




## ARTICLE

# The discourse of travel, society, and nation in Republican China

António Eduardo Hawthorne Barrento 

University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal

Email: [abarrento@campus.ul.pt](mailto:abarrento@campus.ul.pt)

## Abstract

In the late 1920s and the 1930s a fully developed discourse emerged in China that linked either travel as a general concept (mostly with a primary focus on its leisure form) or tourism more specifically to the interests of society and the nation. This article analyses its development as it evolved in the first half of the twentieth century. For this purpose, it first probes into the discourse that surrounded, from the 1920s onwards, the constitution and the activity of the Travel Department of the Shanghai Commercial and Savings Bank and of the China Travel Service, in line with which the travel service that one and the other provided was considered to involve dimensions of service to the nation and to society. The article proceeds by looking into two separate but ultimately linked lines of discourse that came to full bloom during the Nanjing decade and after: one that linked travel to the building of society, and another that linked it to the strengthening of the nation.

## Introduction

In an essay that was published in 1904 in the Tianjin daily *Dagongbao* (*L'Impartial*) under the title 'On the reasons why the Chinese cannot travel', its unidentified author associated tourism with national survival. The argument began by contrasting the situation in China, where not one or two out of thousands of people travelled 'far away to look at the scenery and at scenic sites, let alone to visit other nations' capitals to examine their politics or to enrich their experience', with the situation in every country of Europe and America, where 'people thought, from their childhood, of making far-away journeys, which they regarded as a contribution to their knowledge'.<sup>1</sup> In the context of Darwinian ideas and the proclaimed model of the active 'new citizen',<sup>2</sup> this could be worrying. In line with the nationalist, progressive tone of the newspaper,<sup>3</sup> the writer of the article expressed concern about the worldwide perception that the Chinese, due to their characteristics, would long be unable to be enterprising and adventurous.<sup>4</sup> His anxiety was not new. Liang Qichao had just published an article in 1902 in which he had enunciated the great spirit of enterprise and adventure of the European and American nations as the reason for their superiority in strength to the Chinese

<sup>1</sup> 'Lun Zhongguoren bu neng lüxing zhi yuanyin', *Dagongbao* 835 (21 October 1904), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Chang Hao, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907* (Cambridge, MA, 1971), pp. 177–189.

<sup>3</sup> See Zhou Yu, '«Dagongbao» shilüe', in *Tianjin wenshi ziliao xuanji* (Tianjin, 1992), pp. 66–70.

<sup>4</sup> 'Lun Zhongguoren bu neng lüxing zhi yuanyin', p. 2.

nation.<sup>5</sup> This was not without relation to travel, and Liang Qichao had in fact explicitly linked the characteristics of adventurousness and independence to travel in 1899.<sup>6</sup> If the writer of the 1904 article implicitly related tourist culture to character, then there was also an emphasis on the positive significance of tourism by linking it to knowledge and experience, and ultimately integrating it into the issue of national struggle. As the author saw it, if the Chinese lay prostrate all their lives in their native places, then their knowledge would always come up short and to wish, in that context, to advance a civilisation and establish oneself in this competitive world would be self-defeating and contradictory. A warning was made: the white race had a great spirit of exploration, which the yellow race was not able to match in any way.<sup>7</sup> Against this background, tourism emerged as a character changer and a means for knowledge, both of which were necessary to save the nation. The connection of a private matter such as travel to the collective well-being reflected the high degree of national alertness that had settled in amongst some milieux in China from the late nineteenth century, largely as a result of foreign aggression and threat, especially from the First Sino-Japanese War onwards.<sup>8</sup>

While this type of consideration arose in the final years of the Qing, by the late 1920s and the 1930s, a fully developed discourse had emerged that linked either travel as a general concept (mostly with a primary focus on its leisure form) or tourism more specifically to society and the nation. This evolution occurred in tandem with a substantial expansion in travel activity in China, which can be explained by a variety of factors. One was the progress that took place in transportation. This phenomenon was significant enough by the beginning of the Republican period for the new government to decide in 1913 to create a Museum of Transportation, one explicit aim of which was to show the convenience of transportation and thus stimulate a desire to travel among citizens.<sup>9</sup> This process continued during the following decades, its most visible manifestations being a series of improvements to the railway network, the conditions and offers of passenger transportation, and the construction of motorways.<sup>10</sup> The new circumstances were summed up by writer Yu Dafu in 'Travel in 1933'—a short text that he produced after taking a trip to Eastern Zhejiang: in contrast with the past, there were now planes in the air, ships on the water, and trains and cars on land, and thousands of *li* could be reached in a wink.<sup>11</sup> Another travel-boosting factor was the expansion and outreach of the travel industry,<sup>12</sup> which featured, above all, the China Travel Service (CTS), which was the most important travel agency of the Republican period. This company originated in the Travel Service Department of the Shanghai Commercial and Savings Bank (SCSB)—a unit that began operating in 1923 and developed into an autonomous corporation in 1927.<sup>13</sup> A witness to the ongoing evolution was Commercial Press publisher Zhuang Yu,

<sup>5</sup> Liang Qichao, 'Lun jinqu maoxian', in *Yin bing shi zhuanji zhi si* (Shanghai, 1941), p. 23 (first published in the *Xinmin congbao* 5 (April 1902)).

<sup>6</sup> While mentioning the Westerners' adventurous, independent character, he also recognised it in equal measure among the Chinese, although he then specifically added how Europeans loved adventure and to travel to far-away places: Liang Qichao, 'Lun Zhongguo renzhong zhi jianglai', in *Yin bing shi wenji zhi san* (Shanghai, 1941), p. 51 (first published in the *Qingyibao* 19 (1899)).

<sup>7</sup> 'Lun Zhongguoren bu neng lüxing zhi yuanyin', *Dagongbao* 836 (22 October 1904), p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> See Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford, CA, 2004), pp. 17–19, 47–49.

<sup>9</sup> *Zhonghua minguo shi dang'an ziliao huibian, di san ji, wenhua* (Nanjing, 1991), pp. 290–291.

<sup>10</sup> E. Köll, *Railroads and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2019), pp. 56–62, 91, 128–161; and Yajun Mo, *Touring China: A History of Travel Culture, 1912–1949* (Ithaca and London, 2021), pp. 29–30.

<sup>11</sup> Yu Dafu, *Yu Dafu sanwen ji* (Shenyang, 2014), p. 151.

<sup>12</sup> A. E. Hawthorne Barrento, 'On the Move: Tourist Culture in China, 1895–1949' (unpublished PhD dissertation, SOAS, University of London, 2012), pp. 54–56.

<sup>13</sup> See *Lüxing ye zhizhao, jingji bu zhizhao*, Shanghai Municipal Archives, Q368-1-29.

the author of a collection of travel accounts, who recognised in the 1935 prologue to his work that the existence now of travel agencies and other organisations was one reason for the change.<sup>14</sup> Other factors that favoured the growth of travel related to modifications in the lives of individuals. One of them was the institutionalisation and the expansion of free time. The custom of Sunday rest that was practised by foreign residents in China had been gradually adopted by some Chinese in the late Qing, in the absence at the time of a frequent periodic holiday system,<sup>15</sup> even at the official level. After starting with some ministries in 1906, the entire Qing government had embraced the rule of official rest on Sundays by 1911.<sup>16</sup> Several enterprises had also introduced the practice by the early Republican period<sup>17</sup> and, in 1937, it was remarked that the observance of Sunday as a day of rest was growing and was practically universal among Chinese banks and large concerns in Shanghai, with foreign firms' closing their doors at noon on Saturdays.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, regular rest became a legal obligation for certain types of workers in the 1920s,<sup>19</sup> although that rule was not necessarily enforced.<sup>20</sup> Another reality that stimulated travel was the growth of a consumer culture in a context of urbanisation and industrialisation.<sup>21</sup> Finally, the end to the warlord conflict in the late 1920s alleviated restrictions on internal displacement. It is no accident that Yu Dafu, in the preface to his 1934 travelogue, remarked how, in recent years, with the country at peace and convenient communication, he had become a travel writer.<sup>22</sup>

The visibility of such a fully fledged discourse at that point in time is certainly connected to both the travel boom that was well underway and a greater abundance of material on travel from a wide array of contributors that existed from that period onwards. Prominent amongst this body of sources was a large corpus of publications by the CTS. At the same time, a number of other contemporary factors must also be regarded as being behind the surge in this discourse, such as the attainment of national political unity, the engagement of the state in nation- and citizen-building, and the intensification of foreign aggression. This was an era in which, at the same time, strong concerns about society and the nation were being felt, and individual behaviour was being assessed in accordance with its adequacy vis-à-vis the general aims of contribution to society and the nation. It is thus no wonder that views on travel generally and tourism as one of its forms should have been shaped by these realities. A final comment in a fictional 1935 account of a journey to China's scenic sites, which was part of a book collection for junior middle-school students, illustrates well the scrutiny to which tourism was being subjected in terms of contribution to the collective well-being. After concluding

<sup>14</sup> Zhuang Yu, *Wo yi youji* (Shanghai, 1936), prologue, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Yang Lien-sheng, 'Schedules of work and rest in imperial China', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 18.3/4 (1955), pp. 302–303.

<sup>16</sup> Liu Xinping, *Xiuxian Zhongguo* (Beijing, 2002), p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Lin Tung-Hai, *The Labour Movement and Labour Legislation in China* (Shanghai, 1933), p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> C. Crow, *Four Hundred Million Customers* (London, 1937), p. 93.

<sup>19</sup> See the 1923 Beiyang regulations on factories ('Zanxing gongchang tongze', 29 March 1923, Article 8) and miners ('Kuanggong daiyu guize', 12 May 1923, Article 11): *Zhonghua minguo shi dang'an ziliao huibian, di san ji, gongkuangye* (Nanjing, 1991), pp. 38, 110; and the 1929 Nationalist Factory Law ('Gongchang fa', 30 December 1929, Article 15): *Zhonghua minguo shi dang'an ziliao huibian, di wu ji, di yi bian, caizheng jingji [wu]* (Nanjing, 1979), p. 100.

<sup>20</sup> On the rare enforcement of the 1923 regulations on factories, see Fang Fu-An, *Chinese Labour: An Economic and Statistical Survey of the Labour Conditions and Labour Movements in China* (Shanghai, 1931), p. 131.

<sup>21</sup> See Wen-hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843–1949* (Berkeley, LA and London, 2007), pp. 56–63; K. Gerth, *China Made: Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2003), pp. 3, 14–15; and M. Zanasi, 'Frugal modernity: livelihood and consumption in Republican China', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74.2 (2015), pp. 391–402.

<sup>22</sup> Yu Dafu, *Sanwen ji. Jihen chuchu. Zizhuan* (Shanghai, 2002), preface, p. 3.

that the travelling party involved had toured magnificently, the author hoped that such a group, in the not too distant future, would be rushing around in all four directions, not to see famous mountains and scenic spots, but in service to society and the nation: only then would it be a truly magnificent tour!<sup>23</sup> In this case, where tourism was implied to be a lesser thing, such a reminder of service to society and the nation would have served as an awakening to a wider reality beyond tourism, possibly from an apologetic perspective or as a tentative means of redefining tourism in the form of an escalating process leading to a more elevated plane of existence. In other cases, however, tourism was turned into a greater thing by way of understanding its positive consequences for society and the nation.

The perception by some that tourism was not only an individual matter but also one of far-reaching consequences persisted throughout the Second Sino-Japanese War and up until the end of the Republican period. Two examples illustrate this point. One is found in a manual on the tourist industry that was written by a staff member of the CTS, She Guitang, which was published in Guilin in 1944, during the final years of the war. One of his colleagues, Tang Weibin, wrote the preface and explained that this industry was important above all because of its contribution to political, economic, social, and cultural construction (while at the same time lamenting that all these aspects went unnoticed, and that even Chinese who were interested in tourism only considered it a means of enjoyment).<sup>24</sup> The other emerges in a 1946 internal analysis by the CTS of its tourism promotion activity. In it, tourism was substantiated on the basis of its broad effects, through a consideration of its advantages not only to tourists, but also to the people of the country as a whole. These would emerge as a result of the communication of emotions between citizens, the revelation of cultural objects from every place, and the observation of public and private buildings that it involved. Tourism, the study concluded, was an activity that not only could not be viewed as serving a purpose of consumption, but must be understood as helping 'the progress of society' as well.<sup>25</sup> The collective considerations revealed in both cases followed earlier ones, while they must naturally be observed in the context of the very pressing issue, during and after the war, of China's reconstruction.<sup>26</sup>

This article analyses the development in Republican China of the discourse that linked either travel more generally or tourism more specifically to the interests of society and the nation. The connection between travel and nationalism during this period in China has been drawing increased academic attention in recent years in a variety of ways. One research strand can be found in a number of studies that have focused on tourism in connection with specific geographical destinations, where the nationalist component has been scrutinised to a greater or lesser extent as found in tourist activity or the related literature. One such study has identified this aspect in the tourist practice and discourse of Republican-era Chinese nationals with respect to the Nanyang. It has shown that tourists who went to the region displayed a nationalist interest in local Chinese communities and in China-related sites as tourist attractions and that nation-related considerations occasionally permeated the associated tourist discourse.<sup>27</sup> Another study has investigated the Scenic Tours to China's Southeast project, initiated by Chiang Kai-shek in 1934 and

<sup>23</sup> Huang Jiuru (ed.), *Zhongguo mingsheng youji* (Shanghai, 1935), pp. 97–98.

<sup>24</sup> She Guitang (ed.), *Youlan shiye zhi lilun yu shiji* (Guilin, 1944), p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Zhongguo lixingshe jianmao*, [1946], Shanghai Municipal Archives, Q368-1-37.

<sup>26</sup> On the Nationalist state's intervention in the field of social rehabilitation and welfare in wartime China, and on the relief and rehabilitation effort in China in the immediate post-1945 period, see, respectively, R. Mitter and H. M. Schneider, 'Introduction: relief and reconstruction in wartime China', *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 11.2 (2012), pp. 179–186; and R. Mitter, 'State-building after disaster: Jiang Tingfu and the reconstruction of post-World War II China, 1943–1949', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 61.1 (2019), pp. 176–206.

<sup>27</sup> A. Barrento, 'From Republican China to the Nanyang: the nation on tour', in *China-Macau and Globalizations: Past and Present*, (eds.) L. F. Barreto and Wu Zhiliang (Lisbon, 2016), pp. 158–166.

conceived with a double political and promotional purpose of showing citizens the nation's latest accomplishments in transportation and the beautiful landscape of the region. The study has demonstrated that this effort helped foster a sense of national identity.<sup>28</sup> An essay on the tourist rush to Taiwan from after China's recovery of the territory in 1945 through to the end of the Republican period has pinpointed that touristic interest in the island was partly the result of the intensity of national feeling that territorial repossession elicited and has explained the attention that was paid to certain attractions through nationalist lenses.<sup>29</sup> Another line of inquiry has dealt with the perception, long ingrained in China, of travel as implying hardship. It has noted how, during the late Qing and Republican China periods, this idea came to be associated with the notion of national backwardness on the one hand and to be intensified as a result of an obsession with nation-building hygiene on the other.<sup>30</sup> Yet another approach has focused on how in Republican China tourist journeys, frontier explorations, and wartime travels spanning China proper and its periphery 'contributed to the imagination of China as a congruent national space'.<sup>31</sup> More broadly, it has looked into how these activities both revealed the expansion of the spatial horizons of Chinese citizens and the formation of a nationalist travel culture and helped in the construction of China's national space and national identity.<sup>32</sup> On this basis, it has concluded that the shared imagination of China's national space was inseparable from the increase in tourism mobility and the rise of a nationalist travel culture.<sup>33</sup>

While these studies have teased out multiple layers of connection between travel and the nation during the Republican period, they have not examined in depth the discourse that linked travel to the strengthening of society and the nation during the first half of the twentieth century in China. The first research strand has either concentrated on the importance of nationalist sentiment in moulding tourist interest or, where it has analysed the discourse of travel as linked to the interests of the nation, only done so within the limited context of tourism to the Nanyang and under the Southeastern Scenic Tours project, with reference to related sources.<sup>34</sup> The second line of inquiry has shown the infiltration of nationalist concerns into the field of travel with respect to its perception as hardship but not explored the discourse that revolved around the issue of the relevance of travel for the nation. The third approach has looked into how extended travel activity simultaneously reflected and contributed to a geographical consciousness of China as an interconnected country that encompassed China proper and expanded beyond it, and considered how it shaped the idea of China as a unity despite political fragmentation and a weak central state.<sup>35</sup> This third strand has dwelt on the relation between travel and the geographical construction of a Chinese national space that is made up of core regions and peripheries, thus focusing on the mental solidification of China's territory and

<sup>28</sup> Pedith Chan, 'In search of the southeast: tourism, nationalism, and scenic landscape in Republican China', *Twentieth-Century China* 43.3 (2018), pp. 208–212, 215–216, 230.

<sup>29</sup> A. Barrento, 'Towards recovered territory: the Chinese tourist rush to Taiwan, 1946–1949', in *Colonialism, Tourism and Place: Transformations in Global Destinations*, (eds.) D. Linehan, I. Clark, and P. F. Xie (Cheltenham, 2020), pp. 29, 33–34, 39.

<sup>30</sup> A. Barrento, 'The nationalization of the hardship of travel in China, 1895–1949: progress, hygiene and national concern', in *Routledge Handbook of Revolutionary Chinese History*, (ed.) A. Baumler (London and New York, 2019), pp. 302–317.

<sup>31</sup> Yajun Mo, *Touring China*, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206–209.

<sup>34</sup> Barrento, 'From Republican China to the Nanyang', pp. 161–164; and Pedith Chan, 'In search of the south-east', pp. 215–216.

<sup>35</sup> Yajun Mo, *Touring China*, pp. 38–39, 53, 207.

borders. By contrast, the present study is directed at the discourse of travel that considered it a relevant activity for the construction of the Chinese society and nation as such, thus focusing on considerations about the consequences of travel in strengthening both, either through their consolidation in the imagination and the emotion of their members and citizens or through their configuration in accordance with ideal and robust characteristics. For this purpose, it first probes into the discourse that surrounded, from the 1920s onwards, the constitution and the activity of the Travel Department of the SCSB and the CTS, in line with which the travel service that they provided was regarded as involving dimensions of service to society and the nation. This discourse is examined here as a manifestation of the perception of travel as an activity with collective implications, as a discourse that ultimately established a link between individuals' travel activity and society and the nation through consumption, and as the background to an interpretation of the manifestations of the discourse linking travel and tourism to society and the nation that emerged in CTS publications. The article proceeds by looking into two separate but ultimately linked lines of discourse that developed during the Nanjing decade and beyond: one that connected travel and tourism to society and another that linked them to the nation.

### Travel service for China

The SCSB, established in 1915 by entrepreneur Chen Guangfu, grew to become the most powerful private bank in China within a decade.<sup>36</sup> As it expanded its line of business to the travel service, it associated this new development, from the beginning, with national benefit. It did so as it submitted a petition in 1923 to the Ministry of Communications under the Beiyang government requesting permission to sell train tickets on a commission basis and to conduct travel services, in a challenge to the existing foreign monopoly in travel mediation. Against the backdrop of the nationalist atmosphere of the early Republican age, which the May Fourth Movement had only intensified, the bank did not fail to enunciate the national benefits that would be derived from opening up this trade. The first was the assumption of economic sovereignty, as only Thomas Cook & Son and American Express were authorised to conduct such operations.<sup>37</sup> The bank pointed out that economic rights were flowing out of China—a concern that had been at the heart of the Railway Rights Recovery Movement,<sup>38</sup> which had arisen in a field of activity, with the management and exploitation of railways, that was close to the travel service. The second was the possibility of providing services to more Chinese people and at more locations throughout the Chinese territory. The underlying argument was that, as it was mostly foreigners who went to buy tickets at the foreign agencies, ultimately very few Chinese nationals bothered to go, given barriers such as language. Furthermore, it was claimed that these agencies only had branches in Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Hankou, while the SCSB was spread throughout all the provinces.<sup>39</sup> To counter both foreign exclusiveness and centredness, the bank proposed and solicited

<sup>36</sup> M. Yue Dong, 'Shanghai's *China Traveler*', in *Everyday Modernity in China*, (eds.) M. Yue Dong and J. Goldstein (Seattle and London, 2006), p. 199.

<sup>37</sup> In relation to Thomas Cook & Son, see its agreements with the Imperial Railways of North China (1907), the Shanghai-Nanking Railway (1911), the Imperial King-Han Railway (1911), the Chinese Eastern Railway (1913), the Tientsin-Pukow Line (1913), and the Santo Railway Administration (1915): *Copies of Agreements*, No. 8, pp. 133–134; No. 9, pp. 426–427; No. 9, pp. 495–496; No. 9, pp. 738–741; No. 9, pp. 779–780; and *Volume 10*, pp. 231–232, Thomas Cook Archives.

<sup>38</sup> M. B. Rankin, 'Nationalistic contestation and mobilization politics: practice and rhetoric of railway rights recovery at the end of the Qing', *Modern China* 28.3 (2002), pp. 339–343.

<sup>39</sup> *Benhang chuangan lixingshe de yongyi*, Shanghai Municipal Archives, Q275-1-128.



therefore what amounted to an economic, consumer-oriented, and geographic nationalisation of the travel business. The request was granted. As this occurred, the nationalistic foundations of the formation of the CTS had been laid.<sup>40</sup>

National control of the travel service in the sense of its domination by Chinese nationals would later constitute a fundamental element in the discourse surrounding the creation and existence of the Travel Department and its successor, the CTS. Chen Guangfu repeatedly described how his intention to run a travel agency had been triggered by an unpleasant experience at the Hong Kong office of Thomas Cook & Son at a time when he had gone there to buy a ferry ticket. He recalled having been ignored by a Western clerk who had spent the time talking to a foreign customer and attributed this neglect to the fact that he was not of the same race.<sup>41</sup> Following this episode, he had asked himself why Chinese nationals did not run a travel agency and had developed a strong motivation to set one up himself.<sup>42</sup> Pan Taifeng, a CTS employee, recalled how Chen Guangfu had explained to his staff that he had gained the perception that foreigners were running China's internal travel industry and that the Chinese people were letting themselves fall behind, which he described as shameful.<sup>43</sup>

In rhetoric that echoed the rationale for creating the company, the CTS, shortly after its establishment in 1927, publicly justified its existence through an evaluation that was based on a national deficit (related to national character) and foreign intrusion: 'the aggression-ism of foreigners,' it said, 'has, in our half slumber, stretched to the highest point, and travel agencies, and even very small travel businesses, are run by foreigners.' It criticised the Chinese people in general, and in particular 'the important dignitaries claiming love for the nation and broad-mindedness', as they all had 'inquired with such commercial travel organizations and engaged in travel business with them'.<sup>44</sup> One implicit idea that the CTS thus conveyed was that it now offered the possibility of true nationalism through the purchase of its travel commodities. This passage, included in a text that was published on the occasion of the 1928 National Products Exhibition, stood in line with the purposes of the event<sup>45</sup> and its nationalist content was most probably the result of a combination of genuine belief and marketing calculations.

A few years later, a manifestation of national concern surfaced inside the CTS that was of a different kind in that it implied a clash with business opportunities that were being offered to the company. It occurred in 1934 on the occasion of the company's involvement by the Chinese government in a limited and tentative scheme of cooperation with Japan, in the tense aftermath of the 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Following the Tanggu truce of 1933 and the negotiations between China and Japan that had taken place over the following year,<sup>46</sup> the Nationalist and Japanese governments had reached an agreement with regard to the opening of rail traffic between Beiping

<sup>40</sup> For an explanation of the establishment of the CTS on the basis, inter alia, of the importance of the recovery of national rights, see Yi Weixin, 'Zhongguo lüxingshe chuangban mudi de chuyi', *Hunan daxue xuebao* 17.5 (2003), pp. 62–63.

<sup>41</sup> See Wang Shuliang and Zhang Tianlai, *Zhongguo lüyou shi (xia ce)* (Beijing, 1999), p. 209; M. Gross, 'Flights of fancy from a sedan chair: marketing tourism in Republican China, 1927–1937', *Twentieth-Century China* 36.2 (2011), p. 119; and Yajun Mo, *Touring China*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>42</sup> Zhao Junhao, 'Lüxing jiangzuo: Chen Guangfu xiansheng fangwen ji', *Lüxing zazhi* 10.9 (1936), p. 83.

<sup>43</sup> Pan Taifeng, 'Ji Zhongguo lüxingshe', in *Chen Guangfu yu Shanghai yinhang*, (ed.) Chen Haibin (Beijing, 1991), p. 189.

<sup>44</sup> *Lüxing xiangdao: guohuo zhanlanhui jinian kan*, Zhongguo lüxingshe, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> See Gerth, *China Made*, pp. 253–254, 270–272.

<sup>46</sup> See Akira Iriye, 'Japanese aggression and China's international position, 1931–1949', in *The Cambridge History of China. Volume 13. Republican China 1912–1949, Part 2*, (eds.) J. K. Fairbank and A. Feuerwerker (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 512–513.

and Shenyang in Manchukuo, through the creation of a joint Chinese–Japanese organisation called the Oriental Travel Bureau, to be composed, on the Chinese side, of personnel from the CTS. The company proved unwilling to agree at first, but eventually conceded. The basis for its initial position, according to Pan Taifeng’s insider testimony, had been nationalist in nature: because this company was national in character, having been established against the transgression of sovereign rights by foreign travel agencies, it did not wish to take on such a responsibility.<sup>47</sup> This may well have been so: nationalism was, if nothing else, already a mark of the company and prioritising it over a business opportunity must have been deemed relevant to its overall branding.

One further point emerged in the nationalist discourse of the Travel Department and the CTS as they justified and promoted their existence. It was not only that the travel service—like any product—should come under national economic control, but also that travel in China, given its unquestionable characteristics as a Chinese product, should come under national guidance. Specific reference was made in an internal document of the SCSB to the fact that opposition to guidance by foreigners had been one of the reasons behind the creation of its Travel Department.<sup>48</sup> This point was adamantly revisited in the booklet that was prepared for the National Products Exhibition. In this text, foreign guidance was criticised. While still excusable when travelling abroad, it was not otherwise:

What is more preposterous is that we also go to consult these semi-ignorant foreigners when we are travelling within the country. It may well be asked why we Chinese, travelling in China, go and ask foreigners on how to proceed in order to go. What is the reason for this? What is the explanation? Are those few foreigners then already our China’s masters?<sup>49</sup>

Similar indignation was expressed by a CTS journalist, again as a form of introduction to the firm’s merits, in a 1930 issue of the *China Traveler*, the major periodical magazine of the institution: ‘Before this company opened, the Chinese all had to ask for advice from blue-eyed economic invaders, which was a shame,’ especially when they had to ask foreigners for guidance for touring in China.<sup>50</sup> Against this background, national guidance was upheld. It was important on more levels than just as an icon of national control over an economic activity. As this activity had the nation as its object, it was best carried out, the logic went, by those with the greatest ties to it: Chinese nationals. It was also an element of national control over individual contact with and individual understanding of the nation. Tang Weibin of the CTS made this clear in a 1946 text in which he reviewed the company’s history. In his view, one of its missions had been to enhance the nation’s prestige, because there had previously been only a small number of foreign commercial travel firms in this line of business and they had been unfamiliar with China’s real situation, their guides having proven to have a merely superficial knowledge of the country. The result had been that American and European travellers had only been able to look around narrow downtown streets and had not been left with a good impression.<sup>51</sup> National guidance was therefore to function explicitly as a means of national control over—and consequent improvement of—the knowledge and interpretation of the nation by foreign travellers in China.

<sup>47</sup> Pan Taifeng, ‘Youguan “Dongfang lüxingshe” de shiliao’, in *Chen Guangfu yu Shanghai yinhang*, (ed.) Chen Haibin, p. 222.

<sup>48</sup> *Zhongguo lüxingshe chengli zhi suyuan jiyu ji yu Shanghai yinhang zhi guanxi*, Shanghai Municipal Archives, Q275-1-1656.

<sup>49</sup> *Lüxing xiangdao: guohuo zhanlanhui jinian kan*, *Zhongguo lüxingshe*, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> ‘Benshe jing’ansi jishu’, *Lüxing zazhi* 4.10 (1930), p. 117.

<sup>51</sup> Tang Weibin, ‘Zhong lü ershisan nian’, *Lüxing zazhi* 20.1 (1946), p. 91.



In addition to these lines of discourse, in which the travel business was associated with the nation, another took shape that connected it to society. The SCSB adopted, as one of its mottos, the responsibility to ‘serve society’, which was to be carried out, for instance, through the task of providing convenient travel.<sup>52</sup> In much the same way, the CTS came to represent itself as endowed with a mission to ‘serve society’<sup>53</sup> and as not being driven primarily by profit.<sup>54</sup> Consciousness of possible benefits to the company from such an image appears not to have been completely absent from its construction. Chen Guangfu recounted in his diary how he had decided in 1930 to extend the company’s services to third-class passengers ‘for the sake of mass welfare’, in the belief that the CTS might thus attain its objective of serving society and therefore earn a prestigious standing within it. In a less than totally selfless reflection, he pondered how the spirit of serving society would win the credit of the latter and consolidate the basis of this company.<sup>55</sup> Regardless of the underlying reasons for this approach, the fact remains that the CTS, while building its activity on the basis of a policy of popularisation of the travel service, did so in the context of an identification of its activity with the well-being of society as well.

In reality, this discourse, which developed in various ways in the Travel Department of SCSB and the CTS, rationalised under social and national terms not only the activity of these two entities, but also indirectly, through knowledge of it, the travel practice that was associated with it. An aura of association with the collective destiny was offered to the traveller in the form of both his consumption of a national product and his indirect contribution to the advancement that the company alleged it was seeking. This was a stimulus to travel on both accounts, as long as the right mediation was involved, of course. What all this means is that, for some, the conceptualisation of the idea of helping society and the nation through travel may have materialised for the first time through the consumer culture and this specific business discourse. From the late 1920s and in the 1930s, however, this discourse was to coexist with a now much expanded one that linked travel to society and the nation directly, irrespective of the agency of the CTS.

### Travelling for society

References to travel as a means of social construction mushroomed during the Nanjing decade. This was notably the case in texts for and by youngsters. In a 1933 manual on travel from a juvenile collection that was published by the Beixin Press, the author explained to children the various reasons for travelling and cited, alongside several individual benefits such as the expansion of knowledge, the encouragement of a spirit of mutual aid, which it described as the basis for world harmony.<sup>56</sup> In a travel collection book that was written that same year by a group of students from Suzhou’s Zhenhua Girls’ School, a student who had gone on a journey with her fellow mates similarly enunciated the cultivation of habits of mutual assistance as a benefit of travel, while also mentioning contact with other people’s emotions and the cultivation of the capacity to bear hardships, which she emphasised could be of enormous help to ‘future service in society’.<sup>57</sup> These instances are revealing of the infusion of the notion of travel, at the school

<sup>52</sup> See Chen Guangfu *riji* (Shanghai, 2002), p. 187.

<sup>53</sup> *Zhongguo lüxingshe qishi*, 26 November 1945, Shanghai Municipal Archives, Q275-1-1830.

<sup>54</sup> Tang Weibin, ‘Zhong lü ershisan nian’, p. 99.

<sup>55</sup> Chen Guangfu *riji*, 11 December 1930 entry, p. 108.

<sup>56</sup> Sun Shuji, *Xiao pengyou lüxing* (Shanghai, 1933), pp. 10–18.

<sup>57</sup> *Lüxing congzai* (Suzhou, 1933), p. 112.

or foundational level, with formulations of social integration and social contribution that were key components of the ideology of citizenship in Republican China and that schools taught and the publishing industry presented for the purpose of building actively engaged citizens.<sup>58</sup> The idea of school travel—and youth travel more widely—as a tool for social bonding and the creation of citizenship was not specific to China. It had emerged in a variety of contexts since the late nineteenth century as an expression of a deep concern with society-building. It had been one motivation behind the organisation of excursions, whether by schools, as in Russia,<sup>59</sup> or by other institutions dedicated to shaping future citizens, as in Japan.<sup>60</sup> For its part, hiking, which was profoundly popular in Germany, had come to be deemed an ideal method of socialising youth.<sup>61</sup> The notion of youth travel as a social building block had become widespread. It was important and ingrained enough for it to have been invoked in France at the beginning of the twentieth century as a major argument for the new—and, for many, bizarre—travel-related leisure activity known as camping.<sup>62</sup>

The appearance of such references in China is therefore very much in line with a global trend. In any case, that it should have materialised when it did may not have been accidental, but rather a sign of deepening citizen-building and of a developing civic ethic under Nationalist rule. This phenomenon was not restricted to children. A tourist named She Nanqiu wrote about his touring experience in a 1936 article in the *China Traveler* and, as with the examples above, included among the benefits of touring the promotion of feelings of cooperation and mutual help. As he put it, if one went out touring, one could feel the value of friendship and companionship in a way that was not possible at home or inside an organisation. For him, caring for one another on trains and boats and conducting intimate chats at inns were forms of training that could enhance cooperation and mutual aid, while also strengthening friendship and family bonds.<sup>63</sup> His view was notable for the high level of community concern that it revealed, in which tourism was valued for its long-term socialising aspect and took on the role of a social experiment, with consequences for social construction. This stress on social consolidation as a gain from individual activity was in line with the spirit of the times. The New Life Movement, initiated less than two years before by Chiang Kai-shek, was intent on creating an integrated society and on achieving this by mobilising the population to change individual behaviour.<sup>64</sup> The individual activity of travel could be one means to that end. The attribution of social relevance to travel was also a manifestation of a broader international pattern. Similar visions of socialising tourism were abundant in the 1930s in other

<sup>58</sup> See R. Culp, *Articulating Citizenship: Civic Education and Student Politics in Southeastern China, 1912–1940* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2007), pp. 31, 36, 133, 154–162.

<sup>59</sup> One of the aims of excursionism as it developed as a tool of pedagogical reform in Russian schools in the 1900s was to teach children to work as a group and to make them bond better with instructors: E. D. Johnson, *How St. Petersburg Learned to Study Itself: The Russian Idea of Kraevedenie* (University Park, 2006), pp. 98, 101. See also the avowedly social-building aim behind the organisation of excursions at a Saint Petersburg school in 1912–1913: G. Usyskin, *Ocherki istorii rossijskogo turizma* (Moscow and St Petersburg, 2007), pp. 80–81.

<sup>60</sup> See how the excursions organised for children at the Association for Moral Education in Early Childhood, founded in 1909 in Tokyo with similar aims to those of the Boy Scouts, were thought to stimulate a spirit of support amongst them: U. Yasuhiro, N. Jun, and T. Haruhiko, *Shōnenendan no rekishi—senzen no bōisukauto, gakkō shōnenendan* (Tokyo, 1996), p. 124.

<sup>61</sup> J. A. Williams, *Turning to Nature in Germany: Hiking, Nudism, and Conservation, 1900–1940* (Stanford, 2007), p. 123.

<sup>62</sup> C. B. Lavenir, ‘Camper en 1900: De l’ascèse laïque au loisir élégant’, *Ethnologie française* 31.4 (2001), pp. 631, 633–634.

<sup>63</sup> She Nanqiu, ‘Wo de youli jingyan tan’, *Lüxing zazhi* 10.1 (1936), p. 37.

<sup>64</sup> Arif Dirlik, ‘The ideological foundations of the New Life Movement: a study in counterrevolution’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 34.4 (1975), pp. 945–946.

national contexts where ideas of social construction received a magnified focus, such as in authoritarian Germany<sup>65</sup> and Latvia.<sup>66</sup>

In fact, just as travel was being identified as a mechanism of social bonding, it was in the process of being defined as socially beneficial in another way: as an occupation that discouraged or replaced socially undesirable forms of leisure. In the 1920s, travel had occasionally been equated with correctness and morality, and contrasted with lesser forms of leisure. This had been the case in some material of the Unison Travel Party (UTP)—a non-profit association that was founded by a group of travellers in Shanghai in 1915 and organised leisure trips for its members, while also allowing others to join.<sup>67</sup> In a 1927 article in *The Unison*, a member named Cao Yunfu had deplored the relative lack of tourist practice in China before noting that most people there used insufficient money or free time as excuses not to travel, even as they engaged with prostitutes, gambled, and patronised dancing establishments.<sup>68</sup> In making this reference, he had been not merely condemning such leisure choices, but also proposing tourism as a morally preferable alternative to a less commendable lifestyle. A 1929 special issue of the *Unison Monthly* dedicated to the West Lake Exhibition had included an introductory note in which visiting the event had been advocated as a better option than several leisure activities, such as watching dog races, people dancing, movies, or Beijing opera; having large meals at restaurants; going on a drive to cool off; and playing mah-jong at home.<sup>69</sup> By contrast, a text that was published in the *China Traveler* in January 1934 by the journalist, editor, and intellectual Yu Songhua took things a step further. He directly appealed for travel promotion as a device to drive a shift towards socially acceptable leisure patterns in China. He noted the wisdom of Germans: fond of music and travel, they all liked to go outdoors for leisurely strolls or to faraway places on short trips, with some taking their musical instruments along to make touring even more interesting. By comparison, the Chinese spent their free time drinking and playing mah-jong. He then concluded that, if people in China wished to advocate respectable and beneficial forms of entertainment, then they should encourage travel and music.<sup>70</sup>

Here, one can see a clear interpretation of travel as a social mechanism that fitted in well with the Nanjing decade's entrenched emphasis on civil morality. In fact, it appears to anticipate a similar but more strident campaign-like call for travel that appeared in a 1936 issue of *The Unison*. The message to travellers on the cover of the magazine was direct, to say the least: 'You must first understand your responsibilities! We must push people forward into eliminating all unconscious types of entertainment and into travelling.'<sup>71</sup> Here, as before, travel was identified as a 'conscious' leisure activity. What was new now, in comparison with other cases in which travel's distinction from other activities had been underscored, was the use of a plea—a form that had not previously been used at all, let alone so prominently. This escalation in tone may suggest some influence from the New Life Movement, with its mobilising aim, especially following the introduction by 1935 of the concept of productisation, which insisted, inter alia, on rendering leisure

<sup>65</sup> K. Semmens, *Seeing Hitler's Germany: Tourism in the Third Reich* (Houndmills, NY, 2005), p. 124.

<sup>66</sup> A. Purs, "'One breath for every two strides': the state's attempt to construct tourism and identity in inter-war Latvia', in *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, (eds.) A. E. Gorsuch and D. P. Koenker (Ithaca and London, 2006), p. 108.

<sup>67</sup> See a set of rules by its travel section: *Yousheng*, June 1927, special edition on travel to Hangzhou and Changshu, n.p.

<sup>68</sup> Cao Yunfu, 'Lüxing shuo', *Yousheng* 10 (1927), n.p.

<sup>69</sup> *Yousheng yuekan*, September 1929, n.p.

<sup>70</sup> Yu Songhua, 'Shengping zhi jianghu quwei, san', *Lüxing zazhi* 8.1 (1934), special essay collection, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> *Yousheng*, October 1936, cover.

time useful.<sup>72</sup> Whether or not this was the case, the fact remains that the connection between travel and social morality was to reappear later, after the war. The 1946 internal CTS analysis noted above again used the idea in explaining the grounds for its promotion of tourism, stating that one value of that activity lay in its reduction of inappropriate entertainment. In so doing, it identified travel as a form of ‘social education’,<sup>73</sup> from a perspective that was focused on social construction, which stood out in this context as being crucial as the replacement for socially objectionable enjoyment and certainly was so now in the post-war period.

### Travelling for the nation

From the late 1920s and especially after the 1931 invasion of Manchuria, a considerable number of members of Chinese society began to articulate, in different ways, the idea that travelling (and especially touring, with its aspect of leisure, of consequence for the extent and emotional nature of the experience) could be relevant to the nation and came to specifically uphold and in a few cases engage in tourism as a means to help the nation. The idea of travelling for the nation was not a necessary outcome of nationalist thinking. However, considerations about the nation, which were either a front of mind or in the background for many, inevitably coexisted with other aspects of life, and tourism was one of them. A tourist who visited the Great Wall and the Ming Tombs in 1934 recollected, on his return journey, everything that he had seen, including tourist attractions and trenches that were built during the 1926 conflict between the Nationalist army and Fengtian forces, but then suddenly shifted his narrative to grief over the nation’s situation. Having described his tour in detail, he now wondered whether his compatriots might be able to preserve their great land forever if they did not unite. Addressing them, he exclaimed: ‘the enemy has penetrated our space and a great disaster is approaching: how is not everyone yet awakened and struggling for the country?’<sup>74</sup> This juxtaposition of travel account and nationalist mobilising plea may have accurately mirrored the reality of an everyday life interspersed with anxieties about the nation. At the same time, however, it may have been the result of a sensed need for a moralising counterpoint to leisure travel or have been precipitated by an emotional arousal that was derived from visiting touristic sites or observing the traces of an earlier war. In any of these cases, tourism would have played an active part in shaping the nationalistic outburst.

Several factors were simultaneously playing into such an acute consciousness of and concern over the nation, which in turn were the motor behind a particular awareness of or emphasis on the national potential of travel in this period. One was the aggravation of Japanese penetration and aggression, which was patent in the Northeast and in the expedition of imperial troops to Shandong in 1928 and spiralled with the invasion of Chinese territory in the 1930s. All this vigorously fuelled national sentiment. Other factors were the accomplishment of Chinese unification under the Nationalists and their greater effectiveness, compared with their warlord predecessors, in concentrating on the nation and engaging in nationalist indoctrination.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> See Arif Dirlik, ‘Ideological foundations of the New Life Movement’, p. 973; and F. Ferlanti, ‘The New Life Movement in Jiangxi Province, 1934–1938’, *Modern Asian Studies* 44.5 (2010), p. 964.

<sup>73</sup> *Zhongguo lixingshe jianmao*, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> Li Shenyan, *Changcheng Ming ling youji* (Beiping, 1934), pp. 52–53.

<sup>75</sup> For the propagation of nationalist views during the Nanjing decade, see P. Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895–1949* (London and New York, 2005), pp. 248–251; R. Culp, ‘Setting the sheet of loose sand: conceptions of society and citizenship in Nanjing decade party doctrine and civics textbooks’, in *Defining Modernity: Guomindang Rhetorics of a New China, 1920–1970*, (ed.) T. Bodenhorn (Ann Arbor, 2002), pp. 45–90; and H. J. van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925–1945* (London and New York, 2003), p. 132.

### Awareness, knowledge, and emotion

The nationalist discourse of travel developed in a variety of ways. One important strand focused on travel as a means of acquiring awareness or knowledge of the nation. This perspective emerged, for instance, in an interview with educational reformer Huang Yanpei that was published in 1935 in the *China Traveler*. Huang considered travel an essential condition for a national outlook. In his opinion, in order to leave one's family and join the path of the nation, one needed a broad vision and that could only be obtained through travel. His perspective was that travel was therefore worth promoting vigorously 'at such a time'—an implicit reference to the heightened importance that the national issue had acquired in the face of Japan's increasing assault and threat. Huang was deeply concerned about this issue and involved in the resistance effort. He had accompanied T. V. Soong to Jehol on 17 February 1933, at a time when an attack had appeared imminent, as a representative of the Shanghai Civic Association, in a show of solidarity from an area of China that had previously been attacked.<sup>76</sup> His position was that travel was necessary not only for raising national awareness, but also for acquiring knowledge of the nation. As he saw it, while travel was a path to knowledge of the reality of any nation, it was a necessity in China's case. He stressed that the Chinese people in particular needed to travel, because China was so immense and the conditions of its people so complex that, to have a clear understanding of the national situation, one needed first to travel.<sup>77</sup> In this view, travel took on the overtones of an indispensable national mission.

Another thread in this discourse centred on the idea that travel generated emotional ties with the nation. The idea of the expansion of feelings from domestic tourist sites to the nation as a whole is exemplified by an account of a trip to Kuanglu (Lushan) in 1921 that was published in 1930 in *The Unison Travel Magazine*. In that text, the traveller wrote that the magnificent landscape there stirred thoughts of love for the nation.<sup>78</sup> Through a similar type of reasoning, a journalist who wrote about the travel industry in 1937 reported how commonly one heard people say things like 'what a beautiful land this is!' or 'what a great land!', before commenting on how travel could arouse nationalist thinking.<sup>79</sup>

Irrespective of any touristic emotion related to a specific site, some also felt that knowledge of the nation that was obtained through travel produced love for the nation. This was the case with Huang Boqiao, director of the Nanjing-Shanghai-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway Administration, who wrote in 1936 for the *China Traveler* that only when one knew one's country—and those who had travelled often did, he stated—could one begin to spontaneously cherish it and start developing a genuine desire to protect it. In his view, that was why Chinese citizens were indifferent to their nation's joys and woes: because they did not know their nation. He noticed happily, however, that large numbers of people were now considering travel to be an enjoyable thing, which he saw as not only a crucial change in their lives, but also a matter of 'deep significance',<sup>80</sup> in view of his association of travel with building up a nationalist spirit. Repackaging travel in such a way turned it into a wider issue and one with an urgent and more eclectic appeal, which may have reflected the earnest commitments of both the author and the publisher, even while also serving their institutional interests. The same reasoning emerged again in CTS's magazine during the war in a December 1944 article in which Tang Weibin

<sup>76</sup> R. T. Phillips, "'A picturesque but hopeless resistance': Rehe in 1933', *Modern Asian Studies* 42.4 (2008), p. 742.

<sup>77</sup> Zhao Junhao, 'Lüxing jiangzuo: Huang Renzhi xiansheng fangwen ji', *Lüxing zazhi* 9.12 (1935), p. 61.

<sup>78</sup> Wu Jiaxuan, 'Xinyou xiari Kuanglu lüxing ji', *Lüxing yuekan* 5.7 (1930), p. 21.

<sup>79</sup> Zhengzhang, 'Yi jiu san qi nian de xinxing shiye', 29 March 1937, Shanghai Municipal Archives, Q275-1-1830.

<sup>80</sup> Huang Boqiao, 'Daoyou yu aiguo', *Lüxing zazhi* 10.1 (1936), p. 3.

expounded on the importance of tourism. His argument was that, for citizens to love the nation, they needed to know the object of their love and that a mood of faithful love could only develop with knowledge of the real situation in the motherland.<sup>81</sup> The fact that this point resurfaced at this historical moment may not have been accidental, but actually revealed an accrued anxiety about China's fate. In fact, during the war, knowledge of the nation was a source of worry that was repeatedly brought up in the *China Traveler*. Sun Fuxi, a contributor to the June 1943 issue, had complained about the lack of knowledge of the motherland in China and had proposed travel as a solution.<sup>82</sup> Zhu Liren, a university student in the Foreign Relations Department of the Central Politics University in Chongqing, presented a travel plan for post-war China in August 1945 that was aimed at educating citizens about the nation.<sup>83</sup> Tang Weibin had a more far-reaching perspective. He considered travel not only as a means of acquiring knowledge about the nation, but also as a way to strengthen people's bonds with it.

Knowledge about the nation that was acquired through travel was also sometimes recognised as relevant for other positive consequences in terms of nation-building, beyond arousing national feeling. This was the case when such knowledge was associated with the improvement of general national conditions. A short commentary on tourism and nation that was published in a 1936 issue of the *China Traveler* pursued this angle. It advised people to go to places and tour around: only then would they know what was important, which would be of great help in building up a nation. A person who did not travel would not know whether the land was fertile or poor, whether conditions were dangerous or easy, or whether business was good or bad.<sup>84</sup> The author's underlying argument was that travel constituted a privileged means of contact with practical reality. This idea was repeatedly invoked during the early 1930s in texts that compared it with reading as a form of knowledge acquisition.<sup>85</sup> The commentary on tourism and nation took the same comparative approach, as it encouraged travel as a preferable option to the 'big mistake' among the Chinese of only knowing how to shut themselves indoors and read books. However, this text departed from others by focusing on the collective rather than the individual benefits of acquiring practical knowledge. It was under this frame of mind that it pointed out that groups of people were now advocating travel and that, in doing so, they were not merely attaching importance to the expansion of knowledge.<sup>86</sup>

While travel was looked at here for its perceived effects on practical action favourable to the nation, in other cases, it was viewed as a means of learning about different aspects of national reality and therefore establishing mental ties between the nation's various parts. In this sense, travel was to serve as a spur to national unity. For example, in 1936, tourist She Nanqiu urged the readers of the *China Traveler* to vigorously promote tourism as a way to remove barriers at the provincial level by encouraging understanding between people of different provinces,<sup>87</sup> with the implicit rationale that this would help unite the entire nation. The matter of national unity was of deep concern at the time and would become even more so during the war. It is no wonder, then, that an introductory text that was included in the 1944 edition of a CTS guide on Kunming should have started by pointing out that travel could both improve individual knowledge and create a feeling

<sup>81</sup> Tang Weibin, 'Youlan shiye zhi jihua', *Lüxing zazhi* 18.12 (1944), p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> Sun Fuxi, 'Lüxing de xin renshi', *Lüxing zazhi* 17.6 (1943), p. 103.

<sup>83</sup> Zhu Liren, 'Zhan hou Zhongguo youlan jihua', *Lüxing zazhi* 19.8 (1945), pp. 6–7.

<sup>84</sup> Li Zhaohuan, 'Youlan jian guo', *Lüxing zazhi* 10.1 (1936), p. 7.

<sup>85</sup> Jianguang, 'Lüxing shi dushu de shiyan', *Lüxing yuekan* 5.8 (1930), p. 1; Sun Shuji, *Xiao pengyou lüxing*, p. 11; and Zhao Junhao, 'Lüxing jiangzuo: Pan Gongzhan xiansheng fangwen ji', *Lüxing zazhi* 9.5 (1935), pp. 89–90.

<sup>86</sup> Li Zhaohuan, 'Youlan jian guo', p. 7.

<sup>87</sup> She Nanqiu, 'Wo de youli jingyan tan', p. 38.



of national unity.<sup>88</sup> Zhu Liren also did not disregard this issue in the tourism plan for post-war China that he presented in 1945. In proposing the establishment of a social travel service, he suggested that it might allow coastal people to become acquainted with the inland and inlanders to become acquainted with the coast, all with the apparent aims of enabling citizens to recognise the existence of common characteristics and creating ties between them, with both furthering their identification with the nation. Whether or not this may have been his ultimate objective, his purpose was certainly one of unity. While saying that one should, to the utmost degree, encourage travel enthusiasm among the young, he warned that they were to take on the responsibility of creating a united country in cultural terms<sup>89</sup>—an aspect to which travelling would supposedly (through real or imagined cultural unification?) contribute.

### International standing and defence

In much of the nationalist discourse during the Nanjing decade, travel was also often considered in terms of the improvements it could offer to China's international standing and in association with its defence against foreign assault. This is entirely understandable. Foreign encroachment and external threat were at the very core of the urgency to save the nation and, in this sense, must be seen as the major driving forces behind the nationalist discourse of travel, regardless of its specific form. The focus on China's international situation was the result of a long process of foreign intervention in its territory. Reunification under the Nationalists only bolstered that focus with the prospect of a possible solution to China's troubles, while the invasion of Manchuria in 1931 sharpened it by extending those ills.

### I

One manifestation of this line of discourse is found with Cao Yabo, who was a revolutionary connected to Huang Xing,<sup>90</sup> an early member of the Tongmenghui,<sup>91</sup> and later an aide to Sun Yat-sen.<sup>92</sup> Having toured Sichuan in 1929, he wrote a tour diary that became one of the first publications by the CTS. In describing the motivation behind his touring and the publication of his diary, he followed a clearly nationalistic line of thought. As he explained, his tour and subsequent writing were meant to 'save the nation' at a time of 'shrinking national territory' insofar as, through them, people would get to know about Sichuan's plentiful resources, which were an asset for their capacity to 'swiftly eliminate imperialism'.<sup>93</sup> This awareness of national strength, it can be surmised, might contribute to just that. Here again, knowledge from travel (in this case through its surrogate, reading about it) by nationals was invoked as a nation-strengthening tool.

While the use by Cao Yabo of this type of argument may not come as particularly unexpected given his political background, a similar focus on travel as a means to counter imperialism also emerged, at least ostensibly, in some texts that were signed by school

<sup>88</sup> *Kunming daoyou* (Kunming, 1944), p. 3.

<sup>89</sup> Zhu Liren, 'Zhan hou Zhongguo youlan jihua', p. 6.

<sup>90</sup> E. S. K. Fung, *The Military Dimension of the Chinese Revolution: The New Army and Its Role in the Revolution of 1911* (Canberra, 1980), pp. 122–123.

<sup>91</sup> Jianming Chen and Tao Xiao, 'On the reasons that Christians supported the revolution led by Sun Yat-sen', in *Yearbook of Chinese Theology*, (ed.) P. Z. Huang (Boston, 2020), vol.6, p. 90.

<sup>92</sup> See Xu Guoqi, *China and the Great War: China's Pursuit of a New National Identity and Internationalization* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 242; and Wang Jie, 'Sun Yat-sen studies', in *Contemporary Studies on Modern Chinese History III*, (ed.) Zeng Yeying (London and New York, 2021), p. 64.

<sup>93</sup> Cao Yabo, *You Chuan riji* (Shanghai, 1929), preface, p. 1.

students, who did not share his kind of life experience. This seems to be a clear manifestation of the high level of nationalist indoctrination that was achieved in schools during the Nanjing decade,<sup>94</sup> or at least of the strong nationalist environment in those schools, as one might question the linear direct emulation by children at such an early age of nationalist ideas, as well as the full, unaided, and unguided juvenile authorship of such texts.

One such text was a travel record that was written by a group composed of children from a primary school in Huai'an County to the North of Nanjing, who named themselves the Xin'an (Primary School) Children Travel Party. This group of youngsters embarked in 1933 on a 54-day trip to Jiangnan and specifically Shanghai. They left in their free time and on their own. In their explanation of how they had created their travel group, they said it had resulted from their school's preference for 'experimental new education' and their own belief in 'educational theory'.<sup>95</sup> That their travel was stimulated by the school's experimental curriculum seems clear. The school considered the creation of a travel party by the children as a product of its espousal of the precepts 'life is education' and 'society is school'<sup>96</sup> that had been formulated by reformist educator Tao Xingzhi.<sup>97</sup> The children themselves also summed up the goals of their trip as an implementation of the latter of those two maxims.<sup>98</sup> Their travel was not, however, merely educational in nature. The students themselves maintained that it was a duty towards the nation: 'our country is faced with disaster, we are the masters of the country, our responsibility is heavy, and we therefore need to have a rich experience of every aspect of social life, so as to broaden our outlook and make ourselves stronger.'<sup>99</sup> Their view was that they were to draw individual benefits from travel that might ultimately help the nation. But it was more than that. They also saw their trip specifically as a means to gain a better knowledge of the realities that were impinging on the full sovereignty of the nation—knowledge that might stimulate them to counter those realities. Tao Xingzhi, a vocal opponent of imperialism,<sup>100</sup> had listed a number of tourist attractions that were related to imperialism for the children to visit.<sup>101</sup> For their part, the children declared that their aim was to see, among these sights, the area where the Shanghai War of 1932 had been fought. That, they said, might allow them to truly understand the barbarities of imperialism, which would be the most effective way to encourage them to make a 'determined effort to seek to become strong'.<sup>102</sup>

Another travel party, made up exclusively of children from a primary school in the municipality of Hangzhou and calling itself the West Lake Children Travel Party, visited Shanghai on a seven-day tour in 1936 and offered patriotic rationale for the visit that sounded very similar to that of the Xin'an Children Travel Party. Shanghai, they noted, was a place that was directly under the oppression of imperialists<sup>103</sup> and they wanted to see how such people had invaded their country and how they exploited their

<sup>94</sup> On narratives of a shrinking territory as a result of imperialism and the need to recover it in Republican school books, see Culp, *Articulating Citizenship*, pp. 80–84.

<sup>95</sup> Xin'an xiaoxue ertong lüxingtuan, *Women de lüxing ji* (Shanghai, 1935), [9], p. 17.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, [9], pp. 18–19.

<sup>97</sup> See Yusheng Yao, 'Rediscovering Tao Xingzhi as an educational and social revolutionary', *Twentieth-Century China* 27.2 (2002), pp. 102–103.

<sup>98</sup> Xin'an xiaoxue ertong lüxingtuan, *Women de lüxing ji*, [13], p. 23.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Chu Chaohui, 'Tao Xingzhi yu kangRi zhanzheng', *KangRi zhanzheng yanjiu* 1 (2005), pp. 183–192.

<sup>101</sup> Xin'an xiaoxue ertong lüxingtuan, *Women de lüxing ji*, [14] pp. 18, 156.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, [13], pp. 22–23.

<sup>103</sup> Xihu ertong lüxingtuan, *Xihu ertong lüxing ji* (Nanjing, 1937), p. 20; and Xihu ertong lüxingtuan, 'Xihu ertong lüxingtuan—gei quanguo xiao pengyou', *Shenghuo jiaoyu* 3.4 (1936), p. 159.

compatriots.<sup>104</sup> The account of their journey reflected these concerns: in a nationalist tone, they focused largely on places that were associated with imperialism or Japanese aggression. In following this approach, the children touristified the encroachment on the nation and it ranked so highly in their minds that it even entered their abstract definition of travel. Travel, they explained, was profoundly meaningful, enabling one, for instance, to gain rich knowledge, to understand the lines of invasion of China by imperialists, and to learn about the amount of China's precious resources and the major reasons for its invasion by imperialists. These gains were of not merely individual but also national consequence. Travel, they added, could rouse enthusiasm among a rejuvenated people and strengthen their determination to save the nation and ensure its survival.<sup>105</sup>

Significantly, the journeys of these two groups, which may in fact have been quite exceptional, involved a significant degree of public contact and coverage. The children were received by several institutions—educational or otherwise, such as the UTP, in the case of the Xin'an Children Travel Party—and their trips were followed by media reports and testimonies of the travellers themselves that were included in publications addressed mainly at 'new' and 'progressive' children. All of this provided several avenues of exposure not only of their specific travels, but also of the nationalist tour as such, especially in this juvenile form. Many focused on the aspects of child initiative or child travel, especially their courage in going alone.<sup>106</sup> However, some also paid attention to the nationalist dimension of their tour, as in an article published in a periodical for youngsters, in which the greatness of the purpose behind their travel was applauded.<sup>107</sup> Tao Xingzhi himself highlighted the nationalist motive in his preface to the West Lake Children Travel Party's account of their trip: while pinpointing how their initiative stood out as an example of children's capacity to 'do great things', he identified their activity with learning about, understanding, and reporting on 'national affairs'<sup>108</sup> in an evident appreciation of the nation-related component. Touring for the nation was thus emerging as a concept, an option, an obligation, and an ideal, both in material that was addressed at the general public and in other sources that were aimed at particular circles other than those that were particularly related to travel, such as the educational ones.

## //

Tourism by foreigners also emerged as a tactic for national salvation. It was granted particular importance as a means of elevating China's international image and status, and of defending the country's territory in a war over perceptions that was not unrelated to the realities and intentions of foreign encroachment.

It was considered as an argument by Wang Huanwen, who was department director of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Representing the institution at the Sixth Euro-Asian Coordinated Transport Meeting that was held in Tokyo in June 1931, not long before the Mukden Incident, he encouraged the development of a tourist industry in China as a way of mitigating or even eliminating international misunderstandings. From his perspective, these misunderstandings grew from foreign reports that focused exclusively on infighting, banditry, famine, and floods. He hoped that, if tourists went to China, they would observe its real political situation and learn about its cultural relics, rituals,

<sup>104</sup> Xihu ertong lüxingtuan, *Xihu ertong lüxing ji*, pp. 16, 119.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, to the reader, p. 1.

<sup>106</sup> See, for instance, *Liangyou* 116 (15 April 1936), p. 65.

<sup>107</sup> Ye Yiyi, 'Likai xuexiao jiating bu yong fuxiong shizhang lingdao de Xihu ertong lüxingtuan', *Xin shaonian* 1.8 (1936), p. 54.

<sup>108</sup> Xihu ertong lüxingtuan, *Xihu ertong lüxing ji*, p. 4.

and customs. As a result, they would counter the prevalent negative view that had been propagated and improve the nation's standing, which he may have considered a pressing issue, as he simultaneously mentioned the 'frightening' ambition of the Japanese.<sup>109</sup>

In reality, not only tourism, but also its promotion came to be considered useful for the purpose of national salvation. This is illustrated by a letter that a Chinese official at the Chicago World's Fair sent to the president of the CTS on 18 July 1933. This letter, written several weeks after the fair had opened on 27 May, enclosed a request for the donation and immediate dispatch of as many of the company's travel booklets as possible. This urgent appeal was explained as being needed to 'counter Japanese propaganda'.<sup>110</sup> In fact, perceptions of a Japanese offensive at the fair may have run high given the many sources of pro-Japanese information that were available there. Among these were the Manchurian exhibits that were associated with the South Manchuria Railway as a Japanese exhibitor,<sup>111</sup> the recognition of merit to Japan for the 'development of the surrounding countries, due to the construction of the South Manchurian railway' found in the fair's official guidebook,<sup>112</sup> a pamphlet on the 'progress of Manchuria' produced for the occasion,<sup>113</sup> and other like-minded material.<sup>114</sup> A new battlefield had opened at the fair. On the Chinese side, it included the recreation of the Golden Temple of Jehol—a disputed territory that had ultimately been invaded by the Japanese Kwantung Army in late February<sup>115</sup>—and tourist information itself was called upon for the purpose of national protection.

The logic of national rescue by tourists from abroad resurfaced in a 1934 plan by the municipal government of Beiping for the construction of a tourist district in the city. The plan specified that bringing tourists to China was the only effective strategy to increase international knowledge of China, and specifically of the magnificence of China's sights, and to oppose counterpropaganda that led people to consider China to be a disorderly country.<sup>116</sup> In fact, the plan also squarely referred to national defence in its line of argument, pointing out how Beiping had, following the Mukden Incident, become a place of strategic importance for protecting the country as a whole. The principle was that such a plan would bring advantages in terms of international relations and of the economic profit to be gained from drawing foreigners to sightseeing around China.<sup>117</sup> The plan alleged in particular that it would contribute to enhancing the nation's image and that this would ultimately be of significance for the overall defence of China, through the creation of allies and by undermining justifications for foreign intervention in China. Tourism was thus being imagined as

<sup>109</sup> Wang Huanwen, 'Zhongguo ji ying tichang lüxing shiye', *Lüxing zazhi* 5.11 (1931), p. 65.

<sup>110</sup> *Zhongguo lüxingshe baogaoshu*, [1933], p. 18.

<sup>111</sup> *List of Japanese Exhibitors to A Century of Progress International Exhibition at Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A. 1933*, University of Illinois at Chicago, Special Collections, A Century of Progress Records, COP16, Box 20, Folder 16-289, Japan—Foreign Countries, p. 21. On the Manchuria pavilion, see K. Shepherdson-Scott, 'Conflicting politics and contesting borders: exhibiting (Japanese) Manchuria at the Chicago World's Fair, 1933–34', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74.3 (2015), pp. 544–557.

<sup>112</sup> *Official Guide Book of the Fair* (Chicago, 1933), p. 95.

<sup>113</sup> *The Progress of Manchuria*, University of Illinois at Chicago, Special Collections, A Century of Progress Records, COP16, Box 20, Folder 16-289, Japan—Foreign Countries.

<sup>114</sup> R. Hidemichi Akagi, *Understanding Manchuria: A Handbook of Facts*, New York, November 1932, University of Illinois at Chicago, Special Collections, A Century of Progress Records, COP16, Box 20, Folder 16-289, Japan—Foreign Countries.

<sup>115</sup> Shepherdson-Scott, 'Conflicting Politics and Contesting Borders', pp. 542, 557–561.

<sup>116</sup> *Beiping youlan qu jianshe jihua*, Beiping shi zhengfu, 1934, pp. 1–3.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1. On the view that this argument, though seemingly far-fetched, could have been convincing, given the concerns about national defence, see M. Yue Dong, *Republican Beijing: The City and Its Histories* (Berkeley, LA and London, 2003), pp. 91–92.

a territorial combat weapon that incorporated the use of foreign tourists against other foreigners.

This kind of idea was appealing enough to also appear in a 1935 interview on tourism in the *China Traveler*. One question that was asked of the interviewee, Wang Zhengting, minister of foreign affairs from 1928 to 1931, was whether attracting tourists from abroad could make foreigners understand the real circumstances in China and improve its international standing. While he largely agreed with that premise, he recognised that many scenic spots were often left abandoned and unkempt, and would not produce a good impression; he thus suggested improvements in construction and transportation.<sup>118</sup>

### III

The Northeast was—due first to foreign presence and threat, and then to the Japanese invasion—a major focus in the nationalisation of the significance of travel. In the period from 1926 to 1931, an upsurge of interest in travel to Manchuria took place that was related to reunification and the issue of the political fate of the region.<sup>119</sup> In 1930, the Jiangsu Kuomintang (KMT) applied to the central government to promote travel to the Northeast, requesting it to order the Ministries of Railways, Communications and Education to establish plans on ways to travel and visit the area, free of charge, so that young people from everywhere in the whole of China might clearly see the country's real situation. The problem, in its view, was that the three Northeastern provinces repeatedly suffered from the oppression of the Japanese and the Russians, who were otherwise also competitively contriving to get hold of contiguous areas, and neither the Chinese people nor their government were paying much attention.<sup>120</sup> For the Jiangsu KMT, travel would therefore be a way to save what had been lost, and for China's youth—through the knowledge of reality afforded by travel—to rise in unison and pull the country back from its dire situation.<sup>121</sup> In November 1931, while Manchuria was being occupied, Zhao Junhao, editor of the *China Traveler*, delivered a much plainer verdict. While, in 1929, he had gloomily shared the view that the only good policy to save the Northeast was to have compatriots migrate there,<sup>122</sup> he now admitted that China was not strong enough to resist. Unable to provide any solution, he decided nevertheless to publish an account of an earlier trip to Liaoning and Jilin as a 'call for justice', while asking rhetorically how the existing state of affairs might be amended.<sup>123</sup> In the absence of a means of defence, this was to serve as a form of nationalist protest. But, even at that time, other nationalist functions of travels to the Northeast (past or present) were being proposed. In that same month, Lu Zuofu, director of the Mingsong Industrial Company, which he had founded to challenge the foreign domination of steam navigation in Sichuan, came up with a vision that was similar to that of the Jiangsu KMT, in a new preface to a selection of Northeast tour accounts. In his words, 'only once we have toured the Northeast and seen what the Japanese are doing there, will we wake up to their incessant scheming and quickly gain a deep understanding of it, and will we know the extreme urgency of what is called the Northeast issue'.<sup>124</sup> Once again, tourist activity was encouraged for its ability to raise awareness about foreign intervention. But so was reading about it, he appeared to hint, as he underlined his idea in the context of his introduction to the

<sup>118</sup> Zhao Junhao, 'Lüxing jiangzuo: Wang Rutang xiansheng fangwen ji', *Lüxing zazhi* 9.10 (1935), p. 67.

<sup>119</sup> Yajun Mo, *Touring China*, pp. 174–178.

<sup>120</sup> Zhichao, 'Lüxing xinxun', *Lüxing yuekan* 5.3 (1930), p. 53.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53–54.

<sup>122</sup> Zhao Junhao, 'Dongbei jihen ji [si]', *Lüxing zazhi* 3.11 (1929), p. 35; see also Yajun Mo, *Touring China*, p. 183.

<sup>123</sup> Zhao Junhao, 'Bianzhe zhi yan', *Lüxing zazhi* 5.11 (1931), n.p.

<sup>124</sup> Lu Zuofu, *Dongbei youji*, Chengdu shuju, 1931, preface, p. 1.

book and further suggested that those wishing to rise up and do something about the situation would be able to choose appropriate methods from the content of the travel accounts.<sup>125</sup> For these reasons, these accounts were to find a place among the publications of the Chengdu Bookstore, which were advertised as being aimed at opposing the Japanese and at saving the nation, together with calls on ‘nationalist compatriots to pay attention!’<sup>126</sup> As with the Jiangsu KMT, the point here was to draw attention to foreign encroachment and, if less explicitly, to help stimulate the nationalist fight for the Northeast as a result.

These examples of the political functionalisation of travel were not isolated episodes. In fact, they represented merely one part of an equation that was also taking root on the Japanese side, of which the campaign at the Chicago World’s Fair was an illustration. In Japanese tourist advertising and organised tours in the 1930s and early 1940s, attention was drawn to Manchurian development as a form of both tourist promotion and imperial propaganda.<sup>127</sup> A 1933 advertisement by the South Manchuria Railway Co. serves as an interesting counterpoint to the call for attention on the Chinese side. It signalled, as it were, to tourists and potential tourists the ‘progress’, ‘energy’, ‘activity’, and ‘promise’ of the new Manchukuo state, now that—and for these reasons, it could be inferred—the eyes of the world have turned toward Manchuria.<sup>128</sup> Manipulated as a periscope of political intentions, travel could in fact simultaneously serve totally opposing nationalist aims.

This being so, another idea was to surface in the 1930s with respect to the fight for the Northeast—that of travel to the region as a means of creating emotional bonds with the territory. It was used in 1936 in an account as geographically unrelated to the area as that of a bicycle tour from Suzhou to Anhui by three students on their spring holidays, which demonstrates how present this topic was in the minds of people during this period. This group noted how their cycling tour had been dismissed by other people who had learnt about it and had commented that it could not possibly be successful. They reacted to this view and argued that all Chinese youth should, with their feet stepping on real ground, investigate and get to know the Chinese territory. If they had done so by going to the three Northeastern provinces, then they would certainly now have been longing for them in all their greatness, recalling their importance for China, and striving harder for their recovery.<sup>129</sup> This observation in nostalgia for the loss of the Northeast—a sign of the mental relevance of the issue at the time—was certainly a powerful symbol of the significance of travel. This point was not missed by the editors of the *China Traveler* issue in which the account was published. They expressed their endorsement of travel in ‘our own territory’ as a shared obligation, while giving full priority to it over what they called the ‘extravagance’ of touring around the world,<sup>130</sup> and specifically for national reasons. The observations by the cyclists served, moreover, as an illustration of the relevance of cycling as a form of travel: the students alleged that only ‘travelling with one’s feet stepping on real ground might grant us’<sup>131</sup> the kind of impression and determination that they had obtained through their journey. The underlying idea was that travel in

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, preface, p. 2.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, n.p.

<sup>127</sup> See L. Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley, LA and London, 1999), pp. 259, 268; B. Kushner, *The Thought War: Japanese Imperial Propaganda* (Honolulu, 2006), p. 44; Kawamura Minato, *Manshū tetsudō maboroshi ryokō* (Tokyo, 2002), *passim*, e.g. pp. 70, 75, 170–173; and K. J. Ruoff, *Imperial Japan at Its Zenith: The Wartime Celebration of the Empire’s 2,600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* (Ithaca and London, 2010), p. 130.

<sup>128</sup> *Tsurisuto* 21.3 (1933), n.p.

<sup>129</sup> Gu Huiyun, ‘Su Wan jiaotache lüxing zhi’, *Lüxing zazhi* 11.1 (1937), p. 64.

<sup>130</sup> ‘Yi yue yi tan’, *Lüxing zazhi* 11.1 (1937), n.p.

<sup>131</sup> Gu Huiyun, ‘Su Wan jiaotache lüxing zhi’, p. 64.



direct contact with reality was of particular importance for the nation, with an emphasis on the concrete that was comparable to the preference given to travel over books, as a means to attain a full knowledge of reality. The focus here was on the creation of a special bond on the basis of special contact—unobtainable by train, the students claimed, as one dashed through.<sup>132</sup>

In contrast, the writer of an article that was published in 1937 before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident elaborated more generally on travel in any form as a means of creating an emotional bond. The author also viewed travel to the Northeast as a process of awareness about the particularly negative nature and effects on fellow nationals of Japanese impingement in the area—an aspect that he found likely to further stir up national sentiment. In wording that matched the regular rhetoric of the resistance,<sup>133</sup> the author stated that, if an opportunity arose for people to travel to the Northeast and see its imposing mountain chains, fertile land, and famous products, now that it had been seized by the invaders by using the methods of bandits, and the tens of millions of fellow countrymen who were living in slavery under tyrannical imperialist rule, then the strong fire of nationalism would be kindled in an imperceptible way.<sup>134</sup>

Much as Japan's advance in the Northeast and threat to the rest of the territory fuelled or at least could be invoked to justify the plan for a tourist district in Beiping, it encouraged calls for travel in other regions of China between 1931 and 1937. It was in this context that travel came to be promoted under umbrellas such as research and development<sup>135</sup> or resistance,<sup>136</sup> as a measure to save endangered areas from an identical fate. The editor of a Sichuan guidebook turned to tourism. He pointed out that, as the Northeast had been lost and the country was in peril, a revival of the nation needed to begin in the Southwest. In his view, promoting tourism between the outer and inner provinces would be a contribution to the nation.<sup>137</sup>

Simultaneously, a number of publications of travel accounts to the Western provinces were consistently wrapped in a discourse of nationalist purpose, which one might suspect was not necessarily the direct reason for either travel or publication in all cases but which nevertheless became a recurrent justification. The appeal for nationals to head westwards, which had been building up in the 1920s, gained new urgency in the early 1930s, with the Nationalist commitment to direct control over the frontier provinces and the reality of territorial encroachment elsewhere.<sup>138</sup> It was in this context that nationalist sensitivity populated the travel accounts. Journalist Gu Zhizhong—the author of a book on travels to the Western part of the country that was published in 1932—turned his work into a nationalist manifesto, encasing it in slogans such as ‘the Northeast must be recovered and the Northwest firmly defended, with all one’s might’.<sup>139</sup> Describing how he had, during his journey, equated his collection of material to the investigations in the Northeast by a group that was sent by the League of Nations, he hoped that the book would make everyone pay equal attention to the Northeast and Northwest issues.<sup>140</sup> Lu Yi—one of the writers of a travelogue to Qinghai that went into print two years later and of which Gu Zhizhong was a co-author—compared the Northwest to the lost Northeast and hoped

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>133</sup> See R. Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance and Collaboration in Modern China* (Berkeley, LA and London, 2000), pp. 176–182.

<sup>134</sup> Zhengzhang, ‘Yi jiu san qi nian de xinxiang shiye’.

<sup>135</sup> See *Xibei daoyou* (Shanghai, 1935), foreword.

<sup>136</sup> See Bing Xin, *Bing Xin youji* (Shanghai, 1935), pp. 3–4.

<sup>137</sup> See Zheng Bicheng (ed.), *Sichuan daoyou* (Shanghai, 1935), editor’s preface, p. 1.

<sup>138</sup> See Yajun Mo, *Touring China*, pp. 85–131, in particular p. 86.

<sup>139</sup> Gu Zhizhong, *Xi xing ji* (Shanghai, 1932), p. 1.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, author’s preface, p. 2.

that the reader would thereafter not only want to see Qinghai, but also work in a positive, energetic way to see that one day the development of the Northwest and the recovery of the Northeast would be achieved.<sup>141</sup> Wu Aichen, the writer of a 1935 record of a tour in Xinjiang, proclaimed the same type of aim for the publication of his text. It was intended to make nation-loving people learn about the region and gain a feeling of enthusiasm to protect the border regions and save the nation, which would only be possible, he clarified, if the Chinese people knew in depth about Xinjiang's importance and the threat it faced.<sup>142</sup> Lin Pengxia, author of a 1936 travelogue to the Northwest, gave out a similar rationale for her book. A female pilot who was born in Singapore, she had left for China after the Japanese bombing of Shanghai in 1932 and flown to investigate the situation in the Northwest for the Nationalist government at her own expense.<sup>143</sup> As she put it, her intention was to draw the attention of the Chinese people to the importance of the region, with the Northeastern provinces having been lost and the Northwest being an appropriate foundation for the renewal of a nation threatened with extinction.<sup>144</sup>

In these various texts, travel to the Western provinces was granted a role in terms of territorial integrity. Here, as in the case of travel to the Northeast, the geographically focused approach was dictated by the perception that border regions were particularly threatened. This was a different angle from that found in other less territorially circumscribed understandings but the central argument was the same. One idea arose again and again: travel, by providing knowledge about China and strengthening its people's emotional ties with the country, had the potential to preserve the nation's unity and restore its full sovereignty.

Against this backdrop, the development of the notion that travel to border regions could arouse geographical awareness of the nation's most fragile areas and help safeguard them found a close parallel in the emergence during the Republican period of a 'new geography' that was promoted to overcome the frontier crisis. There was a clear connection between these two trends. For one thing, the new approach to geography consisted of a shift in methodology from textual research to actual fieldwork or on-site investigation, which necessarily implied travel. The context was thus one of development of an inherent connection between geography and travel, making it even more natural that travel accounts could be viewed as relevant for learning geography. They were treated in just this way in the introduction to a 1936 selection of 90 travelogues that covered all of China's provinces. The author suggested that the accounts could serve as supplementary teaching material for geography classes in secondary schools.<sup>145</sup> What is more, this new approach to geography was fuelled by political concerns, much like the visions of a link between travel and territorial integrity, and matured during the Nanjing decade, precisely when these visions were flourishing.<sup>146</sup>

Just as the idea of visualising border regions for national sentiment was being promoted by both encouragement to travel and a new on-site approach to geographical research, it found further materialisation in cinema. This is unsurprising. Given the situation in the Northeast from 1931 and the Shanghai War of 1932, the danger of imperialist invasion and the urgency of national salvation became recurrent features in left-wing film production.<sup>147</sup> They appear, for example, in Sun Yu's *Wild Rose* (1932) and *Little Toys* (1933).

<sup>141</sup> Gu Zhizhong and Lu Yi, *Dao Qinghai qu* (Shanghai, 1934), author's preface 2, p. 2.

<sup>142</sup> Wu Aichen, *Xinjiang jiyou* (Shanghai, 1935), Zhang's preface, pp. 5–6.

<sup>143</sup> Yuxin Ma, *Women Journalists and Feminism in China, 1898–1937* (Amherst, 2010), p. 303.

<sup>144</sup> Lin Pengxia, *Xibei xing*, 1936, author's preface 1, pp. 1–5.

<sup>145</sup> *Zhongguo youji xuan* (Shanghai, 1936), editor's introductory remarks, p. 2.

<sup>146</sup> Zhihong Chen, 'The frontier crisis and the construction of modern Chinese geography in Republican China (1911–1949)', *Asian Geographer* 33.2 (2016), pp. 142–147.

<sup>147</sup> Jubin Hu, *Projecting a Nation: Chinese National Cinema Before 1949* (Hong Kong, 2003), pp. 75–82; and Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (New York and London, 2004), pp. 63, 67, 79–81.

It is notable that, while such films appealed to national awareness, they were largely set in small villages and at the same time featured characters who had travelled from Shanghai and included scenes from the metropolis. This mixture of elements may have served to stimulate a consciousness about China as a territory that was composed of not only major urban centres, but also rural areas that deserved attention. More incisively, Sun Yu's *Great Road* (1934) turned towards explicitly distant areas and to the representation of China as a whole. A group of road workers from Shanghai headed to the 'interior' to build a highway across China and, in so doing, proclaimed their love of the countryside. As they walked along, an animated map of China was shown, with roads stretching as far west as Ningxia and Gansu, and crisscrossing heavily populated eastern provinces such as Zhejiang and as far south as Guangdong.<sup>148</sup> As the construction work proceeded, the army of the 'enemy nation', which had 'seized all that land from us', attacked again, making the task of road building and acting for the nation even more urgent. Fei Mu's *Blood on Wolf Mountain* (1936)—the story of a village threatened by a pack of wolves, intended to represent the Japanese—called for concerted action. One villager advocated that fighting wolves required everyone to work together and go up the mountain. In both films, displacement emerged as a component in the effort to mobilise for the nation. At the same time, they joined a wider trend that was visible in these various productions. In all of them, the visual display of territories in remote, otherwise largely inaccessible places played a role akin to travel in creating, among the film goers, an image of the entire Chinese nation and a sentimental bond with it.

#### IV

Later, in the actuality of a partly occupied China, the importance of travel to national defence may have been largely dismissed as a possibility or relegated to a far distant reality. This does not mean that the issue of national defence was entirely absent. A 1941 article in the *China Traveler* referred to how, in such a time of war, Canada was using tourist income to pay for military expenses and how President Roosevelt was promoting travel to strengthen national defence.<sup>149</sup> Another piece, on the Chinese tourist industry, of 1943 pinpointed as a tourism category that of 'tourism with a national defence character', its significance explained by the fact that China in modern times was large and unified but that its border areas were barren, so people only rarely went there.<sup>150</sup> Now, however, no immediate practical national defence agenda appeared to have been realistically contemplated in the publication of these articles. Other reasons would have motivated it, including possible long-term prospects of the post-war benefits of travel for national defence and the CTS's self-promotional considerations based on the association of one with the other. Whatever the precise reasons, the fact is that the question of national defence was minor compared with the issue of national unity and construction that then dominated the nationalist discourse of travel, and quite logically so, given China's renewed division. It should also be noted that the paradigm that was observed at the beginning of the Nanjing decade of attribution of political relevance to travelling to the Northeast and to related reading as a means of raising awareness with an ultimate purpose of territorial defence emerged slightly transformed in Zhu Liren's 1945 tourism plan for post-war China. In his projection of recovery of the Northeast, he recommended that it be made into a global scenic spot area, not only to attract visitors, but also to let people know that it really should be Chinese territory.<sup>151</sup> The central object of awareness

<sup>148</sup> C. Rea, *Chinese Film Classics, 1922-1949* (New York, 2021), p. 102.

<sup>149</sup> Sun Peigan, 'Tan zhanshi youlan shiye', *Lüxing zazhi* 15.7 (1941), pp. 91-94.

<sup>150</sup> She Guitang, 'Zhongguo youlan shiye zhi huigu', *Lüxing zazhi* 17.7 (31 July 1943), p. 5.

<sup>151</sup> Zhu Liren, 'Zhan hou Zhongguo youlan jihua', p. 4.

was shifted from territorial aggression to territorial appurtenance and unity, which may have been deemed to need more emphasis than ever—given the factual situation for more than a decade—among foreigners and nationals alike, tourism providentially reaching both.

### A representative discourse?

How representative was this type of discourse? Probably not very. For one thing, it was markedly limited in scope. It was only a fragment of the much wider utilitarian discourse of travel that unfolded during this period and focused mostly on benefits for the individual traveller in terms of learning, education, experience, body, and health, rather than for society or the nation. As was to be expected, the institutional promoters of travel, including travel associations and travel industry organisations, were quick to stress the utility of travel as a way to rationalise it, all the more so considering the persistence of an element of traditional resistance to travel in China that was linked to the perception that it implied hardship. In so doing, they generally either simply noted that travel generated advantages or emphasised specific gains for individuals that derived from it. This was the case with the UTP and its associates, and multiple examples of this approach are found in UTP material. For instance, the author of an article that was published in 1930 in *The Unison Travel Magazine* stressed that travel was beneficial for one's mind and helped with one's studies.<sup>152</sup> Similarly, a UTP brochure from a few years later urged travellers to join a two-day trip to Putuo by invoking the advantages of travel in terms of 'body strengthening, knowledge, experience and thought'.<sup>153</sup> In texts originating from or published by the CTS, the same point was regularly made. In an interview that he granted to the *China Traveler* in 1936, Chen Guangfu advocated travel as very beneficial to one's health, studies, and experience, along with other aspects, and went so far as to state that it was what had benefitted him most in life.<sup>154</sup> An analysis of American travel practice in that magazine in the same year clarified this point with reference to cognitive gain: the interest of all Americans in outdoor exercise and especially in travelling was, indeed, related to enjoyment, but also provided a great deal of knowledge. As the journalist summarised it, one obtained some sort of profit from travel.<sup>155</sup> Likewise, as a way to explain the unfamiliar camping life that was favoured by many Americans, a writer for the *China Traveler* emphasised that travelling, albeit primarily a pleasant and enjoyable experience, also included the purpose of training body and mind, and gaining knowledge of all types.<sup>156</sup>

While institutional promoters of travel used this kind of rhetoric, they were far from the only ones to do so. An example from outside that group was Cao Peiyan—a student from Beijing Higher Normal College, who wrote a 1920 article in *New Life* on travel as part of a 'new life'. In his text, which was largely an endorsement of travel, he argued that its benefits were crucial and named first amongst them that of body training: by travelling to faraway places, 'we can naturally train our physiques and make them stronger day by day'.<sup>157</sup> A similar focus on the benefits of travel for the individual also appeared in fictional travel accounts. In one of them, from 1932, that was included in a geography collection for children, its author noted that the book was about two children who had graduated from junior primary school and travelled around the country together, and added that, by the time they returned home, their knowledge had

<sup>152</sup> Fang Zhichao, 'Lüxing yu xueye', *Lüxing yuekan* 5.7 (1930), p. 1.

<sup>153</sup> See Shen Xingchu, 'Qing liewei tichang lüxing aihu lüxingtuan bing qing haishang lüxing—dao Putuo qu', in 'Dao Putuo qu!', *Yousheng lüxingtuan*, undated, after 1934, brochure, p. 11.

<sup>154</sup> Zhao Junhao, 'Lüxing jiangzuo: Chen Guangfu xiansheng fangwen ji', p. 84.

<sup>155</sup> Sun Silin, 'Meiguoren de lüxing re', *Lüxing zazhi* 10.8 (1936), p. 85.

<sup>156</sup> Sun Peigan, 'Ou Mei lüxing tan pian', *Lüxing zazhi* 10.9 (1936), p. 100.

<sup>157</sup> Cao Peiyan, 'Lüxing yu xin shenghuo', *Xin shenghuo* 37 (30 May 1920), p. 5.

improved.<sup>158</sup> In another, from 1934, about a journey by a little boy called Zhener and his father, the story began with the latter telling his son that he wanted to take him along so that Zhener would strengthen his physique and gain a great deal of geographical knowledge.<sup>159</sup> If travel was justified for its benefits for individuals in texts like these in which the activity was theorised or fictionalised, then it was also occasionally rationalised in the same way in cases of travel practice, such as in introductory texts to reports of actual trips. The author of a foreword to a 1934 account of a tour of six provinces by painter Rao Guiju presented it by noting what he viewed as the three benefits of travel: physical training, knowledge increase, and artistic inspiration.<sup>160</sup> In the 1935 prologue to his collection of travel accounts, Zhuang Yu stressed that touring was useful for body, mind, and study.<sup>161</sup> The compiler of a selection of travel accounts to Fangshan wrote in his preface that the valuable thing about travel was that, by means of it, one could broaden the mind, gain knowledge, observe, study, and learn; it was more than just roaming around in search of wonders and luxuriating in the scenery.<sup>162</sup> Travellers themselves also sometimes referred in their travelogues to the individual benefits that were gained from the experience. In much the same way as one of the travelling students from Suzhou's Zhenhua Girls' School examined the social benefits of travel, as observed above, another commented, with a different focus, that travelling was very beneficial for learning.<sup>163</sup>

Even though the utilitarian discourse of travel as a whole was much broader than its streak that looked into the social and national benefits of travel, the fact remains that it was present in only a fraction of the sources that were relevant for studying travel in this period. Most material dealing with travel is free from any type of considerations about its benefits, which suggests that a majority of people did not envisage travel as providing any particular long-term gains. Rather, most sources unsurprisingly reveal a much stronger focus on travel as a source of attraction or pleasure. Multiple testimonies throughout the period attest to travel as the object of intense widespread interest without adding any thoughts about its consequences. For example, a writer for the *China Traveler* referred in 1928 to the fact that more and more Chinese had grown fond of travelling in the preceding years.<sup>164</sup> Testimonies of this kind in CTS material should, of course, be viewed with caution, given CTS's vested interest in emphasising people's enjoyment of travel, but the fact is that these sentiments were also omnipresent in general periodicals. The author of a 1935 reflection on travel in the *Modern Sketch* magazine related the following impression: 'I do not know for what reason, but I have for one year just been listening to people longing to travel [...] everyone is thinking of rushing away.'<sup>165</sup> This feeling was strong enough not to have vanished during the war with Japan. In 1940, the author of a column in a magazine on family and women commented that urban people, although now hindered by the war, displayed a strong interest in travelling in the spring.<sup>166</sup> The attraction of travel was also in the minds of people during the Civil War. The author of an article that was published in 1947 in another magazine stated that, for common people, nothing was more interesting than travelling.<sup>167</sup> A similar assertion was made that same year in a Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) publication. During the spring, the author wrote,

<sup>158</sup> Xiao youji (Shanghai, 1932), preface, p. 1.

<sup>159</sup> Chen Duo, *Zhener lüxing ji* (Shanghai, 1934), p. 2.

<sup>160</sup> Rao Guiju, *Liu sheng jiyou* (Nanchang, 1935), foreword, pp. 1–2.

<sup>161</sup> Zhuang Yu, *Wo yi youji*, prologue, p. 2.

<sup>162</sup> Wang Yulin, *Fangshan youji huibian* (Beiping, 1937), preface, p. 1.

<sup>163</sup> *Lüxing congzaì*, p. 85.

<sup>164</sup> Tu Zheyin, 'Cong Shanghai dao Ha'erbin', *Lüxing zazhi* 2 (Spring 1928), p. 15.

<sup>165</sup> Shao Xunmei, 'Guanyu lüxing', *Shidai manhua* 14 (20 February 1935), n.p.

<sup>166</sup> 'Tan lüxing', *Jiating yu funü* 2.5 (1940), p. 118.

<sup>167</sup> 'Yao ban yi ge lüxingtuan', *Molifeng* 2.11 (1947), p. 17.



one could hear nothing but people asking others where they were going on holiday and madly preparing to go to Wuxi, Suzhou, or the like. For people in general, he made explicit, travel was of the greatest interest.<sup>168</sup>

This kind of direct enthusiasm about travel was clearly exposed in writings by prominent cultural figures such as Yu Dafu and Ba Jin. In 'Travel in 1933', Yu Dafu stated that 'travel is really the best entertainment for people who have free time, money and health'. Having advanced this general idea, he explained the happiness engendered by travel by evoking a series of aspects that he considered it involved: the liberation of the spirit, the satisfaction of curiosity, and the thrill of taking small risks against the background of an overly comfortable life, which amounted, in his words, to 'the most suitable injection of morphine'.<sup>169</sup> In his preface to *Clog Marks Everywhere*, a collection of travel notes published in 1934, he made the same point by plainly stating that 'going out on a tour is, of course, a very happy thing'.<sup>170</sup> He added that he was fond of travelling in nature while explaining that, when he went on a tour, he did not follow as noble a purpose as, for instance, Qing official Sun Jiagang, who had travelled with the idea of writing about his concerns.<sup>171</sup> His focus was on the travel experience, as can be seen in his account of a tour through Eastern Zhejiang that is included in this collection. Yu Dafu had made the journey following an invitation to visit the region from Zeng Yinqian, director of the Hangjiang Railway, who had wished to have him view the scenery and describe it in detail to both Chinese and foreign travellers to the province.<sup>172</sup> He narrated how, after starting off from Hangzhou and while crossing the Qiantang River, he had felt an inexplicable pleasure and how the words relaxed and joyful applied to the state he had been in.<sup>173</sup> In another text, called 'Sentimental journey', he recounted that, as someone who always felt dissatisfied with people and the world, he had been blissfully happy when leaving Shanghai on a train and had thought that 'travel is really good'.<sup>174</sup> These are only a couple of examples of a much wider picture. As Li Xiangxiang has pointed out, Yu Dafu was always excited when travelling.<sup>175</sup> Another writer, Ba Jin, shared Yu Dafu's enthusiasm with travel but focused on people rather than the places visited. In his preface to his 1933 *Travel Notes*, he explained that he had travelled to many places that year for the purpose of spending a few days of happy times with friends, and that he wanted to continue going to other places with this goal in mind. He clarified that it was not at all just because he liked famous mountains and great rivers that he had started travelling, adding that he also very much wanted to learn a little about the living circumstances of people everywhere.<sup>176</sup>

Other travellers were equally passionate about travel as such. A tourist who went to stay at the West Lake for five days noted, in an account published in 1929, that he had experienced all the scenic sites on the lake and the beautiful scenery in the hills and had thought of going for 10 years. What a pleasure it had been, he exclaimed, while noting that, against the background of ups and downs, days with no leisure time, and engagement with trivial things, it would have been impossible for him not to record the delight of

<sup>168</sup> Lin Yun, 'Lüxing de guanjian', *Funi* 2.1 (1947), p. 19.

<sup>169</sup> Yu Dafu, *Yu Dafu sanwen ji*, pp. 151–152.

<sup>170</sup> Yu Dafu, *Sanwen ji, jihen chuchu*. Zizhuan (Shanghai, 2002), preface, p. 1.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.

<sup>172</sup> Wu Xiaodong has seen in this invitation involving the use of travel writing for tourism advertising a visionary move by the railway: Wu Xiaodong, 'Yu Dafu yu Zhongguo xiandai fengjing de faxian', *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* (October 2012), p. 1.

<sup>173</sup> Yu Dafu, *Sanwen ji*, p. 8.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>175</sup> Li Xiangxiang, 'Lun Yu Dafu de lüyou guan', *Zhejiang shifan daxue xuebao* 28.3 (2003), p. 37.

<sup>176</sup> Ba Jin, *Lütu suibi* (Shanghai, 1934), preface.



those leisurely days.<sup>177</sup> He Boxin, a traveller who journeyed through eight provinces in 1934, also concentrated on his experience. An industrialist who had been chosen as a county representative to participate at a Sichuan Production and Construction Meeting in 1934, he had embarked, soon after it had finished, on his trip, motivated, as he explained, by a wish to check on business, education, art, and people's diseases, so as to understand the state of modern society. As he summed up in his preface to his book, the improvement of municipal administration in Hangzhou, the beautiful scenery in Qingdao, the majesty of the architecture in Beiping, the prosperity of the new undertakings in Nanjing, the development of public undertaking in Jinan, and the progress in education and art in various places had left a good impression on him and greatly increased his interest in travelling.<sup>178</sup> As these examples show, the immediate impact of travel on the individual seems to have been what was in the thoughts of most people. It is thus no wonder that even a journalist from the *China Traveler* who was as nation-minded as Zhao Junhao—while also certainly well aware of the inclinations of travellers—should have started a book about his tours in South China with an account of the joys of travel along the Yangtze River<sup>179</sup> and have made no reference to ulterior benefits.

While the discourse that associated travel with society and the nation was far from universally shared, the fact that it existed to the extent that it did indicates the importance that was given in some cases to collective concerns in terms of the redefinition of private life. At the same time, it is crucial to note the significant participation in this discourse of specific categories of people: politicians, politically motivated educators, and politicised students, including younger children. This does not mean that this kind of discourse was necessarily embraced by all those who fell within these categories. It was not present, for instance, in a 1934 book with impressions of a Sichuan tour by nationalist educator Shu Xincheng, who composed it based on letters that he had written to his family along his way.<sup>180</sup> This author's considerations regarding travel were of a different order. He stated that, in recent times, he had been spending several months every year wandering around because this was his natural disposition.<sup>181</sup> Travel was for him a question of interest and enjoyment. The same focus on the experience emerged in his description of his journey to Chengdu. What he retained from it was the fact that the changes in the environment and the long journey had made him appreciate much of the taste of life, through loneliness and silence.<sup>182</sup> Politician Xu Jingren, who served as prime minister of China from 1925 to 1926, deployed the same plain emphasis on the activity of travel itself. When interviewed for the *China Traveler*, he described it simply as the most interesting thing,<sup>183</sup> adding nothing further.

Another aspect not to be dismissed is the fact that many of the sources that conveyed this discourse were published by the CTS, including several by its own staff. This requires reading them against the fact that nationalism was ultimately a good marketing tool that served the company's interests. This is an important aspect to consider, as it raises the question of whether this boom in nationalist discourse can be interpreted as being connected, at least in part, to the specific motivations of the travel industry. The CTS had been founded amidst a nationalist discourse of national control of travel business and guidance. Its embrace and dissemination of the understanding of travel as a matter of consequence in the national sphere could now only further enhance its identification with a national project. This was of possible relevance in turn to its business. Portraying travel in

<sup>177</sup> Jiang Zuyao, 'Xihu xiao zhu ji', in *Hu shang*, (ed.) Zhou Shoujuan (Shanghai, 1929), p. 77.

<sup>178</sup> He Boxin, *Ba sheng lüxing jianwen lu* (Chongqing, 1935), author's preface, pp. 5–6.

<sup>179</sup> Zhao Junhao, *Nan you shi ji* (Shanghai, 1936), pp. 11–17.

<sup>180</sup> Shu Xincheng (ed.), *Shu you xinying* (Shanghai, 1934), preface, p. 1.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, preface, p. 2.

<sup>183</sup> Zhao Junhao, 'Lüxing jiangzuo: Xu Jingren xiansheng fangwen ji', *Lüxing zazhi* 9.4 (1935), p. 55.

this way had the potential to help promote it, as was the case in the early twentieth century, when the tourist industry in the United States used and promoted a nationalist culture that served its interests.<sup>184</sup>

In fact, the CTS publicised the message of a connection between itself and national purpose in one further way. Chen Guangfu mentioned in 1935 the importance of travelling in terms of patriotic spirit and how the ultimate aim of his travel company was to render travel convenient and provide guidance with respect to tourist attractions, so as to stimulate patriotic thoughts.<sup>185</sup> In doing so, he not only ascribed greater benefits and significance to travel practice, but also indirectly did the same regarding the activity of the CTS, which, through this redefinition of the significance of customer practice, emerged further refashioned as being instrumental to national intent. More than that, by portraying travel—defined as patriotic—as being reliant, for some travellers at least, on the travel service, he identified the CTS as an essential agent for this manifestation of patriotism.

Huang Boqiao insisted on a similar idea in the article that he wrote for the *China Traveler*. While mentioning the CTS too, but adopting the broader approach of travel guidance (which was one of the tasks that was undertaken by the Nanjing-Shanghai-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway Administration), he related the phenomenon of a greater perception of travel as an enjoyable thing to the existence of travel services, which he identified as the reason for a change in mentality from the past, when people had considered travel to be a hardship. If guidance institutions, by promoting travel and simultaneously making it more comfortable, were thus to be credited for an ever-greater number of travellers, then they were also to be recognised for the consequences of that rise. He listed these: as travellers immersed themselves and learnt about their country, ever more people would love their nation and, as a result, the foundations of the nation would be established and national business would develop.<sup>186</sup> Huang thus placed travel service on the same level as nation-building, much like travel itself. This was an idea that Tang Weibin reiterated at the end of the war, as he anticipated that a process of national construction was about to begin, by stressing the major role that the travel industry would play in that effort.<sup>187</sup> He also revisited it in a 1946 retrospect of the CTS, in which he not only explained the national relevance of travel, which in his view showed the motherland to the common people and thereby excited their nationalist enthusiasm, but also underlined the importance of the development of the travel industry: it could, in his words, determine the degree of a country's strength or weakness, as all the advanced countries of Europe and America were doing their utmost to promote it.<sup>188</sup> Here, as before, it was not just that the travel service was regarded as being of national importance. Part of the underlying message was that it was to be sought as a means, and a crucial one, for the fulfilment of nationalistic aims: it was an incitement, not a static observation that was drawn from a concern about the nation. And this is precisely the point. The nationalist discourse seems in part to have been directed by a wish to capitalise on nationalist feeling, while transforming it into travel.

## Conclusion

The discourse of travel in China was subject to a step-by-step incursion by society and the nation (the former gradually identified, in the modern world and in Republican China,

<sup>184</sup> On this phenomenon between 1880 and 1940, see M. S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880–1940* (Washington and London, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>185</sup> Chen Guangfu, 'You Xiang sheng gonglu ji Nanyue ji', in *Dangdai youji xuan* (Shanghai, 1935), pp. 86–87.

<sup>186</sup> Huang Boqiao, 'Daoyou yu aiguo', p. 3.

<sup>187</sup> Tang Weibin, 'Zhongguo lüxing shiye de zhanwang', *Lüxing zazhi* 18.2 (1944), p. 5.

<sup>188</sup> Tang Weibin, 'Zhong lü ershisan nian', p. 91.

with national society) during the first half of the twentieth century. The fact that such a discourse, focused on an activity within the domain of private life, was infiltrated by these realities demonstrates the power of the anxieties revolving around matters such as citizenship, social organisation, national unity, and national independence during this period in China. It is true that this development was limited in scope, as the evidence above shows. In most of the discourse of travel, considerations about society and nation were absent. For most people, travel was not considered socially or nationally relevant, but was viewed rather as part of the purely private sphere. However, the fact remains that some connected travel to social and national concerns. That this was the case must be understood in the context of collective apprehension that grew from the late Qing and was to make inroads into the shaping of private life itself, imbuing it with social and national meanings. This was a time of national crisis during which a united front among citizens, inspired by feelings of a state under siege, solidified their bonds with the nation, turning it into a reality with which they more readily identified. This stimulated the propagation of an ideology of national commitment that tied the individual to the nation, at least in theory and discourse, in a variety of ways. Significantly, this occurred with respect to personal dimensions that were not directly or necessarily linked to the nation as a community and political axis, such as material consumption,<sup>189</sup> body cultivation,<sup>190</sup> and sex.<sup>191</sup> This nationalist discourse was a sign of a broad vision with respect to the construction and protection of the nation, which involved not just the affirmation of identity and the build-up and maintenance of political power, which were central to nationalist movements.<sup>192</sup> It also included far-reaching mechanisms that turned the nation into a totalising reality in the sense that it was to be associated with all aspects of the citizens' lives.

The evolution of this discourse throughout this period appears to have been closely tied to broader historical change in several ways. Examples of this are found in an especially pronounced focus on national defence that grew in tandem with the escalation of Japanese attacks and threats during the Nanjing decade, and the shift to a focus on national unity that occurred during and after the war. A major aspect in the evolution of this discourse was the exponential amplification of participation in its formulation from the late 1920s, which must be understood as mirroring both external and domestic pressures. Another important aspect was the difference between a narrow focus on national survival and the international context in the 1904 *Dagongbao* article and a more expansive view that included explicit ideas of service to society or to the nation, first in connection with the travel industry in the 1920s and then more generally with travel and tourism in the 1930s. This appears to have been a reflection of the growing diffusion of and emphasis on the idea of the civic commitment of all to the public good during the Republican period. Certainly, the influence of the state in shaping both the expansion of this discourse and the notion of public service that developed within it cannot be dismissed, even if it was not direct. Another case in which the state may have been of at least some importance in moulding such a discourse was the establishment of a structure of mobilisation for public cause with the New Life Movement. The same cyclists who recommended travel for its benefit to the nation—and even labelled it a duty for Chinese youth—concluded their travel record by stating (in connection with the social ills that they had observed en route) that the new China of the New Life Movement

<sup>189</sup> See Gerth, *China Made*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>190</sup> See A. D. Morris, *Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China* (Berkeley, LA and London, 2004), p. 3.

<sup>191</sup> See F. Dikötter, *Sex, Culture and Modernity in China* (London, 1995), pp. 1–2.

<sup>192</sup> See A. D. Smith, *Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 6–7.

would have no place for selfish people.<sup>193</sup> They did not explicitly establish any kind of connection between their idea that the young should travel and that movement. However, it can still be argued that the frame of mind of public mobilisation that was further encouraged by the state through the New Life Movement would have integrated or facilitated concepts of travel as involving a public dimension and not merely individual physical mobility.

While all this discourse must be integrated into the wider reality of the nationalist movement in China as a whole and of more specific historical developments, it must also be placed within another larger picture. Perceptions of the usefulness of travel to the nation were not unique to China. They mushroomed in the international context from the late nineteenth century, spreading through a wide range of participants. They were to be mentioned early on by many individual voices, including private touring organisations that were founded in the 1880s and the 1890s in Sweden,<sup>194</sup> France,<sup>195</sup> and Hungary.<sup>196</sup> By the first decade of the twentieth century, a substantial number of similar associations had sprung up throughout the European continent that were intent on grounding travel in larger concerns such as nationalist commitment.<sup>197</sup> In the United States, in a parallel process, a network of private institutions took the lead, starting in the 1880s, in promoting travel as a patriotic duty.<sup>198</sup> In many countries where, unlike China, the state authorities stepped into the field in response to private demands or upon realising the importance of travel and became significantly engaged in it, they developed into important direct actors in the establishment of links between it and the nation. The linking of travel to the nation developed around the globe under a variety of justifications, many of which were actually the same as, or analogous to, those that were to be found in China. Examples of this abound. Domestic tourism came to be thought of as a nation-building tool in several contexts: it was envisaged as a means to develop nationalist feelings in Hungary;<sup>199</sup> to bring about knowledge and consequent love of the land, and inculcate a determination to work, fight, and die for it, in the United States;<sup>200</sup> to create a national community in Germany,<sup>201</sup> Italy,<sup>202</sup> and Spain;<sup>203</sup> to strengthen national culture and identity in Canada,<sup>204</sup> and to develop a national

<sup>193</sup> Gu Huiyun, 'Su Wan jiaotache lüxing zhi', p. 72.

<sup>194</sup> O. Löfgren, 'Know your country: a comparative perspective on tourism and nation building in Sweden', in *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America*, (eds.) S. Baranowski and E. Furlough (Ann Arbor, 2001), p. 143.

<sup>195</sup> P. Young, 'A place like any other? Publicity, hotels and the search for a French path to tourism', in *Touring Beyond the Nation: A Transnational Approach to European Tourism History*, (ed.) E. G. E. Zuelow (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2011), pp. 129–130.

<sup>196</sup> A. Vari, 'From friends of nature to tourist-soldiers: nation building and tourism in Hungary, 1873–1914', in *Turizm*, (eds.) Gorsuch and Koenker, pp. 68–71.

<sup>197</sup> Young, 'Place like any other?', pp. 130–131.

<sup>198</sup> Shaffer, *See America First*, pp. 3–5.

<sup>199</sup> Vari, 'From friends of nature', pp. 74–75.

<sup>200</sup> Shaffer, *See America First*, pp. 26, 93–94; and M. S. Shaffer, 'Seeing the nature of America: the national parks as national assets, 1914–1929', in *Being Elsewhere*, (eds.) Baranowski and Furlough, p. 155.

<sup>201</sup> K. Semmens, "'Travel in merry Germany": tourism in the Third Reich', in *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict*, (ed.) J. K. Walton (Clevedon, Buffalo, and Toronto, 2005), p. 146; and S. Baranowski, 'Radical nationalism in an international context: strength through joy and the paradoxes of Nazi tourism', in *Histories of Tourism*, (ed.) Walton, pp. 133–134; S. Baranowski, *Strength through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 5; and S. Baranowski and E. Furlough, 'Strength through joy: tourism and national integration in the Third Reich', in *Being Elsewhere*, (eds.) Baranowski and Furlough, pp. 213–229.

<sup>202</sup> V. de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 183.

<sup>203</sup> E. Afinoguénova, 'An organic nation: state-run tourism, regionalism, and food in Spain, 1905–1931', *The Journal of Modern History* 86.4 (2014), pp. 743–779.

<sup>204</sup> N. Neatby, *From Old Quebec to La Belle Province: Tourism Promotion, Travel Writing, and National Identities, 1920–1967* (Montreal and Kingston, London, and Chicago, 2018), p. 38.

spirit in Japan (especially from 1937).<sup>205</sup> International tourism, for its part, was assigned the role of showing the ‘truth’ about Fascist Spain<sup>206</sup> and Germany,<sup>207</sup> and of improving foreign understanding of Japan and its actions during the war.<sup>208</sup> Tourism was, furthermore, in certain situations, to be specifically pictured as a martial device, being encouraged for the purposes of the defence of Hungary prior to World War I,<sup>209</sup> and of the protection of border areas in the Soviet Union<sup>210</sup> and war preparation or avoidance in Germany<sup>211</sup> and Japan<sup>212</sup> in the 1930s.

The Chinese experience thus ran parallel with what was in fact a worldwide, powerfully voiced, and competitive trend, and, for all the shorter-term or longer-term stresses that pressed forward nationalist considerations in relation to travel, what happened in China cannot be understood separately from what was going on in the rest of the world. This occurred just as China was linking up with the outside world, through contact with foreigners and the espousal of ideas and trends from abroad. This convergence appears to constitute additional testimony to that, being proof of a degree of connection with, and an interest in, the modern world. It ultimately signals a level of integration in the global reality that much of the historiography has long neglected, concentrated as it has been on a scrutiny of the problems of this period, but which has been gaining greater recognition more recently.<sup>213</sup> This being so, in China, the issue of nationalism as it emerged in relation to travel was dominated by a tone of despair regarding the creation of a sense of nation. This was vividly apparent in the commentaries by Huang Yanpei and Huang Boqiao, both remindful of Sun Yat-sen’s criticisms of Chinese society as a ‘sheet of loose sand’,<sup>214</sup> in which travel seemed to occupy the space of a final resort in the absence of an embrace of the nation by the people (all the more difficult in China’s case, Huang Yanpei implied, because of its size and complexity), and hence also the importance assigned by Huang Boqiao to the idea of travel as enjoyment: it was through travel that people would finally join in the national spirit. Another trait that characterised the interweaving of nationalism and travel in China was the emphasis that was placed on the effect of travel on territorial attachment and defence. It was in fact much more of a concern there than in most other national contexts where travel was being awarded national status, and quite understandably so, given China’s peculiar situation as a result of a combination of attack and menace to its sovereignty.

**Conflicts of interest.** None.

<sup>205</sup> Ruoff, *Imperial Japan at Its Zenith*, pp. 83–84.

<sup>206</sup> S. D. Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship: Europe’s Peaceful Invasion of Franco’s Spain* (New York, 2006), p. 33.

<sup>207</sup> Semmens, ‘Travel in merry Germany’, pp. 145–146.

<sup>208</sup> Kushner, *The Thought War*, pp. 34–35, 39. On the efficacy of tourism in incorporating travellers into a Japanese nationalist vision of the Second Sino-Japanese War, see A. Elliott, ‘“Orient calls”: anglophone travel writing and tourism as propaganda during the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1941’, *Japan Review* 33, Special Issue: War, Tourism, and Modern Japan (2019), pp. 117–142.

<sup>209</sup> Vari, ‘From friends of nature’, pp. 76–79.

<sup>210</sup> M. V. Sokolova, *Istoriya turizma* (Moscow, 2004), p. 287.

<sup>211</sup> Semmens, *Seeing Hitler’s Germany*, pp. 11–12; and Semmens, ‘Travel in merry Germany’, p. 145.

<sup>212</sup> D. Leheny, ‘“By other means”: tourism and leisure as politics in pre-War Japan’, *Social Science Japan Journal* 3.2 (2000), pp. 183–184; and D. Leheny, *The Rules of Play: National Identity and the Shaping of Japanese Leisure* (Ithaca and London, 2003), pp. 67–68.

<sup>213</sup> See F. Dikötter, *The Age of Openness: China before Mao* (Hong Kong, 2010), pp. 2–3, 31–80.

<sup>214</sup> Sun Wen, *Sanminzhuyi* (Taipei, 2003), lecture delivered on 27 January 1924, p. 2.

**Cite this article:** Hawthorne Barrento António Eduardo, (2025). The discourse of travel, society, and nation in Republican China. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186324000324>