RED TOURISM IN CHINA: PROPAGANDA, SPACE, COMMODIFICATION

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DISSERTATION
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communications and Media
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2018

Urbana, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about Red Tourism and propaganda.

Red Tourism refers to tourism of the People’s Republic of China in which people visit tourist spots with historical significance to either the Communist Party of China (CPC) or the Chinese revolution.

A heritage tourism, Red Tourism is a kind of oxymoron. It is a yoking together of two extraordinarily powerful drivers in the cultural language surrounding China. On the one hand, “Red” is associated with ideology, discipline, and loyalty combined with a history of authentic struggle and liberation. On the other hand, tourism designates an ongoing process of capitalization. Eerily, this oxymoronicality of Red Tourism epitomizes the cultural imagination of contemporary China, in which the Chinese state seems simultaneously to be engaged in mining the past for its lucrative images and narrative resources as well as calculating a future linked to a kind of “Red” economy where propaganda/xuanchuan roots, morphs, and thrives. Xuanchuan, propaganda’s counterpart in China, means “disseminating purposeful information,” and is folkloristic in nature, associated with good things and deeds. Nevertheless, this is rarely understood, in part because the way we see propaganda has been fixed; scholars treat propaganda as a method, a technique, and/or a practice, devoting much attention to journalism, the news industry, the media system, and censorship and little to the social space of propaganda. This book is meant to fill that gap.

It examines Red Tourism in connection with the transforming power relations between the state and the capitalist, the socialist past and the capitalized present in the communication arena against the backdrop of the world’s second largest economy. I
argue that Red Tourism is a social space comprised of all sorts of political pathways and communication networks. As such, Red Tourism is both produced and productive: it was produced by both physical space such as cities, tourist sites, and museums, and abstract space including histories, ideologies, collective memories, (post)socialist nostalgia, social imaginaries and so forth. At the same time, it is (re)producing all of these physical and non-physical networks by following distinctive mechanisms combining the dominant ideology and the capitalist mode of production. It calls for a new theoretical framework and approach that does not belong to traditional propaganda studies.

In a number of ways this study aims to go beyond existing work in propaganda studies by illustrating the following: that propaganda is a social space; that there is a propaganda culture in China; that tourism is a popular site of propaganda; that the capitalist can make a profit off of popular propaganda by commodifying and selling it in the market; that although ostensibly commercial and nonideological, commodified propaganda can be even more ideologically powerful, hence, more propagandistic; that the partaking of surplus capital in the commodification of propaganda renders the social space of propaganda even more complicated; and that capitalism is, too, a driving force for the production of state propaganda.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to record my gratitude first of all to John Nerone, whose patience, witticisms, erudition, and friendship made my Illinois years a truly fulfilling sojourn. I am also very grateful to James Hay, Bob McChesney, Cameron McCarthy, and Poshek Fu who wholeheartedly supported my project from the outset and their invaluable advice and benevolent criticism helped me to eliminate many shortcomings of the project.

Faculty at the Institute of Communications Research (ICR), especially Anghy Valdivia, Norm Denzin, and Kent Ono offered encouragement and support in the course of my work. Thanks also to ICR staff, especially to Theresa Harris for all her help.

Many thanks also to my former Chinese journalist colleagues who arranged my access to other journalists and local officials, to all of whom I owe an immense debt of gratitude for their frankness and openness. Thanks also to my indispensable informants who are anonymized throughout the project due to the sensitive topic.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about Red Tourism and propaganda.

Red Tourism (hongse luyou) refers to tourism of the People’s Republic of China in which people visit tourist spots with historical significance to either the Communist Party of China (CPC) or the Chinese revolution. The profitability of this so-called “Red” economy has been phenomenal: according to The People’s Daily, “last year [2011] alone, China’s Red Tourism sites received 540 million visitors, counting for 20 percent of tourists in the country” (Jin, 2012). According to a governmental outline from 2011, by 2015 the national Red tourist travel number would exceed 800 million with an average annual growth of 15 percent, and increase the proportion to a quarter share of the total number of China domestic tourism; the consolidated revenue of Red Tourism would reach 200 billion yuan ($31 billion) with an average annual growth rate of 10 percent (Outline 2011–2015). Lately, the China’s Red Tourism wave has even reached out internationally. To accommodate the burning enthusiasm of Chinese Red tourists in Russia, Russian tourism authorities launched a special route called the “red circuit,” an eight-day tour across multiple Russian cities featured the life trajectory of Vladimir Lenin (Koreneva, 2015).

A heritage tourism, Red Tourism is a kind of oxymoron. It is a yoking together of two extraordinarily powerful drivers in the cultural language surrounding China. On the one hand, “Red” is associated with ideology, discipline, and loyalty combined with a history of authentic struggle and liberation. On the other hand, tourism designates an ongoing process of capitalization. Eerily, this oxymoronicality of Red Tourism epitomizes the cultural imagination of contemporary China, in which the Chinese state
seems simultaneously to be engaged in mining the past for its lucrative images and narrative resources as well as calculating a future linked to a kind of “Red” economy where propaganda roots, morphs, and thrives. Nevertheless, this is rarely understood, in part because the way we see propaganda practice has been fixed; scholars treat propaganda as a method, a technique, and/or a practice, devoting much attention to journalism, the news industry, the media system, and censorship and little to the social space of propaganda. This research is meant to fill that gap.

The study examines Red Tourism in connection with the transforming power relations between the state and the capitalist, the socialist past and the capitalized present in the communication arena against the backdrop of the world’s second largest economy. I argue that Red Tourism is a social space comprised of all sorts of political pathways and communication networks. As such, Red Tourism is both produced and productive: it was produced by both physical space such as cities, tourist sites, and museums, and abstract space including histories, ideologies, collective memories, (post)socialist nostalgia, social imaginaries and so forth. At the same time, it is (re)producing all of these physical and non-physical networks by following distinctive mechanisms combining the dominant ideology and the capitalist mode of production. It calls for a new theoretical framework and approach that does not belong to traditional propaganda studies.

I adopted an interpretive approach invoked by two strands of Marxism that speak at times at cross purposes regarding the production of meanings and power relations. In the first strand, that of the contemporary Western Marxism of Henri Lefebvre and Raymond Williams, there is a sophisticated reading of the production of superstructure not as a static, determined process but through dynamic mediation. They help rethink Red
Tourism not as simply a propaganda project determined by the Party’s ideology but a social space mediated by and mediating communications. The second strand, political economy, derived from classical Marxism, carries out inquiries into the relation, production, distribution and exchange of power in the capitalist mode of production. It is a useful tool to analyze the political-economic base of Red Tourism and related issues. Therefore, in this study I pursued what Robert Babe (2009, p. 5) refers to as “a dialectical middle ground,” integrating critical/cultural studies and political economy of communication. The concepts of propaganda, space, and commodification serve as both the cornerstones of the theoretical construct of the study and the conjunctions of the two strands of scholarship.

Not only are the three elements fundamental to Red Tourism, they are also critical to a profound understanding of the Chinese state and its communication. In other words, they are decisive and inseparable in mapping out the ongoing transformation of the geography of contemporary Chinese mass communication. And Red Tourism is a key. It connects the critical components of Chinese communication and converts them into an exceptional case that is visually comprehensible and readily to be read. Think about Mao Zedong’s portrait hung at Tiananmen Gate: it immediately legitimates the history of the nation-state through a space articulation. Then think about Red Tourism as a result of a massive propagation of such symbolism all over the country through, among others, the process of commodification. Now propaganda and capital overlap. Together, they make the current case of Red Tourism complexly intriguing.

One way of making clear sense of the current study is to introduce the keywords and their meanings in specific contexts. Since this work deals with highly ambiguous
and, perhaps, forever debatable subjects in Communication Study including propaganda, political tourism, social space, and commodification in a non-English-speaking, non-Western-democratic country, I found this strategy more appropriate for the introduction. Nevertheless, this is not done in a pick-and-choose manner: reiterating varied definitions of each term and taking one that fits. Rather, I want to examine different ideas surrounding those terms and to answer a few critical questions in much wider social and cultural contexts, and ultimately, to make my own case. Those questions are: why do I go with *xuanchuan*, the Chinese notion of propaganda? How do I see tourism? Why do I treat Red Tourism as a social space? Is Marxism applicable to China’s case? In doing so, I also attempt to furnish proper theoretical grounds on which this dissertation research is based, constructed and developed. In a sense, I envisage this introduction to serve as a simplified tourist map to acquaint tourists with the landmarks, the travel routes and the destinations, and at the same time, to show how I planned to get there. In other words, to offer both a “map” and a “tour” using de Certeau’s terms (1984).

**WHY *XUANCHUAN***?

Instead of getting straight to the point, this dissertation begins with a theoretical exploration of the Chinese notion of propaganda, or *xuanchuan* (宣传). I want to offer a new theoretical framework of propaganda, which I refer to as the “*xuanchuan* model.” This is a bold yet necessary attempt in several regards.

Propaganda is *the* great myth in communication studies. On the one hand, propaganda studies is the birthplace where modern Communication Study as a field developed and thrived; it generated the backbone theories of communication, particularly
in media effect research (e.g. strong, limited and non-effect theories) as well as enormous institutional power. On the other hand, nowadays propaganda research, as a strand of Communication Study, empirical or theoretical, seems to have been exhausted. By contrast, “propaganda,” the term, has increasingly gained visibility in popular discourse and polemics. The Fox News case exemplifies this. Finally, we realize that it is even impossible to locate a commonly accepted definition of the term. This is to say, what is really mythical about propaganda is that although we think we know a whole lot about propaganda in terms of history, methods, techniques and practices, we barely know what it is. For example, what is the difference between propaganda and, say, ideology, public relations and persuasion? For many, it seems the only difference is that propaganda is bad.

My theoretical exploration of xuanchuan is meant to disturb the dominance of the Western notion of propaganda in which propaganda, whatever defined, is believed to be a nefarious thing, loosely associated with brainwashing. Socolow (2007), for example, remarked that the word “propaganda” connotes “conspiratorial and anti-democratic” in US politics (p. 109). Cunningham (1992) also pointed out that propaganda in English-speaking countries is an “ominous term” and “fraught with intentional deception” (p. 233). Although in the West a neutral thesis about propaganda can be heard over time from Bernays (1928; 1942), LaPiere & Farnsworth (1936), Lasswell (1948) to Ellul (1965) and Welch (1983), the negative connotation of propaganda has gained hegemonic power all over the world. The hegemonic power of the Western model of propaganda renders the study of Red Tourism less meaningful. Here is an anecdote. I was repeatedly asked by the academics on many occasions where I presented or talked about my research on Red
Tourism, whether or not I would consider Red Tourism propaganda. The hidden assumption goes like this: if it is propaganda, then everything about Red Tourism goes to the dark connotation of propaganda; if not, then there is no need to view Red Tourism as such. The word “propaganda” itself is deterministic, in other words. Hence, searching for a neutral framework about propaganda becomes imperative, and xuanchuan is the one I offer.

Xuanchuan, the Chinese term for propaganda, has different meanings. In Chinese history, culture and social practice, xuanchuan/propaganda is not a pejorative term. Xuanchuan generally means “disseminating purposeful information” and traditionally is associated with good things and deeds (Lin, 2015; Lin & Nerone). In China, news coverage oftentimes is called “news propaganda (xinwen xuanchuan)”. This is because, as we already know, news is socially constructed and meant to deliver certain, thusly, “purposeful” information to the people. Ideally, journalism is good for the people. Likewise, mainland Chinese journalists call themselves “the people doing propaganda (gao xuanchuan de)” in a rather humble tone. Liang Qichao (2010), arguably the most distinguished Chinese liberal scholar in the late Qing and early Republican periods, proclaimed himself an “aggressive propagandist” (p. 99). The examples can be multiplied. The point is that they point to another universe of propaganda where propaganda is not necessarily evil. Nevertheless, I do not mean to imply by this that xuanchuan is one thing, good, and propaganda another, and bad. There is a cultural gap between xuanchuan and propaganda but they are complementary to each other and situated in different contexts.
To situate my study in the context of Chinese communication, I adopted the Chinese neutral connotation of xuanchuan/propaganda. There is no Chinese term for either “good propaganda” or “bad propaganda.” It would be less confusing to non-Chinese speakers otherwise. According to the Modern Chinese Dictionary, xuanchuan has a range of meanings. Xuanchuan can mean “announce” and “convey” as it is in a common Chinese phrase “xuanchuan zhengce” (publicizing). Xuanchuan can also refer to “explaining to and educating the people.” More close to the Western notion of propaganda is xuanchuan’s meaning of propagation or spread of information. Again, no derogatory sense attached. What I mean by propaganda/xuanchuan in this study is a combination of all these meanings. This is to say, referring to Red Tourism as propaganda does not automatically mean that I consider Red Tourism deceptive and, thusly, a lie. As earlier mentioned, Red Tourism represents an authentic revolutionary history, though mediated. Red Tourism is propaganda/xuanchuan only because it is conveying historical narratives and publicizing the revolutionary history, educating tourists and spreading out intended information symbolically colored in “code Red.” In my writing, I capitalize the word “Propaganda” to designate its Western notion, whereas “propaganda” with a lowercase “p” is the equivalent of xuanchuan with a neutral connotation.

HOW DO I SEE TOURISM?

Upon introducing the new propaganda framework, I then delve into the cultural roots of Red Tourism. I will try to sketch out a prehistory and a history of Red Tourism, which is about unfolding untold histories of political tourism in China. By “political tourism” I simply mean journeys with a political purpose, explicitly or implicitly. In
China, political tourism may include, for example, politically charged and motivated journeys made by *youshi* (游士), or Chinese lobbyists, in ancient times, journeys made in response to the call of Mao Zhedong during the Cultural Revolution, or spring trips to revolutionary martyrs’ cemeteries arranged by schools during both socialist and postsocialist China, and more. This suggests that the political signification can come from travelers, destinations, and/or organizers. Note that this is not unique to Red Tourism. Tourism, by and large, is political.

Tourism has two common and interlinked meanings. Tourism can either refer to a practice of traveling for pleasure or the business of providing such services. Vernacularly tourism has been viewed as a recreation or leisure activity. But contemporary critical studies of tourism tend to problematize this approach. Within these theories—whether Dean MacCannell (1999), stressing the interplay between tourists’ behaviors and social relations or John Urry (2002), revealing the interwoven relationship of gazing and theming—tourism has been deemed as a site of power, whether in the form of “staged authenticity” or “high levels of surveillance.” Departing from here and following this strand of critical scholarship, in this study I treat tourism as a mass communication system, somewhat like journalism. Let me explain.

Like journalism, a central role of tourism is to spread out information to the audience. In addition, like journalism, tourism also matters to “public intelligence,” to borrow a term from Nerone (2015). Specifically, tourism is supposed to make tourists smarter by providing tourists with extensive knowledge of culture, nature, arts, history, politics and so forth. This is in part what journalism sets out to do. What’s more, tourism is an “ism” just like journalism. To put it another way, tourism is, too, a site of ideology.
This is the deeper underlying meaning of tourism. The ideology glued to the touristic spot is readily to be grasped by tourists. A colonial plantation or a Disney park, is somewhat like a newspaper, so much so that whether news articles, news photos and commentaries in the case of newspaper, or historical buildings, plaques, and emblems in the case of the plantation, and designs and settings in the case of a theme park, all of these deliver intended messages to the audience. Such kind of message is by no means value-free. It is ideological, and potentially political. The message delivered in tourism is carefully selected, coded, framed, filtered, and organized through spatial articulations. In *Searching for Yellowstone*, Denzin (2008) captures racial and gender stereotypes, among other things, through a critical reading of the first American national park. Jean Baudrillard (1983) viewing Disneyland as a simulacrum in which American ideology is represented, is another case in point.

Tourism is a communication system like news media. Tourism has its own institutions (e.g. central and local governments, tourism bureaus/authorities) and systems and mechanisms of production (e.g. travel agencies, tourism companies), circulation (e.g. tourist routes, boundaries, maps) and even censorship (e.g. passports, visas, international relations, restrictions, and customs authorities). And this is especially true in China.

Messages and ideologies travel with tourists traveling across space. And information, too, travels unevenly. Like the Western countries dominating the international news flow (Kim & Barnett, 1996), the inequality of international tourists’ flow is evident. A home to a large variety of wild animals, South Africa is a popular tourist destination for Europeans. Rarely do local South African residents have equal agency to travel in Europe for leisure. This leads MacCannell (1999) to argue that tourism is a better structure than
nation when accessing economic and social difference across international borders and cultural boundaries.

Beyond the functional analogy between journalism and tourism is a connecting point, public opinion. For Nerone (2015), journalism can be understood as the representation of public opinion through the journalist’s proxy role for the public. So does tourism. Tourism holds power accountable to something some would call public opinion. But it is the people who run things who decide on behalf of the public which places are to be developed and open to the public and which not. This mechanism parallels that of journalism: news messages are filtered and manufactured to be “representative” of public opinion (Herman & Chomsky, 1988/2008). The New York Times’s famous slogan is “All the News That’s Fit to Print.” However, determining whether a news report is “fit” or not is partly an art of politics and partly a maneuver in economy. In other words, it is the combination of money and power that decides such fitness (Herman & Chomsky, 1988/2008). Like those “fitted” news articles in the New York Times, the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Times Square along many other sites all perfectly fit in New York tourism. Slums, on the other hand, never do the trick. While some unpleasant places such as slaughterhouses, sewers and the Morgue can be tourist attractions, as examined by MacCannell (1999), those were repurposed rather to represent a moment of industrialization and modernization than to get a good grasp of the reality.

Like reading news in publications, tourists can only tour the places that are intended to be seen. Like journalism, tourist sites, too, inform the general public on a wide range of critical matters about state, history, race, culture, gender, politics, and
more. Mount Rushmore National Memorial of South Dakota is a notable example.

Featuring sculptures of the heads of four United States presidents, Mount Rushmore has become an iconic symbol of the United States. But the ideological signification of this space is fiendishly complicated, particularly considering that the United States plundered the place from Native Americans in the late 19th century. This is to say, for Native Americans Mount Rushmore signifies the shocking savagery of their ethnic history. As a competing monument, the Crazy Horse Memorial is under construction, which reminds one of the fight of Native Americans against US federal government encroachments. But one might wonder, how many tourists would choose visiting the Crazy Horse over Mount Rushmore. The answer is not encouraging. In journalism studies, theories like “agenda setting,” “framing,” and “the propaganda model” suggest a similar effect that what we get from news is rather a matter of what the news media feed us. It is not an exaggeration that every “ism” in journalism can be found in tourism.

Unlike journalism, however, messages delivered in tourism are not dominantly through verbal language, but through spatial articulation. Semiotic scholarship is of paramount importance in this regard. Regarding architecture as mass communication, for example, Umberto Eco (1997) has pointed out that architectural objects could connote a certain ideology through what he calls a “code-language.” It is an architectural code system, including “technical codes (dealing with architectural engineering),” “syntactic codes (concerning spatial types)” and “semantic codes (concerning the significant units of architecture)” (p. 193). But space in this study is more than this.
WHY SOCIAL SPACE?

The new theoretical framework of xuanchuan intersects with the histories of Red Tourism at the point that propaganda in China is not merely a technique, ideology, action but something rather fuzzy, including all of them, and much more. It was on this basis that I applied Lefebvre’s (1991) conceptual framework of social space to China’s propaganda. Through a spatial analysis of Red Tourism in relation to lived experience of the Chinese, I revealed a social space of propaganda, far more nuanced and sophisticated than Lasswell, Lazarsfeld and Ellul could have imagined.

In this study, space can be understood at two levels. Macroscopically, space is pointing to a spatial perspective, a particular way of thinking about communication as a spatial project. Instead of treating Red Tourism as a temporal project, and, correspondingly, looking for its origins, development, changes, and effects, this study treats Red Tourism as a spatial project, consisting of maps, places, sites, routes, tourists and so forth. However novel it sounds, thinking communication as space is relatively “old.” Communication as a field started with scholars imagining something bigger than merely a linear information delivering process as suggested by Information Theory, Claude Shannon’s *magnum opus*. Sharing origins with “commune”, “communion” and “community”, communication was once perceived as a spatial project, involving all kinds of networks across all realms. Those networks include national markets and international trading routes in the economic realm (Mattelart, 2000), the public sphere in the social realm (Habermas, 1989), and the Sacred Congregation for Propagating the Faith of the Roman Catholic Church in the spiritual realm (Mattelart, 1996), just to name a few. This is to say, communication was believed to be produced by and attached to space across all
social realms. Many scholars have already said that, implicitly if not explicitly. A quick
catalogue of the influential authors who have connected communication to space includes
Henri Lefebvre, Benedict Anderson, Armand Mattelart, Umberto Eco, James Carey,
David Harvey, Walter Benjamin, Jürgen Habermas, Georg Simmel, Sigfried Kracauer,
John Hannigan and others. One of the benefits of regarding communication as space from
these authors is to locate communication at a blueprint of human society, which, in turn,
helps extend our knowledge on critical issues such as nationalism (Anderson, 2006),
modernity (Harvey, 2003a), urban lifestyle (Kracauer, 1975), democracy (Habermas,
1989) and economy (Hannigan, 1998).

Microscopically, and more importantly, space refers to social space in particular in
this research. It is one of the major theoretical constructs of the study. Lefebvre (1991)
noted that “social space is not a thing” (p. 73, emphasis mine). It is everything, physical
and nonphysical, within the space. As such, a social space is both produced and
producing. Coincident with the tourism topic of the current study, Lefebvre illustrated
what he called the “polyvalence of social space” by examples of a series of Italian
popular cities for tourists. In doing so, Lefebvre does more than simply account for how
those cities, as social space, were produced and what they are producing. Lefebvre (1991)
called attention to the interconnection between the two processes, saying, “[m]ediations,
and mediators, have to be taken into consideration: the action of groups, factors within
knowledge, within ideology, or within the domain of representations” (p. 77).

Lefebvre’s notion of space helps rethink Marx’s theory about the relationship
between the base and superstructure. It is a popular though superficial reading of Marx’s
axiom as a combination of a determining base and a determined superstructure. Strictly
following such “determinism” would make the task of analyzing culture not only mechanically boring but also potentially misleading. For one thing, culture is an accumulative process across histories that cannot be simply determined by a given and fixed base. For another, the discovery of cultural patterns requires to examine what Williams (1961/1975) calls “structures of feeling,” some kind of living experience of the people across different generations. But the determining relationship was, perhaps, not what Marx meant to tell us. Like Lefebvre, critical theorist Raymond Williams, among other cultural Marxists, has also challenged the dominant reading. Williams (1980/1997; 2001/2006) remarked that two qualifications about the relationship between the base and superstructure have to be addressed: the “famous lags,” which denote the temporal distance between certain economic activities and their corresponding cultural activities, and the notion of “mediation” in which the superstructure does not “reflect” but mediate the base. Simply put, it is a process of mediation. Williams (1980/1997) argued that the base is not an abstract “state” but a dynamic “process” (p. 34).

Back to the current study, one of the central arguments of this dissertation is that, as a social space Red Tourism is not merely produced by a particular history, ideology and economy and determined by them; it is also productive, producing values, imaginations, and a so called “Red industry” (hongse chanye). The capitalism involved in the production of this social space, particularly its relation to the state in running the “Red” business makes the process what Williams calls “mediation” profoundly nuanced. Investigation into this mediation is also meant to shed some light on the unsettled “Chinese characteristics” part of China’s story of communication.
IS MARXISM APPLICABLE?

Siding with Lefebvre and Williams, however, will prompt another theoretical and also a practical question: can Marxism be used in studying contemporary China anyway? This question must be answered before I approach “commodification,” the last keyword in the title of this dissertation. This is not because commodification is a Marxist term, but because a considerable proportion of this work was informed by Marxism, specifically, Marx’s critique of political economy. Before answering it, I want to make a brief detour, talking about what I mean, in an earlier statement, by “the world’s second largest economy.”

First and foremost, it means a great economic achievement of the Chinese state. It is common sense that ordinary Chinese people would benefit. According to a report of the World Bank, “[China] has lifted more than 500 million people out of poverty” (The World Bank, 2016). Echoing the world’s second largest economy, China’s tourism is also becoming the world’s second largest travel and tourism economy after the United States (World Watch Institute, n.d.), and unsurprisingly, Chinese travelers turned out to be the world’s biggest spenders (Cripps, 2013). Second, it leads to a long list of varied and wide-ranging challenges and issues such as social inequality, rural-urban disparity, the wealth gap, corruption, environmental crisis, rapid urbanization and so forth. Consequently, these problems have resulted in a serious threat to the nation’s socialist and traditional values, beliefs, ideologies, and political institutions of which Red Tourism is part. Whether a self-proclaimed “socialism with Chinese characteristics” or a “capitalism with Chinese characteristics” (Huang, 2008; Karmel, 1994), however, China does share many of those problems with other Western countries where capitalism is
dominant. Now I return to the question about the applicability of Marxism to China. My answer is positive.

Marxism is more of a critique of capitalism than a particular ideology (Eagleton, 2011; Harvey, 2010a). As such, Marx developed a well-grounded analytical framework to examine the capitalist market economy. It follows, then, that as long as capitalism is on the spot, Marxism works for any country, and no exception for China. This is why contemporary Marxist theorists such as David Harvey (2010a; 2010b; 2014) and Terry Eagleton (2011) continue making reference to China when writing about capitalism. This is to say, although China is not a typical capitalist country in many regards, it would be wrong to discount the capitalistic forces related to the marketplace in analyzing Chinese media communication. For example, “size” and “profit-orientation” certainly apply, even if “ownership” of media organizations does not, according to Herman and Chomsky’s (1998/2008) propaganda model. Note that capitalism can refer to an economic system, a political system, or a combination of both. For the purpose of the study, here I refer to capitalism as a mode of production in which privately owned capital determines the means of production. Commodification is an inevitable process in this mode.

Marx’s whole analysis of capitalism starts from the concept of the commodity (Harvey 2010a). It is an embodiment of two most critical elements of Marx’s conceptual framework: class and labor on one hand, and a signifier of the capitalist mode of production on the other. The commodity is the fetish of capitalism. For Marx (1967), the term “fetish” simultaneously signifies two things: inherent magical powers of an inanimate object on the one hand, and worship towards that object by people on the other hand. Marx (1967) used the term “commodity fetishism” to address “the enigmatic
character of the product of labor” (p.82). Marx further explained the mysteries of commodities in that, “the social character of men’s labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor” (p. 83). It transforms the subjective, abstract aspects of economic value into objective, real things that people believe have intrinsic value. Deviating from Marx’s notion of commodification in which Marx foregrounded labor process and surplus value, commodification in this study centers on the interplay between state power and capitalist power. And, the state and the capitalist have specific roles in Red Tourism.

One of the arguments of the study is that the state and the capitalist each has a Janus-faced role. As a political entity, the state holds and exercises enormous political and institutional power, on the one hand, yet it can act like the biggest capitalist on the other hand. Harvey (2010b) brings out that when the state invests in infrastructures to maximize tax revenues, it acts like a capitalist. This is the way Red Tourism has snowballed and integrated from scattered small businesses into an industry. To put it another way, if the CPC hadn’t used huge chunks of tax money to undertake massive infrastructural projects such as high-speed railways, airports, highways connecting Chinese metropolises to those so called “old revolutionary areas,” Red Tourism couldn’t have evolved from, say, a small heritage tourism business to a sunrise industry. Likewise, the capitalist also assumes a dual-role in this study: a protagonist of capitalism on his own and a “surrogate” for the state (Harvey, 2010b). It was the conventional wisdom that propaganda is a matter of state. But this is only partly true. In Red Tourism, the capitalist fills the state’s shoes to propagandize the intended ideologies attached to the revolution in a capitalist way in which maximizing profit is the creed. This is an important but
clandestine role of the capitalist in commodifying Red Tourism. The interwoven, intimate relationship between the state and the capitalist largely defines the oxymoronic nature of Red Tourism mentioned early on.

This dissertation concludes with a political economic analysis of Red Tourism. Political economy can never be separated from the social space of Red Tourism. Therefore, the commodification of Red Tourism merits a separate chapter. It is commonest to grasp the concept of propaganda as a purely political matter characterized by the predominant relationship between the state, government and the public. In that case, propaganda is thought to be largely determined by the nature of a state’s political system. This is why Siebert et al. (1963) normatively put China’s media system into the category of “authoritarianism” in their famous book *Four Theories of the Press*. But I argue that propaganda is not merely a kind of machinery of “authoritarianism.” It can be a commodity, an industry and an economy. And it can be very profitable. By virtue of that, it has enticed lots of entrepreneurs to join the force of the production of propaganda. Ironically, commercialism—the much-ballyhooed champion of capitalism once considered the arch enemy of communism in the Maoist era—has become an incubator for growing a new generation of China’s propaganda. Rarely has the nexus between capitalism and propaganda been recognized, let alone a thorough political economic analysis of propaganda. In China, as I will try to show in this dissertation, propaganda has been deeply connected to the economy ever since socialist China, and now capitalism is making China’s propaganda even more complicated in a way that has rendered our commonest knowledge about propaganda archaic.
Let me give an example. In January 2016, a giant golden-colored Mao statute in China was demolished by the government overnight a few days right before completion (Tatlow, 2016). Erected in the bare fields of a small village of Henan Province, the 120-foot-tall statute was built with money from Sun Qingxin, an entrepreneur, who spent about 3 million yuan ($465,000) on this project. The irony is twofold. First, generally presumed to be the production of the state, the propagandistic statute was created in the private sector indeed. In other words, it would have made more sense if it was the other way around: the government built it first, then it was torn down by the villagers because of the land issue or something. Second, as the head of a manufacturing conglomerate, Sun should pay for a statue of Deng Xiaoping, not Mao, because what Sun benefited from was capitalism, not Mao’s socialism. These seeming anomalies of Propaganda confront Chinese people in everyday life, and it is this complexity that requires our close examination of propaganda beyond ideological determinism.

A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

This dissertation adopts a qualitatively interpretive approach, and two main source bases inform this study. First, I drew from my own fieldwork in the last six years in multiple locations in China, an extensive ethnographic data collection containing interviews, observation notes, photos and collected documents. Besides formal interviews, either semi-structured interviews with the governmental officials and entrepreneurs, or unstructured interviews with the tourists on different tourist sites, the informants from the Red Tourism industry provided me with precious inside stories on sensitive topics such as land expropriation and labor issues. It should also be pointed out that the photos taken during my multiple field trips play a vital role in my analysis. This
is, in part, due to the visuality of tourism. That is, whether conceptualized as “gazing,” “seeing” or “sighting,” tourism is bound to the visual and particularly consumed visually (Urry, 1995, 2002). The visual is powerfully communicative, so much so that it reminds us how Michel De Certeau (1984) read the everyday life of New York City from the top of the World Trade Center through seeing. McCarthy et al. (2015) raise a similar point in examining the visual field of the Barbadian postcolonial site. Second, I analyzed a wide range of popular discourse on Red Tourism culled from both traditional Chinese news media and the Internet.

Travelling widely across the country from 2012 to 2017 for the project, however, I focus on one city, Yan’an, in this dissertation. Located in the northwestern province of Shaanxi, Yan’an is better known as the “sacred place of the Chinese revolution” (geming shengdi). Yan’an was chosen because it holds the most prominent place in both the Chinese revolution and Red Tourism. To a great extent, Yan’an is equivalent to Gettysburg in the American Civil War and Saratoga in the American Revolution insofar as it signifies the turning point of the war.

Partnered with the academic approach is my personal experience. This is not just relevant but valuable to the current study. No matter how conceptualized, China’s propaganda is a cumulative and sensitive space. “Cumulative” means requiring a long time observation, long enough to cut across several periods. Born in the early 1970s, I experienced the last days of the Mao era along with the eras of Deng, Jiang, Hu, and Xi, together called the “Five Generations of Chinese Leadership.” Growing up in a mass propaganda ecology, propaganda to me was very much like the Internet to today’s kids. I collected animal manure for the People’s Commune, attended yearly spring trips to the
martyrs’ cemetery in school, immersed myself in the sea of propaganda films, and later worked as journalist for sixteen years in the Party’s organ. This long-time exposure and involvement in propaganda, however, did not let me become a “puppet” of so called “Communist Propaganda.” Contrarily, it has helped me foster a critical view on propaganda.

Nowadays Propaganda has become a sensitive topic in China. But it does not by virtue of what the Chinese think what propaganda does. It does by virtue of what the people who run things tend to cater to contemporary westerners’ thought on Propaganda. It suggests an emergent hegemonic power of the Western model of propaganda; at the same time, it requires special tactics and resources in conducting this kind of research in China. However sensitive, this is not implying political persecution. Rather, it means that conducting this research requires good strategies and techniques: for example, how to verify whether what the interviewee says is a true reflection or only meant to be politically-correct, and how to sift through government statements in a way to separate the cliché, the rhetoric from the real meanings behind. Here, my age and journalistic experience help.

It is noteworthy that propaganda is the focus of the present study, not the effects of propaganda. Neither am I an advocate of the strong effects theory, nor of the limited effects theory. The proposition that propaganda is a social space rejects any linear media effects model. The point that I wanted to stress, however, is that as a social space, propaganda is much more than an anti-democratic social practice on which every citizen may want to spit; neither does it automatically follow that any propaganda emanating from the state is deceptively evil, nor effective.
The reader may well be puzzled as to why a study ostensibly concerned with propaganda has devoted so little attention to propaganda tactics and techniques. True, I say very little in this dissertation about these things. This is not only because that dimension has been already documented by a large number of empirical studies, but also because they do not fit into my frame. Besides, techniques and tactics in mass communication are innumerable and fluid. It is very hard for people to catch up on propaganda strategies no matter what cutting-edge propaganda analysis is out there. This is why insincere communication can truly prevail and propaganda can be widely popular.

CONCLUSIONS

Back to the metaphor of the tourist map, the state and the public as sites are now connected by the routes of propaganda through which Red tourists travel back and forth from the revolutionary past to the post-socialist present. During their touring, their imaginations and memories about the state have been continuously reworked to make sense of the world. Dripping with all sorts of exhibition, performance, and interactivity, such reconfigurations of worldview and ideology taking place in the form of tourism seem no longer boring. Conversely, it is so fun and comforting that it is reminiscent of Marco Polo touring Xanadu.

This dissertation treats Red Tourism as a propaganda system somewhat like the news media. As such, the current study is not one of those some might call “tourism studies” to the extent that it is neither a study of leisure, nor of the so called the “leisure class”. Overall, this research is intended to be a propaganda study. But it is a weird one, because it does not research into the system of news media and censorship, but tourism. Moreover, seeing this propaganda system as a social space and scrutinizing it with
conceptual and analytical tools borrowed from cultural studies and political economy of communication make this project even much weirder.

But this is necessary. For one thing, conventional knowledge about propaganda works not so well at least in China’s case where propaganda is culturally deemed neutral. China’s propaganda was not an outgrowth of the Communist ideology, in other words. It had prevailed throughout the Imperial, Republican and Socialist China. Thus, an ideology-predetermined approach to China’s propaganda can yield nothing new except for a doomed Propaganda state. For another, in contrast to the notion of social space, the habit of thinking Propaganda as certain fixed media forms (e.g., newspaper, film, poster, television program, radio broadcast, etc.) and contents elides the complexity of Propaganda in which the relationships between the state and the public are constantly being twisted, reconfigured, and (re)produced by the state and also by the magic power of capital.
CHAPTER TWO: THE PROBLEM OF PROPAGANDA

This dissertation is written in a time of China becoming the world’s second largest economy. Its subject, Red Tourism alongside propaganda, is part of this change. In the West, propaganda has been assumed to be anti-democratic in nature in academia. Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) considered propaganda “antihuman” (p. 212). A typical study in this vine may examine propaganda contents, methods, effects, institutional apparatuses, systems, strategies, gimmicks alike to strengthen democracy and morale. It follows that a media system dominated by mass propaganda generally hinders economic growth, and conversely, that economic liberalization will somehow bring about political liberalization. Under this liberal mentality, these days much of the US imagination of China was based on the assumption that the rapid economic development of China would ultimately lead to the democratization of the nation, which Mann (2007) regards as “the mainstream view of China in America today” (p. 7). But this did not happen. It seems more likely that China will continue to follow its current economic and political paths without liberating its media system (Stockmann, 2013; Zhao, 1998). Another puzzle—central to this study—is why Red Tourism, an enormous propaganda project by the Chinese state, increasingly gained popularity at a time when capitalism, rather than prior forms of socialism, is prevailing? Old theories of propaganda cannot explain this. To make sense of Red Tourism, we need a new theoretical framework of propaganda. This is what I set out to do in this chapter.

Drawing upon Chinese thought and scholarship on xuanchuan/propaganda and informed by a comparison to the Western history of Propaganda studies, I demonstrate a deep conceptual and perceptual gap between Propaganda and xuanchuan. I argue that the
gap is cultural. It cannot be sealed by translating *xuanchuan* into publicity, an increasingly popular treatment nowadays by the government and scholars. I want to delve into what I refer to as *xuanchuan* culture. It is on the basis of this cultural practice that tourism and propaganda connect to, and thus speak to each other in this Red Tourism setting.

This chapter begins with a historical account of the development of propaganda studies in the West. This is necessary because we need a base and a structure for later comparisons with *xuanchuan*. In discussion of the historical and cultural roots of propaganda, I pay special attention to the formation of what I refer as “the hegemonic Western model of propaganda.” This is not merely a retelling of the grand narrative of propaganda studies; rather, this is a mapping out of nuanced relationships between propaganda and its elements embodied in a series of debates and controversies that may not be well heard elsewhere.

Departing from here, I, then, venture into the world of *xuanchuan*. I argue that neither is *xuanchuan* a modern discovery, nor an invention of the CPC. *Xuanchuan* is a cultural practice. Chinese people do not see *xuanchuan* as a malevolent force or “poison,” but, contrarily, as “seeder,” ideally benevolent. The *xuanchuan* practice helps explain some critical yet uniquely perplexing problems about China’s propaganda that cannot possibly be explained by the Western model. For example, why have some Chinese scholars advocated creating a “science” of propaganda? Why do many Chinese communication scholars still hold that news and *xuanchuan*/propaganda are largely the same? Another intriguing question is why modern Chinese journalists still proudly call themselves “the people doing *xuanchuan*/propaganda”? I also bring ideology, hegemony
and worldview into light. By examining their connections and disconnections in the realm of representation, I want to relocate propaganda from the realm of ideology, its place of origin, to a wider realm of popular culture where Red Tourism thrives. To that end, I propose a xuanhuan model of propaganda. Let’s start with the folklore of propaganda.

PROPAGANDA AS DECEPTIVE MANIPULATIONS

Several communications scholars purport that we live in an age of propaganda (e.g. Lindeman & Miller, 1940; Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001). But what is propaganda? Bytwerk (1998) called it an “awkward question” (p. 158). The awkwardness is due to the fact that we think we know a whole lot about propaganda, but we can barely reach a commonly held definition of the term (Jowett, 1987). This is in part because scholars see propaganda as multifarious ‘things’ such as technique (Lasswell, 1927; Miller, 1937), method (Bernays, 1928; Ellul, 1965), practice (Lapiere & Farnsworth, 1936) and ideology (Herman & Chomsky, 1988/2008). But there is a common ground among communication scholars: propaganda is the deliberate manipulation of people’s minds. Lasswell (1927) defined propaganda as “the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols” (p. 627). Clyde Miller (1937), the director of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA), told Americans that propaganda is meant to manipulate individuals’ or groups’ opinions or actions. Lapiere and Farnsworth (1936) referred to propaganda as deliberate attempts to achieve desired effects by the propagandist.
The historical roots of propaganda

The miasmic aura of propaganda was not always inherent in Western cultures. Propaganda is a Latin term, initially referring to the production of plants and animals (Fellows, 1959; Hosterman, 1981). The word propaganda first appeared in English in 1718 with the same neutral connotation as it was in “de propaganda fide” (Fellows, 1959). Accordingly, the English word “propaganda” originally seemed rather “benevolent” in a religious sense. Gordon (1971) noted that propaganda was not used as a pejorative two generations ago. This is consistent with Armand Mattelart’s (1996) account of the origins of propaganda in the West—De Propaganda Fide of 1622—as a practice of spreading God’s words to the non-Catholic world. Starting from that point, the word referred to the practice of propagating certain doctrines, considered a “perfectly legitimate form of human activity” to disseminate the truth (Bernays, 1928, p. 22). By the 19th century, the word propaganda still held its neutrality (Jowett, 1987).

The re-signification of propaganda as large-scale political propaganda was believed to have developed around the time of the French Revolution in the late 18th century (Dowd, 1951; Rogers, 1949). However, at least one author suggested, though not implicitly, that the starting point of modern mass propaganda in the West might be earlier than that. Sawyer (1991) remarks that political pamphlets for propaganda purposes, which he calls “printed poison,” were massively produced and distributed in 17th-century France.

However, communication scholars have arrived at a fairly unanimous conclusion that the First World War was the modern genesis (Fellows, 1957, 1959; Jowett, 1987; Sproule, 1987; Whitton, 1951). Creel (1941) regarded propaganda as a “whipping boy”
for manufactured hate of the Great War (p. 341). Harold Lasswell (1927) called it the “discovery” of WWI. This discovery, as Edward Bernays (1942), the father of public relations, explained, was the realization by the belligerent powers that ideas are just as powerful as arms.

In light of this discovery, persuasion industries emerged as marketing exploitation of people’s fear and desire in wake of the First World War. As a result, propaganda transfigured into different things in different spheres: advertising in the commercial sphere and citizenship education in the educational sphere (Gordon, 1971). Advertising companies from the private sector mushroomed hand-in-hand with propaganda institutions established by the state. Institutional advertising used propaganda techniques to create a favorable image of the company (Pearlin & Rosenberg, 1952). George Creel’s book *How We Advertised America* highlighted the intimacy between propaganda and advertising. Creel was the head of the Committee on Public Information (CPI). Created by President Woodrow Wilson during World War I, CPI was a propaganda organization whose official propaganda campaign during the postwar period is believed to be the “immediate impetus” for American re-interpretation of the dark side of propaganda (Sproule, 1987, p. 63). Creel (1972) proudly described the role of the CPI as “a plain publicity proposition, a vast enterprise in salesmanship, the world’s greatest adventure in advertising” (p. 4). In Lasswell’s (1927) view, even propaganda itself had become an industry with the emergence of an army of professionals including propaganda practitioners, professors, and teachers. Unsurprisingly, the American news industry was also swayed by this industrialized propaganda tide. John Dewey (1918) claimed that “[o]ne almost wonders whether the word ‘news’ is not destined to be replaced by the
word propaganda” (p. 216). This is particularly true for US radio journalism of the Second World War. Socolow (2007) remarks that the head of propaganda radio held that “the journalistic function of American propaganda and the propagandistic function of American journalism were inseparable” (p. 126).

The hegemonic Western model of propaganda

The Western model of propaganda is the end product of fears. It emerged as an intellectual response to growing fears over war propaganda of World War I and rapidly developed after WWII. The model crystalized as fears suffused globally during the Cold War period. It was (re)modeled in different ways by different scholars, but all versions bore deep fears. They were fears over democracy being victimized by propaganda. The Western model of propaganda was exported to the developing world along with the Western notion of journalism, public relations and mass communication. Fears were also packed in that delivered package. As a cumulative effect, propaganda had been universalized internationally into a firm rubric for legitimately despising journalism and media systems of others. Like hegemony of any kind, the Western model of propaganda wasn’t made from whole cloth. Propaganda analysis was its hotbed and the model was constructed based on propaganda studies.

Initially, propaganda analysis set the tone for the development of the Western model of propaganda. As a paradigm, propaganda analysis germinated during the post-World War I period. Sproule (1987) pointed out that it was a critical paradigm created under American progressivism in an effort to measure mass media effects brought about to the modernization of American society. Early American progressive thinkers such as
Will Irwin, Walter Lippmann and George Seldes resisted the neutral thesis of propaganda proposed by American “propagandists” such as Lasswell and Bernays (Sproule, 1989a, 1997). Under this influence, Americans considered propaganda the “corrosive product,” “austerely and pharisaically demanding its exorcism from American life” (Creel, 1941, p. 341). This sounds like a political movement. As a matter of fact, Garber (1942) did call it the “propaganda-analysis movement,” arguing that propaganda analysis paid much attention to verbal tricks without linking the problems to a larger social context in which they presented (p. 241). The reproachful tone toward propaganda was hardened as propaganda studies progressed. This is because, in part, propaganda studies, too, stemmed from fears. Those were fears over malevolent use of mass media and its effects during two World Wars. Fears had profound effects on the nature of the study of propaganda as well as the formation of the Western model of propaganda.

First, as an immediate effect psychology became the dominant paradigm for studying propaganda. During the post WWII period, propaganda theory was dramatically shaped by the study of mass psychology, largely by conditioning theory and psychoanalysis (Garber, 1942). Accordingly, vocabularies of propaganda studies were unsurprisingly psychological: “manipulation,” “collective attitudes,” “deliberation” and “persuasion” to name a few. This trend is manifested in Jowett and O’Donnell’s (1992) definition of propaganda that “propaganda is the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (p. 4). It sounds as if propaganda were an area of study in psychology. Lapiere and Farnsworth (1936) likewise suggested that definitions of the term propaganda, however different, “must be psychological” (p. 71).
More, the notion of psychological warfare rendered propaganda studies extremely psychological (Doob, 1935; Linebarger, 1948; McLaurin, 1982; Qualter, 1962; Szunyogh, 1955).

Second, in the long run the academic trend for propaganda studies rose and fell correspondingly somewhat dependent on the fluctuation of fears. In light of fears of Nazi propaganda, propaganda studies emerged and the paradigm of propaganda analysis thrived from 1919 to 1937 (Sproule, 1987). Debates on the neutrality of the term appeared during the post-World War II period when fears subsided. With the Communist bloc gaining power, fears increased again, consequently generating more propaganda studies. And the study of propaganda turned out to be propagandistic. Parry-Giles (1994), for example, contended that American propaganda studies secured its prominence during the Cold War because it tested “how well the United States was faring in the war of words” (p. 204). Chinese communication scholar Liu Hailong (2013) argues that propaganda studies itself transformed into propaganda during the Cold War because much of such academic effort was bound to add fuel to the hostilities. The field of propaganda study had become less promising upon the collapse of the Eastern Bloc when fears over Communism was allayed.

Related is the opportunistic nature of propaganda studies. This is about taking advantage of situations in order to get funding from whatever source. Propaganda studies flourished in the West only when government had poured huge chunks of money into propaganda institutions such as CPI, IPA, USIA (the United States Information Agency) and the alike. Propaganda studies died in want of funding and the topic became obsolete.
Fourth, fears and government funding together contributed to the ideology-oriented-and-driven nature of the study of propaganda. Jowett (1987) identified three challenges in propaganda research: (1) defining propaganda, (2) erasing the negative connotation of propaganda and (3) creating a body of systematic literature on the topic. All of these problems can be traced back to ideology. Consequently, propaganda studies had turned into a sort of black hole of the field: on the one hand, it contributed to the classical theories in the field (e.g., strong, weak/limited media effects) and made the choice of the dominant paradigm for the field (e.g., the social scientific, empirical) on the other hand, nowadays propaganda research in the field of communication has become increasingly invisible. This “black hole” can be interpreted as, to borrow from Sproule (1989a, p.1), “a long disparaged but quite rich legacy.” In a nutshell, propaganda is not a safe sphere of inquiry (Jowett, 1987). Perhaps a safer way to deal with propaganda is to treat it as weaponry under the dominant ideology. Then the study of propaganda, in a sense, turned into something like a weapon test site: propaganda material and data were collected, assessed and analyzed in order to gain the strategic edge over hostile countries. As a result, many propaganda studies have focused on examining various propaganda strategies, tactics, techniques and practices (Kenez, 1985). In a very real sense, propaganda studies was born and obscured in the war of ideology.

But there was an exception. In the US propaganda was retreated as something neutral by few scholars somewhere between the 1930s and the 1940s (Fellows, 1957; Lapiere & Farnsworth, 1936; Sproule, 1989b). It reflects American social science’s struggles between behaviorism and a value-free approach (Black, 2001). During this period, propaganda scholars and practitioners such as Bernays (1942), LaPiere and
Farnsworth (1936) and Lasswell (1948), among others, called for a neutral definition of propaganda. Some went further, arguing that propaganda even can work positively for Western democracy. For example, Bernays (1928) claimed that careful and clever manipulation of public opinions is essential to democratic society. Similarly, Perry (1942) reckoned that propaganda is necessary for a democratic government to function effectively.

Nevertheless, the neutrality counterthesis hardly affected the popular imagination of propaganda as “poison.” For one thing, although the voice of the neutrality advocates could be heard, the examples/cases the scholars used to make their points were basically political propaganda and war propaganda and those by no means were neutral. For another, there was a tendency in the neutral thesis, explicit or implicit, to indicate that propaganda needs to be avoided. Take Ellul’s work for instance. Ellul’s (1965) book *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes* has to be critical to propaganda studies in many aspects. For Ellul, propaganda is a sociological phenomenon; propaganda exists in any society. In democratic societies, something that Ellul called “democratic propaganda” prevails. He used words like “channel,” “shape,” “adjust” to refer such sort of propaganda, avoiding using “manipulate.” More startlingly, Ellul (1965) claimed that “propaganda, regardless of origin, destroys man’s personality and freedom” (p. 137). To be fair, in this book Ellul conceptualized various propagandas and kept reminding us of various purposes of propaganda, good or bad. Rarely, can any attentive reader recall an example of “good” propaganda. The neutrality thesis still can be found in scholarly work later from time to time (e.g. Black, 2001; Jowett & O’Donnell, 1992; Rohatyn, 1988). But their insights have been overshadowed by the Western model of propaganda. In
addition, it is hard to find any empirical study that really puts propaganda into a neutral category. Then what is the Western model of propaganda, anyway?

The Western model of propaganda derives from war propaganda analysis and studies throughout two World Wars in the early 20th century. It was generated from fears, generated much fear and ultimately was consolidated in fears. Under the ideology of American progressivism, this model postulates that propaganda is the deliberate manipulation of the public opinion and thus fatal to both Western liberalism and democracy. Upon its formation, the Western model became the “dominant rubric” for mass communication research (Sproule, 1989a, p. 1). This model of propaganda was developed within the social science paradigm and fixed in the context of the psychological warfare. But social sciences and psychology did not rescue propaganda studies from obscurity. This is, to a large extent, because this model is super-ideological. Social scientists and psychologists opted for a neutral world of persuasion to avoid to be contaminated by the value-and-ideology-laden paradigm. This model describes propaganda outside Western democracy as much more nefarious than that within it. It has rendered propaganda studies less meaningful. Cumulatively, propaganda studies became a ghost of the field.

But there is another model of propaganda from political economy. Political economy has contributed enormously to our understanding of propaganda and the power relations in producing, distributing and circulating propaganda. Not only has this scholarship enriched traditional propaganda studies with non-discourse (political economic) analysis, it has also considerably widened the scope of the study of propaganda from microscopic textuality to macroscopic systems-orientation. Herman and
Chomsky’s propaganda model is a milestone in that regard. The propaganda model suggests that in the US, news content becomes propaganda through five filters: (1) media’s ownership; (2) advertising dependency; (3) heavy reliance on government news sources; (4) flak and (5) dominant ideology (Herman & Chomsky, 1998/2008). In their modeling, the five filters are really two filters: capitalism and ideology. This is a particularly illuminating way to rethink propaganda not as a “thing” but as a space, produced by inequality of wealth and power and producing the same.

But it is a quite different story in China. In what follows, I will examine *xuanchuan*, the parallel of Western propaganda. Highlighting the fundamental differences in major dimensions between *xuanchuan* and the Western propaganda, I propose an alternative model of propaganda, the “*xuancuan* model.” This model is intended to demystify China’s propaganda that has been fantasized as an outgrowth of the communist ideology. I argue that *xuanchuan* in China is a cultural tradition, not a modern invention. The notion of *xuanchuan* complicates the oversimplified hostile relations in the West between propaganda and other crucial elements of an open society.

*XUANCHUAN AS A CULTURAL PRACTICE*

The hegemonic power of the Western model of propaganda has reached out to China. The Propaganda Department of the CPC changed its English name to “the Publicity Department” though its Chinese name remains unchanged. It is ironic that, by switching the translation from propaganda to publicity, the government bureau covertly welcomed the Western idea of propaganda that sees the bureau’s work as deceptive, undemocratic. Chinese communication scholar Liu Hailong (2013) has gone further,
calling what he refers to as “the US model” (*meigu moshi*) “the scientific propaganda model” (*kexue de xuanchuan moshi*) (p. 5). For Liu, characterized by systems of government spokesperson and public relations, the US model is “scientific” because it prioritizes a neutral way to deal with propaganda, which is publicity. Liu is not alone. It has been a very common strategy for scholars to translate “xuanchuan” into “publicity” when preferring a neutral connotation, and “propaganda” for the opposite. Such treatment, though practical, has created more problems than it has solved. The opportunity to rethink China’s propaganda in relation to its economy, culture and society after the Cold War has been partly lost in such translation that embraces an old, ahistorical, acultural mode of thinking.

In this section, I argue that *xuanchuan* is a cultural practice. As such, propaganda in China has its own origins, traditions, histories, practices, characteristics, debates and concerns that do not fit in the Western model. Theories of propaganda developed in the West may be helpful in revealing the political propaganda system in China but they are insufficient for scrutinizing a society where propaganda is believed to infiltrate and affect every stratum.

In what follows, I start with a brief historical account of *xuanchuan*. It is meant to challenge the hegemony of the Western model of propaganda on the one hand, and to outline the cultural practice of *xuanchuan* by focusing on its four characteristics on the other. I, then, probe into what this cultural practice means to what some Chinese scholars refer to as “the Chinese characteristics of communication” with emphasis on the long-lasting debate on the relation between *xuanchuan* and journalism. This is not less important because it builds the foundation on which I will wed tourism with propaganda
and journalism in next chapter, arguing that tourism can be better understood as a propaganda system somehow like journalism. I should explain why there has been such a xuanchuan culture in China that did not appear in the West. I end this section by bring three big confusing but closely-related concepts, namely, ideology, hegemony and worldview, to light, I end up this section, thus the whole chapter with sketching out the xuanchuan model, a tentative solution to the problem of propaganda.

The cultural roots of xuanchuan

Xuanchan (宣传) is the Chinese word for propaganda. Unlike its Western parallel, xuanchuan is a neutral term without any derogatory connotation (Lin, 2015; Lin & Nerone, 2015). The term is composed of two Chinese characters, “xuan” (宣) and “chuan” (传). Xuan means “announce” and chuan “disseminate.” According to the Modern Chinese Dictionary, xuanchuan carries three meanings: to announce, to explain or educate, and to propagandize. Roughly, it refers to three things: propaganda, advertising and public relations. Communication scholar Robert McChesney would call these “insincere communication” for their manipulative nature. Nevertheless, the Chinese people call these things “xuanchaun/propaganda” because all of them do not communicate (as exchanging information) but disseminate information for specific purposes. Originally, the word “xuan” in Chinese ancient writings means to spread information from rulers to the ruled (Cao, 1987). Later this meaning was associated with conveying orders from the top authority downward (Liu, 2013). So the authoritative power has always been assumed in the hands of the one who does xuanchuan. In other words, xuanchuan signifies a kind of power merged from an authoritarian culture. To the
extent that xuanchuan implies concentrated power, it does share a marked characteristic with Propaganda.

But xuanchuan has different cultural roots. The origins of xuanchuan as a social practice started much earlier than its Western counterpart. The two World Wars timeline of the development of propaganda studies in the West has nothing to do with the history of xuanchuan. While scholars did remark that propaganda activities in the West also have longer history, they have concluded that propaganda as a massive manipulation of people’s minds is modern (e.g. Block, 1948; Qualter, 1962; Schettler, 1950). For example, regarding propaganda as a regular department of government, Whitton (1951) referred to it as the “great innovation of modern times” (p. 142). Ellul (1965) held that the new mass media is the precondition for the coming of modern propaganda. But Chinese communication scholars disagree with this in many respects.

The Chinese believe xuanchuan/propaganda, in the full sense of the word, is ancient (Dai, 1992; Li & Guo, 1992; Qiu, 1993; Shi & Gao, 2011). The creation of xuanchuan as a practice appeared in the Spring and Autumn Period (770 BC - 476 BC). This was not about a few people persuading other people to do certain things; it involved mass persuasion, mass movement, and mass transportation. The massive, systematic and political focus of the xuanchuan activity of the period makes it comparable to modern Western propaganda. Qiu (1993) argues that the xuanchuan practice reached its zenith in ancient China, and perhaps, in the ancient world, during this period. Many factors are believed to contribute to the spectacular rise of massive xuanchuan. Among many Chinese scholars, Liang Qichao’s account is illuminatingly evocative.
Liang Qichao (1923) suggested that the increasing mobility of the people paved the way for the coming of the *xuanchuan* practice. Liang Qichao (1923) made an interesting point that in the absence of mass media, *xuanchuan* was carried out by mass travelling by social elites including officials, merchants, and intellectuals. This is to say, in an archetypical *xuanchuan* the social elites played the mass media’s role of spreading information to the people by word-of-mouth, the kind of communication Raymond Williams (2003) referred to as “social communication.” This tradition turned out to be very successful during the Chinese Revolution in the 20th Century. Constrained by illiteracy and materials, the CPC propagandized its ideology to the proletarian class in a manner heavily dependent on oral communication and traveling. To explain what propaganda is, Mao (1991) said, “A person as long as he talks to others, he is doing propaganda work” (p. 838). Even during the Cultural Revolution, when all mass media transformed into propaganda machinery, word-of-mouth propaganda was still preeminently effective. Chu (1977) pointed out that the Chinese way of propaganda was not through news media, but a case of “almost everyone talking to everyone else” (p. 4). Dymkov (1967) observed that compared to the leading role of oral propaganda, printed propaganda only played a supporting role in the Cultural Revolution. The examples could be multiplied. The point is that the precondition for *xuanchuan* was not mass media as was true in the West; it was human mobility combined with word-of-mouth communication.

The democratization of aristocratic schooling made propaganda practice systematically massive. Liang Qichao (1923) noted that aristocratic schooling became increasingly scattered in the civil society during the Spring and Autumn Period, enabling
the ideology of the aristocracy to reach out to a much wider audience. In addition, new writing material further boosted xuanchuan practice (Guo, 1985). Unlike the previous bamboo and wooden slips, silk paper came into being, which was much easier to be carried in travel.

Meanwhile, the Chinese school of xuanchuan emerged. The major intellectuals of the school were generally Pre-Qin thinkers including Confucius and Mencius among many others. The xuanchuan school is best known for its humanism. Members of the school stressed that xuanchuan was the best means of governance. They believed education and propaganda must be given priority to govern a state. For example, Mencius claimed that the Tao of governance is to gain the people’s support that can only be achieved through education and propaganda (Chinese Classics Studies Society, 2006). This school of thought on xuanchuan has far-reaching sociopolitical consequences.

As the immediate impact, xuanchuan moved up to a massive scale and with great social penetration (Deng, 1988). Take “zhong 忠” (loyalty) and “xiao 孝” (filial piety) propaganda for instance. They are considered two types of social identification in Confucianism (Hwang, 1999). The zhong-xiao propaganda was regarded as the core value of the Ming and Qing dynasties, believed to be “valuable experience in running and uniting the state” (Gu, 2014, p. 23). This is still the case in contemporary China. In the state sector, being loyal to the country has been put into the so called “core socialist value system” under the presidency of Hu Jintao, whereas filial piety has been deemed as the key to achieve the harmonious society in the private sector. Together, zhong and xiao provide the ideological and moral foundations for post-Mao China. Like any culture,
xuanchuan has a pattern with four characteristics: (1) social integration, (2) education, (3) human mobility, and (4) social networking.

Four characteristics of xuanchuan culture

The upshot of ancient xuanchuan activities was the emergence of an authoritarian culture, which I would call xuanchuan culture. It is a form of authoritarianism. Nevertheless, it is not defined by an authoritarian political system, but by the authoritarian way of life. This is to say, xuanchuan is a culture, a lifestyle, and a form of communication. Culture has countless meanings. Herein I refer to the meaning of culture put forth by James Carey (1989), who regarded communication as culture, for it is the “symbolic production of reality” (p.23). A vivid example of authoritarian culture/communication occurs at most levels of Chinese society when Chinese parents make choices and decisions about colleges, jobs, and even marriages on their children’s behalf. As a cultural practice, xuanchuan prevailed and is prevailing in all Chinese societies throughout imperial, republican, socialist, and post-socialist China. The four characteristics, namely, the function of social integration, the education pathway, the emphasis on human mobility, and the conventional social networking method, would help understand this particular form of communication, culture, and lifestyle.

At the heart of the xuanchuan practice is social integration. Xuanchuan seeks to integrate people into an intended society, for better or worse, under a certain set of ideologies. It is the basis on which xuanchuan became a cultural axiom for governing and retaining social harmony throughout China’s history. This is why, starting from the Kuomintang (KMT) regime, the Chinese government has self-consciously used the term
xuanchuan/propaganda in describing its system and the department dealing with the subject. This idea of integration, however, approached by different scholars from different angles, has been rarely pinpointed and largely neglected. In examining the organizational structure of China’s political propaganda system, Shambaugh (2007) notes that most Chinese citizens do not take any negative connotation from propaganda because “it believes should be transmitted to, and inculcated in, various sectors of the populace” (p. 29). But rather than viewing it as a cultural belief held by many, he mistakenly attributes this neutral attitude to the Party’s view that propaganda is a legitimate tool to build the society. In his account, the masses seem to be “brainwashed” into believing propaganda is neutral. Arguably, Ellul’s (1965) idea of integration propaganda is much closer to xuanchuan. For Ellul, integration propaganda aims at unifying social groups by imposing a pattern. This otherwise stimulating idea loses its luster when juxtaposed as an antithesis of agitation propaganda in a dichotomy, among many others (e.g. active/passive, direct/indirect, political/sociological, vertical/horizontal, and rational/irrational propaganda, etc.). In Ellul’s scheme, the relationship between agitation propaganda and integration propaganda is that the latter replaces the former. This leads Zhang and Cameron (2004) to argue that a structural transformation of Chinese propaganda from agitation to integration is underway. In my view, however, agitation is a propaganda technique, whereas integration is a function of propaganda. They are not two kinds of propaganda, and therefore not mutually exclusive; they are two dimensions of propaganda. Usually produced in the form of catchy slogans, agitation propaganda such as “Be All You Can Be,” “Army of One” or “Army Strong” can be easily spotted or heard.
even in a democratic country, like the United States. As a technique, agitation propaganda has never been replaced and outdated. It just moves from one space to another.

Another characteristic of *xuanchuan* is its inherent connection to education. But education in this context has specific meanings. First, education can be seen as what the Chinese call “*jiao hua* 教化”, a combination of two Chinese characters, “education” and “change,” hence “education for change.” Unlike its English translation, the Chinese term sounds old-fashioned without any modern rhetorical quality and mostly appears in polemics. Believed to be an amalgam of politics, morals and education, *jiao hua* is sometimes loosely translated as “enlightenment.” The second word “*hua*/change” carries all the weight of its cultural signification. Historically, *jiao hua* refers to the change of minds to be submissive by conforming to certain norms and values, whether ethical, moral, cultural, social, or political. This is exactly what Weber (1964) believed Confucianism was about. Coincidently, Mao Zhedong shared a similar view with Weber on Confucianism for which Mao encouraged the public to criticize Confucius and Confucianism during the Cultural Revolution, leading to the “Criticizing Lin and Confucius Campaign.”

The second implication is that education, formal or informal, is believed to be the way to propagandize. This is why propaganda in China sometimes is referred to “political/ideological education.” Under the same rationale the system implementing propaganda and the education system used to be united in a single system called “*xuanjiao xitong*” (propaganda and education system) in the Mao Era. Propaganda’s role of education can be reached by Williams’s idea of education. For Williams (1961/1975), education is a process of selection and distribution. What is to be selected or omitted for
distribution is partly cultural and partly ideological. Williams noted that, while some consider this process education, others from different cultures may regard it as indoctrination. This exactly is the case in China. Williams (1961/1975) depicted such indoctrination as “the transmission of a particular system of values, in the field of group loyalty, authority, justice, and living purpose” (p.126). This depiction is what Chinese people generally think propaganda does. In China, this educational signification of propaganda was passed down from generation to generation as the cultural practice of xuanchuan and continued to evolve from imperial periods to modern times.

Western scholars also noted the educational dimension of propaganda. Gordon (1971) blurred the previously defined line between propaganda and education, referring to teachers as “propagandists” and textbooks as “instruments of propaganda.” Gordon (1971) argued that juvenile delinquency in the US was not a failure of education, but the breakdown of the nation’s propaganda for not providing “the right kind of cultural indoctrination” (p. 167). He concluded that the big problem of the US education system was too little propaganda in early schooling and too much in higher education. The logic here is fairly simple: when kids are young they need more propaganda to guide them, whereas when they get mature and are competent to reasoning, less propaganda is needed. Nevertheless, Gordon’s view of the connection between propaganda and education was heterodox; the popular belief in the West has been just the opposite: propaganda aims to enslave, while education serves to empower the individual (Doob, 1935, 1949; Martin, 1929; Qualter, 1962).

Mass mobility is another feature of xuanchuan. It marks off xuanchuan from its Western parallel in both history and practice. In the West, propaganda is believed to be
preconditioned by wide circulation and distribution of mass media. In other words, proliferation of technology and literacy is where the Western history of propaganda began. But this is not the case for *xuanchuan*. The driving force behind the formation of *xuanchuan* was greater human mobility brought about by the extension of transportation networks (e.g. roads, passes, canals) in the wake of frequent interstate wars in ancient China (Lin, 2015; Qiu, 1993). Instead of circulation through media, people circulated and propagandized, acting like propaganda media. In doing so, the literacy barrier was circumvented by the word-of-mouth method. In practice, the *xuanchuan* tradition of travelling, or mapping space by human travel, remained effective during the period of the early Chinese revolution. The communist propaganda deeply penetrated the countryside not by regular forms of mass media, but by tens of thousands of ‘propagandists’ at all levels of the Party leadership constantly traveling. This mass traveling tradition of *xuanchuan* reached another peak during the Cultural Revolution. Communication-wise, the unprecedented element in what some call the “unprecedented Cultural Revolution” can be fairly defined by the unprecedented volume and speed of mass mobility embodied in a series of political/human movements including “the Great Mass Rally” (*da chuan lian*), “Transfer of Cadres to Lower Levels” (*ganbu xiangfang*), “Up to the Mountains, Down to the Villages” (*shangshan xiaxiang*) and so forth. But the story does not stop there. Mass mobilization of cadres for propaganda purpose still characterizes the CPC’s propaganda work in post-socialist China. Under the system of “Propaganda Teaching Team” (*xuan jiang tuan*), tens of thousands of cadres nowadays are routinely traveling from cities to rural areas, engaging in diverse *xuanchuan* activities at the grass-roots level. It is not an exaggeration that *xuanchuan* is propaganda in motion.
This leads to the social networking of *xuanchuan*. It suggests that people, the human agent, are of paramount importance in the cultural setting of *xuanchuan*, which renders mass media less glittering in terms of influence and effectiveness. Arguably, the great success of the CPC’s Propaganda system was not its news media system, but a parallel system one may call the cadres-based human social network. It resulted in an ever-increasing atomization of society: the top Party leadership assigned its Propaganda tasks, passed some of its own responsibilities down to millions of the Party cadres, and finally reached out to the masses. In a sense, the social networking method of *xuanchuan* is somewhat like the modern multi-level marketing (MLM) network, except the products were not goods or services, but highly uniformed Party indoctrinations and instructions. It was indeed a hierarchy of multiple levels of socially propagating networks characterized with the word-of-mouth approach of interpersonal communication. Ostensibly, the social networking method can be explained by the theory of personal influence, which, advanced by Katz and Lazarsfeld, stresses communication from person to person. Central to that theory is a model called the “two-step flow of communication,” suggesting that mass media first affect opinion leaders and then the leaders affect wider populaces (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 2006). Nevertheless, this kind of vertical influence is only one side of the social networking approach of *xuanchuan*. The other side that can better characterize *xuanchuan* is horizontal influence. It is not wielded by “opinion leaders,” but, in many cases, by family members, relatives, and close friends. In contrast to vertical influence, the horizontal influence is more powerful and much harder to control. This is why as a business model, MLM was banned in China in 1998 after being accused of undermining social stability and economic order by the Chinese government (Wong, 2002).
The triangle of dissemination

In the field of Chinese communication study, xuanchuan, journalism, and communication make up the triangle of dissemination. The xuanchuan culture along with the four characteristics created a different academic milieu for propaganda studies in China. In the West, tremendous effort has been made to study propaganda effects for the purpose of avoiding propaganda, whereas in China, the dominant research direction has been the one aiming at improving propaganda in practice. The cultural gap between propaganda and xuanchuan also manifests in a long-lasting and still ongoing academic debate about the relationship between propaganda and journalism. The central question of the debate is that, should be journalism considered propaganda? The seemingly non-issue from the Western perspective has generated a substantial body of literature. Using “xinwen yu xuanchuan” (journalism and propaganda) as keyword to search titles of academic journal articles on CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) databases, I found 937 items specifically on this topic. Why have those Chinese authors been so obsessed with such an ostensibly simple question? For most Westerners, journalism is certainly not propaganda.

But many Chinese scholars hold the opposite. Whether arguing that journalism intersects propaganda, or that one includes the other, the consensus view is that propaganda and journalism are tied to each other. At the heart of this view is the conviction that journalism is meant to educate the people to integrate them into a better society. By virtue of this, Chinese journalism scholars have emphasized the humanistic side of journalism in one way another. For example, the major concern of
commercialization of journalism in China has been “the decrease of humanistic content,” whereas “the humanism of journalism” (xinwen de renwen jingshen) is taken for granted (Tong, 2001). The Chinese humanistic view of journalism is radically different from the Western liberal idea of journalism, which is understood as the representation of public opinion (Nerone, 2015). In other words, journalism in China has been, to a large extent, deemed as a form of guidance, not a form of representation. As such, China’s journalism operates in line with the xuanchuan practice in many respects. In addition to their overlapped purposes of integration and education, journalism in China also shares an authoritative tone with propaganda in practice. It has been a tradition that Chinese journalists do not prioritize presenting balanced opinions, as true in the West; they only offer the right opinion, usually the authoritative one. Somewhat paternalistic under Western eyes, such practice has been commonly viewed as a professional responsibility by Chinese journalists. It is true that the Western model of journalism has been increasingly gaining hegemonic power in Chinese academia and news industry. As a result, Western professional journalism packed with liberal notions of reasoning and freedom has been raised and valued. Nevertheless, whether a news report is balanced or not has been not a deep concern for either the media practitioner or the audience in my twenty-year journalistic career.

The harmonious relationship between journalism and propaganda in China started as early as the emergence of the field of journalism. In 1934, the journalism department at Yenching University offered a selective course for juniors and seniors called “Public Opinion and Propaganda” (Wang, X. L., 2010). Two years later, Liang Shichun (1936), the Dean of the journalism department, published the first Chinese textbook on
propaganda, entitled “Applied Propaganda Science” (shiyong xuanhuan xue)². Under the influence of traditional xuanchuan culture, Liang believed propaganda is an educational tool for the masses to be enlightened. His thought was articulated in the Preface of the book: “the purpose of propaganda is to help the masses acquire a clear understanding of an individual, an organization or an ideology, so that they can form a pure, undeceived and common-interest-oriented public opinion” (Liang, 1936, pp. 1-2). And this, by no means, is an isolated case.

Meanwhile in Shanghai, Wang Yizhi taught “science of propaganda” at the journalism department at Fudan University. Based on his teaching notes and under sponsorship of the Propaganda Department of the Central Government of Kuomintang, Wang published his book Comprehensive Propaganda Science in 1944. The credential of the author printed in the book was interesting: “professor in propaganda science at Fudan University” (Wang, Y., 1944). This is not an issue of translation but careful deliberation. In answering whether propaganda can be considered “science” at the beginning of the book, Wang Yizhi (1944) explained the term by referring to the original English word in a rather ambiguous tone. He pointed that the book’s title can be either interpreted as “the science of propaganda,” “the study of propaganda” or “propagandism (sic)” (Wang, Y., 1944, pp. 1-2). What Wang Yizhi was quite certain, however, was that propaganda is a social science because as he reasoned, “if social sciences can be deemed as science, then propaganda is science too” (p. 2). As the book’s title suggests, this is truly a “comprehensive” book on propaganda, which was reminiscent of Edward Bernays’ book Propaganda of 1928. On the other front, the CPC published a 48-page booklet with a

From the late 1980s to the 1990s, some Chinese scholars called forth a “new” academic field called “xuanchuan xue,” literally, “science of propaganda.” Many books with “science of propaganda” in their titles were published during this period (see for example, Li, D., 1992; Wang, X. H., 1994; Zhang & Qian, 1992; Zheng, 1987). Nevertheless, these books read more like guidebooks on how to improve propaganda technique than serious academic work by Western standards. In a book entitled, “The Science of Mass Propaganda,” Gu (1999) puts it bluntly that the book aims for training young propagandists. Some Chinese communication scholars insisted that it is just a matter of translation; they viewed “science of propaganda” as “propaganda studies.” However, it is evident that at least some propounders held that propaganda can be a science. For example, Cao (1987) considered propaganda the same kind of social science as economics but yet to be developed. Cao’s enthusiasm for what he saw as a promising academic field does not come from a vacuum. Cao (1987) argued that “propaganda is a social practice and developed in accordance with the development of the human society and predictably, will continue to make a great impact on our society” (p. 46).

The everlasting debate on the tangled relationship between propaganda and journalism has inevitably brought communication into the triangle. At the center of the triangle is dissemination. The triangle showcases the cultural gap and internal multifarious struggles between the West and China in the field of communication. It also manifests itself, as I have shown elsewhere, in what some Chinese scholars call “the
Chinese characteristics of communication” (Lin & Nerone, 2015). Let me briefly reiterate it.

The field of communication is translated as “chuan bo xue” in Chinese, literally, “the science of dissemination.” From “communication” to “dissemination,” the boundary drawn between the West and China was fixed. It is of great theoretical complexity, and certainly not a merely linguistic problem. It is, indeed, a cultural gap camouflaged by translatability. Nonetheless, this gap has been rarely, if at all, noted by both Chinese and Western scholarship. The English word “communication” emphasizes the activity of exchanging or sharing information, where the central power is usually not implied. That is, everyone can communicate with everyone else. The Chinese word “chuanbo 传播” or “dissemination,” on the other hand, centers on the ability/capacity to distribute information to wider audience, where power is, whether explicitly or implicitly, always assumed in the hands of the one who disseminates. For Chinese people, to disseminate is to xuanchuan/propagandize. Therefore, Communication Study has been widely perceived as a “science” of propaganda in a Chinese sense. For example, Li Bin (1990) argues that “mass communication is from propaganda, focuses on propaganda, and applies to propaganda, therefore, is the science of propaganda per se” (p. 77). For the same reason, Chinese communication scholar Liu Jianming (2011) claims that the CPC’s propagandists were the original creators of communication study in China indeed.

The Cultural Revolution is regarded as a big turn in xuanchuan history by some. Scholars argued that it left an unpleasant taste in the public perception of xuanchuan (Cao, 1987; Wang, Z., 1982.). Ge (1984) noted that news was turned into “pure” propaganda during the Cultural Revolution. Liu (2013) claimed that the notoriety of the
Cultural Revolution propaganda combined with bombardments of commercial propaganda after the economic reform resulted in the public dislike of the word “xuanchuan.” Yet, some Chinese writers had acknowledged that the unfavorable attitude toward xuanchuan appeared much earlier. Lu Xun (2005) pointed out in the 1930s that the word “xuanchuan” had been abused and trashed by Chinese social elites and finally became a nickname for “lie” during the KMT regime. But this is rather a case of abuse of the word. Still, in today’s China the neutral way of using “xuanchuan” is dominant, from public discourse to government discourse. Nothing suggests a connotative change that happened or is happening except the “dislike.” To gain the flavor of xuanchuan, “seeder” can be a master metaphor. Historically, xuanchuan was used for planting “seeds” of good deeds. The Chinese character “xuan” as in xuan-chuan first appeared at least in B.C. 990 in a phrase “xuanqi dexing 宣其德行,” or “propagating the virtue” (Wu & Wu, 1695/1995). In his lecture of 1935, Mao Zedong (1991) regarded the Long March as a triumph of xuanchuan, calling it “seeder.”

Xuanchuan and Propaganda share some commonalities. They are not mutually exclusive categories and the nexus cannot be ignored. First, Propaganda is included in xuanchuan (Figure 1). This is to say, the sinister connotation along with the negative association “package” of Propaganda can also be found in xuanchuan. For example, the government’s intervention in news reporting can be seen as both Propaganda and xuanchuan. Secondly, both xuanchuan and Propaganda intersect with worldview and ideology. The difference is that xuanchuan always emphasizes education, whereas Propaganda in the West does not. Martin (1929) reckoned that “education aims at independence of judgment. Propaganda offers readymade opinions for the unthinking
herd” (p. 145). Randomly asking writers who somehow wrote about Propaganda, Lapiere and Farnsworth (1936) found that one thing those Western authors held in common was that propaganda is needed to be separated from education. Note that hegemony in Figure 1 is interpreted as a place or a direction that all Propagandas, xuanchuan, worldviews, and ideologies are headed for. That is, all of these “things” are aimed for hegemonic power.

![Diagram of Hegemony, Worldview, Propaganda, Xuanchuan, and Ideology]

**Figure 1:** The propaganda and xuanchuan nexus.

The connection between Propaganda and xuanchuan also lies in the historical subtlety. Few Western scholars have treated propaganda as xuanchuan. For example, Black (2001) argued that like free market to a capitalism system, Propaganda is necessary
to a fully functioning democratic society. Black (2001) envisaged Propaganda as a marketplace of ideas somewhat like the contemporary western notion of journalism:

In a politically competitive democracy and a commercially competitive free enterprise system, mass communication functions by allowing a competitive arena in which the advocates of all can do battle. What many call propaganda therefore becomes part of that open marketplace of ideas; it is not only inevitable, but may be desirable that there are openly recognizable and competing propagandas in a democratic society, propagandas that challenge all of us—producers and consumers—to wisely sift and sort through them. (p. 135)

Likewise, Edward Bernays did not see propaganda as an intrinsically undemocratic instrument. Contrarily, Bernays (1942) enthusiastically stuck up for the idea of using propaganda to strengthen democracy by word-of-mouth method and public education programs, all of which were strikingly reminiscent of the core of xuanchuan. John Perry also valorized the role of propaganda in advancing US democracy and his method reminded us of what Mao achieved during the Chinese Revolution. Specifically, Perry (1942) suggested that in the US, government propaganda and channels can be effectively used to spread information, facts and ideas, to provoke discussions and to facilitate education by outreaching farmers, labors, housewives and the youth.

Why in China?

One crucial question that remains to be asked is why did the propaganda culture in China not also emerge in the West? While this question cannot be answered
sufficiently without full inquiries into Chinese history, culture, politics and philosophies, it is too important to be evaded. For the answer, I look into two crucial factors: religion and culture. This is, by all means, a daunting task. So what I offer here are more assumptions than assertions. At the beginning of the *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, Marx (1970) noted that any criticism should start with the criticism of religion. Ricoeur (1986) remarked that the critique of religion provides us a model for a critique of ideology. But China does not have a religion; it has many religions, yet none considered a state religion. I think this matters greatly to Chinese communication and so does the *xuanchuan* culture.

My first assumption is that *xuanchuan* culture in part operates as a substitute for the missing state religion to unify the nation in a quasi-religious way. One thing that religion and propaganda share in common is that both encourage and demand devotion. *Xuanchuan*, derived from Confucian teachings, can be seen as a kind of “rationalized religion” like Confucianism itself, “more abstract, more logically coherent, and more generally phrased” compared to traditional religion (Geertz 1973, p. 172). Perhaps, the most auspicious place to look for the role of religion for Chinese communication is in Weber’s book *The Religion of China*. Weber (1964) repeatedly used the word “decisive” throughout. For Weber, the absence of unified religion in China was sociologically decisive. This leads Weber to assume a kind of ideological polarization unique to traditional China: lacking “a particular mentality” on the one hand, and abundant in Chinese ethos on the other (p. 104). The mentality that Weber referred to is equivalent to “the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism” (Weber, 1958). According to Weber, the polarization had two profound ramifications that have devised the social structure of
China. First of all, capitalism failed to develop in China and communities in the Western religious sense did not exist. The second consequence, perhaps more enlightening, was that ideological wars became very frequent. Weber argued that the clash between the Confucian literati and the anti-literate Taoists was “decisive” for “the structure of Chinese politics and culture” (p. 46). Such clashes left deep traces on the xuanchuan culture.

Another interesting point Weber (1964) made, among others, is that unlike in the Middle Eastern states, there was no prophet exist in China, suggesting that the Confucian “ritualist,” “literary officeholder,” and “the emperor” acted as proxy for the prophet (p. 142). Like missionaries working in an archetypical propaganda system, the three players did a similar job that Weber would describe as “the taming of the masses” (p. 143). This is xuanchuan, per se.

Xuanchuan is the way of communication and life that keeps the Chinese searching for guidance for life, raison d’être, and other meanings, which has earned xuanchuan a pseudo-religion-like connotation. Today in China, it is still the case that everyone propagandizes everyone else in their daily life or on the Internet about many ideologies and worldviews, including bourgeois lifestyle, Confucianism, Americanism/anti-Americanism, patriotism, Maoism/anti-Maoism, many forms of Buddhism, etc. Without the presence of a unified religion, the Chinese treat ideology as religion when disseminating it as if it were an absolute truth. As in the religious world, groups propagandize all sorts of ideologies with the same conviction that what they do is for the common good.

My second assumption valorizes the role of collectivism as a cultural pattern in forming the xuanchuan practice. This is in line with the theory of dimensions of cultures
proposed by Geert Hofstede. In a large survey conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s about the values of people working at IBM from 50 countries, Hofstede (1991) identified “Power Distance,” “Collectivism versus Individualism,” “Femininity versus Masculinity” and “Uncertainty Avoidance” as the four basic areas of common problems worldwide. He called those “four dimensions of cultures,” together a four-dimensional (4-D) model. Hofstede (1991) postulated that the 4-D model can help map out a country’s culture. Later, based on Confucian dynamism, Hofstede advanced his model by adding a fifth dimension labeled “Long-Term Orientation.” The Hofstede model has been extended and applied to many areas of the social sciences and generated a growing body of literature, becoming a “doctrine” for intercultural communication (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). Applying the Hofstede model, empirical studies, mainly conducted in the field of business management, have demonstrated a cultural gap between China and the US: China ranks high in “Power Distance,” “Collectivism,” and “Long-Term Orientation,” whereas the US ranks lower in these areas (Shi & Wang, 2011). As a result, what some may call the “Chinese mind” emerged. Characterized as exhibiting a high degree of authoritarianism, collectivism and long-term orientation, the Chinese mind speaks a lot to the aforementioned four characteristics of xuanchuan practice. Xuanchuan aims to integrate individuals and social groups into a Confucian harmonious society where the authoritative power and rules are to be respected and obeyed. It is also based on collectivistic culture, mass mobility and social networking, the latter two characteristics work powerfully for producing propaganda. I do not mean to suggest, simplistically, that human mobility and social communication are not effective in an individualistic culture. Rather, I want to address that, compared to the China’s case of
“everyone talking to everyone else,” propaganda in Western individualistic countries has a higher degree of mass media dependency. Moreover, xuanchuan generally seeks to achieve the long-term effects through inculcation and distillation rather than short-term shocking impact (e.g. brainwashing). This is why in practice education has been intricately intertwined with propaganda in China. “A sensational finding,” in Hofstede’s description, of this scholarship was the correlation between Confucian values and economic growth (Hofstede, 1991; Hofstede & Bond, 1988). It demonstrates that culture in a certain form of national values can boost its economy. I have argued elsewhere that China’s propaganda has centered on the economy and contributed to the nation’s economic growth even during the turbulent period of the Cultural Revolution (Lin, 2013). Linking Confucian dynamism to xuanchuan practice, at a minimum, would shed some light on the puzzle of why China’s economy has continued to grow without liberating its propaganda system. Nevertheless, it should be noted that there is a potential to overapply Hofstede’s model to solve the complicated Chinese communication problem; so I herein only mean to invoke the normative power of Hofstede’s model in order to stimulate thought on the mass behavior of xuanchuan. Any deductions more than that would be exaggerated and invalid at this stage.

THE PROBLEM OF REPRESENTATION

What should be clear by now is that the conceptual morass of propaganda is largely due to its intricate connection to ideology. To a large extent, the problem of propaganda is the problem of ideology. Compared to propaganda, the term ideology is less pejorative but overwhelmingly inclusive as it deals with almost everything about
human minds. This leads Ricoeur (1986) to argue that the field of ideology is “so wide,”
the field of science “so narrow” (p. 138). The problem also goes to the famous
“Mannheim’s paradox:” if everything coming from our minds is ideological, how is it
possible that a theory of ideology can be itself non-ideological? Now the subject becomes
a philosophical minefield. To cross the field of ideology without being trapped into
obscure jargon, I take the idea of “Representation” as the central axis of my discussion. I
capitalize the term “Representation” to designate its philosophical connotations, and
hence to differentiate it from the common use in communication study particularly as
media representation. Discussing ideology with respect to Representation, I want to drag
the topic into the field of communication, linking it to propaganda. Nonetheless, this is
not an arbitrary move. At the heart of conceptions of ideology by many thinkers is
Representation per se, whether called “a system of representations” by Althusser (1979),
rhetorical structure” by Weber (Ricoeur, 1986), or “symbolic mediation of action” by
Ricoeur (1986).

It has been said that a sophisticated discussion of ideology should start with Marx
and his The German Ideology (Eagleton 1991; Ricoeur 1986). For Marx, ideology is a
distorted Representation of praxis. It is not opposed to science and truth, so it is not an
untruth, or a lie. To Marx, ideology is analogous to the inversion of an image (camera
obscura) in a sense that it is symbolically mediated through communication. Ricoeur
(1986) also noted that ideology is “representation and not real praxis” (p.77). Harbermas
(1971) likewise points out that praxis has two dimensions, namely, instrumental action
and symbolic interaction. The later dimension, as he suggests, is where “the
configurations of consciousness” takes place, referring to Marx’s notion of ideology as “manifestations” of this process (Harbermas, 1971, p. 42). Here, “manifestations” is merely another way to say “representations.” Harbermas (1971) goes on, arguing that labor in its commodity form is ideology because it represents the social relation of the production.

Another way, perhaps an easier one, to comprehend Marx’s abstract idea of ideology is to look at the real person who runs ideology: the ideologist. In a marginal note Marx (1998) remarked that the first form of ideologist is the priest (p. 50). This reminds us of the missionary in the prototypical propaganda network. In Marx’s account, ideologists were given birth through the division of labor, particularly the division of mental and material labor in the ruling class. A thinker of the ruling class, the ideologist “make[s] the perfecting of the illusion of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood” (Marx, 1998, p. 68). This is to say, ideologists worked as some kind of media practitioner to serve the ruling class in their capacity of mediating representations. This image of the ideologist strikingly parallels the public imagination of the propagandist insofar as the primary role for both the ideologist and the propagandist is to make up desirable images for the ruler.

Weber’s idea of ideology as “legitimation” is one step closer to propaganda. For Weber (1946; 2004), Marx’s notion of distortion is legitimation per se. In other words, ideology is legitimated Representation. According to Weber, the way to legitimate Representation is through coercion in forms of “sophistic or rhetorical structure” (Ricoeur 1986, p. 195). Therefore, Representation turns out to be the legitimation of political authority by coercive and deceptive means. Now a demonic image of
propaganda looms. Eagleton (1991) suggests that the process of legitimation involves at least six strategies:

“[P]romoting beliefs and values congenial to it; naturalizing and universalizing such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; denigrating ideas which might challenge it; excluding rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and obscuring social reality in ways convenient to itself.” (Italic in the original, pp. 5-6.)

Through this legitimating process, a certain set of values becomes something that Bourdieu (1977) would call doxa, except it is manufactured. It reminds us of “manufactured consent” in Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky’s description. Ideology and propaganda are so intertwined in the realm of legitimation that Eagleton (1991) takes Mao’s propaganda slogan “the West is a paper tiger” as an example of ideology (p. 26).

Contrasting to Weber, Ricoeur developed a neutral thesis of Representation, viewing ideology as integration/identification for social groups. Ricoeur (1986) claimed that ideology helps social groups to be integrated in both time and space. He argued that “[i]deology preserves identity, but it also wants to conserve what exists and is therefore already a resistance” (p. 266). To illustrate how ideology integrates a social group in a non-pejorative way, Ricoeur (1986) took individualism as an example of the ideology of the US (p. 265). In that regard, Ricoeur was rather speaking of the US culture than an abstract ideology. That is because treating ideology as an integrative force by means of symbolic interaction is, in another way, showing an example of how culture works. A
bearer of integrating power, Representation is now taking us to the changing terrain of culture, where everything communicates everything else. To be specific, we need to take Marx’s notion of distortion and Weber’s legitimation of authority into consideration to comprehend Ricoeur’s idea of integration. It should be noted that the three ideas from the three authors are rather three dimensions of the same conceptual construct, the Representation, than three distinctive conceptions. I think Ricouer would agree since he, interestingly, refers to “distortion,” “legitimation” and “integration” as the three “functions” or “roles” of ideology in a loose manner (pp. 265-266).

I found Ricoeur’s notion of ideology as integration particularly helpful for the study of Red Tourism at least in two respects. First of all, it prioritizes a neutral reading of ideology, which has given me a disposition to consider what Red Tourism delivers not something deceptively manipulative. Coincidently, Ricoeur’s ideology integration echoes Ellul’s (1965) integration propaganda in the way that both are thought to unify social groups. Secondly, Ricoeur (1986) puts ideology and utopia in the same framework of Representation, pointing out that the two seemingly opposing phenomena work together constructing what he refers to as “cultural imagination” (p. 1). What Ricoeur suggests here is that cultural imagination is not merely a cultural product, but also an ideological one.

Hegemony is what Representation is intended to achieve. Theorized by Antonio Gramsci, hegemony was originally treated as a ruling power just as force (Bates, 1975). Gramsci (1988) wedded ideology and propaganda into the term “ideological propaganda” to address the hegemonic power of a certain type of propaganda such as Fascist propaganda and the Communist Party’s propaganda. Hegemony assumed a nefarious
image partly because of its association with dictatorship. But this is rather a misinterpretation of Gramsci’s idea, than his own. Gramsci used hegemony somewhat in a neutral way. In discussion of Italian popular culture, for example, Gramsci (1988) referred to the Italian readers’ preference of foreign writers as undergoing the “moral and intellectual hegemony of foreign intellectuals” (p. 367). What Gramsci is saying here is that the foreign writers wrote something closer to the daily life of the Italian people than what Italian indigenous writers did. Hegemony goes in many forms (cultural, moral, intellectual) other than ideology. For this consideration, Eagleton (1991) argues that hegemony “includes (emphasis in the original) ideology, but [is] not reducible to it” (p.112).

Raymond Williams also connected hegemony to propaganda in an inexplicit way, though he had very little to say directly about propaganda. Williams (1980/1997) considered hegemony a dominant system of practices, meanings and values, which appears in any period (p. 3). Williams illuminated the way hegemony is transformed into the dominant culture through a mechanism he called “the selective tradition.” Characterized by intended and systematic inclusion, emphasis, reinterpretation, omission and exclusion, the selective tradition is the Representation that mediates and is mediated by the past and the present. Williams (1980/1997) goes on to remark that it is not easy for us to get rid of the dominant culture, because it is not something the ruling class imposes on us but something “built into our living” (p. 39). This can be seen as a different expression of the idea of propaganda as a social space, produced and productive.

Neighboring ideology and hegemony is another Representation called worldview. Worldview is the Representation of the world in people’s minds. Geertz (1973) described
it as the “picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society” representing people’s “most comprehensive ideas of order” (p. 127). For Williams (1980/1997), worldview is “the organized way of seeing the world” (p. 24). By virtue of this, scholars tend to use ideology and worldview interchangeably. For example, a dominant worldview is a dominant ideology. Habermas (1971) extends worldview to connote a certain system of knowledge. He refers to science as the natural/scientific worldview, and others include “philosophical worldviews” and “religious worldviews.” Nevertheless, as Representation with a capital “R,” worldview always comes into being with its hegemonic power.

THE XUANCHUAN MODEL

Drawing from the cultural practice of xuanchuan, I adopt a neutral and broader conceptual construct of propaganda for the current study. Herein I refer to it as the xuanchuan model, characterized by the goal of social integration, educational instrumentality, priority of human mobility, and social networking method. It assumes that propaganda is a social space through which ideology is to be disseminated, propagated, promoted, and reproduced in the form of Representation for the purpose of generating hegemony. It also assumes that propaganda and ideology coexist in a symbiotic space, meaning that they are mutually dependent phenomena. On the one hand, ideology as Representation does not run things by itself, and on the other hand, propaganda without ideological signification is unthinkable.

But we have an ingrained habit to think Propaganda as certain ideologies and to separate Propaganda and ideology from their social space. The folklore has been that
anything coming from the Communist Party, the Propaganda Department, the *People’s Daily*, or the Chinese political leaders is Propaganda, regardless of its textual properties and social contexts. In other words, political ideology itself is deemed as Propaganda. But how do other ideologies, say, racism, colonialism/post-colonialism, cultural imperialism, individualism, orientalism, utopianism, operate? Racism nowadays does not have its formal organizations, institutions, media, leaders, and nor do the other aforementioned ideologies. No professionals work to generate “publicity” for those. Propagation of these ideologies largely hinges on popular culture, economic activities, and sometimes, military actions (think about colonialism). This implies two corollaries.

First, popular culture is a popular site of propaganda. As Representation, ideology is embedded and embodied in films, TV dramas, songs, fashions, news stories, commercials, live concerts, shows, national/international sports events (e.g. national anthem before a game) and so forth. Propaganda of any sort has a marked tendency to mobilize popular culture for delivering intended ideological messages. It is evident in the invention of revolutionary opera (*yangban xi*) and mass production of revolutionary songs (*geming gequ*) during the Cultural Revolution, and also in many Disney shows. Here, again, I opt for the neutral connotation of propaganda based on a neutral conception of ideology as Representation. In a sense, Fascism is an ideology, so are liberalism and communism. Likewise, spreading out communism is propaganda and promoting individualism is propaganda too. Neither am I suggesting that propagandistic shows of Disney are produced to manipulate the audience’s opinions, whatever they are, nor arguing that the people who watch those shows would necessarily be victimized by such propaganda. Rather, my point is that popular culture in any form works for propaganda.
just like other propaganda machineries/organs. As a form of popular culture, tourism is no exception. This leads me to argue, in the next chapter, that tourism can be seen as a propaganda system.

The second corollary is that propaganda includes both discursive communications and non-discursive networks. This is to say, propaganda is a social space. It is produced by and producing diverse discourse such as histories, collective memories, nostalgia, sentiments, national identities, and non-discourse such as economy and praxis. This can, at least in part, explain why there is no specific media and organization responsible for racism, but racist groups have constantly grown fast worldwide. I will articulate and elaborate the idea of propaganda as a social space and how it speaks to Red Tourism in subsequent chapters.

CONCLUSIONS

The problem of propaganda is that it has too many problems.

The insurmountable problem of propaganda is its ideological orientation. It assumes that propaganda is a feature of certain ideologies, political/social systems, whereas others are very much immune to it. Although many media scholars and critics have said that propaganda exists in all human societies, it has not swayed the social imaginary of propaganda as the special product of certain sets of historical periods, nations, and political leaders. This is what people have been constantly fed by popular culture where Propaganda—often coming disguised in the form of foreign evildoers, government moles, or highly framed international news coverage—is ideologically determined. It has fostered a massive illusion that Propaganda is the issue of “Others.” It
follows that Propaganda in developing countries exerts greater influence than in Western democratic countries, thusly much more noxious.

This, in turn, defines the evaluative nature of the term, which is a perennial problem of propaganda. This is to say, the word “propaganda” evokes conation rather than cognition. For a case in point, look at the “distinction” between propaganda and counterpropaganda. It has been a tradition in the US to call spreading disfavored ideologies “propaganda” such as Nazis propaganda in WWII, Soviet/Communist propaganda in the Cold War, and Jihadist/ISIS propaganda in the war against terrorism, whereas “our” propaganda is renamed as “counterpropaganda.” Herbert Romerstein (2009), a former director at the propaganda institution of the USIA, refers to counterpropaganda as “carefully prepared answers to false propaganda” (P. 137). It is clear that in his definition, “our” manipulation is rephrased as “carefully prepared answers” to connote something rather positive. This is also true for many typologies of propaganda. For example, Ellul (1965) divided propagandas into many binaries based on the propaganda producer’s intention and the receiver’s inclination. Even for a neutral thesis of propaganda, the author is always required to determine whether the propaganda is good or bad, say, is Red Tourism bad propaganda or good propaganda? The evaluative nature has rendered the study of propaganda more political and less academic.

The overemphasis of vertical influence is another problem. From the hypodermic needle model to the two-step flow of communication, theories in propaganda studies have paid much attention to hierarchal power structures and the powerful people. To a great extent, Propaganda has been viewed as the event of the state sector, say, the most powerful minority bamboozling the helpless majority. Relatively, how propaganda is
(re)produced and disseminated in the private has received scant attention. Put very simply, the horizontal influence of propaganda has been largely neglected. There are still a lot of other problems including textuality dependency, short-term effect primacy and so forth. Ultimately, the problem of propaganda has become a deterrent to prevent scholars from discovering the complexity of propaganda particularly in the field of popular culture studies.

In contrast to the contemporary Western notion of propaganda, *xuanchuan* is a cultural practice in China. This is a little-known fact but one with immense significance for studying propaganda in civil society. Based on this practice, I have proposed the *xuanchuan* model. It regards propaganda as a social space, produced and productive. It is considered a neutral framework of propaganda, not only because it considers the ideology that propaganda purposefully tries to propagate defined neutrally, but also the space itself as neutral.

It is worth noting at this point that the *xuanchuan* model is not opposite but supplementary to the Western propaganda model. The Western model makes better sense of Propaganda in the state sector, whereas the *xuanchuan* model is aimed at illustrating how propaganda operates in relation to popular culture in the private sector. The distinction between propaganda in the state and in the private is only for the purpose of clarification of the two models. In reality, propaganda as a social space cannot be separated from the both sectors. It should be also noted that *xuanchuan* as a practice of disseminating ideology appears in all modern societies, both in the West and China. The difference is that *xuanchuan* is a culture in China. The seemingly troublesome statement can be illustrated by a comparison of eating rice: it is a cultural practice in China, but
Americans also eat rice. Constructed at the intersection of propaganda, space, mobility and popular culture, the *xuanchuan* model lays the theoretical groundwork for developing another important conceptual construct of this project, where tourism is defined as a popular site and vehicle of propaganda.
NOTES

1. The interplay between transportation and communication in the Western cultural context has been thoroughly studied (e.g. Carey, 1989; Mattelart, 1996). But their work primarily focuses on how transportation facilitates the distribution of mass media. For example, the US postal system helped spread the news (John, 1995). In contrast with the Western scholars, Chinese scholars paid close attention to human mobility beneath the transportation network. Qiu (1993) points out that because of extensive transportation network in the Spring and Autumn Period, wars, leisure and official visiting other countries (pinxiang 聘享), business travels and political lobbying (youshi 游士) became increasingly frequent, all of which helped achieve greater human mobility and, ultimately, the prosperity of xuanchuan.

2. In this book, Liang (1936) systematically analyzes a wide variety of social phenomena, media, practices and techniques associated with propaganda including newspapers, advertising, Catholic church, college newspapers, education news, public speech, leaflet etc. Liang suggests that propaganda is not a modern thing, however, propaganda techniques became increasingly important to China as the country was undergoing modernization.
CHAPTER THREE: TOURISM AS A PROPAGANDA SYSTEM

Like propaganda, “tourism,” too, is a confusing term as it designates too many things (Rojek & Urry, 1997). However, there are generally two approaches to studying tourism: professionals regard tourism as a business, whereas academics see it as a social phenomenon (Apostolopoulos, Leivadi & Yiannakis, 1996). For this project, I combine the two distinct approaches, regarding tourism as a social space, comprised of both discursive networks (e.g. history, politics, media, etc.) and non-discourse (economy). Put very simply, tourism is an amalgam of history, politics, culture, collective memories, mediated communications, economy, and more. The first step of rethinking tourism as a social space is to think it as a system, specifically, a mass communication system.

Whether referring to “travelling culture” from an anthropological perspective (Clifford 1992; Said 1985), or “touring culture” (Rojek & Urry, 1997) from a sociological perspective, the conceptual constructions of tourism propel the contemporary critical study of tourism into the cultural domain where communication study as a field has occupied an important seat. Nevertheless, a quick catalog of the authors who contribute greatly to what one may call “tourism studies” is dominated by sociologists and anthropologists; communication scholars as a group are largely invisible. This is, in part, because we, communication scholars, have a tendency of taking ideas and diverse rhetoric from social theorists that are not necessarily within our grasp. This is not to suggest that there has been a lack of interest in studying human travel in the field of communication. On the contrary, studying mass mobility and space is indeed a legacy bequeathed by the early generation of communication scholars, noticeably James Carey and Armand Mattelart among others. But we do not have a theoretical framework of
tourism that speaks directly to/and about mass communication. Grabbing existing constructs from social/critical theorists without significant deconstruction and reconstruction would somehow bring us into the endless circle within the realm of the sense of the Western leisure class, which is irrelevant to the current study of Red Tourism.

In this chapter, I attempt to reconstruct tourism as a propaganda system that operates through a mechanism whereby ideological messages are channeled into the market, disseminated by human travel and (re)produced by consumption. The tourism-propaganda framework (TPF) is a new scheme of tourism constructed in the field of mass communication. It connects and converges existing ideas and theories concerning popular culture, tourism, propaganda/xuanchuan, and the public sphere into a single frame through which we are not only able to see the tourist, the public, the state and ideology differently but also the dynamics among these critical elements of the sphere of tourism beyond a phenomenology of leisure and recreation. TPF has a triad of theoretical dimensions: mass culture, mass tourism, and mass communication. It is on the basis of the triad of masses that my texts are organized. The construction of the TPF is multipurpose: it partly serves as a continuation of the previous chapter, partly a theoretical preparation for the investigation of Red Tourism in subsequent chapters, and partly an indispensable conceptual grasp with which this research is conceived, constructed, and purposed.

POPULAR CULTURE AS POPULAR PROPAGANDA

There are many ways to approach tourism, for example, a sociology of tourism or an ethnomethodology of sightseers. My theoretical point of departure, however, is
popular culture, sometimes also referred to as mass culture. This is because in the final analysis, tourism is a form of popular culture.

Scholars have pointed to the propagandistic nature of popular culture without using the term “propaganda.” What I do herein is to connect those thoughts and to translate them into the thinking around propaganda. In doing so, I want to pinpoint that popular culture is a popular site for popular propaganda. This is of pivotal importance for this study no longer treats propaganda as the state’s deceptive manipulation, but a produced yet productive space encompassing both the state and the private. In other words, the reinterpretation of popular culture brings the previously unspotted private sector into light in producing, distributing, and circulating propaganda. It assumes that consumers of mass culture are mobilized for producing popular propaganda while being propagandized. This, again, directs our attention to a profound social space of propaganda. In light of the xuanchuan model of propaganda, popular culture can be viewed as a modern xuanchuan practice within which intended ideologies, for good or ill, are spread out horizontally through human (popular) social networking, or “social communication” in Williams’ (2003) description. In this process, previously passive indoctrination becomes active consumption, manipulation camouflages as marketing, ideologies come in the guise of fictional narratives or visual-audio attractions, and finally, hegemony arises out of popularity. The upshot is that propaganda, a previously dull form of communication, is now to be perceived as rather fantastically commercial. This is, in part, why tourism almost completely loses its ideological connotation in the public’s imagination.
The propaganda nature of the culture industry

The tangent point between the line of propaganda and the circle of popular culture is fear. The previous fear of propaganda is now entering the realm of popular culture. Unsurprisingly, intense debates on popular culture have very much focused on the effects of popular culture that can roughly fall into two categories: strong effect and limited effect. This is to say, the paradigm of the study of popular culture, to a great extent, and that of propaganda studies are conflated.

However, in popular cultural studies scholars prefer a new vocabulary of propaganda. In the new lexicon, for example, “cultural dupe” and “one dimensional man” replace “puppet/propagandee,” and “indoctrination,” “prescribed attitudes,” “the Happy Consciousness,” and “myth” substitute for “propaganda.” I am not suggesting that this is wrong; conversely, it, again, confirms the complexity of the social space of propaganda. Rather, I want to make a point that in reality, the study of popular culture signposts a regime of propaganda where culture, ideology, politics, economy are intertwined, reassembled and repacked in the name of commodity. Fisk (1987) describes popular culture as a battlefield of “semiotic guerrilla warfare” (p. 316). Against this way of thinking, I contend that it would be more precise to consider popular culture the battlefield of “propaganda guerrilla warfare” where all sorts of ideologies fight for both consumers and hegemonic power. A more positive thinking would be that popular culture is the marketplace of propaganda.

In what follows I will explore the nexus between popular culture and propaganda. This means that although I will to a certain extent sketch out the tradition of cultural studies of popular culture, this will be done only as it can be extended to shed some light
on propaganda; so that I will be very selective in terms of which aspects of cultural 

studies I choose for discussion. Since the current study is theoretically founded on two 

strands of Marxism, classical Marxism and Western Marxism, I draw heavily from 

scholars in the Marxist tradition, namely, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert 

Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, and Raymond Williams. Each, in his different way, provides 

me with insights into the conjuncture of popular culture and propaganda. What unites 

them is an underlying assumption that popular culture is a social form of power full of 

potential for spreading ideologies.

Up to a certain point, the standard Frankfurt School critique of popular culture can 

be seen as the equivalent of a critique of Propaganda. Storey (2009) points out that the 

Frankfurt School treats mass culture as “imposed culture of political manipulation” 
(p.82). Adorno’s idea of the culture industry as mass deception is a characteristic 
replaced “mass culture” with a coined term “the culture industry” in an attempt to 
discredit the idea of popular culture as “a culture that arises spontaneously from the 
masses themselves” (Adorno, 1975, p.12). For Horkheimer and Adorno, the culture 
industry is deceptively pernicious. They contended that the idea that “they [the cultural 
industries] are nothing but business is used as an ideology to legitimize the trash they 
intentionally produce” (p. 95). In other words, for Horkheimer and Adorno, what popular 
culture does is to propagandize as it seeks to confirm the established social order and 
maintain ideological hegemony. Characterized as the mass proliferation of sameness, 
homogeneousness, universality, inflexibility in the social space of popular culture, 
ranging from film and radio to architecture, the culture industry is believed to be the
inevitable outcome of monopoly capitalism.

The ghost of the Western Propaganda also haunts the field of popular culture, as Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) suggest, “[u]nder the private monopoly of culture tyranny …sets to work directly on the soul” (p. 105). Adorno (1975) fully articulated the Propaganda nature of popular culture in his later account of the culture industry: “[t]he total effect of the culture industry is one of anti-enlightenment, in which…enlightenment, that is the progressive technical domination of nature, becomes mass deception and is turned into a means for fettering consciousness” (pp. 18-19). It is not an overstatement that Horkheimer and Adorno’s idea of the culture industry can be interpreted as a transmutation of Herman and Chomsky’s Propaganda model in popular culture. In both cases, texts and practices of popular culture, whether in the form of hit songs, films or news coverage, ultimately become Propaganda through filters of capitalism and the ruling ideology.

One dimensional man is believed to be the final product of the culture industry. Marcuse (2002) viewed popular culture as a means of social control through which man and his behavior and thought become “one dimensional,” ultimately resulting in a one dimensional society alongside a one dimensional reality. This is in part because, as Marcuse noted, compared to what he called “the pre-technological culture” (high culture), the dimension of truth is lost in mass culture. Specifically, mass reproduction to Marcuse is the process through which the logic of Reason turns into the logic of domination. In other words, it is on this basis that popular culture becomes propagandistic. Propaganda is delivered to the consumer as “prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions” (Marcuse, 2002, p. 14). These are
Propagandas because they “indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood” (Marcuse, 2002, p. 14). For Marcuse, the ostensible democratization of popular culture is merely the domestication of culture insofar as the antagonistic power of artistic alienation is removed to preserve social domination. Marcuse (2002) contended:

This sort of well-being, the productive superstructure over the unhappy base of society, permeates the “media” which mediate between the masters and their dependents. Its publicity agents shape the universe of communication in which the one dimensional behavior expresses itself. Its language testifies to identification and unification, to the systematic promotion of positive thinking and doing, to the concerted attack on transcendent, critical notions (p. 88).

It is worth noting further that the critique of popular culture by classical Marxists is oftentimes misunderstood, generating a substantial amount of counterarguments to the culture industry. In fact, what the classical Marxists assumed was not a completely passive audience incapable of critical thinking, but a kind of technology-and-mass-consumption-camouflaged superpower effective in implanting ideologies into the masses. Whether the audience is intelligent or unintelligent is irrelevant to their critiques, because the capitalist mode of production determines the nature of the culture industry regardless of the consumer’s agency.

If Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse advocated a strong-effects model of mass culture, other Marxist theorists such as Walter Benjamin and Raymond Williams can be seen as proponents of a limited-effects model. They envisaged a more active mass in the
Referring to mass culture as technological reproduction, however, Benjamin’s (2008) account did not focus on technology; he spoke volumes about ideology instead. For Benjamin, the technological is essentially ideological and the result of technological reproduction is an organized way of seeing. Accordingly, Benjamin’s idea of popular culture has two fundamental parts: politics in the site of production and interpretation in the site of consumption. For Benjamin (2008), popular culture represents a paradoxical situation that he referred to as a “shattering of tradition”: on the one hand, he explained, it is “destructive, cathartic,” and on the other hand, it means “the liquidation of the value of tradition in the cultural heritage” (p. 22). Through the circle of mass production, mass propagation and mass perception, diverse ways of seeing were increasingly being organized into the prevailing way of seeing, as Benjamin (2008) suggested, “the way each single image is understood seems prescribed by the sequence of all the preceding images” (p. 27).

Benjamin did see some degree of control on the audience end but he saw this rather dialectically. Benjamin (2008) argued that: “[i]t is they [the masses] who will control him [the actor]. Those who are not visible, not present while he executes his performance, are precisely the ones who will control it. This invisibility heightens the authority of their control” (p. 33). Benjamin goes further reminding us that the audience’s control has no political power as long as the capitalist model of production is still on the scene. Contrarily, Benjamin indicated that the masses’ revolutionary control over cultural products can be repurposed for counterrevolutionary use under capitalist circumstances. Another control is about literacy. In the wake of mass production, literacy competence
now becomes the common property of the masses; but the other side of the coin is that the capitalist also takes advantage of it to “distort and corrupt” class consciousness of the masses (Benjamin, 2008, p. 34).

Labeled as “culturalism” by other scholars, Williams’ grasp of mass culture is more nuanced. For Williams (1961/1975; 1989), culture by and large is a particular way of life. This is why he repeatedly kept reminding us that “culture is ordinary” (Williams, 1989). In Williams’ framework, culture has three levels: the lived culture, the recorded culture, and the selective tradition. The selective tradition is of crucial importance among the three for it not only links the recorded and the lived, but also produces them. Williams (1961/1975) argued that the process of selection and re-selection is governed by the “contemporary system of interests and values,” in a nutshell, the prevailing ideology (p. 68). But what marked Williams off from other Marxist scholars was that popular culture for Williams is not merely a matter of selection on the producer end; it is also a matter of selection on the audience end. This notion of double-selection is consistent with Williams’s (1960) conviction that “[c]ommunication is not only transmission; it is also reception and response” (p. 332). It resembles Lefebvre’s idea of space to the extent that symbolic meaning is both produced in the site of production and (re)producing new meanings through interpretation. By the same token, Williams (1989) rejected the idea of the “masses” as the duped, arguing that “there are in fact no masses, but only ways of seeing people as masses” (p. 11). Exemplifying the reading habit of his father, Williams (1989) made an important point that high quality of intelligent life does not prevent one from enjoying popular culture. In other words, Williams refuted a general presumption that the proliferation of mass culture leads to the decrease of public intelligence. In his
study of television, Williams (2003) viewed the effects of popular culture as social changes (e.g. Williams’ notion of mobile privatization) within larger social changes. In other words, William rejected the cultural degradation thesis dominant in the critique of popular culture.

The coded language of propaganda in studying popular culture points to a popular myth that upon propaganda entering the realm of popular culture, it is no longer as “propagandistic” as it is in the state sector. This mode of thinking has shifted the focus of our attention away from hegemony to the ideology of consumption, thus reducing a wide range of ideological communications to a question of commercialism. But I argue otherwise. Specifically, I argue that propaganda becomes even more powerful after being reproduced and repacked as “fantasy” in various popular cultural forms than being produced by state Propaganda organs. By virtue of this, I contend that popular culture is the popular site of propaganda.

This proposition can be understood in two ways. First and foremost, propaganda in this terrain is reproduced in popular forms of communication such as films, pop songs, shows, etc. In other words, propaganda can be popular since it no longer comes in dull texts but something aesthetically appealing. Second, popularity also indicates the lively and heavy traffic in exchanging propaganda in the market. That is, as the xuanchuan model suggests, propaganda now becomes a case of everyone propagandizing everyone else through social communication, hence popular propaganda.

In the preceding chapter I have remarked the most popular and persistent propaganda in China: the zhong-xiao (loyalty- filial piety) propaganda. Now I turn to racism, arguably the most popular propaganda in the modern West. A powerful
propaganda, racism was crucial in propagating colonialism and conquering colonial nations worldwide. It sugar-coated colonial conquest “as if directed by God” (Storey, 2009, p.171). Disseminated through popular culture, this popular propaganda back in the nineteenth-century assumed that the Negro, inferior to Western Europeans, could only be civilized and humanized by White people. Justified by such racist propaganda, colonialism and imperialism were masked as a civilizing mission for the well-being of the conquered (Fryer, 1984). Yet the topic of racism has been rarely talked about in the language of propaganda. Among many forms of racism, Orientalism is an “exotic,” popular one.

Said (1977) observed a propaganda “layer” of Orientalism manifested in the institutionalization of studies of Oriental languages in the West. It would have been more illuminating if Said could say directly that Orientalism is “propaganda,” rather than referring to it as a “system of ideological fiction” (p. 321). The propaganda feature becomes plainly evident in that “[i]t [Orientalism] is one of the mechanisms by which the West maintained its hegemony over the Orient” (Said, 1977, p. 300). This is to say, like propaganda, the ultimate goal of Orientalism is to gain hegemonic power; but unlike pure political propaganda, the territory of Orientalism is popular culture where Orientalism as propaganda is produced in diverse forms of fantasy, narratively penetrating and aesthetically alluring.

Many reasons can explain why people appear reluctant to refer to Orientalism as propaganda and at least two of those are worthy of special mention. First, there is no political party, political institution, government, political leader and state responsible for initiating such propaganda; there are myriad instead: many countries, many political
institutions, many industries (show business, film, popular art, etc.) in addition to millions of professionals. Said (1977) simply called it “almost a European invention” (p. 1). This does not fit the existing popular imagination of propaganda as the province of certain countries, governments, political parties and leaders. However, no scholars have said that propaganda needs to be that way. Rather, it is an imagination based on many other imaginations and the Representation (re)produced by media representations. The Orientalism case illuminates how popular propaganda is produced and producing in the private sector. Second, the spectacular make-over after being commodified renders the propaganda quality of Orientalism so imperceptible. The exotic feature of cultural products of Orientalism has been perceived as “edge” and “chic,” sometimes even classic. Consider Hollywood’s *Shanghai Express* (1932), *The Good Earth* (1937), *Casablanca* (1942), *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960), *Cleopatra* (1963), among many others. To the extent that their narratives seek to legitimate, indoctrinate and propagate intended ideologies, these films are propagandistically resonant. During the Cold War, the United States produced and consumed a lot of fantasies of Asia. Christina Klein (2003) points out that the growing interest of US film industry in Asia during the late 1940s and 1950s was closely related to the political, military, and economic expansions of the US in that region. In 1950 Raymond A. Hare, acting assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs spoke to the Under Secretary of State in a meeting:

> What we have to do is to convince not only their minds but their hearts. What we need to do is to make the “cold war” a “warm war” by infusing into it ideological principles to give it meaning (quoted in Klein, 2003, p. 19).
I do not think it is too much to say that from colonial conquest to the Cold War, the global expansion of Western power depended considerably on the deployment of popular propaganda in diverse popular cultural forms.

It should be noted further that Orientalism is always bound to space, which Said (1985) refers to as “imaginative geography” characterized by an invisible yet defined line “separating Occident from Orient” (p. 90). As such, tourism is a popular site of Orientalism. John Urry would see Orientalism as the Western gaze on the Oriental. This Orientalist gaze is evident in the contemporary tourist consumption of belly dance in Istanbul (Potuoglu-Cook, 2006). In fact, it becomes a selling point for promoting indigenous tourism by many Asian countries such as China (Yan & Santos, 2009) and Oman (Feighery, 2012).

Saying that popular culture is propagandistic, however, I am not suggesting that popular culture exists merely to manipulate people’s minds. With its neutral connotation as in the xuanchuan model, propaganda in the context of popular culture cuts in two ways: propaganda as domination and propaganda as resistance. In other words, popular propaganda in the private sector works in two directions: one towards reinforcing the established social order and power and one towards challenging such hierarchy, as Foucault (1978) famously noted, “Where there is power there is resistance” (p. 95). Popular discourse of the Vietnam War in US history is a powerful case in point.

Two kinds of popular propaganda were noticeable in the American popular culture during the Vietnam war period. One sold America’s war in Vietnam to American audiences characterized by Hollywood’s Vietnam. As a genre, the Vietnam War film
produced a “particular regime of truth” (Storey, 2009, p. 176). It is a transformation of state propaganda into popular discourse/propaganda as it narratively confirms Americanization/Americaness in a rather narcissistic way that the war in the diegesis is not about Vietnam and the Vietnamese, but all about the Americans. As a result, as Klein (1990) suggests, “the war is decontextualized, mystified as a tragic mistake, an existential adventure, or a rite of passage through which the White American Hero discovers his identity” (p. 10). In contrast, the other kind of propaganda opposes the war. It was embodied in protest music of the sixties such as Bob Dylan’s “Masters of War” (1963), Phil Ochs’ “Talkin’ Vietnam Blues” (1964), Neil Young’s “Ohio” (1970) and so forth. Anti-Vietnam protest music coexisted with folk music concerning Civil Rights and nuclear disarmament in the 1960s. Auslander (1981) argued that the shift of rock and folk music from these movements to anti-Vietnam war was anticipated by the escalation of the American presence in Vietnam. Then, can popular culture be seen as the free market of propaganda? While it is a market with competing ideas, ideologies and propagandas, it is by no means “free.” The capitalist mode of production matters. In content analyzing American popular music surrounding the representation of American soldier between 1965 and 1985 James (1989) demonstrated that the dissident voice was only marginal in contrast to the hegemonic voice from the culture industry. In other words, the two types of propaganda were imbalanced with regard to media representation.

The triumvirate-sphere of popular culture

The problem of the culture industry is the problem of propaganda. The great divides between strong-effects and limited-effects proponents and culture industry and
human agency advocates stem from and manifest a substantial divergence in understanding Marx’s view of human society incarnated in the dialectical relationship between the base and the superstructure. I agree with Williams’ and Lefebvre’s interpretations in that both authors, though approaching it differently, reject a mechanical reading of the relationship as a combination of the determining base and the determined superstructure. Williams (1980/1997) sees a mediation between the dynamic base and superstructure, whereas Lefebvre (1991) sees a social space both produced and productive. I will elaborate their points in the later chapter on the social space of Red Tourism.

My thinking on the debate over the effects of mass culture is twofold. On the one hand, I do not believe agency, understood as individual capacity, can counteract the power of structure. The most imbalanced US news coverage on the Gulf War debate is a straightforward example in this regard (Fico & Cote, 1999). On the other hand, I do not deny the power of the public either. Nevertheless, I would argue that to be able to challenge structural power, individuals must work collectively as/in a structure. For example, I do not think of an anti-racism movement such as “Black Lives Matter” as an instance of individual agency fighting against structure. Rather, I believe this is an instance of one structure challenging another; but this is inconceivable in the agency-structure binary. So I need a new one.

My solution to the problem of mass culture is a triumvirate-sphere of popular culture consisting of xuanchuan/propaganda, the culture industry, and the public sphere (Figure 2). It postulates that in the space of popular culture exists the triad of spheres: the xuanchuan/propaganda sphere, the culture industry and the public sphere. It is a
deconstructing and remobilizing of the mentality of the Frankfort School based on the xuanchuan model. Specifically, it is a reassembling of Horkheimer and Adorno’s idea of the culture industry, Habermas’s public sphere and the cultural practice of xuanchuan. The dynamics of the triumvirate-sphere determine the nature of Red Tourism, which cannot be understood as a domain of Propaganda but a social space where the forces of propaganda/xuanchuan, economy, and democracy are inextricably intertwined, together producing a social imaginary of contemporary China. I have discussed xuanchuan and the culture industry, now I turn to the public sphere.

![Figure 2: The triumvirate-schema of popular culture.](image)

Note that there is an idea of “the public” and there is also one of “the mass.” The public practices democracy in the public sphere, but what do the masses do? And where? Is there a “mass sphere? To answer the questions, the pejorative connotation of mass/masses might be a starting point.

Assuming mob-status, “masses” signifies “gullibility, fickleness, herd-prejudice, lowness of taste and habit” (Williams, 1960, p. 317). According to Williams, the meaning
of masses is threefold. First, it means physical massing, designating the human movement from the rural to the urban, hence urbanization. Second, the massing became social when workers were organized into factories, ultimately leading to mass production. Third, the development of class consciousness of the working class rendered the massing political, resulting in mass-action. Characterized as “mass-thinking,” “mass-suggestion,” and “mass-prejudice,” the masses were believed to threaten what Williams referred to “class-democracy.” By class, he really meant the ruling class. No doubt in the West the gullible working-class masses were set up against the intelligent middle-class reading public, but a question inevitably arises here with Habermas’ construct of the public sphere: was the masses as a group included in the public sphere? Surely, the working people were not the regulars of coffee shops, salons, who were described as major actors of the Bourgeois public sphere. If the masses, the majority, was excluded from the public sphere, then where did they practice democracy? These are crucial questions that I cannot sidestep. Given the fact that China is not a Western democratic country, conjuring up a Chinese public sphere is extremely difficult, if not utterly impossible. But Chinese citizens must have a “sphere” in which critical issues are brought out, discussed, and debated in public in the name of restoring democracy. This is to say, in China there must be some kind of “creative resistance” in the practice of everyday life. To tackle this task requires much imagination.

Public sphere theory has gained currency in China starting from the 1980s. The heated debates have centered on the interrelationships among a series of concepts, mainly, “state”, “civil society,” and “private sphere,” and their applicability to Chinese society (Xia & Huang, 2008). No consensus has been made as to whether there is a
counterpart of the public sphere in China, if it exists at all and what it should be. Nevertheless, Chinese scholars hold the unanimous conviction that public sphere theory must be reworked to be considered useful in China. While diverse attempts to “transplant” this Western democracy theory to a non-Western-democratic state have demonstrated the intellectual robustness of Chinese scholarship, the result is rather disappointing. A Chinese public sphere is still unimaginable. The difficulties are discernable.

A thorny issue is about vocabulary. The original vocabulary of Jürgen Habermas’ public sphere theory works well in early modern Europe. This is in part because the theory was developed on the discourse of German bourgeois society (Habermas, 1989). But this discourse alongside its practice is alien to the Chinese. Even the Chinese translation of the term “public sphere”, or “gongong lingyu” (literally, “public domain”) sounds administratively familiar but easily misleading. Secondly, the debates on the aforementioned core concepts without referring to specific historical accounts have made this area of Chinese scholarship even more abstract than the original work of Habermas. Thirdly, the major players and places of the Habermasian public sphere are also foreign to Chinese culture. Merchants, bankers, manufacturers, and entrepreneurs, perhaps, are the last group of people in the minds of Chinese people when conjuring up an image of the public. Moreover, the places in the Habermasian public sphere such as coffee houses and salons are equivalently foreign. All of these problems suggest that a new model is needed. The cultural practice of xuanchuan may help conceive of the Chinese public sphere.

As noted earlier, xuanchuan is meant to empower the people and aims for the
good of the state with close ties to education. This benign feature points to an alternative public sphere. The big problem, however, is that the primary function of *xuanchuan* lies in its governance, whereas the public sphere, whatever it is, is headed for the opposite, democracy.

A possible way to solve the puzzle is to re-look at the private sector. One of the big differences between Western Propaganda and *xuanchuan* practice is that *xuanchuan* can be initiated from the private. Such *xuanchuan* /propaganda from below has led to multiple revolutions and democratic movements in China. As a matter of fact, democratic movements in modern and contemporary China, say, from the May Fourth Movement of 1919 to the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, have been considered to be sparked from *xuanchuan*. As noted in the preceding chapter, some Western scholars hold a similar view that even Western propaganda can work for democracy. Taking this as a point of departure, I argue that the cultural practice of *xuanchuan*, in particular, can help construct an alternative public sphere by inviting us to rethink “public”, “sphere,” and “media,” the three fundamental elements of the public sphere framework, in the Chinese context.

First of all, the mobility in the *xuanchuan* model points to a mobile public. Culturally, Chinese people have long imagined the nation-state as a big family (Sun, 2000). In this cultural imagination, the boundary between the state and the private is believed to be difficult to be drawn by many scholars (e.g. Huang, P. C., 1993; Liang, Z. P., 2003). To avoid the trap of an already abundant rhetoric about what should be and what shouldn’t be included in the public sphere in Western scholarship (e.g. “gendered publicity”, “couterpublics” and “subaltern counterpublics”) and particularly since my effort here is only to invoke an image of a Chinese public, I will not engage in this kind
of discourse, which I think merits a separate project. My point is that every citizen should be included in the mobile public.

Related is a mobile sphere. It does not require a set of fixed places. The word-of-mouth method of the xuanchuan practice suggests that xuanchuan can be made through social communication. There are no designated places for this kind of communication; it can happen anywhere and everywhere. This is also the case for the proposed Chinese model of public sphere. This is to say, public debates on critical issues in China can be sparked off at any kinds of space, physical, virtual, and/or abstract spaces. Roughly, the mobile sphere includes four types of space: (1) public space such as the passenger cars of trains, restaurants, classrooms, and workplace. Lord Bryce, for example, considered smoking cars of commuter trains the public space where public opinions were exchanged (DeFleur, 1988; see Katz, 2006); (2) private space such as family; (3) virtual space like micro-blogs (Weibo and WeChat), online forums, BBS and so forth; (4) abstract space such as regional operas (difang xi) and many other types of folk arts. Take classrooms for instance. Lately an “Open Letter” about university professors’ criticism of China from Liaoning Daily, a Communist Party-run newspaper in a northeastern province, shocked both Chinese intellectuals and netizens. The news article criticizes many professors who were secretly investigated by the journalists for, reportedly, promoting Western political systems while criticizing the Chinese government and the socialist system. Subsequent debates were centered on academic freedom. What’s to be noted, however, is that professors’ criticism was rather in the form of spontaneous talk than formal lecturing. The incident suggests that the university classroom might be a place for the Chinese public sphere.
Another example is family. People in the West do not normally think it is appropriate to include what Habermas refers to as the intimate sphere into the public sphere because “public” and “intimate” are mutually exclusive within a dualistic model. Nevertheless, family plays a pivotal role in political communication. Lazarsfeld has shown in the famous presidential election research (also known in communication history as the Decatur studies) that compared to news media, family members and close friends were no less important in their political decisions (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Katz, 2006). This is where Lazarsfeld’s account of personal influence and the “two-step flow of communication” begins. From the mobile perspective, the intimate sphere can be readily transformed into a public sphere. In a traditional society, it is common that Chinese people want to invite and to be invited by friends, relatives and colleagues to their homes. This format of the exchange of visit is not for partying though. Socializing, maybe, but not in the format of scattered chatting and small group discussing. Although the form of home gathering in China is quite fluid, ranging from dinning-table eating, tea drinking to simply chatting, all people are supposed to take part in the mutual-talk. “All people” may be misleading here, since women and children were largely excluded in the traditional Chinese society, particularly in rural communities back to the pre-economy-reform period. While this certainly demonstrates gender inequality, it is also a sign of critical discussion as true in the Habermasian public sphere. In other words, critical issues that matter to the state and its future are typical of topics of Chinese family gatherings. When I was a kid, those issues used to be inner-Party conflicts, governmental policies, international relations, economic reforms and the like. Nowadays critical debates arises from such social gatherings usually involve the Party’s anti-corruption campaign and
changes of political, and military leadership, among others. However, I am certainly not saying that all family gathering events automatically involve Habermasian-style debate as much as not everyone going to a coffee shop or salon must enjoy a critical talk in Habermas’s own account. Nor am I suggesting that home gatherings in China are necessarily significant to democracy. Rather, I want to make a point that in a mobile model, even the intimate sphere can be publicized, merging into a sort of public sphere.

The role of mass media is prominent in the Habermasian public sphere. The mass media had helped form a reading public, which Habermas (1989) considered “the real carrier of the public” (p.23). This is not immediately applicable to the Chinese case. The xuanchuan model suggests that both “word of mouth” and mass media matter to xuanchuan. It means that the Chinese public sphere is not totally dependent on mass media. In the Liaoning Daily’s case, for example, the “Letter” published in the newspaper sparked public debate on how university professors should talk about China. But the most vigorous part of the debates was not carried by news outlets, but on the dining table or other types of “intimate” space though social communication.

Although I argue that the public is mobile and the sphere is fluid, neither do I advocate a “phantom” Chinese public nor another theory of no-public-sphere-at-all. On the contrary, I believe even in a political system that is not Western democratic, a “sphere” through which the general public engages in deliberative democracy does exist in an alternative form. What I disagree, like many Chinese scholars, is to copycat the Habermasian model. In search of the Chinese public sphere, I stress the mobility of the public and space in light of the cultural practice of xuanchuan. To differentiate this proposed Chinese public from the Bourgeois public sphere, I herein refer to it as the

The **xuanchuan**-public sphere is based on the **xuanchuan** model of propaganda. In that sense, it represents a structural transformation: **xuanchuan** now is seen as the proliferation of critical debates and democratic talk though social communication in the practice of everyday life. It may be considered “counter-propaganda” in a Western sense. It assumes that anyone can be included in “the public” as long as they engage in diverse **xuanchuan** activities. Not initiated by the reading public, **xuanchuan** may take diverse forms and formats, for example, a variety of folk arts, particularly those more or less dependent on the oral than the textual. Within the mobile sphere, the previously well-demarcated and fixed lines between the state, the public, and the private, and between the civic and the intimate are blurred, collapsed, becoming fluid and transformable. In this regard, the **xuanchuan**-public sphere is a public sphere in motion. As an attempt to problematize the clear-cut boundaries between popular culture, propaganda, and public practicing of democracy, the **xuanchuan**-public sphere is intended to be more evocative than decisive. Preliminary as it is, the proposed model, with its normative power, offers alternative angles to look at the pattern and rationale of Chinese communication. This is of paramount importance in understanding the contradictory role of Red tourists in terms of disseminating the grand narrative and at the same time, reconstructing a counter-narrative in my later account.
REFRAMING MASS TOURISM: TOWARD A TOURISM-PROPAGANDA FRAMEWORK (TPF)

There is mass culture and there is also mass tourism. Nonetheless, “mass” in the tourism setting no longer connotes the mass production of homogeneous goods; rather, it denotes the producing of standardized tourists by constantly organizing their way of seeing, or the “tourist gaze” in Urry’s (2002) description. But the connection between mass culture and mass tourism is noticeable. Mass tourism, too, is academically set up against the backdrop of a kind of modernity (Aramberri, 2010; Cohen, 1972; 1995; Rojek, 2000) and the democratization of the elite culture in the wake of industrialization, or de-elitization of tourism in particular (Boorstin, 1992; Pearce, 1982). In the grand narrative, the upshot of mass tourism, like that of mass culture, was the gullible tourist. It has been said that their visions can be manipulated into “a closed self-perpetuating system of illusions” by professionals such as media practitioners, travel agents, tour guides, and the like (Boorstin, 1992; and see Urry, 2002, p. 7). The notion of touristic dupes (just like cultural dupes) has been much debated, however, whether the tourist is gullible or sophisticated is irrelevant to my account of tourism as a system of propaganda simply because my focus here is what tourism does, not what the tourist does. On the one hand, just because there is a propaganda system it does not follow that tourists would ultimately become “victims” of such propaganda. On the other hand, smart tourists do not prevent the presence of the propaganda system either. This is to say, treating tourism as a propaganda system, I am not indicating any degree of determinism either on the tourist end or on the system end. This is consistent with my disposition to see propaganda as a social space.
Distinct from other forms of popular culture, mass tourism involves mass human movement, “representing one of the largest peacetime movements of people, goods, services and money in human history” (Greenwood, 1972, p. 81). A related attribute is that tourism is a spatial practice, touring across space. Providing popular culture is the popular site of propaganda, mass mobility and space as two markers of tourism point to a mass communication system that is somewhat parallel to Propaganda de Fide, the archetypical propaganda network in the West. This leads me to argue that modern mass tourism can be better understood as a propaganda system from a communication perspective. I refer to it as tourism-propaganda framework (TPF). TPF somehow is analogous to the missionary system of the catholic church. Just as catholic missionaries propagandized the God’s words by traveling, so tourists propagate all sorts of ideologies nationally and internationally through domestic and foreign tours. This is partly because the vast flow of tourists means the circulation of ideas carried by the tourists (Appadurai, 1996) and partly because touristic flows are subject to prevailing ideologies. A new framework of tourism, TPF is meant to pull tourism out of the realm of the sensuous, relocating it in the realm of Representation, or that of ideology.

Revisiting tourism studies: the three filters

Existing social and cultural theories of tourism have been largely developed through abstraction of tourist motivations, experiences and senses, not the essence/totality of tourism itself, or the system of tourism. In that sense, what some refer to as the sociology of tourism looks rather like the sociology of tourists. As a ramification of the tourist-orientation, the study of tourism has placed too much emphasis on varied
experiences of tourists, losing the big picture of tourism as an amalgam of mass culture, mass mobility, and mass communication in shaping community and society. Therefore, revisiting the bulk of academic literature on tourism for the purpose of studying mass communication at the macro level requires a careful plan.

Inspired by Herman and Chomsky’s (1988/2008) propaganda model, my strategy for developing the TPF is a similar one: to illustrate how modern tourism becomes a propaganda system, I focus on “filters,” or some characteristic mechanisms by which Representation is disseminated through the tourism network. This is to say, my conceptual grasp of tourism is organized and tied by the idea of filter/filtering. In reviewing the principal concepts of tourism studies, I identified three filters: the organized tourist gaze, staged authenticity, and determined routes. This is by no means an exhaustive list as it only sketches out the systematic “filters” of tourism operating for legitimating and propagating the Representation. There are many other mechanisms and apparatuses of crucial importance in this regard such as museuming. The three filters are chosen only because these have been frequently engaged and vigorously debated by scholars. As such, the three-filter scheme seeks not to describe the tourism system, but to provoke, calling for a reconstruction of tourism at the site of ideology.

The organized tourist gaze. Hardly can any attempt of mapping out tourism literature evade John Urry’s seminal idea of the tourist gaze. Derived from Foucault’s (1975) medical gaze, the tourist gaze is conceptualized as an organized, systematized and institutionalized way of seeing (Urry, 2002). In the tourist gaze, pleasure, nostalgic memory, sensuality, historical sense and aesthetic taste that are mediated by representations (e.g. travel books, tourism advertisements, TV programs, fictions) and
(re)shaped by discourses (e.g. education, history, politics) are reproduced in the touristic site, and about the same time producing new meanings (Urry, 1992). So the tourist gaze is a site of ideology per se. In an interview, Urry articulated the ideological nature of the gaze, saying, “there are all sorts of dominant ideologies which surround travel and tourism and these dominant ideologies presuppose various kinds of visual gazes” (Franklin, 2001, p. 121). MacCannell (2001) also remarks that the construction of the tourist gaze is “fully ideological” (p. 35). However, ideology is not what Urry’s narrative is about; visualism is his analytical focus.

Had Urry paid more attention to institutional power behind visual modalities and moved beyond semiotics to the realm of ideology, the analytical framework of the tourist gaze would have been more powerful. In original accounts of the Foucauldian gaze, new institutions alongside the emergent institutional power are of paramount importance for producing, legitimating and propagating those gazes. For example, the development of the asylum advanced the gaze of madness (Foucault, 1988) and likewise, the advent of the clinic and the formation of the medical gaze (Foucault, 1975), the birth of prison and the panoptic gaze (Foucault, 1977). Unfortunately, such analysis of power, institutions and their dynamics has been largely missing in Urry’s work.

The tourist-centered approach of tourism studies inevitably includes a chapter on human agency. Among many criticisms surrounding the tourist gaze, the most influential one is MacCannell’s (2001) “second gaze,” which depicts a free and critical tourist, hence a critical gaze. MacCannell reads a great deal of determinism in what he refers to as the “Urry Gaze,” ranging from the tourist’s motivation, site/sight choice to sightseeing and interpretation. For MacCannell (2001), the first (Urry) gaze, though popular and
deceptive, is superficial and can be readily seen through by tourists, who will, then, cast the second gaze, a critical one upon the unseen. Cloke and Perkins (1998) likewise argue that tourists are able to counter the effects of tourism propaganda by using propaganda material in a creative and unintended way. In contrast to the agency-proponents, Dash and Cater (2015) emphasize the inaccessibility of the Real by tourists, suggesting that even MacCannell’s second gaze is hopeless. In response, Urry, too, rejects the singularity of the tourist gaze, advocating a multiplicity (Franklin, 2001). What the Urry-MacCannell debate informs the current study is the ideologically manipulative nature of the tourist gaze upon which both authors agree. The notion of the tourist gaze points to a potential hidden space of propaganda. The substantial divergence of their debate is rather about how powerful the organizing power of the tourist gaze is and whether tourists are gullible. This reminds us of the famous and long-lasting strong-or-weak-effect debate and a wholesale of human agency surrounding popular media and media effects in the field of communication study.

The tourist gaze proved to be political in some forms of tourism. In studying Vietnam’s border tourism designed for Chinese tourists, for example, Chan (2006) argues that the discourse of the Vietnam-China relations (re)produces and authorizes both the tourist gaze and the host gaze. And propaganda surrounding the historical tensions of the two nations occupies an important position in that political discourse creates the dynamics in the tourist–host contact manifested in the “ferocious” Vietnamese host gaze. In a study of Israeli backpackers in India, Maoz (2005) reveals a somehow Orientalistic Israeli gaze which sees local Indians as feminine, primitive, vulnerable and dirty. Maoz links the Israeli gaze to post-imperialism and post-colonialism, in passing, by a note that
the Israeli tourists colonist-wise created their own enclaves in India with name like “hof Tel Aviv (Tel Aviv beach)” (p. 227).

*Staged authenticity.* Equally influential in the literature of tourism studies is MacCannell’s notion of “staged authenticity.” Unlike Urry’s sensuous orientation, MacCannell focuses on the tourist’s motivation and his master metaphor is pilgrimage. MacCannell (1973; 1999) assumes that the modern tourist is a pilgrim-like character, who is motivated to travel by a desire for authentic experiences just as a pilgrim pursues the ultimate truth. To cater to the needs of tourists, the tourism industry seeks to turn a touristic site into sacred space through a multistage of what MacCannell terms as “site sacralization.”1 The analytical structure of staged authenticity is twofold: a need and a strategy.

The need, or what makes tourists leave home for touristic attractions, has been central to the study of tourism. Early studies have seen tourists seeking a radical break with everyday life and mundane things, whether driven by a kind of media-instilled “daydreaming and fantasy” (Urry, 2002), a “desire for contrast and escape” (Rojek & Urry, 1997, p. 1), or an instinct longing for “foreignness” (Kracauer, 1995). Others like MacCannell also articulated the nexus between pilgrimage and tourism (Clifford, 1992; Cohen, 1988; Graburn, 1977; Shields, 1990). What really differentiates MacCannell’s concept of staged authenticity from others is not the conceptualization of the tourist need, but the strategy embodied in the attributive adjective “staged.” It involves a series of deliberate manipulations of space, touristic experience and representations.

First and foremost, “staged” implies a spatial manipulation. MacCannell sees tourism as a social space. But unlike Lefebvre, MacCannell uses the term “social space”
in a broad way, simply referring to it as the social function of space. For MacCannell (1973), staging in tourism is specifically about manipulation of a particular set of space, namely, the front region and the back region. Typically, such manipulation involves “a series of front regions decorated to appear as back regions, and back regions set up to accommodate outsiders” (p. 602). Note that MacCannell’s idea is derived from Erving Goffman’s theory about social performance and space. It is Goffman (1956) who dichotomizes social space into “front” and “back.” Both regions are institutionalized as each designates socially pre-established routines for certain social roles. For example, “performers appear in the front and back regions; the audience appears only in the front region; and the outsiders are excluded from both regions” (Goffman, 1956, p. 90). Also note that Goffman’s theory involves two regions and three types of social actor. The possible permutations of the five manipulatable elements make Goffman’s theory illuminatingly playful. For instance, a false social front for the audience, or an inauthentic back region for the outsiders. Both cases point to a lie. And this is where MacCannell’s (1973) “arrangements of social space” and “staged authenticity” came from.

Having situated Goffman’s front-back schema in the tourism setting, MacCannell (1973) then points out that the manipulation of social space is indeed aimed at manipulating touristic experience, saying that:

A mere experience may be mystified, but a touristic experience is always mystified, and the lie contained in the touristic experience, moreover, presents itself as a truthful revelation, as the vehicle that carries the onlooker behind false fronts into reality. The idea here is that a false back is more insidious and dangerous than a false front, or an inauthentic demystification of social life is not merely a lie but a superlie, the kind that drips with sincerity (p. 599).
Eerily reminiscent of the Western notion of propaganda, “superlie” suggests an insincere manipulation of representations. MacCannell (1973) also noted that tourists have a marked tendency to enter the back region for authentic experience but what they see is rather staged, faked representations of social reality.

MacCannell’s staged authenticity is especially helpful in understanding the propaganda potential of tourism. For example, guided tours to the abandoned testing site of nuclear weapons in Qinghai, a remote province of northwestern China, has lately gained popularity, resulting the emergence of a tourist city called “City of the Atom” (yuanzi cheng). The formerly prohibited secret military facility that witnessed the births of the first Chinese atomic and hydrogen bombs is now open to domestic tourists but still closed to foreign visitors. The tour, supposedly taking tourists to the “back” region, only features staged relics in addition to the newly built memorial and monument. The site has an immense symbolic value for it embodies the “Two Bombs and One Satellite Spirit” (liangdan yixing jingshen), a propaganda campaign to represent the great achievements of new China deemed to be the pride and honor of the nation.

MacCannell (1973) remarked that a tour designed to invite tourists to the back region is educational since it promises to provide outsiders with insiders’ insight and experience. Since the back region open to tourists is typically staged with “an aura of superficiality” (p. 595), or inauthenticity which is often perceived as authenticity, it actually directs tourists to a propaganda space that MacCannell referred to as “a new kind of social space” (p. 596). This is, perhaps, why in my interviews with many officials from Chinese tourism authorities, they repeatedly pointed out that Red Tourism is not unique
to China; they see staged inauthentic touristic sites for propaganda purposes everywhere in the world. One official argued that the White House tour in the US is a good example of Red Tourism because he believes it promotes and propagandizes American values (interview, June 4, 2015).

Manipulating representation is both the means and result of manipulations of space and tourist experiences. In examining an alienated tourism in Paris, MacCannell (1999) pointed out that some very unattractive places in Paris such as the morgue, the sewers, and the stock exchange were transformed into tourist attractions to satisfy some kind of “alienated” needs of the tourists by manipulations of representations. MacCannell (1999) sees those sites as “the concrete material representations of our most important institutions” (p. 57). The representations after the make-over secrete a mediated modernity that communicates to the tourists powerfully. An accumulative effect of such manipulations in tourism may lead to a change in tourists’ worldview. For example, MacCannell (1999) remarks a significant change of modern tourists, who transcend nature as “a force opposing man” to “something we must try to preserve” (p. 81).

_Determined routes._ In addition to the realms of sense and motivation, a realm of culture can also be found in the anthropology of travel. It has a markedly different vocabulary, narratives, and foci that are disharmonious with the Western-middle-class centric paradigm of tourism studies. As such, this strand of scholarship has been not as oft-quoted as the aforementioned conceptual constructs in the study of mass tourism. Nevertheless, it is critical to our understanding of Red Tourism for the work sutures culture, history, class, identity, and politics with travel. Clifford’s notion of routes/roots is a prime example.
For Clifford (1992), cultures are sites of both dwelling (roots) and traveling (routes), all of which dispel the travel myth that tourists travel in unconstrained ways. Clifford contends that the touristic circuits and routes are determined by cultural and historical roots. In other words, different travelers (e.g. privileged bourgeois travelers, oppressed immigrant and migrant laborers, pilgrims, etc.) produce and follow different well-trodden routes. Clifford’s anthropological view of travel calls for taking tourist discourse broadly and seriously on the one hand, and reaffirms that tourism is a site of ideology with many layers on the other hand.

The first layer is culture. Clifford suggests that in some cases travel defines us culturally even more than dwelling does. At the very beginning of his influential essay Traveling cultures, Clifford (1992) quotes C. L. R. James’ Beyond a boundary (1984), saying, what really matter is “not where you are or what you have, but where you come from, where you are going and the rate at which you are getting there” (p. 96). Referring to the traveler as “the intercultural figure,” Clifford regards travel as a series of intercultural encounters inasmuch as it means to leave one group’s core to one’s periphery (another’s core). This is why Appaduri (1996) refers to the global flow of travelers as “cultural traffic” (p. 28). Clifford goes further, arguing that intercultural interpretation in such touristic encounters is necessarily politically charged. But travel is also productive, producing “cultural expressions” such as travelogues, comportments, books and so forth (Clifford, 1992, p. 108).

Another layer is power. It is deeply interconnected with what Clifford (1992) calls “historical taintedness” manifested in “gendered, racial bodies, class privilege, specific means of conveyance, beaten paths, agents, frontiers, documents, and the like” (p. 110).
In Paul Gilroy’s (1993) account of black Atlantic diaspora, it is political, racialized and class power that constructed different types of traveling such as coerced travel by slaves, recreational travel by whites, and the third type by the Pullman porter. In tourism studies, the dominant narrative of hegemonic tourist discourse led Bruner (1991) to argue that “[i]t (tourism) is as much a structure of power as it is a structure of meaning” (p. 240). Later, in examining historical tourism in Ghana, Bruner (1996) notes a considerable controversy over the representation of slavery in the castles for Dutch, British and African American tourists. This is because each group of the tourists has a specific agenda predetermined by their interpretations of particular dimensions of history. To minister varied political interests, the local tour guide developed a strategy to take different groups of the foreign tourists to different places of the castles with different representations, thusly, different symbolic power. Sometimes such power can be brutal. For example, the powerful countries’ fantasies about the Other have created loops of sex tours in Asian destinations (Appaduri, 1996). Sometimes that power is about class. In assessing different kinds of romantic tourism in England, Walter (1982) has noted that most tourists are concentrated within a very limited area, whereas the privileged tourists consume the scarce places. Interestingly, Walter suggested that the tourists’ choices of romantic places were largely due to persuasion of middle-class professional opinion-formers who were part of “an effective propaganda machine” (p. 300). This is to say, the popular routes of romantic tourism were partly a result of popular propaganda.

The third layer is education. It is in line with one of the characteristics of xuanchuan. In the xuanchuan model, to propagandize, to a great extent, is to educate. Historians have valorized the educative role of travel in the West, noting that travelers
acquired certain knowledge by traveling certain routes. Meade (1914) described the continental tour in the eighteenth century Europe as “an indispensable form of education for young men in the higher ranks of society” (p. 3). Meade suggested that although the tourist routes could be varied depending on personal interests and other factors, they did follow a pattern, generally conforming to the taste of Englishmen. To put it another way, the English aristocracy held hegemonic power in the discourse of the Grand Tour in terms of prescribed routes. In addition to foreign tours, domestic travels by British landed classes were also believed to be educational (Moir, 1964/2013). Like propaganda, the effects of travel as educational agency were incalculable; but undeniably, travel had become an important part of informal education in British by the end of the Industrial Revolution (Dent, 1975).

Overlapped with culture, power, and education, politics is another important layer of the route metaphor. Contemporary research in tourism, heritage tourism in particular, has demonstrated that the educational function of tourism can be highly political in a sense that the former educational agency now transforms into the propaganda machinery. This is why Hewison (1987) was strongly critical of what he terms “the heritage industry,” denoting massively manufactured and widely distributed bogus history through heritage tourism. Hewison assumed some kind of propaganda-like anti-democratic feature with heritage tourism. Calling Hewison’s argument “condescending,” Urry (2002) disagrees because he sees heritage tourism as something like xuanxuan, propagandistic yet not necessarily mendacious. In examining the Wigan Pier, a heritage center in the UK, Urry (2002) argues that the site conveys “a non-elite popular culture,” contends that the touristic attraction is “scholarly and educational” and concludes that compared to other
media representations of history such as biographies, historical novels and dramas, heritage tourism is no more misleading (p. 102). In recent study of a dark tourism route in Northern Ireland, Skinner (2016) shows that the walking tour is used to propagandize Republican ideology. Rather than manufacturing historical representations, or “staged authenticity,” manipulating tourists’ movement through the guided walking route became an effective means for such propaganda. I will elaborate the political dimension of tourism further in the next chapter as a history of political tourism in China unfolds.

Besides the theories of the organized tourist gaze, staged authenticity, and determined routes, other ideas in critical studies of tourism also point out that the site of tourism is ideologically powerful and manipulative. Revealing the role of popular myth and fantasy in the sociocultural construction of tourist sight, for example, Rojek (1997) sees tourism as an “index” of representational cultures. According to this theory, a tourist sightseeing Notre Dame de Paris would also search for, in his mind, how it is “indexed” in popular culture, say, Victor Hugo’s novel “The hunchback of Notre-Dame” or the film, to (re)construct the sight. Rojek stresses what he refers to as the “inner journey” of the tourist. An equivalent journey to the physical one in the inner world, inner journey designates a sense making process of the tourist through mobilizing popular cultural myths, or popular propaganda. For Rojek, the tourist experience involves two types of journeys to both physical space and abstract space. Together, they frame the touristic sight.
MASS COMMUNICATION: AN ANALOGY WITH JOURNALISM

Tourism is an “ism,” in other words, a site of ideology. Theories of the organized tourist gaze, staged authenticity and determined routes indicate that. What I will attempt to argue beyond this nature of tourism is that, tourism is an ism that is analogous to journalism. The two isms are similar in many respects including their persuasive/communicative nature, educational/informational role, and authenticity/objectivity concern by the audience. The analogy leads me to argue that tourism can form or transform into a propaganda system under some sociopolitical circumstance just as news media can. However, there is a seemingly insurmountable difficulty with this analogy: journalism is a political institution (Cook, 2006; Domke, 2004; Nerone, 2015) but tourism seems not to be. The issue must be addressed before I put tourism and journalism side by side for comparison.

The overriding problem about institution and structure of power can be simplified like this: journalism is a profession but tourism is not; or alternatively, reduced to a simple question: journalists produce journalism but is it fair to say likewise that tourists produce tourism? It depends. From the perspective of industry, there is no such a group of professionals that can be identified as the producer of tourism. There are many instead, including government officials, professionals from travel/tourism agencies, tour operators, parks, museums, and the like. They are equally important to the development of the tourism industry. What’s more, there is no unified professionalism and norm for the professionals to embrace in tourism except for those for conducting regular business. All of these are nothing like journalism, which is highly institutionalized with generally accepted norms and professionalism.
But the tourist is the producer of tourism from a cultural studies perspective. Distinct from other forms of popular culture such as television, film, popular music, fiction and journalism, the core of tourism is spatial practice. The meaning of tourism is only delivered through tourists’ spatial practices such as touring and gazing. The role of the tourist resembles that of what de Certeau (1984) metaphorically refers to as “the walker,” who “transforms each spatial signifier into something else” (p. 98). This is to say, tourism is produced by the spatial practice of the tourist, not some kind of professional. Without tourists, tourism is meaningless and nonexistent as there are only natural scenes and historical sites. This is to say, the real producer of tourism is the tourist. This may help explain why tourism researchers have such a pervasive and persistent fascination with the tourist rather than “tour” or “ism”.

The issue can be addressed differently, or interculturally. While tourism as a site of ideology does not have its formal institutions in the West, it is not necessarily the case in other parts of the world. In China, for example, tourism has a hierarchical system that parallels the nation’s media system. The China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) is the organization in charge of tourism affairs at the central government level. Like the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT), CNTA is directly affiliated to the State Council and also has its bureaus at the provincial level. The Office of National Red Tourism Coordination Group (ONRTCG), usually referred to as the “Red Office” (hong ban), is an internal department of CNTA in charge of Red Tourism development. Interestingly, the head of the Red Office is not from CNTA, but the deputy director from National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), a more powerful government agency responsible for planning and control over the Chinese
economy on the macro level. The head of CNTA is the deputy director of the Red Office. Nevertheless, the organizational structure of the Red Office is much more complicated than that. Conference highlights of the Red Office show that in addition to NDRC and CNTA, the leadership of the Red Office comes from many other government departments and agencies consisting of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China (previously the Propaganda Department), the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the Ministry of Transport, China Railway, the Ministry of Culture, Civil Aviation Administration of China, and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (Information Center of CNTA, 2015).

It now seems to become clear that given government control and institutionalization, tourism in China can be seen as a system similar to the country’s news media system, but not elsewhere in the world. Tourism in Western democratic countries, for example, seems to be a self-organized, independent communication system insofar as there are no formal institutions and mechanisms to govern the tourists’ behavior and tourists do not form any institution. However plausible, this is not what I mean. I do not want to make a special case of China’s tourism against the tourism of the rest of world. Instead, I argue that tourism can be better understood, by and large, as a propaganda system due to its enormous communicative power even if not institutional power. And this communicative power of tourism is comparable to that of journalism. Let me explain.

First of all, lacking formal institutional power does not mean lacking communicative power. Take the public sphere for instance. Theoretically constructed as a
connecting space between the private and the state for the public to participate in political debates, the public sphere is believed to produce enormous communicative power for democracy even without being institutionalized. Put simply, the public sphere is self-organized. In light of the idea of the xuanchuan-public sphere as noted earlier, in tourism a similar discursive space or sphere produced by tourists exists. Tourists do not have their own institution, but a “sphere” instead. Translated this into de Certeau’s (1984) language, tourists do not have “strategies” but they develop “tactics.” Nevertheless, considering the bred-in-the-bone “frivolous” image (or imaginary in a Lacanian sense) of the tourist, hardly can anyone possibly argue that tourists in that sphere will act like the Habermasian public which characteristically engages in serious talk about a range of societal problems. Nevertheless, the communicative power of the “tourist sphere” cannot be underestimated either. The vast flows of tourists, ideas, cultural goods, and services along with the markers of class and lifestyles make tourism comparable to journalism in terms of its massive flow of information.

And that information is not just any kind; it involves the kind that matters to public intelligence. At the heart of tourism or journalism is classic liberalism alongside a particular form of practice, whether free movement or free expression. What is extremely critical to these practices is what Nerone (2015) refers to as “public intelligence,” designating a combination of a special kind of information and the capacity for transforming individuals/people/self into the public. Public intelligence is so crucial to the liberal thinking of modern mass communication that it can thread through John Dewey’s idea of community and Habermas’ idea of the public sphere. While this pivotal role of journalism can be easily comprehended, linking tourism to public intelligence
requires much deliberation, perhaps, also imagination. This is in part why I started this chapter with a lengthy discussion on popular culture. In particular I have argued that popular culture is the popular site for propaganda. The great debate surrounding the culture industry also indicates that popular cultural forms like tourism matter a lot to public life. Still, it would be idle to compare tourism with journalism as much as to compare tourists with journalists. Tantalizing as this may sound, at least on one precise point such a comparison is very revealing.

That point is about the Real. It is “authenticity” in tourism and “objectivity” in journalism. One thing that tourism distinguishes from other popular cultural texts and practices is something one may call “touristic authenticity,” a parallel description to journalistic objectivity in journalism. Touristic authenticity has two dimensions: the tourist experience (perception) and the site authenticity (objectivity). Wang (1999) argues that independent of the site objectivity, the perceived authenticity by the tourist is provoked by a “more authentic and more freely self-expressed” feeling activated in touristic encounters in the absence of constraints of everyday life (pp. 351-352). In other words, tourists see sights more authentic and real compared to their second-hand experiences. This is understandable considering the ideology of “Seeing Is Believing.” Similarly, news audiences also demand a certain degree of authenticity. In journalism studies, scholars usually refer to it as objectivity. Like authenticity to Europe-centric tourism studies, objectivity has been central to the development of the Western culture of journalism (Nerone, 2015; Schudson, 2001). Just as authenticity is the touristic experience in tourism, objectivity in journalism is merely the journalistic account of facts. Theoretically speaking, touristic authenticity is largely staged according to certain tactics.
(e.g. spatial manipulation, simulation/simulacrum), whereas objectivity in journalism is crafted by some kinds of journalistic practices (e.g., news balancing, sourcing) or “rituals” in Tuchman’s (1972) description. Put simply, both authenticity and objectivity are not a matter of the Real, but a matter of reconstruction of meaning within a society.

They point to a shared realm of mediated representation between tourism and journalism. They, then, become even more comparable in light of theories of representation. Recall that the theories (here in a broader sense as organized ways of thinking) in tourism propose that touristic representation is staged by spatial manipulation, perceived by organized ways of seeing and even the touristic route to the representation is highly determined by cultural and historical roots. Uncannily familiar, these theories do speak a lot for journalism too. Both staged authenticity and news framing, for example, describe the effective mechanisms for manipulating a given communicating text. News framing is about foregrounding some aspects of reality to communicate while omitting the rest (Entman, 1993; 2004; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). This is just another way saying “staging.” In other words, framed reality in journalism can be explained by staged authenticity in tourism, and vice versa. Entman (1993) further notes that:

[T]he frame determines whether most people notice and how they understand and remember a problem, as well as how they evaluate and choose to act upon it. The notion of framing thus implies that the frame has a common effect on large portions of the receiving audience, though it is not likely to have a universal effect on all (p. 54).
To translate the quoted paragraph: News readers’ gaze is organized by news frames. Hegemony and the indexing theory in media studies suggest that the making of news frames is not random but follows certain patterns consistent with the views of powerful elites (Gitlin, 1980; Hallin, 1987; Bennett, 1990; 2011). Translating this point into the language of tourism, news frames do follow highly determined routes whereby social and political power is distributed. In fact, many of principal concepts of tourism studies, when translated, more or less correspond to classic ones available on the reading list of the sociology of the press.

In spite of the similarities in the manipulation of representations, however, there is a glorious hiatus between tourism and journalism that cannot be touched on lightly. Notably, tourism does not have some fundamental functions journalism supposed to have, namely, “watchdog” and “gatekeeper.” It reconfirms that tourists are not journalists and have no institutional power. But beyond that, tourism is a powerful communication system similar to journalism at the macro level as both operate as a system for social integration. In studying journalism history, Nerone (2015) describes the mechanism of that system as communication “by sifting through information in a way that can be presented publicly as both worthy of guiding policy and as the sort of thinking that really represents the way the public thinks” (p. 1). Curran (1978) argues that what the system does is to propagate collective values and to legitimate the dominant ideology. In tourism studies, Matthews and Richter (1991) refer to this integrating function of tourism as “political socialization.” In light of all these, tourism can be seen as a propaganda system. Drawn from empirical data, my later narratives and analysis of the case of Red Tourism will shed additional light on this.
CONCLUSIONS

Treating tourism as a cultural practice, scholars have complicated the common notion of tourism as a kind of business. Rojek and Urry (1997) point out a paradigm of cultural analysis while rejecting “a specifically social science of tourism” (p. 5). The treatment of tourism as a cultural practice, while bringing cultural thinking into the study of tourism, has an inherent deficiency that might prove to be its Achilles’ heel: it renders the already vague and inclusive term “tourism” even much vaguer and all-embracing in light of being “cultural.” A useful tactical move might be to re-contextualize the “cultural.” This is what Rojek and Urry attempted to do. Nevertheless, they opted for the realm of human senses, which appears to be rather a devolution to Urry’s earlier idea of the “tourist gaze” than a real “cultural” revolution. To tackle the problem, I have looked further back, revisiting the culture industry from which the mass tourism industry stemmed.

Although never using the exact word “propaganda” in their narratives, Horkheimer and Adorno (2002; see also Adorno, 1991) do articulate the propagandistic nature of the culture industry by suggesting it is deceptive and homogenous. They note that the public mentality is a part of the production of the culture industry. For Horkheimer and Adorno, the culture industry is an ideological filter through which once diverse contents and discourses were harmonized (they illustrate this point in the example of jazzing up Mozart, p. 101) as dissent was blocked and removed, resulting in ideological hegemony, a type of dictatorship to some extent. In the film industry, they refer to this filtering mechanism as “the guideline,” a phenomenally popular term in the
lexicon of China’s propaganda. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, an important consequence of the culture industry is the dismantling of the public. They suggested that this process of propagandizing is somewhat like education, noting, “Donald Duck in the cartoons and the unfortunate victim in real life receive their beatings so that the spectators can accustom themselves to theirs” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 110). Nevertheless, scholars from the field of cultural studies, particularly those from the Birmingham School assumed a more intelligent and critical-thinking capable public than the one in Horkheimer and Adorno’s analysis (e.g. Hall, Hobson, Lowe & Willis, 1980; Hall & Jefferson 1975).

The vigorous debates on the culture industry have been inevitably passed onto the tourism industry with the similar bone of contention: the gullibility of the tourist. This is eerily reminiscent of the strong-versus-weak/non effect debate in early media effects studies and propaganda studies. But such debates have less to do with my view of tourism as a propaganda system because whether tourists are smart or gullible is independent of the presence of such system. This is quite understandable considering that there is a powerful news Propaganda system in China, and its existence is irrelevant to the intelligence of the Chinese public. What is relevant to China’s propaganda systems, whether news media or tourism, is its history, culture, and politics. Arguably, one of the best locations to examine the dynamism of China’s propaganda is Red Tourism thanks to its hybridity and visuality.

But there is an enormous gap between tourism studies and propaganda studies. For one thing, analysis of ideology and politics has been significantly missing in tourism studies; for another, propaganda researchers’ marked preferences for the news media and
communication system leave almost no space for any serious inquiry into tourism. Also systematically lacking in social/critical studies of tourism is the role of state. This is in part because scholarship on tourism is Anglo-Western centric and in the Western democratic countries tourism is commonly seen as a laissez-faire business, private and individualized (Matthews & Richter, 1991). As such, discussion of politics in tourism development is normally limited to the level of local authorities, without considering much about state power, let alone state Propaganda. To fill the gap theoretically, I proposed TPF. It is a mass communication-oriented theoretical construct remodeled from the Congregatio de Propaganda fide, the archetypical system of propaganda in the West with the substitutes of missionaries for tourists, of religion for ideology. At the core of both systems is a communicatively powerful form of spatial practice, characterized by human mobility and social communication. As a critical mode of tourism inquiry, though preliminary and lacking in sophistication, TPF innovatively connects three different modes of thinking, namely, the public sphere, the culture industry, and xunchuan practice, integrating the three discursive spaces into a triumvirate-sphere of popular culture in which mass tourism is viewed as a mass propaganda system.

To end this chapter, an anecdote from Mao would be illuminating. In 1944, in conversation with US Foreign Service officer John S. Service on the topic of propagandizing American democracy in China, Mao said, “Every American soldier in China should be a walking and talking advertisement for democracy” (Davies, 2012, p. 216; Esherick, 1974, pp. 302-303). This is the first part of the story, which has been widely circulated as evidence of Mao’s early positive attitude toward Western democracy. More revealing, perhaps, is the rarely-told second part. According to historical records
published in an internal publication of the Party, the story then goes like this: Sensing the flavor of propaganda, Service rejected Mao’s proposal, stating that the US Army cannot work as a propaganda force. Then Mao explained what he meant was not to let the American soldiers to do any propaganda work, but simply to be there presenting themselves (The Party History Research Center, 1983). For Mao, the presence of the American travelers themselves is propagandistic enough. The point is that the traveler can be a powerful agent for propaganda and presumably, tourism can be a propaganda agency. This particular way of thinking about tourism, the treatment of tourism as a propaganda system, is one of the focal points of my dissertation research and the subsequent chapters are meant to illustrate this point. Moving from theories of propaganda and tourism, I will present a brief social history of political tourism in China in the next chapter within the TPF by stressing those overlooked yet critical elements in the study of tourism, namely, the state, ideology, and politics.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE CULTURAL ROOTS OF RED TOURISM

Culture has countless meanings. Williams proposed a triad framework for analysis of culture. For Williams (1998), culture is a dynamic process that takes place in three dimensions: the ideological dimension (“ideal”), the historical dimension (“documentary”) and the social dimension (“a particular way of life”). Therefore, for Williams, a comprehensive analysis of culture should be partly ideological, partly historical and partly social. I apply this analytical framework for my historical account of Red Tourism of which the culture of xuanhuan is part.

Instead of treating Red Tourism as a type of political tourism, I see it as what I call “mass political tourism.” It distinguishes the existing idea of “political tourism” with an added “mass.” Mass herein has two specific meanings: first, it denotes the massive space that tourists travel; second, it designates the main body of the tourists as the mass. In other words, the majority of the tourists engaging in political tours in China are not partisans (e.g. leftists, conservatives, the Red Guards, CPC members) but regular tourists like you and me and they travel all over the country.

My insistence on using “mass” reflects the general argument of this chapter: political tourism in China is not a conglomeration of many types of political tours. Rather, Chinese political tourism is a well-established social institution throughout Chinese history. Like journalism in the West, Chinese political tourism has its own guiding philosophies, bureaucratic institutions, and communication pathways. Seen as “dark tourism” in Eastern Europe (Light, 2000), communist heritage tourism has evolved into an industry only in China. Also, the Chinese tourists’ perception of Red Tourism is generally positive
Together, it suggests a different paradigm of political tourism where the mass matters.

This chapter is a historical study of Red Tourism. Against a backdrop of a Chinese philosophy of tourism, it explores how Red Tourism originated, evolved and transformed from the separate ideas of “Red” and “Tourism,” into a Red Tourism industry with an overwhelming emphasis on political thinking along with the emergence of institutional power. The chapter has three purposes. The first is to bring the interplay between tourism and propaganda, as I have discussed in previous chapters, from theory to practice. The second is to unravel the political orientation of Chinese tourism and how mass political tourism has been institutionalized in the case of Red Tourism. The third purpose is to reveal what “ism” is behind the powerful rise of Red Tourism.

Three sources inform this study. First and foremost, I drew from my own fieldwork in multiple locations in China between 2011 to 2016, an extensive data collection containing archives, collected documents, notes, photographs, and interviews. A total of sixteen in-depth interviews were conducted. For this chapter, I drew particularly from five respondents who were senior officials with ministerial government agencies responsible for Red Tourism. All the interviewees’ names have been anonymized throughout. Second, I analyzed popular discourse on political tourism in China. In examining the government discourse of Red Tourism, I delved into reports, editorials, and commentaries that I culled from the People's Daily. The newspaper was selected because the People’s Daily represents the viewpoints of the central government (Wu, 1994). Third, supple-
mental to primary sources, Chinese scholarship in tourism studies and what some Chinese scholars call “Red Tourism studies,” which has been largely unknown in the West, was also examined to shed some light on Chinese mass political tourism.

My narrative is organized chronologically. It starts from what I refer to as a “pre-history” of tourism in imperial China. It traces back Chinese philosophical ideas about “tourism,” a social practice that is different from what we mean by “tourism” today but has significantly contributed to the popular imagination of tourism conjured by modern Chinese intellectuals. Then it follows a brief history of the modern Chinese tourism industry in Republican China. It is considered “brief” not so much as I wrote briefly as the emerging industry only survived less than three decades. The majority of texts of this chapter concentrates on the PRC period since the establishment of the party-state in 1949. This is a period where a recent history of Red Tourism is located. Based on ideological transformations of tourism, I divided the PRC period into four sub-periods, namely, the New China period (1949-1965), the Cultural Revolution period (1966-1976), the early reform period (1977-1989) and the post-1989 period (1990-present) with an emphasis on the last one.

AN OVERLAPPED PRE-HISTORY OF TOURISM WITH XUANCHUAN

The history of Chinese tourism, though written by different authors, reads partly like a history of Chinese philosophy, partly like a history of Chinese literati, partly like a history of Chinese emperorship, but nothing like a typical tourist-centered modern tourism study. Nevertheless, I would argue that it is the triad of the three principal roles, philosopher, literati, and emperor that defines the identity of Chinese tourism as something
truly serious, powerfully communicative and critically informative, all of which differ substantially from the modern notion of tourism as something personally pleasurable. It is something that renders early Chinese tourism essentially propagandistic. It is not an exaggeration that an ancient history of Chinese tourism is roughly equivalent to that of Chinese propaganda. Since tourism in imperial China mainly refers to travel made by social elites, which is different from modern tourism, I would call this part of history of Chinese tourism a pre-history.

The philosophical foundations

Let’s start with the philosophers. The connection between tourism and xuanchuan manifests in the fact that the first generation of propagandists, commonly known as Pre-Qin philosophers, were also considered the first group of tourism theorists. For example, Li and Zhao (2001) regard Confucius and Zhuang Zi as “the founders” of Chinese tourism theory (p.70). Confucius believed the ultimate goal of tourism was about “self-cultivation, building family, ruling a state and conquering the world” (xiushen 修身, qijia 齊家, zhiguo 治国, ping tianxia 平天下) (Wang & Zhang, 1998, p.88), which sounds exactly like xuanchuan. As a matter of fact, this is how Wang (1998) frames his historical narrative of tourism in ancient China, which is partly a history of emperorship and partly a history of conquering by means of intelligence.

Peng (2006) has generalized five philosophical ideas of tourism in Chinese history. The five strands of thought on tourism deal with five philosophical propositions on critical matters, specifically, morality, filial piety, the meaning of practice, absolute freedom and the meaning of life. This is why a history of China’s tourism, to a great extent,
reads like a history of Chinese philosophy. Peng (2006) claims that in regard to tourism, “Confucianism was about governing the state (ru zhi guo儒治国), Buddhism about governing the soul (fo zhi xin 佛治心), and Taoism about governing the body (dao zhi shen 道治身)” (p. 14).

Two schools of thought are of paramount importance in later developments and perceptions of tourism. The first strand of thought from Confucius holds that tourism is a way to self-cultivation in that travelers can learn the cardinal virtues from the natural environment if they decipher the imaginative meaning in a figurative sense. It became what later was called the “figural virtue theory” (bi-de shuo 比德说). Many Chinese scholars hold that Confucius’ thought on tourism was utilitarian since for Confucius, the goal of tourism was to help achieve political ideals (Fan, Zhang & Wang, 2008). But Zhang (2008) argues that the Confucian view of tourism was an amalgam of the rational and the emotional.

In contrast, the second philosophical idea from Zhuang Zi seems fairly emotional. It assumes that like meditation, tourism is meant to totally free self from reality in order to obtain Tao. The theory was named as “carefree wandering” (xiaoyao you 逍遥游). It has been said indisputably that Taoism opposes Confucianism in this regard. Nevertheless, I would argue that Confucius and Zhuang Zi actually shared the same idea that tourism was an optimal way for self-improvement with the only difference that one preferred to interpret nature in relation to human nature and one was inclined to let the feeling freely flow to “activate” the human nature. Both Confucius and Zhuang Zi’s theories were ideology-oriented in that they deal particularly with world-views. And both can be seen as propaganda because they worked on propagating their world views.
Referring the two philosophical ideas as “Confucian tourism theory” and “Taoist tourism theory,” Wang and Zhang (1998) argue that however different, the two theories have “influenced and guided Chinese tourism practice” ever since (p.86). In academia, Chinese scholars have consistently studied tourism from the lens of philosophy as “throughout history, what they have been interested in are the dialogues between the tourist and nature, historical relics, and inquiries into the sentiment relations between human beings and Heaven and Earth” (Yu, 2005, p. 2). In that regard, literati played a primary role.

The literati concentration

Tourism in imperial China, by all accounts, was literati-centered. Referring to shi (士) as “the intelligentsia group” (zhishi qunti 知识群体), Peng (2006) pointed out that the shi consisted of the main body of tourists in the ancient (p.34). There are many terms in ancient Chinese written records that were associated with tourism, for example, yun-you (云游 wander), huan-you (宦游 travel made by official), xun-you (巡游 travel made by emperor), xuan-you (玄游 travel made by neo-Taoists), xian-you (仙游 travel for personal immortality), shi-you (释游 travel made by Buddhists), shi-lv (士旅 travel for securing an official position), etc. Each of these terms represents an ideology or a philosophy advocated by a certain group of Chinese literati. It is evident that tourists in Imperial China, though motivated by a variety of needs, whether for the pursuit of fame or for a sense of escapism, were largely depicted as the well-educated. Calling their work “a history of pathways combining those of acquisition and travel,” Wang and Zhang (1998)
suggested that tourism was an inseparable part of the Chinese literati life, preserving their identity as intelligentsia (p. 1).

The early history of Chinese tourism is a necessary part of that of *xuanchuan*. In the Spring and Autumn period, developments in transportation, trade, and the formation of early trade-centered cities along with the postal network led to the boom of *xuanchuan* practice and also the rise of tourism. Tourism as a social practice has intertwined with *xuanchuan* activities ever since then. *Kese* (客舍), a type of hostel provided by wealthy aristocrats to accommodate lobbyists (*shiren*, 士人), coexisted with the prototype of modern hostel for regular travelers. Wang (1998) notes that the most active tourists during this period were *shi*, who traveled to persuade those with power, mostly monarchs, to adopt their ideas. Chinese historian Qian Mu (钱穆, 1895-1990) (2001) characterized this period as “the lobbyist society” (*shoushi shehui* 游士社会) by the same token. Persuasion was the lobbyists’ profession and their achievements could only be assessed by the effects of their *xuanchuan* activities. Because of that, Wang and Zhang (1998) called tourism made by *shi* “utilitarian tourism” (*gongli de lvyou* 功利的旅游) (p. 79). That is, a Chinese history of *xuanchan* /propaganda necessarily involves the power relations between the powerful and the intelligent, where tourists played a role. From here, propagandists in Chinese minds had been typically associated with intelligentsia, imagined as educated, intelligent, usually mastering literature and traveling a lot. The image of propagandist as dishonest and insincere politicians in China is rather contemporary.

To prepare themselves for a career in the persuasion business, *shi* needed first to learn their skills, which also required frequent travel. In the grand narrative of Chinese
tourism, Confucius alongside his preaching was credited as “improving the taste and aesthetics of tourism” to the degree that pupils not only learned to appreciate natural scenes during their journey but also adopted a habit to explore the philosophy of life beyond the beauty (Wang & Zhang, 1998, p. 78).

The literary legacy of Chinese tourism also points to a realm of Chinese literati. “Landscape literature” (shanshui wenxue 山水文学) is a unique and representative genre of ancient Chinese literature, literally, “literature on mountains and waters.” The literary genre developed in accordance with the development of tourism in China and became a “representation of space” of Chinese tourism, to borrow a term from Lefebvre. In the eyes of Chinese literati, landscape never stands alone, but always signifies some kind of morality. Traditionally, Chinese people believe each natural phenomenon, a mountain or a river, articulates some aspects of human virtues that the tourist should learn from.

The emperorship association

Like propaganda, tourism in ancient China was also associated with emperorship and governance. Legends say, the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黄帝), the creator of the Chinese people, was a great traveler who traveled to numerous great mountains in his life. Because of the cognitive and cultural activities associated with his tours, the Yellow Emperor was deemed as the “seeder” of Chinese touristic culture by Chinese tourism historians (Wang & Zhang, 1998; Zhang, 1992).

Tourism intersected emperorship at a particular form of tourism, Feng-Shan (封禅). It is a combination of the worship ceremonies of the Heaven, which is feng, and of the Earth, shan, conducted by monarchs (Feng, 2007). While the procedures of the Feng-
Shan Ceremony were different and vague in historical records, it has been agreed that the long, grand journey of the monarch to the ceremony site was just as propagandistic as the ritual ceremonies for legitimating monarchical power themselves, for it created and spread out an image of prosperity to a large proportion of the populace on that journey (Wang & Zhang, 1998). Emperor Qin Shihuang, for example, propagandized his virtues and merits by carving stones on his journeys, functioning like some kind of premodern Propaganda pamphlet. The practice is eerily reminiscent of the Long March, which Mao famously called “propaganda team” (xuanchuan dui 宣传队).

In imperial China, Chinese people perceived tourism as means of acquiring knowledge, of self-cultivation, of establishing worldviews for religious, political, ritual, literary, aesthetic and educational purposes. But fun, however defined, the inerasable marker of modern tourism, was not on that long list. In fact, stringing together all kinds of Chinese philosophical thinking on tourism shows a ubiquitous idea about a tourism that fundamentally opposed traveling purely for fun. The Qin Empire declared that only if the hostel business (nilv 逆旅) was abolished would the development of agriculture be achieved. It reasoned that the business harbored a lot of “idle tourists” (moji youshi 末技游食) who could be engaged in farming otherwise (《商君书》卷一《垦令》, see Peng, 2006, p. 132). It seems that in age of empires outside of the secular realm, only the social elites, whether literati or officials, were encouraged to travel. Perhaps, this is why tourism of the grassroots has gone mostly unmentioned in both historical records and modern retellings, or at the most, framed as celebrations of holidays along with other rituals and ceremonies that somehow involved travel.
THE ADVENT OF MODERN TOURISM AND ITSIDEOLOGICAL ARTICULATION, 1912-1948

Modern Chinese tourism started out as a representation of patriotism combined with modernity. It was the embodiment of a political articulation of a mixed reality of revolutionary past and colonial present in a form that the Chinese believed partly cultural and partly modern. This was also how Republican China (1912-1949) represented itself. Although influenced by the Western practice, the development of modern tourism in China was believed to be based on traditional Chinese culture with a theme of patriotism (e.g. Jia, 2002; Wang, 2005). This is to say, the keywords of early modern Chinese tourism are culture and patriotism. Together, they point to a realm of ideology, the inner core of mass political tourism.

The framing of this particular part of history is, too, politics-oriented. In *The modern history of China’s tourism*, Wang Shuliang (2005) breaks down the modern development of tourism in Republican China into three stages: the first stage was the formation and founding period, from 1912 to 1927; the second stage was the early development period, from 1927 to 1937, and the third stage was the setback and recovery period, from 1937 to 1949. Note that the four critical moments in this schema, namely, 1912, 1927, 1937 and 1949, represent the end of the Xinhai Revolution, the birth of the KMT regime, the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the establishment of the PRC. Except for the Anti-Japanese war, the other three moments connote three political revolutions, namely, the Revolution of 1911, the National Revolution and the Communist Revolution. In that sense, Wang’s periodization was rather revolution-based and political. Nevertheless, I am not suggesting that this is wrong; rather, I simply spell out the fact that the
study of the modern history of tourism in China, to a great extent, connects to the development of the nation-state and national identity.

Wang and Zhang’s (2003) account of early Chinese tourism industry reads like a modern history of Chinese nationalism/patriotism. The narrative starts with depicting a group of Chinese students who studied abroad and later came back to China to engage in social reforms and ends up with an account of a series of global travels made by Tao Xingzhi (陶行知, 1891-1946), a distinguished Chinese educationalist, in an effort to counter Japanese war Propaganda. Overall, the work seems to suggest that the critical social changes of early modern China, to some extent, were brought about by those patriotic travelers/intellectuals. Unsurprisingly, like the ancient history of Chinese tourism, its modern parallel has still exclusively focused on social elites, intellectuals in particular, and how the substantial majority, the masses, traveled remains largely unknown. This is to say, tourism has been treated as a unique dimension of intellectuals throughout Chinese history, if not a form of narcissism.

The starting point of modern mass tourism in China was narrated as a single patriotic act of a Chinese businessman. Chen Guangfu (陈光甫, 1881-1976), an Ivy-League-graduated Chinese banker in Shanghai, created China Travel Service, the first Chinese-run travel agency in China in 1923 in response to those foreign travel agents who repeatedly treated him with disdain, telling Chen that Chinese people were incapable of providing tourism service (Gross, 2011; Tong, 2009; Yao & Cao, 2002; Wang, 2005; Wang & Zhang, 2003). Upon its establishment, the tourism company aimed at spreading the nation’s pride (fayang guoguang 发扬国光) (Peng, 2006; Wang & Zhang, 2003; Yi, 2009).
The business of the Travel Service was not good in the first few years. The reason was rather ideological. Confucianists opposed tourism for pure leisure, as noted earlier, claiming that travel must follow right principles (Fan, Zhang & Wang, 2008). This anti-leisure ideology was so influential among Chinese literati and later intellectuals that it became one of the tenets of Chinese tourism. The biggest challenge among what Gross (2011) refers to as “three impediments” to the early development of mass tourism in China was to persuade the urban middle class that there was nothing wrong about travel for fun and leisure was “appropriate” to their social status (p.120). In other words, the major task for the early Chinese tourism industry was not so much as to build up a primary clientele as to dismantle the Confucian idea inherent in the Chinese culture of tourism. To do so, the travel agency used travelogues to sell the modern idea of tourism, branding it as a kind of representation of modernity. Acknowledging the propaganda power of tourism, Chen Guangfu explained to his employees that the seemingly unprofitable business would help his bank generate greater publicity, which he referred to as “invisible yields” (Wang, 2005, p.6). Nevertheless, patriotism never was off the scene of the newly developed Chinese tourism industry. In 1933, Chen’s tourism company asked American journalist Edgar Snow to write five travel pamphlets in English about China as anti-Japanese propaganda and delivered 20,000 copies to the Chicago World’s Fair through an American-Chinese association (Wang, 2005; Wang & Zhang, 2003). This particular way of thinking of tourism as a means of xuanchuan by ancient Chinese finally found its modern inheritor in a world of banknotes and stocks.
Central to patriotism was nationalism. According to a news report, tours of North-eastern China were increasingly gaining popularity in Shanghai right before the Anti-Japanese War, attracting lots of southeastern people thanks to its “historical richness” (lishi xing 历史性) and “nationality” (minzu xing 民族性) (Yousheng tour group, 1936). In 1936, a few months before the start of the War, Yousheng (友声), a Shanghai-based tourism company, having successfully organized two fully booked tours in a single year, continued to operate the 17-day tour in October. In response to overheated concern over the deteriorating military situation in the northeast, the company promised that they would have the military and police to protect the tourists throughout the tour. 1936 turned out to be a golden year for China Travel Service too as its revenue increased to five times the previous year’s (Yi, 2009).

Nationalism was also exploited as a strategy to promote Huangshan, a scenic spot 250 miles southwest of Shanghai. Articles published in China Traveler (luxing zazhi 旅行杂志), the first travel magazine in China, propagated the idea that touring Huangshang “would make the tourist strong in mind and spirit to prevail over foreigners” on the one hand and reaffirm their Chinese identity on the other (Gross, 2011, p.138). Nationalism was also packed in tourism related advertisements. A hotel advertisement written by Hu Shi (胡适, 1891-1962), a prominent writer and scholar, says, “New Asia Hotel’s success has convinced us that our nation is not unable to live a clean and tidy life” (See Peng, 2006, p. 200).

The rediscovery of the propaganda power of tourism in the wake of WWII marked modern Chinese tourism differently from an industry point of view. The tourism industry had fairly developed when Republican China recovered from the War. Now
tourism assumed three big tasks: (1) to educate citizens by fostering nationalism and patriotism through historical tourism, (2) to increase profits through inviting more foreign tourists, and (3) to propagandize the nation and its morality in order to improve foreign relations (Wang, 2005, p.77). One specific task of post-war Chinese tourism was to preserve major Anti-Japanese War sites, including Lugouqiao (卢沟桥), Taierzhuang (台儿庄) and Changsha (长沙) “to commemorate the War of Resistance and to let the Chinese people be vigilant about the war, never forgetting those who sacrificed their lives in exchange for freedom” (Wang, 2005, p. 78). Interestingly, the tourism development plan was not proposed by someone from the tourism industry or government agencies, but by a professor, among other people, from the Department of Foreign Relations of the Central University of Politics (zhongyang zhengzhi daxue 中央政治大学), who claimed that “tourism is not merely a form of education, but a very important part of education in general” (Zhu, 1945; see Wang, 2005, p. 89). In promoting tourism to the public, the plan particularly targeted the youth in hope of persuading and recruiting them to work in the remote border regions by instilling a kind of “pioneering spirit” (kaituo jingshen 开拓精神).

The normalization of organized political tours was a significant development of tourism in Republican China. In 1937, the Executive Yuan (xingzheng yuan 行政院), the executive branch of the central government of the Republic of China, invited more than 180 leaders from government departments, agencies and industries for a two-month tour along the Nanjing-Yunan Road. During the “long march,” the group members did many kinds of propaganda work such as spreading “the goodwill” of the KMT in addition to visiting the tourist spots (Jia, 2004, p.86).
The journalists’ tour is worthy of a particular note due to its Propaganda nature. According to a report published in Shen Bao in 1946, a group of 73 journalists from Shanghai, claimed to be organized by a journalist association for a tour of Wuxi, was invited to the headquarter of the First Pacification Zone of the KMT immediately upon their arrival. The military provided the journalist group all kinds of luxury service for the rest of the tour including lunch, tea parties, banquets, hotels in addition to transportation. Gen. Tang Enbo, the Commander in Chief of the Zone, attended the dinner party with the journalists (The journalist tour, 1946).

In Republican China, tourism, patriotism and nationalism were twisted together. Compelling evidence points to the fact that modern tourism in China had evolved into a propaganda apparatus already in the KMT regime. On the one hand, it was a continuation of a much longer Chinese history of tourism with an assumed function of xuanchuan, and on the other hand, an abrupt departure from the laissez-faire business mode of modern tourism with much government interference. Perhaps more significantly, political tourism in the KMT period signaled that a prototype of Red Tourism was looming large on the horizon even prior to the CPC coming to power.

“PLAYING POLITICS”: THE PROPAGANDISTIC TRANSFORMATION OF TOURISM, 1949-1965

The leisure business withered quickly after 1949. Yi (2009) calls the first five years of the People’s Republic (1949-1954) “the regression period” of China Travel Service as the company continued losing money after 1949 and finally bankrupted in 1954. The bona fide reason for the regression was the replacement of the leisure middle class
by the proletarian class in the wake of sociopolitical transformations. In the first thirty years of the New China, tourism as a sector in the nation’s economy was nonexistent thanks to its internal political system and external political and economic blockades imposed by Western countries. Sofield and Li (2011) describe this period as “three decades of ‘non-tourism’ under Mao” (p.503).

Tourism as a Bourgeois lifestyle and an emerging industry in the KMT period could not survive in the Mao era unless it could transform into something else, something ideologically appealing to the newly established People’s Republic of China. Tourism needed a new role, in a nutshell. In a memoir, Yang Gongsu (1994), a diplomat in charge of tourism affairs during the Cultural Revolution, recalled that in an internal meeting of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the head stated that “tourism work is part of diplomatic work, about playing politics” (p.52). Oddly, this role of “playing politics” echoes what later President Jiang Zeming brought forward as journalism’s role of “talking politics” (jiang zhengzhi 讲政治). Then what did “playing politics” mean?

In this section, I argue that the meaning of “playing politics” was twofold: domestically, it denotes a specific nation-building function of political tourism; internationally, it suggests a diplomatic role of inbound tourism. Together, tourism’s role of “playing politics” suggests that what I would call a propagandistic transformation of tourism was underway.

Tourism as a mobilization tool for nation-building

1949 was a watershed in the development of China’s tourism, dividing the “old” yet modern model of tourism from the CPC’s new model. This was an ideological turn. It
was ideological not only because this change occurred as a result of the ideological transformation from Republican China to Communist China, but also because the new model enormously expanded the ideological dimension of traditional Chinese tourism to the extent that tourism now became a legitimate tool of propaganda.

The Chinese tourism bureau operated as a government agency since 1949. It specifically dealt with matters that were thought to be critical to foreign relations. In virtue of this, tourism work was politics-oriented (Duan, 2002). In an institutional reform in 1958, the Secretary-General of the State Council was directly in charge of the China International Travel Service (CITS), and accordingly, all CITS’s subordinate branches were handed over to local governments (Han, 2003). Chinese scholars have commonly characterized PRC’s tourism prior to the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee as a “accommodating model” (jiedai xing 接待型). Whether referred to as “accommodating for political purposes” (Wang & Wang, 2001), “accommodating by government” (Gao, 2006), “accommodating for diplomatic purposes” (Li, 2010), or even a “malpractice” (biduan 弊端) (Duan, 2002), this tourism model was bluntly political.

The new model mushroomed in the absence of the regular tourism. It generally showcased the progress of socialist China. Yi (2009) has noted that organized political tours such as “the production study tour” (shengchan guanmo tuan 生产观摩团), or the “industry and commerce study tour” (gongshang kaocha tuan 商工考察团) became China Travel Service’s core business in the first years of the PRC. Correspondingly, the scope of China Traveler, the biggest travel magazine at the time, changed dramatically from aiming at promoting the tourism business to spreading culture and education (wenjiao 文
with an emphasis on indoctrination of patriotism. In light of this emerging educational/xuanchuan function, the travel magazine became a textbook for some schools, and its subscribers changed from the educated middle class in the KMT era to organizational subscribers, mainly schools and military troops. The paid circulation snowballed from 8,200 to 19,000 copies a year after the Shanghai Post Office took over the magazine’s distribution in 1953 (Yi, 2009, p.148).

Tourism became a part of government-organized celebrations. To celebrate the first Children’s Day after 1949, the Beijing government opened parks, scenic spots and historical sites for children to visit in addition to a series of commemorative meetings (Xinhua News Agency, 1949). Not all tours for celebration purposes were free. On May 1, 1949, the International Labor Day, the Confucius Temple and the Temple of Heaven in Beijing reopened to the public for a five-yuan admission fee (Peking Confucius Temple reopens, 1949). On New Year’s Day 1950, all Beijing touristic spots opened and admission was free for troops, relatives of revolutionary martyrs and military families and half-price for the general public (Bai, 1949). Note that in the Mao era, people were organized by their units (danwei 单位) and visited the same historical sites, now “Red” spots, for various political purposes. Nevertheless, the tourists did not want to be called “tourists” at the time (Gao, 2006). This is another manifestation of the ineradicable anti-leisure ideology of tourism rooted deeply in Chinese culture.

Throughout the 1950s, the People’s Daily published a series of photos featuring well-known Chinese touristic spots on the left of the newspaper’s masthead under the running title “Our Great Motherland” (women weidade zuguo 我们伟大的祖国). It is very rare in the history of world journalism for a daily newspaper to constantly place
tourism photos in the most eye-catching position for a long period of time. This demonstrates the Party organ’s intention of instilling a well-crafted, themed visual representation of the Chinese nation-state in the public by which the new nation was imagined.

Minority groups were critical to the new nation-building. The Chinese state proclaimed that the Chinese nation consists of fifty-five ethnic minority groups in addition to the Han Chinese majority. But this was rather a matter of rhetoric than an already-accepted social construct in early socialist China. In other words, the image of a fifty-six-ethnic groups-based “Great Motherland” needed to be propagated. And political tourism can be an ideal vehicle for that. The Chinese government dispatched delegations to minority regions right after the establishment of the PRC. Similar to what I have remarked on as the goodwill mission of the Nanjin government during the KMT period, the Communist delegations aimed at propagandizing the Party’s new minority policy. In 1950, the central government decided to dispatch the first mission to Southwestern China where many ethnic groups lived together and accordingly, ethnic relations were complicated. More than 120 members from government departments and agencies were given a month-long training about the histories, habits and customs of the ethnic groups prior to their departure (Zhong, 2013). In a front-page editorial of the People’s Daily, the mission was said to be “a true symbol of friendship and cooperation among all ethnic groups” (Send southwestern mission, 1950). In a return, minority elites were invited to Beijing for political tours, which became a “new tradition” of Chinese political tourism (Bulag, 2012, p.137). In 1950, except for some directly from the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), minority delegations divided on a regional basis were invited by the state to join the national celebration of National Day (October 1) held in Beijing (Representatives of
Xinjiang garrison, 1950). The People’s Daily reported the event in a full-page of news photos under the headline: “Let All Ethnic Groups of the People’s Republic of China Unite.” The introductory text reads:

Representatives of brother ethnic groups (xiongdi minzu 兄弟民族) of the People’s Republic of China came to Beijing from remote regions to celebrate their own country’s birthday. They represent thirty-six ethnicities in our country, and this is the first ever grand reunion of all brother ethnic groups throughout Chinese history, a guarantee of building the national unity of the People’s Republic of China (The People’s Daily, 1950).

Tourism as a diplomatic tool

“Playing politics” was consistent with Premier Zhou Enlai’s instructions on Chinese inbound tourism. Zhou described the goal of tourism work was “to xuanchuan ourselves, understand others, wield influence and gain sympathy” (Yang, 1994, p.52). That is, inbound tourism to the young Republic was a diplomatic tool.

In 1954, the state-owned tourism company “China International Travel Service” (CITS) was established. It was the same year that the privately-owned China Travel Service closed down. The word “international” that distinguishes the name of the new company from that of the old one has a specific meaning: “diplomatic.” Situated in the context of citizen diplomacy (minjian waijiao, 民间外交, aka people’s diplomacy) advocated and practiced by Premier Zhou, CITS served as a diplomatic agency for Communist China to communicate with the outside world. One of major tasks of CITS was to provide travel services to visiting overseas Chinese, the tourists whom the Party believed to have potentials to spread out the positive image of the PRC to the rest of the world in addition
to serving the country directly or providing economic aid (Xinhua News Agency, 1956).

In 1957, CITS created its subsidiary company, Oversea Chinese Travel Service, with thirty-five branches scattered throughout the country. During an eight-day conference held in March, 1957 in Beijing, delegates of the Oversea Chinese Travel Service reached a consensus that unlike for-profit corporations, the agency is not for profit and as such, all the profits will go back to the tourists (Xinhua News Agency, 1957). Not coincidentally, Xiamen Oversea Service, the first tourism company born in the PRC, also exclusively targeted oversea Chinese (Han, 2003).

1964 was decisive for the development of the PRC’s international relations. It turned out that the same year was also of historical significance to Chinese tourism. Premier Zhou Enlai visited 13 Asian and African countries in February. During the tour, Premier Zhou exchanged views and reached extensive agreement with the Third World leaders on a wide range of world issues such as expansionism and opposing imperialism. The event led to a wave of institutionalization of international relations in China as Zhou Enlai ordered the establishments of several universities and departments to train and prepare diplomatic staff (Shambaugh, 2002). In July, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC) approved the establishment of the China Travel and Tourism Enterprise Administration (zhongguo lvxing youlan shiyeguanliju 中国旅行游览事业管理局, now CNTA) under the State Council. Although named “enterprise,” it designated a special practice in this particular socialist context as shown in government documents: to run a business without considering cost and market rules (Gao, 2006). Again, what really mattered to the tourism agency was politics, not profit.
Established in December, the Tourism Administration had two specific goals: (1) politically, to propagandize its social/socialist achievements worldwide, and (2) economically, to accumulate foreign exchange from foreign tourists (Han, 2003; Yang, 1994). Both aimed at inbound tourism, as domestic tourism as an industry was yet to be developed. Because of its focus on international relations, it is not surprising that the tourism agency operated under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the Cultural Revolution and after that until the early 1980s (Han, 2003; Yang, 1994).

In 1957, the first group of tourists at their own expense toured the Soviet Union. According to a series of reports, the Chinese tourists arrived in Moscow prior to new year eve of 1957. Although the tourists paid for everything themselves, the oversea tour was overtly political. They visited factories and the subway in Moscow and historical sites associated with the Russian Revolution, the Workers Cultural Palace, and the Russian cruiser *Aurora* in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) (First self-financed travel group, 1957; Self-financed travelers, 1957).

More than half a century later in July 2015, Beijing and Moscow jointly launched a similar tourist route named “Red Circuit” in light of the Red Tourism wave. The Red Circuit features the life of Vladimir Lenin and the Russian Revolution (Russia draws hordes of Chinese tourists, 2015). Not surprisingly, Moscow and St. Petersburg were both included in the four Russian destinations of the Red Circuit.

Coincidently, the diplomatic scope of tourism echoed Mao’s personal view of tourism as a means of making friends, particularly those who could help achieve his political ambitions (Ling, 1994). For Mao, tourism was a very effective tool for political
communication. This was, in fact, a prevailing perspective of tourism among early Chinese thinkers. Cai (1994) has remarked that Mao’s attitude towards tourism was influenced by ancient Chinese. Like Confucius, Mao opposed touring exclusively for leisure. In Mao’s class notes it reads, “A tourist should not only enjoy the scenery, but also make friends with prestigious figures, learned intellectuals” (Sun et al., 2008, p.300). During his first sojourn in Beijing, Mao furthered friendship with the leaders of the New Culture Movement, including Li Dazhao (李大钊, 1889-1927), Chen Duxiu (陈独秀, 1879-1942), Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培, 1868-1940), Tao Menghe (陶孟和, 1887-1960) and Hu shi (胡适) (Cai, 1994).

The perspective of treating tourism as a valuable source of foreign exchange was criticized during the Cultural Revolution, rendering Chinese tourism completely political at that time.

THE GREAT RALLY: A PRELUDE TO RED TOURISM, 1966-1976

One way to see the Cultural Revolution is to view it as an assemblage of many “great” political movements such as the “Great Rally” (da chuanlian 大串连), “the Great Leap Forward” (da yuejin大跃进), and “the Great Criticism” (da pipan大批判). While the term “great” denotes massive scale, it also indicates mass movement in the true sense beyond its figurative sense. In other words, the Cultural Revolution can be an exceptional case for studying the nexus between mass communication and mass mobility, and therefore, a starting point for probing into modern Chinese mass political tourism.

Retrospectively, the Great Rally paved the way for the later emergence of Red Tourism. Zhou and Gao (2008) refer to the political movement as a “special phase” of
Red Tourism. Likewise, Huang (2010) considers it the origins of Red Tourism. In Yan’s (1993) account, the Great Rally was “the largest and most complete political tour in human history” (p.4). It was considered the largest because at least 20 million people, three to five percent of the country’s population, embarked on the grand political tour. The tour was purely political as it was initiated for political purposes, people joined it for political reasons and it ended in political struggles (Yan, 1993, p.4).

The Great Rally was intended to be a “seeder” to plant seeds of the Cultural Revolution through human movement. The political movement was believed to be self-organized at the early stage until Red Flag magazine published Mao’s speech in which Mao mobilized the masses to join the rally (Yan, 1993). The political movement transformed into political tourism when the government announced that the government would cover all travel-related expenses including train tickets, lodging, and food. Considering everything was free, Yan (1993) remarks that “it would be unwise not taking the tour” (p.15). It has been commonly assumed that the majority of participants of the Rally were the Red Guards. But scholars have shown otherwise: the majority actually were students and teachers mainly from colleges and high schools (Yan, 1993; Zhou & Gao, 2008). Political tourism was particularly attractive to the youth since they had nothing to do when all schools were forced to be closed at the time. Their motives were varied. Some were enthusiastic about revolutionary rebellion. Still many others were rather lukewarm towards that, joining the Rally as an escape of harsh political reality.

In the meantime, a kind of prototype national “Red” tourism network emerged. In contrast to all other historical relics that were destroyed in the name of “Eradicating the
Four Olds” (*po sì jiù* 破四旧), the revolutionary sites were protected, enshrined and reused. Given that millions of young “pilgrims” arrived each day, those spots gained popularity almost overnight and transformed into tourism spots with free services and food with all costs borne by the government. The most popular destinations of the Rally were Yan’an, Jinggangshan, Shaoshan and Ruijin. Today they stand as the major Red Tourism cities. It should be noted further that other than historical sites, other places, particularly those remote ones such as Xinjiang and Yunan, having less to do with the Chinese revolution but with spectacular scenery, also turned into hot destinations during the Rally. Previously having to pay considerably, now people were able to travel to these beautiful places at the government’s cost.

But political tourism was not as fun as it sounds whatsoever. Given terrible transportation, poor lodging facilities, among many other difficulties, many tourists suffered badly during their journey. For some, the free political tour was even at the cost of their human dignity and life. Many witnessed that travelers were so over-packed like sardines in the train that they were unable to move within tens of hours of travel. Some had to urinate in front of other travelers (Yan, 1993). Some suffocated to death on the train (Xia, 2004). The human cost of the political tour far outweighed whatever the tourists achieved. According to the statistics of Beijing Public Security Bureau, 1,772 people were beaten to death from August to September of 1966 in the climax of the Great Rally (Jin, 1995, p.184). In April 1967, the Central Committee, State Council, Central Military Commission and the Central Cultural Revolution Group issued a notice to end the Rally nationwide.
Notwithstanding its political orientation, it is arbitrary to translate Chinese tourism policy prior to the economic reform as “the fewer outsiders the better” (Richter, 1983, p.397). Contrarily, foreign tourists were surprisingly welcomed by the Chinese government as far as the propaganda goal was concerned. In the Mao era, it became a common practice in the Party’s propaganda work to report private visits made by American tourists in the *People’s Daily*. A quick catalog of the professions of the reported foreign tourists shows a wide range, from lawyer, mathematician, scientist, scholar, to writer, etc. For “leftist” foreign tourists, mainly foreign communists or those in sympathy with the CPC, travel expenses were paid by the Chinese government (Yang, 1994). In 1971 when China was admitted into the United Nations, Mao instructed the tourism agency, “the number (of foreign tourists) should be increased and include rightists as well” (Yang, 1994, p.52). According to Yang Gongsu, the head of the tourism agency at the time, “rightists” referred to government officials, journalists and businessmen from Western capitalist countries. This practice seems to reconfirm what Mao had said to American diplomat John Service many years ago during the Chinese Civil War that the presence of American travelers itself is good propaganda.

THE ECONOMIC TURN, 1977-1989

The starting point for the development of modern tourism in the PRC is marked by a series of speeches given by Deng Xiaoping from 1978 to 1979. Du Yili (2012), Deputy Director of CNTA, describes the situation of the tourism industry in the PRC prior to
Deng’s leadership as the “Five-No State” (*wuwu zhuangtai* 五无状态), namely, “no concept, no market, no scale, no goal, and no policy” (p.57). Simply put, no tourism industry whatsoever.

Against the backdrop of economic reforms in the 1980s, the rapid expansion of Chinese tourism strategically was aimed at inbound tourism while starting up domestic tourism. Han (2003) refers to this inbound-tourism-based tourism development plan as “the Chinese model of tourism,” a kind of “Chinese characteristic” in the realm of tourism (p.24). Starting from the late 1970s, tourism in China switched swiftly from its diplomatic role to an economic one.

From 1978 to 1979, Deng Xiaoping gave five speeches particularly on tourism, all of which provided guidelines for the development of tourism in the post-Mao era. Duan (2002) argues that these talks answered two critical questions about why and how to develop tourism in China. In light of the economic reform, Deng believed the development of tourism could bring about breakthroughs in emancipation of the mind, internal reform and opening up (Duan, 2002; Zhang & Xie, 2005). In contrast to the diplomatic orientation of early PRC tourism, Deng valorized the economic role of tourism as an industry to boost the nation’s economy. In October 1978, Deng gave a speech to the heads of the Civil Aviation Administration and the Tourism Administration after meeting Pan American World Airways CEO William Seawell. Deng pointed out that for China, the largest source of tourists was the United States. Deng calculated, “if each foreign tourist would spend $1,000 in China with a total of 10 million of tourists visiting China a year, China could earn $10 billion, and even if only half of the tourist number, it is still $5 billion” (Deng, 2000, p.2). In view of the lack of proper diplomatic channels, Deng instructed the
two government agencies to get into the international tourism market through private channels. In a talk with the head of the Tourism Administration in 1979, Deng rearticulated his economic orientation, saying that the reason to develop tourism was to increase revenue, making every effort to make it profitable (Deng, 2000). Other socialist countries did not have a similar development pattern as China to make tourism what Sofield and Li (2011) define as a “keystone” industry.

At the heart of what Chinese scholars have termed “Deng Xiaoping’s thought on tourism” was the money-making ideology of the market economy. Propaganda as a political agenda went unmentioned in both Deng’s and later Chinese scholars’ accounts of tourism in this particular period of time. This is, perhaps, in part due to the de-politicization trend in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, On June 9, 1989, five days after the Tiananmen incident, Deng Xiaoping admitted that the biggest mistake being made during the ten-year reform was not drawing much attention to ideological and political education, which he called a “serious error” (Deng, 1994). And this was critical to the coming of Red Tourism.

THE MAKING OF RED TOURISM, POST-1989

Given the nature of the Cultural Revolution, it is not surprising that tourism was entirely political as everything else was. What is surprising is the Party’s resumption of the political tradition of Chinese tourism in the 1990s to launch, institutionalize and promote Red Tourism after tourism had been depoliticized and become a pillar industry in Deng’s era. Note that Confucianism alongside a wholesale rhetoric about cultural heritage was also widespread about the same time. This is by no means a coincidence.
The ideological vacuum

It took about twenty years for China to switch its cultural heritage politics from one extreme to another. In 1966, in light of the “Eradicating Four Olds” (old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas) movement at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, cultural heritage was deemed as counter-revolutionary. In 2006, cultural heritage became something that the government encouraged the whole nation to celebrate on Cultural Heritage Day. The state politics towards Confucianism was just the same. Once being criticized throughout the Cultural Revolution, Confucianism started being institutionalized in 2004 as Confucius Institutes grew worldwide with support from the state. At the intersection of cultural heritage and Confucianism is heritage tourism. And at the heart of heritage tourism is propaganda/xuanchuan. In that sense, Blumenfield and Helaine (2013) see cultural heritage as a “political tool” for “those in positions of power telling stories about the past and present” (p.4). Perhaps a Propaganda tool would be more precise, particularly considering that they figuratively describe heritage tourism as “the genie let out of the bottle” (Blumenfield & Helaine, 2013, p.9).

Inquiring into the recent history of Red Tourism, I argue that the rise of Red Tourism can be seen as a strategic response to what I would call an “ideological vacuum” in the aftermath of 1989. The loss of credibility of major revolution ideologies in Mao’s era—Communism, Maoism, and Leninism—and the abandonment of Western liberalism in the wake of the Tiananmen incident of 1989 have created an ideological vacuum that led to a legitimation crisis for the Party. Chen (1995) defined the crisis as “three belief
crises,” specifically, the Chinese losing faith in the Party, socialism and Marxism. But I have reservations about the Marxism part.

Siding with Eagleton (2011), I consider Marxism more of a critique of capitalism than a revolutionary ideology. As such, although the Chinese might not talk much about Marxism since the end of the Cultural Revolution, it is still very hard to imagine a real “crisis” of Marxism occurring during the reform and opening period. It would be amazing, if the Chinese had lost their faith in Marxism, and alternatively, wholeheartedly embraced capitalism. If this had been the case, China would have already lost its “characteristics,” and consequently, what I am discussing here, “Red Tourism” would have been, more appropriately, renamed as Dark Tourism. Paradoxically, Marx’s stimulating ideas, such as the “alienation” of stratified human society and the “commodification” of social life, have shed additional light on China’s sharp increase in social inequality occurring after the dismantling of its system of centrally planned socialism.

In reality, the hot pursuit of Chinese characteristics together with the ideological vacuum have left room for a reconsideration of the ideological foundation for a post-reform China. Instead of looking into Marxism, this time the Party looked further back to its own history and culture. Then patriotism became an ideological magnet.

Re-signification of patriotism

In view of the “serious error” in ideological education, the Party launched the “Patriotic Education Campaign” in 1991. It signaled the start of the making of Red Tour-
ism by wedding “Red” to “Tourism.” It was more than a resumption of the patriotism tradition of Chinese political tourism; it was a re-engineering of a mass communication network that involved reordering its superstructure and constructing a new base.

Central to the massive nationwide campaign, however, was a humiliating history of a colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal China charged with the Chinese revolution that was used to mobilize the youth. Called “patriotic education,” the propaganda campaign unmistakably echoes “citizenship education” in US history (Gordon, 1971). According to an “Outline on Implementing Patriotic Education” issued in 1994, patriotism now was elevated as the “common spiritual pillar for the people of all ethnicities,” the “foundation of constructing socialist spiritual civilization,” the “theme of our society,” and the “guideline for ideological education” (Outline, 1994). The major locus of the ideological campaign was the education sector. Schools’ textbooks were rewritten, replacing the class-struggle narrative with a new one showcasing the Party’s unparalleled role in ending the one-hundred-year humiliating history of the Chinese nation (Wang, 2008). Besides classrooms, the Outline of 1994 specifies that “Patriotic Education Bases” (aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu jidi 爱国主义教育基地), mainly those “pre”-Red Tourism sites, are the loci for implementing patriotic education. In 1991, the CPD, the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Culture (MoC), the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), the Central Communist Youth League, and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) issued a “Notice about Conducting Education of Patriotism and Revolutionary Traditions through the Use of Historical Relics.” The document requires all schools, from primary school to college, to take students to the museums and historical sites significant to the
Chinese revolution for patriotic education and to treat such tours as a must-attend educational activity (Ministry of Culture, 1991). The 2004 Outline reiterates the key role of the bases/historical relics and museums in ideological education, calling for free admission to all school-organized tours of these bases (CPCCC & the State Council, 2004). About that time, Red Tourism surfaced.

In 1997, the Central Committee of the CPC (CCCPC) compiled a list of 110 National Exemplary Patriotic Education Bases that further promoted the expansion of such sites (Zhou & Gao, 2008). By the end of 2005, the total number of National Bases reached 270 in addition to more than 10,000 Bases at the provincial level (National Red Tourism Work Coordination Group, 2008).

Tourism in post-socialist China forged a double identity: an industry on the one hand, and a social force on the other. While the economic development of China’s tourism after 1978 has been stressed by tourism practitioners and scholars, the second identity of Chinese tourism as a social force in social development can never be overstated. In light of the bureaucratic structure of macroeconomic regulation and control, tourism is under the control of the Social Development Division of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), a supra-ministerial cabinet agency under the State Council. In addition to tourism, the Social Division also has administrative and planning control over other cultural industries including sports, television, radio, news and publishing. This is to say, the Party sees all these cultural industries as special ones that would bring about critical changes of the society in addition to economic growth.
The social function of tourism in China can be better understood as social integration, a main characteristic of *xuanchuan* that I have elaborated in Chapter 1. In the lexicon of the contemporary CPC’s propaganda work, tourism in post-socialist China has been oftentimes associated with the “Construction of Spiritual Civilization” (*jingshen wenming jianshe* 精神文明建设), a propaganda campaign launched by the Jiang administration in 1996 (Chen, 1997; Gao, 2006; Lin, 2011). Regarding tourism as a form of mental activity, for example, Yuan (1998) has argued that tourism can work on people’s mentality by improving citizenship, by facilitating communication across cultural boundaries and by promoting cultural heritage. Gao (2006) notes that tourism can significantly contribute to the construction of a harmonious socialist society for it is a carrier of good spirit.

The “government-led model” of tourism was misinterpreted as the development model of tourism with Chinese characteristics due to the planned economy tone in its calling. Ironically, the term was initially coined by CNTA in 1996 to describe the decisive role of government in tourism development in two specific foreign countries, Israel and Turkey, after their visits (Gao, 2006). In other words, government involvement in tourism development is not unique to China, and by no means determined by a given economic system.

The coming of Red Tourism

The coming of Red Tourism has been grounded in the context of the economic departure from a centrally controlled economy to a market economy, and an ideological continuation rooted in the prior form of socialism. The structural transformation of the
nation’s economy resulted in a protracted and intensive round of capitalist-style privatization, which in turn has rendered strict adherence to the socialist ideology less promising in the private sector. The Party sees the first part of this complicated process as the “construction of socialist material civilization,” and the second part the “construction of socialist spiritual civilization.” The development of Chinese society was said to demand social equilibrium between the two kinds of construction. This idea is epitomized in Deng Xiaoping’s famous saying, “seize with both hands, both hands must be strong,” (liangshou zhua, liangshou douyao yin两手抓, 两手都要硬), which became a general guideline for the so-called “construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics.” So there has to be a way to balance the unbalanced.

Surprisingly, as a business model Red Tourism did not start from well-known revolutionary sites but from some unknown towns and villages around the mid-1990s. It is not so surprising, however, given the fact that the Chinese economic reform was also initially introduced in small villages. Both indicate that their attempts were so bold that they could only be made in places with less political constraints and more freedom in embracing a market economy. Based on CNKI (Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure) databases, the appearance of the Chinese term “hongse lvyou 红色旅游” (Red Tourism) in mainstream publications can be traced back to 1996 in an article entitled, “Deep feelings about the Old Region” (Zheng, 1996). An interview of the head of the Women’s Committee of China’s Old Region Development Promotion (zhongguo laoqu jianshe cujin hui fuwei hui中国老区建设促进会妇委会) remarks that three small towns in the old revolutionary base areas of Hebei, Shandong and Hubei provinces conducted Red Tourism with help from a travel agency run by the Ministry of Water Resources in an effort to alleviate
local poverty. In this case, the looming Red Tourism business was well in concert with the emergence of township and village enterprises (TVEs) in that both aimed to mobilize local resources for local economic development. Additionally, both changed their early trajectories by virtue of a seemingly ceaseless round of capitalization. I will illustrate this point in last chapter on a political economy of Red Tourism.

Besides the unprecedented expansion in the Bases, there were two other propelling forces behind the rise of what Gao (2006) calls the “big wave” of Red Tourism in the late 1990s. The first was that tourism has grown up into a profitable business and become a pillar industry contributing greatly to national economic growth. The second was that the Party’s commemorations and celebrations related to its revolutionary past settled into a tradition (Gao, 2006; Huang, 2010). Gao (2006) further suggests that the anniversary significant to the Party’s history can even be a reliable predictor for a strong Red Tourism market. When the term “Red Tourism” first appeared in the People’s Daily in 1999, the business had already become phenomenal. According to the report, Ruijin—a county-level city of Jiangxi Province where the Chinese Soviet Republic was established in 1931—received more than 100,000 tourists in the first half of 1999 (Rui & Xie, 1999).

Having seen the profitability of Red Tourism, private enterprises joined. Where there was no “Base” immediately available for the entrepreneurs to run the Red business, they created one from scratch. In 1998, a tourism firm called Huihai was created with registered capital RMB 3 million ($ 460,000) in Qionghai, a small coastal city of Hainan Province now best-known as the permanent venue for Boao Forum for Asia (BFA). For Chinese, Qionghai is known as the home of the legendary Red Detachment of Women, a
revolutionary story adapted into many forms of literary and artistic works. The ballet version of the Red Detachment was performed for US President Richard Nixon on his visit to China in 1972. Finding a business opportunity behind the revolutionary heritage, Huihai began to build Red Detachment of Women Memorial Park in 1998 with a total investment of RMB 25 million ($3.85 million). A fascinating mixture of revolution-themed sculptures, a museum, tropical coconut groves and live performances in addition to four more-than-90-year old former women soldiers of the Red Detachment, the first-generation “Red”-theme park opened in 2000. With half a million tourists arriving each year since its opening, the Memorial Park was soon included in the list of “Exemplary Bases” by the CPD in 2001 and recognized as a “National Classic Red Tourism Attraction” by the NDRC, CPD and CNTA in 2005. During this time, the CPD allocated RMB 3 million to establish the Red Detachment of Women Memorial at the park.

First “red,” last “tourism”

In early 2004, the CPD passed on an important instruction entitled, “To actively develop Red Tourism,” from Politburo Standing Committee Member Li Changchun to the CNTA. While its consequences are profound, three direct ramifications were clear. First of all, Red Tourism immediately became a central topic of the National Tourism Conference held in May, resulting in the “Declaration of Zhengzhou” (Zhengzhou xuanyan 郑州宣言) signed by six provinces and municipalities including Beijing and Shanghai. Calling for “branding Red Tourism, raising Red Tourism to climax,” the Declaration is a set of guidelines for the participating members to share resources and information, to co-develop markets and to seek common interests in running Red businesses.
It proposes a network of Red Tourism routes that start at Shanghai, run through southern and northern China, and end at Beijing. It demonstrates the members’ confidence in the Red Tourism market on the one hand, and their burning ambition to seize monopolistic power in the early development of that market on the other. A follow-up commentary in the *People’s Daily* states:

Red tourism is both a conceptual innovation and an industrial innovation. The development of Red Tourism will help explore a virtuous cycle in which, under the socialist market economy, social benefits and economic benefits are well integrated, spiritual wealth is transformed into social wealth. Together, they are of benefit to the society and the people (Wang, Li, & Dai, 2004).

In August, the *People’s Daily* published a series of seven reports on the development of Red Tourism in different locations under the running title of “Red Tourism Series” in seven consecutive days. The grand gesture of the Party’s newspaper clearly signified a new chapter of Red Tourism.

The second ramification was the “2004-2010 National Red Tourism Development Outline” issued by the Central Government at the end of 2004. It is considered the general guideline for subsequent Red Tourism developments (Zhou & Gao, 2008). In the document, the Party provides an official definition of the term for the first time, which is:

Red tourism mainly refers to the thematic tour for cherishing memory and learning (*mianhui xuexi* 缅怀学习) in those memorials, historical sites and markers that as carriers, contain revolutionary history, revolutionary stories and revolutionary spirits and represent great achievements of the Chinese people under the
leadership of the CPC during the revolution and war periods. Development of Red Tourism has immense practical significance and far-reaching historical significance for strengthening revolutionary tradition education, enhancing the sense of patriotism of the whole nation, particularly the youth, cultivating the national spirit and promoting socioeconomic development of the old revolutionary base areas (CPCCC & the State Council, 2004).

The 2004 Outline articulates the guiding ideology, basic principles and development goals in propagation of Red Tourism. It also provides a roadmap for the development of Red Tourism, showing that the Chinese state was determined to develop Red Tourism at an industry level. In view of the relationship between economic and social gains, however, the Outline states that social benefit must be prioritized. A follow-up editorial of the People’s Daily concludes, “Red Tourism is a systematic project of the society, an invention with distinctive Chinese characteristics, and multiply significant to politics, culture and economy” (Actively developing Red Tourism, 2005). About the same time, the National Red Tourism Work Coordination Group (aka the “Red Office”) was established.

The members of the “Red Office” are the heads from fourteen government departments and agencies (See Figure 3). In light of the bureaucratic structure of the Coordination Group, it is surprising that CNTA, the government agency in charge of tourism directly under the State Council, is at the bottom. This can be an indicator to reconfirm what Airey and Chong (2010) have said, that national policy-making for tourism in China is fragmented with CNTA only having a “comparatively low administrative status and weak bargaining power” (p.311). On the other hand, the fact that the CPD as one of the
leading agencies and ministries ranked second reveals the propaganda nature of Red
Tourism. That is, the first is “Red,” last “Tourism.”

Figure 3: The bureaucratic structure of the “Red Office.”

In an interview, Susan, an official in charge of Red Tourism at a provincial-level Tourism
Bureau nicely illustrated this point from a bureaucratic insider point of view, which I pre-
sent at length below:
The parent units (shangji daiwei 上级单位) of Red Tourism are the Propaganda Department and the Cultural Affairs Bureau (wenhua ju 文化局). In fact, the Tourism Bureau cannot manage it (Red Tourism). The National Red Tourism Work Coordination Group is set up in CNTA, but the group top leader is from NDRC, not from CNTA. Only the office is located in CNTA, [whose role is] merely delivering announcements. Like CNTA, the local Tourism Bureau is where the local Red Office is located, and still, the leader is from the local NDRC bureau. There is no specific government funding/subsidy and post in the Tourism Bureau specific for Red Tourism. The heads of our Red Office come from as many as twelve government departments with only four really in charge: the local NDRC Bureau in charge of money, the Finance Bureau for distributing money, the Propaganda Department taking command, and the Tourism Bureau laboring at drafting and other specific works.

As a matter of fact, the Propaganda Department does not really work on propaganda (here Susan means “advertisement” in particular). For example, we planned to take out a full-page advertisement in the largest local newspaper for Red Tourism. According to the division of work, the Propaganda Department should take on this work. But the Propaganda Department said, “we cannot do this unless we have received direct instruction from the city leaders.” Ultimately, we had to undertake the task ourselves using funds taken out from elsewhere. The quota of funding (qie kuai 切块) we get from NDRC is only for fixed uses, say, 5 million yuan for advertisement, and Red Tourism is not included. Since the funding is from the government for the development of tourism in general, and the development of Red Tourism is part of that, we [think it would be fine to]
move some funding for Red Tourism. But we do not have a quota particularly for Red Tourism. Except for Guizhou Province which has two established posts (shiye bianzhi 事业编制) for the Red Office, elsewhere staff from local Tourism Bureaus run Red Offices as a concurrent post (interview, December 17, 2015).

The third ramification is that, named as the “Number One Project” (yihao gongcheng 一号工程) for its cardinal importance, rebuilding the image of three major patriotic education bases, namely, Shaoshan, Jinggangshan and Yan’an, started in 2004. Each place was branded with a specific selling point, Shaoshan for “Mao Zedong led the Chinese people to stand up,” Jinggangshan, “the Chinese revolution sparked from here,” and Yan’an, “Yan’an Spirit and the sacred place of the revolution” (Zhou & Gao, 2008, p.8). By now, previously revolutionary sites had completed their two-step transformation, first to patriotic education bases, then Red Tourism sites. Accordingly, Red Tourism also transformed from an undefined kind of touristic activity to an institutionalized industry with specified superstructure and regular bases in addition to full support from the state. In the following three years, the Central Government allocated more than RMB 1.5 billion ($231 million) for building Red Tourism sites and museums and the total investments from local governments were even more than that number (National Red Tourism Work Coordination Group, 2008, p.31). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2004 China’s Red Tourism sites received 120 million visitors, counting for 10 percent of tourists in the country and the consolidated revenue of Red Tourism reached RMB 20 billion ($3.07 billion) (See Zhou & Gao, 2008).

In 2011, these numbers were multiplied with 540 million visitors counting for 20 percent of total domestic tourists (Jin, 2012). In the same year, an upgraded version of the
2004 Outline was issued. With an industry of Red Tourism already becoming reality, the 2011 Outline substantially upgraded the role of Red Tourism from previously promoting patriotic education to fostering the socialist core value system. In the “Guideline” section, the Outline of 2011 states:

As a political project and a cultural project, Red Tourism must emphasize its pivotal role in facilitating the construction of the socialist core value system and imbuing the masses with the idea that it was the history and the people that chose the CPC, the socialist system and the road to open up and reform. In doing so, Red Tourism will help reinforce public trust in the CPC and in socialism with Chinese characteristics and thus consolidate the common ideological foundation for both the Party and people of all ethnicities (CPCC & the State Council, 2011).

An article published in the CCCPC’s Qiu Shi (求实) magazine defines Red Tourism as a “form,” a “resource,” a “carrier,” a “pathway” to the implementation of the socialist core value system (Deng & Gao, 2014, p.92). Thus far, Red Tourism has been politically and economically phenomenal and phenomenally successful in terms of economic gains and popularity. According to a report, in 2015 the major Red Tourism cities completed a total investment of RMB 42.37 billion ($6.52 billion) and received 452 million tourists with the consolidated revenue RMB 286.98 billion ($44.15 billion), an increase of 13% (Dou, 2016).

Two problems must be addressed in interpreting these numbers. First, it should be clear that Red Tourism is profitable only in a handful of places rich in revolutionary resources, particularly those so called old revolutionary base areas. Red Tourism in most
other areas—as it has spread out all over the country already—solely relies on government subsidies. Given Red Tourism’s subjectivity, this is quite understandable. Other forms of tourism are the same. For example, seaside tourism can only thrive in coastal areas, islands, whereas wildlife tourism industry greatly depends on wildlife sanctuaries.

Liz, a head of a municipal Tourism Bureau disclosed:

The money we receive from Red Tourism is totally negligible compared how much we get from regular tourism because tourists visit all [Red Tourism related] museums and sites for free. Even if we charge a 10-yuan admission fee for the museum with 2 million tourists arriving each year, we still cannot make ends meet considering that we carry out major renovations at 3-5-year intervals with each costing tens of millions (interview, July 10, 2014).

The unbalanced nature of the Red Tourism business, in turn, suggests an intense profit-concentration. In view of this, Red Tourism can be a goldmine for profit chasers. This is why Red Tourism has been rapidly commodified and capitalized, changing the geography of social space of some places, whereas in other places, the survival of Red Tourism heavily depends on the government.

The second problem is about the reliability of these numbers. The government released statistics on Red Tourism, as published in popular media (newspapers, books) and also cited in this study, were basically drawn from self-report surveys. For example, the Red Office requires all it subordinate bureaus to report Red Tourism revenues, tourist numbers etc., and then it puts all collected numbers together to map out the national Red Tourism. Therefore, the statistics about Red Tourism as presented here, to a large extent,
are merely indicative of the scale, and the growth of the industry. Beyond this the num-
bers would be less valid. Susan acknowledged:

The national Red Office has a platform for collecting data, including the tourist
numbers to Red Tourism attractions and Red Tourism revenues. Every province
has a local Red Office, which is asked to report those numbers. Perhaps this is
how its statistics were produced. Do you ever know where the consolidated reve-
 nue of national tourism comes from? This is very difficult to define, let alone that
of Red Tourism…sometimes it depends on the “tone” (tongyi koujing统一口径, here it refers to the instruction from the top leadership—author’s note). Take
Lushan for instance. You may count everything, from meals, hotels, transporta-
tion to entertainment and touring, into Red Tourism revenue (interview, Decem-
ber 17, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

Political tourism in China is writ large. While political tourism is a form or a di-
mension of tourism in other parts of the world, it carries the identity for Chinese tourism
throughout history. In light of unfriendly attitudes towards commercial culture, Yan
(1993) has argued that the origin of tourism in China was deeply political. The political
orientation/tradition of Chinese tourism was rearticulated and emphasized right after
1949, despite the fact that tourism as an industry had already germinated in the KMT re-
gime. In analyzing Chinese tourism policy, other scholars have also concluded that the
development of tourism in China was politically motivated (Sofield & Li, 2011; Richter,
And it is mass political tourism in China. It calls for all citizens to engage and is by no means a special interest tourism (SIT) that caters to the specific interests of groups and individuals. The call is guaranteed by a form of bureaucratic-authoritarianism embodied in a systematic hierarchical structure created by many important government departments and agencies that normally are not responsible for tourism in other countries. Ideological orientations of the Red tourists are varied, pro-Mao or anti-Mao, or, pro-America or anti-America, etc. Nevertheless, they are regular tourists whom you can see in other popular tourist destinations too such as Beijing, Shanghai, Bangkok, Oahu and Los Angeles.

Mass political tourism in China plays a role of social integration. It is a shared characteristic of xuanchuan that I have discussed earlier. In that sense, mass political tourism is indeed a system of propaganda. The social integration role of Chinese political tourism has been discussed by few scholars but in different terms. In a historical study of the state-orchestrated ethnic minority tours in the Mao era, for example, Bulag (2012) has conceptualized the propaganda role of political tourism as “centripetalism,” the idea to integrate the marginalized ethnic groups from the cultural periphery into the center by taking ethnic minority elites to premeditatedly designed tours. During the touring, intended ideologies were indoctrinated in a rather subtle way of manipulation of representations, such as showcasing economic achievements of the New China. Grounded in the Foucauldian notion of the power of seeing/gazing, the propaganda nature of political
tourism was described as “the control or management of the state image” (Bulag, 2012, p.136).

Political tourism in this context carries a neutral connotation of propaganda. In their study of Red Tourism, Zuo, Huang, and Liu (2016) refer to the integrating function of political tourism as “political socialization.” They argue that Red tourists may learn values and attitudes intended by the state to support its political system. Examining ethnic tourism in Tibetan China, Hillman (2009) concludes that formerly viewed as a social force for consolidating national unity, this form of political tourism “provide[s] part of the solution to changing public opinion” (p.6). Traditionally parsed as manipulation of public opinion, now propaganda in this description rather had a desired effect in that “greater understanding and sensitivity” between Tibetans and Han Chinese was achieved (Hillman, 2009, p.6). This is an example of good propaganda, the kind that does not match the western definition of bad Propaganda.

A prevailing type of mass political tourism in contemporary China, Red Tourism is the result of a series of structural transformations of tourism throughout Chinese history. Deeply rooted in the Chinese philosophy of a “serious” tourism as manifested in Confucianism, Red Tourism represents the education-orientation of traditional Chinese tourism. When tourism began to form an industry in the 1920s in Republican China, the education legacy of tourism was carried out with an articulation of patriotism. With an industry of tourism fading away in the early socialist China, only its politics survived. The three decades of the political transformation of Chinese tourism has left an inerasable “Red” mark on Chinese mass political tourism. The economic transformation of Chinese tourism in the early economic reform period turned out to be a bitter-sweet experience for
the Party. On the one hand, tourism grew rapidly into a keynote industry. On the other hand, the effort to erase the inerasable failed dismally from the viewpoint of the Party as it believed the lack of ideological education was partly responsible for the 1989 incident. In view of this, an ideological transformation of Chinese tourism in name of patriotic education occurred right after 1989, leading to the emergence of Red Tourism. It can be understood as a profound U-turn to the patriotism tradition of Chinese tourism in the long Chinese history across imperial, republican and socialist China on the one hand, and a re-orientation of market to a market economy with “Chinese characteristics” on the other.

Now it is clear that the driving force behind Red Tourism is not a single “ism,” but a mixture of many isms: Confucianism, patriotism, socialism, authoritarianism, among others. Together, it might be called what Wang (1944) termed some seventy-years ago as “propagandism (sic),” or put another way, xuanchuan.

Red Tourism points to a paradigm of mass communication where space alongside spatial practice produces meanings that matter to the nation state. What has been addressed a lot so far was the “Red” part of Red Tourism, the political articulation in the ideological dimension. What has been both lost in the government documents and my current account is tourism itself, the fun part. I will examine the social space of Red Tourism in next chapter to explore how the fun was produced and what the fun is producing in return.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE SOCIAL SPACE OF RED TOURISM:

THE YAN’AN CASE

It was a cold winter nightfall. I was deeply shocked when I saw Mao Zedong pacing slowly around the entrance gate of Yangjialing (杨家岭) site. Wearing his blue-gray tunic suit, Mao was meditating with a lit cigarette in his fingers. While I was approaching him, Mao suddenly looked up at me, asking, “Take a photo?” “How much?” I said. “Ten yuan,” Mao replied with a very low voice. “How about five? I’d rather take a few photos of you, not with you.” Mao gave me a quick nod. Mao was very cooperative, aptly delivering a series of his iconic postures and gestures like in a photo shoot. I handed him a five-yuan bill after photographing. Mao nodded at his suit pocket. Realizing his signal, I put the money in his pocket. All of a sudden, I felt very embarrassed as if I had insulted Mao by giving him a less-than-a-dollar bill for all he had done for this country. Not interested in reading my awkward look, Mao resumed his walk and meditation like nothing happened in the last twilight before the door closed. It was December 26, 2015, Chairman Mao’s 122nd Birthday. Given the time difference, it was Christmas morning in the US. With the difficulty of bringing the Mao impersonator into reality, my research trip of Yan’an in 2015 ended up to be absolutely surreal.

Early in the day I went to the Revolutionary Museum of Yan’an. A steady stream of people was filing through a makeshift memorial in front of the giant Mao sculpture. The crowd consisted of both locals and tourists, but mostly youth. They were either organized by their work units or coming on their own. There were a lot of bouquets of flowers on the base of Mao’s statue, all of which were donated by the visitors. Many of them came with families and children. The atmosphere was solemn and calm, charged
with occasional children’s giggles and playing noise.

The two vignettes above point to a profound social space of Red Tourism that a theory of Propaganda, a theory of tourism, or a simple combination of the two appears inadequate of analysis. On the one hand, Red Tourism is produced not only by the Party’s Propaganda machinery, but also through spatial articulation as if it was in a theatrical work to the extent that the meaning of the play is produced not solely by the narrative, but more importantly, by mise-en-scène, the spatial arrangement of symbols alongside the manipulation of feelings. On the other hand, Red Tourism is producing new meanings and imaginations during touristic encounters, which may, in return, impact its own making.

Having said that I would apply Williams’ framework of cultural analysis to my account of Red Tourism, I admit that I have so far paid much attention to the ideological articulation and historical reflection of Red Tourism and relatively little to the social dimension. Perhaps this makes previous chapters somewhat dull. This chapter is intended to remedy the situation.

To do so, this chapter focuses on the social space of Red Tourism. It examines Red Tourism through a case study of Yan’an, China. Drawing upon social/critical scholarship on media and space, I argue that Red Tourism is better conceived as a social space, both produced and productive. From the qualitative data derived from this study and through a comprehensive spatial analysis of architecture, urban planning, urbanism, the walking tour of the historical site, and the Revolutionary Museum of Yan’an, I argue that Red Tourism was created by the state to xuanchuan/propagandize its revolutionary past and attached politico-ideological legitimacy by catering to post-socialist nostalgia.
and stress on the one hand, and is producing and proliferating new meanings and
impressions on the other. Departing from Henri Lefebvre’s powerful thinking around the
production of space, this chapter sheds additional light on the close ties between
propaganda and space.

It should be noted at this moment that instead of directly applying Williams’ idea
of “a particular way of life,” or “social life” in his cultural analysis framework, I adopted
Henri Lefebvre’s framework of “social space” for my analysis of Red Tourism for several
reasons. For one thing, Red Tourism is a spatial project. Macroscopically, space matters
to the production of Red Tourism since developments of touristic sites, local economy,
and labor market are all space-specified. Microscopically, communication between Red
Tourism sites and tourists is largely achieved through a variety of spatial articulations
such as exhibits, displays, performances, sculptures, architecture, etc. Secondly, tourists
flow across space. Their spatial practice is producing Red Tourism and simultaneously is
reproduced by it. Later on I shall elaborate the term “spatial practice.” Suffice it to say at
this juncture that spatial practice contributes significantly to the overall dynamics of Red
Tourism, which should not be underestimated. Thirdly, there is a connection between
Williams’ social life and Lefebvre’s social space beyond the “social.” Both see the
relationship between the superstructure and the base not as the latter determining the
former but dialectically dynamic, which I have noted in my theoretical exploration of
ideology in chapter 1.

Based on seven research trips to Yan’an from 2012 to 2016, this study adopts a
qualitative and interpretive approach. The qualitative data are drawn particularly from
two strands of inquiry: government official interviews (n = 11) and tourist interviews (n =
32). The interviews with the governmental officials focused broadly on the development of local Red Tourism, related propaganda campaigns, and urban planning projects. In the interviews at different Yan’an tourist spots, the tourists were asked directly: “why did you choose Yan’an as your travel destination? Do you like the place you are visiting now? Why? What does this trip/tour mean to you?” The interviews are complemented by other data, including observation notes undertaken in the field trips and a total of 2336 photos taken by me. Furthermore, I also probed into popular discourse pertaining to Yan’an’s Red Tourism, including articles from national news outlets and blog posts. Last but not least, I analyzed government documents and archives—either obtained from government sources or culled from the Internet—to gain a fuller picture of the social space of Red Tourism in Yan’an.

In what follows, I start with a critique of what I refer to as the “temporal hierarchy” of Communication Study, followed by a literature review centering on the nexus between communication and space. The purpose of the literature review is to introduce the social space approach of the current study by looking into the keywords/key-dimensions of social space. Then, I delve into my case study. I introduce Yan’an by focusing on its historical significance and contemporary (re)significations. My spatial analysis of Red Tourism in Yan’an is twofold, containing a macro-level analysis and a micro-level analysis. Macroscopically, I analyze Yan’an’s urbanism, urban planning with a particular emphasis on a series of spatial manipulations pertaining to the representation of space and representational spaces. Microscopically, I examine three representational spaces of Yan’an’s Red Tourism, namely, the Revolutionary Museum of Yan’an, the walking tour of Yangjialing, and the Fantasy show. Altogether, my spatial
analysis is meant to illustrate the most crucial point of this dissertation that propaganda is not a text, a discourse, but a social space, comprised of communication networks, political pathways, and economy. This chapter ends with a discussion of Red tourists’ experience characterized by their marked ambivalence towards the grand narrative. This, again, complicates the linear thinking of propaganda and points to a lived social space of Red Tourism.

THE “TEMPORAL HIERARCHY” OF COMMUNICATION STUDY

Communications of any kind must attach to a certain space: praying in a church, dancing on the stage, lecturing at an auditorium, chatting on the Internet, casting your mind back to the past. Space—whether physical, abstract, or virtual—has enormous impact on human communication. Massey (1984) has noted that space matters to all social processes. Nevertheless, this space-attached attribute of communication has been largely de-spatialized and systematically overlooked by many strands of scholarship in the field. A similar critique given by James Carey (1989) was that “[a] ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time” (p.15).

The “temporal hierarchy” of Communication Study has been pervasive but rarely recognized. I coined the term “temporal hierarch,” to pinpoint a dominant ideology of Communication Study in which time is the dominant and determining force for communication whereas space is submissive or even dispensable. According to this ideology, communication events such as war propaganda and public opinion occur in a sequential order in time, methodologically characterized by a pre-post analysis grounded
on a cause-effects model. This was where media effects studies, a dominant paradigm in the field, started. Early scholars in this strand of studies held different or even contradictory findings and theory in many respects, including time range and strength and scale of media effects. But they all stuck to the before-after measurement and consequentiality determined by time. Take the development of the hypodermic needle model and weak/limited effects model for instance. Propaganda matters to scholars only when being considered as an event that was solely temporal in an almost unthinkable sense. Under this temporal hierarchy, Chinese propaganda was understood as a legacy of the Soviet Union, both were labeled as communist Propaganda, and finally their origins were traced back to Nazi Propaganda. In this genealogy of Propaganda, geography appears utterly irrelevant, despite the fact that the defining words ahead of these Propagandas, namely, “Chinese”, “the Soviet” and “Nazi” themselves, are explicitly pointing to geographies. Sadly, academic inquiry into Propaganda, the great legacy of Communication Study, suddenly stopped there. It seems to me that the end of the Cold War, again, a watershed and a temporal marker, rendered Propaganda—as a concept, a social practice or a theory—somehow residual and redundant, and therefore academically worthless. For example, according to this model of thinking, no matter what the research design is and what the approaches are, the outcome of Red Tourism research is highly predictable: once Red Tourism is deemed as Propaganda, it, then, can conclude that Red Tourism is a production of the Party’s politics being used to spread the dominant ideology. But, among many other puzzles, why has Red Tourism gained so much currency in postsocialist China? The de-contextual, ahistorical and acultural nature of the ideology of the temporal hierarchy erases all social and cultural texture of Red Tourism,
all nuances, all dynamics with only a stubborn “red” stain being left. This is surely not the place that I am headed for.

The temporal hierarchy, however prevailing and dominant these days, is not initially how communication as a field was envisaged. Sharing the “gene” with “commune”, “communion” and “community,” communication was once perceived as a spatial project, involving all kinds of networks across all realms of human society. Those networks include national markets and international trading routes in the economic realm, the public sphere in the social realm, and Sacred Congregation for Propagating the Faith of Roman Catholic Church in the spiritual realm, just to name a few. This is to say, communication was believed to be produced by and attached to space. Many scholars have already said that, implicitly if not explicitly. A quick catalogue of the influential authors who have thought about communication from a spatial perspective includes Henri Lefebvre, Benedict Anderson, Armand Mattelart, Umberto Eco, James Carey, David Harvey, Walter Benjamin, Jürgen Habermas, Georg Simmel, Sigfried Kracauer, John Hannigan, and many others. One of the benefits of looking communication as a spatial event from these authors is to locate communication in a larger blueprint of society, which, in turn, helps extend our knowledge about communication not on trivia, but on critical issues/projects such as social networking (Armand Mattelart), nationalism (Benedict Anderson), modernity (David Harvey), lifestyle (Sigfried Kracauer), democracy (Jürgen Habermas), and economy (John Hannigan).
Space, social space, spatial practice, and spatial analysis

Henri Lefebvre (1991) might be a mighty warrior fighting against the temporal hierarchy as he says, “time was thus inscribed in space, and natural space was merely the lyrical and tragic script of natural time” (p. 95). Then what is space and what exactly does space mean to communication?

Discussions of space have been throughout the history of philosophy and that of science, not mentioning geography and the great urban-rural division in sociology. Even an extremely brief retelling of any of these can be truly overwhelming. Besides, endless philosophical-epistemological debates on space stray from my topic of Red Tourism. Communication-wise, my inquiry into space focuses on a few terms that show how space communicates. As such, the following discussion is aligned with such authors: Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Walter Benjamin, James Carey, and Siegfried Kracauer. My account of the literature on space is intended to be evocative as it serves to provide minimal background theoretical foundation for my later spatial analysis, rather than to be an extensive literature review of space.

Space is not a place. For de Certeau (1984), the difference between place and space is radical: place, distinctively located, is static and stable, whereas space, consisting of direction, velocities, and time variables, is dynamic and mobile. A place, however, is ready to be transformed into space by spatial practice within that place. For example, a touristic place such as a museum is a place fixed in its geographical coordinates; it turns into a space when tourists visit it. “Visiting” is a spatial practice that distinguishes space from place. Hence, a comprehensive analysis of space necessarily involves two types of
examination: one of the place, and one of spatial practice, or “ways of operating” in that place (de Certeau, 1984, xiv).

The distinction between space and place led de Certeau to identify two types of power in a pair of space-oriented ideas: “strategy” and “tactic.” For de Certeau (1984), institutional power rests with a place, which he refers to as “proper (propre),” “a spatial or institutional localization” (xiv). The way to exercise that power was conceptualized as “strategy.” In contrast, “tactic” is where the power of resistance arises. For de Certeau, without “proper,” tactics are activities within a place. It is such everyday practice as talking, moving, reading that makes a place a powerful space, resulting in “victories of the ‘weak’ over the ‘strong’” (de Certeau, 1984, xix).

Space is social. This is a core point of Lefebvre’s thinking on the production of space. Inasmuch as natural space does have values and carries and delivers symbolic meanings to human beings, the sharp divide between natural space and social space disappears. Lefebvre (1991) adds that “natural space was soon populated by political forces” (p.48). In other words, all kinds of space are social. The greatest achievement of Marx, as Lefebvre has noted, is “the successful unmasking of things in order to reveal (social) relationships” (p. 81). Following this tradition, Lefebvre claims that space is not only composed of things but also social relationships concealed behind.

In de Certeau’s account, social space is merely a different way to say space as he uses the two terms interchangeably. In this regard, Lefebvre’s notion of social space was a leap forward. For Lefebvre, social space has specific connotations. Under capitalist conditions, social space connotes “biological reproduction (the family),” “the reproduction of labor power (the working class per se)” and “the reproduction of the
social relations of production” (p.32). Lefebvre goes further, suggesting that social space connotes those relations through symbolic representations. And these representations are critical to communication.

At the heart of Lefebvre’s spatial representation is a conceptual triad, or “three moments of social space.” The first concept is “spatial practice.” Lefebvre points out that spatial practice “secretes” social space (p.38). “Secrete” herein indicates two processes. First, it implies that spatial practice articulates the symbolic meaning of social space in such a hidden way as daily routine, or “the practice of everyday life” to borrow a phrase from de Certeau. Lefebvre illustrates this point by an example of the daily life of a tenant. Second, “secrète” means “produce,” suggesting that spatial practice produces social space. Both processes point to a realm of perception. The second concept is “representation of space.” It is “conceptualized” space insofar as it is a system of verbal signs abstracted from the dominant space. So to speak, the representation of space is framed and ideological in nature. The third concept is “representational space.” It is the dominant space associated with symbolic meanings from which the abovementioned representation of space is derived. In light of dialectical relationships among the three concepts, Lefebvre (1991) refers to the triad as the “perceived-conceived-lived triad” (p.40).

Among many kinds of spatial practice, travel is “a pure experience of space” (Kracauer, 1995, p.66). Once again, space should not be limited to physical space. It must also include abstract space where individual and collective memory, nostalgia, imagination, ideology, bias, worldview and the like are constantly being reconfigured, producing the spatial experience of the tourist, and therefore the meaning of tourism. This
process is somewhat like reading a newspaper. Different pages and columns (physical space) of the reader’s choice take the reader to different worlds and discourses (abstract space). This is the reason why Kracauer (1995) contends that “man is really a citizen of two worlds,” one he calls “the Here,” the other “the Beyond” (p. 68).

To deal with the space of “the Beyond,” Benjamin’s approach largely centers on imagination. Such imagination is not merely about associating a mental picture with a symbolic value. Rather, for Benjamin (1979), the reading of a city and its architecture involves imagining a dynamic set of human *activities* stirred by an impulse. To a great extent, this imagination is located in the realm of sense, something like what Barthes (1979) refers to as a “dream.” According to Benjamin, reading a city people actually means remaking a mental montage by piecing together fragments of memory, feeling and dream with a unified “leitmotif” (p.81).

But Lefebvre strongly opposed the treatment of space as a simple mental space. In criticizing Roland Barthes’s general semiology of space, Lefebvre (1991) reasons that the coding and decoding process of the semiological approach reduces space to a message, neglecting history and practice. In other words, “the mental realm comes to envelop the social and physical ones” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.5). For Lefebvre, spatial analysis, whatever it is, it must emphasize mediation. This is to say, spatial analysis is not a matter of reading, but a matter of (re)constructing.

Constructing reality is communication. It manifests in James Carey’s (1989) definition of communication, which is “a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed” (p.23). In that sense, Carey (1989) describes the United States as “the product of literacy, cheap paper, rapid and inexpensive
transportation, and the mechanical reproduction of words” (pp. 2-3). Lefebvre would translate Carey’s words like this: as a social space, the United States is jointly produced by spatial practice such as “the mechanical reproduction of words,” representational spaces such as “cheap paper,” and the representation of space such as “literacy” and “inexpensive transportation.” By the same token, Carey (1989) sees media of communication (e.g. tourism) as “organisms” (p.9), which clearly echoes Lefebvre’s notion of social space in that both ideas point to a polyvalent nature: produced yet productive.

This is how Lefebvre has paved the way to rethink Marx’s political economy of production. For Lefebvre, social space consists of political pathways and communication networks. On the one hand, social space is a product to be used and consumed. On the other hand, it is also a means of production in Marx’s term, meaning that a social space is also productive. Lefebvre terms this as the “polyvalence of social space.” This brings up a critical question, then, how to analyze social space? A social space is not merely a finished product ready for coding and decoding. It is alive and productive. Neither is a semantics of space nor a semiology of space sufficient.

The answer is hidden in Lefebvre’s text. Not only has Lefebvre developed a battery of concepts by which to think through social space, but also a methodological framework that he loosely refers to as “spatial analysis.” Nevertheless, Lefebvre does not specify the analytical steps of his method. Rather, the sequence of his method can be generated based on his complex and multiplex detail of analyses of urban space throughout his seminal book, “The production of space.”
Roughly, Lefebvre’s spatial analysis takes place in two dimensions. On the micro level, spatial analysis is threefold, including formal analysis, structural analysis and functional analysis. But these analyses are not enough. Spatial analysis needs to move to another level. On the macro level, Lefebvre analyzes the three moments of social space, namely, spatial practice, representational space, and the representation of space. Spatial practice can be any activities within a given social space, for example, “the practice of everyday life” (de Certeau, 1984), or “a specific use of space” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.16). But spatial practice has specific meanings in Lefebvre’s analysis of urban space. In a footnote Lefebvre (1991) elucidates that spatial practice in an urban setting takes three levels, namely, “planning,” “urbanism,” and “architecture” (p.25). Lefebvre’s notion of social space and his spatial analysis serve as my theoretical departure and the methodological foundation for my analysis of Red Tourism in the Yan’an case.

YAN’AN: THE SACRED PLACE

I chose Yan’an as a single case study for its historical significance to the Chinese revolution, symbolic power for the party-state, and central position in the Red Tourism industry.

Known as the “Sacred Place of the Chinese Revolution” (geming shengdi 革命圣地), Yan’an is now a prefecture-level city of Shaanxi Province in northwestern China. As such, Yan’an has heavily invested in Chinese revolutionary heritage. It is a city that is aware of itself as in the center of one of China’s poorest regions and yet brands itself as a haven for Red Tourism. For Chinese people, the term “Red Tourism” would immediately invoke a mental montage of a few places, and Yan’an, arguably, tops the list. To the
extent that Yan’an represents the turning point of the Chinese Revolution, it is like Gettysburg to the American Civil War and Saratoga to the American Revolution. But Yan’an is much more than that.

Historical significance: the Yan’an period

Yan’an represents an authentic revolutionary history. In January 1937, Mao Zedong along with the CPC Central Committee stationed in Yan’an. The place became the center of the Chinese Revolution in the following decade till 1947. This decade is known as the “Yan’an period.” During this period of time, the CPC drew lessons from the past, advanced its revolutionary theories, formulated the Party’s guidelines, principles and policies, all of which laid the groundwork for the victory of what came to be called the “New Democratic Revolution” (xin minzhu zhuyi geming 新民主主义革命). For example, Judd (1985) argued that the Yan’an period resulted in the “creative formulation of policies and of methods of organization” (p.377). What’s more, Yan’an represents the maturing of the first generation of Chinese leadership under Mao Zedong and historical transformation of the Party from weak to strong (Liu, 2006).

No matter how this history was exploited for the Party’s Propaganda in later stages of socialist China, it is spurious to reduce it to merely an artifact of Mao’s storytelling (e.g. Apter, 1993). In the Yan’an days, Mao tested various ideas on a variety of things that had enormous impact on the later course of events. First and foremost, the Soviet China was established during the period. With the founding of political, financial and educational systems, what some called “Mao’s republic” was established. It is now considered an archetype of the Chinese nation-state. Second, in view of the tentative war
against Japan, Mao consolidated his military thinking of “guerrilla warfare” (youji zhan游击战) and “mobile warfare” (yundong zhan运动战), all of which not only became principal strategies for the communist army in the War against Japan, but also proved to be effective in the later Liberation War against the Nationalists. But Apter (1993) was right in pointing out that “Yan’an was a discourse community” (p.208). It is so not only because most of Mao’s influential writings were produced there, which is true, but also because the most enduring and dominant official discourse of the Party developed in Yan’an, noticeably, “criticism and self-criticism” (piping yu ziwopiping批评与自我批评), “self-reliance and hard work” (zili gengsheng jianku fendou自力更生, 艰苦奋斗), “utter devotion to others without any thought of self” (haobu liji zhuanmen liren毫不利己专门利人) and so forth.

Symbolic power: the Yan’an way

The discourse of Yan’an holds enormous symbolic power. I draw the term “symbolic power” from Bourdieu (1989) to designate what he describes as a power of “world-making” (p.22). In other words, Yan’an is “sacred” because of its world-making power in the literal sense. That “world” later referred to as the “New World” of the communist in contrast to the so called “Old World” of the KMT.

Worldwide, Yan’an signifies the “Yan’an Way.” There is no such a term in Chinese, however. The Yan’an Way, to a great extent, might be called the xuanchuan way in light of what I have elaborated earlier “propaganda as an integration force.” Likewise, Selden (1995) defines the Yan’an Way as an “integrated program,” stating that:
[The Yan’an Way] represents a distinctive approach to economic development, social transformation, and people’s war. Its characteristic features included popular participation, decentralization, and community power. Underlying this approach was a conception of human nature which held that people could transcend the limitations of class, experience, and ideology to act creatively in building a new China (p. 170).

Translating Selden’s text would yield what the Chinese call the Yan’an Spirit (yanan jingshen 延安精神). While definitions of the Yan’an Spirit are varied, its core elements commonly involve self-reliance and hard work, education at the grassroots, and the mass line. These elements well correspond to Selden’s “economic development,” “social transformation” and “people’s war.” In fact, Selden (1995) himself, too, loosely refers to the Yan’an Way as a “spirit” (p.224). In China, Yan’an is believed to connote a starting point of the “way” to socialism with Chinese characteristics (Zhu, 2012).

Two interrelated historical moments named after “Yan’an” are paramount to an understanding of the Yan’an way or the Yan’an Spirit, and hence, the discourse of Yan’an. They are Yan’an Rectification (yanan zhegnfeng 延安整风) and Yan’an Talks (yanan jianghua 延安讲话). Credited as the first mass ideological movement of the Party, the Yan’an Rectification of 1942-1944 had a profound impact on the Party and later the PRC. The term “rectification” simultaneously denotes something wrong and the necessity of making corrections. In the Yan’an Rectification, the first part of this dual-denotation was comprised of a series of isms, mainly, subjectivism, sectarianism, and Party formalism, whereas the second part was indeed a method of mass ideological movement characterized by open criticism. In studying the Yan’an Rectification, Western
scholarship has been particularly obsessed with immediate effects such as the assertion of the authority of Mao as the Leader (Apter, 1993), internecine power struggles within the Party (Benton, 1975; Goldman, 1967; Wylie, 1980), a defining moment for Chinese communism” (Selden, 1995), and the interconnection between the Rectification and concurrent counterespionage campaigns (Seybolt, 1986). In contrast, Chinese scholars have emphasized the normative power of the Yan’an Rectification insofar as they commonly view the ideological movement as a model (Fan & Hu, 2013; Wang, 2007), a mechanism (Xi, 1999) that can be reused or applied to Party building (dangjian 党建) (Luo, 2012). In fact, the form of the Rectification was duplicated at least in two other political movements in 1950 and 1957. Hence, in the Party’s lexicon Rectifications always go in its plural form. In 1996, the CPC embarked on a three-year long ideological education campaign called the “Three Stresses” (sanjiang 三讲), which refer to the three imperatives as “stress study,” (jiang xuexi 讲学习) “stress politics” (jiang zhengzhi 讲政治) and “stress righteousness” (jiang zhengqi 讲正气). Chinese scholars have generally agreed that this ideological campaign under Jiang Zemin’s leadership can be understood as an extension of the Yan’an Rectification (Lu, 1999; Luo, 2002; Song, 2001; Zheng, 1999).

Central to the Rectification was the Yan’an Talks, short for “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art” given by Mao Zedong on May 2, 1942. The Yan’an Talks

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1 The Yan’an Talks was included in Mao’s (1965) Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol. III. Beijing: Foreign Language Press. The English translation of the full text can be retrieved from https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm
called for the ideological transformation of intellectuals through political reeducation. Rather than all intellectuals, Judd (1985) has noted that the Talks in particular spoke to writers, artists and dramatists whom Judd refers to as “literary intelligentsia.” Previously called literati in traditional China, this group of intelligentsia shared considerable propagandistic power for they worked on people’s minds and imagination. As earlier noted, this is the defining characteristic of the literati group, for instance, the shi group. In a sense, the Yan’an Talks meant to use propaganda to curb other propagandas. In a literary study of He Qifang (何其芳, 1912-1977), a poet, Zhao (2005) described the transformation of He in light of the Yan’an Talks as “from being ‘enlightened’ to ‘enlightening’ the masses” (p.10). In that sense, the Talks can be better understood as the groundwork for Party Propaganda work than what Irving (2016) viewed as the foundation of China’s policy on culture. This is to say, ostensibly the subject of the Talks was about literature and art, but it was really about propaganda in a deeper sense. A marker of the Yan’an Period, Lu Xun Academy of Arts (luyi 鲁艺) is a perfect footnote in this regard; the Academy was built not because the Party had a keen interest in arts but rather because as a political institution, it prepared a new generation of propagandists for the Party.

The Yan’an Spirit continues to be studied and celebrated in China today. Yan’an is seen as the ultimate source of so called “positive energy” for the Party. There is even an area of study called “Yan’an Studies” (Yan’an xue 延安学), which was established in the early 1990s in China (Guo, 2006). With regard to Red Tourism, the latest metaphor of Yan’an is a “test area” for later People’s Republic. Compared to the early signifier, either the “Yan’an Spirit” in China or the “Yan’an Way” worldwide, the new metaphor of “test area” is spatially
illuminating and imaginatively appealing; it literally invites tourists to the “area.”

The “red Mecca”: a paradoxical utopia

What some call the “Red Mecca” was and is a utopia to many. And it is a paradoxical one. It manifests in a series of sharp contrasts between abstract space and physical space throughout the recent nearly a hundred-year history of Yan’an. During the Yan’an Period, thousands of intellectuals from all over the country came to Yan’an in pursuit of the revolutionary ideal despite its geographical status as one of the poorest areas of the nation. In the 1960s, the youth flocked to Yan’an in the name of revolution at the time when many Party leaders of the Yan’an Period were being persecuted in the Cultural Revolution. Finally, when the so called “digital revolution” became a reality and Chinese netizens began indulging themselves in all kinds of activities in virtual space, when capitalism as a mode of production and exploitation became dominant in economic space, and particularly when Hollywood-like cultural products and outbound tourism increasingly gained popularity, Yan’an is now surprisingly re-emerging as one of the nation’s most popular touristic destinations.

The Red Tourism industry without Yan’an is unimaginable, and vice versa. Branded as the “most condensed, most resourceful Red Tourism city” in the government’s website, Yan’an is the host of 445 revolutionary sites in addition to three big ideological education bases for patriotism, revolutionary traditions, and the Yan’an Spirit (Yan’an Municipal Government, 2013). According to a government report, in 2015, Yan’an’s tourism sites received 35 million visitors, with an annual growth of 11.3 percent; the consolidated revenue of tourism was RMB 19.3 billion ($2.97 billion) with
an annual growth rate of 12.1 percent (Statistical Bureau of Yan’an City, 2016). The same year, the gross output value of Yan’an’s primary industries (including agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, and fisheries) was RMB 19.8 billion ($3 billion) with RMB 15.4 billion ($2.37 billion) in agriculture. Given that traditionally Yan’an was built up on an agricultural-based economy, it appears now that the contribution of Yan’an’s tourism to the local economy has outstripped its agriculture.

SPATIAL ANALYSIS I: ON THE MACRO LEVEL

Yan’an once represented living hell. Ritualistically, this is how various accounts of Yan’an start. Yan’an was described as the place that “comes the nearest to being a liability” in Mark Selden’s (1995) book, China in revolution. Similarly, in Chinese narratives, the image of Yan’an before the Yan’an Period has been exclusively associated with barren lands, warlordism, banditry, and famines. Perhaps, Yan’an is best known in the West as the Red Capital in American journalist Edgar Snow’s 1938 book Red star over China. Even in this book, Snow (1938) rarely mentioned Yan’an. Only in a footnote, Snow told readers that Yan’an “is now (1937) the provisional Red capital” (p.28). Yan’an was called “the city made of earth” in a report of a major newspaper in the KMT period (Introduction of Yan’an, 1947). This was what I thought before I came to Yan’an in 2012. But I was wrong.

Urbanism: a hybrid space

I was stuck at the busiest road outside of the Yan’an Railway Station in August 2016. This happened again and again during my multiple trips to Yan’an in the last five
years without exception. It is almost impossible for a tourist to get a taxi in the vicinity of the Station without being ripped off. This is, however, a symptom that is shared by many so-called China’s “first-tier cities” (yixian chengshi 一线城市) such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin—the city I reside in. However defined, these cities are characterized by high-density housing and terrible traffic congestion. Yan’an shares these too. Except Yan’an is not a first-tier city, not even a well-qualified third-tier city by criteria such as population, income, economic competitiveness, etc. For example, Yan’an has a total population of 2.23 million by 2015 (Statistical Bureau of Yan’an City, 2016), which is the equivalent of a county in Anhui province.

Unsurprisingly, when I finally got into a taxi, the driver ripped me off by taking long routes. From my accent and backpack, the driver could tell that I was a tourist. Cheating tourists by cab drivers nowadays is quite usual in any Chinese tourist city. No exception for the Red Mecca. Nationwide, thousands of taxi drivers in several cities had staged protests and strikes against unfair treatment and ride-hailing app services since the beginning of the year. Ironically, due to frequent unfair treatments given by cab drivers, Chinese netizens had shown no sympathy whatsoever to cab drivers, quipping, “Please don’t stop striking!” in social media.

The long, expectedly unexpected detour made by the taxi driver, however, was like a tour of the city to me. It was packed with a montage of a global scene, a modern scene, a local scene, a metropolitan scene, and a rural scene. Pizza Hut and KFC occupied the most eye-catching locations in the city’s business area hand-in-hand with the newly erected Baskin-Robbins shop. Note that these global fast-food restaurant and ice cream chains normally open their stores only in first-tier or second-tier cities in China
because of their middle-class clientele alongside their presumed tastes. Rarely would they pick a small city like Yan’an. The unusual location seems to be due to the city’s Red Tourism boom. From my observation, the regulars of those Western style stores were mostly tourists. The locals preferred to hang out in those Chinese restaurant chains not so much because of their marked preference of rice and noodles but because of something called “xing-jia-bi” (性价比), a buzzword referring to a kind of cost-effectiveness related to everyday consumption. Also note that a regular 12-inch medium pizza is normally sold for 88 yuan ($13.5) in Chinese Pizza Hut stores, more expensive than in the US. Presumably, the preference of “xing-jia-bi” can be an indicator for low-income groups in China. Outside those modern-look shopping centers and malls, local villagers were peddling yellow steamed buns. The previously unknown speciality of Yan’an has caught national attention overnight as it was featured in an episode of A Bite of China, a smash-hit CCTV documentary series on Chinese local cuisine. More villagers gathered in the major tourist sites of the city such as the Date Garden (枣园) and Yangjialing (杨家岭), selling dried dates, another local treat of Yan’an, to tourists. A report of The People’s Daily published a decade ago criticized the peddling around these Yan’an historical sites as “inharmnionous voice” (Wang & Wang, 2005). But it did not stop. Now a date market was built right next to the entrance gate of the Yangjiangling-site but villagers continue peddling around.

The hybridity of Yan’an is hard to decipher and represent. Yan’an is not rural. Fast-paced urbanization has been the dominating theme of the city. During the Eleventh Five-Year Plan period (2006-2010), the built-up area of central Yan’an city doubled (Zhang, 2011). Today, the sign of the hand-written Chinese character “拆” (chai,
“demolish”) inside a big circle appears in many walls of old buildings in the central parts of the city. The sign, which can easily invoke a terrible feeling of oppression, articulates a huge ongoing modernization project that Yan’an shares with all other small cities in China. But modernity does not simply mean destruction of the old; it has to be “creative destruction,” a radical break in lifestyle, according to David Harvey (2003a). In other words, modernity, to a great extent, is more about urbanism than urbanization. Yan’an is not global either. Hardly can anyone spot a foreign tourist in Yan’an despite its status as a popular tourist city. According to the government statistics, international tourists only accounted for 0.1% of the total tourists that Yan’an received in 2015 (Statistical Bureau of Yan’an City, 2016). This is why there is no international hotel chain in Yan’an. In the absence of chained department stores, local ones are glutted with cheap products and shoddy goods.

The representation of space and the representational spaces

The representation of space and representational spaces of Yan’an can be simplified as what Li et al. (2011) phrase as “two sacred [sites] and two yellow [landscapes]” (liangsheng lianghuang 两圣两黄). The first part connotes the representation of space as the sacred site for the Chinese Revolution and the sacred birthplace of Chinese civilization. The second part implies two representational spaces, the Yellow River and the (yellow) Loess Plateau.

Located in the middle reaches of the Yellow River on the Loess Plateau, Yan’an along with its periphery is considered the cradle of early Chinese civilization. Once a small town, Yan’an’s representational spaces were its yellowish soil (the Loess Plateau),
the yellowish water of the river (the Yan River), and its yellowish people (typical Han ethnic Chinese). In concert with the representational spaces, the representations of space of Yan’an were hard work and plain living. Taken all together, traditionally Yan’an as a social space was highly expressive and communicative, signifying the greatness of the Han Chinese and their civilization.

This spatial connotation of Yan’an was (re)shaped by the Chinese Revolution. The replacement of “sacredness” for “greatness” reflects the new codifications of the representation of space and the representational spaces. The representational spaces became Pagoda Hill (baota shan 宝塔山), associated with Mao Zedong’s multifarious activities, anecdotes, and iconic photos during the Chinese Revolution, and yao-dong (窑洞), a unique cave-like indigenous dwelling that accommodated the Communist troops during the revolutionary period. This “Red” resignification of Yan’an became a blessing for its skyrocketing economy of Red Tourism. Pilgrim-like tourists, young and old from every corner of the country, swarm into Yan’an desperate to have a picture with the Pagoda Hill, to stay a night at a yaodong-style hotel, and, most importantly, to get a flavor of the Chinese Revolution. David is an entrepreneur from northern China. Yan’an has special meaning to him. He says:

I love Yan’an. I was brought up under the Party’s red flag, always feeling attached to Yan’an, the sacred place. This is my first visit. Lao Mao [a nickname for Mao] always has a special place in my heart and no one can replace him … [During the Chinese Revolution] many aspiring young people from all over the country came here to join the revolution. If I were born in that era, I probably would also do the same. I will talk about my Yan’an experience with my friends
for sure (interview, June 23, 2013).

This is how most of the interviewees spoke about their motivation for visiting Yan’an, depicting themselves as some kind of pilgrims. David was not alone on his pilgrimage to Yan’an. Red Tourism captivates millions of the “Red” pilgrims all over the country each year.

Urbanization, gentrification, and extreme makeover

Like many holy sites, the locality of the Sacred Place is unique. The topography of the city of Yan’an is vividly described as a big “Y” or “three mountains sandwiching two rivers” (sanshan jia lianghe 三山夹两河), which indicates a great scarcity of land (see Figure 4). It is also the reason why the spatial development of the city has been described by “lines” rather than by areas. A lot of local people still live in earth caves. They chose to stay in caves partly because of roaring house prices and partly because of persistence of the traditional way of life. With the dramatic advance of ongoing urbanization, the close-knit yaodong communities are being disintegrated, rapidly becoming rabble and debris. I visited several such sites in last few years, and they looked like ghost towns in the mountains in view of the sharp contrast between untouched well-paved roads, stone steps and the ghastly debris.

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2 Three mountains refer to Pagoda Mountain (宝塔山), Fenghuang Mountain (凤凰山) and Qingliang Moutian (清凉山), whereas two rivers refer to the Yanhe River (延河) and the Nan-chuanhe River (南川河).
The ghostly scene is a by-product of an ongoing makeover of the city. Yan’an is at the midpoint of the intermediate stage of urbanization, characterized by all sorts of development issues such as rapid population growth, land scarcity, traffic congestion, poor infrastructure, low-taste urbanscape and so forth (Qing, Jiang & Yao, 2014). To resolve the “ugly” issues, Yan’an was undergoing a huge Red Tourism-oriented makeover project, which was given the name of “Beautifying Yan’an” (zuomei Yan’an 做美延安).

A five-year plan from 2011 to 2015, the Beautifying project aimed to rebuild a sacred Yan’an exactly like the one imagined by the public. In other words, it was about to create an image of the city that was based on and caters to others’ perceptions of the city. The criteria for the beautifying was a triad, including beautiful functions, beautiful images, and beautiful contents. The outcome of the five-year-long makeover was
envisioned as a “cultural image” that projected the tourists’ pursuits of “bringing back Red memories” and “getting the feel of the Loess style” (Housing and Urban-Rural Development Bureau of Yan’an, 2011). According to the urban planning authority, the Beautifying project was supposed to significantly improve the taste of the city of Yan’an (Yan’an Urban Planning and Design Institute, 2011).

Whatever it is, the new taste was believed to stem from a Red Tourism-centered gentrification project. The major part of the project was to pave an estimated thirty hills, so that the government can relocate the residents from the city center to the outskirts to save space for its Red Tourism development. The slogans for Yan’an urban planning are “Evacuating People from the Center to Expand the Periphery” (zhongshu waikuo 中疏外扩) and “Rebuilding the City on the Mountains” (shangshan jiancheng 上山建城). Note that the paved mountains are not in the center of the city. In the central area, the project called for “Relocating Residents from the Mountains” (jumin xiashan 居民下山) (Yan’an Urban Planning and Design Institute, 2011). These slogans appeared in multiple sources including government documents and news reports. To add space to Pagoda Hill, the landmark of Yan’an, for example, the government evacuated 148 families, a total population of 1100 people who previously lived in that area (Yan’an Tourism Bureau, 2012). This ambitious makeover project was meant to sharpen a sense of sacredness by adding vast space to the historical sites. Sara, an official of the Yan’an Tourism Bureau, explains:

Adding space is a philosophy of traditional Chinese architecture. For example, Buddhists would like to dislocate their temple from the residential area of the city
to a remote place with large space to make the temple look otherworldly. This is the best way to rebuild the image of Yan’an’s Red Tourism (interview, June 25, 2013).

Significantly, Sara’s understanding of the manipulation of space implicitly suggested that there was a similar strategy being employed between the religious practice and Red Tourism in creating an intentionally sacred image.

The relocation plan was extremely critical to the city’s fetish for Red Tourism. In 2011, the government set out a spatial development strategy of Yan’an city: “Developing the New City, Easing the Old City, and Protecting the Sacred Place” (Qing, Jiang & Yao, 2014). To translate the slogan, it simply means a resettlement plan of relocating the residents from the old city to the new place for the Sacred sites. In a research report on the Beautifying project, Zhang (2011) argues that the “absolute authority” of Red sites must be asserted and established in urban planning. To do so, as Zhang suggests, it has to put Pagoda Hill at the center of the spatial structure of the city with other Red tourist spots radiating from it. This would achieve a desired effect in urban spatial structure that is termed as “zhong xing gong yue 众星拱月” in Chinese traditional architecture, literally, “many stars circle a moon” (Zhang, 2011, p.4). Then an aura of “absolute authority” emerges alongside what Zhang calls a “poetic image of the sacred city.”

The Beautifying project was only the first step on the blueprint. In 2012, the Master Plan of Yan’an City, 2012-2030 was introduced. The primary goal of the development plan is to build an eco-friendly, livable, vibrant sacred Yan’an by making the city beautiful, big, and strong (Yan’an Municipal Government, 2012). The strategy is twofold: sanctifying the old city and modernizing the new city. The way to sanctify, as
earlier noted, is basically to remove residents from the center of the city to save space for Red Tourism sites. Hence, land being cleared in this process will be only used for Red Tourism and related public green space. This plan, on the one hand, is expected to lead to the restoration of the historical scene of Yan’an characterized by lower buildings, large tracts of open land and low population density. On the other hand, as the residents continue moving into the outskirts of city, Yan’an will expand to two-and-half times its current size by 2030.

SPATIAL ANALYSIS II: ON THE MICRO LEVEL

At the heart of Red Tourism is imagination. Benedict Anderson’s book, *Imagined Communities*, is helpful on this topic, particularly in thinking about how Red Tourism strives for rebuilding and branding an intended image of the socialist country via reconfiguration of space. For Anderson (2006), the public perception of the nation is largely based on the reconfiguration of space via imagination. This is also true for the Yan’an case. Tourists imagine themselves as part of the nation through a series of institutional apparatuses associated with Red Tourism. The museum, in particular, is of vital importance among those apparatuses.

The Revolutionary Museum of Yan’an (RMY): articulation of the grand narrative

Museums are profoundly political. Museums in any form, by any theme, and under whatever situation are not innocent and by no means neutral and purely scientific. The museum is a space fraught with political/ideological signification. It articulates and spreads the intended ideology through a series of even more complex and subtle
apparatuses, including spatial organization, ordering of exhibits, proscriptions, internal and external layouts, decorations, inscriptions, selected artifacts, displays, lighting, and so forth. Like Anderson, Tony Bennett (1995) also views the museum as an institutional apparatus, noting the co-occurrence of the reorganization of the social space of the museum and the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere in the West. Bennett (1995) argues that the museum has gradually and ultimately transformed into a governmental instrument for educating the general public ever since its Enlightenment conception. In studying the Newseum, Nimkoff (2008) has demonstrated that this news museum acts as “a mechanism for changing individual minds” (p.30). Nevertheless, this educational function of the museum has a specific meaning in Red Tourism; it simply means ideological education. The Revolutionary Museum of Yan’an (hereafter RMY) is a propaganda apparatus in this regard. To a great extent, RMY is exactly like the Party’s organ. Leon and Rosenzweig (1989) remarked that sponsorship and financing have significant effects on what museums say. A reflection on Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model suggests the same controlling mechanism as in news media.

The post-1949 reconsideration of museums as education resources in China entailed a significant transformation of earlier cultural strategies. However, the rules and admission fees of PRC museums in their early stages of development did not fulfill the propagandistic role because they served, though involuntarily, to distinguish the intelligentsia by excluding the general populace. Coincident with China gaining global economic power in the early twenty-first century, the Party’s re-realized the propaganda function of the museum, which led to the free admission and renovation movement for all public museums. During this period of time, the RMY, originally erected in 1950, was
relocated to a new site, reconstructed with total expenditure amounting to approximately 570 million yuan ($95 million), and reopened to the public with free admission in 2009. The new RMY was branded as the “Number One Project” (Yan’an Tourism Bureau, 2012).

The RMY sits in the Pagoda District, the central tourist area of the city. Through exhibits and extensive collections, the 14,500 square-meter (156077 square-foot) museum presents a thirteen-year- history of the CPC in Yan’an. In addition to 5,500 historical photos, its collection features more than 25,000 artifacts, from daily use items of the Party’s early members to Mao Zedong’s pistol and his white horse, long dead and now stuffed. The museum includes four connected exhibition units with each articulating a particular theme (see Table 1). Put together, the RMY produces a grand narrative of the Party.

Table 1
*The Exhibition Plan of RMY*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 1: Destination of the Long March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Northwestern Revolutionary Base</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Headquarters of the Chinese Revolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3 Formation of the National United Front</td>
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<td>1.4 Political Center of the Anti-Japanese War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.5 Comprehensive War of Resistance</td>
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<td>1.6 Anti-Japanese Democratic Bases behind Enemy Lines</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.7 Policy of “Resistance, Unity, and Progress”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.8 Victory of the Anti-Japanese War</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 2: Test Area of the New Democratic Revolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Construction of Political Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Economic Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Cultural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Building the Cadre System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Foreign Affairs in Yan’an</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instead of examining the RMY exhibit by exhibit, I only highlight some nodal points pertaining to the nexus between propaganda and space. A truly comprehensive analysis of RMY can lead to a book. Besides, the museum is not the primary focus of this research. In what follows, I start with architecture because it is central to spatial analysis. Eco (1997) regards architecture as a mass communication system. For Eco, like any other form of discourse, architectural discourse starts with commonly accepted rationales that accordingly lead to readily acceptable argument. In other words, architecture is where the grand narrative begins.

Corresponding to the grand narrative is a grand display. Situated in a large public area, the façade of RMY is both traditional and modern. On each flank of the main entrance, there are nine statues of iconic Chinese literary characters in their revolutionary moments. This arrangement of the numbers connotes a principle of feng shui (风水): “jiu jiu gui yi” (九九归一), literally, “every time number 9 appears, the next number will
return to number 1.” The figurative meaning is that everything in nature is in a circle and it has to return to its original point (“1”) after arriving at its climax (“9”). So the key point in this architectural metaphor is the “one,” designating the original point of the Chinese Revolution. It is the Party that these eighteen sculptures point toward and that the people represented in these sculptures champion. Prima facie, the central sculpture in front of the main entrance is the “one,” which, unsurprisingly, is Mao Zedong, symbolizing “oneness” of this whole spatialized feng shui mise-en-scène. The irony, however, is that once suppressed by the Party as superstition, feng shui now seems to be celebrated, though implicitly, through “Red” signifiers. From another angle, however, the RMY façade is embracing modernity: the lighting of RMY alongside the European-style ornamental horticulture of shaped trees and lawn, arched walls, and elegant layouts appears self-evident. This combination of seemingly contradictory elements from traditional Chinese culture and the West mirrors the “desperateness” of the architecture as a mass communication apparatus to communicate or, more precisely, to advance an argument crystalized in the Party’s long-run slogan: “Without the Communist Party, There Would Be No New China” (meiyou gongchandang jiu meiyou xin zhongguo没有共产党就没有新中国).

The architectural codification goes on as the grand narrative unfolds. The steps to the entrance are divided into three stages that represent the three historical stages of what the Party experienced in the Yan’an period, namely, the Agrarian Revolution, the Anti-Japanese War, and the Liberation War. The seven yaodong-shape archways in the entrance porch denote the Seventh People’s Congress of the CPC held in Yan’an. The interior colors of the exhibition units were initially coded to denote different themes.
According to Wei Chunxue (1999), the chief designer of RMY, grayish purple was used to symbolize the dawn of the revolution, light coral red for the nation’s life-and-death struggle against Japan, Olive green for the Communist-controlled peaceful border region, light camel for the Large-scale Production Movement and the Ratification Movement, and Chinese red for the victory of the Chinese Revolution and the founding of the PRC (Wei, 1999). However, when I started this research project in 2012, the interior color of the RMY was all painted Chinese red.

Upon entering the YRM, visitors are greeted by a group of statues of the early Party’s leaders along with foreign communist sympathizers against a giant relief. The open and separate entrance hall where the statues stand is a first-of-its-kind for the Chinese museum. The representational spaces of Yan’an, including the Pagoda Hill, the Yanhe River, the Loess Plateau, and the old Yan’an city, were carved in relief to represent the Yan’an period. To create an atmosphere of mystery and particularly to give a psychological hint to the visitor to switch space from the present to the past, a special manipulation of lighting borrowed from Chinese ancient architecture was employed for the relief, which is “zaojing” (藻井) or caisson ceiling. Typically found in sacred places such as temples, zaojing is a skylight structure usually above the religious figure. Remolding the zaojing structure, the architect set thirteen groups of lights above the relief on the ceiling. In doing so, it “transforms an unknown space into one that is full of energy and solemnness” (Wei, 2000, p.53). The spatial organization of displays also glorifies the Party’s past and its leadership. In representing the victory of the Anti-Japanese War at the end of the first exhibition unit, for example, three rifles with haversacks across the weapons as the symbol of the Party’s revolution are placed in a glass display case in the
center of the room with every other image and object enclosing it.

The new YRM promised to change the old image of Chinese revolutionary museums marked by banality and artlessness. The new museum planners have fulfilled the promise in some respects. In representing the people’s War of Resistance against Japan, twenty Kung Fu spears are arranged against the wall in a fan-pattern like rays emanating from the sun. The spears look like rays and the negative space around handles of the spears forms a half-sun-shape. Six rifles were added in the radial pattern. While the display is rich in symbolism, its visualization is so spectacular that it looks like an art exhibit. Normally, visitors crowd into the sight, taking plenty of pictures.

In the course of the chronological progression of the second exhibit on the New Democratic Revolution, foreign affairs in Yan’an are spotlighted. A golden, hollow globe is placed at the center of the exhibition room. Names of those countries with people coming to Yan’an during the Yan’an period are shown and marked red, leaving the rest countries’ names blank. The surrounding walls are hung with historical photos divided in three sections, namely, “International Friends in Yan’an,” “The US Military Observer’s Mission in Yan’an,” and “From Yan’an to the World.” On a typical day, this exhibition room swarms with giddy kids curiously hanging around the golden globe. It is worth noting that like in many other kinds of museums, children along with their family members are a frequent presence at RMY.

The exhibit of the New Marketplace of Yan’an (延安新市场) received praise from many tourists. Established in 1939, the New Marketplace soon became the center of commerce and finance of Yan’an at the time, particularly when the Bank of the Border Region and the Finance Department moved in. Now a 3-D simulacrum depicting a life-
size barbershop, a blacksmith’s shop, among others, and wax shopkeepers and customers, the Marketplace occupies a large fraction of the second floor of the museum. The vaulted ceiling is painted with a realistic blue sky and vivid white clouds. The realistic representation of the Marketplace is reminiscent of the iconic gondola *mise-en-scène* of The Venetian hotel at Las Vegas. The whole Marketplace is bathed in soft and dim lighting, which on the one hand incites tourists to imagine themselves in the past, and on the other, enables them to see the faint light inside the shops, and therefore to let them concentrate on the displays. To some degree, the Marketplace serves as a “buffer zone” where tourists can relax a bit after engaging in the discourse of the War of Resistance and before moving on to the next exhibit, the most important one about the Yan’an Spirit from the planner’s point of view. Walking through the street of the Marketplace, tourists see a prosperous Yan’an brought about by the Communist force.

Annie, a college student from Guangzhou, appreciates the intriguing style of RMY when she says:

> It is well worth watching. My only regret is that I would have arranged more time for this museum. It has so many floors. I did not expect that a small town like Yan’an could build a spectacular modern museum like this one … I was most impressed by the high-tech based replica of old shops and street of Yan’an inside the museum, very realistic, particularly with cutting-edge sound and light technologies (interview, June 24, 2013).

What struck Annie most was the way that the RMY as a space communicates to her: Its magnificent appearance and the state-of-the-art exhibit make the revolution-theme
While the four historical exhibition units are arranged rather chronically, two exhibits that jump out at visitors are noteworthy for their spatial articulations. Both appear in what the designer calls “remaining” space, a 90-degree corner that links two exhibition rooms. As open space, the corner is supposed to “develop rhythms of space to reduce the visual fatigue of the audience,” and as transition space, it is a continuation of the last exhibit and a hint about the next one (Wei, 1999, p.68). But the effect is, perhaps, more profound than that. Leaving the third unit of the Yan’an Spirit before entering the fourth on “Mao Zedong Thought,” visitors walk into a corner where a lightbox wall appears. It was supposed to put the state leaders’ comments on the Yan’an Spirit on display. Instead of highlighting the words, however, the light boxes featured portraits of the PRC’s state leaders. Given the historical artifact orientation of the museum, this display looked glaringly disconcerting. In 2013 summer, there were four portraits on the lightbox wall, namely, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao. Compared to the standard speech photos of the other three leaders, Mao’s picture, presumably taken after 1949, was exceptionally refreshing. What caught the visitor’s eye is a typical image of a traditional Chinese intellectual writing diligently on paper with a brush. In the background of the picture, there is a wooden window with a green curtain pulled back and sunlight streaming in. As the visitor’s eye moved through the window, a big green tree is bathed in glorious sunshine. But the lightbox display had changed when I revisited the YRM in 2015. With Xi Jinping’s photo being added to the portraits, the exhibit now looks completely like a representation of the five generations of Chinese leaders regardless of their comments on Yan’an. For one thing, the labeled text was too
small to read in the low lighting environment. For another, none even tended to read the
text when passing by. Moreover, Mao’s picture was replaced by a similar speech photo in
concert with others, resulting in a visual homogeneity in terms of frame, posture,
foreground and background, etc. Also, the lights above the lightbox wall were turned off,
so that the tourist can see only the five portraits.

The other surprising exhibit is on the corner right before tourists moving on to
“Victory of the War,” the last exhibit of the museum. It is a new panoramic photo of
Yan’an city, representing a modern Yan’an. Typically, tour guides would stop there to sell
the city to tourists. Unlike other sights in the RMY, this one is rather a commercial
maneuver as manifested in the tour guide’s advertising tone and the PR effort of the city
in putting a single modern panorama in a history museum. All the surprising elements
and changes suggest that the RMY has been constantly adjusting its exhibits, not so much
to represent a revolutionary past as to negotiate, reinterpret, and most importantly, to
mobilize that history for either political Propaganda or commercial propaganda.

The physical space of the RMY is highly controlled and manipulative. The
visiting route is unidirectional to reinforce the RMY’s guiding role in constructing the
grand narrative of the Chinese Revolution. Visitors’ flow through the museum is strictly
controlled by the mandatory route without allowing for any variance. In other words,
tourists do not have navigational autonomy as in other kinds of museums. They have to
proceed along the same pathway. In controlling the visitors’ flow, the planners hope to
construct a kind of filmic reality in which desired interpretations are cued by pushing the
visitor from one particular exhibit/display to another as if in a film sequence. In order to
enhance the impact of the exhibit, the planners have also compressed the exhibit space by
reducing the floor level from 6 meters to 4.8 meters and lowering the exhibition wall from 4 meters to 3.5 meters (Wei, 1999).

While taking pictures is strictly prohibited in many history museums in China for the purpose of protection, photographing and video recording are surprisingly welcomed in the RMY. Through the use of mobile devices and social media, the tourists, previously considered audiences of propaganda, now act as propagandists when spreading the intended information to much wider audiences. This audience-cum-propagandist role of the audience manifesting in the changing process between consumption and production can be better understood by the concept of “media conduction,” because, as Peaslee (2013) points out, “it sees that relationship as defined by processes” (p. 824). To put it metaphorically, by applying the original notion of conduction, the audience now becomes a “conductor” through which “electricity,” or ideology-loaded massages, can pass along.

During the museum tour, tour guides always highlight two stories. The first story usually is referred to as “Voting with Beans” (投票选举). It is supposed to illustrate the democratic structure of the Shaanxi - Gansu - Ningxia Border Region Government, the most embryonic form of later People’s Republic. The on-site narrator stops in front of a historical photo in which a group of people cast beans in a row of bowls on the table. The narrator explains the scene:

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3 In this article Peaslee (2013) defines “media conduction” as “movement of information due to a difference in level of access (from a high access to a lower-access region) through a transmission medium (e.g., festivals, conventions, events) that simultaneously reifies the value of that access” (p.811).
The highest authority in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region was the parliament. According to the election law, members of parliament were chosen by the masses through the parliamentary election. Because the literacy rate at the time was only about one percent and most were illiterate, they put a bowl behind each candidate, so that people could vote by casting their beans in the bowls in public. This method was democratic and transparent (July 13, 2014).

Note that terms like “parliament” and “parliamentary election” are so foreign to the Chinese audience that they can immediately invoke an imaginary of Western democracy. A typical comment from visitors is, “How democratic it was back then!”

The second is a murder case, called the “Huang Kegong Case” (黄克功案). It was the first murder case of the High Court in the Border Region. An exceptional young general of the Red Army during the Long March, Huang Kegong shot Liu Qian, a female student of the Anti-Japanese Military and Political University, in Yan’an after she rejected Huang’s marriage proposal. Huang was sentenced to death after a public trial, the first influential one in the Party’s history. Mao Zedong refused to grant an amnesty for Huang, saying “Members of the Communist Party and the Red Army must maintain more stringent disciplines comparing to the ordinary people.” This story was adapted into a film in 2014. With an English title “A Murder Besides Yanhe River” (Chinese title still “The Huang Kegong Case”) and starring Wang Kai, a Marie Claire cover boy and a valuable television series drama star, the film was touted as a “political thriller” by China Daily and a “rare ‘Red’ commercial film” by its director (Wang, 2014).
The walking tour of Yangjialing: searching for the lost Xanadu

Unlike analysis of the RMY, my examination of the Red Tourism site of Yan’an does not focus on displays, artifacts, and images. I shift focus to spatial practice instead. For one thing, tourism is, by and large, about touring, which is a spatial practice. For another, as earlier noted, it is spatial practice that transforms a place into space. Nevertheless, tourist activities are remarkably diverse. Besides, this research is not a typical tourist experience oriented tourism study, but a mass communication-centered research project. In view of the difficulty and the specific purpose, my strategy for analyzing the historical site is to look into the key stakeholder of touring, the tour guide. Drawing from my fieldwork, I analyze the walking tour of the Yangjialing site. It should be noted that the qualitative data being used in this section were culled from multiple tours that I undertook, not from a single one. Also, all the tour guides’ names are pseudonyms.

Yangjialing is about 2 km north of Yan’an city. Due to the Japanese bombing, the CCP Central Committee along with its headquarters moved to Yangjialing from Yan’an in November, 1938 and stayed until March, 1947. The site was the place where many of the Party’s defining moments occurred, noticeably, the Yan’an Rectification and the Yan’an Talks. The small mountainous village of Yangjiangling is presently occupied by historical buildings of the CCPCC, including the Central Auditorium, the major bureaus and offices, and the residences of the Party’s early leaders. In addition to the Auditorium, tourists come to Yangjiangling mainly to see the yaodong-caves where Mao Zedong, Zhou En Lai, Zhu De, Liu Shaoqi and other leaders once lived. Tourists are grouped for a guided walking tour either by the on-site tour guide or the tour escort/guide.
A fundamental form of spatial practice, walking is an intermediate state. That is, walking is liminal (Skinner, 2016; Solnit, 2002). It involves ambiguity, orientation, disorientation and reorientation with regard to reading. This is the reason why walker/walking is of paramount importance to de Certeau’s (1984) thinking of the practice of everyday life and the strategy-tactic framework. In a walking tour setting, the spatial practice of walking is highly organized and guided by both the tour guide and deliberately selected routes. Hence, the walking is nothing natural like a daily practice. So also the reading. It is a production of the control of spatial fluidity and the manipulation of historical narrative. In that sense, the reading of space by the tourist turns into a matter of indoctrination by the tour guide. But this is done in a fairly fascinating way, or a fabulist way.

The internal display of the Auditorium was mounted according to the original setting of the Seventh National Congress of the CPC. Look at the central podium. Hung in there are the side portraits of Mao Zedong and Zhu De. Hung above is the Seventh Congress’ political slogan, “Victory under the Banner of Mao Zedong.” … Let’s look back at the wall. The four characters “One Heart, One Mind” (同心同德), was the key motto of the Seventh Congress, which was handwritten by Mao Zedong. From April 23 to June 11, 1945, the Seventh National Congress of the Communist Party of China was solemnly held in this auditorium. In addition to the Congress, there were also other large-scale activities held in here such as the premiere of The White-Haired Girl (白毛女).

The White-Haired Girl (白毛女) is one of the Chinese classic revolutionary operas, later
On November 30, 1946, Commander-in-Chief Zhu De’s 60th birthday was also held in the Auditorium. That’s my introduction to the Central Auditorium. Now I give you a few minutes to take a look at the podium (Alicia, July 14, 2016).

The walking tour starts in the Central Auditorium. It is an ideal tour start point since the Auditorium is not only the historical marker of the Yangjialing site but also the closest relic to the main entrance gate. All dressed in military style green uniforms, the on-site tour guides, both young male and female, gave tourists a false impression of military personnel.

Alicia, an on-site tour guide, unfolds a historical moment in an expressive tone like a narrator reading a poem. The Auditorium is empty and dark, immediately arousing a feeling of the past. While the first part of the narration is a standard practice in tourism, the second part about the events of the show and the birthday party transforms the Auditorium from a static place of the Party’s Congress to a dynamic space as lived through with music, applause and laughter. Knowing that each tour in the era of digital mobile devices is necessarily a photographic tour, Alicia leaves enough time for the tourists to take photos. In this regard, the Auditorium is a perfect place as tourists are allowed to stand in the podium to pose as a leader giving a lecture. Just watching such

adapted to film, Beijing Opera and ballet. The opera is based on a folk legend circulating in the Border Region of Shaanxi, Chahar and Hebei, describing the life change of the peasant girl Xi’er before and after joining the communist force. A Propaganda work encapsulating class struggle, the show quickly became a marker and thus an embodiment of the Yan’an Talks after its premiere in 1945.
activity alone is so much fun.

The Office Building of the CPCCC is the first stop of the tour and the last stop before climbing the mountain. In the three-story building, only the west wing is open to visitors. A dining hall, it was also used as a conference room. Most significantly, it was the place where Mao gave the Talks on Literature and Art.

Look at the first picture on the wall in which teacher Wang Dahuan and the first-year student Li Bo of Lu Xun Academy of Arts performed Brother and Sister Reclaiming Wasteland in Yan’an street. In absence of any PA device, the audience reached more than 20,000. You can tell, from the photo, how immensely the masses were enthusiastic about this [performance]. Now let’s look at [a giant photo of the scores of the song] The East Is Red (dong fang hong 东方红). It was adapted from a traditional love song by a liberated peasant named Li Youyuan, who expressed the love of the people of northern Shaanxi for the Communist Party and the People’s leaders. Now look at the next photo. This is Chairman Mao watching the Yang-ge Dance in the Spring Festival. Taken in 1943, this photo is the one that Chairman Mao’s smile looks most cheerful, brightest and happiest (Alicia, July 14, 2016).

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5 Brother and Sister Reclaiming Wasteland (兄妹开荒) is a short musical created in the Yan’an Period. Based on local music and the Yang-ge Dance (秧歌舞), the musical captures a few moments of the Large-scale Production Movement (da shengchan yundong 大生产运动). It soon became of an iconic representation of self-reliance.
Until now it is evident that a memory of Yangjialing is being rekindled by a series of carefully-selected iconic performances, rather than by a retelling of the grand narrative. Piecing these representations of performance together, the Yan’an Spirit, the representation space of revolutionary Yan’an comes to the fore. But this iconological style of narration changes noticeably after the tourists are taken in the mountain.

All former residences (jiuju 旧居) of the Party’s leaders are located in the loess mountain. These are yaodong-caves, a representational space of Yan’an. Usually tour guides would take tourists to Zhou Enlai’s yaodong first since it sits near the first turn of the road.

Li Peng\(^6\) was already fifteen years old when he was in this place. (Then the tour guide points to the photo on the wall). The taller one is Li Peng, Premier Zhou’s adopted son. The next two tile-roofed houses were where a lot of orphans of martyrs lived. They were adopted by Deng Yingchao (Mrs. Zhou Enlai). Li Peng was the son of Li Shuxun. The orphans grew up in a nursery, including (Gen.) Liu Bocheng’s (adopted) son Liu Taihang. This photo shows that Premier Zhou got injured. He fell from a horse, which is the reason why his arm could only bend sixty degrees. This is the famous story that was later called “Falling from a Horse into the Yanhe River” (延河坠马) (Rachel, July 12, 2016).

Unlike Alicia, Rachel is a tour escort from a southern province. When visiting Zhou Enlai’s residence, Rachel speaks of Li Peng with only a passing remark on an incident of

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\(^6\) Li Peng (李鹏) was former Premier of the PRC (1987-1998), who is best known in the Western world for his role in declaring martial law during the Tiananmen Incident of 1989.
Zhou Enlai. Li Peng is now deeply associated with the Tiananmen Incident of 1989, and therefore, his name is sensitive. Nevertheless, Rachel only conjures up an image of the controversial figure without going any further and leaves the rest to the tourists’ imagination. The same narrating pattern also occurs in Mao Zedong’s residence, the most crowded place of the Yangjialing-site. This time the controversy centers on Mao’s fourth wife and their daughter.

The third cave was the bedroom of Chairman Mao and Jiang Qing. See the earth cave on the top? It was the place where Li Na, the daughter of the Chairman and Jiang Qing, was born in August 1940. Li Na lived in the cave with her nanny alone since her birth. Li Na comes here at least twice a year. Li Na will not go anywhere but directly to here off the plane in the airport. When she left here, she was already eight-years old, so she had an affectionate memory of this place (Mark, July 13, 2016).

Mao Zedong and Jiang Qing got married in Fenghuang Mountain on November 20, 1938. They moved to Yangjialing the same day because the Japanese bombed Yan’an. So their wedding was in Yan’an but the bridal chamber (xinfang 新房) was in Yangjialing. A foreign journalist who came to China said emotionally, “The Party’s leader wrote for a long time in such a cold cave in the faint light. There were no exquisite furnishings, no material enjoyment. But the man who

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7 Jiang Qing (江青, 1914-1991) was a Shanghai-based actress before coming to Yan’an in 1937. A member of the “Gang of Four,” Jiang Qing was a key figure in launching the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Jiang Qing committed suicide in 1991.
lived in the cave was sharp, thoughtful and had a vision of the world. That man is Mao Zedong.” Well, take a look at the bridal chamber of the Chairman and Jiang Qing (Amy, July 13, 2016).

Both Mark and Amy are tour escorts. Like all other tour guides, they highlight the enigmatic intimacy between Mao Zedong and Jiang Qing alongside their daughter in this site. While they do mention that the cave was also the birthplace of many of Mao’s famous articles, the tourists show no interest in that passing remark. Throughout the walking tour, tourists ask the most questions in front of Mao’s cave. Rarely does the tour guide get criticism or tricky questions from tour members. More often than not, the tour guide would get questions about the romantic relationship between the couple. No matter how silly those questions might sound, the tour guide usually sails through with an authoritative tone. In addition to asking tourists to have a peek at the empty cave, Mark also cues them to rent the Chinese Red Army’s costumes from a rental booth in the courtyard and take photos in front of Mao’s “house.”

The next stop is the former residence of Liu Shaoqi. Commonly, tour guides call it a “five-star hotel,” unanimously referring to it as the equivalent of today’s Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing. However, these are regular yaodong-caves except for being used to accommodate generals and the Party’s top leaders after they came back from the

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8 Liu Shaoqi (刘少奇 1898-1969) was a leading statesman, Vice Chairman of the CPC (1956 – 1966), and President of the PRC (1959 to 1968). Labeled as a traitor to the revolution and an antagonist of Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi died under harsh treatment in the early stage of the Cultural Revolution.
battlefront. In fact, Liu Shaoqi did not have his own cave in Yan’an since he worked in the Kuomintang-controlled area at that time. The cave was allocated as the “residence” of Liu Shaoqi in 1953 during the renovation of the Yangjialing site.

Chris is a Yan’an-based tour escort, quite knowledgeable about local folklore. Chris takes tourists to a small stone table near the busy road within sight of the caves. More likely tourists would pass by without stopping at the table if they were not in a walking tour thanks to the glaring banality of the setting. However, the site/sight suddenly turns into a very dramatic one as tourists listen to Chris. Here I present at length below:

American journalist Anna Louise Strong interviewed Mao Zedong right here. Chairman Mao said humorously, “All the US-Chiang reactionaries are paper tigers.” Then Lu Dingyi\(^9\), sitting on the other side, translated “paper tigers” into “straw men.” Chairman Mao shook his head, suggesting that it was not correct. Lu Dingyi was very smart and he responded very quick, correcting the translation as “both straw men and paper tigers.” Chairman Mao then was pleased. He laughed, saying, “straw men can be put in the fields to protect crops from sparrows. If you leave a paper tiger in the fields, it can be easily destroyed by a rain, so the paper tiger is not as good as the straw man. And it (paper tiger) exactly represents the situation.”

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\(^9\) Lu Dingyi (陆定一 1906-1996) was the editor-in-chief of the \textit{Liberation Daily} (解放日报) at the time. He served as the first director of the Propaganda Department after the founding of the PRC.
According to the sitting custom of our northern people, Chairman Mao must sit here, Strong there. There were a lot of older people and children standing in the mountain to watch this. When Strong turned around and found this, she asked why there were no people behind Mao Zedong. Chairman Mao laughed, saying, “These are my friendly neighbors. They have never seen anyone like you with blonde hair, high nose and big eyes.” Strong said to Chairman Mao, “Well, I can change the position with you, so your friendly neighbors will have a good look at me, a foreigner.” Then she stood here, saying “ha-lou” (Hello) to the old people and children in the mountain. They couldn’t understand what she said. Finally, someone stood out, saying, “she asked us to go down.” So all the people ran down from the mountain. This is because “ha-lou” in the dialect of northern Shaanxi means “down” (Chris, July 15, 2016).

In the course of his recounting, Chris imitates Mao’s and Strong’s demeanor and posture like an actor performing on the stage. Following Chris’ cue, tourists lightheartedly and repeatedly speak “ha-lou” to imitate the funny accent.

The walking tour winds down on a hillside. It is a perfect end. From here tourists can take a rest and see a small walled vegetable plot down the road. That is the famous “Chairman Mao’s Vegetable Plot.” The Plot was featured in an article entitled, “A Morning in Yangjialing,” which was included in the primary school textbooks from the 1960s to the 1970s. Most Chinese people around my age have read it. Reportedly reclaimed by Mao himself, the plot was a signifier for the self-reliance tradition of the Party.
The Chairman invited patriotic overseas Chinese Chen Jiageng for a dinner here using vegetables picked up from his own plot. The dinner cost twenty cents, which was paid for a chicken brought by his neighbor. Chiang Kai-shek, too, invited Chen Jiageng for a dinner in Chongqing in order to fawn over him. The cost was eight-hundred yuan. Having his appetite fully satisfied, however, Chen Jiageng criticized Chiang Kai-shek (in Chongqing), “How the hell have you squandered such a great amount of money for a dinner! I donate money not for you to waste!” After visiting Yan’an, Chen Jiageng said, “the country will be the Communist Party’s country!” Later, he donated a lot of money to the Communists (Chris, July 15, 2016).

This coda of the walking tour irresistibly reminds me of the choir competition (geyong bisai 歌咏比赛) when I was a teenager. Characterized by a series of fixed patriotic songs, the competition always ended up with a song that articulated the Propaganda theme.

Rather than proceeding to other sites on their own, tourists usually opt to go down and return to their buses. The walking tour is so popular that the sites excluded from the tour have become deserted. I have a keen interest in visiting the Propaganda Department in Yangjialing but all my attempts failed because the office seemed to be closed without a trace.

The selfstyled tour guides play a crucial role in tourists’ imagination of the revolutionary heritage. Unlike the on-site narrator, the tour escort/guide wears ordinary clothes, speaks Mandarin but usually with an accent, thick or slight, a sign of a lack of proper professional training. Nevertheless, this can be a strength for their storytelling. As escorts, they have a tendency to cater to the group creatively rather than to perform an
over-rehearsed daily routine. What’s more, they stick to a colloquial style and their accounts, though largely fabulist, are much more entertaining.

The entertaining style of the tour guide in Red Tourism sites sparks off continuing controversy. Referring to the phenomenon as “vulgarization and discoloration,” and “distortion of history,” the Red Office has routinely criticized this style in its annual reports, pointing out that the tour guide may confuse tourists when he/she provides interpretations different from the ones from the on-site narrator (National Red Tourism Work Coordination Group, 2005). The government has further called for rigorous check on both narrators and tour guides for a “comprehensive, accurate, and objective” interpretation of the history (National Red Tourism Work Coordination Group, 2008). As an effort to establish and spread out exemplar models for tour guide narration, the National Red Tourism Tour Guide Competition, sponsored by the Red Office and based on CCTV and its online platform, was held five times by 2014.

Whether entertaining or not, the walking tour is significant to both tourist experience and the social space of Red Tourism. Red Tourism sites like Yangjialing do not have many attractions upon which a tourist can gaze except for few historical buildings, caves, and photos. Historical artifacts are extremely rare, even replicas. In the case of Yangjialing, there are none. Take Mao’s cave for instance. Among three small, whitewashed rooms, there is Mao’s bedroom. It is staged to be as it was in the Yan’an days. The tourist can count the items in the display exactly on the fingers of one hand, a thermos bottle, a deckchair, a wooden bath, a bed and a Mao’s family portrait on the wall. This is to say, the articulation of this space rather depends on spatial practice characterized by the tour guide’s narration in the movement.
Throughout the walking tour, the tour guide develops pertinent tactics to cue, intrigue and propel tourists into an imagined Xanadu, an idyllic and beautiful place where people were happy, singing, and dancing, and the leaders were amiable, eating vegetables they grew themselves. A holy site is only for the religious people, but Xanadu for everyone. The only thing being omitted in the walking tour is the historical reality that the Yan’an period represents one of the most difficult times of the Party. This is why the Rectification, the Talks, the Spirit came into this space during this particular period of time. With respect to framing Yangjialing as a Xanadu, there is no difference between the on-site tour guide and the tour escort/guide.

The *Fantasy* show: in light of being “revolutionary”

Beneath Red Tourism, one can see the marriage of history and entertainment. In the Red Tourism industry, history, or revolutionary history to be more precise, has been commodified into consumer goods ready for the tourist to consume via diversified performance and innovative activities. I will elaborate this aspect of Red Tourism in next chapter within a framework that I refer to as the commodification of propaganda (CoP). It suffices to say at this juncture that the commodification of the revolutionary past offers the tourist what Hannigan (1998) calls a “participatory fantasy experience” (p.26). As a result, the formerly sacrosanct boundaries—between dull political Propaganda and fan-chasing tourism, and between political manipulation and business maneuver—have been blurred, collapsed, and recast into something fantastically new. Take, for instance, the *Fantasy of the Yan’an Defense* (梦幻延安保卫战), an on-site reenactment of a historic battle.
Branded as “A Must See for Any Tourist in Yan’an,” marketed with the gimmick of “real guns and real bullets,” and innovated with tourist participation, the *Fantasy* show was considered “revolutionary in Red Tourism” (Xu, 2010, p.204). It now became the most popular site of Yan’an tourism. According to a local news report, the outdoor show earned more than 2 million yuan ($320,000) within a few days during the Golden Week holiday of 2014 (Liu & Gao, 2014). The show represents the Yan’an Defense in an entertaining fashion where historical fidelity completely surrenders to vaudeville performance. The narrative is largely fictional, and the show incorporates many vernacular, traditional, and representational styles of dance and music.

The “battlefield” of the *Fantasy* is conveniently located at the foot of a loess hill about a few kilometers north of the Date Garden-site. Usually performed twice a day, the show was only held once around noon in summer 2016 when I attended it. Tour buses came right before the show started. I was slightly disappointed by the fact that the whole site is merely composed of several rows of crude bungalows. There was nothing to evoke a feeling of war. I sat on the bleachers facing a vast open field along with about six hundred tourists like we were going to watch a football game except no athletes, only performers.

The show starts with a very peaceful, lovely day in the Yan’an Period. The communist troops train in the front. A group of women soldiers sit on the ground spinning in the back against another group of male farmers and soldiers plowing at the far end. A mediocre visual representation of self-reliance and the Yan’an Spirit, the opening scene alongside the whole setting is distinctly familiar to the audience as it has been a staple of Yan’an-theme television dramas and films since the dawn of the Red industry. Then the
high-pitched suona sound is heard. A double-reeded horn, the traditional Chinese music instrument suona usually performs in rituals. Immediately, the cheerful music signals a traditional wedding ceremony underway. The bridal team comes from a distance with the bride riding a donkey. The wedding ceremony reaches its culminating moment as the communist soldiers join in. Until this moment my feeling of disappointment did not go anywhere as what I saw was merely a reenacting of a sequence of film clichés and there was no sign of what the advertisement has billed as a “real war.” But I was wrong.

The first explosion sounded just like a real terrorist attack. A signal of the beginning of the Yan’an Defense, the explosion was so loud that I instantly lost hearing. More explosions occurred shortly as the KMT air strikes began. I heard children crying in the audience. Choking and pungent smoke filled the air in no time. A few miniature WWII fighters were moving, swiftly along on suspended cables and firing guns. The happy wedding soon turned into a tragedy as people “died.” More troops from both the communist side and the KMT entered the scene. I could hear, however, only the buzzing, ringing, and whistling sounds. The audience was as excited and attentive as if they were in a real battle.

The bomb blasts were ridiculously realistic. It is simply because they came from real bombs and explosives. Now I believed the show’s publicity. Even worse, I could barely breathe due to the overwhelming heat from the explosions. I was the nearest spectator to the bombs. While all the audience were relatively in close proximity to the deafening bombs, I sat at the right end of the first row of the bleachers for the photographing purpose. The nearest explosion was no more than a road- breadth away from me. And the road was where those real tanks were firing and bombs were blowing
up. I could feel, from the overwhelming heat and smell, that the explosives were mixed with gasoline. Perhaps, this is a bombing trick for exaggerating the special effect of explosion. But my feeling that someone can easily and seriously get hurt was by no means an exaggeration. I have learned that in 2010, an actor accidentally got shot by a gun in the same show. Elsewhere, several staff members even got killed in preparing the explosives for a similar show produced by the same company. In that sense, the *Fantasy* is fantastically eye-opening and breathtaking despite all its narrative clichés.

The show ends up with the red flags of the communist army being raised in Yan’an city. Echoing the ending scene, more flags are being waved in the loess hill. To highlight the victory more, hundreds of men and women start up the Ansai Waist Drum Dance (安塞腰鼓) in the field. A representation of the space of Yan’an (in a sense like hula to Hawai‘i), the large-scale drum dance featured in the overture of the 2008 Beijing Olympics opening ceremony. The drums roar and so do the suonas as if the show would never end. Shortly, performers start to invite the audience to join the dance. Early on, other tourists wore the costumes and participated in the show as extras (background actors) by paying extra. At the last, tourists take pictures with the performers and linger around. To me, the show is well worth watching considering all the shocking elements that one cannot experience in other tourism sites. But perhaps once is enough, for safety considerations.

By abandoning historical authenticity and accuracy, the show was fantasized as it has morphed into an “exoticist” show like Hula dancing at Waikiki beach. Tom, a tourist from Beijing, is clearly aware of the “fantastic” flavor of the *Fantasy*. He says:

The show was ridiculous but I had so much fun … I thought it would be really
fun to participate in the show, so I paid extra for the interactive session. My only regret is that I got the tattered pants (props). I wish I could have played the Kuomintang. In that case, I could at least wear a uniform. Our tour guide told us that it is a live show with real ammunition. But I feel like I watched folk dances and listened to folk songs for the most of the time. The real deal of the show is the beautiful spy; she was especially sexy when riding a horse … (interview, June 26, 2013).

To Tom, the show is the show, nothing more special than any other kind of commercial performance. As long as the show was entertaining, Tom did not seem to care much about either the history or the revolution.

The Fantasy is a commercialized space. Within that space, a piece of revolutionary history is not so much being reenacted, represented, and proliferated as being simply exploited. This is unsurprising, considering that the show was invested in by a single entrepreneur from Wenzhou, a southeastern city of China known as the paradise of private enterprises. The total investment in the show reaches 10 million yuan ($1.6 million) including enlisting Chen Weiya, a famous director and choreographer who codirected the spectacular opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games (Yan’an Tourism Bureau, n. d.). There is also an official website created for the show. Despite the show’s entertaining nature, this entrepreneurial deployment of “Red” seems to be a cross-border appropriation of the postsocialist sentiment and a resignification of “Red” in contemporary China. As this dissertation was being completed, the show changed its early name by dropping off the word “fantasy,” now it is called the Yan’an Defense.
THE DIGITAL SHORTCUT

In September 2018, Baidu Baike, the collaborative, web-based encyclopedia owned by China’s Internet giant Baidu, and Yan’an Municipal Government jointly launched three digital museums in Yan’an, namely, the Revolutionary Site of Xibeiju (西北局革命旧址), Yangjialing Revolutionary Site (杨家岭革命旧址), and Zhaoyuan Revolutionary Site (枣园革命旧址). This is a continuing joint venture deemed as “strategic cooperation” (Sohu News, 2018) between Baidu and Yan’an city after launching Liangjiahe Digital Museum (梁家河数字博物馆) in September 2017 and Yan’an Learning Academy Digital Museum (延安学习院数字博物馆) in June 2018. These digital museums showcase the real sites, exhibits, artifacts as well as historical photos and provide online touring experience for netizens using cutting-edge technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), videos, and 360-degree photos. Visitors can examine the revolutionary site by taking a virtual tour while listening as the “guide” introduces the revolutionary history behind each scene. With the emergence of digital museum, the Yan’an Red Tourism museums, normally visited by thousands, can now be virtually toured by millions. It is worth noting that these digital revolutionary museums are part of Baidu Digital Museum Project under a recent global trend of digitalization of museums.

What does this digitalization of the Red space mean? It might simply be the migration of artifacts of revolutionary museums to the digital domain as another example of the strategical use of new technology by the Party for propaganda purposes. A step forward in the evolution of the Party’s propaganda work in other words. In what follows, I argue that, something even more “novel” to the production of Party’s propaganda is
happening besides the ostensibly novel digital format of digital museum, something that I refer to the commodification of propaganda (CoP) in the next chapter.

I make this argument in three steps. First, I review literature on digital museum in light of the “new museology.” Second, I offer a way of thinking about the use of new media and technology and its logics in the Party’s propaganda work, and how Baidu, the Internet giant, has incorporated that government line in its production and branding. This is not simply an account of the Party’s ambition of taking advantage of whatever the technology is available for propaganda use. Nor is it told in a manner that the Chinese technology company is competing with other multinational corporations (MNCs) worldwide in the new wave of digitalization of cultural heritages. Rather, I regard it as a form social practice in China in which both the state and the private play their due roles in producing state propaganda. Third, I analyze the virtual space of Yan’an digital museums by offering a virtue tour of Liangjiahe Digital Museum.

Digital museum in light of the “new museology”

What some call the “new museology” (Varine, 1978; Vergo, 1989), the idea that the museum is not merely a research center for studying collected archetypical objects but an educational instrument, is not new to China. The CCP has given a specific name for that: Patriotism Education Demonstration Base. In 2017, The total number of National Patriotism Education Demonstration Bases has reached 428, covering most national revolutionary museums (Xinhua News Agency, 2017). Digital museum seems to be an ideal representation of the “new museology” for it embraces broader audiences, new communication technologies, and interactivity. Compared to physical objects, the
flexibility, mobility, and extensionality of digital objects make them ideal for education (Srinivasan et al., 2010). As early as China won the bid for hosting 2008 Beijing Olympic games, the central government had funded to establish the Digital Olympic Museum (DOM), the digitalization of Olympic Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland (Pan et al., 2009). Digital museums now have upgraded from the Web site to the virtual environment. Digital museum, loosely defined, is the digitalization of a physical museum and its displays. Digital museuming is converging with other online activities such as playing video games in a sense that the digital museum visitors can perform various operations: view, navigate, comment, and share. The visitor experience of digital museum is distinct from navigating a physical one. Activities of digital museum are not merely digital simulations of those of traditional museum, but with expansion and extension (Wang et al., 2014). For example, the digitalization of museum removes constraints of time and space. Think about 360-degree panoramic displays.

Utilizing Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) to enhance the visitor experience has been a growing practice in the tourism industry (Jung, Chung, & Leue, 2015). Enjoyable AR applications can enhance tourists’ learning (Leue, Jung, & Dieck, 2015) and overall tourist experience (Jung et al., 2016). Many museums received the majority of the visitors through their digital platforms (Proctor, 2010).

Studies of digital museum, largely confined to the Library and Information Science (LIS) community, have focused on a transmission model of information from technological perspectives (Tang, 2005). Within this strand of scholarship, digital museum was treated merely as a new platform for disseminating cultural information to reach a broader audience. One of the ramifications of this way of thinking about digital
museum/museuming, perhaps an important one, is a lack of critical perspective. My analysis of the digital museums in Yan’an is meant to address the void.

The Party’s new concerns and Baidu digital museum project

The launching of digital museums of Yan’an is part of a larger geopolitical project of the Chinese state aiming to grow global influence through culture. In a speech delivered at the National Conference on Propaganda and Ideological Work held in August 2018, Xi Jinping stressed Internet-oriented “new thought, new ideas, and new theory” in the Party’s propaganda work. The guideline is articulated in the slogan, “Raising the Flag (举旗帜), Uniting People’s Hearts (聚民心), Educating the Young (育新人), Promoting Culture (兴文化), and Spreading the Image (展形象).” The “image” specifically means the positive international image of China that is said to be attained through the development of China’s international communication capacities, spread of the story and the voice of China, all of which would improve the nation’s soft power in culture and its global influence. “We must scientifically understand fundamentals of network communication, improve Internet governance through the Internet, and make the biggest variable of the Internet available for the biggest increase in social development,” said Xi (Zhang and Huang, 2018).

Arguably, one of the best ways to spread the new grand narrative is through museums. In 2015, Chinese museums received 700 million visitors, and that number had reached 900 million one year later (Wang, 2018). Branding as the “gene pool of red culture,” a powerful metaphor for an abundance of revolutionary museums/sites, Yan’an City has obtained more than 580 million yuan ($89 million) of funds at all levels for the
protection and repair of old revolutionary sites since 2014. Beginning in 2015, the Municipal finance subsidized cultural relics protection with a budget of 10 million yuan ($1.54 million) every year in addition to special subsidies at county and district levels. In the first half of 2018, Yan’an museums received a total of 4.02 million visitors, a year-over-year increase of 30% (Guo, Qiang, and He, 2018). And visitors of Yan’an virtue museums were not included.

Going “digital” in the arena of cultural heritage has grown rapidly over the last few years. Baidu, the “Google of China,” a Beijing-based multinational technology company specializing in Internet-related services and products, plays an unrivaled role in the wave of digitalization of museums. Baidu started launching its Digital Museum Project in 2012. In this collaborative, massive project, Baidu worked with museums across the country to digitally display their collections online. These virtual museums were said not only to increase visitors, but also to “bridge the information gap between the rural and the urban” (National Museum of China, 2012).

With Baidu digital museums soaring, the Internet giant set off to conquer new territories globally. With the cooperation of the China-based Gaudí Asia-Pacific Research Institute and the Gaudí World Congress, Baidu launched the digital museum of the Sagrada Família church, an UNESCO World Heritage Site in Spain, in 2017 (Huang, 2017). In 2008, Baidu announced that “it will help more than 1,000 Spanish cities and tourist sites go digital,” including creating the digital museum for Museo Del Prado, one of the greatest museums in the world (Xinhua News Agency, 2018). In a recent tweet, Baidu announced that it has 1600 museum partners worldwide including those from Mexico, Austria, and Germany (Baidu Inc., 2018b) and its digital museums have received
more than 86 million visitors (Baidu Inc., 2018a). By October 2018, Baidu has operated 245 digital museums and received 88 million visitors.

Digitalization of revolutionary sites and computational propaganda

In contrast to Baidu’s global reach, the homepage of its Digital Museum Project appears oddly revolutionary in a political sense. As Figure 5 shows, a representational space, the rotating banners of the webpage comprise three images of revolutionary sites in Yan’an, namely, Zaoyuan, Yangjialing, and Xibeiju. As parts of Baidu Digital Museum project, they were launched in 2018 after the other two digital revolutionary museums, Yan’an Learning Academy (延安学习院) and Liangjiahe (梁家河), making a total of five.

Figure 5: Screenshot of the banner of Baidu digital museum project website.

The five digitalized Yan’an revolutionary museums are results of the strategic cooperation between the city of Yan’an and Baidu. Starting in 2016, the cooperation between one of the hottest Red Tourism cities and the Internet giant was said to be a
response to Xi Jinping’s instruction on the role of the Internet in precision poverty alleviation (Xinhua Net, 2016). In that regard, the digitalization of Yan’an’s revolutionary sites is just as much an economic project as a propaganda one. And the Party places much weight on Baidu.

Technology-wise, Baidu’s digital museum project unfolds against the backdrop of what is to be called “China’s AI revolution” (Knight, 2017), a “bold Chinese government plan for AI with specific milestones for parity with the West in 2020, major breakthroughs by 2025 and the envy of the world by 2030” (Church, 2018, p.645). AR is a central tenet of digital museum. In 2017, Baidu established an AR lab in Beijing, the fourth one after AI, deep learning, and big data, all of which are essential to the company’s new growth (Yu, 2017). As long as the Party’s propaganda work is concerned, Baidu has worked closely with government agencies to police the Internet, including checking out 3 billion claims of fake news every year (“China’s biggest search engine,” 2017).

The first half of 2018 has witnessed “deep” cooperation between Baidu and two largest mouthpieces of the Party, Xinhua News Agency and the People’s Daily. By “deep cooperation,” I mean the agreement that affects the state-run media in a long-term and transformational way. The transformation can be epitomized by something called “computational propaganda,” the term loosely defined as using Internet-based platforms, algorithms, and big data to do propaganda job, “among the latest, and most ubiquitous, technical strategies to be deployed by those who wish to use information technology for social control” (Woolley and Howard, 2016, p.4886). Let me illustrate this.

In June 2018, Baidu and the People’s Daily announced that they reached a
strategic cooperation agreement on seeking a new ecology of the media on content, production, and technology levels (China News, 2018). The People’s Daily will rely on Baidu’s leading Artificial Intelligence technology and search engine to generate more high-quality, original news to reach more audiences in a fast and direct way. “In the past five months, Baidu and the People’s Daily have completed a series of collaborative work with ‘Internet speed.’ The two sides conducted in-depth research and discussion on content, technology, and resources, and our all-round strategic partnership is based on this,” said Li Yanhong (aka “Robin” Li), CEO and co-founder of Baidu, at the launching ceremony. “Our cooperation not only has a solid technical foundation, but also a common philosophy and vision. I believe that through the strategic cooperation between Baidu and the People’s Daily, we can definitely bring values to our users and spread mainstream values and traditional culture of the Chinese nation in a more innovative and technical way” (China News, 2018).

In the future, the Baidu algorithm team will work closely with the People’s Daily to develop algorithms that particularly meet the needs for the Party’s organ and its users. The People’s Daily has evolved to “people’s media matrix” with more than 10 kinds of media and more than 400 terminal platforms, covering 786 million users (Lu, 2018), whereas the daily active users of Baidu APP have reached 150 million. For the Party’s organ, the partnership is said as a strategy to cope with the “flow anxiety” and “algorithm anxiety,” terms denoting the intense competition for user time and attention in social media arena. “We attach great importance to recommendation algorithm and are studying the matching efficiency for matching massive content to individualized demands through the ‘party media algorithm,’” said Lu Xinning (2018), Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the
People’s Daily. “We firmly oppose out-of-control algorithms, chaotic algorithms, and dangerous algorithms. We believe that any algorithm should not be insulated from values and should be under the control of mainstream values.” In February 2018, Baidu and the Xinhua News Agency formed a similar partnership in content distribution, AI, and search engine. The cooperation aimed to explore a new media operation characterized by a formula of “content + channel + search + big data” (Sina Tech, 2018).

A virtue tour of Liangjiahe Digital Museum (LDM)

That abstract formula can be illuminated by Liangjiahe Digital Museum (hereafter, LDM).

Liangjiahe, an isolated and impoverished village located approximately 50 miles northeast of Yan’an city, has been transformed into a well-known theme park not for entertainment outlets but for being a home for the Chinese president Xi. Described as a “representation of poverty and backwardness” in the entry of Baidu online encyclopedia (n.d.), Liangjiahe hosted the educated youth from Beijing in the late 1960s as part of Mao’s “Down to the Countryside Movement,” and Xi, 15-year-old, was one of them. The resignification of the backwater village in light of Xi’s connection has sparked a Red Tourism boom of Liangjiahe with more than 1 million visitors in 2017 (Fu and Pu, 2018). The same year Liangjiahe went digital. Touting as Yan’an’s “new business card” and “new digital assets” by the local media (“Qihang,” 2018), LDM is said to allow netizens, especially the young people, to trace back the “leader’s initial intentions” and to raise the spirit just like “calcium supplements [to improve health]” (Li, 2017). The collaborative construction of LDM took one month with 30 people from the Municipal Party
Unlike domestic-tourism-oriented museums of Yan’an, LDM was intended to be international just as much as to be digital. The English platform of LDM was fully upgraded immediately after it was launched, “so that people around the world are able to ‘walk into’ Liangjiahe via the Internet” (Xu, 2017). To celebrate the 97th anniversary of the founding of the Party, LDM added four languages to its online platform on July 1, 2018, namely, French, German, Japanese, and Korean, in addition to Chinese and English (Li and Ye, 2018). There is only one problem with this otherwise amazing, global-audience friendly product: the websites of LDM and other four digital revolutionary museums of Yan’an cannot be found by major search engines other than Chinese ones; they are non-Googleable, thusly, invisible to the West. In other words, there is no way for non-Chinese speaking netizens to access these digital museums.

Perhaps, more effective at attracting international tourists are organized tours, the traditional form of mass political tourism in China. In summer 2018, the School of Public Administration of Tsinghua University and the Shaanxi Provincial Committee of the Communist Youth League jointly organized 43 international students from 19 countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America to tour Yan’an (Li, 2018). Earlier this year, organized by the Shaanxi Tourism Commission and the English Channel of “Discovering Shaanxi,” more than 10 international students from three Shaanxi-based universities visited Yan’an (“Liuxuesheng”, 2018).

For Chinese people, LDM is easily accessible through many online platforms and mobile devices. In addition to Baidu Baike, Baidu Maps, and the Baidu app, there is an AR-based innovative way to visit LDM. Start the camera of a mobile device under the
AR mode of the Baidu APP, zooming in the cover of the books, either Xi Jinping’s Seven Years of Educated Youth, or “Liangjiahe,” the 3D model of the Liangjiahe landform will appear on the screen, from which visitors can enjoy the online tour of LDM. During the tour, visitors are able to experience fun AR visual effects, for example, to light the kerosene lamp in the cave as they were one of the educated youth. Another noteworthy feature of LDM also aims to enhance the interaction: it sets up “Party Branch Sign-in” and “Educated Youth Sign-in” functions to encourage visitors to identify them with a particularly Party Branch, and/or to play the role of the Educated Youth, all of which can be shared as fun experience on social media networks including Webo (aka China’s twitter) and WeChat, thus “affecting and benefiting people around them,” described by a local daily newspaper (Li, 2017). On July 1, the Party’s Founding Day, visitors can click on the image of the Party banner on the right of the LDM website, “to express their deep affection for the Party by signing their names on it” (Li and Ye, 2018).

As Figure 6 shows, the design of LDM interface features a wide-angle night view of the cave where Xi lived in Liangjiahe village more than two years. In contrast to the full moon, the warm color of the cave uncannily evokes a nostalgia feeling of the revolutionary past. Click the “jinru” (enter) button, the background image corresponds harmoniously to the warm, mellifluous voice of the narrator when she says, “Liangjiahe, a place close to heart” in Chinese. The English counterpart is odd: the welcoming statement is erroneously translated as “a place to keep to heart,” narrated with a deep, slow, and robotically unaffected tone.
Figure 6: Screenshot of LDM interface.

Upon entering LDM, visitors are being taken for a 360° panoramic view of Liangjiahe. The warm, glorious theme of the virtue space is once again highlighted by the movie-soundtrack like symphony running in the background. The automatically-tuned narration goes like this:

On the vast Loess Plateau, there is a small, inconspicuous village, where General Secretary Xi Jinping spent seven unforgettable years as an educated youth. This is Liangjiahe village, located in Yanchuan County, Yan’an City. (LDM)

To start a virtue tour, visitors can either choose to go to the menu in the lower left corner of the screen, or to simply click any one of these numbered scenes in the panoramic image. For the Chinese version, the operation menu has seven options, “Home,” “Switch the Scene,” “Music,” “VR,” “Autorotation,” “Party Branch Sign-in,” and “Educated Youth Sign-in.” For the rest of languages, there are only five options without
the last two. In addition to the aforementioned panoramic view, there are fourteen scenes that visitors can explore virtually: Entrance of Liangjiahe, three Former Residences of the Educated Youth, Sales Agency (daixiao dian 代销店), Sewing Cooperative (fengren she 缝纫社), Mill (mofang 磨坊), Biogas Exhibition Room (zhaoqi zhanshi 沼气展室), Ironing Cooperative (tieye she 铁业社), Low-lying Land Dam (yudi ba 淤地坝), Educated Youth Well (zhiqing jing 知青井), Folk Art Museum (minjian yishuguan 民间艺术馆), Orchard Demonstration (pingguo shifanqu 苹果示范区), and Village History Museum (cunshi guan 村史馆). While “walking” through LDM, visitors can listen to audio guides for the sights, interact with historical photos, artifacts, and commemorative signs. “No. 1 Former Residence” is a case in point.

Click the scene button, a narration is heard instantly with the symphony in the background, “Here is the first host family of Xi Jinping, the home of Liu Jinlian. He lived here for two years and three months, going through “the flea crisis,” “the crisis of labor,” and “the crisis of thought”. A red speaker icon flashing in a display board outside the spot is inviting visitors to click. The title of the display reads, “Comrade Xi Jinping Returned to Liangjiahe on February 13, 2015.” Clicking the speaker, a talk from Xi during that visit arises:

The first step in my life started in Liangjiahe. I had been here for 7 years from 1969 to 1975. But when I left, I left my heart here. From that time, I said [to myself], “if I have the opportunities in the future, I will go into politics and do some good work for the people. (LDM)
The day view immediately switches to a night scene upon entering the courtyard. It is the same image on the homepage of LDM. Another speaker icon on the cave is flashing. Click it, Xi’s voice is heard:

When it was raining, I cut grass in the cave, and caring for the animals at night. I herded the sheep with them [villagers]. I could do everything. Back to that time, I could carry 200 jin (100 kg) of wheat walking 10 li (5km) without switching shoulders. (LDM)

Entering the cave, the narration automatically runs:

Six educated youths including Xi Jinping lived in this cave. He slept in the second spot from the left hand. He worked during the day and read at night. The light in Xi Jinping’s cave was often on until the middle of the night. The villagers said, “the Commune members are addicted to cigarettes, Jinping addicted to books.” (LDM)

There are three old photos hung on the wall. A red dot flashing on the middle one cues the visitors that there is something in there. Click it, a group photo with Xi at the center appears. The description under the photo reads:

In October 1975, Liangjiahe villagers said farewell to Xi Jinping, who enrolled for further studies. On the day of departure, the men, women, and children in the village sent him far away. More than 10 villagers companied him from the village to the county, taking this commemorative photo. (LDM)
“Touring” the virtue space of LDM, an image of an easy-going, charming, and inspirational young man can simply spring out of the visitors’ minds. The charisma is created by many tropes, the warm color of the scenes, the glorious theme of the background music, the affectionate voice of the female narrator, the anecdotes either told by Xi himself or delivered through narrations, historical photos, scenes, and displays, and so forth. Like the walking tour I have analyzed earlier, the virtue space of Liangjiahe erases the historical context of Xi’s years in Liangjiahe, the Cultural Revolution, an incredibly turbulent period in modern Chinese history. The LDM doesn’t seem to invite its visitors to have any reflections on this particular history but to cherish a pleasant, positive, precious memory of a young man.

POSTSOCIALIST NOSTALGIA, STRESS, AND EMERGENT COUNTERNARRATIVE

The prosperous Yan’an Red Tourism, however, brings up a few critical questions that cannot be explained by spatial practice. For example, why has Red Tourism increasingly gained popularity at a time when capitalism, rather than prior forms of socialism, is prevailing in China? Is this Red pilgrimage a result of state Propaganda or a reflection of social demands unfulfilled by the postsocialist state? There are no easy answers since where Red Tourism goes remains to be seen. But there are clues.

Red Tourism offers antidotes on the one hand to the feeling of loss residing in the nostalgic memories and imaginations of the socialist past, and on the other to social stress brought on by postsocialist inequality. Whyte (2012) regards the feeling of postsocialist
inequality in China largely as a response to briberies, embezzlements, and abuses of power, and this is the general impression that I gained from many interviewees as well. Susan is a local official. When asked about the meaning of Yan’an Red Tourism, she says:

Currently, the Party calls for spreading positive energy. All stories of Yan’an are positive energy. I won’t say too much here because you know it. Looking at those corrupted officials and then looking back at the old generation of the Party officials who worked here, it is quite obvious that they are nothing like today’s officials; they stuck to plain living. Even high-level officials at that time were quite approachable by ordinary people. Nowadays that is impossible (interview, June 25, 2013).

Susan expresses her dissatisfaction with the reality in contrast with the past glory of the Mao era. And that dissatisfaction does not come out of nowhere.

China’s economic reforms of the 1980s resulted in some eerily new “Chinese characteristics,” as Harvey (2005) puts it, describing “a particular kind of market economy that increasingly incorporates neoliberal elements interdigitated with authoritarian centralized control” (p.120). Zhang Xudong also gets a strong “mixed-ingredients” flavor, terming it postsocialism. Specifically, Zhang (2008) argues that postsocialism is “a conceptual proposal to stay and live in contradictions and chaos in a mixed economy and its overlapping political and cultural (dis)order” and also, “a result of the historical overlap between the socialist state-form and the era of capitalist globalization” (pp.15-16). As Jameson (2000) observes, one far-reaching consequence of neoliberal globalization is that “culture has become decidedly economic” (p.54). To the
extent that this shift came largely unexpected and with astonishing speed, it is reminiscent of what Charlie Chaplin faces in front of the assembly line in *Modern Times*, except this time it was not industrial revolution but a radical change in the culture industry. Nevertheless, the feelings of anxiety, loss, and longing nestling in nostalgia are strikingly similar.

In reconceptualizing the term “nostalgia,” Hutcheon (2000) valorizes the emotional impact of the pastness of the past, pointing out that the past is not something experienced but imagined (p.195). Since such imagination is an ongoing process, she argues, “Nostalgia is less about the past than about the present,” or it “exiles us from the present” to be more precise (p.195). Perhaps this can, in part, explain why Red tourists, by simple observation, are not exclusively the elderly but people of all ages. Dai Jinhua (1997) attributes the nostalgic sentiment of the 1990s in China to rapid urbanization, calling it an “imagined heaven” (p.148). To build that heaven, the cultural industry started with exploiting nostalgia. Dai (1997) remarks that as part of marketization of nostalgia, revolutionary history was sexually romanticized in popular culture (p.152).

It should be noted that the revolutionary past has been a key historical object for nostalgic appropriation in Chinese cultural industries for decades (Wu, 2006). Coincident with the Party’s efforts to reinforce its socialist value system and with commodity fetishism in cultural production in the 1990s, Red Tourism benefited from postsocialist nostalgia. Many of the interviewees indicated that visiting Yan’an has fulfilled their long-held dream, now nostalgia for the Mao era. Richard, a tourist, says:
My family drove all the way to Yan’an from Wulumuqi\textsuperscript{10}. I like history. I have been longing for Yan’an since I was a kid, because it is the sacred place. I was particularly amazed by He Jingzhi’s \textit{Return to Yan’an} when I was young …\textsuperscript{11} It [Yan’an] provides the Chinese people with great spiritual wealth. I think my biggest gain of this trip is that our kids get to know how hard the revolution was and the life of the great revolutionaries, all of which would be very valuable for their growth (interview, June 23, 2013).

In his early forties, Richard did not experience any revolutionary moment associated with Yan’an, but he has a dream about the revolution. And he wants children to be inspired by what he believes his dream and Yan’an represent.

Another clue is held in an emergent counternarrative. The innermost part of Red Tourism is a grand narrative of the Party. As shown in the RMY, the grand narrative presents to the tourist a kind of emancipation narrative. As such, it links the revolutionary past to the post-socialist present in a predetermined way insofar as each historical event and figure was assigned a value and a character to transform history into a saga from which the Chinese nation-state and its identity are imagined. To the extent that Red Tourism is part of the Party’s long-lasting ideological education campaign, it is fair to say

\textsuperscript{10} Wulumuqi is the capital of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in the northwest of China.

\textsuperscript{11} He Jingzhi (贺敬之) is a Chinese poet and playwright. He went to Yan’an in 1940 when he was sixteen and joined the Party a year later. During those days, He Jingzhi wrote his masterpiece, \textit{Return to Yan’an}, a poem in which the poet affectionately calls Yan’an “mother.” The poem was included in many primary and secondary school textbooks.
that the saga or the grand narrative is more about casting light upon the present than articulating the past. In Lyotard’s (1984) original account, the grand narrative matters to social bond. In the postmodern condition, for example, the collapse of the grand narrative led to social disintegration and social atomization in an erratic random movement, which Lyotard (1984) referred to as “Brownian motion” (p.15). Red Tourism as a social space of propaganda, or a force of social integration, is meant to counter that effect and the corresponding movement.

Rather than a presumed grand narrative, a counternarrative emerges from the Red tourist’s experience. The fact that history museums encourage visitors to engage in intended imaginations also suggests that they inhibit the visitors from imagining alternatives (Wallace, 1996). But imagination, perhaps, is one of the hardest things to control. A fantastic lion circus show for some people may stir an imagination of animal cruelty for others. In a Red Tourism setting, the touristic gaze is set in a dynamic history-reality comparative structure from which tourists’ interpretations and imaginations arise. The comparative structure can be seen as an “internal storyline,” to borrow a term from Doering and Pekarik (1996). The tourist brings it to the Red Tourism site as the foundation for interpreting the display. Specifically, Red tourists interpret museum displays and form their own opinions by comparing historical practice to the current one. Typically, this process results in their dissatisfaction with present government and policies. It is this juxtaposition of the lyrical and poetic revolutionary past as mediated in exhibits, tours and shows with the bitter reality that creates a counternarrative running through Red tourists’ experience.

The counternarrative serves as a timely reality check for the tourist. Two
aforementioned stories of the RMY illustrate this point. Supposed to propagate a democratic and law-abiding image of the Party, however, the stories about the beans and the general-cum-murderer oftentimes invoked tourists’ bitter resentment of reality. In light of the democratic revolutionary days, what the interviewees spoke most of was the current corruption and graft in officialdom. Jason, a Party cadre attending a training program in Yan’an, says:

Although we have received Red education from school to work unit and somehow become indifferent to it, we were still shocked in the RMY, particularly when we saw [the photo of] Voting with Beans. Facing a lot of illiterates, our party still insisted on voting by secret ballot. The first day we arrived at Yan’an, we were invited for a welcome dinner by a counterpart unit (duikou danwei 对口单位). We drank fifteen bottles of wine worth 380 yuan ($57) each, and of course, it was not paid by ourselves but the work unit. I knew it was not right but you know, when in Rome, do as the Romans do. Had we stuck to only half principles of what the early Party members did, our society would not have corrupted like this (interview, July 22, 2015).

Jason, like many other tourists, engaged during Red Tourism in a counternarrative in which a grim reality of the Party is projected and foregrounded from its glorious days. During last four years of this research, this counternarrative has been consistent and pervasive throughout my interactions with tourists, tour guides, and government officials, whether in formal interviews, informal chats, or overheard conversations. It is clear that beyond the discourse of revolutionary history, Red Tourism also includes a
prominent and ongoing discourse of today’s Party’s politics. This is an example of what I have noted earlier that a mobile Chinese public sphere can emerge from a propaganda sphere. Gary, a senior CPC member who takes a walking tour of the Yangjialing-site with other Party members, asks:

Why is there a sign of more corruption occurring even in the course of China’s massive anti-corruption campaign? Why cannot this campaign achieve a similar effect as the Yan’an Rectification Movement? The Rectification took the mass line, whereas today’s anti-corruption campaign takes a different pathway, not encouraging the people’s participation; many things (corruption cases) were only briefly reported afterwards without letting people know anything beforehand (interview, July 11, 2014).

The emerging counternarrative, however, does not imply that the grand narrative has fallen apart. Not even a sign. Red tourists, to a great extent, cherish the memory of the authentic revolutionary past. This is why family groups are a frequent presence at Red Tourism sites. Parents bring their children to the site for the purpose of education, not specifically for a history but for the purpose of instilling a parents-desired worldview and life style. Their practice can be seen as a voluntary ideological education insofar as the morals and values of revolutionary heritage are inculcated in children’s minds in a subtle yet preferable way as they are meant to be by the state. The on-site education by parents takes many forms. For example, parents may directly talk to their sons and daughters to draw life lessons from the early revolutionaries. Sometimes, kids take hints from their parents to gaze on particular things supposed to be inspirational for their growth. Kelly, a
young mother visiting the YRM with her husband and their 6-year-old son, says:

For us, Red tourism is merely about relooking at a history, but for our children it is more important than that. Now most children are the only child (dusheng zinv 独生子女) of their families. They do not care about other people. It seems that everyone else lives only for them. They can easily get what they want. Although our kid does not understand history, we brought him here, at least, to let him see a lot of people who lived for others. Also, we wanted to let him to learn good things such as hard work attitude and simple life style. I think these are things that he cannot learn from other kinds of touristic places (interview, July 22, 2015).

The enduring grand narrative together with the emergent countenarrative suggest tourists’ ambivalence towards Red Tourism. Their interpretations and imaginations during the Red tour are dynamic, undefined, and always subject to reconstruction with a discourse of the Party’s current politics and policies being dragged into the historical discourse.

CONCLUSIONS

The tourists’ ambivalence points to a social space of Red Tourism. As such, Red Tourism is not determined by the Party’s Propaganda, and not determining such Propaganda.

The Yan’an case illustrates the polyvalence of the social space of Red Tourism. On the one hand, Red Tourism is a space produced by revolutionary history, the current Party’s politics, postsocialist stress, and a market economy, among others. On the other
hand, Red Tourism is producing a kind of hybrid modernity, new urbanscapes, a red economy, and a counternarrative in addition to the grand narrative.

In the (re)production of the revolutionary past, space always matters. Central to the city’s new gentrification and resettlement plans is a Red Tourism orientation. The Red-themed environment of Yan’an leads Australian scholar Roland Boer (2013) to exclaim in his travel blog, “China may have communist symbols throughout, but compared to Yan’an, they seem sparse indeed. Every bridge, every building, every road, every poster proudly displays red flags, red stars, hammers-and-sickles, and what have you.” On the micro level, commercial reenactment shows like the Fantasy offer Red tourists a kind of daydreaming experience in as an extraordinary way as promised by the show’s publicity (“Real Guns, Real Ammunition”). The fantasy goes on to the walking tour of Yangjialing. In contrast to the deafening noise of the Fantasy show, an image of tranquil Xanadu emerges from the tour guides’ narration. While the RMY holds considerable space-oriented institutional power in delivering the grand narrative, the visitors, through spatial practice-oriented “tactics,” construct a counternarrative with which they not only make sense of the past, but more importantly, formulate a critical view about reality in an ambivalent way where the grand narrative coexists with the counternarrative. This can be a manifestation of what a mobile Chinese public sphere looks like.

The social space of Red Tourism has evolved and expanded massively as Red Tourism transformed from a small business on the town and village level to a capital-intensive industry. Pertaining to this dramatic change, the emerging power relations between the state and the capitalist in the making of Red Tourism, the private channel for
distributing institutional power, the labor issue, and the capitalist production model render classical theories of tourism, propaganda, and semiotics helplessly insufficient. Thus, a political economy of Red Tourism becomes imperative. This is what I will set out to do in the last chapter.
CHAPTER SIX: THE COMMODIFICATION OF PROPAGANDA (COP)

Commodification is an inseparable part of the social space of Red Tourism. The acceleration of such commodification has been startling. In 2015, led by a couple of large corporations such as Shaanxi Tourism Group Co., and Shaanxi Culture Industry Investment Group Co., the total investment by private enterprises in Red Tourism in Yan’an and its proximity had reached 50 billion yuan ($7.7 billion) (Tian, 2014). Knowing that the total investment of Shanghai Disneyland is $5.44 billion (Palmeri & Lin, 2014), one cannot help wondering what kinds of Red Tourism projects those were. No grand themed parks or other spectacular man-made landscape appeared. Added to the map of Yan’an Red Tourism were merely a few small dots that are negligible for their insignificance to the city’s Red Tourism. Where did the money go?

In contrast to the Red Tourism fetish as shown above and also in government reports and media coverage, complaints about the unprofitability of Red Tourism by government officials, tour guides, and tourism operators in the last five years have been persistent throughout this research. It left many wondering whether Red Tourism is really a profitable business, and if so, then what is the business model of Red Tourism? In this chapter, I will address these conundrums by a political economy analysis of Red Tourism within a new framework, which I refer to as the commodification of Propaganda (hereafter, CoP). CoP is understood as the production of Propaganda in the private sector under the capitalist mode of production.

This research is based on my fieldwork in multiple sites in China conducted between 2012 and 2016. The main sources were key informant interviews selected based on their involvement in Red Tourism development over a long period. Given the
propaganda topic of this study, the reader might be interested in knowing how I got some of the more important people to talk candidly. There were no easy ways and standard procedures that I could follow. Many important interviews in part were done in a way somehow like how I conducted investigative journalism in China when I was a journalist. First, I came up with a long list of informants (e.g. government officials, entrepreneurs) that I wanted to interview. Then, rather than contacting the listed people directly, I would research my personal and professional networks to see if someone in these networks had connections and could reach out to the informants. This would result in a shortlist, or nothing in some cases. Then I would either contact the shortlisted or do another long list. The interviewees were chosen in such a way because in China this perhaps is the only way that informants can trust the interviewer to maintain their privacy and to protect confidentiality and anonymity. Unlike the institutional IRB review, this is rather a matter of cultural practice. However, even this cannot guarantee a frank talk. Here, again, my 20-year journalistic experience—especially the capacity of distinguishing bureaucratic talks from candid ones, and of filtering clichés from the real germ of truth—helped. For example, in interviewing entrepreneurs, first I would try to let them talk about their successful business maneuvers, strategies, all of which they were good at. Then I asked them to provide me some examples through which I asked critical questions that they may not answer or answer frankly otherwise. In addition, data source triangulation was used for cross-checking information validity and capturing different dimensions of the CoP. Among the respondents, three were senior officials of the Tourism Bureau at three different levels, namely, provincial, metropolitan, and municipal; three were local government officials who were responsible for regional Red Tourism development; one
was an entrepreneur ("capitalist") who monopolized the "Red" reenactment show business in several Red Tourism sites; five Red Tourism industry practitioners who provided me with insider views of the Red business; four workers who did different kinds of manual work in Red Tourism scenic spots. Added to the ethnographical data were news articles and commentaries culled from both traditional newspapers and the Internet.

The following text is organized into three sections. The first lays the theoretical groundwork for later discussion of CoP. Rather than reiterating dialectical Marxism from ground zero, in this section I focus on a few interconnected terms, some latest developments within the political economy of communication in both Western and China’s contexts, and land issues in China, all of which are aimed at providing theoretical and social contexts on which the CoP is based. The second section is to establish the CoP framework. Together, these provide theoretical pillars, social context and an analytical tool that are necessary for an examination of the political economy of the Red Tourism industry. Composed of two cases, one reenactment business and one Red Tourism development project, the last section is to illustrate how the CoP plays out in the real world.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

In CoP, propaganda is conceived as some sort of raw material that is commodified for sale. This is not how Marxists commonly see propaganda (superstructure) and commodity (a good or service). Throughout the preceding chapters, I have argued and illustrated how propaganda as a social space is produced and productive, a move away
from the traditional perception of propaganda. I now focus on commodity and related concepts and issues pertaining to CoP.

Commodification, commodity fetishism, commercialism and hyper-commercialism

The commodity is the basis of the two most critical elements of Marx’s conceptual framework: class and labor, and on the other hand, a marker of the capitalist mode of production. Marx’s whole analysis starts with the idea of the commodity (Harvey 2010a). But propaganda, by nature, is not marketable; it must be commodified to be saleable. The underside of such commodification is commodity fetishism.

Marx’s notion of commodity fetishism needs explication because it serves as a starting point for formulating CoP. In the original text, Marx does not explain a lot about commodity fetishism, albeit being considered the “basis of Marx’s entire economic system” (Rubin, 1973, p.5) or an “essential tool for unravelling the mysteries of capitalist political economy” (Harvey, 2010b, p.38). What’s more, Marx’s style in this section, as Harvey (2010a) points out, is fairly literary. Altogether, commodity fetishism opens a vast field for (re)interpretation.

The word “fetish” simultaneously signifies two things: the inherent magical power of an inanimate object and worship towards that object by people. Marx (1967) used the term “commodity fetishism” to address “the enigmatical character of the product of labor” (p.82). Marx further explains the mysteries of commodities in that “the social character of men’s labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor” (p. 83). To put it another way, commodity fetishism is the mystification of the social relationships behind economic relationships among the money
and commodities exchanged in market trade. It transforms the subjective, abstract aspects of economic value into objective, real things that people believe have intrinsic value. With regard to Red Tourism, the social-political relations behind propaganda have been mystified by the fact that Red tourists buy it as tourism; it is still propaganda but losing its original strong propagandistic flavor. Having been commodified, the previously propaganda-relationship between the state and the masses was, too, transformed into one between the producer and the consumer, and accordingly, instillation becoming consumption, and finally, propaganda morphing into commodity. I will elaborate this point shortly.

But commodification is not commercialization. The commercial use of Propaganda in China is not a recent event. Even in the height of the Cultural Revolution, producing Propaganda goods for profit by private entrepreneurs did exist. In Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics, Huang (2008) remarks on a case: “[During the Cultural Revolution] another entrepreneur in the same township [Shishi] had raised 6,000 yuan from 36 investors and had started 30 small factories producing Mao Zedong pins” (p.62). While this anecdote illustrates how a businessman can take advantage of a political trend to make profits, it also suggests a chapter of capitalism pertaining to China’s propaganda has yet to be written and seen. This is what I set out to do in this chapter.

The framing of CoP, however, is much more than a general notion of commercial use of propaganda. It is not about manufacturing Mao Zedong pins and other souvenirs with propaganda content and selling them to tourists for profits. Rather, CoP is meant to unmask how state Propaganda is produced in the private sector under conditions of the capitalist mode of production.
Commodification in CoP has at least two new meanings, compared to the term that Marx originally used. First, in CoP, what is being commodified is the Representation glued to the revolutionary history, which turns out to be the selling point that propels the capitalist into the circle of CoP. In that sense, CoP is an extension of the original notion of commodification in Marxism. Second, CoP foregrounds the power relations between the state and the capitalist. This is a rather new focus of commodification in contrast to the foci in Marx’s account, either the three elements of commodity, namely, exchange-value, use-value, and value, or the embodiment of human labor. Put together, CoP is meant to be a new interpretation of Marx’s commodity fetishism in the culture industry.

In the American media context, scholars have commonly seen commercialism as a dominant force in media production (Anderson & Strate, 2000). The marker of media commercialism is advertising, a commercialized Propaganda. For example, Jhally (2000) refers to twentieth-century advertising as “the most powerful and sustained system of propaganda in human history” (p.27). In CoP, this commercial form of Propaganda/publicity and state Propaganda reunite, jointly producing a Red culture and a Red industry of which Red Tourism is part. Note that CoP is set up in popular culture. The realm of popular culture, as early noted, is super ideological. The dominant ideology is now disguised under a pseudonym “popularity.” Postman (2000) has illuminated this point, saying that,

American television limits freedom of expression and choice because its only criterion of merit and significance is popularity. And this, in turn, means that almost anything that is difficult, or serious, or goes against the grain of popular prejudices will not be seen (p.51).
The framework of CoP is grounded in political economy. Within that scholarship, political economy of communication (PEC) particularly deals with the power relations between capitalism and media communication (McChesney, 2013; Mosco, 2009). According to the PEC, fundamental components of a given communication system include political institutions, market structures, firms, support mechanisms, and labor practices. All of these elements are necessarily included in my discussion of CoP.

My overall analysis of CoP is dialectical. A philosophical term, “dialectical” can be confusing. What I mean by “dialectical” here is rather straightforward, as Harvey (2010a) puts it, “seeing everything in motion, in contradictions and transformations” (p. 12). The elements of PEC are to be scrutinized in following analysis not within a determined structure, but in a dynamic process leading to the production of the social space of Red Tourism. McChesney (2013) notes that “[t]he PEC is not just about making a structural analysis of communication systems and policy debates, as important as those are. Its practitioners also analyze how communication defines social existence and shapes human development” (p.69). In light of the PEC, the latest practice in the capitalist world can be characterized by hyper-commercialism.

In his discussion of the problem of US media system, McChesney (2004) notes that an increasingly intensified commercialization of news media is shaping and colonizing the American press. He refers to this trend as “hyper-commercialism.” Hyper-commercialism is driven by increasing amounts of advertising to an unforeseeably maximum extent that the traditional boundaries between commercialism and media are “dissolving” (p. 153). McChesney (2004) identifies two consequences of hyper-
commercialism in the US: (1) commercialism is invading public spaces including public broadcasting, museums, colleges and universities and the like; (2) advertising and PR are converging. McChesney (2004) notes, “in hyper-commercialism, corporate power is woven so deeply into the culture that it becomes invisible, unquestionable” (p.167). One of the tasks in analyzing CoP is to expose such corporate power in broad daylight. Applying the concept of hyper-commercialism to highlight commercialism brought up into Propaganda production, CoP, in particular, addresses the power exchange in the inter-sector relations between the state and the private and the interplay between capitalism and state politics.

The state-capitalist bond

In the latest form of capitalism, the state behaves like a capitalist. For example, the state uses taxpayers’ money to invest in infrastructures in order to generate more tax revenues (Harvey, 2010b). In examining the real estate boom in China, Glaeser et al. (2016) demonstrated that the state plays a decisive role in housing markets, not the market itself. The state plays a similar role in developing Red Tourism and later, integrating scattered small businesses into an industry-level economy. Simply put, if the state hadn’t used a huge chunk of tax revenues to undertake massive infrastructural projects such as high-speed railways, airports, and highways for those underdeveloped old revolutionary areas, Red Tourism couldn’t have evolved from, say, a typical sightseeing tourist activity to sound industrial clusters accounting for 20% of total tourism revenues. By virtue of this, it is not an exaggeration that the state is the biggest and unbeatable investor in Red Tourism.
The other unbeatable force is capital. Harvey (2010b) reminds us that “while many agents are at work in producing and reproducing the geography of the second nature around us, the two primary systemic agents in our time are the state and capital” (185). When state Propaganda is taking the form of a commodity and when its distribution is moving from the state to the private sector via market channels, there are strong incentives from the capitalist to accelerate the speed and extend the range of such distribution. From a capitalist’s point of view, this distribution process should be called circulation. The capitalist only sees it as the circulation of capital, not of Propaganda. Harvey (2010b) has noted that “we have lived through an astonishing period in which politics has been depoliticised and commodified” (pp. 218-219). Harvey goes on, suggesting that “state and capital are more tightly intertwined than ever, both institutionally and personally. The ruling class, rather than the political class that acts as its surrogate, is now actually seen to rule” (p.219). Although Harvey doesn’t make a particular reference to China here, it can be fairly assumed that this is also applicable to China as Harvey repeatedly uses China as an example to make his points throughout his narratives. A half century ago, Baran and Sweezy (1966), too, pointed out that the power relations between the state and the capitalist were more intertwined and stronger in a monopoly capitalism system than previous forms of capitalism. Against the backdrop of militarism and imperialism (two major ways absorbing surplus), for instance, the oligarchies tended to deceptively propagandize a very belligerent international situation in order to promote government spending on the military (Baran & Sweezy, 1966).

The state-capitalist bond can also be approached from the path of postmodernism. I have found Jameson’s (1991) analysis of contemporary cultural trends undeniably
illuminating to reveal a globalized China, even though transplanting the idea of postmodernism from Western societies to contemporary yet traditional Chinese society is notoriously difficult. It is not so much a matter of recontextualization, which alone requires a comprehensive analysis of all possible economic, political, social, historical and cultural conditions in China’s context, as developing another postmodernism theory. In view of the difficulties, I draw only upon the part that Jameson (1991) refers to as “the cultural logic of late capitalism,” leaving the rest of his argument of postmodernism open to the reader’s own interpretation.

At the heart of Jameson’s notion of the dominant cultural logic is a spectrum of crises created by consumer capitalism. First and foremost, culture is in crisis. Losing its autonomy, culture no longer looks like culture but mutates into commodity as it continues being commodified. The upshot is imagined as a kind of “degraded” cultural landscape, which owes a great deal to Horkheimer and Adorno’s idea of “Culture Industry.” This leads Jameson (1991) to argue, “aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally” (p.4). The second is a crisis of representation over historicity. “Pop history,” or the mediated stereotype of the past, has gained increasing currency in “an age that has forgotten how to think historically” (ix). To put it another way, historical authenticity is now being replaced by the simulacrum. Last but not least, the cultural issues spread out across economic and social realms, resulting in a “hyperspace,” to borrow a term from Jameson (1991, p.38). Elsewhere Jameson (2000) describes it as “collapsing the cultural into the economic—and the economic into the cultural” (p.53), and that “culture has become decidedly economic” (p.54). It is in such hyperspace where CoP takes place. All of these crises, discontinuities and collapses
suggest that Jameson, Horkheimer and Adorno are consistent with commodity fetishism, and at the same time point to an unprecedentedly close bond between the state and the capitalist.

In China, the state-capitalist partnership manifests itself in the neoliberalism trend. Wang Hui (2003) argues that the upshot of the 1989 social movement in China was neoliberalism increasingly gaining hegemonic power. Wang goes further, characterizing China’s economy after 1989 as a “dual nature”: “market extremism” representing discontinuity on the one side and state guidance as continuity on the flip side (p.43). This duality defines the nature of Chinese neoliberalism. Specifically, Wang Hui (2003) sees China’s neoliberalism as a combination of elements of “market extremism,” “neoconservatism” and “neo-authoritarianism,” repeatedly referring it as “the commodification of power”. In analyzing China of 1997 and onward, Wang (2003) writes,

The links between political power and market arrangements, the recent production of poverty and inequality, and the internal links between the old networks of power and the new expansion of markets have all provided new opportunities to rethink modern Chinese history and a new creativity in understanding the discussions of the legacies of the socialist system (pp.97-98).

To a great extent, commodification in CoP is the commodification of the power relations between the state and the capitalist. During this process, Propaganda as a social space is being commodified always bound up with other social-economic development projects such as urban upgrading, local economic development, industrial structure adjustment
and so forth. Such commodification does not happen by accident, but is a social process in the latest form of capitalist system where the boundaries between politics and economics, culture and economy, lifestyle and commodity, collapse.

Land issues in China

Land acquisition is of paramount importance for Red Tourism development. China’s land policy is characterized by a dual land system: urban land is state-owned, whereas rural land is owned by rural collectives. According to China’s Constitution (1982, rev. 2004), the Land Administration Law (1998, rev. 2004) and the Property Law (2007), farmland cannot directly enter the real estate market unless changing land ownership from the collective to the state. In other words, the state, as the biggest capitalist, is granted the right to sell rural land to commercial developers. But there is a prerequisite: the land must be used in the public interest. In principle, acquired farmland cannot be used for any commercial purpose. In practice, the vague term “public interest” is always subject to favorable interpretations by governments at different levels. This has resulted in a “buy low, sell high” land-grabbing wave in rural China in which local governments acquire rural land at knockdown prices and sell land to commercial developers at much higher market prices. This must be done on the pretext of the “public interest.” And Red Tourism, supposed to be a public good significant to both public education and local economic growth, is a legitimate reason to acquire land.

This is nothing new. Tourism villages have been an important driving force for rural transformation development (RTD) in China, particularly in remote areas (Long, Zou, & Liu, 2009). Tourism has brought spatial morphology evolution to Chinese rural
communities. In an empirical study of a rural tourism case, Xi et al. (2015) show that a higher degree of land-use intensity occurs in the village closer to the scenic spot. Taking tourism development as a way to grab land has been a very common business strategy for Chinese real estate developers (Xu, Wu, & Wall, 2012).

Land finance is a sign of the coming of another round of capitalization in rural China after township and village enterprises (TVEs) in the 1990s. Acquiring low-cost land is a way to further expand capitalism in space (Harvey, 2003b). It is considered the “most noteworthy fiscal phenomenon in China” (Wang & Ye, 2016), and has propelled the social and spatial transformation of Chinese rural communities while creating many problems (Webber, 2012). The dual-track land policy serves as a good example of the “two Chinas” theory in the economy: specifically, one more market-driven rural China and one state-controlled urban China, which together Huang (2008) refers to as “capitalism with Chinese characteristics.” Simply put, rural China is a hotbed of capitalism.

But this fact is rarely reflected by a growing body of literature on land issues in rural China. Studies of the kind suggest that land acquisition has caused widespread social unrest in rural China (Cui et al., 2015; Li, 2016; Song, Wang, & Lei, 2016). As to what the term “issues” denote, research in this vein focuses primarily on a series of problems, including corruption, government intransparency, undervaluation, unfair compensation, exploitation of farmers by local governments and so forth. Little attention has been devoted, however, to capitalism, the capitalist role of the state, and dynamic power relations between the state and the capitalist. Song, Wang and Lei (2016) identified the key stakeholders in a land acquisition case as the central government, local
governments, village cadres, and local villagers, and concluded that it is the village party secretary that led to villagers’ tension over land acquisition. In their framing, the capitalist was excluded. In a similar study, Wang and Ye (2016) employed large N-datasets and confirmed that local top leaders’ (e.g. the Party secretary) tenure is a determinant of land finance. The latest studies of land expropriation, albeit addressing political implications, are still lacking political economic analysis. For example, Sargeson (2016) demonstrated that changing land from collective ownership to state ownership weakens democratic participation in self-government in small villages, which contradicts the classic liberal assumption of private ownership of property leading to democratization. Cui et al. (2015) suggested that land expropriation deteriorated the villagers’ political trust in local governments. All of these studies left capitalists and capitalism, key stakeholders and a system, unmentioned.

The most common conclusion drawn from this constantly snowballing body of literature seems to suggest the flawed dual-track land tenure system caused all the troubles. Some indicate that once the land policy is changed, the land issues can somehow be solved (Li, 2016). Unsurprisingly, many have called for land rights reform. But other studies have shown that land reforms in China, in spite of stimulating local economic growth, did not settle conflicts between peasants and local governments, (Cheng, 2016). Capitalism, both as a mode of production and a driving force in land sales and transfers, has been systematically, if not ideologically, neglected. Such ignorance and underappreciation of capitalism in shaping social life has been pervasive in contemporary communication inquires worldwide, such as in digital communications studies (McChesney, 2013).
Among those examining Chinese land issues, Wilmsen’s study is a notable exception. Wilmsen (2016) argues that what some may call the liberalization of rural land markets is “a conduit for extending capitalism in rural China” (p.13). This argument corresponds closely to Wang Hui’s (2003) critique of Chinese neoliberalism in which marketization was mistakenly treated as a potent mechanism for achieving political democracy. Due to the research scope, however, Wilmsen does not provide evidence from the real world to illuminate this point. What’s more, speaking of the capitalist mode of production without examining capitalist practices in land acquisition further weakens the argument. My discussion about land issues in relation to CoP aims to fill this research gap by focusing on the dynamics between the capitalist and the state. In particular, I look into the dual-and- mutually-penetrated role of the state and the capitalist in commodifying rural land.

TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK OF COMMODIFICATION OF PROPAGANDA (COP)

Lately China has witnessed the marriage of commercialism to Propaganda. Red Tourism and anti-Japan World War II dramas, for example, have contributed greatly to the so called “Red economy.” It is ironic that commercialism, the much-ballyhooed champion of capitalism and once considered the arch enemy of socialism in the Maoist era, has now become an incubator for growing a new generation of Propaganda in China. This phenomenon is recognized but rarely realized, or seen as merely the behavior of commercialism. Understanding this unconventional marriage between capitalism and postsocialist Propaganda requires extensive deliberation.
Drawing from Marx’s thinking of commodity fetishism and wedding that to Harvey’s (2010b) notion of politics having been increasingly depoliticized and commodified, I develop an analytical framework within the tradition of the political economy of communication (PEC), which I refer to as the commodification of propaganda (CoP). CoP is an embodiment of commodity fetishism at the crossroads between state Propaganda, the money-making ideology of the market economy, and the capitalist mode of production.

Structural transformation of propaganda

The idea of CoP is formulated around a series of dialectical relations, including state vs. capitalist, propaganda vs. commodity, audience vs. consumers, indoctrination vs. consumption, and so forth. Altogether, CoP suggests an ongoing structural transformation in the production of Propaganda: the previous relationship between propaganda and propagandee now becomes product and consumer, and therefore, passive indoctrination turns into active consumption (Figure 7).

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<th><strong>State Propaganda</strong></th>
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<td>Propagandee</td>
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**Figure 7**: The structural transformation of propaganda.
A cognitive map of what I refer to as the structural transformation of CoP, the diagrammatic representation of the process of CoP entails the layering of five different levels of the structure of CoP. Note that state is not absent from the CoP framework; rather, it moves from the frontstage to the backstage. Backstage does not mean unimportant. Think about the director and the producer of a show. In the case of CoP, the state still plays a pivotal role after that transformation, which I will articulate later. Structurally transforming the production of propaganda from 5 “Ps” to 5 “Cs,” CoP synchronously promotes commercial values and ideological values.

It is now clear that much confusion about whether or not the commodified Propaganda is Propaganda is due to this structural transformation. First, it makes it harder for the lay people, perhaps even some media practitioners and researchers, to tell whether the new product is Propaganda or merely another ordinary commodity. Commenting on my research paper about Chinese propaganda, a reviewer of one of the major journals of the field asked me whether I would consider the “Red-themed” Chinese restaurant at Chicago’s China town “propaganda.” The reviewer believed the restaurant’s decoration with Mao’s images all over the place is just an instance of commercialism, having nothing to do with propaganda. In my encounter with a group of Chinese television directors and practitioners who all have a Master’s degree in film studies, they refused to associate Chinese anti-Japanese war films and television dramas with Propaganda. Again, they, almost unanimously, reckoned that those shows are nothing but an instance of commercialism. That is, as often as not, how we see a commodified social space: an apolitical fantasy without thinking of the Representation, or ideology, for example, the Disney Park.
The second problem is rather theoretical. Upon propaganda being produced into a commodity, it renders traditional content-based-and-oriented propaganda analysis inadequate. For example, economy, labor issues and the financial dimension are largely missing in traditional propaganda analysis. Therefore, we need a new framework. CoP is a remedy in this regard.

Rather than referring to the producer of commodified Propaganda as entrepreneur or businessman, I call it “capitalist” throughout this chapter for a few reasons. First, CoP requires capital, a lot of it. The capital brought into CoP is largely surplus capital from capital-intensive industries such as real estate, mining, or regular tourism industry. That is, the CoP itself is capital intensive. CoP is not about the innovative entrepreneurial activity through which businessmen make profits by producing commodities with propaganda content, such as T-shirts with Mao’s image, or soldier’s caps with red stars sold at the Great Wall. These are merely manifestations of commercialism and commercialization. CoP, by contrast, points to an industry that is parallel to many others in a capitalist system. Second, calling the producer “entrepreneur” might provoke a series of images likely taking us to a territory characterized by some kind of innovativeness, something people refer to as “entrepreneurship.” This is not necessarily wrong. For one thing, entrepreneur is one of roles capitalists play in the CoP. For another, to successfully run a Red business, the capitalist needs to be innovative, for better or worse. Nevertheless, calling a capitalist “entrepreneur” overshadows the role of capital in this CoP setting.

Part of the social space of propaganda, CoP contains dialectic relationships across political, economic, cultural, and social realms. As such, CoP rejects any single-factor
determinism (e.g. the Party’s ideology, commercialism, neoliberalism, postmodernism etc.). I do not simply call it “commercialized propaganda” for several considerations. First, commercialism can easily belie the delicate relationship between the state and the capitalist. While commercialism does, too, emphasize the power of capital, it pays little attention to state power. Think about advertising and PR, two notable markers of commercialism. They direct us to corporate/private propaganda, not state Propaganda. It is true that CoP involves commercialization insofar as propaganda content is commercialized when deployed by the capitalist. But this is only one layer of CoP, perhaps, the outermost yet most deceptive one. It evades the critical question as how propaganda becomes a commodity. Secondly, commercialism leads many to believe once being commercialized, Propaganda no longer exists, or is less effective. As earlier noted, this is the distinct impression I received from many interviewees of this research. In contrast, the notion of commodification takes us to a different, “pseudo-religious” realm characterized by Marx’s notion of “commodity fetishism.” It is “religious” not only because of the fetishism of transforming social relations into commodities but also because, like other religions, it creates a hierarchical system with which capitalism continues dominating.

At the core of CoP is the marriage of state power to capital power. It means that CoP can only be understood by examining the dynamism between the two powers. A simple condemnation of either commercialism or state Propaganda is misleading at the least. As such, my examination of CoP is consistent with the notion of propaganda as a social space. CoP is not static but fluid. It is not merely about the individual role of the state, of the capitalist, of propaganda, and of the audience, but the relations between all of
them. This is a vital point that cannot be overemphasized. I will go back and forth on this at various points as my analysis of CoP proceeds and the case unfolds.

Major stakeholders

There are six major stakeholders in CoP, namely, the state, local governments, the capitalist, financial institutions, laborers and consumers (*Figure 8*). Their networks cross two sectors (the state and the private) and, at least, two spheres (the economic sphere and the ideological sphere).

![The network of stakeholders of CoP.](image)

*Figure 8:* The network of stakeholders of CoP.
In CoP, the state has a dual identity. First, the state by nature is the hegemon that exercises hegemonic power and is responsible for the dissemination of intended ideologies. As noted earlier, the Chinese state established and implemented specific policies to promote Red Tourism development, which is part of the scene of CoP. The state also introduces regulations and provides guidelines to ensure how state Propaganda is commodified and then some.

The second role of the state is the Capitalist. In particular, the state acts as the biggest investor in CoP. It is based on this role that the state is contractually bound to the capitalist to commodify the social space of Propaganda. In addition to investing in communications infrastructures, the state has absolute power in land expropriation. Harvey (2003b; 2010b) notes that spatial relations have been shaped by capitalism. What is yet to be said is the state’s role in the capitalization of land. In China, the dual-track land policy grants the state a monopolistic power in acquiring, transferring and selling land. Duckett (1998), writing on real estate and commerce bureaux in Tianjin, China, has demonstrated that contradicting neoliberalists’ expectations, the Chinese state bureaucracy can wholeheartedly embrace a program of market reform. Duckett (1998) takes such enthusiasm as “state entrepreneurialism,” a term irresistibly reminiscent of “state capitalism.” State entrepreneurialism connotes entrepreneurial activities undertaken by the state, whereas state capitalism signifies the capitalist role of the state. Whether state entrepreneurialism in China is transitional or enduring was unclear at the time Duckett was writing the book. But after two decades of marketization and privatization, it seems that state entrepreneurialism in China has developed into full-fledged state capitalism, at least in the real estate sector. This is to say, in the real estate industry the
Chinese state behaves exactly like a capitalist in the wake of the loss of the element of risk-taking—a defining characteristic of entrepreneurship. For example, the state acquires land from the rural collective at cheap state planning prices and sells it at higher market prices to commercial developers. In this sense, previously somehow productive state business activities that mark state entrepreneurialism now turn into capitalist profiteering.

The Capitalist role of the state is also evident in using public funds and state power to produce commercial propaganda (e.g. PR, ads, TV documentaries) and regular news coverage for promoting Red business, all of which ordinary capitalists who invest in Red Tourism are generally unwilling to do by themselves. Unlike in other businesses, capitalists involved in Red Tourism keep a low profile. They value their relationships with the state and local governments much more than commercial publicity.

Like the state, the capitalist’s identity is also preserved in a dual role: a capitalist of his own and a “surrogate” for the state. The dual-role of the capitalist gives him a paradoxical identity epitomized by two distinct behaviors: profit-chasing and ideology-spreading. The former is always rational and primary, so much so that continued profits need to be secured; the latter, relatively, irrational and secondary.

The dual role requires a dual-capacity. The first is a capacity of successfully maneuvering in the capital-intensive industry sector. The second is a capacity of swiftly swimming in waters of bureaucratic politics in the officialdom. The two capacities indicate two kinds of capital. The marker of the first capacity is investment capital, a large amount of capital. The second capacity is characterized by Political Capital, a special form of guanxi (关系). Roughly referring to social networks of an individual being mobilized for doing business in China, guanxi now has a specific meaning. It is
close to the idea of the political capital except that the influence is from a businessman not from a politician. I capitalize the term “Political Capital” to denote this particular capacity of a capitalist and to differentiate it from political capital of a politician (Figure 9). In CoP, Political Capital refers to a kind of invisible currency a capitalist uses to mobilize government and public resources for their business. Tied up in mutual interests between the capitalist, the state and governments at different levels in economic activities, Political Capital is accumulated by maintaining good relationships with the government.

**Figure 9:** Guanxi-based Political capital vs. political capital.

In China, it is quite common for business elites to gain Political Capital by attaining membership in a prominent political organization such as the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, the National People’s Congress, or the People’s
Congress. Li, Meng and Zhang (2006) argue that Chinese private entrepreneurs’ political participation is largely motivated by hostile institutional environment, such as bureaucratic inflexibility and a weak legal system. In examining a Red Tourism case, Zhao and Timothy (2015) viewed *guanxi* as an invisible and undocumented power that is fundamental to tourism planning and development. However, they depicted *guanxi* as social networking among different levels of governments and overlooked *guanxi* between the state and the capitalist. It gives an illusion that Red Tourism development is merely a matter of interactions among governments at different levels. What is missing from this otherwise illuminating idea is the capitalist mode of production in producing the social space of Red Tourism. This is where the CoP comes to the fore. Compared to other business sectors, Political Capital is more critical to this so called Red industry. I will return to this argument later; suffice it for the moment to anticipate a point that will be illustrated by several cases, namely, that CoP represents a joint venture by the state and the capitalist.

The dual role of the capitalist has caught much attention, tension, and confusion. On the producer end, the speculative and innovative entrepreneurial activities manifested in commodified Propaganda render capital accumulation dynamic and keep state Propaganda in motion. On the consumer end, revolutionary history is exploited, commercialized to the extent that commodified Propaganda was as not so much to fulfill postsocialist nostalgia and stress as to blot out collective memories. Anti-Japan War dramas, for example, have drawn strong condemnations from the audience nationwide and filled up media space and social media. Confusion arises when people, as noted earlier, thoroughly discredit it as propaganda.
Like Janus, the state in CoP faces two directions simultaneously: the authentic revolutionary past and a lucrative future. The dual-faced image of the state alongside the dual role of the capitalist points to a central conundrum of CoP: a somehow “harmoniously inharmonious” relationship between the two co-venturers. They are harmonious inasmuch as the capitalist is endowed with state power and resources to pursue profits and the capitalist, in turn, helps spread out state Propaganda by repacking, customizing, and rebranding it in the private sector. Inharmonious situations occur when Propaganda value in the production of commodified Propaganda is depreciated or compromised by commercialism; or the other way round, a profitable project fails to launch because of a certain state regulation or censorship. This is to say, the relationship between the state and the capitalist in the CoP setting has always been contingent and deeply problematic. In other words, internal contradictions are inherent and irreconcilable in CoP.

Preconditions and consequences

There are some preconditions for CoP to come into being. First, there is widespread dissatisfaction with reality and popular resentment toward the government that leads to the emergence of a booming market for appreciation of a certain ideology (e.g. Maoism in postsocialist China and American conservatism in in the era of Trump). The corollary of CoP is that there is a market for consumption of state Propaganda. And the market should be large enough to attract capitalists on one hand and to develop into an industry to its full potential on the other. In light of the social inequality caused by capitalism, Red Tourism, for some, stands as a commodified social space of what might
be called “Maostalgia,” a nostalgia for old Maoism. CoP is very much domestic thanks to its internal market and domestic consumers. Second, CoP requires a lot of surplus capital, not merchants’ capital buying cheap to sell dear. I will elaborate this point later in my account of a Red Tourism development case. Last but not least, a “spirit.” It is something like a counterpart of Max Weber’s (1958) “spirit of capitalism” in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, except that in CoP that “spirit” is marked by a collusion between the dominant ideology and capitalism.

It is noteworthy that an authoritarian political system is not a precondition for CoP. This is to say, although I develop the framework of CoP based on the China’s context, it is also applicable to Western democratic countries. For example, the Chinese “element” in US popular television dramas and films oftentimes is politicalized in such a way that the official anti-Chinese government Propaganda is commodified and embodied, for instance, in the omnipresence of vicious Chinese spies in such hit shows as 24, Blacklist, and Person of Interest. The list goes on and on. A cultural form of state Propaganda, it is also an instance of CoP.

The commercialized production of propaganda shifting from the state to the private has at least two major consequences. First and foremost, state Propaganda after the CoP process no longer looks like Propaganda. Related, commodified Propaganda becomes even more powerful and penetrating. I have discussed this matter earlier, and think it is still in need of some reiterations and clarifications.

The communicational territory of CoP is more imagination than persuasion. Providing war Propaganda or state Propaganda is about manipulation of public opinion, commodified Propaganda typically operates on collective memories. Unlike dull
propaganda content, commodified Propaganda works powerfully on the public
imagininations of a wide range of crucial matters including national history, national
identities, cultural identities, international relations, to just name a few. By virtue of this,
commodified Propaganda exerts effects typically through popular culture. This
reconfirms that popular culture is a popular site for popular Propaganda. In other words,
it is popular culture that makes state Propaganda unbeatably powerful. The US news
media is said to help shape the American public imagination of China tremendously
(MacKinnon & Friesen, 1978). US news reports claimed to be “balanced” and
“unbiased,” though many media critics hold the opposite view. Herman and Chomsky
(1988/2008) see US news media as Propaganda. Rarely do people see popular culture the
same way as Herman and Chomsky do. People see the pervasive and prevailing Chinese
espionage scenario lurking in US popular television thrillers as an instance of
commercialism at the most. No one bothers to spell out that it is Propaganda. A trivial yet
equally very interesting footnote on such shows is that presumably mainland Chinese,
actors in those shows always speak broken Mandarin or Cantonese, very painful to native
Chinese speakers. Except for some Chinese Americans, rarely do other American
audiences demand any degree of realism for such scenes. This reminds me of popular
Chinese Anti-Japanese-War dramas in which American characters, usually played by
international students, speak English predictably with a pronounced British or European
accent. It seems that commodified Propaganda only works on others. People are well-
equipped by their governments to detect “Others” Propaganda and the same gear turns
out to be useless when facing “Our” own Propaganda. In discussing the VOA case, US
media critic Jim Naureckas (2015) makes a point that “they” have “propaganda,” whereas the US has “public diplomacy.”

RED TOURISM: A WEIRD INDUSTRY

All government officials interviewed in this project have pointed out a salient fact that the historic-tourist site itself in Red Tourism is not profitable. This is even true in popular Red Tourism provinces such as Jiangxi Province. Those resourceful cities and provinces market, brand, publicize and promote Red Tourism, but they do not rely on Red Tourism sites to raise the revenue. This is simply because all sites are free to all tourists. They depend on a group of Red Tourism-oriented closely related industry clusters, together the so called “Red industry” (hongse chanye 红色产业).

It is a weird industry. Aiming at ideological education, the state is in charge of the unprofitable part of the business for it protects, maintains, renovates, and manages historical sites and museums solely by massive subsidies. In contrast, the capitalist runs the profitable part. Some have suggested that local Red Tourism authorities can make profits from regular tourism business practices such as selling souvenirs, or putting on profitable shows exactly like what the capitalist does (Yi & Yu, 2013). But it seems that no government official really cares. The profitability has been always on the capitalist side. Laura, a senior official of the tourism bureau of a metropolis responsible for Red Tourism, unravels the mystery. Laura explains,

I doubt there is one (Red Tourism authority) that would really think about earning money from Red Tourism. Sure, they can generate profits from investing in some profitable Red businesses, but what is the point? All Red Tourism bureaus are
fully subsidized by the government, so they do not have any investment capital. Even though they can run the business, and they run it successfully, every penny they make must go to the government; they cannot use it. So I just cannot see the motivation here (interview, December 17, 2015).

For the state, Red Tourism is not about profit. This is another salient point from the government officials being interviewed. For one thing, Red Tourism can only merge into an industry in a handful of cities and provinces that occupy an important place in the Chinese revolution. Elsewhere, the survival of Red Tourism crucially depends on the state’s support and government subsidies. For another, enormous investments by the state in Red Tourism infrastructures such as building airports and high-speed railways in small towns and cities have exclusively focused on social/propaganda gain without considering much economic gains. But there is an irony associated with the freebie.

Free tickets did not automatically lead to an increase in spectators. Sometimes, the effect might be just unexpectedly opposite. Here is a case. Previously, one revolutionary museum charged 40 yuan ($6.2) for a regular ticket. A tour operating company would receive a 25-yuan ($3.8) commission for every tourist they bring to the museum. So tour guides were highly motivated to take tourists to the museum. After the museum was free, tourists, however, decreased for several reasons. From the tour company’s perspective, losing commission earning meant losing motivation. On the museum side, there was no point to draw more tourists to the site considering that receiving 100 or 1000 tourists a day is the same in terms of earning, which was none. As far as day-to-day management and maintenance were concerned, the fewer tourists the better. On the tourist side, those tourists who brought the tickets themselves must have really wanted to see and learn from
the museum. By contrast, those coming the museum with free admission sometimes might not be enthusiastic about the museum or museuming at all. For instance, in those scorching summer days, this museum was usually crowded with emigrant workers who came here simply to cool off. From the tour guide’s point of view, Red Tourism is, too, unprofitable. In China, the major source of income for tour guides does not come from their guiding service such as fees or tips but from commissions, generally selling tickets of tourist sites, taking tourists for shopping and/or to additional attractions (jiadian 加点). Since Red Tourism sites are free, the tour guide cannot earn their commission, which significantly affect their earnings.

In virtue of unprofitability, many local governments have lost initial motivation for developing Red Tourism, viewing it as a pure Propaganda project, no longer a promising business. Laura explains:

> We came up with a Red Tourism development plan in 2013 but have not yet made it public. Basically we designed several main routes with each featuring a corresponding theme, including “Great Leaders’ Charismata,” “Road to Victory,” and “the Anti-Japanese War.” Well, those were routes, but they were very much labels indeed. Because we did not have any specific promotion plan for travel agencies, they did not pick the routes. They, at best, would choose one or two sites if those are conveniently on their own major routes. It is very true that no tour operator would consider Red Tourism sites seriously (interview, December 17, 2015).
Kevin, a senior official of a tourism bureau at the provincial level, even disputed the term of “Red Tourism industry.” Kevin made a point that except for a few Red Tourism-rich cities such as Yan’an, other places have made a determined effort to develop Red Tourism only because they lack natural resources to develop regular tourism. Kevin explains:

Although people treat Red Tourism as an industry, it only accounts for a small percentage of overall tourism revenues. It is about ideology. What we call Red Tourism is a merely a form of patriotism education in other countries. For example, the Lincoln Memorial, in this regard, is a Red Tourism site because it aims for spreading the ideology (interview, May 30, 2014).

Characterized by mutual penetration between private enterprises and public institutions, the Red Tourism industry is a mixture of cultural industries (wennhua chanye 文化产业) and public/government institutions (shiyedanwei 事业单位). Nevertheless, the two kinds of work units cannot simply be divided as the private and the public as they appear to be. Under the current situation, cultural industries in China, though by and large private, are always bound up with public/government institutions. Kevin remarked that every time he attended the national conference on Red Tourism, he found most attendees were those who were from the cultural sector in charge of venues and museums. They are part of cultural industries and part of shiyedanwei (public/government institution).

Most venues and museums are subordinate shiyedanwei units of the Bureau of Cultural Affairs (wennhua ju 文化局) and other government departments. For example, the Bureau of Cultural Affairs runs museums, and the Bureau of Civil Affairs (minzheng ju 民政局) is in charge of revolutionary martyrs’ cemeteries. When the government manages Red
Tourism resources, it always involves both industries and shiye units. Take the Tourism Bureau (luyou ju 旅游局) for instance. It is a government agency, but it looks more like an industry unit than a shiye unit. The Tourism Bureau does not have any tourism resource under its name. What the Bureau does is merely to provide platforms and establish some industry standards. It has no control of any tourism business such as operating a tourist site or an attraction due to lacking of administrative power. If a privately owned enterprise invests in a Red Tourism spot, what the Bureau can offer is to help the company build few public facilities such as public toilets. The Bureau does not have the budget specific for Red Tourism. But the Propaganda Department and the Bureau of Cultural Affairs do.

Now I turn to my CoP cases. What follows is not to be read as description of day-to-day operations of the Red Tourism business, as individual cases among others. I have rather meant to offer a “documentary” to show real events and issues pertaining to commodifying the social space of Red Tourism, through which the conception of CoP comes to the fore.

Reenactment show: revitalizing capitalism

Henry, a mogul of the Red Tourism industry, has invested in multiple on-site reenactment shows in Red Tourism scenic spots nationwide and monopolized the market of the kind. The Red Tourism market had grown large in 2005 when Henry sank vast amounts of capital accumulated from years of his ordinary tourism business in the venture. Realizing that the majority of Red tourists were the Post-’80s and the Post-’90s, mainly the youth, aiming to change the old style of Red Tourism characterized by dull
explanations and boring exhibitions, and following the interactive tourism trend, Henry started his Red Tourism business with an investment of RMB 30 million ($4.62 million) in an on-site war reenactment show in a Red Tourism site. This adventure brought Henry great fame in his business circle.

While all kinds of investment are risky to some degree, private investment in Red Tourism is much riskier. Henry explained that for natural attraction-based tourism investment, it is rather a matter of tourism management upon the completion of the investment. Red Tourism investment, by contrast, requires a considerable amount of manpower, resulting in higher management costs and higher production costs. Natural attractions have generated considerable publicity over the years. This is not the case for Red Tourism. A contract for running a regular tourism business in natural attractions will guarantee a profit, but a contract in Red Tourism won’t do the same. Once the Red Tourism spot construction work is completed, a large investment for generating publicity is needed. According to Henry, the risk of investing in Red Tourism is several times higher than that of investing in regular tourism. Henry says,

Commercial propaganda (publicity) is pretty much on our own. The government only promotes political Propaganda on the macro level, say, the development of the Old Region or the Sacred Place of Yan’an, and celebration of Mao Zedong’s thirteen years in Yan’an. But our investment is on the micro level, which the government will not propagandize (interview, June 4, 2015).
Besides, Henry suggested that the market also completely depended on his own hands to develop. It requires a certain kind of maneuver and strategy, including a capacity in taking advantage of and manipulating government politics.

Henry’s war reenactment business changed its theme as national politics and Propaganda changed. In light of the Diaoyu (Senkaku) islands dispute between China and Japan coincident with an easing of military tension between mainland China and Taiwan, the mainstream Civil War-theme television dramas were replaced by Anti-Japanese War ones. Correspondingly, the previous hostility between the CPC and the KMT was revised to reconstruct a kind of partnership between the two parties in fighting against the Japanese troops. In other forms of cultural industries, for example, television and film, such partnership is now typically portrayed as some kind of romantic relationship between two spies from the two different political camps. Sensing the new politics and catering to the Anti-Japanese sentiment, Henry changed the strategy of his investment from reenacting civil war battles to Anti-Japanese ones. Henry explains,

My current strategy is anti-Japanese stuff. I have my own thinking: first, I saw the relationship between the KMT and the CPC was bettered; second, the Japanese along with the Americans now keep troubling the Chinese and what the Chinese people hate most is the Japanese. So I believe switching to this (anti-Japanese theme) is easier for people to accept (interview, June 4, 2015).

Henry had two projects underway when I interviewed him in summer 2015. One reenactment site in Chongqing, which features “the Sichuan Army leaving Sichuan to join in the Anti-Japanese War” (川军抗日), was near completion with an investment of
RMB 50 million ($7.7 million). The other one, a more ambitious one reenacting the Battle of Tai’erzhuang (台儿庄大捷), just passed the project evaluation and was in the stage of negotiating development details with the local government. It should be noted that unlike other Red Tourist attractions, the two projects share a marked similarity that both represent spirited resistance of the armies of the Republic of China against the Japanese armies, not the Communist-led forces. The Sichuan Army was a local military force relatively independent from the central government, whereas the KMT troops played the leading role in the Battle of Tai’erzhuang. In other words, the two projects have nothing to do with the CPC and are considered “Red” only because of their patriotic theme, an extension of Red Tourism. This is to say, rather than representing the CPC legacy, the two tourist attractions aimed to propagate a positive national image or some Chineseness of the desired kind.

In the business sector, a higher degree of risk usually corresponds to greater profitability. Private firms that invest in Red Tourism can receive government support in many ways. It was the CNTA that set up Henry in the Tai’erzhuang project. Unlike other sites, Henri did not need to develop his mock battle business from scratch in Tai’erzhuang; there are a newly re-built “ancient” Tai’erzhunang city and the Memorial of the Battle of Tai’erzhuang that have drawn a lot of tourists already. What Henry needed to do, from the Red Tourism authority’s point of view, was to reinforce the “Red” in local tourism. Henry explains,

Recommended by the director of CNTA, I negotiated the business along with the director of the Red Office. They (the two leaders) know my economic capacity for running the red business. They felt like having an ancient city was not perfect; it would be perfect if the
Battle could be reenacted. So they hoped that I could build the tourist attraction quickly. Tai’erzhuang has received wide publicity. So has the reenactment project because it is the largest one in Red Tourism and the Battle of Tai’erzhuang was huge in the course of the Anti-Japanese War (interview, June 4, 2015).

The risk is by no means merely metaphorical. The production nature of reenactment shows in Red Tourism poses constant hazards to workers. Companies promised that the work is absolutely safe, stressing that prop guns used in the reenactment are loaded with blank ammunition that contains gunpowder but no bullet or shot. Nevertheless, since there were more than 300 reenactors who performed on a daily basis, injuries such as burns, abrasion, dislocation, fracture are inevitable for reenactors. Only when the injury is serious enough to prevent the injured from working can the worker take a paid sick day; they have to continue to work otherwise or to take a day leave without pay.

Raw materials in Henry’s business simply mean gunpowder and explosives. To reenact an authentic version of a revolutionary battle, the crew of the show actually used more than two hundred genuine rifles, six cannons along with armored vehicles that were once used by both the KMT and the Communist forces during that time. To achieve greater visual impact, each hourlong performance used 800 blanks and 80 shells (Liu & Chen, 2012). Since the show performs each day during the tourist season (May to November), the demand for gunpowder and explosives to be used in the production is large and clearly crucial. Given the grim situation of counter-terrorism and national security worldwide, transporting and storing such large quantities of ammunition alone requires extraordinary Political Capital to deal with the government, the military, and the police, not to mention obtaining a requisition for explosives and bullets. Rarely can any
group of entrepreneurs or private companies get this kind of support from the state. It marks the delicate relationship between the capitalist and the state in the CoP. As a fixed routine, local police come to the site for inspection quite often. As long as there is nothing serious happening, they were fine with it.

But tragedy can strike when things go even slightly wrong. In 2011, Hong Jiasheng, the entrepreneur who invested in and ran the Yan’an Defense reenactment show, was commended as the “first person of China’s Red Tourism” in the National Red Tourism Conference for the success of his reenactment business in Yan’an. The next year, Hong invested RMB 100 million ($15.4 million) for a similar historical reenactment named the “Liaoshen Campaign” (辽沈战役) in Fushun, a northeastern city. The first of the three decisive campaigns during the War of Liberation, the Liaoshen Campaign, taking place in 1948, signaled the final stage of the PLA’s offensives against the KMT. To a great extent, the Liaoshen Campaign reenactment is a replica of the Yan’an Defense: same promised “real guns and live explosions,” homogenous scenes and recruitment of a famous director, Zhang Qian who directed the well-known Anti-Japanese War television drama series Liang Jian (亮剑, “Unsheathing the Sword”). But this time Hong was in for a bumpy ride.

Seven people were killed in an explosion after a dress rehearsal on April 28, 2014, a few days prior to the opening of the reenactment show. The explosion happened when two pyrotechnicians were handling explosives for special effects. The two pyrotechnicians died on the spot alongside three staff members of a local administrative committee who happened to be passing by, and two workers in the scenic spot (China
Radio International, 2014). While the cost in human life was surprisingly high, the company’s crisis management dealing with the accident was even more surprising.

Two months after the fatal tragedy, a follow-up news report published on a local newspaper is truly a soft sell from a media professional perspective. Entitled, “An Accident Makes the Liaoshen Campaign Reenactment More Riveting,” the advertorial does not even care about concealing its commercial nature insofar as the title reads exactly like an advertising slogan (Anonymous, 2014). Complete with ad elements and content, the article ends with this sentence, “Wish the re-opening of the Liaoshen Campaign tourist spot all the best, contributing greatly to Liaoning province’s flourishing tourism.” It is no wonder that this article was published anonymously. It should be noted that commonly dubbed as “soft news” (ruanwen 软文) in the circle of Chinese media professionals, paid news (youchang xinwen 有偿新闻) has been a thorny issue in the Chinese news industry (Tsetsura, 2015). In 1997, the Propaganda Department along with other government agencies launched a long-lasting anti-paid news campaign, requiring that news must be distinguished from advertisements and all forms of paid news are forbidden (The Central Propaganda Department, 1997). However, the situation was not improved much until violators were punished with the harshest terms, ranging from disbarment to imprisonment. Today blatant paid news in Chinese newspapers is very rare. Li and Li (2014) refer to the rare case as a manifestation of “Soft Power,” pointing to the capacity of people in power to manipulate news media. One year after the death of the seven people, the Liaoshen Campaign reenactment show celebrated its grand opening with more than 3000 tourists visiting the site on April 23, 2015. Containing a lot of
promotional photos and texts, the local newspaper covered the opening event in a full-page without mentioning a word of the previous tragedy (Zan, 2015).

Ostensibly a safety issue, the accident also points to serious labor issues in CoP. Henry was having a difficult time recruiting laborers (reenactors) when he started his Red business. Reenacting by nature is a kind of manual labor that requires reenactors to work outside no matter what the weather. Like in other labor intensive industries, capitalists aim for cheap labor power in CoP, typically, landless farmers. Henry says,

Wherever we go, we are welcomed by local governments because most people we hired were locals, those uneducated (farmers). As long as they can run, we employ them. They cannot be hired by any other work units because they don’t look good and are poorly educated. What they have is labor. One can only make money from trading his labor, if you will. They don’t have good physical strength and what they can do is mere running errands. So this (business) has solved the unemployment of these people (interview, June 4, 2015).

Considering that the reenacting work is hard yet paid less than other jobs, normally local young male farmers would choose to go out to work in cities. As a result, women and the elderly formed the bulk of workers employed in the Red businesses. This explains why there were many female soldiers appearing in those battle reenactment shows. The Yan’an Defense appeared in the BBC 2013 documentary, China on Four Wheels, which helped the scripted reenactment gain international popularity. But this did not help extend market reach. In 2011, the show performed three times during the day and additional one in the night. Starting from 2014, the reenactment only performed once a
day. Previously there were several horses for the reenactment show, as shown on the billboard, now only one horse and three donkeys are left. With a decrease in visitors, the company increased the ticket price from 150 yuan ($23) to 180 yuan ($28).

Workers’ payments have been rock steady during the last decade since the opening of the site. The monthly wages of regular reenactors were 1500 yuan ($231), and 1800 yuan ($277) for drummers. All workers got paid without the compulsory social insurance by law. These wage rates were so low that they could barely make ends meet. Note that in 2015, the per capita disposable income of urban residents in Yan’an was RMB 33,127 ($5096) (Statistical Bureau of Yan’an City, 2016). Also note that the cost of living in Yan’an is much higher than a similar city because of the tourist flats. For example, a bowl of ramen cost about $3 in Yan’an, whereas it was only $1 in Baoji, the second largest city of Shaanxi Province.

There are no holidays, weekends, and paid sick days for all workers, both reenactors and other laborers. They must work every single day during the tourist season (from February to November) regardless of weather conditions and their physical conditions. Previously a drummer in the reenactment show, Carter is now a security guard working in the site. According to Carter, the show performed each day during the tourist season without a single day break in last eleven years even under adverse weather conditions, even if there were only about one or two hundred spectators. In other words, each single day in the nine-month tourist season is a workday for the workers. Sometimes reenactors had to painfully perform in heavy rains without any additional compensation. Workers will receive a monthly 200 yuan ($31) bonus providing that they do not take sick leave in that month. If they do, they will not get paid for that day plus losing the 200-
yuan bonus. In other words, a sick day will cost a worker 250 yuan ($38), about 1/6 of their monthly wage. Therefore, it was extremely rare for a worker to take sick leave even when they were very sick. Following a common practice from China’s manufacturing industry, the reenactment company provided workers with meals and lodging on the reenactment site. Not many workers chose to live in the dormitory; the majority of workers are local people, and unlike migrants they have their own families around.

The workforce of the reenactment company is roughly divided into two groups: “ordinary workers” (普通员工) and “support staff” (后勤人员). Roughly speaking, workers do manual labor, whereas staff member are in charge of business management and other administrative work. The wage gap between the two groups of employees was huge. Staff members earned about four times as much as regular workers, plus bonuses. The site was empty during the winter months. Unlike 12-month paid staff members, workers left the site for the winter trying to find other work to make a living since no work means no pay. Carter moved his family to Yan’an city, pursuing a better education for his son. However, the situation was dire. Carter’s family lived for many years in a rental house. There was absolutely no money left over after rent and food, let alone skyrocketing education costs in Chinese urban schools.

Like Carter, most workers of the reenactment were local from Yan’an or nearby counties. Recruiting reenactors has gone smoothly. With about 300 reenactors already, the company stopped recruitment. According to Carter, if it were continuing, more people would come. This is because women from villages usually cannot get other kinds of work. Reenactors need to work 8-hour a day like workers elsewhere even though the show only lasts about one hour. Every day workers report to work in the morning,
preparing and then performing the reenactment. After having a lunch in a makeshift canteen in the loess hill, workers come back to the site to take a roll call and then kill a few hours before the end of the day’s work. In addition to regular performance, rehearsals, though infrequent, took place when the producer detected problems in their reenacting.

However, reenactments are not the only profitable Red business. Comparing to show business, real estate is much more lucrative in Red Tourism. As such, it tells more about the state-capitalist dynamics in the CoP.

The “Golden Yan’an”: a land game in the name of red

Land grabbing is the great driving force for most capitalists who invest in Red Tourism. Huang (2008) has noted that real estate is the “most political sector in the Chinese economy” (p. 229). It is also the site where the development of Red Tourism thrives.

The unwritten golden rule for private investment in Red Tourism is that the capitalist must ensure, prior to signing a contract with the government, a double-size-investment return from the government. For example, if one invests 3 billion yuan in a Red Tourism project, he must secure 6 billion in return from the government. The 6-billion return comes in many forms, for instance, building supporting infrastructure such as highways, airports, speed-rails and other mass transportation systems in conjunction with the project. Among many kinds of rewards, land acquisition is a prominent one for the capitalist to partake in Red Tourism development projects such as building a revolutionary museum. Given the skyrocketing housing prices and the increasing
difficulty in acquiring commercial land nationwide, the capitalist can lock in substantial profits from land finance even before the project starts. Typically, the capitalist will allocate a small portion of acquired land from the government, often by fiat, for the Red Tourism site development, leaving the rest for other commercial developments. In some cases, the capitalist would simply resell the land to other real estate developers. It is common that a Red Tourism developer is a powerful real estate tycoon.

Henry is not a real estate developer, but he has friends in that circle. A Hangzhou-based real estate guru recommended that Henry invested in a Red Tourism development project called the “Old Yan’an,” a modern replica of the Old Yan’an City in the revolutionary period. He told Henry that it was much better to invest in the Old Yan’an project than a regular real estate one because it is almost certain to kill two birds with one stone: once the project was completed, shops in the Old City will be rented out on the one hand, and tickets can be sold to tourists at the entrance gate on the other hand. In view of the double-profit from real estate and tourism, Henry invested in this project. Four years after signing the contract with the government, Henry’s company had completed the conversion of agricultural land to commercial land. However, the construction site was empty when I took the interview with Henry in 2015 due to financial problems. A year after that, the “Old Yan’an” project changed hands from Henry to a corporate group. The name of the project also changed to “Golden Yan’an.” These changes point to a fierce battle on the capital front and a rearguard battle on the Political Capital front.

Conveniently located at the northern extension of the main Red Tourism route of Yan’an city, Jingjiawan Village (井家湾村) enjoyed a reputation for rural tourism, which helped get the village included in the list of “Shaanxi Rural Tourism Demonstration
Villages” in 2010 (CNTV, 2011). In particular, Jiangjiawan was famous for nong-jia-le (农家乐) tourism, literally, “joy of farmers’ families.” It is a form of farm-household-based agritourism emerging in post-Reform China. A bottom-up type of tourism, nong-jia-le on the one hand offers urbanite tourists a nostalgic tourism experience featuring family-made rustic food and countryside-style lodging alongside other farming related activities, and on the other hand provides local farmers with an additional and valuable source of economic income. Moreover, it also stands as a communication event insofar as social boundaries between the urban and the rural are constantly being reconfigured and negotiated in the tourist encounters (Park, 2014). About one in three farm households in Jingjiawan Village was conducting nong-jia-le tourism business (Tian, 2014).

But this is no longer the case. Due to a huge ongoing Red Tourism development project called “Holy Land Valley” (圣地河谷), the villagers lost their land for doing their rural tourism business. Nong-jia-le tourism that supports the needs of the rural households was seen as “primitive” and replaced by the large-scale tourism investment. Here a particular type of value system is used to assess productivity—one that is capitalist. Specifically, the capitalist production mode is weighted in favor of commercial profitability and GDP growth over the welfare of villagers. It is such an irony that Red Tourism, originally introduced as a means of poverty alleviation, is becoming an exploitation tool as it morphs from a kind of heritage tourism business into a capital-intensive industry, which potentially can lead those villagers who climbed out of poverty through small tourism business to return to poverty.

It is for this reason that the Jingjiawan villagers organized a dozen protests against the construction project. Their attempts, however, completely failed on April 23, 2014
when construction work of the Red Tourism project resumed after having stopped for a year due to the protests. A commentator predicts, “in the near future, this tourism village, which is well-known for flower farming and nong-jia-le, will completely cease to exist; replaced by a large-scale Red Tourism project with an investment of ten billions of yuan” (Tian, 2014).

The company responsible for the loss of farmland is Shaanxi Tourism Group (hereafter, STG), which monopolizes the Yan’an Red Tourism market. In addition to the Holy Land Valley project, STG also runs the Holy Land Theater, Wenanyi scenic spot, and Hukou Waterfall scenic spot in Yan’an. Established in 1998, the Xi’an-based corporate group covers four industrial clusters, including tourism services, tourism culture, tourism and cultural center area development and tourism real estate. According to the company’s website, STG has more than 40 subsidiaries, 6,000 employees with net assets of 10 billion yuan ($1.54 billion) and comprehensive operating income of 18 billion yuan ($2.77 billion) by 2016 (STG, n.d.).

The Holy Land Valley project has been highly controversial for its real estate nature behind the scene of the “Red”. Land transfers and real estate sales are cardinal components of its business model. The 10-billion-yuan Red Tourism development project includes five major subprojects, namely, “Urban Life,” “Golden Yan’an,” “Northern Shaanxi Folk Park,” “Cradle Valley,” and “Long March Children’s Theme Park” (Figure 10).
Figure 10: Five subprojects of the Holy Land Valley project. Modified from Yan’an Holy Land Valley. Source: http://www.yaholyvalley.com/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=67&id=21

Commentators and industry insiders believed developing large Red Tourism projects in the Yan’an area was not driven by the market. They pointed out that Yan’an already has adequate, fully developed Red Tourism sites that attract millions of domestic tourists each year. Compared to those sites, the Valley project does not have any advantage from a tourist perspective. The ultimate driving force for the project is land finance. By virtue of this, commentators referred to the project as a “land game” (Tian, 2014).

Golden Yan’an is the core among all the five subprojects. It is an ambitious project to build a new “Golden” city within a city, which has stirred up a lot of
controversies. STG describes Golden Yan’an as “the reproduction and beyond of the old Yan’an, the visible glory and dream of Yan’an, a three-dimensional city, a smart city, an eco-friendly city, and a fortune city” in project’s publicity (Yan’an Holy Land Valley Cultural Tourism Industrial Park Management Committee, 2014). It is clear that STG is engaged in selling real estate. More importantly, the craze for building new iconic architecture worldwide indicates a fiercer round of capitalist competition, as Harvey (2010b) points out,

The selling and branding of place, and the burnishing of the image of a place, becomes integral to how capitalist competition works… Bring a signature architect to town and create something like Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. This helps put that city on the map of attractors for mobile capital (p. 203).

Apart from its publicity, the “true colors” of the ostensible “Red” project are also easily detectable on the panoramic map of the project for promoting sales (Figure 11). Except for one revolutionary history museum, the properties on the map ready for sale and transfer are commercial real estate, including 8 themed-hotels (3 or 4 star), residential buildings, commercial streets, bars, a plaza, a shopping center and business clubs.
The progress of this multi-billion-dollar Red Tourism project was rather unsatisfactory. It stagnated shortly after the project was set up for a combination of reasons. The first problem was about land acquisition. In spite of the extreme land scarcity in Yan’an, the project requires 14 square kilometers (3459 acres) of land. Forced land acquisition took place in Jingjiawan Village in December 2013 with all 897 mu (145 acres) of land being converted from farmland to construction land in the name of Red Tourism development. It means that all the villagers will turn landless. Each farm household would receive a land compensation of 147,500 yuan ($ 22,692) per mu. The compensation rate fell short of the villagers’ expectations. In average, every mu of land in Jingjiawan could earn the villagers 60,000-70,000 yuan ($9231-10,769) per year from growing vegetables and rural tourism. This is to say, the land compensation is less than three years of earnings from the acquired land. Note that the market price for construction land in Yan’an was about 2.5
293 million yuan ($ 384,615) per mu at the time, 17 times the land compensation rate. According to STG estimated land revenue, every mu of cleared land will bring the corresponding profit of 1.452 million yuan ($ 223,385) (Tian, 2014). If we multiply this number by all acquired land from Jingjiawan Village, which is 897 mu, we shall find that the total profit STG is making from land acquisition alone in a single village would be 1.3 billion yuan ($ 200 million). Therefore, land acquisition is the perfect point for STG to lock in some handsome profits. But for Jingjiawan villagers, landholdings provide an important safety net. Once sold, the villagers will lose their safety net—a secure asset of production, becoming landless farmers who will find themselves marginalized and with drastically lower standards of living. This has given rise to local farmers’ stiff resistance to land acquisition shortly after they were notified of the project.

Apart from villagers’ resistance, the local government along with its departments and agencies showed marked reluctance to cooperate with STG in land takings. The motive of the Valley project was openly questioned, mainly by the Pagoda District Government and Yan’an Land and Resources Bureau. The local officials insisted that STG aimed at land finance under the guise of Red Tourism development. A fiduciary arrangement made in 2014 between STG and Sino-Australian International Trust on the Valley project shows that the estimated revenue from Phase 1 of the project is 7.939 billion yuan ($ 1.22 billion), which includes the land transfer income of 5.559 billion yuan ($ 0.855 billion), tourist ticket sales of 870 million yuan ($ 133.8 million) and rental income of 1.51 billion yuan ($ 232.3 million) (Sina Finance, 2014). These numbers suggest that 89% of the revenue comes from land finance. An industry insider revealed that the Golden Yan’an project, the major subproject of the Valley project, will lead to a
land value uplift of the periphery, which in turn, will help STG reap greater profits in its later land sales and transfers. Red Tourism is negligible in this profit-making scheme.

Neither did the local officials’ resentment towards the Valley project suggest that they opposed land finance in general. Nor did they fight for the welfare of dispossessed villagers. Simply, the local government and the Land Bureau maintained that they should be the beneficiaries of land finance, not STG. For one thing, the rural land policy grants the local government discretionary power in the chain of land acquisition, conversion and land sales. For another, land sales have been used as the most important source for local government financing. This is to say, in principle the beneficiaries of land transfers and land associated with the Valley project should be the Pagoda District Government and the Land Bureau. However, most profits earned from land finance go to STG instead in accordance with the company’s business model. This is where local officials’ lukewarm attitudes towards the Red Tourism project came from.

The third problem to carry out this CoP mission was financing. It is no less serious than resistance from the villagers and the local officials. One local official pointed out that STG did not have sufficient financial strength for this 10-billion-yuan project. According to information released from Sino-Australian International Trust, STG reported total assets of 3.01 billion yuan, net assets of 650 million yuan, and a debt ratio of 78.4% in 2012 when the company obtained the Valley project (Sina Finance, 2014). It is no wonder STG sought financing to build Golden Yan’an on the slogan “Huge Financing, Financing for the Huge” (da rongzi, rong dazi 大融资，融大资) (Yan’an Holy Land Valley, 2016b). Note that STG obtained land without going through an open land auction, a common practice in land acquisition in China. In other words, STG might not
have obtained the land use rights, or would have paid more if it had gone through the proper channels. STG got preferential treatment and policies because CoP, as the term is conceptualized and defined, is always a joint mission between the capitalist and the state.

Contrary to the attitude of the lower (district) government, Yan’an Municipal Government has shown extraordinary enthusiasm for the biggest-ever single investment in Yan’an tourism. The municipal government convened many meetings, calling for full support by all local government departments and agencies involved in the Valley project, asking them to sacrifice local interests in land acquisition and displacement and aim for “Big” (daju 大局). In contemporary Chinese political discourse, “Big” has a special meaning, connoting that political interests of the state must be prioritized unconditionally. In 2012, a few months after signing the contract between the Yan’an Municipal Government and STG, the Yan’an Holy Land Valley Cultural Tourism Industrial Park Management Committee was created in order to further facilitate and promote the project. In spite of functioning as a government agency, the Committee is surprisingly led by STG, which, again, was resisted by local officials. About the same time, headed by Mayor Liang Hongxian with core members including Deputy Mayor Zhang Xilin, STG general manager Zhou Bing and deputy general manager Zhang Dongsheng, a leadership group for the Valley project was established to partner up on a joint venture.

The role of the state is decisive in CoP business. STG has the full backing of the state’s Propaganda Department alongside other departments and agencies. The Valley project has its own website, mainly for PR and marketing purposes. In the “news” section, the latest piece is about Deputy Director of the Central Propaganda Department Jing Junhai visiting the Holy Land Valley project and attending the first performance of a
Red Tourism show produced by STG (Yan’an Holy Land Valley, 2016a). Representing the Yan’an Period, the “Red” show “Yan’an Memories” is said to be directed by a German team which employed many cutting-edge sound and light technologies. But the show is not the point. Complete with praise for the Valley and Golden Yan’an from Deputy Director Jing, the article denotes that the controversial Red Tourism development project has now secured firm support from the state’s top Propaganda authority on the one hand, and connotes that the company’s Red business is running smoothly on the other hand. The website also highlights visits by other powerful politicians of the state including Zhao Zhengyong, the Deputy Director of the House Judicial Committee of the National People’s Congress. What’s more, the Valley project was included in the list of “National Fine Selected Tourism Development Projects 2014” issued by CNTA, despite raging controversies from local government officials and protests from undercompensated villagers (CNTA & CDB, 2014). When this dissertation was nearing completion in December 2016, STG Yan’an subsidiary company was awarded “Advanced Collective of National Tourism System,” an honorary title bestowed on selected tourism-related organizations every five years by CNTA and other state departments (CNTA, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

Propaganda has long been a commodity, in company with the commodification of social life. But rarely is propaganda thought of this way. This is because how we see propaganda has been largely determined by state Propaganda. In my lifetime, such determining force does not come in the form of Propaganda posters or op-eds of party
organs, or, dull radio programs, but originates from theaters, movies, songs, televisions, video games, websites, social networks, and in this case, touristic sites.

The commodification of the social space of Red Tourism is nothing special to the profit-chasing ideology of capitalism and greedy psychology of the capitalist. Exploitation of marginalized groups, grabbing land from peasants, and collusion between corrupt government officials and business owners have constructed an unchained melody of global capitalization. What is new to the CoP, however, is the role swapping between the state and the capitalist. The state invests the most, including infrastructure, historical sites, and land, whereas the capitalist is responsible for producing intended Propaganda. But the exchange of roles, like one represented in those reality television shows, always involves conflicts between the role-exchangers. The tortuous development trajectory of the Golden Yan’an project is a perfect footnote in this regard.

The CoP is by no means unique to China, though the current study focuses on China and the Red Tourism case. In the Western world, dominant ideologies, whether classic liberalism, neoliberalism or conservatism, cohabit with state Propaganda in the realm of popular culture. And tourism is included. CoP offers a framework to rethink tourism, not limited to Red Tourism but tourism in general worldwide, in light of disseminating the Representation, or, propaganda.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION: THE PROPAGANDA STATE

In a number of ways this dissertation aims to go beyond existing work in propaganda studies by illustrating the following: that propaganda is a social space; that there is a propaganda culture in China; that tourism is a popular site of propaganda; that the capitalist can make a profit off of popular propaganda by commodifying and selling it in the market; that although ostensibly commercial and nonideological, commodified propaganda can be even more ideologically powerful, hence, more propagandistic; that the partaking of surplus capital in the commodification of propaganda renders the social space of propaganda even more complicated; and that capitalism is, too, a driving force for the production of state Propaganda.

These are bold claims. Each one of these merits a book or two. The nature of the current study, however, is a sketch in this regard and it makes no pretense to be sophisticated. The purpose of this dissertation is to begin the process of systematically analyzing propaganda not on the basis of a certain set of ideologies, but on the basis of the production of social space, addressing communication networks, political pathways, the political economy, and the interplay among them.

My approach was to undertake a study of Red Tourism, to investigate into its produced yet productive social space, as a way of redirecting our attention regarding propaganda from the state to the private, from the news media to popular culture, and from state politics to the dynamisms between that and capitalism. This goal cannot be achieved unless propaganda no longer appears as merely the manipulation of public opinion by the state. By virtue of this, I take as my starting point a Chinese history of xuanchuan that is similar in comparison with the early history of propaganda in the West.
In that stage, propaganda, whether in the form of Confucian preaching, or, of spreading God’s words by missionaries, was aimed at a kind of “spiritual education”, secular or religious. While this inner core of the xuanchuan culture survived throughout imperial, republican, socialist, and post-socialist China and remains effective today, propaganda in the Western world changed its neutral connotations particularly after two world wars with a fixed evil image rooted in the minds of late modern westerners. I conclude at a point when propaganda has been increasingly commodified through a particular form of joint venture between the state and the capitalist, which I refer to as the commodification of propaganda (CoP). The CoP suggests an ongoing structural transformation of propaganda and a cross-boundary arena of propaganda where culture, history, state politics, and economy intersect. All of these problematize early models and theories of propaganda, suggesting a need to extend the paradigm of propaganda studies beyond the confines of a phenomenology of psychology and the interpretation of the province of authoritarian states.

In what remains of this dissertation, I will try to think through the Chinese characteristics of propaganda by reflecting on and extending what I have touched on in previous chapters. I would argue that China is a propaganda state. A very familiar way of framing the CPC’s media politics by the major news outlets in the West, however, what I mean “propaganda state” is not what they mean. What I mean is based on a school of thought on propaganda, a model of propaganda, and most of all, a culture of propaganda. As noted earlier, all of these had existed long before the CPC came into power. China is a propaganda state because propaganda is the Chinese characteristic form of governance and the Chinese characteristic way of mass communication. Let me explain.
The Chinese characteristic form of governance

The image of the communist society was familiar to Chinese people long before the advent of Marx’s *The Communist Manifesto*. Confucius depicted it as the “World of Great Harmony” (*shijie datong* 世界大同) where everyone loves each other, every family lives and works in peace, no disputes, and no wars. The sharp divide between Confucian cosmopolitanism and Marxist communism lines in the pathways to achieve them. While Marx saw the proletariat revolution, Confucians advocated the sort of massive, persuasive, ideological education that he believed would lead to the formation of the cosmopolitan society. That pathway is *xuanchaun* /propaganda.

It was believed to be the optimal way of governance. The propaganda state was envisaged as the ideal one that is governed by effective and benevolent communication between the ruler and the ruled, not by coercion. This view was not limited to Confucians but shared by many schools of thought. For example, Guan Zhong (管仲, c. 723-645 BC), a key figure of Legalism (*fajia* 法家), made it explicit in *The Art of the Mind* (心术) that “to govern a state was to govern the people’s minds,” (心治是国治也) and it was “not done by punishments and coercive sanctions” (操者非刑也). The combination of a virtuous ruler, an effective mass communication system, and the means of self-improvement was of crucial importance in running such propaganda state. The rationale goes like this: the ruler would provide the right kind of guidance to mobilize the ruled through mass communication networks for their self-improvement. Traditional cultural forms in China, in line with this propaganda reasoning, were aimed at disseminating worldviews and lifestyles. Symbolic meanings of traditional Chinese paintings and
poems, no matter how sophisticated, normally can be decoded by associating them with a certain kind of worldview or ideology. No exception for tourism, as noted earlier. But the Confucian idea of governing minds through propaganda did not go unchallenged.

Three crises occurred. One challenge came from the monarch in Imperial China, one from the liberals in Republican China, and one from the communists in Socialist China. The first crisis arose when Emperor Qin Shi Huang (秦始皇) ordered the burning of Confucian classic books and the historical books of other states, known as “burning books and burying Confucian scholars alive” (焚书坑儒). The Emperor Qin saw Confucianism as a heterodox spirituality. The second anti-Confucianism campaign appeared during the May Fourth Movement of 1919. Given the nickname of “kong jia dian,” (孔家店) or “Confucius and Sons” by Hu Shi (胡适, 1891-1962), a student of John Dewey at Columbia, the Confucian school of thought was believed antidemocratic by the liberals. The last attack on Confucianism took place in the “Criticizing Lin and Confucius Campaign” during the Cultural Revolution when the communists deemed it counterrevolutionary. Retrospectively, it is clear that what the emperor, the liberals, and the communists fought against was not the practice of propaganda, but rather a matter of replacing one propaganda with another, whether despotism, Western liberalism or Maoism. In that sense, propaganda as a form of governance was generally desirable and rarely challenged throughout Chinese history.

This Chinese characteristic form of governance has been gradually recognized in the field of contemporary China studies. Nevertheless, scholars unanimously tended to think of it as a new Propaganda maneuver of the CPC based on, again, the hegemonic Western model of Propaganda. Associating it with “cultural governance,” “cultural-cum-
“nationalist propaganda,” or “cultural nationalism,” Perry (2013) describes the propaganda practice as the strategic deployment of symbolic resources by the Party to deal with its legitimacy crisis in post-1989 years. In a weblog post, Cheek (2016) has pointed out that the “Chinese model of propaganda” is the way China works. Cheek pushes the date back, but not any further, seeing the Chinese model as an invention and later, a tradition of the Party. While this may explain, to some degree, why propaganda matters so much to the CPC leaders, it cannot explain why propaganda also matters so much to the Chinese public. For example, why have Chinese netizens taken television propaganda dramas featuring the Chinese Civil War and the Anti-Japanese War so seriously that they kept demanding stricter censorship from the government to filter out dramatic martial arts sequences and lengthy sexual scenes? For the sake of entertainment, these scenes are exactly what television dramas are all about. Likewise, why did millions of Chinese tourists choose Red Tourism at the time when their capacity for travelling freely was so high? And why is their Red Tourism experience markedly positive? These questions cannot be explained by a theory of brainwashing. Nor is the explanation of a political party’s strategy sufficient. This becomes even more confusing and problematic as the debate on the distinction between propaganda and journalism in Chinese academia and among media practitioners continues.

The Chinese characteristic way of mass communication

The Chinese see journalism quite differently. For them, the role of the press is not merely an information-provider, but more importantly, an intelligent guide. If professional journalism in the US can be characterized by a balanced model, the Chinese
model of journalism can be, in my view, identified with a “biased” mode. But bias, like many terms in Communication Study, is highly misleading. For one thing, bias only exists by comparison with other biases. In that sense, balance in professional journalism is, too, a bias. For another, as communication scholar Dan Schiller has spelled out in his lecture (personal communication, 2013), there are bad biases and there are also some good biases. For example, the bias of some races being inferior to others versus the bias that the world would eventually become perfect and everyone is happy. For Chinese journalists, the ultimate goal of professional journalism is to propagate good “biases,” not to balance good ones with bad ones. But judging what is good or bad is both moral and ideological. It is the sort of capacity that a Chinese journalist is believed to need to produce good journalism. Therefore, journalists themselves play a decisive role in this “biased” model, not their professionalism. The audience expects that journalists would show their good judgment with which they can chose to agree or disagree. Balanced journalism without a marked “bias” is usually interpreted as insignificant to political discourse. Chinese newsworkers never tend to hide the propaganda nature of their work. *The MetroExpress* (城市快报), a metropolitan daily newspaper of the news group I used to work in, proudly claims in its publicity that the newspaper is “to influence those who have the greater influence.”

The “biased model” grew out of a cultural tradition in China. Neither was it a result of the Party’s media politics, nor did it stem from a particular journalistic practice in China. It originated from a shared tradition with other Chinese cultural forms, as I have argued here and there, that are largely aimed at mass ideological education for social integration. This tradition remains so deeply ingrained in today’s Chinese culture industry.
that it became a robust criterion for evaluating a cultural product. The ideological function can be enshrined to an unbearable degree. For example, xiao-pin (小品) a very popular form of humorous TV show intended to make people laugh, oftentimes are designated for the opposite, trying so hard to make the audience cry. The rationale is that the sad storyline is believed to be more ideologically evocative than the entertaining one. In other words, tears would teach people much more than laughter. Tourism is another case. Like their ancestors, many contemporary Chinese tourists still hold the ideology of serious tourism: that good tourism should be serious and well thought out for people’s self-improvement. And Red Tourism, for better or worse, is a perfect match; the subject of Red Tourism is serious and tourists take it seriously.

Another way, perhaps, a more intelligent way, to say the “biased” model is to rephrase it as the xuanchuan/propaganda model. Historically, Chinese journalism originated from propaganda and was aimed for propaganda. Starting in the early 1900s, Chinese newspapers became a propaganda tool for various active political groups, namely, the reformists, the revolutionaries, and the constitutionalists in the course of China’s political modernization (Fang, 2000). Shibao (时报) is a good example. Instead of subverting the Qing government and overthrowing the imperial regime by violence, Liang Qichao found the propaganda power of the press, creating Shibao, a daily newspaper in 1904 in Shanghai. Not only did Shibao propagate a constitutional reform agenda, but it also promoted a sort of modern lifestyle. Nevertheless, the reformist newspapermen did not stand against Confucianism as some supposed. Rather, as Judge (1996) has pointed out, they “infused the Confucian tradition with new elements and transformed foreign ideas to conform to familiar cultural constructs” (p.4). In other
words, what they did was to mobilize Confucianism for their own political agenda. Does this practice remind you of the rise of the Confucius Institute lately?

Sadly, the long-lasting debate on the relationship between journalism and xuanchuan/propaganda in China and enduring propaganda research on contemporary China in the West excluded a very important chapter of the Chinese culture of propaganda. In China, the hope of creating what some early Chinese scholars called “propagandism” or “science of propaganda” was dashed by the hegemonic Western model of journalism alongside the hegemonic Western model of propaganda. In a major Chinese scholarly work on propaganda, Liu Hailong (2013) names the American model of propaganda—marked by public relations, crisis management, and spokesmanship—the “scientific model” (p.5), which he thinks that China should adopt. Coincidentally, balanced journalism has gained some currency in Chinese journalism students and some elite news media, even though the legitimacy of the golden rule of balance in Western professional journalism has been continuously questioned by journalism scholars in the West, whether referring to it as “addiction” (Nerone, 2015) or “strategic ritual” (Tuchman, 1972). Nevertheless, the spirit of Chinese journalism, which rose from a much longer Chinese literary tradition emphasizing the propagation of morals and virtues, still holds Chinese journalists together. Mainland Chinese journalists calling themselves “the ones doing propaganda work” can only be explained in this spirit of journalism.

It is this deep-seated belief in the benevolent power of xuanchuan/propaganda that persisted down through the centuries in China in spite of, almost in defiance of, the prevalence of the malevolent power of Propaganda. It is also because of this belief that each day millions of Chinese tourists follow the Red routes in the hope of gaining
insights for making better sense of the past, the future, and perhaps more importantly, the link between the two.

In this digital age marked by the universal ideology of trendy and ubiquitous swarming followers on the Internet, the brand of “propaganda state” is no longer exclusive to China or a handful of other sovereign states. Never was propaganda so pervasive in everyday life in human history as today. Like how the Chinese see propaganda, it always cuts two ways: more possible democratic communication yet more controllable.
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