



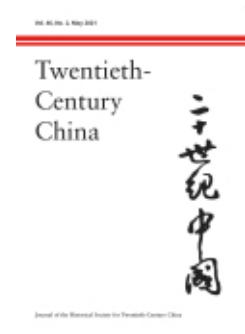
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# THE WAR OF TEXTBOOKS: EDUCATING CHILDREN DURING THE SECOND SINO-JAPANESE WAR, 1937–1945

JENNY HUANGFU DAY

The Second World War has been understood as a war of production, not only in instruments of assault and defense but also in the civic imagination of the nation-state. Mass mobilization for war fundamentally reshaped the relationship between the state and the knowledge industry. In China, the retreat of the Nationalist government from Nanjing to Chongqing saw China's worst refugee crisis, but it also resulted in the country's most dramatic growth of publicly funded education for primary and secondary schools and caused a shift in how knowledge came to be embodied in the materiality of wartime textbooks. Based on archival research, this article tells the story of the Second Sino-Japanese War by tracing the lives of textbooks produced and consumed during this period, and it assesses how the wartime experience fundamentally changed the textbook industry.

KEYWORDS: Guomindang (Nationalist government), history of education, mass education, Second Sino-Japanese War, textbooks, wartime culture

After reading a few pages of *An Outline of Logic*, it occurred to him that since no textbooks were available, perhaps he should make this one available to all, by mimeographing and distributing it to students. Then he reflected that it wouldn't be necessary. Professors used to keep other reference books, which served as "secret pillow treasures," and so they were willing to use textbooks. Now that there were no reference books, and he was solely dependent on this one textbook to instill knowledge and culture, he could not possible share it with everyone. He'd better let students remain mystified by it all and take notes on his lectures.

Qian Zhongshu, *Fortress Besieged*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Qian Zhongshu, *Fortress Besieged*, trans. Jeanne Kelley and Nathan K. Mao (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 202.

## INTRODUCTION

*Fortress Besieged* (1947) by Qian Zhongshu (1910–1998) depicts the frustrations faced by a man from middle-class Shanghai caught between forces beyond his control. The hero of the novel, Fang Hongjian, has just returned from studying in Europe in 1937 when total war with Japan breaks out. Finding the prospects of working in occupied Shanghai dim and unsatisfactory, he travels into the interior to take up a teaching position at the fictional San Lü University. Among his eclectic travel companions is professor of Chinese literature Li Meiting, who carries an oversized metal trunk with tiny drawers filled with numerous “white cards neatly arranged inside like a library catalogue.” When the contents of the drawers—thousands of Chinese poems neatly copied onto the index cards—are accidentally exposed to his colleagues, Professor Li explains that they are his wartime stock in trade: “As long as I have this, even if all the books in China were burned, I could still go on giving courses as usual in the Chinese Literature Department.”<sup>2</sup> Li’s fastidiousness seems laughable, but he is proved prescient. The university is haunted by a severe shortage of textbooks. Assigned to teach a course on logic, Fang rummages through the old, dusty school library and is overjoyed to find a book on the subject.

The novel is often read as an allegory of modern man’s entrapment, but it drew from Qian’s firsthand experience as an educator and academic who moved to universities in the interior provinces. The shortage of textbooks it depicts was real. The Japanese air raids and the Nationalist government’s scorched-earth policy reduced thousands of schools to shanties and libraries to dust, and it forced publishers to downsize and move. The war imposed staggering demands on the government and publishers to come up with new textbooks with the ideological potency to combat Japanese invasion and Communism and to create nationalist citizens fit for serving the nation in crisis.

“Those of us who grew up in the fifties believed in the permanence of our American-history textbooks,” writes historian Frances FitzGerald, describing the postwar generation’s attitude toward textbooks in the United States, “to us as children, those texts were the truth of things . . . : imperturbable, humorless, and as distant as Chinese emperors.”<sup>3</sup> To the Chinese students in wartime and the immediate postwar period, textbooks were cherished with an equal measure of reverence. But textbooks were in fact one of the most ephemeral genres of books, and it was much debated what role they should play in education. Early Republican educators had experimented with a wide range of progressive ideas as alternatives to the textbook-centered, memory-based model that had long been the dominant form of Confucian education dating from the early imperial period.<sup>4</sup> From 1928, the Republican government used extensive curricular standards to regulate textbooks, but it nevertheless embraced a wide range of education ideals.<sup>5</sup> War mobilization reversed this

2 Qian, *Fortress Besieged*, 160.

3 Frances FitzGerald, *American Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 7.

4 For early Republican reforms in education, see Barry Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment in China: Educational Reform and Political Power in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1977); Suzanne Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in Twentieth-Century China: The Search for an Ideal Development Model* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

5 Peter Zarrow, *Educating China: Knowledge, Society, and Textbooks in a Modernizing World, 1902–1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 39.

relatively liberal attitude and tolerance of plurality. In this “conservative revolution,” to borrow historian Brian Tsui’s term, state-sponsored education at the primary and secondary levels came to be dominated by standardized textbooks as the primary medium to deliver knowledge.<sup>6</sup> The severe lack of teaching staff, equipment, and facilities made education dependent on textbooks, as they stood in for well-trained teachers and constituted the only reading materials for many children.

This article tells the story of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) by tracing the lives of textbooks. It joins a growing body of literature that takes the experiences of wartime China seriously and seeks to understand how the war changed the trajectory of state building and engendered new forms of state planning and management.<sup>7</sup> It also uncovers an important and largely unknown story. The current literature on the history of education and the publishing world generally ends in 1937 or treats the war as a hiatus with few significant developments.<sup>8</sup>

This elision of wartime experience is understandable: the war forced schools to close down or relocate, disrupted textbook production and dissemination, and posed tremendous challenges to government regulation. It caused an immediate and near-total collapse of the existing relationships among educators, publishers, and the state. But out of the chaos and panic there came a new relationship between the state and the education industry, and this new arrangement outlasted the war. A history of wartime textbooks allows us to examine the dynamics and contingencies of wartime mobilization because the textbook is the one material object that unites the education enterprise. The supply of textbooks with the correct ideology mattered precisely because the Nationalist government often lacked other means of implementing its education plans or ensuring local compliance. Books, however, were mass produced and difficult to alter, ensuring some consistency between government goals and local implementations.

The story of the Nationalist government’s wartime textbooks also links the Chinese experience with those of other countries at war. Using books to fight the war was common to all belligerent powers during the Second World War. The Third Reich used history textbooks to bring about a regeneration of the “new youth” free of foreign impurities and to promote a “high-tension ethos that accepted war as a normal condition in a

6 Brian Tsui, *China’s Conservative Revolution: The Quest for a New Order, 1927–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

7 William Kirby, “Continuity and Change in Modern China: Economic Planning on the Mainland and on Taiwan, 1943–1948,” *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 24 (July 1990): 121–41; Morris L. Bian, “The Sino-Japanese War and the Formation of the State Enterprise System in China: A Case Study of the Dadukou Iron and Steel Works, 1938–1945,” *Enterprise and Society* 3, no. 1 (2002): 80–123.

8 See, for example, Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004); Zarrow, *Educating China*; Robert Culp, *The Power of Print in Modern China: Intellectuals and Industrial Publishing from the End of Empire to Maoist State Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 87–91; Carl Kubler, “Imagining China’s Children: Lower-Elementary Reading Primers and the Reconstruction of Chinese Childhood, 1945–1951,” *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, no. 26 (November 2018): 1–41. Two important exceptions are Keith Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness: Refugees during the Sino-Japanese War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), chap. 8, and John Israel, *Lianda: A Chinese University in War and Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), but they focus on elite high schools and colleges, not on primary and secondary education, and they have little to say about the production and circulation of textbooks.

life of struggle.”<sup>9</sup> In the United States, textbooks written by progressive educators such as Harold Rugg to initiate social change prompted a crusade from advertisers, business communities, and the right-wing organizations in 1939, turning textbooks into a battlefield of ideology.<sup>10</sup> In 1942, President Roosevelt pronounced that American books were “weapons for man’s freedom,” and on D-Day, Allied soldiers carried crates of books onto the Normandy coast.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, the Nationalist government saw wartime books—textbooks especially—as weapons in ideological battles not only in so-called “Free China” but also in Japanese-occupied areas, Communist-controlled regions, and frontier zones with non-Chinese populations, as well as among overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia.

At the center of this story is the making of the national standard textbooks (國定本教科書 *guodingben jiaokeshu*), the first mandatory national textbooks edited, manufactured, and supplied under complete government oversight for students enrolled in public and private schools under the administration of the Nationalist government.<sup>12</sup> This was not the first attempt by the Chinese government to unify its educational materials. In 1934, the most recent prior effort by the Nationalist government to promote a set of texts edited by a government committee failed because of poor coordination with publishers and bookstores. As a result, by the outbreak of the war, most schools still used commercial textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education.<sup>13</sup> Although the government had not been able to nationalize textbooks in peacetime, it managed it during the most trying years of the war. In 1943, the *guodingben* finally replaced other commercial and private textbooks in elementary and secondary schools. Although the policy only achieved mixed success and never drove illicit textbooks out of the market, the state’s control over textbooks reached an unprecedented level and continued after the Chinese Civil War in both mainland China and Taiwan.

## THE TEXTBOOK BUSINESS IN THE NANJING DECADE

In order to understand how the outbreak of war in July 1937 changed the textbook world, it is useful to begin with a brief survey of the textbook industry and the Nationalist government’s policy in the years preceding the war.<sup>14</sup> At the outset of the Nanjing Decade in 1927, the Ministry of Education issued a regulation on the inspec-

9 Gilmer W. Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich: Race and History in Nazi Textbooks* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 12.

10 Joseph Moreau, *School Book Nation: Conflicts over American History Textbooks from the Civil War to the Present* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 219–63.

11 John Hench, *Books as Weapons: Propaganda, Publishing, and the Battle for Global Markets in the Era of World War II* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 1, 22.

12 In parallel to the *guodingben*, the Nationalist government also edited and distributed bilingual textbooks for ethnic minorities in Manchuria, Mongolia, and Xinjiang and patriotic textbooks for overseas Chinese, but this article is limited to discussion of textbooks issued to areas under the Nationalist government’s direct control.

13 For an overview of the textbook industry prior to 1937, see Wei Bingxin, “Guoding jiaokeshu bianji jingguo” [How the national standard textbooks were edited], *Jiaoyu tongxun fukan* [Education communications, supplement] 1, no. 6 (1946): 14.

14 For the representation of knowledge and reading practices associated with textbooks prior to the war, see Zarrow, *Educating China*. For the relationships among the state, schools, and the publishing industry, see Robert Culp, *Articulating Citizenship: Civic Education and Student Politics in Southeastern China, 1912–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007); Culp, *Power of Print*.

tion procedures for all elementary-school and middle-school textbooks.<sup>15</sup> Textbooks were to comply with the government's newest curricular standards, conform to the Three Principles of the People ideologically, and exclude explicitly anti-Japanese materials.<sup>16</sup> Like perishable foods, textbooks were given expiration dates and seals of approval. The ministry periodically published lists of newly approved and recently terminated titles, forbidding expired textbooks.<sup>17</sup> Local education administrations and schools still retained some freedom in choosing among more than half a dozen approved titles, but government endorsement was a selling point. Publishers competed for customers by adding "ministry approved," "soon to be approved," or "still valid" in their advertisements.<sup>18</sup> Some printed in their advertisements solemn declarations of solidarity with the educational spirit promulgated by the Ministry of Education.<sup>19</sup>

In 1936, the Nationalist government entered the ring. The Ministry of Education's editorial team, under the guidance of the National Compilation and Translation Bureau (國立編譯館 *Guoli bianyiguan*; NCTB), finished a set of textbooks known as the *bubian ben* (部編本 ministry-edited books) and consigned it to the major publishing houses to print and distribute.<sup>20</sup> Reluctant to give up their existing market share to the *bubian ben*, the publishers dragged their feet until the ministry abandoned the *bubian ben* in 1937 because their contents were no longer appropriate to wartime needs.

A delicate relationship existed between the Ministry of Education and the textbook publishers. For the established companies, the textbook market represented huge profits.<sup>21</sup> While they abided by the ministry's inspection process and bid for its blessings, publishers were wary of stringent regulations, fearing that they could result in uniformity and reduce their competitive advantage. Although the trend toward increased state control was unmistakable, there were clear limits to what the government could do: the Ministry of Education lacked resources to print its own textbooks and distribute them to the local bookstores, and it could not force the schools to adopt government textbooks.<sup>22</sup> Educational

15 "Jiaokeshu shencha guicheng" [Inspection regulations for textbooks], *Shen bao*, September 15, 1927; "Shencha xiaoxue jiaokeshu zanxing biaozhun" [Temporary standards for inspecting elementary-school textbooks], *Shen bao*, September 27, 1927.

16 "Jiaoyu tushu bianshen" [Inspection of education textbooks], in *Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan* [Second historical archives of China], ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dang'an ziliao huibian* [Archival documents of the Republic of China] (hereafter ZHMGSDA), ser. 5-1, "Jiaoyu" (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1994), vol. 1, 89–97.

17 "Guoli bianyiguan wuyuefen shencha zhongxiao xue jiaokeshu jieguo" [Results from the National Compilation and Translation Bureau's inspection of middle- and elementary-school textbooks in May], *Shen bao*, June 9, 1936.

18 Dazhong advertisement and Commercial advertisement, *Shen bao*, January 31, 1933.

19 See, for example, World's advertisement, *Shen bao*, May 1, 1933; Zhonghua's advertisement, *Shen bao*, June 1, 1933; Commercial's advertisement, *Shen bao*, January 5, 1935.

20 "Jiaobu bianji xiaoxue jiaokeshu zhi jiji" [Activism of the Bureau of Education in editing elementary textbooks], *Shen bao*, June 5, 1935.

21 See Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai*, chap. 5.

22 According to the Ministry of Education, it only printed "short-period compulsory education" textbooks and delivered them to students for free. "Rineiwa guoji jiaoyuju wei Zhongguo xunlian xiaoxue jiaoshi ji zhongxiao xue jiaokeshu diaocha yu jiaoyubu laiwang wenshu" [Geneva international education bureau's communications with the Ministry of Education regarding the training of Chinese teachers and the inspection of Chinese elementary- and middle-school textbooks], March 9, 1938, 5-15158, Second Historical Archives of China, Nanjing (hereafter SHAC).

materials edited by the ministry ultimately relied on the publishers to reach the students. Two prior official attempts to issue a nationally standardized textbook, one by the Qing government during the New Policies era in 1906 and another under Yuan Shikai in 1915, both sank under heavy public criticism.<sup>23</sup>

The relationship between officials and educators was also a subject of public debate during the Nanjing Decade. Up to July 1937, the key issue was the government's role in editing and compiling textbooks. While many educators did not directly oppose state supervision of the textbook industry, they sought to preserve their intellectual autonomy. They argued that excessive regulation resulted in passivity, conformity, and mediocrity.<sup>24</sup> Educator Zhao Tingwei (趙廷為 dates unknown) invoked Social Darwinism to articulate his concern that if publishers lacked incentives to vary their products, seeking only to appease official inspectors, the field would degenerate.<sup>25</sup> When several provincial governments sought to impose uniformity in textbooks within their jurisdictions, educators fought back by citing the national policies and calling for a “balance between individual freedom and social compulsion.”<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, some intellectuals and educators saw an urgent need for government involvement in the editing and distribution of textbooks. Zhou Hanmei (周寒梅 dates unknown) proposed that the government should nationalize all textbooks and employ teams of professors from renowned public universities as compilers and editors and that annual revisions should be undertaken on the basis of feedback from educators around the country.<sup>27</sup> In May 1937, Ye Gongchao (葉公超 1904–1981), a Qinghua University professor, called for the NCTB to assume the responsibility of drafting, translating, and editing educational texts for all levels of schools, especially high schools and universities. Ye was concerned about the use of Western-language textbooks in middle schools and colleges because publishers lacked resources to translate foreign-language books into Chinese. The lack of government supervision resulted in higher education being left in the hands of market-driven and capitalist publishers.<sup>28</sup>

After 1937, the debate was conditioned by wartime contingencies and resource constraints. Responding to the shortages and rising cost of textbooks, the more left-leaning and liberal-minded educators encouraged schools to move away from a textbook-dominated education model, even calling for the abandonment of textbooks altogether. In his magazine *Wartime Education* (戰時教育 *Zhanshijiaoyu*), Shanghai-based education editor Dai Botao (戴伯韜 1907–1981; penname 白桃 Bai Tao) boldly envisioned a decentralized and democratized “textbook-free” model in which newspapers, pamphlets, and posters

23 Wei, “Guoding jiaokeshu zhi bianji jingguo.”

24 Wang Chengzu, “Guanyu zhongxiaoxue jiaokeshu de jige wenti” [A few questions regarding elementary- and middle-school textbooks], *Huanian*, no. 6 (April 1937).

25 Zhao Tingwei, “Jiaokeshu zai jiaoyushang de diwei jiqi bianji wenti” [The status of textbook editing in education], *Jiaoyu xue* 2, no. 10 (1937): 1–10.

26 “Muqian difang jiaoyu xingzheng shang jidai jiejue de wenti” [A few problems urgently awaiting solutions in the administration of local education], *Jichu jiaoyu yuekan* [Journal of basic education] 2, no. 7 (July 1937): 1163–65.

27 Zhou Hanmei, “Guanyu jiaokeshu de wenti” [On textbooks], *Shen bao*, April 30, 1936.

28 Ye Gongchao, “Bianyi jiaokeshu de zhongyao” [The importance of editing and translating textbooks], *Shen bao*, May 6, 1937.

would become the main educational materials. Dai argued that a new reality called for a different educational medium to inspire immediate, collective action transcending the static and bookish learning of peacetime.<sup>29</sup>

Mainstream educators, however, took the opposite view. Responding to the “textbook-free” model, Qiu Chun (邱椿 1897–1966), an education professor at Beijing University, observed that Chinese school activities had always been dictated by textbooks and that since most teachers had never received training in natural and social investigations, it was impossible to ask them to teach without textbooks. With an acute shortage of teacher’s training programs and teaching manuals, textbooks were virtually the only means of conveying knowledge. They were a “spiritual staple for children and youths in the rear areas,” and their adequate supply was critical to the winning of the war.<sup>30</sup>

To summarize, prior to 1937, although the Nationalist government increased its regulatory pressure, it was primarily an outsider to the textbook industry and relied on the cooperation and support of the private sector and professional educators to implement its visions and ideology. Educators, publishers, and officials shared the broader goal of national rejuvenation through education, but they diverged considerably on how textbooks fit into the larger enterprise. The outbreak of the war forced the Ministry of Education to take the lead in textbook compilation and supply.

## BATTLING “PSEUDO-TEXTBOOKS”

The political function of textbooks was suddenly accentuated after 1937, as regimes competing with the Nationalist government stepped up their propagation of newly edited textbooks for mass indoctrination. On March 29, 1938, the Nationalist government convened a National Political Consultative Conference to rally support and issued a wartime constitution calling for “revised education policies and teaching materials” for a new wartime curriculum.<sup>31</sup> It utilized a network of underground bureaus to gather education intelligence from the puppet regimes in North China and Central China, especially in their efforts to disseminate new textbooks and education materials aimed at instilling compliance and cooperation with Japanese policies (referred to as “slave mentality” by the Nationalists). It was reported that under the directorship of Chen Damin (陳達民 dates unknown) the North China Provisional Government set up a bureau to edit textbooks and mass-education readers. By February 1938, 10,000 copies of textbooks, closely modeled on Japan’s own national textbooks, had been printed in Osaka, shipped to Beiping, and disseminated in elementary and secondary schools. Ideologically, these texts promoted “East Asian peace” and the racial unity among the Japanese, the Manchus, and the Chinese by revitalizing Confucian

29 Bai Tao, “Kangzhan jiaoyuxia de huo jiaokeshu” [Living textbooks in wartime education], *Zhanshi jiaoyu*, no. 11 (1937): 3–4.

30 Qiu Chun, “Houfang zhongxiaoxue jiaokeshu de gongji wenti” [The issue of primary- and secondary-school textbook supply in rear areas], *Dagong bao* (Hong Kong), February 12, 1939.

31 “Jiaoyubu dingding zhanshi geji jiaoyu shishi fang’an” [Ministry of Education’s approved plan for implementing wartime education on all levels], ZHMGSDA, ser. 5-2, “Jiaoyu,” vol. 1, 28–30.

ethics.<sup>32</sup> In June, Yan Xishan (閻錫山 1883–1960), the warlord turned Nationalist general, sounded the alarm that Japan had smuggled five million elementary-school textbooks into Shanxi Province alone.<sup>33</sup>

Intelligence reports held in the Second Historical Archives of China suggest that the Ministry of Education received regular updates from its agents on the education policies and textbook contents in schools under Japanese occupation.<sup>34</sup> One of these special reports, dated January 1942, was prepared by a “special education station” aimed at infiltrating schools under Japanese occupation, maintaining contact with a network of patriotic teachers, and gathering the latest evidence of Japan’s “slave education.” The station collected excerpts of Japanese textbooks and sent them to the NCTB for the purpose of creating antienslavement textbooks to be disseminated by these teachers to their students covertly.<sup>35</sup> In 1937, the Ministry also established an office of army-affiliated education commissioners (駐軍督學 *zhujun duxue*) in Shandong Province—where the Japanese Army occupied the urban areas and the Communist forces had built small-scale bases in rural areas—and continued to funnel textbooks into schools. Until their permanent evacuation in August 1943 after a Japanese attack, the education commissioners utilized guerilla tactics to ensure “the reading and recitation of [patriotic] textbooks” in more than a dozen counties.<sup>36</sup>

For the educators and publishers who stayed in Shanghai, resistance against Japanese pressure to abandon nationalist textbooks could result in financial losses and personal danger. The Japanese army confiscated the entire stock of textbooks that World Books had left in Shanghai, numbering tens of thousands, and shipped them to Japan for censorship and alteration. By 1939, pro-Japanese presses in Shanghai had taken over the equipment and assumed the printing of these post-censorship editions, causing great losses to World Books.<sup>37</sup> The Hong Kong *Dagong bao* reported that several Shanghai principals who had refused to change their schools’ textbooks were abducted by Wang Jingwei’s special agents and taken into a secret room at a casino where they were threatened with imprisonment.<sup>38</sup> In March 1938, a Shanghai school within the French Concession was bombed by the

32 “Huabei de nuhua jiaoyu” [Slave education in North China], *Shen bao* (Hong Kong), March 24, 1938. For publication information for the *Xiuzheng duanqi guoyu duben* [Revised short-term Chinese reader], see Beijing tushuguan, *Minguo shiqizong shumu (1911–1949): Zhongxiao xue jiaocai* [A complete book catalog published in Republican China (1911–1949): elementary- and middle-school educational materials] (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1995), 34.

33 “Junwei hui bangongshi chaosong Yan Xishan guanyu Rijun yunru jinsheng daliang xiaoxue keben de midian ji jiaoyubu fuhan” [Intelligence forwarded from the Office of Military Commission regarding Yan Xishan’s secret report that Japan sent large numbers of textbooks and the Ministry of Education’s reply], 5-1222, SHAC.

34 “Riwei nuhua jiaoyu qingbao ziliao” [Intelligence on Japan’s pseudo-enslavement education], 5-13796, SHAC.

35 5-13796, SHAC.

36 “Jiaoyubu guanyu Shandongsheng jiaoyu shishi yu Shandongsheng jiaoyuting wanglai han” [Ministry of Education’s correspondence with Shandong Province regarding education implementation], 1939–1943, 5-672, SHAC.

37 “Hongkou wei fanbanshu zonghui, huashang sunshi shenju” [Hongkou is the center of pirated books; the loss of Chinese merchants is enormous], *Shen bao*, July 12, 1939.

38 “Wang ni zhuaya bangjia Hu xiaozhang, qiangpo xiugai jiaokeshu” [Traitor Wang’s henchmen abduct Shanghai principals and force them to revise textbooks], *Dagong bao* (Hong Kong), August 10, 1939.

Japanese because its textbooks contained resistance content.<sup>39</sup> In June 1940, the Shanghai Municipal Police bowed to Japanese pressure and confiscated the World Books textbooks on the pretext that such books undermined “public interest” and jeopardized diplomatic tension with Japan. Through the mediation of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, the police returned the books in exchange for the publisher’s promise not to display these books within the International Settlement.<sup>40</sup>

Although the Nationalist government did not openly attack the education policies of the Communist Party, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek remained vigilant about the dissemination of Communist textbooks in base areas and border regions. Under the “special education” (特種教育 *tezhong jiaoyu*) umbrella, the Nationalist government sent teams of experienced cadres to the rear areas occupied by Communist guerrillas, where they engaged in a variety of covert counterrevolutionary, anti-Communist and anti-Japanese educational activities.<sup>41</sup> Each Special Education Corps received funding to edit, print, and disseminate its own textbooks and pamphlets suitable to local conditions. They also delivered exhaustive reports on every aspect of Communist education, with complete lists of textbooks, literary publications, periodicals, school curriculums, literacy rates, and the numbers of students at every educational level for each school.<sup>42</sup> The Generalissimo’s preoccupation with Communist textbooks can be seen from a personal note he sent to Minister of Education Chen Lifu (陳立夫 1900–2001) requesting the *National Language Textbooks* issued in the Shaan-Gan-Ning border regions and textbooks issued by the Communist-controlled Nangong County.<sup>43</sup>

All of this means that changes in the Nationalist government’s textbook policies during the war should not be viewed in isolation but must be understood in the context of intensified ideological battles between the Nationalist government, Japanese-supported puppet regimes, and the Communist base areas, with textbooks as their weapons. Though they each sought to undermine their rivals’ legitimacy, their intelligence and counterintelligence programs in education policies converged on similar policies. All three began to issue government-mandated wartime textbooks edited by official organs and characterized by heavy-handed ideological content, even in the most basic language primers. They all issued their respective *guoyu changshi keben* (國語常識課本), literacy primers aimed at

39 “Choushi Shanghai xuesheng, di xiang xuexiao toudan, ren jiaokeshu nei you fan Ri yanlun” [In their hatred toward Shanghai students, enemies bombed schools, claiming that their textbooks contained anti-Japanese statements,” *Xinhua ribao*, March 6, 1938.

40 “Jiaoyu bu guanyu Shanghai gonggong zujie chajin Shijie shuju chuban zhi xiaoxue jiaokeshu yu waijiaobu deng danwei laiwang wenshu” [Ministry of Education’s correspondence with the foreign office and other offices regarding the banning of primary school textbooks by World Bookstore in the Shanghai International Settlement], 5-1224, SHAC.

41 “Tejiao gongzuo gangyao yu jihua” [Guidelines and plans for implementing special education], ZHMGSDA, ser. 5-2, “Jiaoyu,” vol. 2, 361–81.

42 “Guomindang dui bianqu jiaoyu wenhua zhuangkuang de diaocha” [Nationalist Party’s investigations into the educational and cultural conditions of border regions], ZHMGSDA, ser. 5-2, “Jiaoyu,” vol. 2, 517–56.

43 “Jiangjieshi guanyu zhaokai dongyang jiaoyu huiyi ji Shanghai ge shuju jujue Wang wei shifu shencha jiaokeshu dadian” [Chiang Kai-shek’s telegrams on the Toyo education convention and the Shanghai publishers’ refusal of the pseudo-government of Wang Jingwei’s inspection of textbooks], June 10, 1938, p. 473, 5(2), SHAC.

instilling “common knowledge” in service of their political visions and wartime goals.<sup>44</sup> These primers were intended for use by elementary students who might never have the opportunity to take formal lessons on the natural or social world. The nearly simultaneous appearance of these mixed primers points to the strain on education resources faced by each government and a shared understanding that a politically correct world view (disguised as “common knowledge”) must begin as soon as students entered the first grade.

## THE TEXTBOOK “FAMINE”

Although the Nationalist government’s wartime constitution in 1938 promised a new set of curriculums and textbooks, these changes took more than five years, and in the meantime students were taught with whatever textbooks were acceptable and available. But supplying millions of textbooks to a country at war was not easy. According to government reports, between Beijing and Shanghai, 94 of the 108 schools of higher education were relocated to escape bombing and occupation and many moved as many as five times.<sup>45</sup> In addition to supplying textbooks to refugee students, the Nationalist government also supplied millions of textbooks in concert with its expansion of compulsory education at the elementary and secondary levels. Implemented under the *baojia* (保甲) household registration system, this expansion of compulsory education saw a steady increase in the enrollment of children of elementary-school age: from 24% in 1932 to 42% in 1940 and 76% in 1944.<sup>46</sup> Finally, the Ministry of Education also supplied antiresistance and patriotic textbooks to occupied areas, to Mongolia and Manchuria, and to overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, often at the request of local administrators or community leaders.<sup>47</sup>

The apparently successful expansion of education must be taken with a grain of salt: the lack of government oversight and regulatory apparatus left the Ministry of Education unable to address or even detect the gaps between the reports and the real circumstances of each locality. Wartime telegraphic dispatches to and from the Ministry of Education reveal widespread frustration as well as the numerous hurdles to continuing Nationalist education through the war. Challenges to textbook supply can be identified on three levels:

44 The Nationalist government issued the *Chuji xiaoxue guoyu changshi keben* [Elementary-level national language and common knowledge textbook] in 1942; the Communist border regions issued the *Chuji xin keben (guoyu changshi hebian)* [Elementary-level new textbook (combined edition of national language and common knowledge)] in 1944.

45 “Kangzhan qijian de Zhongguo jiaoyu” [Chinese education during the War of Resistance], ZHMGSDA, ser. 5-2, “Jiaoyu,” vol. 1, 298.

46 “Kangzhan qijian de Zhongguo jiaoyu,” 313, 316–17.

47 See “Ge Guoli bianjiang zhongdeng xuexiao chengbao jiaoke yongshu diaochabiao, geke jiaoxue kemu ji jiaoxue shishu biao” [Tables containing survey results on textbooks, curricula, and instruction hours submitted from national middle schools in border provinces], 5-12388, SHAC; “Jiaoyubu guanyu shenhe bianyi bianjiang duwu keben yu youguan danwei de laiwang wenshu” [Ministry of Education’s communications on the inspection and compilation of the border regions’ reading materials and textbooks], 5-12435, SHAC; “Jiaoyubu guanyu qiaomin zhongxiao jiaokeshu bianshen, buzhu qiaoxiao cankao yongshu suoji cankao ziliao deng yewu wenti yu gefang laiwang wenshu” [Ministry of Education’s communications on the inspection of elementary- and middle-school textbooks for overseas Chinese and subsidies on supplementary education materials for overseas Chinese schools], 5-13285, SHAC.

rising cost to consumers, resource scarcity for publishers, and transportation strains on suppliers. On the basis of the Ministry of Education's own documents, in 1937 it only approved a 30% increase in textbook prices rather than the 40% increase requested by the Shanghai Book Association. Student representatives from Guangzhou, however, complained that textbooks at their local bookstores were sold at tripled or quadrupled prices.<sup>48</sup> In Chongqing, the prices of books all quadrupled and the prices of teaching supplies and stationery rose by 700–800%, amid rumors that the prices would double again in 1939.<sup>49</sup> The ministry's 1939 surveys indicated a widespread shortage of textbooks for elementary and secondary schools in 16 provinces: 37,694,546 elementary textbooks and 3,468,434 secondary-school textbooks were needed by the end of the year. According to reports from the three largest bookstores, they could only supply 22,000,000 elementary and 2,900,000 secondary-school textbooks, meeting 58% and 83% of the demand.<sup>50</sup>

The war forced the large publishers to move their offices and machines to the interior provinces and set up branch offices and printing houses in Hong Kong.<sup>51</sup> It also interrupted the chain of inspection, production, and dissemination that had worked to supply schools with government-approved texts produced by the Shanghai publishers. In 1938 and 1939, several provinces under Nationalist control undertook their own revisions of textbooks due to wartime needs and managed the printing and the supply chain. In March 1938, the provincial government of Gansu passed a resolution to compile a new set of textbooks by selectively incorporating materials from existing commercial texts.<sup>52</sup> In Shanxi, Nationalist General Yan Xishan wrote (as an afterthought rather than a petition) that his administration was compiling resistance readers and disseminating them in the millions.<sup>53</sup> In March 1938, the Guiyang Education Bureau asked for permission to compile resistance readers by local education experts.<sup>54</sup> In July 1939, the Fujian Education Bureau stated that, because naval blockade made transportation of textbooks from other provinces difficult, it had constituted its own committee to select its own standard provincial textbooks.<sup>55</sup> The Ministry of Education could do nothing more than give their tacit permission, with the caveats that the government's standardized textbooks would

48 “Jiaoyubu guanyu zhongxiaoxue jiaokeshu dingjia yinshua faxing yu youguan danwei laiwang wenshu” [Ministry of Education's communications on the pricing, publication, and distribution of elementary- and middle-school textbooks], 5-1291(1), p. 90, SHAC. See also “Jiaoyubu youguan jiaokeshu ji jiaoxue cankaoshu yinshua caigou deng shixiang de wenshu” [Ministry of Education's communications on the printing and purchasing of textbooks and supplementary education materials], 5-1290, p. 27, SHAC.

49 “Jiaoyubu guanyu zhongxiaoxue jiaokeshu dingjia yinshua faxing yu youguan danwei laiwang wenshu” [Ministry of Education's communications on the pricing, publication, and distribution of elementary- and middle-school textbooks], 5-1292(2), p. 230, SHAC.

50 5-1290, p. 27, SHAC.

51 Wang Yunwu, *Shangwu yinshuguan yu xin jiaoyu nianpu* [Chronicle of the Commercial Press and new education] (Taipei: Commercial yinshuguan, 1973), 638–48, 726–28.

52 “Gansu sheng zhengfu zisong gaisheng jiaoyuting bianzuan zhongxiaoxue jiaokeshu jihua ji jiaoyubu fuhuan” [Gansu provincial government's reports on its education department's compilation of elementary- and middle-school textbooks and the Ministry of Education's replies], March–May 1938, 5-1250, SHAC.

53 5-1222, SHAC.

54 5-1291(1), p. 107, SHAC.

55 Zheng Zhenwen, “Minsheng zuijin jiaoyu sheshi” [Recent education facilities of Fujian Province], *Minzheng yuekan* [Monthly journal of the Fujian administration] 6, no. 6 (1939): 55–56.

soon become available and that provincial textbook committees should preferably focus on the regional supplements (鄉土教材 *xiangtu jiaocai*) instead. Amidst the chaos of war and relocation, the Ministry of Education held onto the authority, if only on paper, to approve or reject local resistance textbooks.<sup>56</sup>

In regions where local governments had no means of editing or distributing their own textbooks, educators and administrators called for the central government to take over the supply of textbooks. In 1939, the scarcity of textbooks in the southeastern provinces prompted General Gu Zhutong (顧祝同 1893–1987), stationed in Jiangxi Province, to recommend that the Ministry of Education establish its own printing presses in these provinces to make cheap copies and distribute them at no cost.<sup>57</sup> Many makeshift educational facilities in the Southwest also looked to the government for textbooks. Pleas for government assistance with textbook supply, now archived at the Second Historical Archives, came from all regions and levels of society. Letters reporting local shortages were processed and filed along with the relevant minutes, administrative discussions, and policy decisions addressed, but there was minimal coordination. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education's timely replies to these letters suggested that the exigencies of war forced the education officials to be more in touch with the changing needs of the localities.

To alleviate the immediate needs for patriotic education, the Ministry of Education reedited a set of short-term elementary textbooks (短期小學課本 *duanqi xiaoxue keben* or 短小課本 *duanxiao keben*) in the early summer of 1938, printed them in Hong Kong, and shipped millions of copies to Hubei, Hunan, Yunnan, Guizhou, and Shandong. In the winter of 1939 and spring of 1940, the Ministry of Education decreed that all provinces should adopt textbooks approved or edited by the government instead of the ad hoc textbooks compiled by local education bureaus or commercial publishers.<sup>58</sup> Toward that end, the ministry set up a conference with the Shanghai Booksellers' Association (Shanghai shuye tongye gonghui) to oversee supply and regulate prices. To offset the increasing cost of paper, transportation, and printing, the ministry appropriated millions of yuan from the National Treasury in December 1939 and secured the grudging consent of the booksellers not to increase prices. It also requested assistance from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Transportation to ascertain the supply of paper stock and transportation costs.

Finally, in early 1940, the Ministry requested 5 million yuan to compile its own ministry-edited textbooks (*bubian ben*), set up printing houses in Sichuan, Shaanxi, Guizhou, and Jiangxi, and coordinate the distribution of textbooks with each province.<sup>59</sup> The government's assumption was that closer government supervision would curb the rampant increase of book prices and allow them to appropriate resources more efficiently. As it was understood that textbook compilation would take months to complete, makeshift presses were permitted to manufacture their own copies of approved textbooks until the government's new textbooks became available. In March 1940, the Zhengzhong Bookstore volunteered to "donate" the copyrights for its entire textbook stock to the Nationalist

56 5-1291(1), p. 110, SHAC.

57 5-1291(1), p. 159, SHAC.

58 5-1290, p. 31, SHAC.

59 5-1290, p. 27, SHAC.

government.<sup>60</sup> The government issued to all regions a list of Zhengzhong book titles along with a blanket authorization to all local printing agencies to manufacture books on the list.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, the main focus of the Nationalist government in supplying textbooks during 1940–1941 shifted toward the authorization of local production of the approved and ministry-edited editions. With the tacit permission of the Nationalist government, provinces responded creatively to textbook shortages in ways that depended on local conditions, ranging from purchasing from bookstores (in noncombat areas where the supply exceeded demand) to mobilizing the intelligentsia to make copies by hand (in Shanxi), to relying on the schools to make their own copies (in Anhui).<sup>62</sup>

By 1942, the Nationalist government in Chongqing had come to oversee a vast network of ad hoc private and provincial textbook production agencies, but it was in no position to impose uniformity of content or quality and merely provided limited support for local production and transportation of government-approved textbooks. The situation tended toward integration by early 1943, as the Ministry of Education worked with book editors, educators, publishers, and local businesses to bring out what might be called China's first “national textbooks,” the *guodingben* (國定本).

### MAKING THE NATIONAL STANDARD TEXTBOOKS (*GUODINGBEN*)

The office mainly in charge of writing the *guodingben* was the Textbook Compilation Committee for Elementary and Secondary Textbooks (中小學教科用書編輯組 *Zhongxiaoxue jiaoke yongshu bianjizu*; TCCEST), established in September 1938 in the Chongqing suburbs and relocated to Beipei in April 1939. The committee consisted of 37 editors, 4 assistants, and 27 inspectors, including some of the most prestigious educators, writers, and intellectuals who had moved west with the Nationalist government.<sup>63</sup> The prominent essayist Liang Shiqiu (梁實秋 1903–1987) served as its director, but most administrative duties fell to Wei Bingxin (魏冰心 dates unknown), a veteran textbook editor for World Books, and Li Qingsong (李清悚 1903–1990), a disciple of the famous educator Tao Xingzhi (陶行知 1891–1946). Between 1938 and 1940, the main responsibilities of the committee lay on three fronts: (1) the inspection of existing textbooks to determine their compatibility with the government's wartime policies; (2) the compilation of supplementary wartime education readers; and (3) the compilation of a set of standardized textbooks on the Chinese language, history, geography, and citizenship, intended for universal adoption in all primary and secondary schools.<sup>64</sup>

In addition, the Ministry of Education was also keen to mobilize the wider society to contribute to its book-editing efforts. Calls for grassroots educational manuscripts

60 5-1292(2), p. 29, SHAC.

61 5-1292(2), p. 74, SHAC.

62 5-1290, p. 24, SHAC.

63 “Jiaoyubu guanyujiaoke yongshu bianweihui jigou renshi de wenjian” [Ministry of Education's personnel files on members of the textbook compilation committee], January 1940 to December 1943, 5-1206, pp. 14–28, SHAC.

64 “Sannian lai zhongxiaoxue jiaoke yongshu bianjizu gongzuo baogao” [Report on the work of the textbook compilation committee in the last three years], 5-1204, SHAC. On the bylaws of the committee, see *Jiaoyu faling* [Education regulations] 1, no. 23 (August 1938): 14.

(high-school textbooks, wartime supplementary readers, illustrated stories of patriotic resistance) were incentivized with promises of monetary rewards and government contracts.<sup>65</sup> The TCCEST was charged with selecting the winners and revising promising submissions. Most submissions were rejected on the grounds that they did not fully comply with the ministry's guidelines, and in cases of acceptance many pages were essentially rewritten (Figure 1). By branding these revised texts as "written by private individuals" (個人編寫 *geren bianxie*) or "submissions from the masses" (民眾徵稿 *minzhong zhenggao*), the committee funneled social energy into the appropriate language and ideology, giving the submissions a veneer of grassroots endorsement.<sup>66</sup>

Editing a set of textbooks for the entire nation was an elusive target, given the ever-changing nature of wartime reality, but it was perceived as an essential component of the Ministry of Education's expansion of compulsory education. The TCCEST worked with standards, expectations, and policies that constantly shifted depending on the exigencies of the war and the volatile commands from Chiang Kai-shek's headquarters. A note from Chiang on September 30, 1939, instructed the committee to include pieces from the *Rules for Proper Education* (養正遺規 *Yangzheng yigui*) by Qing governor Chen Hongmou (陳宏謀 1696–1774). The following year, he emphasized the balance between moral teaching and "common knowledge" of the real world: in history, geography, engineering, electricity, and economics. In November 1943, a new directive emphasized "the cultivation of habitual use of machines" and "the ethos of scientific discovery."<sup>67</sup> These shifting demands reveal the "ever-changing boundaries of what counted as basic and necessary knowledge" and an understanding that textbooks must be edited and revised constantly to address the changing needs of war.<sup>68</sup> This dynamic is most apparent in the geography, history, and fast-evolving fields of science and technology, but its effects were also keen on the ideological and linguistic level, intended to standardize the language of nationalism and citizenship.

The most noticeable differences in new *guodingben* elementary textbooks is the amalgamation of education in literacy with a broad range of knowledge, values, and skills under the rubric of "common knowledge" (常識 *changshi*). This change, as noted above, reflected limited wartime resources and the state's need to transform children into soldiers. While many of these trends were already evident prior to 1937, the *guodingben*'s content departed from the big publishers' textbooks in that it combined several distinct wartime educational goals into one single text.

Compared with the content of the pre-1937 ministry-approved textbooks, that of the wartime *guodingben* had several distinct features. If we take the mixed primers as an example, their intended audience shifted from the urban to a mixed rural-urban setting,

65 See, for example, "Jiaoyubu zhengqiu gaozhong benguo shidi jiaokeshu" [Ministry of Education's solicitation of high-school textbooks on Chinese history and geography], *Shen bao*, November 6, 1941.

66 See "Jiaoyubu shenhe geren bianxie zhongxiao xue jiaoke yongshu de youguan wenshu" [Documents pertaining to Ministry of Education's inspection of elementary- and middle-school textbooks], 1936–1940, 5-1261(1), SHAC.

67 "Jiaoyubu guanyu zhongxiao xue jiaokeshu you guoding zhongxiao xue jiaokeshu qijia lianhe gongyingchu tongchou yinshua shi yu youguan bumen laiwang wenshu" [Ministry of Education's communications on the Seven Alliance's overall management of the printing of the national standard textbooks], September–November 1943, 5-1299(2), p. 121, SHAC.

68 Zarrow, *Educating China*, 6.

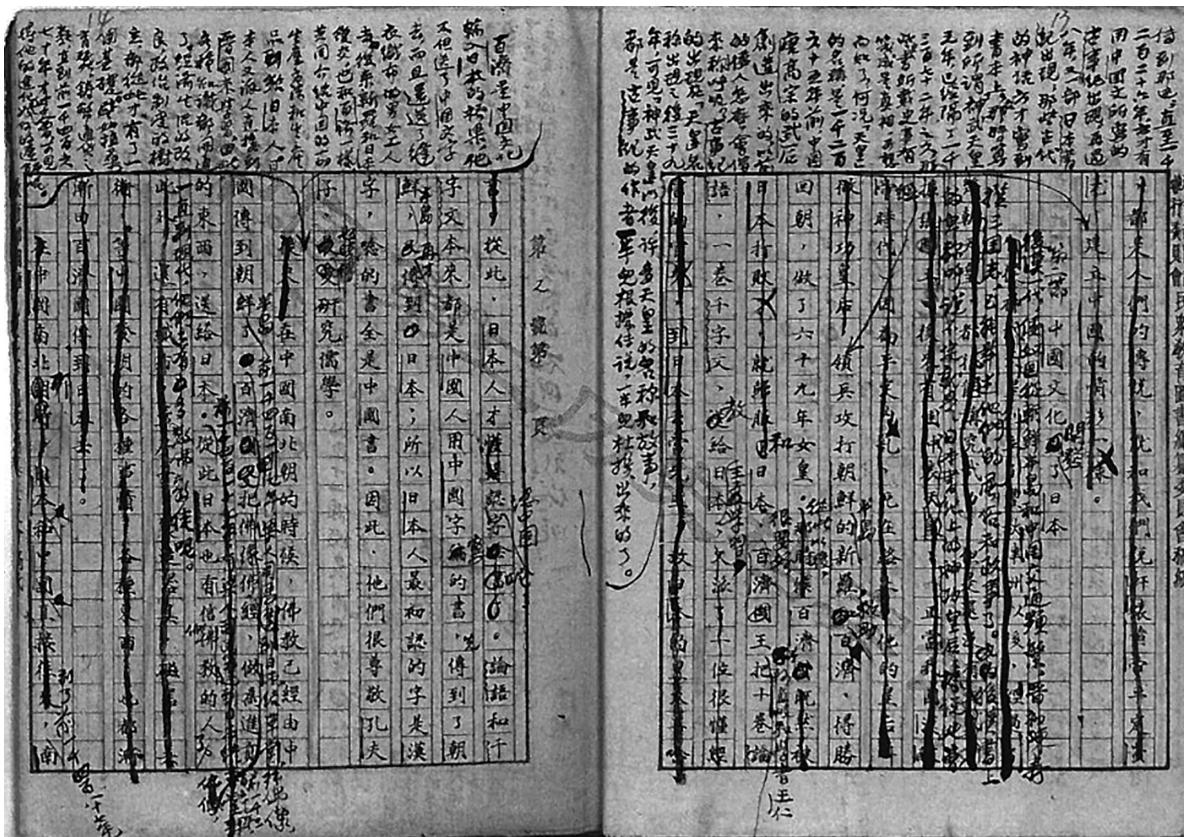


Figure 1. The numerous revisions of a manuscript on the history of Japan made by the Textbook Compilation Committee for Elementary and Secondary Textbooks (中小學教科用書編輯組 Zhongxiao xue jiaoke yongshu bianjizu; TCCEST). Source: “Jiaoyubu jiaoke yongshu bianji weiyuanhui shencha minzhong duwu gao” [Ministry of Education’s TCCEST inspection reports on popular reader submissions], February 1937 to January 1941, 5-1341(1), Second Historical Archives of China, Nanjing.

and many activities described in the lessons involve physical labor in the fields, such as weeding, sowing, and harvesting, encouraging young children to engage in productive work. More importantly, patriotic resistance to Japanese imperialism lay at the heart of about half of the lessons. The pre-1937 textbooks presented Japanese imperialism as a “natural outgrowth” of the world capitalist system, refrained from advocating territorial recovery in Manchuria, and conveyed a sense of admiration for Japan’s achievements.<sup>69</sup> The *guodingben* primers continued the tradition of “usable past” but sharpened it to arouse anti-Japanese sentiments. It told historical and invented tales of children’s heroism, called for vengeance and self-sacrifice, and glorified war and military service in service of national unity. It normalized the use of the derogatory *wokou* (倭寇 dwarf pirates) to refer to the Japanese and connected children’s play with the language of military engagement. A lesson on children’s toys, for instance, introduced the vocabulary for *chongfeng shadi* (衝鋒殺敵 to charge forward and kill the enemies), *hongzha dibing* (轟炸敵兵 to bomb enemy soldiers), and *jiluo diji* (擊落敵機 to shoot down enemy planes).<sup>70</sup> There was also stronger emphasis on self-defense training, personal hygiene, and knowledge about infectious diseases. First-grade students were taught the different types of sirens for warning of aerial bombing, a general emergency, and poison gas attacks, complete with illustrations about how to properly wear a gas mask (Figure 2). They were asked not to eat too much and to avoid uncooked or cold food to avoid cholera (Figure 3). Finally, the new textbooks introduced a host of terms and concepts associated with the implementation of state-sponsored self-government and the *baojia* system, prompting students to conduct field surveys of local religions and to collect stories of local heroes (本地英雄 *bendi yingxiong*) and role models.

Like the literacy primers, history and geography texts also underwent heavy rewriting. The TCCEST’s guidelines on history warned against content with “thick feudal influence” and recommended removal of any mentions of “emperors who made no positive contribution to the nation.” New sections were added throughout lessons on Chinese history to emphasize the “abundant achievements and great deeds” (豐功偉績 *fenggong weiji*) of the early empires and the lessons learned from previous dynasties’ successes (the Tang) and failures (the Southern Song and the Ming) in national defense and frontier policies.<sup>71</sup> While coverage of premodern China shrank significantly, modern history and contemporary events received elaborate treatment (for instance, Japan’s aggressions, notable campaigns of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the achievements of the Nationalist Air Force, and the nation’s new accomplishments through wartime mobilization). Compilation guidelines plainly admitted their goal of spurring middle-school students to enlist.<sup>72</sup> In geography textbooks, long sections were added to middle-school textbooks to emphasize the relationship of war mobilization to state building in the frontier regions of

69 Zarrow, *Educating China*, 237, 240.

70 *Chuji xiaoxue guoyu changshi keben* [Elementary-school common knowledge textbook] (Chongqing: Zhengzhong shuju, 1942), vol. 4, 33–34.

71 “Jiaoyubu zhongxiaoxue jiaokeshu bianjizu xize, gongzuo jihua, bianji yaodian” [Detailed guidelines, work schedule, and key editorial points for TCCEST], September 1939 to February 1940, 5-1306, p. 73, SHAC.

72 5-1306, p. 73, SHAC.



Figure 2. Top: A lesson on how to respond to air raid sirens. Source: *Chuji xiaoxue guoyu changshi keben* [Elementary-level national language and common knowledge textbook] (Chongqing: Zhengzhong shuju, 1942), vol. 2, 5. Bottom: A lesson on how to distinguish between sirens for air raids, general emergency, poison gas, all clear. Source: *Chuji xiaoxue guoyu changshi keben*, vol. 2, 50.



Figure 3. A lesson on cholera prevention. Source: *Chuji xiaoxue guoyu changshi keben*, vol. 2, 53.

Mongolia, the Northwest, Yunnan, and Tibet.<sup>73</sup> To promote ethnic integration, the Ministry of Education banned the use of the pejorative dog radical in designating ethnic minorities.<sup>74</sup>

In addition to changed content, the appearance of the *guodingben* textbooks bore the marks of resource scarcity. They were reduced in size, printed on coarse, flimsy newspaper sheets that tore easily, with fewer illustrations (all black-and-white), in characters too small and blurry to make out easily. It would be a mistake, however, to place too much emphasis on change—the editors of the *guodingben* came from the same group of urban educators and writers who had worked in the field prior to the war or else were liberal-minded intellectuals who shared their culture and values.

73 5-1306, pp. 103–5, SHAC.

74 5-1306, p. 118, SHAC.

## SUPPLYING THE *GUODINGBEN*, 1943–1945

Although profits were low, the *guodingben* kept the largest publishers in business through the most difficult times of the war. By 1942, most of them had shifted their centers of operation to Chongqing and desperately needed a new market. The Zhengzhong Bookstore had hoped to gain a monopoly on the production of the *guodingben* by voluntarily surrendering their copyrights to the Nationalist government in 1940 to enable local reproduction. But the sheer demand for the textbooks, in addition to lobbying by other publishers, resulted in the creation of a “Bureau of the Seven Alliance” (七聯處 Qilianchu), a merger of the Big Trio (Commercial, Zhonghua, Zhengzhong) and four smaller publishers (World, Dadong, Kaiming, and Wentong). In June 1943, the Ministry of Education signed a two-year renewable contract with the Seven Alliance, entrusting them to print all *guodingben* textbooks for elementary and secondary schools and all ministry-edited teaching guides.

The contract specified that the ministry would deliver all manuscripts to be produced by the Seven Alliance. The latter would set up printing houses in a network of 14 cities throughout Free China and be given monopoly over the supply of textbooks in all provinces controlled by the Nationalist government. Even in war zones and Communist-controlled areas, the Seven Alliance was exclusively authorized to coordinate with local education agencies and bookstores to supply textbooks. An exception was made for areas the Seven Alliance’s network could not reach, where the Ministry of Education could authorize, on a case-by-case basis, local reproduction of the *guodingben*. Prices were calculated based on projected manufacturing cost, plus a 15% profit for publishers and 10% for suppliers.<sup>75</sup> The ministry promised governmental assistance in paper supply, transportation, and loans if financial losses were too severe.<sup>76</sup> For an initial test run to supply textbooks for the fall semester of 1943, the Seven Alliance supplied liquid capital of \$12,500,000 for the printing and transportation of 2,600,000 volumes of elementary-school textbooks, 200,000 volumes of secondary-school textbooks, and 100,000 volumes of teaching manuals.<sup>77</sup>

Under this new arrangement, the large companies with capital and publishing experience pooled their resources and subcontracted smaller interior businesses for production and supply. The prices of the textbooks for each region were calculated separately according to the quality of local paper, the cost of print, storage, bookbinding, transportation, and insurance.<sup>78</sup> The Ministry of Education coordinated with other departments at the central level to provide additional financial and transportation assistance. For example, the ministry received permission from the Ministry of Finance to provide tax exemptions for all paper stock used for textbook printing.<sup>79</sup> Cheap loans were also provided to the Seven Alliance to cover their losses. But runaway inflation exerted constant pressure to increase prices. In a series of meetings beginning in early 1943, Minister of Education Chen Lifu and representatives of the Seven Alliance negotiated price increases to match inflation.

75 “Jiaoyubu guanyu zhongxiaoxue jiaokeshu you guoding zhongxiaoxue jiaokeshu qijia lianhe gongyingchu tongchou yinshua shi yu youguan bumen laiwang wenshu” [Ministry of Education’s communications on the Seven Alliance’s overall management of the printing of the national standard textbooks] May 1943, 5-1299(1), p. 74, SHAC.

76 5-1299(1), p. 135, SHAC.

77 5-1299(1), p. 109, SHAC.

78 5-1299(1), SHAC; 5-1299(2), SHAC.

79 5-1299(1), p. 117, SHAC.

To what extent did the Seven Alliance succeed in supplying textbooks for schools in the interior? In many ways, their achievements were mixed, and they varied greatly by location. Schools in large cities in Sichuan, Hunan, Guangxi, and Jiangxi took up 60% of the textbook demand, and their needs were often prioritized over the other areas.<sup>80</sup> But the sales of the textbooks, even in well-supported cities, were unimpressive. On the basis of enrollment numbers supplied by the Ministry of Education, the Seven Alliance had expected demand to far exceed supply, but the opposite was the case. In Chongqing, only slightly more than half of the books were sold. For some schools, the *guodingben* arrived too late for the beginning of the semester. Others preferred to use old textbooks for curricular continuity, and some even intentionally started their semester early so as to excuse themselves from using the *guodingben*. The most glaring case of adoption failure occurred in Jiangjin County, Sichuan Province, where the Seven Alliance supplied all 30,000 volumes of textbooks well ahead of the semester, but fewer than 5,000 were purchased.<sup>81</sup>

Minister Chen Lifu met with representatives of the Seven Alliance to hammer out a series of countermeasures. It was now required that all bookstores turn over their existing stocks to the Seven Alliance to create a streamlined, centralized supply. To prevent local publishers and bookstores from printing or selling older textbooks, it was required that all plates be turned over to the Seven Alliance for destruction or storage. The use of older textbooks, even the Ministry-approved versions, was strictly banned except in areas where transportation was truly difficult.<sup>82</sup>

Despite the optimism of the Seven Alliance that the second and third terms would bring smoother operations, many bookstores continued to defy official regulations and promoted old textbooks.<sup>83</sup> Publishers excluded from the monopoly also complained. In December 1943, the Hubei government, upon hearing the news that the Seven Alliance was planning to extend their network into their province, asked for their own publishing house to be included in the contract. In December, the Jiangxi government requested plates and permissions to print their own textbooks. In November 1944, the Dongnan Bookstore in Jiangxi Province insisted that dozens of counties in the region could not be covered by the Seven Alliance's network and asked to join the alliance for the upcoming renewal of the contract.<sup>84</sup>

By 1944, the Ministry of Education was caught in many conundrums associated with managing a centralized textbook supply system. The Seven Alliance constantly demanded price increases, government loans, expansion of their network coverage, and stricter bans on unauthorized printing. From the ministry's perspective, the rapid deterioration of the economy and resource scarcity, due partly to Japan's Operation Ichigo, made it increasingly difficult to coordinate with the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Transportation. It was impossible to ascertain conditions in regions that claimed that they could not be covered by the alliance's networks. In response to provinces' requests to join the Seven Alliance, the ministry could do no more than issue a blanket refusal citing the terms of the contract. It also received allegations of foul play against the Seven Alliance: some of

80 5-1299(1), p. 109, SHAC.

81 5-1299(2), pp. 23–30, SHAC.

82 5-1299(2), p. 58, SHAC.

83 "Qilianchu cheng" [Presented by the Seven Alliance], February 17, 1944, 5-1296(1), SHAC.

84 "Qilianchu cheng" [Presented by the Seven Alliance], 5-1296(1), November 11, 1944, p. 6, SHAC.

their offices refused to supply textbooks to retailers unless the latter sold them at higher prices; other offices stockpiled their supplies to drive prices artificially high.<sup>85</sup>

For all its flaws and charges of malpractice, the ministry's contract with the Seven Alliance accomplished some important goals. It supplied tens of millions of resistance textbooks to elementary and secondary schools in the most difficult years of war. Overall demand for the textbooks grew in 1944 and 1945 despite local noncompliance.<sup>86</sup> Through its decentralized network of printing houses, the Seven Alliance sourced local papers and presses and kept thousands of workers employed. The ministry's supervision kept textbook prices from spiraling out of control. Since production tracked with changing demands for each coming semester, overproduction was minimized, though not eliminated. This collaboration also rewarded nationalist publishers with wartime business and kept their allegiance to the government strong. The Nationalist government tightened its control over the content of elementary- and middle-school education, a feat of collaboration unprecedented in the modern history of education.

### THE COLLAPSE OF THE *GUODINGBEN* IN CIVIL WAR

In the summer of 1945, as abruptly as it all began, the war with Japan ended. And yet the textbook war continued with new demands and dimensions. The logistics of supplying a vastly expanded student body with the *guodingben* posed a significant challenge to government officials, publishers, and suppliers. In many ways, the summer of 1945 did not mark the transition between wartime and postwar in the textbook world but the beginning of another battle to reclaim the business of the occupied territories.<sup>87</sup> Shortly before Japan's surrender, the puppet regime in Nanjing had produced a large stock of pro-Japanese textbooks, also called the *guodingben*. In 1946, the Ministry of Education became concerned that many schools, either confused or desperate for textbooks for the fall, had adopted these "pseudo-textbooks" or begun to recirculate the pre-1937 textbooks.<sup>88</sup> The huge profit of the textbook business tempted presses outside the Seven Alliance to infringe on the copyright law and engage in illicit reproduction.<sup>89</sup>

85 "Jiaoyubu guanyu zhongxiao xue jiaokeshu you guoding zhongxiao xue jiaokeshu qijia lianhe gongyingchu tongchou yinshua shi yu youguan bumen laiwang wenshu" [Ministry of Education's communications on the Seven Alliance's overall management of the printing of the national standard textbooks], December 22, 1944, 5-1300(1), SHAC.

86 See projected production figures for the fall of 1945 in "Jiaoyubu guanyu zhongxiao xue jiaokeshu you guoding zhongxiao xue jiaokeshu qijia lianhe gongyingchu tongchou yinshua shi yu youguan bumen laiwang wenshu" [Ministry of Education's communications on the Seven Alliance's overall management of the printing of the national standard textbooks], January–December 1945, 5-1301(1), p. 193, SHAC.

87 Wang Yunwu, *Shangwu yinshuguan*, 832.

88 "Suqing weijiaokeshu bing ying chongshen jiu shendingben" [We must purge pseudo-textbooks and reinspect the old textbooks], *Shen bao*, July 21, 1946; "Guoding jiaokeshu zhanhou xiuzheng ben lianyin lianxiao daliang gongying, jiaoyubu yanchi geshengshi jinjue wei keben" [Postwar national standard textbooks are being printed and supplied by the alliance in large quantities, and the Ministry of Education orders all provinces and cities to absolutely ban pseudo-textbooks], *Shen bao*, August 4, 1946.

89 "Sijin jiaokeshu shishang faxian shiwu yu wan" [Discovery of more than 150,000 pirated textbooks on the market], *Shen bao*, September 9, 1946.

The takeover was managed by the Eleven Alliance, the original seven publishers plus four smaller companies, under government supervision. In December 1945, the Ministry of Education sent Lu Dianyang (陸殿揚 1891–1972), director of the TCCEST, to the newly recovered capital, Nanjing, to promote the adoption of *guodingben* for the spring of 1946.<sup>90</sup> At the same time, representatives from the 11 companies assembled “supply committees” (供應委員會 *gongying weiyuanhui*) for six major cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Changsha, Guangzhou, Shenyang, and Chongqing), where they manufactured textbooks on local machines and paper. Due to resource limitations, supply was pegged closely to estimated demand. All elementary and secondary schools, private and public, were required to obtain a seal of permission from their local department of education before their orders were accepted.<sup>91</sup>

Despite repeated official exhortations and threats of lawsuits, the government’s exclusive contract with the Eleven Alliance not only failed to drive out illicit reproductions but proved financially unsustainable. The contract’s expiration in 1947 was celebrated widely in newspapers as a moment of liberalization, but it was also the beginning of the end of the *guodingben*. On July 1, the Ministry of Education gave permission to all publishers to print the *guodingben* subject to a set of general guidelines to ensure quality and readability, provided that they deliver three proofs for approval. The original Seven Alliance still held copyrights to the illustrations and page layouts of their existing *guodingben*, but the text was free for all publishers. This measure ostensibly leveled the field and granted equal access for all, but in reality it only accentuated the deep inequality among publishers. Government loans continued to be funneled to well-connected large publishers, especially those within the Seven Alliance. During these months of rampant inflation, the government’s financial support staved off bankruptcy. In addition to not having access to loans, the newcomers faced the additional costs of having to make their own designs and page proofs. As a result, small investors who pooled their capital to print textbooks quickly faced bankruptcy.<sup>92</sup>

More importantly, the education field no longer favored continuing the *guodingben*, and criticism intensified after 1947. As publishers and educators gradually aligned themselves with the Communists, criticism of the Nationalist government’s textbook policies became vociferous. Discussions regarding a petition to abolish the *guodingben* dominated the agenda of the first postwar meeting held by the board of education in Beijing.<sup>93</sup> One educator publicly denounced them as “hopelessly petrified no matter how many revisions they go through” and mocked one-size-fits-all nationalization by comparing it to the “ten-thousand-year calendar” (萬年曆 *wannianli*): anyone with a permit could publish it for

90 “Jiaobu pai Lu Dianyang tuixing guoding jiaokeshu” [Ministry of Education dispatches Lu Dianyang to promote the national standard textbooks], *Shen bao*, December 11, 1945.

91 “Guoding zhongxiao xuexiao jiaokeshu qijia lianhe gongyingchu gonggao” [Public proclamation from the Seven Alliance supplying the national standard textbooks for elementary and middle schools], *Dagong bao*, August 9, 1946.

92 For an example of how the lack of government loans bankrupted latecomers to the *guodingben* franchise, see “Jiaoyubu guanyu zhongxiao xue jiaokeshu dingjia yinshua faxing yu youguan danwei laiwang wenshu” [Ministry of Education’s communications on the pricing, printing, and distribution of elementary- and middle-school textbooks], September 1945–May 1948, 5-1298, pp. 49–71, SHAC.

93 “Shengli hou diyici Ping shi jiaoyu xingzheng huiyi” [The first postvictory conference on the administration of education takes places in Beiping.] *Shen bao*, January 29, 1947.

a profit.<sup>94</sup> Many of these concerns were directly expressed to the Ministry of Education on March 4, 1947, when it held a meeting with intellectuals and educators on the merits and issues of the *guodingben*. Participants delivered reports on the status of the textbook industry in Europe, the United States, and Japan and passed around a beautifully printed American textbook. The phrase “thought control” was used by liberal and left-leaning intellectuals to describe existing policy. A poll was taken at the end of the meeting of the 22 participants: no one voted for the exclusive continuation of the *guodingben*.<sup>95</sup> Depending on their stake in the status quo, publishers responded to such news with opportunism or suspicion. When the ministry announced its plans to review its existing textbook policies, many publishers ceased investing in the *guodingben*. Rumors of the return of the approval system rekindled publishers’ interest in the prewar textbooks, and some of these old texts were quickly manufactured and sold in defiance of government regulations. When the ministry published a set of new curricular guidelines to pave the way for the inspection system in May 1947, the Seven Alliance demanded that the Ministry of Education purchase their stock, threatening lawsuits if their losses were not compensated.<sup>96</sup>

As a result, by the end of 1948, the Ministry continued to receive reports from Shenyang, Hubei, Beijing, and Qingdao on the continued use of pro-Japanese *guodingben* or pre-1937 textbooks.<sup>97</sup> The demoralized Nationalist regime could hardly muster the strength to deal with the situation. From then until the Communist takeover in 1949, new *guodingben* ceased to be produced, and huge stockpiles were left in warehouses due to the lack of book suppliers. The prewar approval system was only reimplemented after the Nationalist government relocated to Taiwan, where a model similar to the wartime *guodingben* policy was introduced in 1947.<sup>98</sup> In mainland China, as Robert Culp observed, the Communist government put in place a centralized system for the publication and distribution of political and educational books dominated by a state-owned publisher and distributor.<sup>99</sup> In many ways, the post-1949 textbook policy in both China and Taiwan were not departures but continued the relationships among the state, the publishers, and educators that had been implemented during the war.

## CONCLUSION

The outbreak of the war in 1937 increased the symbiotic relationships that connected the state, the publishers, and educators, catapulting the Ministry of Education into the position of a switchboard manager responsible for supplying resistance textbooks to an embattled nation. The forced migration of the Nationalist government from Nanjing

94 “Jiaoke shuhuang yichang yanzhong, guodingben zhuzhang feizhi” [The textbook famine being extremely critical, it is proposed that national standard textbooks be abolished], *Shen bao*, July 18, 1947.

95 “Jiaoyu wenti zuotanhui taolun jiaokeshu wenti” [Roundtable discussion on the issue of textbooks], *Shen bao*, March 4, 1947.

96 “Canzhenghui jiang taolun guoding keben cunfei wenti” [The political consultative conference will discuss whether the national standard textbooks will be kept or abandoned], *Shen bao*, May 2, 1947.

97 5-1298, pp. 52–81, SHAC.

98 He Liyou, “Jiaokeshu gongying moshi dui zhanhou chuqi Taiwan wenjiao shiye zhi yingxiang” [Impact of the textbook supply model on postwar Taiwan’s culture and education enterprises], *Taiwanxue yanjiu* [Journal of Taiwan studies], no. 6 (2008): 89–108.

99 Culp, *Power of Print*, 188–89.

to Chongqing in 1938 resulted in the most dramatic growth of publicly funded education for primary and secondary schools. In the next few years, government-edited textbooks gradually replaced commercial or private textbooks and eventually became the only choice for tens of thousands of schools in the interior. Between 1943 and 1945, the government sponsored a joint monopoly of seven publishers to coordinate textbook supplies with local agencies. The model was implemented according to local conditions and achieved moderate success in targeted areas.

Textbooks underwent frequent and dramatic changes during the war. While existing studies on textbooks have focused on how they instilled nationalism and civic values, this article suggests the further possibility of seeing textbooks as a mass-manufactured weapon of mobilization and state building, deployed with precision to achieve quick, tangible effects. The vocabulary and lesson plans of the primers came under the direct supervision of the highest level of government officials—often Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek himself—and targeted the enemy's education content with razor-sharp precision. Development in the Nationalist government's Free China, the occupied areas, and the Communist base areas paralleled each other in terms of the state's relationships with the publishing industry and the education field. All three regimes appointed editorial teams to instill ideological indoctrination into short-term language primers and utilized government resources to manufacture and supply textbooks to targeted populations. There was no longer much room for commercial publishers and textbook editors to assert their independence. The former found themselves beholden to the government's textbook contract in order to survive at all, and the latter were brought into the TCCEST and put on the government payroll.

Despite the facade of solidarity around anti-Japanese resistance, a sense of pent-up frustration was felt by all sides. Published in 1947, the year when *guodingben* textbooks saw their demise, Qian Zhongshu's *Fortress Besieged* captured the prevalence of cynicism felt by intellectuals toward the Nationalist government's education policy during the war. But it might be worth noting that such cynicism perhaps reflected the immediate postwar attitude toward the lingering effects of wartime policy more than the dominant feeling among intellectuals during the war itself. Furthermore, it was perhaps more keenly felt by professors in higher education than by teachers in elementary and secondary education, whose dependency on the government to supply basic education materials and financial assistance was much stronger.

The policies and the institutions that the Nationalist government created to deal with extreme resource shortage during the war came under criticism after 1945, and the steps it took after 1946 to liberalize the textbook industry only backfired and deepened the distrust felt by those outside the establishment. The government's intent to replace the previous puppet regime's textbooks with the *guodingben* met with local resistance, and its exclusive contract with the Seven (later Eleven) Alliance attracted public criticism and rumors of corruption. Liberal and left-leaning intellectuals criticized the government-edited textbooks as petrified ideological indoctrination. When the Ministry of Education decided to return to the prewar inspection system in 1947, it further alienated the existing stakeholders. The big publishers with government contracts threatened lawsuits, while newcomers and small publishers lost their investments due to rampant inflation and the government's wavering commitment to the *guodingben*. By 1948, the *guodingben* were

widely despised and considered proof of the retrogression of the Nationalist government's education policy.<sup>100</sup>

But when we subject these shifting relationships to closer analysis, it seems that any glib characterization of the history of *guodingben* misses the heart of the story. Since textbooks were reconceptualized as instruments of war, rapidly changing political and military circumstances must form the basis of any history of wartime education. As this study shows, the Ministry of Education repeatedly modified their textbook policies, gradually expanded the reach of government-edited textbooks, and wielded telegrams, statistics, special agents, and contracts to salvage students from the "textbook famine." The moderate success it achieved came at the cost of eliminating the margin of freedom that commercial publishers and educators had retained prior to 1937. The war fought in the realm of textbooks had no clear winners, and its outcome was dictated by forces beyond the control of its main players.

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

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100 "Huangmiu juelun de guodingben jiaokeshu" [The ridiculous national standard textbooks], *Dagong bao*, February 2, 1947.