

The Chinese Portrayal of the Korean Peninsula in the Resisting America and Assisting Korea Literature of the 1950s*

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ABSTRACT

When the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) first resolved to wage the “Resisting America and Assisting Korea” (RAAK) campaign, lack of acquaintance with or a negative perception of North Korea among the Chinese populace constituted the biggest impediment to social mobilization for the war effort. Therefore the CCP used literature and art as propaganda tools to shape politics, ideology, and the collective will in favor of the RAAK war. By accentuating the relationship between China and North Korea as being as close as that of “lips and teeth,” RAAK literature reaffirmed the importance of assisting North Korea. Moreover, the technique of binary opposition was employed in a narrative of North Koreans and North Korean society versus South Koreans and South Korean society, reshaping the Chinese perception of the Korean peninsula in the early 1950s.

Keywords: Korean War, Resisting America and Assisting Korea, Cold War, *chunwang chihan*, *Gaoli bangzi*, RAAK literature

Introduction

On the morning of June 25, 1950, the Korean War (1950-1953) broke out when the North Korean People’s Army unexpectedly launched an all-out offensive against South Korea. In the afternoon of June 27, 1950, three days after the eruption of the war, US President Harry S. Truman decided to dispatch armed forces to aid South Korea and issued an order to deploy the US Navy’s Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait. On the evening of the same day, the UN Security Council approved the US plan to provide assistance to South Korea, including military aid. On July 7, the US Security Council also approved the resolution authorizing the US to appoint a commander for the UN forces. After landing at Inchön, the UN forces made a rapid northward advance and crossed the 38th parallel, threatening the Chinese border with North Korea. On October 8, the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter CCP) made the decision to dispatch the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army (hereafter CPVA) to Korea. On October 26, one day after the CPVA entered the Korean War, the CCP issued the directive to launch the *Kangmeiyuanchao* (抗美援朝; Resisting America and Assisting Korea, hereafter RAAK) campaign to secure a victory in the war.

As the largest patriotic movement after the People’s Republic of China (hereafter PRC) was founded, the RAAK campaign has significant implications for

China's contemporary history and consequently has attracted increasing attention from academia. Existing literature can be categorized into five types. First, studies that focus on social mobilization for the RAAK campaign, as represented by Chinese scholar Hou Songtao, whose studies are the most profound and comprehensive. Hou (2005; 2012) systematically explores the cause, propagation, and progress of the RAAK campaign by analyzing the shift in public mentality before and after its launch. Second are studies that center on the living conditions of women during the RAAK campaign, as represented by Im Ugyōng's essay (2009) that deals with the transformation and significance of Chinese women becoming active citizens during the *Aiguo gongyue yundong* (愛國公約運動; the Patriotism Pledge Movement). In recent years, Japanese academics have also started to pay attention to the subject of Chinese women during the RAAK campaign. In 2014, the Japanese journal *Ajia gendai joseishi* (アジア現代女性史; Study of Contemporary Asian Women's History) published a special collection titled *Kōbienchō jidai no Chūgoku joseishi* (抗美援朝時代の中国女性史; History of Chinese Women in the Era of Resisting America and Assisting Korea), which focuses on Chinese women during the RAAK period. The third category includes studies that tackle the Chinese perception of the world during this time. Scholars such as Yang Yusheng (1996), Zhang Jishun (1999), Li Gang (2005), Lu Xun (2012), and Im Ugyōng (2011) have all explored, from various dimensions, the construction, significance, and impact of the Chinese imagination of the USA during the RAAK period. The fourth category consists of studies that analyze the formation of national consciousness, as represented by Sa Zhishan (2014), who examines the process of individuals assimilating into collectives that gave birth to national consciousness by studying several propaganda campaigns during the RAAK period. Finally, the fifth category includes studies of the RAAK impact on domestic politics. South Korean scholar Kim Okchun (2002; 2008) provides keen insights into the impact RAAK propaganda had on China's domestic politics in the 1950s through an in-depth study of the campaign. Generally, the aforementioned literature has been largely free from ideological constraints and has manifested a high level of critical consciousness and intellectual integrity, serving as a solid theoretical basis for further RAAK studies.

Unlike previous studies, this paper will focus on the formation of the Chinese portrayal of the Korean Peninsula in the early 1950s as well as its effects. In 1950, when the RAAK campaign unfolded, the Korean Peninsula captured the attention of the Chinese people. It was during this process that Chinese people's old views of the peninsula were erased and replaced by a new collective imagination and new perceptions. In the following six decades, this understanding of the Korean Peninsula has been constantly refreshed by books, films, and commemorations of the war, and still influences China's approach to Korean affairs. Therefore, studies on the creation process of the Chinese portrayal of the Korean Peninsula during the RAAK period and its uniqueness will greatly facilitate our understanding of today's relationships between China and North and South Korea.

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While based on an extensive collection of various kinds of literature, this paper focuses on the creation of RAAK literature, and specifically refers to the themes of the patriotism, internationalism, and heroism of the Chinese people and the CPVA in the period following the start of the RAAK war. RAAK literature can be divided into two types: 1) propaganda-motivated literary and artistic works mostly created within China to target workers and peasants, presented through various folk art forms, such as ballads, folk songs, Yangko opera, and Big Drum Storytelling; and 2) war literature created by war writers or correspondents who had made field visits to the battlefield, as represented by Ba Jin (1904-2005), Lao She (1899-1966), and Lu Ling (1923-1994). Since the new PRC lacked hi-tech communications tools, RAAK literature was not only tasked with a propaganda mission,¹ but was also considered “the most popular form of mobilization” (CFLAC Research Office 1951, 3).

Although the quality of the RAAK literature is mixed, it has profoundly influenced and shaped Chinese people’s mentality and sentiments over the past six decades. In particular, ideological messages present in the RAAK literature remain valuable for our understanding of the cultural context of the early 1950s. Therefore, this paper, unlike others that solely focus on the study of texts,² will look at the creation of this special genre of literature as a result of the war, as well as its impact on society through the lens of the sociology of literature. Moreover, this study of the RAAK literature will also help us understand its special context and significance, and how it shaped the Chinese perception of the Korean Peninsula in the early 1950s.

The Unique Nature of the War and the Need to Stress the Importance of Assisting North Korea

Following the end of World War II, the USA-USSR conflict intensified. Their wartime alliance was superseded by an escalating Cold War that finally resulted in bitter confrontations between the socialist and capitalist camps. During the Cold War, due to its strategic location in northeast Asia, the Korean Peninsula became the main battlefield for these two ideological opponents. After its division along the 38th parallel, the USA-USSR conflict exerted a profound influence on the peninsula

¹ Chang Bin (2007) conducted a detailed study of the birth of RAAK literature by analyzing relevant newspapers, magazines, and other literature. By reading her publications, we have come to realize that the creation of RAAK literature had reached an unprecedented level in the 1950s.

² In China, Chang Bin (2007; 2009; 2010; 2012; 2013; 2014), Hui Yanbing (2007), Yan Li’na (2010), and Li Zonggang (2005; 2007) have published papers in this field. In addition, some South Korean scholars have conducted research into this subject, including: Pak Chaeu (2003), Kim Myŏnghŭi (2006), Cho Taeho (2002; 2007), Yi Yŏnggu (2007; 2008; 2009; 2010), Kim Sohŏn (2011), and Kim Houng (2011). These academics mostly focus their research on the texts of Korean War-themed literary works of famous Chinese writers. Therefore, they failed to realize the importance of public sentiment and its impact in the creation of RAAK literature and thus lost the opportunity to reinterpret the RAAK literature and other works created by Chinese writers from 1949 to 1966. Their failure to interpret RAAK literature from a Cold War perspective also led to the failure to study its political nature from a macro-perspective. While the ideological attributes of the RAAK war are still being reproduced and consumed by various kinds of media through different channels, the interpretation of RAAK literature from a Cold War perspective will add more dimensions to the study of literary works created at that time.

and its people. In 1948, when the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were founded, the originally unified Korean nation broke into two states, giving birth to two mutually hostile regimes that often quarreled over unification and who should rule the country. In this context, armed conflicts near the 38th parallel increasingly escalated (Chōng Byōngjun 2006, 203-59), portending an internecine war. Finally, with the approval and support of Joseph Stalin, as well as the acquiescence of Mao Zedong (Zhu Jianrong 2005, 66), Kim Il Sung ordered the People's Army to cross the 38th Parallel in the early morning of June 25, 1950, starting an all-out war with South Korea. After the outbreak of the war, the USA immediately reacted and entered the war with forces organized in the name of the United Nations. Confronted with a UN army that ignored China's warning and continuously advanced northward beyond the 38th Parallel, the CCP Central Committee finally decided to send the CPVA into the war (Zhu Jianrong 2005, 257). On October 25, four months after the start of the Korean War, the first battle fought by the CPVA on the Korean Peninsula marked the start of the RAAK war.

The RAAK war was different from any war that had been fought by China. From the perspective of the newborn PRC, this was not only a defensive war China had to fight to protect its new government, but was also a grueling test of a weak China against a powerful enemy. Defeat could endanger the newly-established communist rule, potentially leading to its overthrow. However, despite this risk, China had to enter the war and honor its international obligation as a member of the socialist camp (Shen Zhihua 2010, 51). Once the CCP decided to intervene, it had to deal with the practical issue of how to ensure victory.

However, at the start of the RAAK war the Chinese public showed mixed sentiments. Although some were fairly vocal about supporting China's entry into the war, an overwhelming majority of Chinese people were passive in attitude. This situation was further complicated by a pervasive fear and apathy with regard to the war as well as a widespread friendliness, admiration, or fear towards the USA (Hou Songtao 2005, 19). Another hurdle to RAAK mobilization was Chinese people's unfamiliarity with Korea or their unfavorable opinion towards it. Historical records show that a large portion of the Chinese populace had no idea of Korea's geographical location even after the start of the RAAK campaign. Beliefs such as "Korea is located to the southwest of China," "Korea is part of China," and "Korea is one of China's nine northeastern provinces" were not only common among the general public, some CCP members also believed that "Korea is part of China, roughly located in our south" (Fang Jie 1951, 130-31). At the same time, even the minority who did have some knowledge of Korea had a low opinion of it. On November 8, 1950, the People's Daily published an editorial, "*Yuanchao Zhengshi Weile Fandui Gaoli bangzi*" ("援朝 正是為了反對 '高麗棒子': Assisting Korea is to Fight against the Gaoli bangzi), to dispel the confusion expressed by a reader named Wang Kun in his letter to the newspaper:

I have my own opinion about the RAAK campaign. I think it is necessary to resist America because it is an invader, but I don't support assisting Korea because when imperialist Japan invaded China, many Koreans joined the Japanese to bully the Chinese. Chinese people

called these Koreans *Gaoli bangzi* and hated them as much as they hated the Japanese. Now Americans are waging a war in Korea. Isn't it a good opportunity to teach Koreans a lesson? Why should we provide assistance to them? (1950)

Wang Kun could understand the CCP's resistance against America because it threatened its security, but he did not favor the idea of assisting Korea, as "many Koreans joined the Japanese" to intimidate Chinese people during Japan's invasion of China. He referred to Koreans as *Gaoli bangzi*, a term historically used by Chinese people as a derogatory reference to Koreans (*Gaoli* 高麗 means Korea in Chinese, while *bangzi* 棒子 means "stick" and generally refers to thin pole-like things). Its origin is open to debate, but this term reflects Chinese people's negative historical view of the people from the Korean Peninsula (Huang Puji 2012). As Wang Kun wrote, Chinese people's unfavorable perception of Koreans in the 1950s was closely associated with Japan's invasion of China earlier in the 20th century. The anti-Chinese riots in Korea in 1927 and the subsequent Wanpaoshan Incident in 1931³ also contributed to shape the Chinese view of Koreans, which was further aggravated by the involvement of a minority of Koreans in Japan's policy of selling opium. Wang's letter shows that after the PRC was founded, Chinese people's traumatized memories did not change as a result of the formation of a new geopolitical order. Most Chinese did not know that the Korea they remembered had been divided into two opposing states. Therefore, these historical negative sentiments towards Korea became a major obstacle to the CCP's RAAK campaign (Sun Hailong 2011, 168).

In his classic work *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, Harold D. Lasswell (1902-1977) underscores the critical importance in war of fueling hatred towards enemies, maintaining friendly ties with allied and neutral nations, and undermining the morale of enemies (1938). Thus, the widespread negative perception of North Korea among the Chinese public would certainly be detrimental to the PRC's efforts to emphasize its friendship with its ally, harming its war effort. Therefore, the CCP had to urgently address Chinese people's ignorance of the Korean Peninsula and reconstruct the public perception of North and South Korea through a propaganda campaign. Thus, one of the CCP's top priorities was to unsparingly reiterate the importance of assisting Korea while developing anti-American sentiment through the "*Sanshijiaoyu*" (三視教育; Three Viewpoints Education) campaign.

Literature and Art in the RAAK Campaign and the North Korean Narrative

To address domestic negative sentiment towards the RAAK campaign, the CCP Central Committee issued *Guanyu zai quanguo jinxing shishi xuanchuan de zhishi* (Directive on Carrying out Nationwide Propaganda on Current Events) on October 26, 1950. This directive mandated that official propaganda should serve

³ For more on the Wanpaoshan Incident in 1931, see Michael Kim, "The Hidden Impact of the 1931 Post-Wanpaoshan Riots: Credit Risk and the Chinese Commercial Network in Colonial Korea," *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* 10, no. 2: 209-27.

two principal purposes. First, the message must reach the public that the PRC “should not keep its hands off of America’s intensifying invasion into Korea.” Secondly, “the reactionary pro-American sentiment as well as the irrational fear of America must be thoroughly eradicated” in order to universally promote an anti-American mentality. In terms of publicity tools, the directive further points out that “communities dedicated to literature, art, and publication should produce large volumes of literary and artistic works and leaflets to meet publicity needs” (CCP Central Committee Party Literature Research Office 2011, 381). Because of the CCP’s efforts, as in the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the Liberation War (1945-1949), art and literature were once again turned into an important propaganda tool for social mobilization.

Literary and art communities responded positively to this directive. On October 28, 1950, three days after the CPVA entered the Korean War, the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (CFLAC) issued a call to all literary and art workers to take part in the RAAK publicity campaign and established the CFLAC’s Resisting America and Assisting Korea Publicity Committee. In *Guanyu wenyijie zhankai kangmeiyuanchao xuanchuan yundong de haozhao* (The Call for Literary and Art Circles to Participate in RAAK Propaganda), the CFLAC emphasized that literary and art communities should support and participate in the RAAK campaign. In terms of means, the CFLAC proposed to “mobilize writers to increase publicity by creating such works as poems, plays, essays, dramas, movies, reports, novels, and songs,” adding that “literary and art newspapers and magazines from around the whole country should frequently and systematically publish RAAK-themed articles and works,” and that “literary and art groups and troupes from around the whole country should act to propagate RAAK in rural communities, factories, and the military” (1950). Consequently, under the leadership of the CFLAC, Chinese literary and art professionals started to engage in a nationwide propaganda campaign in support of the RAAK war.

During the three years of the RAAK war, literary and artistic RAAK activities were generally carried out on two fronts: first, a large number of propaganda-driven literary and artistic works were created. According to the *Kangmeiyuanchao wenyi xuanchuan de chubu zongjie* (Preliminary Summary of Literary and Artistic RAAK Propaganda) that was published in March 1951, a total of 7,469 pieces of literary and art works had been completed in a number of cities, including Dalian and Lüshun, during the three months from November 1950 to February 1951. In just one month, from November 3 to December 5, 1950, artists and writers in Shanghai alone had presented or published 819 pieces of literary and art works with RAAK themes. Apart from professional writers and artists, amateur young workers and students also joined the propaganda campaign by producing creative works, including literature, operas, paintings, films, and music (CFLAC Research Office 1951, 3). Second, writers were dispatched to the front lines to seek inspiration for their creations. During the RAAK war, a large number of writers had been assigned to North Korean battlefronts by the CFLAC in collaboration with government bodies. They generally visited North Korea in three roles: war correspondents, such as Yang Shuo (1913-1968), An E (1905-1976), Yuan Jing (1914-1999), and Shu Qun

(1913-1989); delegates of the Committee of Chinese People to Defend World Peace and Resist American Aggression, such as Huang Yaomian (1903-1987), Huang Guliu (1908-1977), and Lao She; and writing team members who visited to gain life experience, such as Ba Jin, Lu Ling, and Han Zi (1921-2003). Such battlefield visits lasted throughout the Korean War after CPVA intervention and even continued after it was over.

After the launch of the RAAK campaign, the North Korean narrative that highlighted Sino-North Korean friendship became an essential component of literature. In December 1950, Chen Huangmei (1913-1996), Deputy Head of Propaganda in Wuhan, published a speech entitled *Kaizhan kangmeiyuanchao de chuangzuo yundong* (Propagating the Creative Campaign for Resisting America and Assisting Korea), in which he pointed out that the “defining feature” of literary and art practitioners “should be to create for the purpose of resisting America and assisting North Korea” (1951, 1). He believed that creative activities should center on morale-boosting themes, such as “the bravery of Chinese and Korean peoples in the Anti-Japanese War and the People’s Liberation War as well as today’s North Korean People’s Army fighting alongside the CPVA,” “exposing and revealing the evils and atrocities of American imperialism,” “good military practices,” “military-civilian friendship,” “eradication of spies and mobsters,” “economic development,” and “workers contributing to improved production” (1951, 3). This was one of the earliest articles addressing the content of RAAK-themed literary works. Once published, this speech immediately garnered wide attention. The themes proposed by Chen had a strong resonance with RAAK propaganda and were approached as the framework and source of content for RAAK-oriented literary creation. Consequently, it had become a political responsibility for writers visiting North Korea to promote, in their literary and art works, the friendship forged by Chinese and North Korean peoples in the Anti-Japanese War and the People’s Liberation War, the close collaboration between the CPVA and the North Korean People’s Army, and the amicable relationship between the CPVA and the North Korean civilian populace.

Travelling to a battlefield during a war is extremely dangerous. However, this was a shared aspiration among Chinese writers, who felt that battlefield experience could profoundly transform them, especially among those writers who wished to keep abreast of the times and continue to write after the foundation of the PRC. Following the first National Conference on Art and Literature in July 1949, artists and writers were required to follow Chairman Mao’s directive of “creating art and literature for the people” (*Zhonghua quanguo wenxue yishu gongzuozhe daibiaodahui xuanchuan*, 144). However, most writers who originally lived in nationalist-ruled areas found it difficult to adjust themselves to these new requirements. Therefore, they had to change their mindsets to adapt to the new political environment as they searched for career opportunities. In this context, hands-on battlefield experience would represent invaluable opportunities for self-transformation.

Faced with his new assignment in Korea, Ba Jin was distressed by his lack of field experience and skills. In a letter to his wife Xiao Shan, he expressed his hope

to visit North Korea, “I think I’d better go to North Korea as a training experience that would also be beneficial for self-transformation” (2003, 356). Lu Ling had a long-held wish to experience the Korean battlefield. He had been obsessed with his lack of war adventures, believing that “a writer who has never experienced a war can hardly express the grandeur of this war,” which is “the strength of those who come from the old liberated areas” (Zhang Yesong 1997, 102). With a desire for self-transformation, these writers arrived at the front lines of the Korean War and completed a number of literary works that were immensely influential across Chinese society, including *Sanqianli jiangshan* (Country of 3,000 Li), *Wuming gaodi youle ming* (The Unknown Uplands Become Known), *Chuxue* (First Snow), *Wadi shang de zhanyi* (Struggle in a Hollow), *Shangganling* (Shangganling), and *Shuishhi zui ke’ai de ren* (Who Is the Most Lovable Person?). It is the North Korean narrative in these literary works, which was reinforced by domestic literary and artistic propaganda, that shaped Chinese people’s perception of the Korean Peninsula in the early 1950s.

The Lips-Teeth Relationship with North Korea and the Absence of South Korea

On December 18, 1950, the Shanghai Yulan Opera Troupe staged *Prince Xinling*, a historical play based on *Hufu* (虎符; literally Tiger Tally, a small metal tiger given to the commander of an army in ancient China to show his authority), a drama written by Guo Moruo. *Prince Xinling* tells the story of how during the Warring States Period Lord Xinling of the Kingdom of Wei stole the tiger tally from the King, and used it to take command of an army of 100,000 to rescue his neighboring state, the Kingdom of Zhao, from invasion by the Kingdom of Qin. The in-law relationship described between the Kingdoms of Wei and Zhao in the play echoed the “blood” relationship between China and Korea that had been reaffirmed since the start of the RAAK campaign. The phrase *chunwang chihan* (唇亡齒寒; “when the lips are gone, the teeth will get cold,” an idiom that is often used by the Chinese to describe an interdependent relationship) characterized the relationship between the Kingdoms of Wei and Zhao, but also reflected the actual connection between China and North Korea at that time. It is said that this play was understood in this way and enthusiastically received, achieving phenomenal success in Shanghai. Thanks to this play, many audiences came to appreciate the interdependence of “lips” and “teeth” and showed more interest in the RAAK campaign (Lu Hanwen 2005, 25-26). Following the success of *Prince Xinling*, a nationwide wave of adapting the *Biography of Lord Xinling* swept through the theatrical community (Wang Zhaoqi and Zhang Luxian 1951, 1).

In fact, highlighting the lips-teeth relationship of China and the Korean Peninsula during the RAAK campaign was no coincidence. Based on geopolitical considerations, ancient China used to divide its territory into four zones: core zone, frontier zone, buffer zone, and territorial border zone. As the Korean Peninsula borders China, it has been traditionally treated as a territorial border zone and thus considered the “lips” for China’s “teeth,” protecting the security of China’s northeast and interior (Sō Sang-mun 2006, 31). In the early 1900s, seeing the annexation of the Korean Empire by Japan, a Chinese scholar warned, “After the

fall of Korea comes the fall of Manchuria; after the fall of Manchuria comes the rise of Japan in the interior. I'm afraid that Great China will be colonized by that small island country" (Dai Jitao 1990, 31).

At the start of the RAAK war, the metaphor of the lips-teeth relationship between China and the Korean Peninsula, which was an important foundation for social mobilization, was again revived. However, its context had changed. As a result of escalating Soviet and US tensions, the Korean Peninsula had been separated into two confrontational states: socialist North Korea under the USSR's umbrella and capitalist South Korea under American protection. Thus, although the entire Korean Peninsula geographically remained the "lips" for China's security, in practice, only socialist North Korea fulfilled that role. Subsequently, in the Chinese imagination of the Sino-North Korean lips-teeth relationship in the early 1950s, South Korea, which was an ideological opponent, naturally lost its legitimacy and was reduced to a puppet state. Its ruling class, as represented by Syngman Rhee, was mercilessly condemned through the use of morally offensive terms, including "Syngman Rhee's mobsters," the "South Korean puppet government," and the "running dogs of imperialist America." This portrayal was not only associated with the PRC's refusal to recognize the Republic of Korea, but also attributed to its foreign policy of "Yibiandao" (一邊倒: leaning to one side). It also merits attention that, as noted by Adam Cathcart, the Chinese perception of its new enemy, the USA, and its lips-teeth relationship with the peninsula during this period, partially overlaps with its traumatized memories of Japan annexing Korea as a stepping stone to invade China (2010).

In the poem *Buneng zuoshi buli* (We Must Not Stand By), poet Sha'ou (1922-1994) expressed, in extremely direct language, how he imagined the Sino-North Korean lips-teeth relationship in the early 1950s:

*The American aggressor
Jumping on us like a crazy dog
Threatening our security with its bloody mouth
...
This crazy dog
Which has bared its fangs, with saliva dripping
Is attacking us brutally from North Korea
...
The American aggressor is about to annex North Korea
Vietnam
And then us
...
The destiny of North Korea is closely linked with ours
We must assist North Korea
Protect the motherland
While America is invading North Korea
We must not
Stand by (1950, 50-52)*

In his poem *Ba fanghuo de qiangdao shaosi zai huoli* (Burn Fire-Setting Robbers Alive in the Fire), Shi Qian writes using a similar tone and metaphor:

The fire set by the murderer
The fire set by the American aggressor
It is burning North Korea
It is burning China
It is burning Asia
It is using the bodies of peaceful people
To fill a money bag swollen like an abscess (1951, 43)

In these two poems, the USA is likened to a “crazy dog” or a “murderer.” By using such offensive terms, the poets mercilessly attacked the USA’s aggressive nature. Also, through the repetition of such content as “This crazy dog...is attacking us brutally from North Korea,” “The American aggressor is annexing North Korea, Vietnam, and us,” and “It is burning North Korea; it is burning China; it is burning Asia,” the poets vividly present to readers the new Sino-North Korean geopolitical relationship that was formed in the Cold War context. Furthermore, by painting the USA as a crazy dog baring its fangs with saliva dripping and ready to attack China from North Korea, the poem transfers the public hatred of Japan to the USA, while indirectly engraving in people’s minds the lips-teeth relationship between China and North Korea. Due to such propaganda, the belief was encouraged that China must protect North Korea in order to preserve its territorial integrity and political interests, while South Korea was erased from the map of the Korean Peninsula and became the other.

“Old Comrades” that Are as Close as “Flesh and Blood” vs. “Gaoli Bangzi” who Are Cunning and Treacherous

After World War II and the occupation of the Korean Peninsula in the north by the Soviet Union and the south by the United States, the two regions of what had once been the same country eventually drifted apart and by 1948 had developed into two states governed by opposing ideologies. With the concurrent existence of two different regimes in the north and south of the same peninsula, China inevitably had to reconstruct the public imagination of North and South Korea based on their political orientations while stepping up efforts to accentuate the Sino-North Korean lips-teeth relationship. During this process, class theory was used as the means to differentiate the Syngman Rhee regime from the Korean populace.

In 1951, the book series *Gongchang wenyi xizuo congshu* (Guide to Literature and Art for Factories), whose chief editor was A Ying (1900-1977), was published. The book series incorporated *Zheshi shihou le* (It’s Time), a one-act play written by Bao Chang (1930-1989) that tells how after the eruption of the Korean War a young man by the name of Yang Shihua volunteered to join the CPVA as a token of gratitude for North Korean assistance during China’s Anti-Japanese War. The content of this play was not extraordinary among the works of literature and art created for propaganda purposes, but its description of the shift in Yang Shihua’s

perception of the family of Kim Chunhwa, a North Korean girl who together with her parents migrates to the village where Yang Shihua lives, is noteworthy. Initially, Yang Shihua is extremely mean to Kim Chunhwa because of her North Korean origin. However, familiarity with Kim leads Yang to a change of gear.

Yang: I was hostile to you. Dad used to tell me, "Migrants from Korea are all Japanese underlings. They seize Chinese land. None of them are good people."

Kim: We often got into fights, still remember?

Yang: Things changed later. I saw with my own eyes that you were also suffering as much as we did. Your dad was also a peasant, unlike the Japanese who forcibly occupied our land. He also had to reclaim farmland and work very hard, rain or shine.

Kim: We North Koreans were bullied by the Japanese as much as you Chinese (52)

When Yang Shihua discovered that Chunhwa's father was also an impoverished peasant, his attitude changed dramatically and he became increasingly friendly to her. For Yang, "Japanese underlings" and Koreans "who seize Chinese land" are the same as what Wang Kun called *Gaoli bangzi* above. The shift in Yang's attitude towards Kim's family reveals that whether Koreans were *Gaoli bangzi* or poor peasants largely determined whether they could be considered friend or foe. Deprived peasants were regarded as friends of China, while *Gaoli bangzi* were foes.

As the general public widely perceived all Koreans as Japanese underlings, it was crucial for the Chinese government to draw a clear line between *Gaoli bangzi* and ordinary Korean people. In fact, the *People's Daily* began publishing articles to reverse this negative perception as early as the very beginning of the RAAK campaign. In the article "To Assist Korea is to Fight against *Gaoli bangzi*," an editor from the *People's Daily* defined *Gaoli bangzi* and "the Korean people represented by General Kim Il Sung" as two opposing classes. While characterizing the Syngman Rhee regime as *Gaoli bangzi*, the article also underscored the long friendship between "the Korean people represented by General Kim Il Sung" and China. It further explained that *Gaoli bangzi*, like "the mobsters headed by Chiang Kai-shek," transformed from running dogs of imperialist Japan to underlings of imperialist America after the former's surrender. Therefore, *Gaoli bangzi* are the common enemy of both China and North Korea and the purpose of the RAAK is to exterminate them (Wang Kun 1950). In a subsequent article published a short time later, "Chaoxian renmin xinmuzhong de *Gaoli bangzi*" (*Gaoli bangzi* in the Eyes of North Koreans), the nature of *Gaoli bangzi* in relation to imperialist Japan and America is further defined from the perspective of North Koreans. The article stresses that "North Korean people were also oppressed by *Gaoli bangzi*, as Chinese people were once persecuted by the Kuomintang-led mobsters, traitors, and running dogs of Japan," and that "Any *Gaoli bangzi* that sells opium used to be a running dog of Japan and is now an underling of imperialist America" (Lu Niangao, 1950). While branding the Syngman Rhee regime as *Gaoli bangzi*, both

articles constructed the same identity for *Gaoli bangzi* and “mobsters headed by Chiang Kai-shek,” a tactic that shrewdly identified the Syngman Rhee regime with the hostile camp of the Chiang Kai-shek-led bandits and Japanese and American imperialists, while characterizing “the Korean people represented by General Kim Il Sung” as an ally. In this way, the object of China’s assistance was clarified and the derogatory term *Gaoli bangzi* was made synonymous with South Korea.

While differentiating North Korea from the *Gaoli bangzi*, China also established the concept of a Sino-North Korean friendship forged over the shared experience of war as a focal point of propaganda. In Yang Shuo’s *Country of 3,000 Li, Yalujiang nanbei an* (South and North of the Yalu River) and *Shangwei tongzhi* (Comrade Captain), Wei Wei’s (1920-2008) *Chaoxian tongzhi* (North Korean Comrade) and *Yongshi zhenshou zai dongfang* (A Brave Man Guarding the East), Liu Baiyu’s (1916-2005) *Xue ye* (Snowy Night), Zhang Haimo’s (1923-1968) *Tupo Linjinjiang* (Breakthrough on the Imjin River), and other literary works, we can read of North Korean servicemen being called “old comrades” by CPVA soldiers. Moreover, these North Korean soldiers in novels usually shared similar experiences and features: they grew up during China’s revolution, were fluent in Chinese, and were skilled in Chinese military tactics. In *Country of 3,000 Li*, when Wu Zhen first met An Kyuwon, he was amazed at An’s knowledge and understanding of Yan’an. After a detailed inquiry, he found out that An Kyuwon was once a member of the Korean volunteers who joined Chinese soldiers in fighting the Anti-Japanese War and the War of Liberation. He also discovered that An had participated in the Yan’an Rectification Movement and *Yaodong* (house cave) construction, and had even heard Chairman Mao giving speeches. To An, Yan’an was his second hometown (Yang Shuo 1953, 31). In *Snowy Night*, the first-person narrator is astonished at Park Yongtae’s fluency in Chinese. When asked how he came to be so fluent, Park unbuttoned his coat, revealing two commemorative medals: the North Korean Gold-Star Hero Medal and the Chinese Liberation of the Northeast Commemorative Medal. The latter medal immediately revived memories of the War of Liberation in the narrator: “I thought of those days when we fought the war in the northeast, the scenes of the army advancing in the face of wind and snow, the endless road, the boundless fields, and those lonely white poplars...” (Liu Baiyu 1979, 278). In the RAAK literature, the shared memory and experience of “once fighting the same war and bleeding on the same battlefield” created an emotional bond between Chinese and Koreans and provided the moral justification for assisting North Korea. Moreover, this “blood relation” forged in war also stimulated Chinese people’s imagination of kinship between the CPVA and the North Korean populace.

Imagined Kinship with the Socialist-Ally North Korea versus a Class Perspective on USA-Colonized South Korea

As was mentioned earlier, while China was reconstructing the public perception of the Korean Peninsula’s history through literary and artistic propaganda, some Chinese writers, such as Ba Jin, were dispatched by the CFLAC to visit battlefields. After arriving in North Korea, they not only mingled with frontline CPVA soldiers,

but also interacted closely with North Korean civilians. At that time, most North Korean men had been drafted into the military; those who were left behind were nearly all women. Studies show that casualties inflicted by the war on North Korea were much higher than those suffered by South Korea, with up to 610,000 servicemen killed or injured (Chōn Kwanghūi 1992, 66). The book *Yalujiang gaosu ni* (Stories of the Yalu River), authored by Korean War veteran Sun Youjie (b. 1926), mentions that there occurred a severe gender imbalance in North Korea after the peninsula had been colonized by Japan and devastated by the Korean War (1995, 221). This imbalance was also reflected in the works of visiting Chinese writers who presented North Korea as an extremely feminine geographical space dominated by women: “Since the outbreak of the war, all the male adults that had not been killed bravely went to the frontlines. Those who were left behind were mostly industrious women, in addition to the elderly, sick, and disabled” (Bai Lang 1986, 143). Therefore, while eulogizing the heroic CPVA, another focus of the North Korean narrative in the RAAK literature was to glorify North Korean women.

Chinese writers did see the tears of North Korean women,⁴ but most female characters in their writings were tough and brave, as these writers were deeply aware of the political significance of the North Korean narrative. In their literary works, these women displayed great perseverance, making hard work their weapon. In *Banmendian qianxian sanji* (Random Notes from the Panmunjōm Front), Lu Ling writes, “Hearing shells whistling overhead, the old and young North Korean women who originally had been farming the land were fleeing together with a girl, aged seven or eight. They certainly belonged to three generations. They had been working on this land, where their home had been ruined by the enemy’s artillery fire, for the whole morning. They had removed the broken bricks and tiles from a small plot of land where they were about to grow vegetables. The old woman had been mixing the ashes of burned grass, while with her tender hands the little girl had been sprinkling the ashes into the small holes her mother had dug” (1981, 223). Yang Shuo also described such scenes. In *Chun zai Chaoxian* (Spring in North Korea), he depicted North Korean women and children being collectively organized to participate in farming activities, “Day and night, you could see groups of women with children on their backs pulling ploughs and sowing seeds. Behind them were rows of women, with their hands behind their backs, singing songs and covering the seeds with earth moved by their feet, as if they were dancing” (1951, 9). Through the portrayal of such scenes of North Korean women working, Chinese writers successfully presented a collective image of North Korean women who utilized their labor as a weapon and gradually grew into new socialists in the harsh environment of the war.

⁴ By comparing Ba Jin’s published works and the content of his diaries on the Korean War, Zhou Limin (2001) finds that there are certain discrepancies between how Chinese volunteers and North Korean women are described in his diaries and his published works. In fact, not all the volunteers that Ba Jin witnessed were as brave, selfless, and simple as he described. For instance, some Chinese injured themselves out of fear of the war. Similarly, not all North Korean women were tough and brave and hated their enemies. They would also fight against each other for food and cry over the death of their loved ones. Therefore, Zhou Limin believes that Ba Jin’s published works on the Korean War were self-censored due to the special circumstances of that era.

Under the pens of Chinese visiting writers, there exists a kind of kinship between these tough North Korean females and the foreign CPVA, and this kinship is based on “a friendship as close as flesh and blood.” During the Korean War, Ba Jin travelled to North Korea twice. During his two visits, he experienced hospitality like that of “a mother entertaining her son who has been long away from home.” From such hospitality, Ba Jin felt “the close kinship between us and North Korean parents, brothers, and sisters” and many years later this feeling still lingered in his memory.

Countless times I have dreamt of a figure dressed in white. Every time I think of my life in North Korea, I see in my mind's eye a mother or a sister-in-law dressed in white. It is these North Korean *ōmoni* (which means mom in Korean) that tie my heart to North Korea. Whether it was a scorching summer or a freezing winter, or whether it was in the impoverished countryside or neutral Kaesong, so many North Korean mothers treated me like their family member, providing me with shelter against rain and wind as well as favors. They would also heat the *kang* long before I went to sleep, for fear that I might catch a cold, not to mention their frequent visits to make sure all my needs were satisfied. Even in a small thatched hut, I felt as cozy as in my own home. (1979, 174)

In this essay *Chaoxian de meng* (My Dream of North Korea), written in 1960, Ba Jin emotionally confessed that in the depths of his heart there was a dream about North Korea in which he often saw a North Korean “mother” or “sister-in-law” dressed in white.

This imagined kinship is further accentuated in the literary description of the CPVA's every interaction with North Korean women. In *Struggle in a Hollow*, Lu Ling described a scene of the soldier Wang Yinghong helping an old North Korean woman and her daughter with their household chores:

He did much for her family. In the morning and evening he would carry water and if he had time after lunch, he would chop wood for the old woman. He was so natural in doing these things. He felt that life was difficult for this family. Since he lived in their home, he must be disturbing them from time to time. Although old, she still competed with them [the Chinese soldiers] to do their laundry. When he was doing these chores, she would hand him a cup of water or a towel, treating him like her own son.... (2009, 10)

The unit to which Wang Yinghong belonged was temporarily accommodated in the house of this old woman. “Her son was a member of the People's Army, and his wife had been killed in an air raid.” Now she only had a nineteen-year-old daughter living together with her. “The two had to work very hard on their farm.” After the CPVA came, the women would occasionally help them do their laundry, while CPVA soldiers would help them do household chores. Lu Ling's description of these small details of everyday life, the motherly love and care of a North Korean mother towards a Chinese son was communicated to readers, which further reinforced their idea that “China and North Korea are as close as members of the same family.”

The activities of Chinese writers during the war were strictly confined

within the areas controlled by the CPVA and the North Korean People's Army (Chang Bin 2007, 16). Except for a few writers, such as Li Zhuang (1918-2006), Yang Shuo, and Wei Wei, most correspondents and writers had never gone beyond Panmunjom or the 38th parallel. Except for the South Korean troops they had seen at the battlefield, they were almost completely isolated from South Korean society and its civilian populace. As a result, Chinese writers could hardly grasp the nature of the Korean War from a general standpoint or form a panoramic picture of the Korean Peninsula. In the limited narrative of the peninsula, South Korean society was painted as a living hell filled with "groans," "killings," "punishments," and "exploitation."

The story *Zhanzheng weile heping* (War for Peace) is set in a South Korean village near the 38th parallel, home to a small number of peasants and a landlord by the name of Kim Yun. Kim Yun was a middle-aged bald man in his forties, "dressed in a Japanese kimono, with a sullen face." He not only collaborated with the Japanese in the past, but now maintains close relations with the Americans in the Korean War. He was a *Gaoli bangzi* in every sense. "The doors and windows of his home were brightly painted." The home was well furnished with "shining footboards, a waxed *kang*, attractive silk quilts, and a large mirror" (Lu Ling 1985, 63). By contrast, a woman named Pae Sunok living in the same village was "very poor, wearing a worn-out skirt." "Inside her home, even the mat on her *kang* was in disrepair." "The child in her arms did not wear pants and the child's jacket was pieced together with four or five kinds of worn cloth" (64). "Her brother was a revolutionary and was later imprisoned. It was said that he eventually escaped. Her sister was in Seoul, doing the most pitiful work." Her husband had been forced to join the army and had already been killed at the front, though he "was nothing but a cook." "She had been leading a difficult life over these years: the land she was farming was owned by others and there was not enough food to feed her child" (65). Through the contrasting depiction of Pae Sunok and Kim Yun, the author here presents a war-torn South Korean society that was tormented by economic inequality, exploitation, oppression, and death.

Apart from women, children were also the most unfortunate victims of war and oppression. Through exaggerated descriptions of American soldiers and landlords killing children during the war, visiting Chinese writers exposed the living hell of South Korean society, tyrannized by the USA and Syngman Rhee. For example, in Yang Shuo's *Fengxue jingjidao* (Gyeonggi Province in the Snow), four family members of Hyon Pyon'gyu, a Workers' Party member, are killed. "The two children were put into straw bags and buried alive" (1951, 27); in Zhang Haimo's *Breakthrough on the Imjin River*, two war orphans whose parents were killed by American imperialists end up as tramps (1954, 131); in *War for Peace*, Pae Sunok's son finally dies tragically at the hands of landlord Kim Yun (Lu Ling 1985, 165).

While dramatizing South Korean children being killed by disease, war, landlords, and American imperialists, Chinese writers also gave detailed accounts of scenes of CPVA soldiers coming to the rescue of South Korean children. In a very famous article titled *Who Is the Most Lovable Person?*, Wei Wei provides a vivid description of a CPVA soldier named Ma Yuxiang risking his life to save a South

Korean child:

He heard a child crying in the smoke. He immediately raced into the choking smoke in search of the child, only to find a middle-aged North Korean man lying in the court. The child's cry seemed to come from the entrance of the house. He rushed to the door, where the flames were so intense that it was almost impossible to enter the house. The paper on the door and windows were already burning. "From the billows of solid smoke I could clearly hear the child crying ... I kicked the door open and burst in. The house was all filled with black smoke. I could only hear the child crying but could not see him. I could not open my eyes and my face was hot as if it had been cut by a knife...." (1990, 5)

This extract includes a shift by the author from third to first person perspective, which makes it more effective at describing the urgency and difficulty of the CPVA soldier rescuing the South Korean child. The description contrasts the child's helplessness with the CPVA soldier's persistence, bravery, and heroism. In the readers' minds, the CPVA has unobtrusively become a "protector" of the weak South Korean child. In this text, the rescue of the South Korean child is a metaphor of the relationship between a *protecting* China and a *protected* South Korea. When South Korea is reduced to a being "that needs to be protected," China will be imagined as its tough, courageous, and powerful protector. This imaginary relationship not only reinforces the legitimacy of assisting North Korea, but also burnishes the image of China as a liberator of colonized peoples in its war against the USA.

Influence and Significance of the Chinese Perception of the Korean Peninsula in the 1950s

When studying the developments of the RAAK campaign in the early 1950s, we can easily find that its initiation was not as smooth as claimed by the authorities. As Hou Songtao has shown, from the viewpoint of the government the attitude of the Chinese populace had to undergo a great change at the time of the RAAK war, with wartime publicity playing the most important role in this process (2005, 19; 2012, 31-63). Compared with the pervasive friendliness, admiration, and fear towards the USA, Chinese people's unfamiliarity and negative perception of North Korea constituted a significant obstacle to social mobilization for the RAAK war. In such a historical context, the CCP, in order to mobilize more people to support the war, was confronted with a number of pressing issues, the most urgent of which was to address the public's lack of acquaintance with or unfavorable sentiment towards North Korea so that it could reshape their perception of the peninsula.

In resolving this issue, literature, because of its imaginary, fictional, and emotional nature, played a critical role. As brothers in the same socialist family, China and North Korea had serious responsibilities towards each other, while South Korea was made an enemy due to its divergent ideological convictions. As a result, North and South Korea were presented as two opposing poles in a 1950s RAAK literature that was increasingly dominated by binary narratives. First, under the traditional security concept of *chunwang chihan*, China had to protect

North Korea for its own security and territorial integrity. At the same time, the independent state of South Korea on the other end of the peninsula was completely erased from the map and made into the other. Second, by renewing the Sino-Korean friendship formed during China's Anti-Japanese War and the War of Liberation, the RAAK literary texts turned North Koreans into Chinese people's "old comrades," while the Syngman Rhee-led South Korean regime was vilified as *Gaoli bangzi* who had joined Japan in invading China.

Finally, visiting Chinese writers also adopted the principle of binary opposition in the description of North and South Korean societies. While portraying North Korean women as "new socialists" through the detailed depiction of them at work, they also presented North Korea as a dynamic socialist country. Moreover, their portrayal of the fraternization between the CPVA and North Korean women also stimulated the public imagination of brotherhood between China and its socialist ally. In their limited introduction of South Korea, the contrast between its landlords and ordinary civilians revealed the misery of South Korean women, which further aggravated Chinese people's sentiments towards the Syngman Rhee regime. Furthermore, their detailed accounts of a CPVA soldier coming to the aid of a South Korean child not only consolidated the legitimacy of the RAAK war, but also glorified China as a "liberator of colonized people" in its struggle against the USA. In conclusion, during the three-year Korean War, the Chinese public underwent a great shift, an unforeseeable reverse, in their perception of Korea. The nation that used to be considered *Gaoli bangzi* suddenly had two faces, and *Gaoli bangzi* turned into a term that specifically represented South Korea and its people.

It is noteworthy that the transformation in the Chinese public's perception of the Korean Peninsula and China's drive to build a modern country were also shaped during the three years of the Korean War. Due to the Cold War in Asia, China allied with North Korea and became the enemy of South Korea. Subsequently, the Chinese imagination and perception of the Korean Peninsula developed during this period remained the basis for China's popular sentiment towards the Korean Peninsula throughout the Cold War. Only after the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, China established formal diplomatic ties with South Korea, which was followed by impressive progress by both countries in the political, economic, and cultural arenas. However, the seemingly friendly and prosperous relationship between China and South Korea remains fragile. This is not only because China still proclaims itself a socialist country, but also because during the Cold War South Korea followed a national anti-communist policy and anti-communism today remains one of the forces that influences the workings of South Korean society (Kim Wang-bae 2009, 41). More importantly, it has been accepted as an undisputed truth that North Korea is backed by China, while South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan are supported by the USA. The power struggle between China and the USA remains an important factor that influences Sino-ROK relations.

Japanese scholar Marukawa Tetsuji once pointed out that today's countries and governments in East Asia are all divided into country clusters formed during the Cold War (2010, 7), which means that today's mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, North Korea, and South Korea were all born with Cold War genes in their

blood, as they were all delivered in the context of the USA-USSR struggle. After studying the political discourse of modern empires, Lydia H. Liu points out that “the political discourse of the era of colonialism is not merely a scene in the past” (2009, 6). Similarly, we can say the same for the political discourse of the Cold War era. As a cultural memory, the Cold War has had an impact that reaches beyond the war itself and still, like a ghost, on occasion haunts China and its neighboring countries. Therefore, there remains a long journey ahead of us as we seek to rise above the influence of the Cold War.

GLOSSARY

A Ying	阿英	Lao She	老舍
<i>Ajia gendai joseishi</i>	アジア現代女性史	Li Zhuang	李莊
An E	安娥	Liu Baiyu	劉白羽
Ba Jin	巴金	Lu Ling	路翎
<i>Banmendian qianxian sanji</i>	板門店前線散記	Omoni	阿媽妮
Bao Chang	鮑昌	Prince Xinling	信陵公子
Chen Huangmei	陳荒煤	Sanshi jiaoyu	三視教育
<i>chunwang chihan</i>	唇亡齒寒	Sha'ou	沙鷗
<i>Gaoli bangzi</i>	高麗棒子	Shangganling	上甘嶺
Guo Moruo	郭沫若	Shi Qian	石千
Han Zi	菡子	Shu Qun	舒群
hufu	虎符	Wang Kun	王昆
Huang Guliu	黃谷柳	Wei Wei	魏巍
Huang Yaomian	黃藥眠	Yang Shuo	楊朔
Kang	炕	Yibiandao	一邊倒
<i>Kōbienchō jidai no Chūgoku joseishi</i>	抗美援朝時代の中国女性史	Yuan Jing	袁靜
		Zhang Haimo	張海默

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