drawn by the Qing in Manchuria towards the Mongols.)

185 It should be pointed out that these ‘Japanese pirates’ de facto were a mix of people with many Chinese also participating. They were a threat to China’s long maritime border, i.e., also far beyond Shanhaiguan.

reinforce the Great Wall at Shanhaiguan for this purpose, connecting the fortress with a walled structure right into the nearby sea – today’s famed photogenic spot called ‘old dragon’s head’. In sum, the whole construction is to show that this place, Shanhaiguan, has served ‘the nation’ by protection, as the official summary of 2009 on the site as a ‘patriotic education showcase base’ underlines, enumerating the major war instances,¹⁸⁶ and it points out the necessity for China of strong ‘defence’ capacities on sea as much as on land, while simultaneously praising the site’s UNESCO standing. Thus, special offers are to be directed at youths to make the museum serve as a ‘second classroom’. This call for strong ‘defence’ capacities is also the key theme in the newest ‘patriotic’ summary of the Xi Jinping era, which stresses for the intended domestic reader that China, in fact, once had the capability to defend itself and could only fall by treason (as the case of ‘traitor’ Wu Sangui in the 17th century showed). In fact, this ‘defence capacity’ of Shanhaiguan would be also acknowledged by the treason-profitting Manchu-Qing themselves *after* they had ‘entered *the pass*’, i.e., Shanhaiguan, to rule over China (Liu 2019: esp. 195–198).¹⁸⁷ That way, the Great Wall has not only grown into a symbol of China, but is framed in the ‘patriotic education’ context as proving both the architectural genius of the ‘labouring masses’ of once, and the defence capacities of the Chinese nation (203–204). And it fits well into the official narrative of a China that supposedly needs maritime power urgently, if for ‘defence’ only.

Case study: the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang

While the Great Wall has been a (contested) emblem of drawing the line between ‘the (cultured) Chinese’ from the (‘barbarian’) ‘non-Chinese’ over much of its history, later having turned into an ‘inner-Chinese’ line (which made for its being framed today in this regard rather uneasily as a ‘contact zone’, namely between the Mongols and the Han-Chinese),¹⁸⁸ other sites moved into the row of built ‘icons’ of Chineseness where even more than their geographical location, their cultural qualities are of paramount importance. Big Buddhist rock carvings and cave paintings found at various places in China have been widely acknowledged as Chinese cultural heritage. However, they were usually not considered for ‘patriotic education’.

186 See *Di si pi quanguo aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu shifan jidi xunli* (2009), pp. 30–34.

187 The Xi Jinping-era narrative also adds some legends for the domestic readership, not the least connected to Qi Jiguang and particular buildings at Shanhaiguan.

188 This interpretation can be found, e.g., in the elective course history textbook mentioned above (*Putong gaozhong kecheng biao zhun shiyan jiaokeshu* 2007).

The notable exception are the **Dunhuang Mogaoku** 敦煌莫高窟 (Dunhuang Mogao caves) (Gansu Province) (list 1, 1997) (equally part of the UNESCO World Heritage sites, being included in the first Chinese batch of sites inscribed in 1987, like the Great Wall) (UNESCO [1987d]). This is significantly the only site among the first ‘100’ ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ which has a religious background, although the religious Buddhist aspect is toned down to hail this site as, above all, a pinnacle of the Chinese art of painting (and secondarily of sculpture). The flying *apsaras* (celestial beings often depicted as dancers or musicians) motif is frequently alluded to in China in various contexts in its aesthetic quality as an icon, although one might as well point out that *apsaras* are per se a ‘foreign’, un-Chinese motif with a decidedly Indian-Buddhist background. In fact, it is remarkable that a place like Dunhuang made it into the first ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ list which rather privileges revolutionary history. Gansu province, for sure, does not offer much in terms of revolutionary history but for the most eastern part where the Long March went through, but other provinces don’t either. Obviously, whereas Tibet, e.g., is represented in the ‘patriotic’ listings not with the Potala (though the latter is a World Heritage site since 1994),¹⁸⁹ but with memorials for ‘anti-imperialist’ and ‘liberation’ struggles of rather limited historical relevance, Dunhuang as a place for a long time in oblivion, has less potential to be recaptured as a distinctly ‘Buddhist’ and un-Chinese site. The Potala would offer too much incentive to be read as distinctly ‘Tibetan’, whereas in Dunhuang there are at present no monks (the place had been largely given up in the 14th century) that would challenge the art-historical definition. And again, as with ‘Peking Man’ or Yinxu (see above, chapter 2.1), one should point out that Dunhuang was another ‘big discovery’ in the early 20th century. Once more, at first it was foreigners who made the place famous (and took away much of its treasures to display in various museums around the globe). Thus, this world-wide ‘recognition’ (cf. also the Great Wall case above) also explains in part why the site was chosen as a place to be proud of ‘Chineseness’. This easily includes also Overseas Chinese who are often listed as donating funds for maintaining this ‘common heritage’. In fact, materials on Dunhuang in connection to ‘patriotic education’ continue to stress that the place is important as a pinnacle of *Chinese* art, namely painting and sculpture, brushing aside the non-Chinese aspects, and as an aesthetic ‘jewel in the Gobi desert’ that demonstrated China’s presence in the Western regions early on.¹⁹⁰ Consequently, apart from the Buddhist caves, Dunhuang as an ancient Chinese frontier town is

189 Cf. also chapter 1 of this present book for the problem of ‘patriotism’ with sites like the Potala.

190 Examples of descriptions of Dunhuang in the patriotic education contexts are Fang (1999: 38–41); He (1997: 312–314); Wang / Zhou / Xing (1998: 546–547).

integrated into the narrative as well and how it was influenced by the ‘dominant’ culture of the ‘Central Plain’ to mark it as unquestionably ‘Chinese’.

Furthermore, with the famous ‘library cave’ containing lots of documents discovered in the early 20th century,¹⁹¹ the ‘patriotic’ viewpoint puts a stress on the fact that the daily life of the ‘Chinese people’ at former times has become more palpable as well (as is, in fact, the one of the many non-Chinese present there). Simultaneously, Dunhuang is, however, also characterised as a site of Chinese victimisation by the foreign colonialists (cf. above) who not only took away much of its treasures, but in their greed also wrought destruction to the site, e.g., by cutting and removing wall paintings to transport abroad, which should arouse justified patriotic indignation on the part of the present-day Chinese visitors (who in this case do not need to worry about any ‘Chinese’ destruction during the Cultural Revolution as the Mogao caves were cordoned off at that time).¹⁹² Further destruction, as the exhibition on restoration work in Dunhuang (as I observed in 2014) details, was caused by White Russian soldiers who had fled to China in 1920 after defeat in the Russian Civil War and were located in the area of the caves for five months on order of the then Chinese government. Given the cold nights and need to cook, and the desert environment, the Russians used wooden parts of the site for daily firewood inside of the caves, by this, however, also damaging the wall paintings. More recently, though, foreign as well as domestic donors cared for the caves and their conservation. Thus, in front of the caves, the present-day visitor encounters rows of short portrayals of such benefactors, including also the notable case of Japanese calligrapher Aoyama San’u 青山杉雨. He had collected dozens of precious Dunhuang scrolls and kept them in Japan, but asked his son to finally hand them back to their place of origin. That way, as the appropriate measure to atone for the former ‘colonial fleecing’ of the site,¹⁹³ restitution and donations for protecting what had been damaged are suggested.

This particular history of scattered treasures, though, led also to current international Dunhuang studies, since many countries and museums around the globe are involved and opted – rather than for restitution à la Aoyama – for cooperation, e.g., to build up a digital archive. Thus, Dunhuang is also a place marked by globalised

191 Some scholars call the cave ‘sūtra cave’ (see, e.g., Fraser 2004: 3–6) which translates the common Chinese designation *zangjīngdòng* 藏经洞. The ‘library cave’ contains, however, all sorts of documents, including those of other religions than Buddhism and also secular ones.

192 Interestingly, the exhibition on preservation in Dunhuang does not mention this rather special case of a religious site being spared during the Cultural Revolution. According to the staff of the Dunhuang Academy, this was due to Zhou Enlai personally (Duan 1991).

193 Museums abroad have, however, been reluctant to hand items back to Dunhuang. Thus, virtual cooperation has been proposed instead.

scholarship and features state-of-the-art facilities to display not only the caves, but also the information drawn from the findings by academic studies over decades in various fields. The Dunhuang Research Academy bundles the expertise from the Chinese side and provides the most important link to international scholarship.

When looking into the ‘patriotic’ framing of this top tourist site, one notes that in filmic presentation, the *Ai wo Zhonghua* TV film clip (disc 9) and the longer educational *Zhonghua hun* video version are in fact overlapping, i.e., the former is simply a shortened version of the latter. (This, in turn, discloses an interesting connection between these two different ‘patriotic’ filming enterprises, which in other cases, as we saw, rather produced two different film versions on one site, if apparently based sometimes on the same local TV footage). The video on Dunhuang, produced by the Gansu Provincial Audiovisual Education Centre, scripted by Xuan Chengdong 玄承东, a former journalist in Gansu and cadre, and Ren Zhongxuan 任仲选 of the audiovisual education centre, is in a rather slow tempo with long shots and music, more than text, which sustains the tourist-oriented ‘art-historical definition’ of this ‘patriotic’ site. It introduces the geographical place with views of the sand dunes behind ‘iconic’ famous painted motifs from the caves, usually *apsaras* or *bodhisattvas*, passing by, followed by stringed books on stacks to insinuate scholarship which is, the commentary underlines, the ‘pride of the Chinese nation’. Masses of visitors, including many foreigners, are to prove the tourist attraction of the site with its long history through ‘ten dynasties’. The caves are presented as a marvel of art also praised by Westerners (e.g., with the smiling ‘Eastern Mona Lisa Buddha’ of cave 259), and the flying *apsaras* are in the longer *Zhonghua hun* version also blended with a modern Chinese dance group imitating the paintings, linking the topic also to famous 20th century artist Zhang Daqian 张大千 who worked at Dunhuang in Republican times (but left the mainland in 1949), and to present-day Chinese efforts to preserve the caves. Predictably, it is claimed that preservation was best in PRC times.

As for the contents of the site, some of the famous Buddhist stories depicted in the caves are introduced, including the one of the Buddha (in a former life) saving a hungry tiger mother and her cubs by offering up his body. As the commentary adds in unmistakable ‘patriotic’ framing, though it is the (future) Buddha that is shown, this should be understood by the audience as also representing the Chinese people at large who do not fear to sacrifice themselves! (This forced ‘interpretation’ is incidentally also included in other ‘patriotic’ materials on Dunhuang.) The wall paintings are not only presented to the audience as to their obvious Buddhist content, but are interesting, as the narrative points out, also for representing Chinese daily life habits in history, and therefore they should be considered very precious for

Chinese citizens (be they pupils or the national TV audience) to learn about their past, too.

In the second (modern) part of the video, much shortened in the *Ai wo Zhonghua* TV version, the Daoist monk Wang Yuanlu 王圆箎 who discovered the ‘library cave’ in 1900 which instigated the interest of foreigners, brings up the ‘patriotic’ agenda even more clearly, since this is connected to the history of theft by those foreigners who took many of the manuscripts abroad. Interestingly, while the educational *Zhonghua hun* long version is much more explicit about the foreign ‘culprits’, naming them one after the other, the *Ai wo Zhonghua* TV version cut much of this section so that the viewer of this TV version is not confronted with this criticism very explicitly. Similarly, the issue of scholarship on Dunhuang is much abbreviated in the TV version for the Chinese citizen at large, leaving a rather positive impression of scholarly cooperation with international symposia showing the attraction of Dunhuang, while the longer educational version for classroom use keeps stressing that the main scholarship is, after all, Chinese, not foreign,¹⁹⁴ from the establishment of Dunhuang studies in late Republican times, and painter and ‘guardian of Dunhuang’, Chang Shuhong 常书鸿 (who remained on the mainland in 1949), to PRC times, suggesting to the viewer that the PRC particularly cared about protection and scholarly investigation. The longer educational video version also features shots of prominent Chinese politicians, including Deng Xiaoping, visiting this ‘cultural’ site (and therewith endorsing it), which heightens the ‘political’ feel the video comes with, in contrast to the shortened TV version cut down to rather focus on the more ‘touristic’ parts.

In line with the particular viewpoint of ‘patriotic education’ on Dunhuang, the ‘patriotic’ booklet (Zhang / Lu 1999) as well as other ‘patriotic’ renderings provide sometimes rather questionable assertions, e.g., when it is suggested that the famous *apsaras* are simply a kind of Daoist immortals (Fang 1999: 39), skipping their foreign provenance altogether, or suggesting the above-mentioned rather bizarre interpretation of the Buddha’s self-sacrifice as standing for the Chinese people’s readiness to sacrifice themselves for others (Wang / Zhou / Xing 1998: 546). In short, a certain uneasiness with the religious (and partly ‘foreign’) site content is palpable.

As Dunhuang is an important testimony of the ancient Silk Road, this is, however, also playing into present-day political agendas. It is thus connected also to the UNESCO listing of the Silk Roads (2014) as a border-crossing entry, covering several countries. In short, in present-day ‘patriotic’ view (as reflected in the Xi Jinping-era *Fengbei* series, Zhang / Zhao 2019: 11–22), Dunhuang is at the same

194 To underline the point, the PRC flag in front of the Institute for Dunhuang Studies building is visually highlighted.

time framed as a ‘patriotic education site’ and ‘icon’ for Chineseness, and as a transborder site documenting cultural contact over the Silk Road. While the new ‘patriotic’ framing still puts a stress on art, praising the murals and sculpture, it also claims that due to the fortunate peaceful surroundings, the caves escaped destruction when elsewhere Buddhism was persecuted at different points in time! (The obvious historical irony is here, that this was due to the fact that the area was simply not in Chinese hands at those times when anti-Buddhist persecutions occasionally raged in China.) That way, the narrative assures the reader, ‘*Chinese* traditional culture’ was preserved there well (emphasis added) (12). Only after the end of the Mongol Yuan dynasty when access to the Western regions was once more cut for China, the site fell into oblivion, until well into the Qing (13).

In terms of art, the most outstanding and iconic feature, the *apsaras*, are by now acknowledged as of Indian origin, but are said to have integrated Daoist immortals due to religious syncretism (14–16). Thus, it is claimed, one could still say that the Dunhuang *apsaras* have ‘Chinese cultural characteristics’ (15). The most ‘patriotic’ part of the presentation, however, is reserved for modern times with Wang Yuanlu, the Daoist. While conceding that he intended to raise money to repair the by then dilapidated caves, the fact that he, who discovered the ‘library cave’ in 1900, would sell manuscripts and art pieces to foreigners (starting with Aurel Stein, but then more importantly to sinologist Paul Pelliot, and then to Japanese as well as Russians and Americans) was something not to be forgiven (17–21). Still, it becomes indirectly clear to the intended young reader that only by Pelliot’s making the finds public in Beijing, Chinese intellectuals realised what was going on. They would then stage ‘the first cultural heritage protection activity in history’ (!) (20), but the historical irony was that at least what had been bought by the foreigners would be preserved well in museums abroad (in contrast to items that were supposed to be sent to Beijing for safekeeping but disappeared on the way), which are facts cautiously mentioned. Daoist Wang, in turn, likely (and supposedly deservedly) ended his days in mental derangement.

Contrary to this Daoist ‘traitor’, PRC scholars would, however, care well for Dunhuang. In this new ‘patriotic’ summary of 2019, the long-term director of the Dunhuang Research Academy, Fan Jinshi 樊锦诗, often called the ‘daughter of Dunhuang’, is explicitly praised for her life-long research, being instrumental from the Chinese side to set the huge (international) digitalisation project of the caves into motion. But on top of her scholarly credentials, she is also praised for having been an outstanding CCP member all the time (21–22). In 2009, she was chosen as one of the ‘100 personalities since the establishment of New China that moved China’, and in 2013 received the ‘Lei Feng prize’ as the highest PRC award for

civic morals!¹⁹⁵ (22). This way, ‘patriotism’ is connected not only to academic achievements of Dunhuang studies in China, but also clearly to the Communist Party.

Finally, whereas the Great Wall has a military connotation, and Dunhuang a cultural one in defining ‘Chineseness’ for the Chinese citizen, there are also iconic constructions and landscape transformations that are to show and stand for Chinese engineering skills and creativity, once and today, and they are connected to a central feature of Chinese traditional legitimation of rule: water control. For ancient times, there is the case of the Dujiangyan 都江堰 (lit.: magnificent river weir) irrigation system in Sichuan Province, which is – like Dunhuang or the Great Wall – at the same time a ‘patriotic’ site and a UNESCO one. Its modern ‘counterpart’, the Red Flag Canal in Henan Province, is, however, a purely ‘patriotic’ site.

Case study: Dujiangyan

The **Dujiangyan shuili gongcheng** 都江堰水利工程 (Dujiangyan irrigation works) (Sichuan Province) (list 1, 1997), hailed as the world’s oldest still extant and functioning water regulation construction,¹⁹⁶ proudly displays locally its role as a UNESCO site, but also as a 5A tourism site in China, and as a top-level national park site (as I observed on-site in 2014). Given the UNESCO nomination (in 2000, listed together with the nearby Daoism-related Mount Qingcheng 青城 which is no ‘patriotic education showcase base’, though),¹⁹⁷ its plaques are often multilingual, offering beyond English also Korean and Japanese, sometimes even German. The high skill of Chinese engineering in taming the Min 岷 river into a benign source of water for irrigation of the fertile Chengdu 成都 plain with various measures back in the 3rd century BC is to show how the Chinese were able to invent methods of hydroengineering early on. By the splitting of water ways with the so-called fish mouth into a slower-moving inner lane and the quicker-flowing outer river, then regulating the amount of water to be directed from the inner lane into the irrigation canal cut through the mountain, simultaneously blocking sediment from entering

195 For Lei Feng as a Communist allround model, cf. chapter 5.3 of the present book.

196 See Yang (2019: 55). The short description of the site (ibid. 56–60) provides a brief but concise summary of the technical working of the different parts of this construction.

197 Apart from physical vicinity, the combination of these two sites of very different content into one inscription on the UNESCO world cultural heritage list is remarkable, given also the fact that while in the inner-Chinese heritage protection system, Dujiangyan is listed in toto as well, the Mount Qingcheng Daoist temples are only partly listed as individual items. In this sense, the granted Chinese application in the international system goes further than the inner-Chinese one.

the latter with dykes, weirs, moveable thresholds, and sand banks, for the water to enter over the so-called bottle-neck into the higher-placed irrigation canal, irrigation water is directed toward the East (see fig. 2.3.1). The respective irrigation canal was dug into the mountain with ingenious methods at the time, given the not yet invented explosives (a fact especially highlighted also in the recent Xi Jinping-era narrative framing, Yang 2019: 55–60), which thus connects the Min river to the plain beyond. Periodically changing water levels were measured with stone figures fixed at the margins. The whole system, invented by the Qin state’s official Li Bing 李冰,¹⁹⁸ required annual clearing of the inner lane and repair work for which methods with locally easily available materials were also designed, using, i.a., bamboo cas-kets of stones, to block the inner canal during repair works.



Fig. 2.3.1 View of Dujiangyan: the splitting up of water ways (photograph by the author, 2014)

The control of water has been central to Chinese traditional understanding of the legitimacy to rule, already reflected in mythology with the Great Yu 大禹 (claimed locally as a Sichuanese)¹⁹⁹ ‘taming’ the water – considered the first ‘Xia dynasty’

198 Li Bing lived before the Qin conquered all of China under the First Emperor and thus was of the ‘Qin state’, not the ‘Qin dynasty’.

199 Cf. the locally sold booklet on Dujiangyan as a UNESCO site: Zhang (2013: 4, and p. 18 even showing a photo of the stele ‘on the spot of his birth’).

ruler posthumously according to legend, and water control is of crucial importance for agriculture. By Li Bing's and his son's skilful canalling, who were therefore deified by the locals with a temple later, which is today part of the whole heritage site, flooding was controlled, while the irrigation of a large area in the Chengdu plain was made possible. This proved even crucial in the 20th century, as is pointed out in locally sold materials as much as in explicitly 'patriotic' narratives, during the Second Sino–Japanese War to feed the populace of 'free China' by producing large quantities of grain and vegetables.²⁰⁰ That way, the old technical invention also served the modern Chinese nation in its presumably darkest hour! To keep the system running well, it also required, as mentioned, annually collective work to clear the silting which also implied intangible heritage over the festivities around this collective regular endeavour to bind the locals together.²⁰¹ Furthermore, it is pointed out that Dujiangyan was important for the trade route connecting the Tibetans and the Chengdu plain, and it was also part of the 'Southern Silk Road'.

To step up the 'patriotic' contents of the Dujiangyan site (beyond its UNESCO world heritage role) as well as the local credentials for contributions to the Chinese nation at large, the visitor encounters at the site further illustrations of historical instances where Sichuan locals showed themselves to be 'patriots', namely with the early 20th century Sichuan railway uprising of 1911 to protest against the incumbent Qing signing away the railway concession rights to foreigners. Since these protests fed into the Xinhai revolution (see chapter 4.2 of the present book for the Wuchang Uprising), the Sichuanese are thus shown locally as contributing to 'the nation' also later in history, while the monument for the dead of this Sichuan Railway Protection Movement as a national-level key cultural protection unit underlines this 'patriotic' commitment of the locals in a commemorative vein. The Dujiangyan site came, however, more unfortunately into national focus once more in recent years because of the great 2008 earthquake which wrought damage to precisely this region of Sichuan, and thus WHITRAP (World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region) in Shanghai, an entity under the auspices of the UNESCO, set up a special project to restore the Dujiangyan site.²⁰²

In the national 'patriotic' perspective, the filmic representation of Dujiangyan, a site not treated in the *Zhonghua hun* educational videos, but in the *Ai wo Zhonghua*

200 Cf. Zhang (2013: 23), referring to a (Communist) Xinhua article of 1945! This assertion has been also attributed to the US vice president touring China during the war. See below.

201 Cf. Zhang (2013: 58–61). In fact, in 2006 the festivities were inscribed in the inner-Chinese intangible heritage protection system, while the repair work they were connected to is now no longer done by the populace. See also below.

202 For the evaluation of the Dujiangyan site after the earthquake, see WHITRAP (2009). A restoration of parts of the ancient city was undertaken subsequently: WHITRAP (2013).

film clip (disc 8) for the national TV audience, produced by Sichuan TV's societal education department in 1998, presents Dujiangyan proudly as one of the 'three great wonders' in ancient China, together with the 'Great Wall' (cf. above) and the terracotta army (cf. above, 2.1), all connected to Qin rule.²⁰³ Showing the fertile land around, it is pointed out to the TV audience that this was only possible because Dujiangyan tamed the Min river which had repeatedly caused inundations before. Dujiangyan, constructed during the long reign of Qin Shihuang's great-grandfather in the 3rd century BC (to whom Qin Shihuang would succeed quickly, given the very brief two reigns in between), is thus a site connected to Qin rule (that is usually associated with being rather 'brutal') with a very benign and 'peaceful' role, underlined in the TV film clip by a soft music audio-track.

The TV film clip introduces the various parts of the construction and the important function of dividing the Min 岷 river, explaining to the national TV audience the working of the single parts with graphics in detail, as well as the regular maintenance work at the Tomb Sweeping Festival in spring. With the picturesque temple in his honour, the official Li Bin is profiled as the genius behind it who succeeded in having this constructed in only eight years, in spite of not having technologies like dynamite at his disposal.²⁰⁴ His purported tomb is shown to commemorate his personal effort which would make the rich harvests the whole area ever since enjoyed possible. The narrative does, however, not fail to point out that in PRC times, additional constructions enlarged this water system enormously, but since Li Bing achieved what he achieved with the means of his time at hand, his work should be by now the pride of the whole Chinese nation.

Compared to this filmic treatment, soliciting the TV audience to visit the site as tourists, the 'patriotic' narrative in the booklet on Dujiangyan of the benchmark patriotic series (Song 1998) reflects more explicitly also its own role in the 'patriotic education showcase bases' system. It legitimates its narrative as written to conform to the 1994 'action plan for patriotic education' (cf. chapter 1 of the present book), (101) and to closely follow the point of view of Jiang Zemin, then general secretary and key figure behind the whole 'patriotic education' in the 1990s, who visited the Dujiangyan site in 1993 and called it a site combining 'science and patriotism' (1, 75). For the construction of Dujiangyan, which is dated to roughly 256–251 BC here (and thus even less than 8 years) (1), the ancient genius of Li Bing

203 This definition of the 'three great wonders' of ancient China is, needless to say, not the only one current in China.

204 In a more traditional Marxist reading, one would expect a reference to exploitation of labour here, as with other large projects like the First Emperor's mausoleum, but the quick construction is positively mentioned here without addressing any human cost.

receives praise, though pointing out that the PRC would top him with adding cement and enlarging the whole project so that now even more water is distributed which would serve also for modern industries today, not only for agriculture (e.g., 4, 14, 62).

Furthermore, in 1975 various dredgings were done that also excavated ancient stone markers and iron signs (used since Ming times) in the river bed which showed how the ancient measuring of water levels functioned (10, 19, 22). That way, PRC excavations and historical scholarship receive praise as well – something we noticed at various sites in the present chapter to broaden the ‘patriotic’ credentials.

An interesting variation to Dujiangyan’s ‘patriotic role’ during the Second Sino–Japanese War is provided by the booklet’s narrative for intended young readers in pointing out that it was, in fact, a foreigner, US Vice President Henry A. Wallace, who visited China in wartime and commented that thanks to this ancient construction in Sichuan province, unoccupied (or in GMD parlance ‘free’) China had enough to eat during the ‘common war against fascism’, (9) thus shifting Dujiangyan’s ‘anti-fascist’ credentials to a US Vice President’s remark!

Locally, in turn, Li Bing’s role was that important to the locals that they deified him (and his son), thus starting the tradition of the local temple (Song 1998: 11). In the latter, the main rules for maintenance were written on a board in the educational three-character format (*sanzijing* 三字经) for easier memorisation to record for posterity what needed to be done regularly to keep the construction working (20–24). The construction’s importance can be gleaned also from the fact, that through all dynasties since the Qin, a special official was tasked with looking after the weir (17, 26–32).

Since Sichuan hosts various ‘ethnic minorities’, various former officials responsible for Dujiangyan were, in fact, non-Han (26–27). Needed materials for maintenance works (bamboo, stones, but also special wood for which trees were planted near the river) were all locally available (24), and locals (presumably also including non-Han, since Dujiangyan is also called a place of ‘inter-ethnic cooperation’) had been traditionally tasked with the regular maintenance work (until in the 20th century specialists were called in instead).

Apart from the material legacy of Dujiangyan, the site and Li Bing are, however, also connected to rich intangible heritage. E.g., given the deification of Li Bing, many popular stories about him and his son became part of the local lore (cf. also Birrell 1993: 87–88), which are also a more colourful way of advertising the site to the intended young readers of the booklet (35–44). Li Bing became even the topic of a feature film in 1983, and a Peking opera format was employed to create a new play on him as well (which incidentally received a prize at the time the ‘patriotic’

booklet was published) (80).²⁰⁵ On the more profane level, the city near the construction was renamed in 1988 as ‘Dujiangyan’ as well (47–48), marking the concerted action to prepare the site for the final inscription in the UNESCO list in 2000, together with the nearby Daoist Mount Qingcheng, to turn the whole area into one large tourist destination offering culture, nature, and ‘science’ in one. Given the fact that several important figures in Chinese history, be it the Great Historian Sima Qian of Han times (73, 97), or poets, e.g., several Tang poets, stopped by at Dujiangyan, some on their way to visit the Daoist Mount Qingcheng, leaving poems or inscriptions,²⁰⁶ this links these two otherwise rather distinct sites together also culturally.

On the other hand, the relative vicinity of Dujiangyan to Sichuan’s major city Chengdu (which profits from the irrigation system directly), and its location on important travel and commercial routes, being also the place over which products from the upper Min river arrived downstream to the whole area, made the place a rather frequently visited one (cf. 66–67). In the 20th century, e.g., the noted warlord Feng Yuxiang 冯玉祥 (who had a strained relationship with Chiang Kai-shek and is thus rather positively viewed in the PRC) visited the site repeatedly in the 1940s (52). In 1941, he penned the board of the temple for Li Bing and his son which can be seen there today (78), while in early PRC times, leading Communists like Zhou Enlai (in 1955) and Zhu De (in 1957) passed by, as did Guo Moruo in 1955, leaving an inscription. During the period of the launch of the Great Leap Forward campaign, Liu Shaoqi visited in March 1958 (76, 95–96) as well as Mao Zedong himself, just 3 days after Liu Shaoqi (91). During his visit, Mao immediately called for a ‘modern’ method to block the silting, and for installing a floodgate (92).²⁰⁷ Mao’s ‘wish’ to ‘challenge’ ancient China’s great inventions and top them, is palpable.²⁰⁸ In fact, this agenda is in the background of the repeated claims that the PRC ‘improved’ Li Bing’s work with modern means.

205 The opera was performed by the Chengdu (Peking) Opera Troupe.

206 In the 20th century, notables included also the famous painters Zhang Daqian 张大千 (who would leave the mainland) and Xu Beihong 徐悲鸿 (who would remain but died already in 1953).

207 One may note that although it is impossible to criticise Mao in such a patriotic booklet directly, his various cited non-specialist comments on an irrigation system functioning since over 2.000 years, calling for ‘better solutions’, is rather striking. It looks like the ‘challenge’ of an ancient ‘feudal’ genius stroke an uncomfortable comparison.

208 His ‘wish’ to take a swim there (which he undertook several times in his career as a kind of threat to show he dominated the waters as a demonstration of power) can be seen in this context. (Obviously, he was discouraged and did not do it in this case. His visit, one may add, was during an important Party Meeting in Chengdu to launch the Great Leap Forward.)

After Mao, Hua Guofeng 华国锋, the transitional successor of Mao, was next among the top leaders to visit in the 1970s, and Deng Xiaoping, himself from Sichuan, also visited the site several times after his own final lasting political comeback (in 1979, 1980, and 1982).²⁰⁹ Deng, while praising Li Bing as a knowledgeable person, however stressed that he was for sure no deity (cf. the temple), thus putting the accent on technology. Jiang Zemin, in turn, pointedly picked up on Mao when he visited the site in the early 1990s, to stand at those places from where Mao had given his recommendations for ‘improvement’ (95).

Accordingly, given the modern interventions, including the installation of an electric floodgate (83), the narrative assures the intended young reader that by now, it was finally no longer necessary to block the canal during the annual reparations, which was however part of the site’s intangible heritage, especially connected to when the canal would be reopened after the repair work at Qingming (Tomb Sweeping) in spring. To revive this part of intangible heritage nonetheless (something very much on the political agenda today), the ‘opening’ festivities were simply reintroduced. In fact, already at the times of the Republic prior to the PRC, the festival had been renamed as ‘great ceremony to open the water (flow) (*kai shui da dian* 开水大典)’ (81). In 1990, this ‘traditional’ festival was revived, ‘imitating the ancients’, and in 1994, the 2.250th anniversary of Dujiangyan was celebrated with fanfare (83, 85, 87). The revived ‘traditional’ festival was subsequently inscribed on the first list of ‘national intangible heritage’ in 2006,²¹⁰ thus underlining Dujiangyan’s relevance for a Chinese identity definition on the national scale also beyond its international UNESCO face.

Case study: the Red Flag Canal

In contrast to Dujiangyan of the 3rd century BC, the **Linzhou hongqiqu jinianguan** 林州红旗渠纪念馆 (Linzhou Red Flag Canal memorial hall) (Henan Province) (list 1, 1997) is to show that not only ancient (‘feudal’) China was capable of extraordinary inventions in the crucial sector of water control, but that also ‘Red China’ could do marvels. The Red Flag Canal is made to stand as a proof to this. (In fact, for the 100th anniversary of the CCP in 2021, the Red Flag Canal has become once more the subject of a big TV drama, *Hongqiqu* 红旗渠, in 31 instalments, to celebrate socialist achievements).

209 One may add that he was thus thrice very close to his former home in Sichuan but never went back there. See chapter 5.3 of the present book on Deng’s former home.

210 Cf. ‘Di yi pi’ (2006: item 478).

Historically, the Red Flag Canal was built 1960–1969 to divert water from Shanxi to Henan’s Lin 林 County over a distance of 70 km (in various parts and sublanes, adding up to 1.500 km of construction according to official reckoning), because of repeated severe droughts and famine in Lin County. (The connection to the Great Famine following the Great Leap Forward which hit Henan and this region in particular and was an important background,²¹¹ is not spelled out at the site as I observed in 2017, since it is still a political taboo topic:²¹² in fact, only droughts of earlier times up to the 1940s, i.e., prior to the PRC, are enumerated in the museum!)

The original memorial museum which is the place listed in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system and visualises with miniatures the way the work was done, was joined by a new museum added nearby in 2014, and thus, both buildings featured exhibits at the time of my visit. The new museum’s exhibition arrangement is to imitate a winding canal.

The ‘long-term’ drought problem is dramatised by an installation with painting, while next to it clippings of a well-known propaganda documentary film of 1970 (leaving out the more explicit Cultural Revolution references therein) with the famous spectacular and iconic scene of people dangling down from rocks, working this way to loosen parts of the rocks, is repeated again and again (see fig. 2.3.2).

This documentary film, celebrating the construction of the Red Flag Canal, is familiar to all Chinese of a certain age.²¹³ In 1974, when Deng Xiaoping made a short-lived come-back on the political scene during the Cultural Revolution, he notably chose this film as the first one among ten films to screen for the United Nations – where the PRC had taken over the ‘China’ seat from Taiwan in the meantime and sent Deng to New York to address the General Assembly – as an introduction to the PRC’s accomplishments! (Cf. Zhang 2012: 160, 175).

One should note that in the West, too, the Red Flag Canal had been advertised as a showcase of Maoist performance. When Italian film director Michelangelo Antonioni, known for his leftist political sympathies, was invited by Zhou Enlai to Cultural Revolution China to make a documentary, his (soon to be contested) documentary *Chung Kuo – Cina* of 1972 also included a scene on the Red Flag

211 As the party secretary of the time, Yang Gui (see also below), later noted, many people starved to death, but he would not stop the work since only water by the Canal would help in the future (Zhang 2012: 55). For some comments by another village party secretary in Henan also in the larger Anyang region on the local situation during these times in comparison, cf. Seybolt (1996: chapter 4, and p. 73 on the Red Flag Canal).

212 For the Great Famine, cf., e.g., the book-length study of Dikötter (2010).

213 The scene with the dangling workers is at min. 12–14 of this Chinese propaganda documentary film (called *Hongqiqu* 红旗渠) of 1970.

Canal, presenting the Chinese official narrative of the time to a Western public, though filtered through his own filmic style.



Fig. 2.3.2 Red Flag Canal: the documentary projected on the wall in the museum (Linzhou) (photograph by the author, 2017)

This, however, did not prevent him and his documentary from becoming a target in China of a whole criticism campaign, arguing he was showing too much of Chinese backwardness (Lin County being the only rural area he was led to on his carefully scripted itinerary), and not enough of the revolutionary fervour sparked by Maoism. The criticisms of this supposedly ‘anti-Chinese’ Antonioni documentary, assembled into a leaflet by *Renmin ribao* (People’s Daily), were published in 1974 also in various foreign languages by China’s Foreign Language Press, e.g., in English with the title ‘A vicious motive, despicable tricks: a criticism of M. Antonioni’s anti-China film *China*’ (*Renmin Ribao* Commentator 1974), which suggests that the whole ‘criticism’ movement was designed with an international audience in mind as well.²¹⁴ Notably, Antonioni was accused in China of having been part of a Soviet plot, since the Soviets were the chief ‘enemies’ of China at the time (*Renmin Ribao* Commentator 1974: 15). Reportedly, Antonioni himself who spoke no Chinese and

214 Cf. also ‘Repudiating Antonioni’s Anti-China Film’ (1974).

did not know much about the inner-Chinese political intricacies of the time, was totally unprepared for such a bashing treatment after his invitation to China, and felt deeply hurt. Jiang Qing 江青, Mao's last wife, apparently pushed the campaign against Antonioni, reportedly being particularly upset about his filming pigs while her favourite revolutionary operas could be heard in the background – something Antonioni was unlikely to have ever realised. Yang Gui 杨贵, the leading cadre of the Red Flag Canal project (who had his own problems at the time, though – see below), also duly criticised Antonioni's representation of the Canal during the campaign. Thus, Deng Xiaoping's choice of screening the Chinese propaganda documentary of 1970 on the Red Flag Canal internationally for the United Nations in the very same year of the concerted campaign against the Antonioni documentary, i.e., in 1974, was therefore also likely to brush aside the Antonioni version and replace it with the Chinese production in front of international eyes.

With the Red Flag Canal, the slogans of Chinese self-reliance, the national spirit of fearlessness and taking matters literally in one's hands (as tools were rare) is celebrated, referencing the story of the 'foolish old man who removed the mountains' as one of the standard references of Cultural Revolution times to stress that everything is possible as long as 'the masses' are willing to do it.²¹⁵

A long list in the museum, however, also names and honours those that lost their lives (age 15 to 58!), working on the Red Flag Canal (since work safety measures were nil). Praises and endorsements of the site by CCP leaders (of whom conspicuously few visited in Maoist times, though) are pointed out, but also the fact that today many construction workers around China hail from the area (in fact because of enduring poverty), supposedly because of their special skills in this type of work. Mao, notably, never visited this theoretically 'hyper-Maoist' site. A photo showing Mao shaking hands with the local driving force, party secretary Yang Gui, in the early years of planning (likely of 1958),²¹⁶ is therefore the only way to suggest Mao's backing. Since Yang Gui was attacked during the Cultural Revolution, his name remained a 'hot potato' for many years (see also below), as can be seen from

215 The speech-turned-essay of Mao on the ancient parable of the foolish old man who removed the mountains (through generations of descendants following up on him) was one of the three main texts people had to 'study' during the Cultural Revolution. (The other two are 'In memory of Norman Bethune' – cf. also chapter 5.3 of the present book – and 'Serve the people'.)

216 Yang Gui met Mao, as it seems, at the time the canal was being designed in late 1958 when Mao was on tour in his train (some leaflets give 1959, but from Yang's recollections it should have been in 1958: see Zhang 2012: 5, 156). (He had met Mao already once in 1956: Zhang 2012: 42.) According to his interviewer, Yang criticised the ongoing Great Leap Forward steel production frenzy at that meeting for limiting the workforce of this project as well as of the necessary work in the fields (Zhang 2012: 5–6, 44), which likely did not amuse Mao, if it happened that way.

materials of different times: the local exhibition of this photo is thus also an indirect statement sustaining him. Zhou Enlai seemed to have been behind the project at the time (and advertised it also to foreigners, see also below), but never visited in person either, neither would Deng Xiaoping (in spite of his choosing the propaganda documentary for the UN screening).

While one may note the traces of a visit of the key Buddhist lay leader and noted calligrapher Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 to this ‘red site’ in 1977, memorialising it with a long poem (Zhang 2012: 162), high officials rather visited from the 1990s onward. These included later general secretary Hu Jintao as well as later prime minister Wen Jiabao, with the most important visit being then-general secretary Jiang Zemin in 1996, i.e., shortly before the Red Flag Canal became a ‘patriotic education showcase base’, which means that at this time, the site was promoted more strongly. One may also add that more recently, present general secretary Xi Jinping visited the site in 2022 and recommended the canal’s ‘spirit’ of self-reliance to China’s youth explicitly.

Outside of the museum, the present-day visitor encounters a mix of on the one hand rather traditional Chinese forms of recording the famous achievement of Communist China, e.g., with stelae, on the other hand, revolutionary slogans abound, like ‘subdue nature’, reflecting the Mao-era ‘battle against nature’ spirit (cf. Shapiro 2001). The Red Flag Canal thus supposedly trumps the Dujiangyan site as a triumph of human creativity: where Dujiangyan ‘only’ tamed nature, the Red Flag Canal is to stand for a ‘victory’ over it, and this is to engender particular pride and patriotic fervour. But the Red Flag Canal is also set in the tradition line of Chinese water works, including Dujiangyan, in the outdoor exhibition. While the traditional ones are, however, connected to individual technical geniuses like the Qin official Li Bing in the case of Dujiangyan, the Red Flag Canal is now purportedly ‘of and by the people’.

In filmic ‘patriotic’ treatment, the nationally broadcasted *Ai wo Zhonghua* TV film clip (disc 6) presents the site to the national audience with a more nation-concentrated narrative of engineering and ‘victory’ over water, citing Zhou Enlai who told foreigners in the early 1970s that New China was proud to have created two marvels: the new Nanjing Bridge crossing the Yangzi (finished 1968 during the early Cultural Revolution period and after the Soviets had withdrawn their engineers in 1960, allegedly together with the plans),²¹⁷ and the Red Flag Canal. Thus, foreigners visiting China during the Cultural Revolution were often made to

217 The Soviets had, however, helped design it and thus had more share in it as is acknowledged in the story-line of Chinese achievements against all odds.

visit these sites of ‘new China’.²¹⁸ (The sound track of the TV film clip features bombastic music accordingly.) A miniature model in the museum’s exhibition, presented to the national TV audience, shows the whole setup of the Canal which taps water from the Zhang 漳 river in neighbouring Shanxi. Given this new lifeline, the former arid area of Lin 林 County in Henan would then be able to produce crops. The stretch through the Taihang mountains was very hard to build as exhibited photos and graphs are to illustrate. Clippings of the propaganda documentary film of 1970 as a kind of master narrative on the site are interspersed which show how hard it used to be for the people living in the area to daily carry water before the project was undertaken. The year 1959 (during the Great Leap Forward) was especially dry, the narrative asserts, but the people did not want to undergo any longer the same tragedy as of old (and starve), and thus started to act. The interspersed propaganda documentary film scenes show masses of labourers, including women and some children, who acted to remedy the situation in Great Leap fashion. Thus, in 1960 they started to divert water from the Zhang river, illustrated by shots of explosions to blow up the mountain rocks. While vaguely stating that it was a time of ‘difficulties’ (i.e., the Great Famine time), simple helmets and tools are to prove to the TV audience that the people nevertheless went on to ‘take matters into their hands’ – a Maoist slogan to mobilise the people (and not only ask for help from ‘above’), using whatever was at hand.²¹⁹ All the while, the people had to work by living on only very limited grain, supplementing it with wild herbs shown in the vitrines (which hints at the Great Famine). Photos of people sleeping in holes on the mountains are to document how they did arrange with adverse conditions, and since they had to rely on themselves (which was turned into their ‘spirit’), they found ways to produce explosives and other tools themselves (e.g., presenting photos of Great-Leap-style furnaces exhibited in the museum). After the Cultural Revolution, a traditional black stele would be erected in 1990 to celebrate the (25th anniversary of the) opening of the first canal in 1965 as the major sign of success.

But for this success, the storyline goes on, some had had to sacrifice, referring to one outstanding example, the young engineer Wu Zutai 吴祖太 who was only 27 years old when he died.²²⁰ The danger and daring spirit are repeatedly visualised

218 De facto, a substantial number of foreigners, mostly of Third World Countries (which had been explicitly targeted by Zhou Enlai to be shown the canal) toured the site. Zhou had recommended this already in 1968. (See Zhang 2012: 157). As mentioned above, also Antonioni had been led there.

219 See also chapter 3.3 of the present book for Mao at Yan’an, penning the slogan ‘ziji dongshou’ 自己动手 (do it yourself), which was to become a staple in Maoist rhetoric.

220 Yang Gui recalls him as the earliest ‘martyr’ of the project who was killed in 1960 in a tunnel by falling stones (Zhang 2012: 142). Other young people, including girls, died or were mutilated because of the work (Zhang 2012: 142–143, 146–147, 151–152).

with clips of the most iconic scenes from the 1970 propaganda documentary film of the workers dangling down the rocks, dramatising their braveness by focusing on how the workers put on the cords which held them. This ‘risk squad’ (a wording calling to mind the ‘dare to die squads’ *gansidui* 敢死队 often mentioned in revolutionary contexts) was in charge to put explosives into the mountains and loosen the rocks.

Some years later, after finishing the Canal, calligraphies were also chiselled into the mountain for memorialisation, namely the one by then vice president Li Xiannian who was one of the few political figures to visit during Maoist times, namely in 1974 (accompanying the President of Zambia), who would send a calligraphy subsequently.²²¹ But still during construction time, as the TV film clip points out, it was the Young Brigade (young volunteers) that made the most difficult of the tunnels, the Qingniandong 青年洞 (Youth tunnel, the calligraphy of which was provided by Guo Moruo in 1972 – who did not personally visit the site, though, either).²²² This way, the canal is strongly connected to the role of youth also for the national TV audience. Enormous bridges for aqueducts had to be built on the way as well. In 1965, the main channel was opened, and in April 1966, i.e., shortly before the full onset of the Cultural Revolution, the second, while in July 1969 the whole Red Flag Canal was declared finished. In all, the project claims to have levelled 1.250 peaks, dug 211 tunnels etc. Staff at computer screens show the extent of the whole project with various canal lanes to demonstrate to the TV viewer where crops can be grown by now, thanks to the Canal. Jiang Zemin’s inscription of the Red Flag Canal motto he had written during his 1996 on-site visit, was immediately chiseled into the rocks, too, as the filming shortly thereafter proves. Heroic stories about the building of the Canal are represented at the site also via artwork, e.g., by paintings or bas-reliefs outside. More didactically, though, the *Ai wo Zhonghua* TV film clip, produced by the Henan TV’s education department in 1998, summarises the key message of the site in the end, blending in the motto or ‘spirit’ of the Red Flag Canal as the ‘patriotic’ message to learn for the national TV audience: rely on your own strength, do pioneering work in spite of hardship, unite and cooperate, and dedicate yourself selflessly (*zili gengsheng, jianku chuangye, tuanjie xiezu, wusi fengxian* 自力更生, 艰苦创业, 团结协作, 无私奉献). That way, the Red Flag Canal’s official legacy was clearly fixed.

221 Cf. Zhang (2012: 98, 100, 159). Since Zhou Enlai was already ill, Li Xiannian was to accompany the Zambian president to visit the Canal in 1974.

222 According to Yang Gui, he used personal connections to ask Guo Moruo for calligraphies for both Hongqiqu and Qingniandong, which Guo did already in 1968. This served also as an endorsement of Yang Gui’s pet project (Zhang 2012: 97–98).

In comparison to the above TV presentation for the Chinese citizens at large, the educational *Zhonghua hun* video's (disc 2) take provides some distinct features in its own 'patriotic' framing of the site, designed for classroom use. This video was produced in 1997 by the audio-visual education entity of the propaganda department of Zhengzhou's University of Technology. Starting with an aerial overview and tourists visiting the area, it hails the Canal as a kind of modern 'Great Wall' (!) (of water) (which shows again that the 'Great Wall' image has been fully absorbed into the trope of 'patriotic' language).²²³ The Red Flag Canal is (as we encountered already with the terracotta army of Qin Shihuang) even praised as the 'eighth great wonder of the world'.²²⁴ The educational video presents the exhibition inside the museum and the bas-reliefs outside to the intended watching pupils to illustrate how the work was done. As an educational video, this video notably shows repeatedly pupils who learn about the place on-site. They are shown visiting the indoor exhibition with the miniature model to understand the set-up of the overall construction. The simple food and tools used are focused upon, but given the many droughts that occurred 'until the 1940s' (as is also carefully stated here, but notably shown with a book entry which also mentions that people 'ate each other', though this moment is quickly passing by), the people now wanted to do something against it. The famous 1970 propaganda documentary film is integrated in this video even more extensively than in the TV film clip, showing how people, including children, had to carry water from afar, so that it was decided already in 1957, that Lin County needed to get water from the outside.²²⁵ In 1960, finally, people started making holes everywhere to blow off the rocks. All the while, there was not much to eat (though the Great Famine is again not addressed openly). The building of aqueducts with bamboo scaffolds, and of water reservoirs are shown to demonstrate the many tasks the whole endeavour implied. And thus, finally, rich crops could be grown also in this formerly destitute area. The photo of Mao, shaking hands with Yang Gui, the party secretary, suggests political backing, and Zhou Enlai's remarks (to foreigners) on New China's 'great wonder', the Red Flag Canal, should not only cause pride, but also legitimise Yang Gui's decision at the time to go on with the project at whatever cost.

That the site even attracts foreign tourists is claimed by showing young foreigners in the area (who however apparently did not realise that they were filmed

223 As might be recalled, the 'Great Wall' trope is also used in the de facto national anthem of China: 'March of the volunteers', as the Great Wall of blood and flesh.

224 This praise is rhetorically ascribed, as so often, to foreigners. See Zhang (2012: 171).

225 In fact, the first endeavour was the so-called Hero Canal of 1957–58 which, however, did not work well and only tapped into inner-Henan water resources which dried up.

and when they did, the camera quickly stopped; obviously they were participating in a paragliding outing in the area, but are claimed in the video to have ‘visited the Canal’). In any case, Chinese visitor groups led by guides, shown thereafter, are to demonstrate to the pupils that the site is supposedly attractive to both foreigners and Chinese. (In fact, it is a peculiar feature of this educational video, that it tries to suggest that beyond ‘political education’, the area is also interesting in touristic terms and thus also fun, showing boat cruises on the Canal!) The key lesson for the pupils should, however, be the ‘spirit’ for which the Red Flag Canal, built during the ‘difficult 1960s’, stands, namely self-reliance to show how people become creative under socialism. That way, local economy can be boosted, as shots of an assembly-line glass bottle production, and mechanised spinning mills are to prove. This means that the Canal not only served for agricultural production, but also for setting up industries.²²⁶

Given this success, the pupils should, however, also learn about the costs, namely the fact that some lost their lives for the Canal, visualised with the stele honouring these ‘martyrs’ (including the university-trained young engineer Wu Zutai who had been also pointed out in the TV film clip version). An old man, serving as a witness, tells pupils on-site in more personal terms about the construction times,²²⁷ which prepares for an individual profile of the famous ‘hero’ of the dangling workers to emotionalise the storyline: when a stone hit him and smashed three of his teeth, he would simply use his iron tool to throw them out, to bleedingly go on working nonetheless! This, obviously, should be a working attitude to emulate. Visitors are shown taking notes, while listening to the guide’s explanation, underlining the educational ‘study aspect’ of the site, while shots of Jiang Zemin, shaking hands during his on-site visit, are interspersed for political reference. The pupils visiting the site also learn more specifically about the role of youth at the time, namely with the *shengongpu* 神工铺, i.e., young people who saw their work as ‘holy labour’ (*shengong*) for the future generations, and thus also put their sleeping mats (*pu*) in the rock holes (not going home for the whole period of work), as the old propaganda documentary film shows. This should teach modern pupils that people at the time simply had ‘revolutionary optimism’, and this is what nowadays pupils should learn from their example. The ‘youth tunnel’, Qingniandong 青年洞, which was built by youth who supposedly ‘volunteered’, is seen as a topic of

226 Incidentally, in the 1970 propaganda documentary film, the first of the examples for industrialisation in the area had been the production of water toilets!

227 Already in the 1950s, the Chinese ‘museum workers’ visiting the Soviet Union noted this use of (revolutionary) witnesses telling youth on-site of their experiences as an effective educational device. Cf. below in chapter 6 of the present book.

particular salience for the visiting pupils.²²⁸ Those young people had not much food and thus had to eat wild grass, many even fell ill, but they would still work on. Repeatedly, girls are also shown taking part in hard labour, thus evoking the ‘iron girls’ image of the time.²²⁹ The contribution of youth (of whom some de facto perished and others remained invalidated) would be also honoured later by calling the tunnel after them, eternalised by the calligraphy of Guo Moruo (1972) which is chiselled into the rocks (and thus is to show to today’s youth that also young people can leave their mark). Thus, final shots of pupils at the site and of Jiang Zemin’s visit in 1996 (who also left his own inscription, chiselled into the rocks) figure as the two poles of education and politics defining ‘patriotic education’.

Compared to the above filmic representations for the national scale, be it for TV or for classroom use all over China, the ‘patriotic’ booklet (Wang 1998), de facto based on a longer book of 1996, stands out in that it largely follows the views of Yang Gui who is repeatedly named here, bespeaking a more local perspective in its take on the site (if not disclosing his personal difficulties during the Cultural Revolution). As a general background, the long history of droughts in the region (and notably also of cannibalism reported five times since the Ming era!) is accentuated (Wang 1998: 4–5). Compared to the other ‘patriotic’ materials, this booklet is more explicit about the various difficulties encountered during the construction, again bespeaking a local perspective, zooming in on all major sites along the Canal and where problems were encountered.

While the project was supported beyond the local in the beginning, during the Great Famine (which is only vaguely described), opposition from some higher echelons of the Party increased, also due to some ‘wrong allegations’ regarding the project. While not openly stating that party secretary Yang Gui (who admitted this latter) de facto defied orders to stop the project and clandestinely had the ‘Youth tunnel’ built nevertheless, the narrative suggests that this was in fact conforming to the wish of the local ‘people’ who simply needed water. More than the other ‘patriotic’ materials, this booklet dwells on single cases of ‘heroism’ and sacrifice, profiling various individuals which again underlines the local perspective. It becomes also

228 De facto, as Yang Gui recalls, the young people were assigned this task. This was even in defiance of the orders given from above to stop the project at the time. The tunnel was hard to detect and thus intended to be built secretly – which throws a somewhat different light on it (Zhang 2012: 96).

229 ‘Iron girls / women’ (*tienü* 铁女) had been promoted especially by the Dazhai model for agriculture (a campaign started in the early 1960s and physically referring to the Shanxi side of the Taihang mountains), showing that women could do as much as men under socialism. The topic also recurred in Daqing, the industrial parallel. (Cf. chapter 5.3 of the present book on Wang Jinxi). Notably, while the 1970 documentary film focused a whole section on them, in the more modern ‘patriotic’ versions, this issue has been toned down.

clear that at various places along the 70 km trajectory of the whole Canal, it needed Party representatives to ‘convince’ the respective village populations that working on the construction would benefit them, too, and the larger society in the long run. Recruitment was mostly local, though apparently also Army units at times helped (71). Repeatedly, though, it is also mentioned that due to lack of knowledge and experience, the recruited perished, e.g., when they dug tunnels and simply succumbed due to the lack of oxygen, or when they dealt with explosives amateurishly (27, 29). Some interesting glimpses are provided by hints that fertilizer was assigned to them to create their own explosives, and they also received scrap metal from the PLA, left over from the Korean War, to make their utensils! (41). In sum, the ‘patriotic’ booklet provides a more local take in comparison to spell out what the project meant on the ground.

The ‘Red Flag Canal’ was, as mentioned above, used as a showcase to foreigners of the spectacular feat socialism could provide. However, a chief figure behind its construction, the former party secretary of Lin County, Yang Gui, was for a long time brushed aside, since he came under attack during the Cultural Revolution. Similar to Wang Jinxi of Daqing (see chapter 5.3 of the present book), he thus complicates the narrative. E.g., in the Cultural Revolution little picture story book (*lianhuanhua* 连环画) version of the Red Flag Canal (*Hongqiqiu* 1973), his name is evaded (while, e.g., some ‘model workers’ are named).²³⁰ After the Cultural Revolution, Yang Gui was cautiously put back into the picture, and he was interviewed later (after the Red Flag Canal’s 1997 nomination as a ‘patriotic education showcase base’) to enable him to tell his version of the Canal.²³¹ (Subsequently, he would be even declared an ‘honorary president of the Canal’.) Yang had come to Lin County in 1954 as Party secretary. Realising the dire water situation, he tried with wells at first, as he told his interviewer, and had a first small canal built in 1957 to 1958 from a small river in the area, dubbed (reflecting the spirit of the Great Leap times) ‘hero canal’ (Zhang: 2012: 4–5, 24–25). However, during the 1959 drought, all dried up which spurred the larger project to divert water from the Zhang river in Shanxi, started in 1960. For this task of 70 km through the Taihang Mountains, he cited the ancient Dujiangyan as an inspiration, though here in Shanxi and Henan, obstacles were more massive (9). In 1965, the first Canal went into operation, and in April 1966, shortly before the Cultural Revolution came into full

230 *Hongqiqiu* (1973). Interestingly, this comic-book version (pictures with text below) has several names of ‘negative figures’ (as of that moment in time) cancelled, leaving the blanks.

231 See Zhang (2012). This book was originally published in 2005. Zhang started to interview him for a TV documentary in 1999 after a TV serial on the Red Flag Canal story was proposed in 1998 (Zhang 2012: frontispiece and p. 3).

swing, *Renmin ribao* wrote celebratory articles to make also Yang Gui's name known nationwide (11). But only shortly later, Yang Gui was criticised as were many cadres at the time. (As it seems, his defiance of orders to stop work during the famine had made him many enemies.) In typical Cultural Revolution parlance, he was labelled a 'capitalist roader', the Canal a 'black canal' (obviously countering the self-exaltation with the appropriation of the revolutionary 'Red Flag' symbolism), and he was imprisoned until people from Lin County clandestinely freed him (12, 69–73). He was reinstated temporarily in Lin County in 1968 (78), in 1969 the whole Canal was finished, and by 1970, the propaganda documentary film 'Red Flag Canal' was shown all over China.²³² Still, Yang Gui would be personally attacked further and again more intensely in the later phase of the Cultural Revolution in 1975. He thus could only resume working in 1979, if not returning to Lin County after having been transferred away for good in 1973 (15, 80–90). Today's local leaflets of the site, though, honour Yang Gui, even paralleling him with Li Bing of Dujiangyan, and his calligraphy also makes the mentioned great claims for the Red Flag Canal as 'China's Great Wall of Water'.²³³ The so-called 'spirit' of the Red Flag Canal would become also the topic of exhibitions which repeatedly toured the country, including Beijing where Yang Gui was also invited to explain it.²³⁴ That way, the local and the national perspective of the Canal came closer together.

In the new official 'patriotic' framing of this 'showcase base', by now updated to the Xi Jinping era (in the *Fengbei* series, Tian 2019), however, one notes a shift in accent away from the local or personal (Yang Gui) to portray the Canal as above all something 'the people' of Lin County built, but with significant help of the Party representatives also beyond the village level, and namely being possible only because of the cooperation of the neighbouring Shanxi province representatives who

232 According to Yang Gui's recollections, filming had actually started early when the Canal was under construction, but nothing was released, as long as 'negative' evaluations of the Canal project were circulating (Zhang 2012: 92–93).

233 Cf. the local leaflet: *Hongqiqu fengjingqu* 红旗渠风景区 (Red Flag Canal scenic area) (acquired in 2017). One may add that on some of the locally available leaflets the trope of the 'Great Wall' is also used by applying similar 'advertising strategies': e.g., in school textbooks, the Great Wall is often claimed as outstanding, providing a calculation meant to impress the pupil that if one were to put the bricks (of Ming times) into a line, one could easily encircle the whole globe. In likewise fashion, here leaflets claim that with building a small wall with the earth moved for constructing the Canal, one could easily link Guangzhou in the South of China with Harbin in the Northeast. (This 'patriotic' calculation was incidentally already featuring in the 1970 propaganda documentary film as well).

234 This, too, can be gleaned from the locally available leaflets where Yang Gui (sometimes without being explicitly named) can be seen on many photographs. One major exhibition was in 2004 (Zhang 2012: 175–176).

agreed to have ‘their’ Zhang river used. In this larger picture, Lin County, being in the border region between Henan, Shanxi, and Hebei, is thus nationalised. In other words, it should not only be Henan to be credited. That way, the site is drawn away from any ‘too’ local interpretation. The new ‘patriotic’ framing also contextualises the Canal, pointing out that there were, in fact, earlier inner-provincial irrigation projects in the 1950s before the Red Flag Canal was started (Tian 2019: 5). Only when they dried up, the larger project of using neighbouring Shanxi’s Zhang river was finally devised. This way, the Yang Gui-centred narrative (with its implicit criticism of Party committees beyond the county with whom Yang Gui had clashed) is relativised to stress that many people and institution helped Lin County to build the Canal (10). But the major point stressed in the new ‘patriotic’ narrative is the ‘Red Flag Canal spirit’, which is linked here to Xi Jinping who is said to fully endorse it (8). The basic (Maoist) lesson of not asking for help from above but taking things in one’s own hands should be integrated, though, with the Party’s guiding spirit of ‘unification’, which will make sure that the power of the many can be turned into a productive mass (and not prove divisive). The whole Red Flag Canal endeavour, in this sense, thus clearly stands for more than a local success story.

Today, the ‘Red Flag Canal Scenic Area’ (*Hongqiqu fengjingqu* 红旗渠风景区) is labelled as a 5A tourist site of the PRC, i.e., the highest possible labelling in this regard.²³⁵ This is likely more a ‘political’ labelling than reflecting genuine attraction, though, apart from the fact that the site is not very conveniently located in terms of access. The added attractions include motor boat cruises on the Canal and paragliding (both of which had been shown in the educational video, as mentioned above), but also cable cars up the mountains, or hiking tours are advertised, which were obviously introduced to heighten the attraction of the Canal which as such is a very extended site.²³⁶ The 1970 propaganda documentary film, familiar to every Chinese of a certain age, still plays a crucial role for place branding (and thus is also referred to in the museum). But – in marked difference from Dujiangyan – the site’s touristic appeal as such is rather limited, leaving the ‘patriotic education’ function in a clear pole position.

The four cases of this subchapter show how iconic constructions and landscape transformations are integrated in the ‘patriotic education’ system as material sites

235 The promotion to 4A had been achieved in 2002 (according to an older leaflet of the site), and the one to 5A came only after 2009. The ‘scenic area’ was also included in the ‘10 Red Tourism Areas’ labelled in 2007.

236 This can be seen from the leaflets for tourists available locally. The ‘main’ entrance near the memorial museum has a ticket booth.

where the Chinese citizen can learn in a tangible way, framed by contextualisation, about China's military (the Great Wall), artistic (the Mogao Caves), and engineering (Dujiangyan and the Red Flag Canal) capacities in history and the respective potentials in the present. The sites also position themselves between the local, the regional, and the national, in most of the cases (namely those being UNESCO world heritage sites) additionally also considering the international, which sometimes leads to different narrative framings for the domestic audience to be 'patriotically educated' at a site *vs* the international tourist, something we already observed in the first subchapter on excavation sites with the case of Yinxu.

Final remarks

All in all, the discussed examples in this chapter on three different types of contextualising materiality in the 'patriotic education showcase bases' system show how different readings of objects are emerging between the national, regional, and local agendas, and how these change over time. They also show, how materiality is applied to educate Chinese citizens into 'patriotism'. Although much of this is connected to Chinese cultural history, 'socialist achievements' are also integrated into the system, as the regional museums with their exhibition parts on modern (revolutionary) times, following the Soviet model, as well as socialist constructions like the Red Flag Canal demonstrate. Therewith, the cultural history of China is supposedly seamlessly feeding into modern socialist China's development, or, turned around, the latter is drawing its strength from Chinese tradition, providing the PRC's development with a distinct Chinese face. The tangible character of materiality is also a key attraction for Chinese tourists who are often rather wary of narrative discourse in textbook-like fashion, hoping to 'see' something real instead.

Still, objects don't speak for themselves, and contextualisation thus means to suggest a reading of what is to be seen, which is most crucial in instances where only specialists can 'read' or interpret material evidence, like in the cases of excavations. Therefore, narrative and visual means (e.g., with explanations or recreations, dioramas, or films) are crucial for 'educating' the visitor of a site. In those cases where sites are appealing also to international tourists (like Yinxu, the Great Wall, the Mogao Caves, or Dujiangyan), national pride can be easily engendered, which also feeds into the goal of 'patriotism', but the sites' offer needs to be reframed for the Chinese citizen for going beyond national pride to identify also 'world heritage' sites as nonetheless distinctly 'Chinese'. As we observed, this, at times, is achieved by pointing at China's being fleeced by foreigners in the past at those very sites to

create a feeling of cultural identification and the need to ‘defend’ those sites against any possible encroachment. Presentations to the international audience and to the domestic public thus differ, taking also into account the expectations domestic visitors, whether pupils, or grown-up tourists, come with, given their previous exposure to normative textbook narratives in school, following the Marxist paradigm (as set mainly by Guo Moruo for ancient times). A case in point was Yinxu and the difficulties of how to present, interpret, and present the findings to different target groups.

For the modern times, reflected in the translocal museums, as well as in the landscape transformation of the Red Flag Canal discussed above, the main task and challenge is to engender interest with the domestic audience by connecting local and revolutionary history. During my on-site observations, those parts of translocal museums addressing revolutionary history were typically the least visited ones by non-guided tourists, with the repeatedly overheard remark that there is ‘nothing to see’. While exhibition parts on ancient history often bank on aesthetic objects, and parts on natural history on impressive skeletons or recreated animals particularly liked by pupils (as also the TV and video presentations discussed above clearly showed), those on local culture can draw on the distinct local flavour and customs as selling points to attract visitors. Objects for the revolutionary period, in contrast, are often unspectacular, and presentation is therefore largely focused upon texts or photos, and some dioramas to generate contextualisation. Interest can be generated, as the case of the Red Flag Canal demonstrates, rather over an appeal for elderly domestic visitors to their memories of the Mao era, linking up with the well-known propaganda documentary film to contextualise what can be seen materially on site, while younger people are reminded of the special role young people played during the building of the Canal to suggest agency and importance of the younger generation to make their contribution to the *patria*. That way, China’s ancient impressive achievements in military, cultural, or engineering respects (as exemplified by the Great Wall, the Mogao Caves, and Dujiangyan respectively), should not only awe the new generations and engender national pride, but should also lead to self-assuredness that also the present generation of Chinese citizens can make its mark for socialist China and its future standing in the world. This, after all, is what ‘patriotic education’ is supposed to serve for, using the ‘showcase bases’ as a tangible format for reaching out to pupils as well as to tourists, integrating the local over the regional into the larger national(ist) framework for the formation of Chinese citizens.

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