

## 6 Concluding remarks

**Abstract** These final remarks review the different modes of citizen formation as reflected in the Chinese ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system, played out between nationalism, local identities, and tourism. Issues like the potential effectiveness of this particular way of citizen formation, considering the different types of sites, the role of emotion and knowledge, and the variety of agents involved that imply a possibility of divergent readings, lead to the question, how the Chinese endeavour relates to a larger context. Paying special attention to the historical relationship to the Soviet-Russian model, the question arises whether there is anything specifically ‘Chinese’ about this whole system.

Reviewing the different modes the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ presented in the chapters of this book came with, set in between agendas of nationalism, local identity profiling, and tourist concerns, one might ponder the question: what do such sites add to the larger PRC (People’s Republic of China) ‘patriotic education’ campaign that render them so attractive to continuously expand their number? More specifically: why is this tool of citizen formation considered a particularly effective means? In which ways has the purpose of the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ as outlined in chapter 1 been realised in different types of sites? What role do knowledge and emotions play in this educational endeavour bound to physical sites? Which agents are involved in it? Might there be divergent readings emerging between different agents? And how does the whole endeavour appear in comparative perspective, mainly considering its historical relationship to the Soviet model? Is there, finally, anything distinctly ‘Chinese’ about it?

### Effectiveness

The general ‘patriotic education’ effort has been called the most long-standing campaign the PRC ever set up, which is also mostly evaluated as an effective one.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Zhao (2004). Vickers (2009), looking into political education textbooks of the junior and senior secondary level, suggests this as well. And He (2015) does so, based on personal attacks meted out by Chinese studying overseas against presumed unpatriotic ‘compatriots’.

Some doubts concerning effectiveness have been raised, too.<sup>2</sup> Either way, it is not easy to verify this by using usual survey techniques in the PRC. As has been observed with publicly vocal Chinese ‘nationalists’ who have been found in private to easily switch positions,<sup>3</sup> stated and held beliefs are not necessarily the same, especially when surveys are done in a public setting and when it is obvious to all, that certain answers are ‘expected’ – and thus more likely to be officially given. Some studies on schools and textbook reception in the humanities found Chinese pupils to be sceptical towards their textbooks or simply bored by them.<sup>4</sup> This, however, was largely connected to the exam-centred teaching style, less to a general disbelief, let alone an informed difference of opinion in terms of content which can also hardly be expected of pupils.

A qualitative study by a scholar conducted in the Philippines with semi-structured interviews of Chinese grown-up citizens who received ‘patriotic education’ from the 1990s onward in school, mostly subsequently working in the Philippines and thus fairly free to state their minds, found the campaign to have been effective in the long run. Going beyond a simple yes or no response to the question of effectiveness, the study looked into different areas, finding that effectiveness scored the highest in the affective domain, which was sustained by visual and other medial representations (Dela Cruz Manalo 2020).

That study focused on the general campaign and its school context, not explicitly touching on visits to ‘patriotic education bases’ as part of outdoor education which are more tangible than textbook narratives, but it suggests an important point, namely, that the appeal to emotions by material and visual means as much as the repeated mutual reinforcement by various medial representations provides the key to ‘convince’ audiences of presented narratives in the long run. In this sense, the visit of sites as an ‘authenticating’ experience, either set in a guided school outing or in a touristic leisure context, is more likely to be effective than simple textbook narratives, provided the on-site presentation is integrated with those narratives (and certainly not challenging them), and the concerted action called for by the broader ‘patriotic education’ campaign as outlined in chapter 1 of life-long citizen formation via

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2 For a short summary of views resulting from studies in the 2000s on the effectiveness of formal and informal citizen education’s influence on students, see Xu (2022: 384–385). As argued in chapter 1 of the present book, the term ‘citizen education’ is to my mind more apt than ‘citizenship education’ for the Chinese case.

3 Cf., e.g., Lovell (2011: 353–359) who notes in the conclusion of her book on the Opium War such cases of on the surface inconsistencies among the so-called ‘angry youth’ (*fenqing* 愤青), supposedly aroused by intense nationalist feelings against ‘the West’.

4 Cf., e.g., the observations by anthropologist Kipnis (2011) during fieldwork in Zouping (in Shandong), or of anthropologist Hansen (2015) during fieldwork in a rural boarding school in Zhejiang.

multiple channels helps to diffuse the intended message by such a mutual reinforcement. The fact that the listed ‘bases’ were the only of the ‘patriotic education’ tools that continued to grow in number, even – after a hiatus – in the era of Xi Jinping 习近平, also clearly bespeaks the perceived usefulness and effectiveness of this particular tool.

## Site types

At a closer look as presented in the above chapters, the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ are, however, a very heterogenous group. Some only function in the context of organised outdoor education and are not very attractive just by themselves for tourists to spend their leisure time there, especially when there is not much to be experienced on the ground. One method to cope with this is to tell the visitors stories on-site to link the tangible and local with imagination (or with contents formerly learnt from textbooks or other media), and at times to include songs (where feasible) which appeal to emotions, and link the individual to the group in a performative mode over singing together.<sup>5</sup> Especially the telling of stories of ‘martyrdom’ is deemed effective. These stories are sometimes told in outright theatre-like dramaturgy to move students to tears. In the previous chapters, we could observe this as played out in the filmic ‘patriotic’ renderings of some sites (which also substantiates the added value of integrating filmic material as done in the present book), e.g., in the case of the staged ‘grandpa with grandchildren’ (representing primary and junior secondary level children respectively) at Yan’an 延安 (chapter 3.3) in the educational ‘patriotic’ video for classroom use, to recall Mao Zedong 毛泽东 and his eldest son Mao Anying 毛岸英 at the spot where ‘they

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5 This practice of singing ‘patriotic’ songs together is also widely applied in the closely related defence education to build up a team spirit. Cf. the interviewees in Genevaz (2019: 464) who had undergone university-level defence education and stated that they learnt and sang the songs not only during their obligatory university defence education, but also already in school. In the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ discussed in the present book, one may recall also the songs sung in the filmic representations to emotionalise the topic, e.g., in front of the tombs of the Kunming ‘December First martyrs’ by Lianda alumni and also to the camera by Nobel laureate Yang Zhenning (chapter 3.2), or by the interviewed widow of Lin Jilu, one of the Urumqi ‘martyrs’ (chapter 3.2), or in Yan’an as an educational tool (chapter 3.3), as is in the case of the Wuhan labour strike by school classes singing the songs of the time (chapter 4.2), or by a former member of the Hainan ‘Red Detachment of Women’ (chapter 4.2), or by villagers commemorating the ‘tunnel warfare’ (chapter 4.3), or by school children at Chen Jiageng’s ‘base’ (chapter 5.2), or as an audio background to the presentation of Lei Feng’s ‘base’ in Fushun (chapter 5.3). Songs are also repeatedly referred to in written form, as we observed at various ‘bases’.

talked between father and son' (a scene the intended watching pupils can easily associate with), then pointing out dramatically that the son would soon die (in the Korean War), the camera zooming in on the staged listening 'family's' commotion to invite the watching audience to share it.

But more often, the setting is in front of tombs authenticating the respective historical figure in 'martyrs' cemeteries',<sup>6</sup> which are usually not an attractive destination in themselves Chinese tourists would visit. In China, visiting tombs of others or of whole cemeteries as tourist destinations (like, e.g., Père Lachaise in Paris to just name one prominent Western example) is highly unusual: normally, one only visits tombs of relatives, and even those only on certain dates. For the use of 'martyrs' cemeteries' or tombs as sites to inculcate an obligation of the young generations to the purported 'revolutionary ancestors', usually via pupils laying down wreaths or white paper flowers and 'sweeping' the tombs, we have discussed various examples in the preceding chapters. That way, they are to perform 'patriotism' instead of only hearing or reading about it. Over the visit to and care for the tombs, a fictive 'kinship' is created between the dead and the young Chinese citizens who are supposedly the 'heirs' of these dead. The most extreme case that we observed, given that claim of obligation to the '(revolutionary) ancestors', was the 'Urumqi Martyrs' Cemetery' (chapter 3.2) in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region where the 'martyrs' are CCP (Chinese Communist Party) Han cadres (including Mao's brother Mao Zemin 毛泽民) from far away without much connection to the local population. Beyond the prescribed visits by the assigned schools or other entities, namely at the newly revived Tomb Sweeping Day (a Han custom), not many visitors are to be found, even if the TV film clips which covered every single site of the 'patriotic education showcase bases', including the Urumqi site, as well as the educational video collection for classroom use tried to suggest otherwise. Such places which are not connected well to the local community remain artificial and imposed, and the forced character of attendance of those shown is hard to conceal even in the 'patriotic' filmic presentations. The 'martyrs' cemeteries' as part of the 'patriotic education' system (incidentally something already on the mind of the GMD / Guomindang 国民党 or Nationalist Party government in Republican times), however, serve for ceremonies to inculcate reverence and a sense of obligation into pupils or cadets.

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6 A good example was the educational video in the *Zhonghua hun* collection on the Shenyang Martyrs' Cemetery mentioned in chapter 4.1, discussing the memorialisation of the Korean War, a second list site, where a young girl reads out in dramatic fashion an emotional text to the attending classmates in front of tombs of 'martyrs' of the Korean War, the video also showing the commotion of the classmates as a 'proof' of effectiveness, inviting the video-watching pupils to share this emotion.

This sustains once more the argument that in China (and East Asia in general), ‘patriotism’ functions as an extension of ‘filial duty’,<sup>7</sup> even the more so in recent times in the PRC where the one-child policy and an aging society have led to a new ‘appraisal’ by the grown-ups of this Chinese ‘traditional beautiful virtue’ (*chuantong meide* 传统美德). ‘Filial duty’, as we observed in many cases, has been increasingly addressed over time at various sites as a small-scale (if sometimes framed as ‘narrow’) version of ‘patriotism’, and the frequent use of biological metaphors, appealing to ‘ancestry’, ‘same blood’, ‘born from the same womb’ (*tongbao* 同胞, the literal meaning of what is usually simply translated as ‘compatriots’), or the most recent ‘red genes’ etc.,<sup>8</sup> is a hallmark of official discourse. With this comes a ‘naturalisation’ of inherent hierarchy to counter any ideas of ‘Western equality’ (which presumably led to the ‘turmoil’ of 1989 which, as we saw, is lingering always in the background of the ‘patriotic education’ campaign, though rarely addressed openly). Rather, the purported ‘specific Chinese revolutionary tradition’ is to claim both of the *a priori* opposed concepts of ‘revolution’ and ‘tradition’ to be united, de facto taming ‘revolution’ by ‘tradition’ for defending the *status quo* – a marker of post-Cultural Revolution discourse which therefore tends to share in the ‘cult of heritage’, using the ‘spoils of history’ (Lowenthal 1996), rather than banking on (unruly) revolutionary iconoclasm. The next generations are to be inculcated with this ‘tradition’ which is supposedly conforming to China’s ‘national conditions’ (*guoqing* 国情) – a term much cherished by former general secretary Jiang Zemin 江泽民, the key promoter of the ‘patriotic education’ campaign (cf. chapter 1). That way, a shared national identity of what it means to be a *Chinese* ‘patriot’ is to be created.

While some sites, like the ‘martyrs’ cemeteries’ addressed above, are hardly attractive out of themselves, other sites, to the contrary, rather live off their inherent touristic potential which is only to be rechannelled into ‘patriotic’ messages for serving *also* as a ‘patriotic education showcase base’. Dunhuang’s 敦煌 Mogao 莫高 caves (chapter 2.3) were a case in point which do not need any additional advertisement for sure. Rather, the ‘patriotic education showcase base’ label is, as has become clear, rather uneasily affixed to this world-famous site, bending its offer to serve national(ist) agendas. Similarly, the Dujiangyan 都江堰 irrigation system (chapter 2.3), an ancient landscape transformation and UNESCO site like Dunhuang, or the even older Yinxu 殷墟 excavations (chapter 2.1), or Confucius’ home in Qufu 曲阜 (chapter 5.1), show that in all these (and more) cases, the ‘patriotic’ credentials are forced upon these pre-modern top tourist UNESCO sites to show

7 Kwak / Matsuda: ‘Patriotism in East Asian context’, p. 2. (Cf. also chapter 1 of the present book.)

8 As noted in chapter 1 of the present book, there is also the term ‘cultural genes’ to biologise ‘Chineseness’ more generally. Cf. ‘Zhonggong Zhongyang guowuyuan’ (2019), section 12.

that even though they are ‘world’ heritage, they are as much to be perceived as decidedly ‘Chinese’, especially by the Chinese citizens as the target group of ‘patriotic education’. (As we observed in chapter 1, not every ‘world heritage’ site was, however, conducive to a ‘patriotic’ reframing, namely sites in ‘minority’ areas, e.g., in Tibet.) Where feasible (cf. the cases of Yinxu in chapter 2.1, and Dunhuang in chapter 2.3), stories of foreign exploitation of Chinese historical heritage are to add also indignation to the ‘patriotic’ framing for the domestic target group, thus emotionalising the topic which for the rest is to engender cultural pride.

Other ‘patriotic education showcase bases’, still, are fully bound up with ideology, namely the Party places (chapter 3.3), or the sites of Communist models and CCP leaders (chapter 5.3). Given the strong accent on revolutionary history in school, and the plethora of films and TV series on these topics, together with the general fad for biographical history as noticeable in every Chinese book store, the more famous places among them often draw Chinese tourist crowds more easily to satisfy curiosity: how do the places one read and heard about so often really look like? How and where did famous people, including the top Party leaders, grow up? Needless to say, for individual tourists, the offer beyond ‘patriotic’ content is crucial for deciding to visit a site in their leisure time. Accessibility and possible integration in a trip with other nearby attractions (of potentially other character) are further incentives. Party places, e.g., try to offer as additional attractions a quick ‘experience’ of the Long March, or of life in caves in Yan’an (chapter 3.3), or of the ‘typical’ food of Mao’s birthplace Shaoshan 韶山 (chapter 5.3). Places in nature like Jinggangshan 井冈山 (chapter 3.3) try to heighten interest by packaging the tour together with additional ‘green’ sites, thus offering to relax in nature after receiving ideological training. But the Party places also need to carefully design the narrative on Party history which had changed so often in the past and still does so, reflecting the political shifts through time. They, however, also serve for diversifying the image of the Party, conforming to the political line of the post-Mao era, presenting the Party as a ‘collective’ body with several important figures and events.

The pitfalls of the task have become especially clear in the case of Ruijin 瑞金 (chapter 3.3), Mao’s place of difficulties which he shunned thereafter and which had also bruised many other leading figures, leaving a trauma with its extremely bloody inner-Party witch hunts (which were notably disclosed in ‘patriotic’ materials for Chinese youth in the late 1990s, but quietly edited out in Xi Jinping-era ones). Ruijin was, however, the one-time Chinese ‘Moscow’ in the early 1930s and central Soviet base area where the institutional foundations of the future PRC were laid, and thus tried to fight for its standing in Party history after long-term sidelining. The case of the Nanchang 南昌 Uprising memorial (chapter 4.2), too,

brought to the fore other leaders than Mao, banking on that uprising's being declared in retrospect as the moment of 'birth' of the Red Army, today's PLA (People's Liberation Army), which plays such an important role in the overall 'patriotic education bases' endeavour, as we have observed repeatedly;<sup>9</sup> and the nominated Deng Xiaoping 邓小平-connected places (his home – chapter 5.3 – as well as the Baise 百色 Uprising site – chapter 4.2) also rewrote Party history away from Mao-centrism, while Liu Shaoqi's 刘少奇 home (chapter 5.3) belabours the rehabilitation of this once important leader (and key Cultural Revolution victim), notably even leaking information about the taboo topic of the Great Famine (1958–1962) to argue for Liu's and Deng's reversal in the early 1960s of Maoist economic policies of the times of the Great Leap Forward (started late 1957 and officially launched 1958). Such sites clearly reflect the rewriting of Party history under Deng Xiaoping (and subsequently Jiang Zemin), while the Xi Jinping-era framings opt once more for glossing over the dark spots in the Party's past to rather present to the intended reader of today a 'happy history' of the CCP's rule.

The battle sites (chapter 4.3), in turn, are targeting, above all, a male clientele, and, of course, the military, beyond the guided visiting pupils. The problem for these sites is that not much can be exhibited, given the evasiveness of the topic. Thus, additional features are often introduced to enrich the visit and provide some 'experience', like panorama halls with visual and sound effects, weaponry, films (often linking up with well-known movies on the battles), or, like with tunnel warfare, visits of tunnels to enable a sensory impression. Dioramas play an important role for visualisation, too. And in the case of Taierzhuang 台儿庄, which contemporaneously has its Great Canal cultural heritage in a more touristic fashion as a local selling point, the whole (reconstructed) old city is turned into an outdoor exhibition space, placing sculptures in the streets, and putting up old photos on buildings to visualise street scenes during the fighting in the Second Sino–Japanese War, while only some old buildings with bullet holes remain. This is to add to and 'authenticate' the indoor exhibition of the 'patriotic education showcase base' on the Taierzhuang Battle of 1938.

Some 'red' sites, in turn, try to evoke a more 'nostalgic' feeling for Maoist times, referring to nationally well-known old films like in the case of the Henan Red Flag Canal (chapter 2.3) or the Hainan Red Detachment of Women site (chapter 4.2) which elder people might appreciate, while the younger might be attracted by this kind of Maoist retro chic. Iconic photos are a further device to trigger the visual memory of Chinese citizens of a certain age, as in Daqing 大庆 in Heilongjiang

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9 Cf. also Hughes (2017), pointing out the reverse role of the 'patriotic education' component for the PLA, and for 'national defence education' of Chinese citizens in general.

Province, where the memorial for ‘iron man’ Wang Jinxi 王进喜 (chapter 5.3) works with photos everyone knew at the time of the model oil worker, as does the Fushun 抚顺 Lei Feng 雷锋 memorial (chapter 5.3) dedicated to the quintessential PRC all-round model for every citizen to emulate. These visual sources tap into the public’s received knowledge which they, in turn, expect to find reinforced at these sites (see also below). This display strategy could be seen also – in a material form – at the second millennium BC excavation site of Yinxu (chapter 2.1) where the iconic huge rectangular bronze vessel, the Houmuwu ding 后母戊鼎 of Shang times, was put up in a replica (the original having moved up the museum hierarchy, now held in the National Museum in Beijing) to meet expectations of visitors to ‘see’ it there, since everyone learnt about this famous object in school. Not finding it where it had been discovered disappointed many pupils, and thus the replica was duly installed to satisfy demand. (As we observed in this case of Yinxu, simultaneously being a ‘world heritage’ site, the exhibition style had, however, to be weighed carefully against the UNESCO requirements to avoid any impression of some sort of ‘Disneyfication’, and thus the visual ‘patriotic’ framing of the site listed as a ‘patriotic education showcase base’ in 1997 had to be toned down over time to allow for a UNESCO listing in 2006, producing also new narratives for an international public, while written materials aimed at the domestic audience retained older framings – conforming to Chinese textbook narratives, e.g., with the notorious issue of ‘slave-holder society’ in the Marxist paradigm.)

The least attractive among the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ for leisure tourists are those with a very recent content like the one on Kong Fansen 孔繁森 (chapter 5.3) as a ‘modern’, i.e., contemporary ‘hero’: his role for taking in Tibet by figuring as the model cadre who ‘cared’ for the Tibetans (and for the soldiers guarding the Chinese frontier!) is obvious, but he is too recent and unspectacular for a normal Chinese tourist to solicit interest in spite of the ‘exotic’ flavour his workplace could provide. As we observed, the descriptions of his ‘model deeds’ are going into the absurd to counter this problem of banality.<sup>10</sup> His site in Liaocheng 聊城 (near where he was born) in Shandong Province is serving for guided outings of local school children, but also for cadres etc., while normal tourists are rare, although the siting is urban, convenient to reach, and could be linked with Liaocheng’s more touristic ‘Grand Canal’ heritage as well. Beyond ideology, sustained by an impressive array of labelling plaques put up at the entrance (cf.

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10 This, of course, was not only the case with Kong Fansen, but the description of various ‘model deeds’ of heroes that we observed in ‘patriotic’ materials of other sites also aimed at impressing the intended young reader with weird, at times even unsavoury, details to appeal to imagination and solicit interest.

chapter 1, fig. 1.1, showing a part of them), the site lacks any convincing offer, and the basic idea to show that ‘role models’ are still around in the present, has apparently not captured the normal public.<sup>11</sup>

In their early phase at least, ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ also provided a stress on the role of education as such, by this celebrating also Confucius (chapter 5.1) as an educator, and some 20th century ‘non-Communists’ (if turning sympathetic to the Communists in lifetime) who contributed to modern Chinese education as a ‘patriotic’ deed, as we observed with the sites for Tao Xingzhi 陶行知 and Chen Jiageng 陈嘉庚 (Tan Kah Kee) (both chapter 5.2 and on the first list of 1997). While Republican-era Tao Xingzhi had, in fact, been criticised posthumously in the early PRC for his ‘bourgeois reformist’ role in education, to be reappreciated and ‘heroised’ only since the 1980s, the case of Chen Jiageng, the famous Overseas Chinese leader in Southeast Asia and untiring promoter of education who opted for living out his life in the early PRC, is also not devoid of irony. As we noted, his intention (namely with his Overseas Chinese Museum, chapter 4.1, the first of its kind but ‘patriotically’ listed only in 2001) to set up an educational facility for the local PRC populace to learn about the world abroad, was simply turned around posthumously to make him and his educational endeavours serve the PRC’s nationalist agenda, rather attempting to teach also the Overseas Chinese who might come and visit, to be ‘patriotic’ Chinese (as understood by the CCP). Though this might not be appreciated by the Overseas Chinese themselves, it is to suggest to the mainland Chinese citizen visiting, that the Overseas Chinese should be taught to see it that way.

Various sites in the overall ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system are, in fact, mainly concerned with ‘Chineseness’ at large and thus aim at ‘Chinese’ visitors also from beyond mainland China, not only the Overseas Chinese, but very importantly also those from Taiwan, as well as those from Hong Kong or Macau, the two former colonies that were ‘returning’ to the ‘motherland’ in 1997 and 1999 respectively, i.e. at the time the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system came into effect. Having been educated under ‘colonial conditions’, these ‘newcomers’ to the PRC needed to be brought closer into the fold of ‘Chinese citizens’, and ‘citizen formation’ for these former colonial subjects should also provide the blueprint for the aimed-at ‘reunification’ with the Taiwanese. The ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ aimed at this ‘Chineseness’ at large include namely sites on pre-modern topics, like the ‘mausolea’ of Huangdi 黄帝 and Yandi 炎帝 (chapter 3.1) as the

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11 As we also noticed with the Hunan memorial for Lei Feng (chapter 5.3), e.g., there were therefore attempts of various sorts to ‘prove’ to the public that emulation of this kind of ‘models’ is still practiced today.

mythical ancestors of all ‘Chinese’, or the home of Confucius as a historical figure defining ‘Chineseness’ in cultural terms (chapter 5.1); but also excavation sites like the Palaeolithic ‘Peking Man’ site, the Neolithic Hemudu 河姆渡, or the Shang-era Yinxu (all chapter 2.1) are to teach visitors where ‘the Chinese’ (always explicitly including Overseas Chinese and Taiwanese in the rhetoric) came from, broadening the conception of ‘China’ since ancient times to take in also the South (which is extended back to the Neolithic with Hemudu). On the other hand, and politically more straightforwardly, museums like the ‘China Fujian–Taiwan Kinship Museum’ (the notable case of a completely new site designed from the outset in the ‘patriotic education showcase base’ system, listed in 2005 and only *then* opening its doors the following year – chapter 4.1), or the memorial for 17th century figure Zheng Chenggong 郑成功 (chapter 5.1), as well as Chen Jiageng’s Overseas Chinese Museum (chapter 4.1), are to celebrate that ‘unity’ of ‘the Chinese’, be it with the Taiwanese or the Overseas Chinese. The minority regional museums, in turn, as, e.g., the discussed cases of the Ningxia and Inner Mongolia regional museums (both chapter 2.2) showed, integrate also the minorities in this overall setup of inclusive ‘Chineseness’. Thus, the regional (and provincial – cf. the discussed case of Anhui in chapter 2.2) museums are supposed to serve for feeding regional identity into the national overarching one – something the Soviet model (see below) already proposed.

Implicit in the celebration of ‘Chineseness’ is often, especially in more modern times, an enemy against whom this is profiled. This may be Western imperialists, like the Dutch in the 17th century in the case of Zheng Chenggong’s memorial (chapter 5.1), or the British in the 19th century in the cases of the Opium War (chapter 4.3) and Lin Zexu 林则徐 (chapter 5.1) sites, or the US in the 20th century in the Korean War memorial (chapter 4.1). But the other major foreign enemy focused upon is Japan, from the early modern ‘Japanese pirates’ or *wokou* 倭寇, like in the Great Wall Shanhaiguan 山海关 ‘patriotic’ site (chapter 2.3), over the 19th century First Sino–Japanese War site on Liugongdao 刘公岛 (chapter 4.3), to the 19th and 20th century atrocity sites of Lüshun 旅顺 and Nanjing, and the bacteriological warfare Unit 731 in Northern Manchuria (all chapter 3.2), to sites celebrating Chinese ‘victorious’ anti-Japanese resistance during the Second Sino–Japanese War like at Taierzhuang in battle by the (GMD) military, or with Ranzhuang’s 冉庄 ‘tunnel warfare’ by ‘the people’, if led by a Communist (both chapter 4.3). Internal enemies, in turn, are secondary. This role in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system is historically usually assigned to the GMD (or the Republican-era warlords, and in some cases to the Qing for late imperial times) when the site content concerns the persecution of revolutionaries in prisons and ‘concentration camps’,

while ‘martyrs’ cemeteries’ commemorate the (Communist) dead (chapter 3.2). A further variety of anti-internal enemy sites are those dedicated to revolutionary active resistance to the political foe via uprisings, strikes, and guerrilla warfare (chapter 4.2). And finally, sites dedicated to commemoration how the CCP and the GMD fought each other outright for supremacy and rule, i.e., the listed Civil War sites (chapter 4.3), throw the GMD into the major historical internal enemy role to legitimate the ‘patriotic’ outcome of the CCP’s rule over the mainland in hindsight. Otherwise, given the political objective of ‘reunification’, the GMD in Taiwan is also offered a hand over the Strait, not the least in consideration of the centrifugal tendencies in Taiwan ever more apparent since the 1990s also in Taiwanese history education,<sup>12</sup> precisely at the time when the mainland’s ‘patriotic education’ campaign thrived and the ‘showcase bases’ were set up, and most eye-catchingly when the GMD in Taiwan lost the democratic elections for presidency (in itself a thorn in the CCP’s side) in 2000 to the independence-inclined DPP (Democratic Progressive Party). The mainland’s inclusion of sites for the ‘father of the Chinese Republic’ Sun Yat-sen (cf. chapter 5.2 for his place of origin), or for the 1911 Wuchang Uprising starting the Republican revolution to overthrow the Qing (chapter 4.2) as a ‘common’ point of reference (before the GMD–CCP antagonism arose historically), or for the 1938 Taierzhuang Battle ‘victory’ (chapter 4.3) (fought for by GMD troops) during the Second Sino–Japanese War to acknowledge the ‘common’ fight against the Japanese, was a way to express this cross-Strait mainland offer to the GMD (and to potential Taiwanese tourists) in the system of the PRC’s ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ on the basis of Chinese nationalism.

Internationalism is, however, not totally absent from the nationalist ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system, though only on a side note: the listing of the memorial for the two foreign doctors, Canadian Norman Bethune and Indian Dwarkanath Kotnis (chapter 5.3), who worked and died in China during the time of the Second Sino–Japanese War, is to show to the domestic pupil (and tourist) above all that there were even foreigners sustaining the CCP, and their service and role model is acknowledged (though in the case of Kotnis, the ups and downs of Sino–Indian relations meant that he had been written out of the picture for a long time before his more recent reappraisal). But this does not feed into a call for Chinese

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12 One may recall the stir created in Taiwan by the *Renshi Taiwan* 认识台湾 (Knowing Taiwan) textbooks (a set of three: history, geography, society) in 1997 (cf. Chang 2011) which suggested a distinct Taiwanese identity and also greatly alarmed the PRC, while the first democratic presidential election in 1996 in Taiwan had already provoked mainland military threats. In the mainland’s perspective, at the time when Hong Kong’s ‘coming home’ was celebrated in 1997 (and Macau was on track for following in 1999), Taiwan was quickly moving in the opposite direction.

pupils to involve themselves similarly in ‘internationalism’ abroad: the end point of service is and remains their *patria* China. This also pertains to the way of memorialisation of the Korean War (chapter 4.1), as we observed, being a rare case in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system of a site dedicated to the PRC’s being militarily (and civilly) active beyond its borders,<sup>13</sup> if officially only by ‘volunteers’ to ‘help’ the North Koreans.

## Knowledge and emotions

In educational terms, the aim of ‘knowledge’ transmission – one of the two key tasks of education according to Chinese curricula, the other being ‘emotional education’ – is mostly represented in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system by museums and excavation sites. However, ‘knowledge’ education is not perceived as something ‘neutral’ or ‘non-partisan’, but has to be connected to emotions to serve for engendering ‘patriotism’.

This, in fact, reflects also the Soviet conception of education (see below) with its accent on education as an endeavour of socialist moral upbringing (*vospitaniye*) rather than just knowledge transmission,<sup>14</sup> which used various measures to ‘edify’ students by touching their ‘hearts’. The Stalinist conception of ‘patriotic education’ promoted history education precisely for rousing students’ passion to fight for the good and to ‘hate’ ‘the enemy’,<sup>15</sup> quite contrary to historiographical ideals since Tacitus of *sine ira et studio*, and clearly not subscribing to Goethe’s oft-cited view

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13 The Southeast Asian military endeavours of the PRC are not represented in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system, although they have left their mark on popular culture. Namely, the song *Xueran de fengcai* 血染的风采 (‘bloodstained glory’) (1986) on the fallen PLA soldiers during the Sino–Vietnamese clashes ever since the brief Sino–Vietnamese War (1979) which had been China’s ‘answer’ to Vietnam’s invasion into Cambodia to oust the Maoist Pol Pot regime there (1978), became popular and was covered, among others, by Xi Jinping’s wife Peng Liyuan 彭丽媛, a PLA singer. Ironically, the Tiananmen protesters of 1989 used this song for themselves – before the very PLA suppressed them. And thus, the song was sung in Hong Kong at every ‘June Fourth’ vigil – as long as the latter was allowed. Cf. Baar (2018) (although the article contains some inaccuracies, but it provides also the song text with English translation added). The Sino–Vietnamese conflict was – different from the PRC’s border clashes with India or the Soviet Union – not only about the border as such, but about regional influence.

14 See Avis, George (1987).

15 Cf. Sanina (2017: 69). See also International Relations scholars Hagström / Gustafsson (2019) who stress that such narratives are there and applied to draw conclusions, suggesting a future course of action.

that ‘patriotism ruins history’.<sup>16</sup> In the PRC, this Stalinist conception was taken over, but could be also easily married to older Chinese conceptions of education as a way of character formation (*xiu shen* 修身) rather than just a training of the intellect (and possibly of skills), and by this tapping also into pre-modern Chinese conceptions of the role historical example should play in this kind of education. Historiography is, above all, supposed to provide moral guidance to ‘mirror’ the present in it (see also below), rather than chronicle the past as ‘a foreign country’ (Lowenthal 1985). That way, clear-cut black and white moral categories are more feasible than the blurred grey tones of history, and thus pre-modern and Stalinist conceptions of historiography and education could be combined in the Chinese setting, now rechannelled into a Communist framework of citizen formation.

The crucial role of emotions for soliciting ‘patriotism’ explains why, e.g., places of atrocities or persecution are seen as particularly effective in instilling ‘patriotic’ feelings. A case in point for emotional ‘guidance’ by display are the atrocity sites connected to the Japanese (chapter 3.2) where visualisation of atrocities is so strongly accentuated by different means, that visitors exposed to this presentation will hardly emotionally digest the brief official ‘diplomatically correct’ coda of the exhibition with a call for peace and ‘friendship with Japan’ nonetheless.<sup>17</sup> The victims themselves are, in turn, clearly not the major point of interest in this ‘patriotic’ framing, as we observed. At all kinds of such ‘dark’ sites, the display rather holds up easily assignable (and nationalised) narratives of victimisation and culpability, even doing so in cases where they are historically false or only half-true. Here one may not only think of the Lüshun Massacre site presentation leaving out critical background (chapter 3.2), but also of the more extreme example of the Geleshan prisons (chapter 3.2) and the (wrong) insinuation that the US were behind the GMD’s torturing of Communists there, which, however, is following the fictive popular portrayal in literature, film, and on stage to this avail, produced at a high-time of PRC anti-Americanism. Thus, the material site is not used to ‘correct’ the fictional, but rather adapted in presentation to *conform* to it, better historical knowledge notwithstanding – given also the fact that in this case the misleading ‘Sino–American concentration camp’ labelling has been codified on a high political level, namely by the State Council, which renders it difficult to backpedal.<sup>18</sup> This,

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16 ‘Der Patriotismus verdirbt die Geschichte.’ (Goethe in 1817, talking with Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer.) See Deibel / Gundelfinger (1907): 199.

17 Cf. Du / Littlejohn / Lennon (2013), based on interviews of visitors of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall who stated that they found this hard to accept.

18 As mentioned in chapter 3.2, the assumption of Chinese-born American journalist Eberlein (2011) that the ‘real’ story was only disclosed to her by the nationally famous director of the museum, Li Hua 厉华, during an interview, ignores that the facts had been already acknowledged in the

once more, proves that mutually re-enforcing narratives are seen as key for convincing audiences of a prescribed storyline, regardless of historical reliability.

In fact, in several cases, as we noted, insinuations go deliberately counter history when, e.g., mythical Huangdi's 'mausoleum' (chapter 3.1) is treated as a real tomb, or visitors of the Party place Xibaipo 西柏坡 (chapter 3.3) are mostly left in the dark about the fact that the whole place is a reconstruction, as is that which the visitor encounters at Jinggangshan, Ruijin, and other places 'holy' to the revolution (chapter 3.3). Such measures serve for the impression normal visitors without specific historical knowledge come away with, not being aware of the facts, while curators or anyone else will not be easily pinpointed as having misled the visitors, as on the surface there is often the possibility to hint at some tucked-away statement where the facts are acknowledged. It is the overall impression for Chinese citizens, that counts.

This is similar to my earlier findings with Chinese historical documentaries which are on the surface 'market' productions and claim to only 'document', but de facto deliver official narratives on history in a just more appealing and supposedly 'credible' format (Müller 2013). In the case of the 'patriotic education showcase bases', it is the physical place that serves as the 'authenticator'. In fact, discussions on how to design 'patriotic education' more 'effectively' show that 'indirect means' are seen as superior since the more conventional open top-down methods are more likely to be rejected by the Chinese citizens (cf. Cai 2018 who argues that this should be learnt 'from the British' to again insinuate that this is not Chinese or Communist but a sophisticated 'Western' form one should 'take over': a by now familiar rhetorical strategy).

## **Agents**

For evaluating this in practice, the question arises as to who the agents are that are involved in the 'patriotic education showcase bases' system? What interests do they follow respectively? Obviously, there are national actors with a national(ist) agenda, there is the provincial level, considering also regional development, and there are

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late 1990s, even in the 'patriotic booklet' of the site written by (or under the direction of) Li Hua, if one reads it carefully. However, as we noted, in the 'patriotic' educational video on the Geleshan site done at the same time, the very Li Hua rather repeated the (wrong) official version in front of the camera for Chinese pupils. Very clearly, it depended on the medium and target group, where what could be said, and the binding force of the State Council's 1988 labelling has to be counted in, as detailed in chapter 3.2.

local agents. Then there are the visitors, a very varied group: from individual tourists over organised tourist groups to school classes (at times including those for impaired children),<sup>19</sup> military cadets, cadres, or working units (and occasionally also prisoners led there to be ‘re-educated’ and ‘reform’ themselves). In sum: what are visitors to get out of the sites?

The national agenda is clearly spelled out in the materials we have used (and described in more detail in chapter 1): the official lists of sites, ever expanding over time, the nationally broadcasted *Ai wo Zhonghua* 爱我中华 (Love our China) TV film clips on every listed site during the eras of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao 胡锦涛, and – where extant – additionally the alternative collection of educational videos on some first list sites, selected by the Ministry of Education and produced by the national entity for audio-visual education, *Zhonghua hun* 中华魂 (Soul of China), for classroom use; the official ‘patriotic’ booklets of the *Zhongguo dabaiké quanshu* 中国大百科全书 (China Encyclopaedia Press) benchmark series on the single sites of the first list, usually put on the shelves of school libraries (reprinted over the 2000s and partly in 2012 with a new layout); the further officially commissioned printed collections grouped after the respective lists, some clearly geared towards individual tourists by providing maps; and the most recent official *Fengbei* 丰碑 (Monuments) series of 2019 in 22 volumes, grouping the nationally listed sites (up to the 2017 list) per province, updating the whole ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ endeavour, started in the era of Jiang Zemin, over the era of Hu Jintao, to the era of Xi Jinping, with new narratives. By choosing this historicising approach, we could follow the evolution of the single sites, but also of the sites’ ‘framing’ (Goffman) through time which reflected the changes of requirements (and uses) as well. While many sites existed as such already before the ‘patriotic education’ campaign, might have been on the ‘cultural heritage’ listings already before, and might have undergone the usual process of ‘upgrading’ in the ‘patriotic education’ context (for a typical example, see chapter 1, appendix 2), entailing the need to adapt themselves to the more specific requirements of the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system since 1997, we also looked at examples of sites which were established only relatively late. These are, e.g., those connected to people ‘re-evaluated’ or rehabilitated in post-Mao China, not the least Deng Xiaoping himself. The more recent cases included, as mentioned, even an example of a site completely newly designed and on purpose for the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system itself, only opened (in 2006) *after* being listed (in 2005), tellingly dedicated to the Fujian–Taiwan connection – chapter 4.1), which thus showed a ‘model’ site for how

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19 Cf. the example of Kunming’s ‘Tombs of the four December 1 ‘martyrs’ and December 1 memorial hall’ in chapter 3.2.

a ‘patriotic education showcase base’ should ideally look like – and what it should be used for. In other words, it showed the system in the making. By using all those materials systematically for the single cases, considering also the school history textbook narratives Chinese visitors have been socialised into, the national agenda’s general evolution could be followed in its local dimension and held against personal on-site observations at a given moment.

The regional or local agendas, in turn, are by nature pluriform: the single sites are required to show how they feed into the national ‘patriotic education’ goal, but they also try to market their place and attract visitors, ideally also domestic tourists. For the provincial or regional (minorities) museums (see chapter 2.2), e.g., this means to tread a fine line, since the peculiar provincial or minority features are the interesting point for a tourist visitor, but should not eclipse the national for serving ‘patriotic education’. For the stable offer, the sites drew up contracts with entities which they serve for outings, sometimes with specifically tailored proposals: for schools of various levels, for the military, or for work places. Though most entities served are nearby, especially in the case of primary or secondary schools, some are also further away and thus reach out beyond the local, namely in the case of some universities that would send their students over for ‘patriotic education’, promising also a ‘trip’ away from home, but also guaranteeing that sites are not bound up too much with the local community only. Also, as we observed, some contracted military entities were from further away. With working places, the connection is usually over the specific site content, aiming, e.g., at workers, journalists, or bank employees. Cadres are a group which are explicitly and repeatedly addressed for receiving ‘education’, namely to train them in ‘anti-corruption’ and to enrich their ideological background to turn them into a stable and ‘convinced’ backbone of PRC society. Signs of such contractual relationships are displayed at the sites with plaques (cf. chapter 1), and some of the official booklets on single sites even addressed these arrangements explicitly, as we have seen, to document their conforming to the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ requirements. In this context, the sites often developed a ‘going-out’ strategy as well, either sending staff to schools to teach the pupils in their classroom, or designing travelling exhibitions shown around the country. That way, pupils as well as grown-up Chinese citizens not able to travel to the site could be reached, too.

Beyond the ‘stable’ offer and contract relations, the sites, however, also need to attract normal tourists and Chinese citizens which they do to various degrees (and depending on what they can offer, given the site content). Local materials sometimes try to infiltrate some ‘local’ readings to supplement the national perspective for heightening the site’s attractiveness (and uniqueness). Thus, during

my on-site observations, locally available materials have been taken in, too, to evaluate how the sites try to perform their double task to serve local as well as national agendas.

The least easy to grasp actors are the visitors themselves: the obvious ones are those coming via the mentioned contracts to ‘receive education’, which included, as the TV film clips (and in some cases the sites’ official booklets) had disclosed, beyond the usual pupils, military cadets, cadres, or work entities, also occasionally prisoners to ‘reform’ themselves by visiting such ‘patriotic’ sites.<sup>20</sup> Many visitors are led there to perform ceremonies, for which all ‘showcase bases’ provide ample space on purpose, typically being sworn in to join the Young Pioneers, the Communist Youth League, the Army or the paramilitary,<sup>21</sup> or the CCP itself, but sometimes even for more general coming-of-age ceremonies, thus integrating the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system in the Chinese citizens’ life-cycle. Since 2016, there are also ceremonies held for medium-level to higher officials to take an oath on the Constitution.

The festive calendar of when to perform activities has been also expanded in the meantime: in the ‘PRC law on Patriotic Education’ (2023) that went into effect on 1 January 2024, traditional lunar calendar Chinese festivals like the Spring Festival, the Lantern Festival, Tomb Sweeping Day (Qingming 清明), the Dragon Boat Festival, and the Mid-Autumn Festival, have joined the ‘international’ ones like (solar) New Year (1 January), International Women’s Day (8 March), Labour Day (1 May), Youth Day (in China: 4 May), Children’s Day (in China: 1 June), and the newly (i.e. in 2018) installed ‘Chinese Peasants’ Harvest Festival’ (‘in autumn’). Furthermore, the Day of Victory in the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance (3 September), Martyrs’ Day (30 September), and the National Memorial Day for the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre (13 December) installed in 2014 are prescribed.<sup>22</sup> The use of the sites for ceremonies thus integrates them into performative agendas. Therewith, they become a historical backdrop for engendering future patriots as much as continuing to educate the adult citizen by ‘citizen formation’.

Beyond such ‘visitors on duty’, tourists are a pickier variety.<sup>23</sup> While the group tourists depend on the tour package offered, which can also join various sites together like theme tours on the Long March (e.g., in ‘red tourism’), or as suggested

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20 Such groups would not mingle with the normal tourists, of course. The TV films are therefore an important document for this, as are the occasional written statements in the published ‘patriotic’ materials.

21 The paramilitary consists of citizens receiving military training outside the formal army.

22 See *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu fa* (2023), articles 28 and 29.

23 See, e.g., Urry / Larsen (2011) for a discussion of tourist perspectives on places people travel to.

in newer approaches of a so-called ‘1+x’ model, to join the ‘red theme’ with one other factor like shopping or nature,<sup>24</sup> individual tourists would only visit if there was an offer interesting enough to warrant spending leisure time there. Sites need to take this into account and thus try to variegate their offers, which some of them also contemplated openly in the official ‘patriotic’ booklet series on the first list sites, as we saw. That way, they also try to make ‘their’ site distinct and unique which otherwise, with politics overtaking everything else, could be easily levelled, rendering it unattractive in touristic terms, though providing ‘politically correct’ messages.<sup>25</sup> The sites also consult among each other to learn of ‘best practice’ examples elsewhere.<sup>26</sup> Unsurprisingly, those sites that are attractive on their own in purely touristic terms need less of an additional effort, while other sites will be largely deserted for much of the year beyond the ‘standard’ contract visitors.

The Chinese concerted action in the context of the larger ‘patriotic education’ campaign, thoroughly planned and assigned to all administrative levels and entities as something to report on (cf. the implementation outlines or ‘action plans’ referred to in chapter 1), therefore also tries to pick up expectations the potential Chinese visitors would bring along from their former exposure to narratives in school, but also to those of other (official) media. This became very obvious in the examples of topics well-known from PRC-era fictional renderings. This could be via the genre of novels like ‘Defence of Yan’an’ (*Baowei Yan’an* 保卫延安 of the 1950s) for the Party place Yan’an (chapter 3.3 – given that this ‘holy place of the revolution’ had to be surrendered temporarily to the GMD in 1947), and most importantly ‘Red Crag’ (*Hongyan* 红岩 of 1961) in the case of the Geleshan 歌乐山 prisons (chapter 3.2), engendering also other fictional renderings like theatre plays or films, dramatically highlighting the Communist ‘martyrs’ in Southwest China at the eve of the PRC’s founding. A further medium via which Chinese visitors had been familiarised with certain topics in the official reading, framing their perception of sites and referred to in the ‘patriotic’ materials or on-site, was PRC-era films. E.g., we noted the one on 19th century ‘national hero’ *Lin Zexu* (chapter 5.1) of the 1950s still recommended for history classes, and the more internationally launched

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24 Cf. Zhao (2021: 234). The ‘cradle of the revolution’ Jinggangshan (chapter 3.3), for one, proposed a combination of ‘red’ and ‘green’, as we noted.

25 Red tourism research has shown that often local and national perspectives collide, with the locality interested more in economic aspects while the national perspective is fixed on ‘political correctness’. Cf. Zhao (2021: 232).

26 E.g., we noted that the Longhua (see chapter 3.2) or Geleshan (see chapter 3.3) sites tried to pose as ‘best practice’ examples also for others, detailing their measures of education for various target groups. The Nanjing Massacre Memorial, in turn, served as a standard for atrocity sites (see chapter 3.2).

1997 movie on the ‘Opium War’ (*Yapian zhanzheng* 鸦片战争 – chapter 4.3) at the occasion of the Hong Kong hand-over. Visitors to the respective ‘showcase bases’ in Fujian and Guangdong were to match those with the physical places. ‘The Naval Battle of 1894’ (*Jiawu fengyun* 甲午风云) on the First Sino–Japanese War (a film of 1962) was another example of a film still recommended for history classes, framing that topic for visitors of the respective ‘showcase base’ on Liugongdao (chapter 4.3). The various fictional renderings of the ‘Red Detachment of Women’ (*Hongse niangzi jun* 红色娘子军), this early 1930s Hainan guerrilla formation, best known in China in the filmed ballet version (of 1970), but also applied for PRC foreign relations on stage, notably during US president Nixon’s historic visit in 1972, was, in turn, a clear point of reference for the respective Hainan ‘patriotic education showcase base’ (chapter 4.2). For the commemoration of the Second Sino–Japanese War, the 1986 film ‘Bloody Battle of Taierzhuang’ (*Xuezhuan Taierzhuang* 血战台儿庄 – chapter 4.3) on this 1938 ‘victory’ over the Japanese, served, as we observed, also for cross-Strait relations to the GMD on Taiwan, soliciting potential tourists also from there to visit this ‘patriotic’ place, while other sites connected to the Second Sino–Japanese War rather referred back to well-known Maoist framings for the domestic public, like the film on ‘Tunnel Warfare’ (*Didaozhan* 地道战, 1965) in Ranzhuang (chapter 4.3) which hailed the ‘people’s war’ (under Communist guidance) against the Japanese. Newer films treating the subsequent Civil War battles between the CCP and the GMD in Manchuria, Central, and North China (chapter 4.3), namely the ‘Decisive Campaigns’ (*Dajuezhuan* 大决战) trilogy of 1991/1992 repeatedly referred to in the respective ‘showcase bases’ of the three military campaigns of 1948/1949, in turn, were to document for the PRC citizen that the CCP’s rule was ultimately justified by victory in the Civil War. This film trilogy’s historical ‘argument’ was particularly important at the moment of the CCP’s legitimacy crisis after the bloody crushing of the Tiananmen protests in 1989 domestically, and internationally after the crumbling of the Communist Bloc in Europe, culminating in the momentous dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. That way, the Chinese film trilogy of 1991/1992 was to convey to the PRC citizen that the CCP, in contrast, would not waver and stay in power, and this storyline was to be transmitted also at the respective ‘patriotic education showcase bases’. To illustrate and bolster the legitimacy of ‘new China’ also beyond military victory in the Civil War, documentary films on PRC-era topics, in turn, served, focusing on ‘socialist achievements’, like the 1970 propagandistic documentary film on the Red Flag Canal (*Hongqiqu* 红旗渠 – chapter 2.3) built since 1960, which was, as we observed, very pronouncedly integrated into the respective ‘patriotic education showcase base’s’ display. The documentary film was to appeal to the domestic

visitors' visual memory of this widely publicised case of PRC engineering achievements (evidently not mentioning the Great Famine background). That documentary film had been also used for the international public after the PRC had joined the United Nations (taking over the seat from Taiwan in 1971), when Deng Xiaoping (at his brief temporary political come-back during the Cultural Revolution) chose it as the first of ten films to screen and advertise the PRC in 1974 when travelling to New York to address the UN General Assembly. (As we noted in chapter 2.3, this international screening had the further subtext of countering the foreign documentary treatment of leftist Italian film director Michelangelo Antonioni in his 1972 film *Chung Kuo – Cina*, attacked with a campaign in the PRC meanwhile, with an at the time 'politically correct' 'Chinese' version). The equally Mao-era documentary film on oil worker and 'ironman' Wang Jinxi (*Tieren Wang Jinxi* 铁人王进喜) (released 1966), in turn, served to showcase a Chinese Communist model worker and functions as a background for domestic visitors of Wang's respective 'showcase base' in Daqing (chapter 5.3), who are familiar with his most iconic images from the documentary. Beyond such above-named artistic treatments in novels, theatre plays and ballets, or films, a further medial form widely circulating among the normal Chinese citizens is the little comic-style picture books (*lianhuanhua* 连环画) on various topics, which we occasionally noted as well. And the visual memory of Chinese citizens also built on news and iconised photographs, which were referred to, as we observed, in several 'showcase bases', e.g., in those of Lei Feng (chapter 5.3), but also in the case of Bethune (chapter 5.2), or of places like Yan'an (chapter 3.3) where many iconic photos had been produced (to be sometimes cropped later when people fell out of favour). In any case, a successful on-site matching of expectations domestic tourists will bring with them, created by earlier exposure to such other widely disseminated medial forms, heightens the possibility that people get hooked and will be moved to visit the sites in their spare time.

## Divergent readings

The differences between the agents and their agendas, however, also open up possibilities for divergent readings. Some materials precisely use the locality to offer small windows of such alternative readings, even if the larger historiographical framework of Chinese history, namely in the case of pre-modern history as mainly and authoritatively defined in Marxist terms by Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978)

(whose brush we also encountered repeatedly as a once major figure in the PRC's heritage system), remained intact.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, for more recent periods, historical photos shown locally may provide unexpected cues to the attentive on-site visitor (which – as we observed – had been skipped for sensitive cases by the nationally broadcasted TV presentation more careful as to what and whom to show to the national audience). Or museum holdings may materially point to aspects not fully in line with official narrative priorities (which were then left out in the national 'patriotic' TV representations as well, e.g., in the case of the Anhui museum and its holdings of Western-style paintings of Pan Yuliang 潘玉良 – chapter 2.2, a woman artist with a penchant for depicting female nudes who never returned from France after she had left in the 1930s). In this – and other – cases, the alternative book series of museums (which was launched later in the Hu Jintao era: *Dai ni zoujin bowuguan* 带你走进博物馆 or 'taking you to the museum' – cf. also chapter 1) addressed to Chinese youths as a 'second classroom' that we have occasionally integrated in the discussion of single sites that were museums, tried to play up the local holdings instead as an attraction.

As for PRC times, a notable case of a bold de facto challenge of the official historiography has been Liu Shaoqi's birthplace (chapter 5.3) that disclosed in its respective 'patriotic booklet' the man-made Great Famine to the intended young Chinese reader by reflecting on the local, countering the official storyline of 'natural disaster' (and thus undermining the official taboo in a 'patriotic education' publication already in the late 1990s!). That way, even if national readings of history may not be explicitly challenged, some local agents contributing to the 'patriotic education showcase bases' (being assigned to produce the 'patriotic' materials) can give it a spin, like in this case of Liu Shaoqi's birthplace that uses the rehabilitated most famous victim of the Cultural Revolution to also vindicate the people of his home area who not only suffered from his fate at that time, but already earlier during the Great Famine (as so many people did elsewhere). Deng Xiaoping's birthplace, too, tried to vindicate the local people who suffered and were affected by the 'great son's' changing political fortunes, even though Deng himself (different from Liu Shaoqi) never returned or openly cared for the place. As so often in China, via a historical case, perceived former injustice is indirectly tried to redress. This is far from 'objective historiography', of course, but it is precisely in the changes of narratives over time (and space) where the developments of policy agendas (and occasional deviations from it) are reflected. Here one may think once more of the Xi

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27 Cf. especially chapter 2 on Guo Moruo's influence on Communist historiography, namely of ancient China, but also his role in Maoist times as a key figure in the Chinese cultural heritage system and in CASS (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences).

Jinping-era ‘new’ narratives which aim at ‘telling China’s *story* well’ (note: *story* / *gushi* 故事, not history / *lishi* 历史!). In fact, the ‘story’ needs to be told ‘well’ and ‘compelling’ for being effective, and it needs uniformity (which explains why ‘dark spots’, especially in more recent history, are by now rather glossed over, with the eye witnesses who could testify to the contrary also dying out). But local agents at times try to infiltrate some divergence into the narrative to vindicate local agendas under the national radar.

## **Comparative aspects**

Finally, how do these ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ appear in comparative perspective? How do they relate to the Soviet example? And is there anything specifically ‘Chinese’ about them?

### *Soviet patriotic education*

The Soviets had a pronounced education in patriotism, for which the crucial event would become the ‘victory in the Great *Patriotic War*’ in 1945 (cf. also chapter 1). However, already before, the outlines of a ‘patriotic education’ which at the beginning of the Soviet Union was still in rivalry with Communist ‘internationalism’, had been drawn. Although Lenin was (as mentioned in chapter 1) de facto rather hesitant to promote ‘patriotism’ (and is tellingly often quoted in China out of context to insinuate the contrary!), his wife and in her own right an important figure in early Soviet education, Nadezhda Krupskaya, suggested to take up elements of the Western scout movement, which included ‘patriotism’, with the aim to provide a character education (*vospitaniye*) that would produce the ‘new Soviet person’, ready to serve Soviet society.<sup>28</sup> Since the mid-1920s, i.e. after Lenin’s death (1924), ‘revolutionary patriotism’ was safely on the agenda, and in the early 1930s, Stalin combined it with the necessity to defend the fatherland for protecting socialism. That way, patriotism was by then clearly linked to the military. In short, patriotism was there to protect the purportedly superior Soviet societal system, and the times of Stalin were characterised by the conjecture of ‘enemies’ (inside and outside) to be fought against. As Russian scholar Anna Sanina sums up: ‘The

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28 Cf. Riordan (1987). This article also provides the text of the promise given by the Soviet Young Pioneers in an appendix, p. 155.

military-patriotic element became the quintessence of the Soviet system of patriotic education, intended to promote combat and labor traditions, inculcate respect and love for the armed forces, develop a sense of civic and military duty, promote the mastery of military skills and knowledge, and prepare the younger generation for military service.’ (Sanina 2017: 34).

This sounds very familiar, given the observations in the present book on the Chinese case as found at several ‘patriotic education showcase bases’. The military component necessitated to create a sense of being potentially attacked, i.e., it presupposed the existence of ‘the enemy’ (which typically, here as there, is left unspecified as to who that would be, leaving open the possibility to turn on various ‘enemies’ inside or outside, historical or present). And after WW (World War) II, the Soviet system of ‘patriotic education’ in a multi-ethnic (in Soviet parlance: multi-national) country, another parallel to China, was very meticulously worked out to start from young children all through to adulthood, and to include various organisations and media. Also, the tools applied resemble each other, including visits to heroes’ (‘martyrs’) tombs, ceremonies of *rites de passage* (i.e., in the Soviet Union joining the Soviet Octobrists for age 7–9 and the Pioneers for age 9–14 thereafter, respectively in the PRC joining the Chinese Young Pioneers for age 6–14; then the Komsomol for age 14–28 in the Soviet Union, respectively in the PRC the Chinese Communist Youth League for age 14–28; joining the respective army; or the respective Communist Party), essay writing, interviewing of veterans, singing of patriotic songs, or watching patriotic films. However, the Chinese went beyond the former Soviet practice which started in terms of age only with primary school, while Jiang Zemin called for starting from kindergarten already (which in turn is now taken over in Russia’s present ‘patriotic education’, while in China the Xi Jinping-era efforts even aim at yet earlier beginnings).<sup>29</sup> One may recall here that Jiang Zemin, the key promoter of the intensified Chinese ‘patriotic education’ wave after the 1989 Tiananmen crisis, had undergone vocational training in the Soviet Union in the 1950s and thus had experienced the Soviet system himself there.<sup>30</sup> In fact, even the Soviet slogan of ‘love for socialism, love for the Soviet government, love for the Communist Party’ (Sanina 2017: 35) reverberates in the PRC’s official similar ‘three loves’. In both the Soviet Union and the PRC, the key element in

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29 The new Xi Jinping-era ‘implementation outline’ for patriotic education even calls for starting right away from babies, as mentioned in chapter 1! Cf. ‘Zhonggong Zhongyang guowuyuan’ (2019), section 5. The ‘how’ is, however, not specified.

30 Notably, the book-length (and rather biased) biography in English of Jiang Zemin, published when the latter had just stepped down, as ‘the man who changed China’ by journalist cum businessman Kuhn (2004) who says about himself that he acted as an ‘advisor’ for the Chinese government, has almost nothing to say on this crucial time at all.

‘patriotic education’ was defined as ‘emotion-based’ learning.<sup>31</sup> Thus, ‘patriotism’ was to be nurtured above all by emotions which were to be roused by all possible means to learn ‘whom to hate and whom to love’. This sense of ‘the enemy’ also furthered the supposition that ‘patriotism’ was something to be introduced in all kinds of school subjects, from math to music. And the major goal was to inculcate a vision of life where the collective good is paramount.<sup>32</sup> To enhance this, here we there, stories of heroism and heroes were disseminated,<sup>33</sup> even at times taking some mutually over,<sup>34</sup> including also child heroes, and hailed figures were presented as outstanding already in youngest age, thus bringing the model closer to the children for emulation.<sup>35</sup>

In the reverse direction, the turn towards the ‘national conditions’ (*guoqing*) under Jiang Zemin, highlighting (selected) ‘Chinese values’ rather than the Maoist ‘revolutionary values’, was taken over by Russia in its recent reorientation towards a ‘traditional Russian spiritual and moral values’ system, combined with the need to stress the superiority of one’s own system (*vis-à-vis* ‘the West’).<sup>36</sup> Similar also to the PRC, present-day Russia has ‘defence bases’ as well where to learn about this issue, though it is not that systematic a system as in the PRC, which has, as shown in chapter 1, an elaborate net of labelled sites for various target groups and administrative levels for various specific issues (defence, but also anti-corruption etc. – cf. chapter 1, appendix 3). And the Chinese case with its inclusion of ancient Chinese cultural sites, if less numerous than the dominating revolutionary ones, also taps into a much broader ‘national identity’ reservoir (given also the perceived peculiar need to address the Taiwanese and Overseas Chinese to bind them to the mainland) to enhance pride in China’s past, even reaching back into ‘prehistory’, and covering all provinces and regions of the modern PRC in terms of space (cf. chapter 1, appendix 1). According to Jiang Zemin’s vision, the ‘patriotic education showcase

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31 See Sanina (2017: 66–70).

32 For a listing of what the Soviets expected of their citizens, cf. Muckle (1987: 2–3).

33 Merridale (2003: 23) has also aptly remarked that Stalin (like the Chinese Communists) sensed that for his semi-literate people morality tales about heroes were more easily accessible and popular than Marxist theories. This legacy of moralising biographical history writing, she states, also carried through to the Putin era.

34 As we noted, heroes taken over were mostly Soviet heroes also praised in the PRC, but sometimes a Chinese hero was praised also reversely in the Soviet Union. (Cf. chapter 4.3 on the Liao–Shen Campaign in Manchuria 1948 and Soviet author Konstantin Simonov’s praise in 1950 of Bu Fenggang’s 卜凤刚 heroism.)

35 E.g., Lenin’s childhood stories were widely disseminated in the Soviet Union already. (Cf. Sanina 2017: 75). And as we saw above in chapter 5 for Chinese model figures, many heroes and Party leaders are shown as outstanding at a very young age already.

36 Cf. Sanina (2017: 106, 117).

bases' were also to connect to various other tools and the media to make 'patriotism' the 'main theme' or 'main melody' (*zhuxuanlü* 主旋律) (a term first used in visual media for 'main melody dramas') in all facets of life – ideally at least.

### *Soviet museums*

Beyond the general system of 'patriotic education', the fact that many of the 'showcase bases' are museums or memorial halls, also requires a look into the influence of the Soviet model on this element of the PRC system, which is, e.g., tangible in the museum hierarchy and conception. Recent English-language scholarly treatments of Chinese museums (e.g., Denton 2014, Varutti 2014, Lu 2014, Ho 2018) usually only mention this in passing, rather focusing on an inner-Chinese perspective of museum development from Republican times. While this inner-Chinese precedent is certainly playing an important role as well, PRC museums were called upon to actively 'revolutionise' also this sector and thus looked to the Soviet Union in the 1950s for guidance expressly to distance themselves from the pre-revolutionary museums which were seen as bourgeois, capitalist, and elitist. Interestingly, this went as far as taking in Soviet advice on how to present *Chinese* history. E.g., the Soviets advised the Chinese on how to change the presentation of the emperors Qin Shihuangdi 秦始皇帝 (3rd century BC) and Tang Taizong 唐太宗 (7th century AD), or of the Boxers around 1900 (in the suppression of which the Tsarist Russian Empire had been involved), while also asking for adding Lenin's positive reaction in 1912 to the Chinese Republican revolution of 1911 in the display on the latter!<sup>37</sup> Beyond smaller exchanges between the Soviets and the Chinese, in 1955, a delegation from the PRC was sent to the Soviet Union to study the Soviet museum system (which was to the Chinese delegation's surprise dominated by female experts),<sup>38</sup> and in 1957 a Soviet delegation came to China, whereas exhibitions of one country in the other were also held in between.

As the key journal to discuss museum work in the early PRC, *Wenwu cankao ziliao* 文物参考资料 (Reference material for cultural relics), pointed out in 1957, reflecting on 40 years of revolutionary museums in the Soviet Union, two key elements stood out there in terms of museum types: first, the whole network the

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37 See Han (1957: 16).

38 The Chinese museum staff, especially on the leaders' level, were usually male. See Wang Yeqiu 王冶秋, a leading PRC museum figure who visited the Soviet Union already in 1950, who told his Chinese readers of the impressive fact that 70–80% of Soviet museum directors were female. Wang (1950: 74).

Soviets had established all over the Soviet Union of ‘topographical’ (*dizhi* 地志), i.e. regional-local museums (*krayevedcheskiy muzey*) which reflected the triad of ‘nature, history, and socialist construction’ of a given area to engender ‘ardent love of one’s native soil, ardent love of the fatherland, and active participation in socialist construction’ among the Soviet public (which clearly bound ‘love of one’s native soil’ to the one of the fatherland, while conceiving a museum as not only directed towards the past but also towards the future: this whole slogan was also taken over in the PRC); and, if secondarily, the memorial museums (*memorial’nyy muzey*, *jinianxing bowuguan* 纪念性博物馆) which were to record outstanding events or people. The first type (i.e., the regional-local museum), which recalls in its Chinese translation the Chinese historiographical tradition of local gazetteers (*difang zhi* 地方志) that also described various aspects of a region, was systematically introduced in 1956 to China’s various provinces and autonomous regions. The second type (i.e., the memorial museum) was started with the former sites of the Chinese revolution, notably not (yet) from the Shanghai ‘founding’ place of 1921 (see chapter 3.3) but from the Guangzhou Peasant Movement Training Institute (1924–1926) over Ruijin and Zunyi 遵义 to Yan’an (cf. the ‘Party places’ in chapter 3.3), which recorded ‘events’, while other sites were to record outstanding individuals like Republican-era writer Lu Xun 鲁迅 (often labelled the ‘Chinese Gorky’).<sup>39</sup> As for the first and main type, the regional-local museums, which were to represent the regions of one’s country, be it the Soviet Union or the PRC, the museums concentrated at first on the nature and resources in a more material and materialistic vein, to be only enriched with art and culture (as additions by human labour) to show the particularities of a province or region. As a Soviet expert explained in 1956 in a summary for the Chinese who published it in translation, the regional museums should, however, cover all of the above-mentioned triad, pointing out more specifically how the ideal setup looked like: first, the natural surrounding with local geology, flora, and fauna, for which an exhibition method integrating the various interdependent parts of the ecosystem was best to provide a lifelike feel of the surrounding. This should avoid having, e.g., only exemplars of single animals exhibited out of context. Processed products made of natural resources, in turn, would not be placed there but go to the exhibition part on economy (as a subcategory of ‘history’, being products of human labour). Beyond the display on regional nature and resources, the second major item would be local history, which should follow historical materialism to conform to the museums’ double function as a place of research but also of education for the populace.

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39 See Bo (1957) about what China should learn from Soviet museums.

Therefore, Soviet museums had fixed relations with schools (which the Chinese would take over, as we saw). This history part (which included economic, social, and cultural aspects) should, however, not end up showing local history as isolated, but stress its being part of national history. That way, the museums would fulfil their duty to lead to ‘patriotism’ (evidently intending love for the nation, not only the region as the above motto of ‘love of one’s native soil’ and ‘love of one’s fatherland’ suggested – a tension the Chinese counterparts also grappled with, as we noted). But, the Soviet expert stressed, local museums would have to use local artefacts as materials (that way giving the local also its due), not only putting up textbook-like narratives, photos, and tables (which was a challenge, as we saw, for some types of PRC ‘patriotic education’ bases on elusive topics, lacking in local tangible artefacts to display). And thirdly, the museums should reflect the socialist construction and life at a given locality (which thus explicitly included the present and plans for future development for exhibition in a museum which by this showed its ‘socialist’ character different from ‘capitalist’ museums supposedly focused on storing and exhibiting the past only).<sup>40</sup> In fact, these Soviet models guided the first boom in PRC museum openings that has been noted for the time of the Great Leap Forward, especially in the years 1958 and 1959.<sup>41</sup> This boom was also driven by the wish to catch up with the Soviets who boasted of a much larger number of museums on their territory, the majority being local-regional museums of which most were created only after the October Revolution and thus were from the outset in a ‘socialist’ design, also connecting to Soviet ‘nationality politics’.<sup>42</sup>

As we saw with the provincial or regional museums in China (chapter 2.2), much of this Soviet legacy is still virulent, e.g., with the triad of nature, pre-revolutionary history and culture, and the local participation in the revolution and beyond (which is to stand for the ‘socialist construction’ in the Soviet-style triad mentioned above). Also, the way exhibitions are arranged, with ideology guiding, but with due attention to artefacts to show the history told also ‘materially’,<sup>43</sup> is close to Soviet advice of the 1950s.<sup>44</sup> Over time, in the PRC, the local actors, however, stepped up culture

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40 See the advices given by Leidaya (1956).

41 Cf. the quantitative table in Lu (2014: 118).

42 A broader outline of all types of museums in the Soviet Union had been already presented in China in 1950. See the translated article by Vasil’yevna (1950). In 1956, the above referred-to Soviet museum expert told the Chinese that the Soviet Union counted over 1.000 museums, most of them being created in Soviet times with only some going back to Tsarist times. Cf. Leidaya (1956).

43 This uses artefacts as ‘witnesses’ of something or someone like a scientific document. Cf. Varutti (2014: 61).

44 A rather detailed report was the named one of Leidaya (1956). But also Chinese visiting the Soviet Union came back with many concrete examples how, e.g., personal items of revolutionary

in an effort to attract tourists to the provinces, banking on more ‘traditional’ selling points of the locality (de facto often not coextensive with provincial boundaries) to create a ‘provincial identity’ distinct enough to warrant a visit, while translocal museums at the same time also de-localised their exhibited artefacts (chapter 2.2), showing them rather as ‘top pieces’. *In situ* sites like the excavation sites or landscape transformations (chapter 2.1 and 2.3), or sites that focus on the locality (chapter 3) or on the connection of a physical site to a ‘hero’ (chapter 5),<sup>45</sup> in turn, need less of a narrative contextualisation for the visitor.

Most contextualisation is needed in the case of the ‘elusive’ sites (chapter 4) where representation and narration are key. There, in fact, the problems the Soviet advisor had outlined above, abound. And in terms of citizen education, the Soviet museums provided also the model for laying out museums in a way to have space enough to allow for ceremonies, pledging loyalty to the Communist Party and love of the socialist fatherland. While historical settings were deemed particularly impressive for school children, Chinese museum representatives visiting the Soviet Union also highly evaluated the presence of ‘old Bolsheviks’ to tell of their experience on the spot as particularly effective and emotionally gripping, which the Chinese readers of their report on Soviet museums were recommended to learn from to render education also in China more forceful in this regard.<sup>46</sup> (As we observed in several cases, the filmic representations of the sites thus integrated occasionally such interviews with witnesses for more recent topics – like in Urumqi’s cemetery for the ‘martyrs’ of 1943, or Kunming’s memorial for the 1 December 1946 ‘martyrs’ – both chapter 3.2, or the memorial for Tao Xingzhi – chapter 5.2, or of descendants – like in the case of Lin Zexu – chapter 5.1., even though in this case they could hardly tell about a forefather after several generations. Also, the Huai–Hai Campaign memorial – chapter 4.3 – employed eye-witnesses telling of their experiences at the time.) This device serves to render the site content

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leaders were exhibited there, or how, very importantly, documentary films were integrated in a multimedia approach to educate the public (which shows that this feature which we repeatedly noted was also something with a Soviet precedent). Cf. Yang Boda’s long article in three instalments in *Wenwu cankao ziliao* 1954.

45 For the latter, often termed *guju* (former residence) as we saw, in the Soviet Union the so-called ‘house museums’ (*dom-muzey*) are a likely reference. See, for an overview on Soviet museums, provided by Soviet authors, including such house museums, the special issue of the UNESCO journal *Museum: Museums in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (1963). These museums were for key figures like Lenin, but also often for writers, or other outstanding figures like famous aviator Valery Chkalov (1904–1938) who was the first to fly the polar route from Europe to North America and was honoured as a Soviet hero and ‘patriot’. His memorial house-museum was incidentally also introduced in 1958 to Chinese readers in translation from Russian: see Bayev (1958).

46 See Luosu (1958).

more approachable on an emotional level (as is, needless to say, also true elsewhere around the globe where eye-witnesses or videos of them are applied in modern museums on more recent topics).

### *Soviet tourism*

As to ‘patriotism’ and tourism in comparative perspective, there are similarities but also differences between the Soviet Union and the PRC. In Stalin’s times, the Soviets focused more on vacation as either medical treatment (which, incidentally, several CCP figures received in the Soviet Union as well), or as strengthening the body by physical activity. (For China, one may think here of the Beidaihe 北戴河 seaside vacations in PRC times as a collective enterprise by the high CCP cadres, but this was not a broader practice for the normal Chinese citizen in Mao times yet). But the Soviets also knew organised ‘patriotic travels’ for the populace,<sup>47</sup> not the least for the young, e.g., over the Communist youth organisation Komsomol that designed organised tourism as a good chance for ‘patriotic education’, or trips that – like with the Long March in China – would follow, e.g., the trail of victories of the Red Army in WW II.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, also the outstanding role of memorials which had been built in the Soviet Union immediately after the war in increasing numbers, and the already mentioned role of memorial museums in the museum landscape are similar to China, serving as tourist destinations as well.<sup>49</sup> Summer camps were also offered in the Soviet case (and are so again today)<sup>50</sup> – as is by several of the Chinese ‘patriotic education showcase bases’, too, but a similar systematic structure like the Chinese ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ covering all of China and integrating them in a mutually reinforcing system of school history textbook narratives, films, songs, recommended readings, and tourism was not developed to the same degree in the Soviet Union. In fact, as mentioned, the present-day ‘patriotic education’ in Russia seems to take much inspiration from the Chinese model reversely by now. And in terms of tourism, ‘red tourism’ tours in Russia are not primarily offered to Russians nostalgic about the Soviet Union, but packages are offered above all for attracting *Chinese* tourists to Communist sites in Russia to do their ‘Grand Tour’

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47 See Koenker (2013: 57, 258–259).

48 Cf. Gorsuch (2011: 35, n53).

49 See Gorsuch (2011: 35 n55). Soviet-era monuments have become a contested issue in the post-Soviet era, though, of how to relate them to a new national identity. See Forest / Johnson (2002) for a case study on Moscow monuments.

50 Cf. Hemment, Julie (2015).

there, notably, however, as a cooperation project between Russia and China set up in 2014 which was dominated by the Chinese side,<sup>51</sup> making sure that the Chinese agenda (and historical reading) is reflected in the programme offered to Chinese citizens.<sup>52</sup>

### *A look to the US*

Beyond the Soviet Union as a key inspiration for the form of ‘patriotic education’ in the PRC, the latter could also build upon Republican-era forms enhanced by the GMD, namely with the flag (and image of the leader) in the classroom, the singing of the national anthem, or recitation of other required educative texts,<sup>53</sup> and visits of ‘martyrs’ tombs’ (if not as a fixed item of outdoor education yet), of themselves practices inspired by foreign examples back then, namely by the US, but also Europe (and sometimes mediated over Japan).

In present-day China where the system of ‘patriotic education’ has been stepped up after the 1989 Tiananmen crisis, there is of course also an awareness of on-going practices elsewhere in the world of more enduring relevance. Most importantly, this intends the US case: the daily morning ritual with the ‘pledge of allegiance’ and the flag in the classroom as means to educate dedicated patriotic American citizens, still widely practiced,<sup>54</sup> have been noted. The reciting of the pledge to the flag and the American Republic, standing for a common reference for the otherwise extremely heterogenous US population with varied immigration histories, is, however, in present times not mandatory for pupils to participate in, given the repeated tensions and debates about possible infringement on individual rights, and studies show that participation, in fact, varies.<sup>55</sup> In the American case, it has been found that it is especially poorer Americans (usually without much knowledge about or experience of other countries) that profess a strong patriotism, which seems to be largely bound up with beliefs in the promises of human dignity, equal opportunities, inclusiveness

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51 Cf. Zhao (2021: 235, 241).

52 One may recall that the fact that the Communist Party in Russia is today an opposition party, if the biggest one, necessitates for the CCP to deflect the official, but somewhat divergent readings of history offered by Putin’s United Russia Party, e.g., on the figure of Lenin who has been criticised by Putin for damaging Russian national interests. (For an example of how the CCP uses the Russian Communists to subtly challenge the United Russia Party and its interpretation of history in the context of restoring the largest Russian cemetery in China in Lüshun, see Müller 2022: 171–172.)

53 Cf. Harrison (2000); Culp (2007); Zarrow (2015).

54 For a brief historical summary of the American case, see Curren / Dorn (2018), chapters 1 to 3.

55 See Martin et al. (2017).

of the social contract, and America as ‘God’s country’. Compared to large European countries and Japan, this factually underprivileged group of Americans scored the highest in terms of (stated) patriotic conviction.<sup>56</sup> Patriotism also plays a notable part in domestic tourism in the US, not the least related to the country’s natural landscape,<sup>57</sup> but also to historically important places.<sup>58</sup> Thus, patriotism is at times also connected to physical places. However, nothing comparable to the systematic network of patriotic education sites like in China is to be found. I.e., the scope and breadth of the PRC campaign is outstanding, and its systematic integration of sites, too.

### **Chinese cultural specificities?**

This leads to the final question whether there are any specific factors that distinguish the Chinese ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ system also in a cultural sense?<sup>59</sup> In comparison to Soviet (or US) ‘patriotic education’, one notes not only the broader and more systematic approach in the PRC case, but also some characteristics derived from Chinese tradition. These include the eye-catching role of calligraphy at the single ‘patriotic education showcase bases’, and the legacy of traditional historiography and education more broadly.<sup>60</sup>

### *Calligraphy*

Calligraphy and inscriptions as visual, if indirect, markers of alignment and appropriation of a site, were a feature that we encountered repeatedly at the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ discussed in this book. As has become apparent all over the cases addressed in the preceding chapters, inscriptions play a vital role. They

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56 Cf. Duina, Francesco (2020). For the Japanese case, pointing to the reservations of pupils as well as teachers in spite of attempts under former Prime Minister Abe to push for more patriotism in school, see Fukuoka / Takita-Ishii (2022).

57 For a more historical take, see Shaffer (2001).

58 Cf. the case study on Washington, D.C. by Huang / Santos (2011).

59 For heritage sites in China, it has been claimed that interaction with the Chinese audience is peculiar over the ‘cultural moments’ Chinese citizens experience there, e.g., over a ‘poetic sense’ landscapes may evoke, which are not appreciated by foreign visitors (Zhang 2020). This, however, is only partly relevant for the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ as they do not only cover sites of cultural identification or culture–nature ‘harmony’.

60 Obviously, these distinguishing features also spread historically to other regions in East Asia and thus are no longer ‘exclusively Chinese’ in this sense.

may be by noted professional calligraphers in some more recent cases, thus connecting to solicited artwork at a given site (and advertised accordingly), but usually (and conforming better to the tradition that calligraphy should not be something ‘marketable’), they are by non-professionals. These may be noted public figures, e.g., Zhao Puchu 赵朴初, the key (lay) leader of PRC Buddhism, whose brush appeared not only at sites of ‘Chineseness’ like the ‘mausoleum’ of Huangdi, but also at several ‘red sites’, like the Red Flag Canal (chapter 2.3), the Shanghai Longhua ‘Martyrs’ Cemetery’ (chapter 3.2), or Liu Shaoqi’s home (chapter 5.3) as we saw, but in many cases, the brush is imbued with outright political weight.<sup>61</sup> Former general secretary Jiang Zemin was a key figure to leave his calligraphy at ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ all over the country, but also other leaders are present in this way and thus inscribed themselves in the respective sites.

Per se, for people of importance, leaving endorsements and calligraphies to inscribe a place is an age-old practice in China which implies patronage. It can, however, also be a form of outright political appropriation as we saw with the contestations about Guo Moruo’s ‘tomb stele’ for the Chinese mythical ‘ancestor’ Huangdi (written on orders of Mao, in spite of Guo’s having voiced his disbelief in Huangdi’s historicity) (cf. chapter 3.1), which de facto served for replacing Chiang Kai-shek’s calligraphy (who had aimed at the same political appropriation effect earlier) at this key site of ‘Chineseness’.<sup>62</sup>

But some of once important or even leading figures (including those of the CCP) who left their calligraphies at some places, later became politically incorrect or fell from grace (e.g., former Party secretary Hu Yaobang 胡耀邦 whose calligraphy we noted, i.a., at the ‘mausoleum’ of Yandi, the other mythical ‘ancestor’ of ‘the Chinese’ – cf. chapter 3.1; at the Wuhan February Seventh Memorial, or the Red Detachment of Women – cf. chapter 4.2; at the Opium War Museum – cf. chapter 4.3; or at the Bethune / Kotnis memorial – cf. chapter 5.3).<sup>63</sup> Locally, if calligraphies were kept nonetheless, this implied a silent statement of alignment with that former ‘patron’. And in cases calligraphies had been on purpose destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, e.g., those of Republican-era GMD figures (or even older imperial ones), they would be remade in several cases thereafter, if not necessarily telling audiences explicitly who that (GMD) person was (like in the case of the inscription

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61 For the use of calligraphy in politics, cf. Kraus (1991).

62 As will be recalled from chapter 3.1, Guo Moruo was asked by Mao to do this who did not want to do it himself, neither of them believing Huangdi to be historical, having a ‘tomb’.

63 One may also recall here the case of Liu Shaoqi’s changing the naming of Mao’s home in the early 1960s (when at the peak of his power) from a *guju* to a *jiuju*, though he smartly left the calligraphic rendering itself to Mao’s friend Guo Moruo (cf. chapter 5.3).

of ‘Mr.’ Jiang Dingwen 蒋鼎文 at Huangdi’s ‘mausoleum’, i.e., by the former GMD general holding the area during the Second Sino–Japanese War – cf. chapter 3.1). On the other hand, actively eliciting an endorsement or inscription for a ‘patriotic education base’ in the present, e.g., from a Taiwanese representative, expresses cross-Strait relations over a ‘shared’ historical site (like the inscription Chiang Kai-shek’s chief ideologue Chen Lifu 陈立夫 sent for Yandi’s ‘mausoleum’; the one of former Taiwan premier and leading GMD figure Lien Chan (Lian Zhan 连战) for the Taierzhuang Battle memorial; or Sun Yat-sen’s grandson’s writing one on spot at the Wuchang Uprising memorial) (see chapter 3.1, chapter 4.3, and chapter 4.2 respectively). That way, personalities perform ‘Chinese patriotism’ at large over writing at or for such a site.

Apart from the age-old topic of patronage and politics, the calligraphy issue, however, also reflects, if indirectly, the changes the Chinese leadership and their education has undergone: Mao himself was a calligrapher and poet who also liked to exchange both, be it with other Communists of his generation, be it with non-Communists he respected as skilled on that front,<sup>64</sup> bespeaking the education his generation had received. Even Deng Xiaoping, though no noted calligrapher (and much less a poet) but from a well-to-do family, had learnt the art in his youth and left his inscriptions for sites here and there, where he deemed it advisable. His handwriting thus became known throughout the country and easily identifiable, if clearly second to Mao’s dominating brush.<sup>65</sup> The younger Jiang Zemin, coming from a family of the affluent Jiangnan area, had also received his education before PRC times, including training in the arts, though studying engineering and later also staying in the Soviet Union for some time. He thus exemplifies the generation bridging the two educational frameworks, the Republican one and the socialist one. Jiang, however, if often derided as amateurish for his performance, was an always ready provider of calligraphies, had a penchant for Chinese ‘traditional culture’, while also publicly singing both Soviet songs as well as Peking Opera tunes. Notably, he was a leader who also spoke foreign languages. This breadth of education, however one assesses Jiang’s performance, increasingly thinned out with the following leading generations that had received their education in the Mao era. While Hu Jintao (born 1942) at least sometimes took to the brush, the younger Xi Jinping

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64 One may only refer here to the case of Yu Youren 于右任, an important GMD figure who ended his days on Taiwan, who was highly and broadly respected as a calligrapher also by his political enemies.

65 As we noted, also other major Party figures of that generation or the slightly younger ones born in the first years of the Republic left their mark with calligraphies at several sites, even if they had only a rather basic formal education like Hu Yaobang.

(born 1953) has not been noted for doing so, leave alone composing poetry. In this sense it is ironic that the education under Mao did not provide the students with those ‘Chinese’ skills Mao himself loved to practice, having learnt them under the ‘old system’. It is thus no wonder that ‘traditional culture’, though rhetorically invoked, has been increasingly side-lined in practice over the years of development of Chinese ‘patriotic education’, narrowing ‘patriotic education’ content down to Communist credentials in Xi Jinping’s times.

### *The legacy of Chinese historiography and education*

Another factor that recalls Chinese cultural tradition is the (if twisted) legacy of historiographical writing and its relation to edification. The moral framing of the provided narratives, though bent to marry the Communist worldview, and the continuous stress on ‘filial *duty*’ (which in this context is the more apt translation of *xiao* 孝 than the more conventional translation as ‘filial *piety*’) as an educational goal to underpin obedience, and even internalisation of hierarchical claims desired from the Chinese citizens from childhood onward, especially stressed for the so-called ‘me generation’,<sup>66</sup> strongly build upon the past as a legitimating factor. Needless to say, ‘the past’ is selectively appropriated, as are ‘the values’ supposedly defining ‘the Chinese’, as we have seen played out in the cases in the preceding chapters. To use the past for edifying the present generation via historiography is certainly not something unique to the Chinese case. But the ways how narratives are framed in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ tapped, as we noted in many case studies, repeatedly into Chinese ‘traditional’ historiographical patterns. They clearly do not aim at any *sine ira et studio* ideal to understand more about the past as the past, or to reflect on the foundations from which the present grew in some ‘objective’ way, to then ponder what ‘lessons’ could be drawn and applied for the present. Rather, these ‘patriotic’ narratives are to provide from the outset a reading of the past that serves present political agendas, though the modern addition is to engender active involvement of every socialist citizen to be educated to not only sustain the status quo, but to be ready to carry on the socialist system into the future at whatever cost. Exemplary history as a type of historical narration (cf. Rüsen 1990), already much favoured in traditional Chinese historiography, is thus the preferred device, and human agency is key. Otherwise, if only impersonal structures,

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66 Cf. Rosen (2009) and Hansen / Svarverud (2010).

e.g., would be central, or even simply fate, rendering human agency marginal, historiography would not lead to active involvement.

By proposing individual examples of embodied values at physical places, the Chinese learner or tourist citizen is called upon to actively emulate them, most importantly the ‘heroes’ and ‘martyrs’ who stood for the chosen values uncompromisingly. As sociologist Bakken (2000) has aptly called it, China is designed to be an ‘exemplary society’. ‘Patriotic education’ thus is to serve for a citizen formation that centres on the needs that are formulated in a prescribed reading of what ‘exemplary’ means in practice, legitimated via historical ‘examples’, but clearly directed at the future, and, needless to say, not starting from the needs of the individual to be educated. Supposedly, individuality is only achieved by fitting in well into the prescribed role, and by living out the values attached to this. Thus, as we repeatedly noted in the preceding chapters, stories of exemplary figures are often already in themselves modelled upon others and thus appear very stereotyped even in Communist cases, be it in content and imagery, be it in the highly repetitive language used, thus openly acknowledging their ‘intertextuality’ (Kristeva), which makes for an engraving effect.

The ‘showcase bases’ are rendering this visual and tangible for the visitors, be they pupils or tourists. Furthermore, the ‘showcase bases’ serve also as spaces for performing and experiencing ‘patriotism’, binding the individual Chinese citizen to the nation at several stages in life, as the ceremonies of pledging to join the Young Pioneers, the Communist Youth League, the Army, or the Party, typically conducted at the ‘showcase bases’, showed, thus pushing the citizen from learning to action. This is what a simple classroom lecture could hardly achieve.

Does this mean that China is successfully educating generations of fervent nationalists in practice by integrating and relying on the tool of ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ and their distinct modes? After all, the basic simple question remains: *cui bono*? ‘Patriotic education’ is per definition to serve the *patria*. But also Chinese citizens can well ask: *who*, in the end, is the *patria*?<sup>67</sup> And what is education for, after all? There might be more answers to these questions given by the Chinese citizens themselves than the officially championed one.

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67 Historian Fitzgerald (2022) has recently given a very straight-forward answer: ‘China has become the CCP’. Seen from the official viewpoint of ‘patriotic education’, this is certainly the aim, but considering the observations made on the different agents involved in practice in the ‘patriotic education showcase bases’ and their uses for citizen formation, this answer is at least not an uncontested one.

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