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## EAST ASIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE REVIEW

### **Engendering Children of the Resistance: Models for Gender and Scouting in China, 1919–1937**

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#### **Abstract**

In the 1920s and 1930s, Chinese adapted scouting, which had originally been developed to masculinize British youth as future colonial troops. While Chinese families and teachers valued scouting as a form of outdoor recreation, Chiang Kai-shek and the Guomindang after 1927 connected scouting to preparation for military training. In addition to fostering masculinity among boys, the Chinese Scouting Association also directed Girl Scouts with new models of patriotic girlhood. The Guomindang promoted the distinct femininity of the Girl Scouts and channeled girls' patriotism into nursing. As China entered World War II, Girl Scouts became significant symbols of patriotism in an increasingly militarized children's culture. The Guomindang showcased Yang Huimin, a Girl Scout and heroine in the Battle of Sihang Warehouse, as a spokesperson for the Nationalist cause, but it could not fully control her public image.

Keywords: Girl Scouts, scouting, gender roles, China, World War II

On the cover of the 1926 issue of *Children's World*, a young Chinese boy salutes girls who are marching in step (figure 1). With rounded features and swinging movements, the children appear almost doll-like in an idyllic setting on the cover of this magazine for elite children. The children don scouting uniforms, and the boy carries the long stick typically used by Boy Scouts. This image raises questions about the militarization of children's culture in the politically tense environment of the 1920s. Would child's play retreat to an imaginary garden or confront an approaching war front? Could girls and boys salute each other in a shared youth culture, or would they march separately along a gender divide? This article explores the ways in which the Chinese Scouting Association aimed to prepare children for the realities of war by promoting heroes and creating rituals in the years leading to the Second Sino-Japanese War.



Figure 1. *Source*: Cover of *Ertong Shijie* [Children's world], 1926 (18: 20).

The Chinese Scouting Association sanctioned the militarization of childhood, which diversified the range of gender expression among children in China. Age provides a useful category of gender analysis (Leow 2012), and scouting, as a childhood activity, may thus offer a new lens onto the shifting landscape of gender performativity in the 1920s and 1930s. At a time when Western and Japanese imperialism presented an affront to indigenous masculinity, Chinese women could embrace a greater range of gender expression (Luo 2008). The images of the

“androgynous” Chinese female soldier and the “sexualized” Modern Girl also influenced a younger generation, growing up in the 1920s, who would become Girl Scouts by the outbreak of war in 1937.<sup>1</sup> Through the Chinese Scouting Association, the Guomindang (GMD) aimed to shape these influences on Girl Scouts and to promote a model heroine like Yang Huimin, a Girl Scout and courageous participant in the Battle of Sihang Warehouse, as a spokesperson for the Chinese war effort, both at home and abroad. By studying the Chinese Scouting Association, we gain insight into Nationalist mobilization—especially via the militarization of children’s culture, from camping and parades in the 1920s to wartime service in the late 1930s—to galvanize support for the nation during the War of Resistance.

### **Gender, Imperialism, and the Introduction of Scouting to China**

Scouting raises questions about the ways that military training, designed for colonial rule, could be adapted for youth and translated across nations. Scouting emerged in the context of movements to promote “physical culture” among youth for national defense (Brownell 1985, 18; Macleod 1983). Chinese scout leaders implicitly acknowledged the colonial origins of the Boy Scout movement in founder Sir Robert Baden-Powell’s response to the Boer War (e.g., Begbie 1935, 184; Liu 1938, 11). Nevertheless, scout leaders in the 1920s argued that, as a form of preparatory training, scouting should *not* be considered military service (SB 1922a); thus, the logic of age differentiation was powerful enough to convince some Chinese that scouting was distinct from soldiering.

Despite scouting’s connection to imperialism, missionaries could also export it abroad to promote national self-defense among colonized or indigenous peoples. In the movement for “muscular Christianity,” YMCAs founded Boy Scout troops to masculinize boys through recreation in the rugged outdoors.<sup>2</sup> Christians established the first Chinese Boy Scout troop in 1912, and participation in Boy Scouts became available in most mission universities and schools in China by 1915.<sup>3</sup> By 1922, Christian missionaries promoted scouting as a form of leadership training for both boys and girls (Flynt 1997, 176; Rawlinson and Thoburn 1922, 561). Ironically, because imperialism posed an affront to indigenous masculine power in China, Chinese reformers imported Western forms of physical training to improve China’s position in among its global competitors (Morris 2004, 12).

The early development of Chinese Scouts was directly tied to the influx of students returning from Western treaty ports. For example, the president and secretary of the first Chinese American Boy Scout troop (in New York) eventually moved to China to serve the Chinese Boy Scouts in Canton (Kemp 1920, 196; Norden 1918, 95). Educational psychologist Chen Heqin (1892–1982) was one of the first scout leaders of the New York troop during his studies at Columbia Teachers College, and he likewise brought scouting practices to China upon his return in 1919. Americans had lauded the Chinese American Boy Scouts as a triumph in race equality among patriotic Americans (Norden 1918, 95), but Chen presented the racially segregated troop as a way to connect Chinese Americans to Chinese culture (H. Chen [1943] 1993, 33). Likewise, one of Chen’s Scouts praised Chen as a bridge to his “ancestral homeland.”<sup>4</sup> Scouting thus facilitated a dimension of what political scientist Chan Sucheng terms “Chinese-American transnationalism” (2006, ix–x).

Like Chen Heqin, female Chinese student Zhang Zhaonan returned to China with information about Girl Guides after studying abroad in England.<sup>5</sup> When Zhang returned to China in 1919, she published a series of articles about Girl Guides. In addition to founding a Chinese Girl Scout troop in Shanghai, Zhang also established the Shanghai Girl Scout Educational Research Society to study the biology of physical recreation and to publicize the Girl Scouts (C. Liu 1935, 3; G. Chen 1932b, 24). Early statistics about membership in the Girl Scouts are scarce (with competing claims about the “first” troops established in China) because of issues about recognition by international organizations (see G. Chen 1932a, 22; NYT 1934). In the late 1930s, the government began to register each scout, and by 1946, the total number had risen to 315,776 (of whom over 3,100 were girls).<sup>6</sup>

Because troops began locally, they enjoyed a great deal of individual autonomy in the “experimental phase” of scouting history before 1927 (Shen [1939] 1947, 1). Individual Girl Scout troops could elect to join the Chinese Scouting Association (e.g., C. Liu 1935, 4). Affiliated Girl Scout troops could attend Boy Scout meetings and activities. Yet their affiliation with the Boy Scouts was always somewhat contentious (e.g., SB 1923m). According to article 8 of the 1933 General Rules of Chinese Scouting, Girl Scouts were to adhere to a different set of regulations than Boy Scouts (Guomin zhengfu 1933; see also Cai 1999, 292). The outright exclusion of girls from the Boy Scouts could easily be denounced as a statement about the weaknesses of the fairer sex (*Ling Long* 1933a)—an unpopular argument when women so

closely embodied the Chinese nation (Chow 1991, 170). Even within the Girl Scout movement, scout leaders maintained gender norms when they argued that Girl Scouts should learn to keep house and train to become good wives and wise mothers (e.g., Yan 1934, 101).

As this brief introduction indicates, the Chinese Girl Scouts originated from sources—like missionary groups—very different in orientation from those that gave rise to the androgynous “woman soldier.” According to comparative literature scholar Lydia Liu, “women warriors” had to “reject their female identity in a suicidal manner to become Chinese and fight for the nation” (L. Liu 1995, 208). Despite the differences between the model female soldier and the relatively well-off girls in China’s treaty ports, the example of women warriors did help to promote the idea that girls could enjoy physical recreation, sports education, and even military training (SB 1923o; Y. Gao 2013; Judge 2001, 788). Because of the anti-imperialistic drive to liberate women, gender complicated the Chinese Boy Scouts’ masculine mission to protect China’s national territory.

### **Mastering Nature: Age-Appropriate Camping and Sexual Propriety for Boys and Girls**

Scouting, which began as a distinctly masculinizing organization for young men in Western-style universities in China, expanded in terms of gender and age in the first decade of the Republic, with boys as young as eight and girls as young as eleven entering troops (SB 1922h).<sup>7</sup> The segregation of troops by age was part of a larger trend to nurture children and to protect them from age-inappropriate demands (Bai 2005, 150–175). Citing the Ministry of Education’s goals for primary school students, educator Shen Leiyu (b. 1891) explained that scouting would help to achieve the goal of improving children’s psychological well-being (Shen [1939] 1947, 65). By emphasizing age-appropriate learning, educators were also countering parental fears about military training.

Scout leaders claimed that the Chinese term for “scout,” *tongzijun*, literally “youth soldier,” was a misnomer because it emphasized militarization (e.g., SB 1922a). Parents misunderstood the nature of scouting because the Chinese translation included the character for *jun*, or “military” (Shen [1939] 1947, 6). In response to parental concerns about military recruitment, scout leaders insisted that scouting trained children to enjoy recreational activities, such as camping. This logic ignored the imperialistic dimensions of camping, evidenced by Girl Scouts crying out to be like Christopher Columbus discovering new territory, for example (C. Ke

1937, 53), or the dangers of camping during the political turmoil of the warlord era (NYT 1926).

One vocal champion of camping was scout leader Cao Yongfang, whose specialty was advertised as “playing dead” (SB 1924g). Cao represented the Boy Scouts in a meeting in Sweden (SB 1924h–i), and in his manuals he drew from sources like Robert Baden-Powell’s *Scouting for Boys* (Cao and Zhang 1928, 3). Cao emphasized scouting’s connection to the great outdoors (Cao and Zhang 1928, 1). According to Cao, recreation increased physical and mental agility by training scouts to develop special skills (1928, 5). Cao’s arguments reflect advertisements for scouting, often found in elementary civics textbooks, that invited young boys to navigate the great outdoors (figure 2).

If camping were presumed to be a natural activity, the inclusion of Girl Scouts complicated the morality of an innocent pastime. Because Girl Scout troops participated in Boy Scout meetings and camping trips (e.g., SB 1922c, SB 1923b, SB 1923j), Chinese scouts were careful to expel any rumors of cohabitation. For example, the *Shanghai News* reported that Girl Scouts from Shanghai’s Patriotic Girls’ School slept separately from boys when attending a provincial Boy Scout meeting in Suzhou (e.g., SB 1923i, SB 1923k). Pictorial magazines also routinely depicted wholesome photographs of ruddy young Girl Scouts camping in *exclusively* female company (*Zhongguo daguan tuhua nianlan* 1930a–e; Wu 1930, 27; 1934, 17; Huang Jianhao 1935, 22; *Tuhua Shibao* 1935, 1042; *Xingqiliu* 1936a–c). When *Shanghai News* reported that the Scouting Association’s goals were especially tailored to the nature of children (Ch. *yinghe ertong tianxing*; SB 1922e), the language of childhood reinforced the notion that such activities were sexually innocent. With such rhetoric, the Scouting Association was perhaps reassuring parents about the propriety of allowing daughters to camp away from home.

If sexual propriety circumscribed girls’ freedom to camp, so too did concerns about female biology. At a time when Chinese female sports experts needed to prove scientifically that women could exercise during menstruation (Y. Gao 2013, 33), scout leaders like Liu Chengqing reassured parents that female campers would receive special consideration during their menstrual cycles and a greater degree of attention to hygiene in general (C. Liu 1935, 6; Shen [1939] 1947, 65). Officer of the Chinese Scouting Association Yang Kejing (1896–1974) thus allowed for gender segregation despite a commitment to gender equity (C. Liu 1935, 1, 7). Scout leaders were perhaps responding to critics who had argued that translations of Robert Baden-Powell’s Girl Scout manual were inappropriate for Chinese girls because the author was neither female

nor Chinese (Pan 1931, 91; e.g., Baden-Powell 1932). Scout leaders thus promoted a form of gender equality while also preserving a degree of gender segregation based on assumptions of biological difference.



Figure 2. On the inside cover of a civics textbook, an advertisement invites readers to join the Boy Scouts to explore the great outdoors. *Source*: W. Dong (1924).



Even though troops were gender-segregated, girls and boys learned, for the most part, exactly the same camping skills. When it came to tasks like tying knots or kindling a fire (Fan 1935b, 72), Girl Scout manuals simply recycled lessons verbatim, showing children how to “learn by doing” (Shen [1939] 1947, 71, 73; see also C. Liu 1935, 6; Boy Scouts of America 1911, 255). By including training in outdoor cooking and child rearing (e.g., Shen [1939] 1947, 80), the Boy Scouts implicitly de-gendered domestic skills (Culp 2007, 188). Likewise, both Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts were taught a civic duty to guide fellow citizens. In figures 3 and 4, we can see that Girl Scout manuals sometimes featured girls rather than boys in illustrations directing good behavior.

Public rituals, like flag ceremonies and parades, were an integral part of scouting culture and helped to promote civic duty and national pride. Military drills displayed male prowess (Hinsch 2013, 139), and athletic schools included formations in athletic competitions to shake off the image of the “sick man of Asia” (Shao 2004, 164; see also SB 1923d, 1924e). Rituals reinforced the dignity of both scout leaders and scouts (C. Liu 1935, 20) and presumably commanded the respect of audiences. Nationwide conferences helped to determine standards for manuals, uniforms, and scouting badges (SB 1922e, 1923c; Shen [1939] 1947, 56), and thus to create a national community. The participation of Chinese scouts in world meetings indicated China’s inclusion in the international community (Cao and Zhang 1928, 2).

The most graphic difference between Boy Scout and Girl Scout manuals is the gendered dimension of the illustrations. In both cases, those who need help are inevitably female, as in U.S. manuals (Boy Scouts of America 1911, 251, 237). When a rescued woman wears a *cheongsam* (Chinese dress), the manual does not change the illustration, perhaps because the uniforms sufficiently distinguish the scout, whether male or female (Fan 1935b, 87). Boy Scout manuals sometimes copied illustrations from foreign texts (e.g., Cao 1928, 97; Boy Scouts of America 1911, 6). When artists redrew Girl Scout illustrations, they had the opportunity to render the figures to appear somewhat more distinctively Chinese.



Figure 3. In a Boy Scout manual, a scout offers a seat to an elderly woman. *Source:* Fan (1935a, 104).

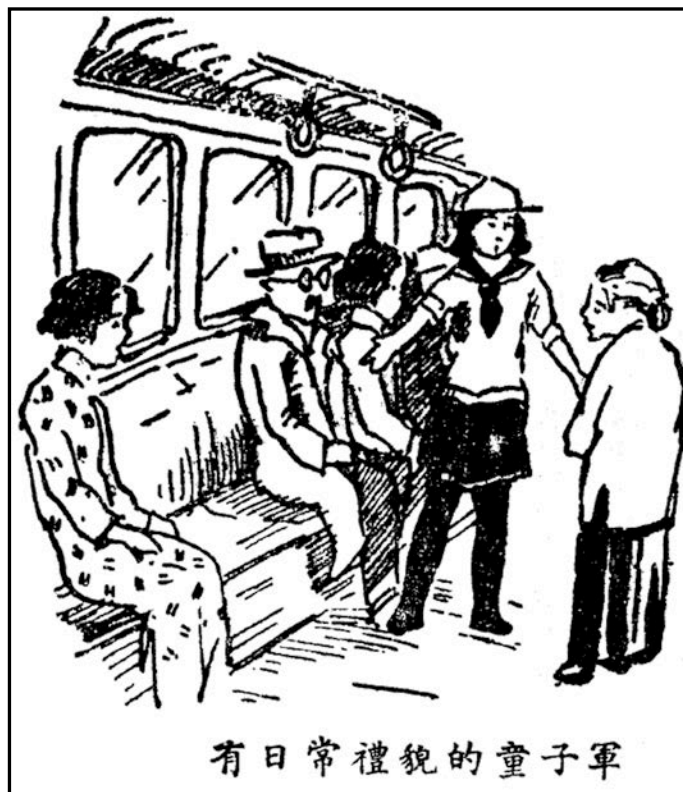


Figure 4. In a revised edition of Xiaoliu Fan's 1935 Boy Scout manual, prepared for Girl Scouts, a scout offers a seat to an elderly woman. *Source:* Fan (1935b, 102).

### Maintaining Public Order: Ritual Performance and Patriotic Display

Historian Gao Yunxiang argues that, in the 1920s and 1930s, female athletes and physical education teachers helped to promote a new aesthetic of “robust beauty” no less feminine than thinness and pallor (2013, 63–65). In keeping with these trends, Chinese periodicals like *Sports Weekly* devoted a series of articles to the Girl Scouts in 1932. These trends allowed girls, especially in new athletic schools, to exhibit their strength and beauty in the public arena, through print culture and film productions (e.g., SB 1922d, 1923f–h; Jingxiu Huang 1929, 3). In 1922, the Star Motion Picture Company filmed a newsreel of Girl Scouts from the Patriotic Girls’ School and the East Asian Physical Education School dancing and performing martial arts, long jump, and flag ceremonies (SB 1922h).<sup>8</sup> Photographs of Girl Scouts were circulated and recirculated in women’s pictorial magazines to promote physical recreation, but no doubt also for the visual appeal of the young, athletic girls themselves.<sup>9</sup>

Although uniforms often appear as androgynous or even masculinizing, these photographs indicate a diverse range of Girl Scout uniforms—from pantaloons (e.g., Lin 1935, 1) to skirts (e.g., S. Xu 1933, 6; *Dang tongzijun cilingbu yuekan* 1929, 4). Skirts on Girl Scouts are especially striking when juxtaposed with photographs of troops of female soldiers in pants (e.g., *Shangbao huakan* 1932, 2). In part because exposed skin was considered provocative, sports uniforms could be deemed transgressive (Y. Gao 2013, 43). To counter possible objections, illustrations of Girl Scouts sometimes darkened the legs to suggest tights (and photographs indicate that many girls did, in fact, wear tights under their skirts). At Chinese Scouting Association meetings, scout leaders discussed standards for Girl Scout uniforms (SB 1922f, 1923a). Regardless of national regulations, girls could bring their own flair to their appearance. Illustrations show the generic model Girl Scout with a permed bob, a sign of the subversive but almost ubiquitous “Modern Girl” (M. Dong 2008, 204), sometimes even legislated as a marker of prostitution (Y. Gao 2013, 75). Thus, Girl Scouts could mark themselves as feminine in ways that challenged socially conservative norms.

Public parades helped to galvanize Chinese citizens by displaying the vigor of Chinese youth (*Liangyou* 1930a, 6; *Sheying huabao* 1933a, 29). Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts participated in flag ceremonies to rally national patriotism (*Liangyou* 1930b–c; *Sheying huabao* 1934). The government selected public places, such as sports facilities, to hold sports competitions and

award ceremonies for scouts (Guomin zhengfu 1930–1942; SB 1922g, 1923l, 1923n). Girl Scouts as well as Boy Scouts stood guard at these athletic events, despite the tendency for girls and boys to compete in different events.<sup>10</sup> Girl Scouts in particular usually stood guard for public events celebrating women or women’s organizations (e.g., SB 1931, 1934). When Suzhou held a parade honoring the fifth anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Girl Scouts in 1924, the organizers deliberately intended to elicit the praise of passersby (C. Liu 1935, 4). Public rituals were also integrated into the scouting curriculum.<sup>11</sup>

By “maintaining order” at large public events (e.g., SB 1927), Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts played an important role in rallying national patriotism. As China historian Jeffrey Wasserstrom has noted, Boy Scouts could also surreptitiously organize marches as a cover for May Fourth protests, as well as to maintain order and safety at protests (1991, 82–83). The duty to maintain order thus helped to put scouts at the forefront of patriotic public performances. Photographs, such as figure 5, show that Girl Scouts as well as Boy Scouts served as guards at the interment ceremony to bury Sun Yat-sen in Nanjing (see also X. Shi 1929, 2). Their public presence helped to propagate the image of the patriotic Chinese scout.

Even more than for their duties guarding public order or performing flag-raising ceremonies, scouts gained a reputation for patriotism on the basis of their service during the Japanese attacks on Shanghai. In 1932, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts aided the wounded in the wake of the Japanese bombing of Shanghai (e.g., Tang 1932, 27; *Kangzheng: Waijiao pinglun* 1932); as a result, Chinese scouts gained a reputation for patriotism and military bravery (Jones 2011, 232). After 1932, China also began to celebrate Children’s Day to showcase hope for China’s future. In the wake of Japanese aggression, many middle-school students demanded military training in schools (Culp 2007, 199). The government responded to this upsurge in patriotic sentiment by asserting a greater degree of control over local scouting movements and overtly training scouts for wartime service.

### **Guomindang Control of Scouting**

In the Nanjing decade, the central government increasingly institutionalized the Boy Scouts as a subset of military education and preparation. According to 1919 guidelines, Chinese scouts were already subject to government regulation (Cai 1999, 291). In March 1926, the

Guomindang's Central Training Committee called for troops to join the Chinese Scouting Association. At the National Educational Association of 1928, in the wake of the Northern Expedition and the ascendancy of Chiang Kai-shek, central government regulation intensified (Q. Liu 2010, 14). As historian Robert Culp has noted, 1927 was a turning point for increasing interest in military education, among students, the state, and school administrators (2007, 198–199). In 1934, the Ministry of Education made scouting, under the auspices of the Central Training Committee, a requirement in all junior high schools (Culp 2007, 183).



Figure 5. Girl Scouts solemnly stand at attention as they maintain public order at the ceremony to inter Sun Yat-sen. *Source: Feng'an dadian xiezhen* (1929).

The Central Training Committee thus aimed to expand its pool of soldiers by mandating scouting, but the requirement may have been limited to those privileged enough to attend school. Granted, charity schools also offered scouting (SB 1924b–c), and scout leaders advertised widely in local newspapers for members (C. Liu 1935, 15). However, economics could constrain membership. Girl Scouts had to pay monthly membership fees to offset communal expenses for

camping (C. Liu 1935, 44). While pocketknives and scouting manuals were relatively inexpensive, a Girl Scout uniform cost 12 *yuan* (SB 1924a). Chinese films, such as *Playthings* and *San Mao*, reinforced the stereotyped contrast between transient street urchins and middle-class Boy Scouts (Jones 2011, 145). Ideally, according to one college professor in that era, camping trips would allow Chinese youth to witness rural poverty and thereby to “understand the sufferings of the people” (in Cao 1937, 1).

As historian Duan Ruicong (2013) has pointed out, Chiang Kai-shek saw scouting as preparation and recruitment for the military. Chiang wrote in his diary on June 17, 1932, “Today’s national defense needs to be based on education and economics, and the foundation of education is elementary school. Elementary school especially needs to be centered on the Boy Scouts” (in Duan 2013, 3). Chiang Kai-shek thus envisioned the Chinese Boy Scouts as a feeder institution to the Youth Corps and eventually the Chinese army. Thus, in contrast to its status as a mere extracurricular activity in the United States, scouting was perceived by Chiang to be the cornerstone of political education and military training in China.

Despite Chiang’s focus on military preparation, local school administrators continued to describe scouting as a form of physical education. In 1934, the director of the Shanghai East Asian Scout Training Facility explained scouting requirements in terms of physical education (M. Chen 1934). The missionary-run Shung Tak Baptist School for Girls included scouting as part of its weekly physical education requirements (Marlowe 1932). Private schools like Shung Tak needed to comply with requirements to obtain the state certification necessary to grant credentials to their students. These examples attest to the difference between Chiang Kai-shek’s focus on militarized discipline and the local schools’ emphasis on physical education. Students also certainly created their own perspectives on scouting and citizenship (Culp 2007, 2). Nevertheless, some schools reported “scoutification” (Ch. *tongzijun shenghuohua*; see *Anqing Nütong Xiaokan* 1935a, 37) and thus acknowledged that scouting represented a new type of culture.

Chiang Kai-shek’s ideals provided the basis for Guomindang indoctrination in scouting manuals and magazines. In need of heroes (Shen [1939] 1947, 23), scouts honored the “heroic character” of Sun Yat-sen as the founding father of the party (Fan 1935a, 19–24; 1935c, 9–12). Boy and Girl Scout manuals appear nearly identical in terms of patriotic Nationalist elements,

such as instructions for flag ceremonies (Fan 1935a, 30; 1935b, 63) and the party song (Fan 1935a, 49; 1935b, 68). Both Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts would help to “rejuvenate the Chinese folk” (Ch. *fluxing zhonghua minzu*; e.g. Fan 1935c, 1) and save China from foreign imperialism through Nationalist revolution.

In keeping with Chiang Kai-shek’s relationship to the Third Reich, the Chinese Scouting Association began, in the late 1930s, to point to Germany as a model. In the preface to a scouting manual, educational psychologist Liao Shicheng (also known as Sze-chen Liao, 1892–1970) recalled that during his studies in the United States, his German teacher taught him to appreciate hiking into ravines and singing until sunset (in Cao 1937, 1). Professor of religious education Jiang Yizhen (also known as Newton Chiang, 1900–1983) wrote, “Camping skills are the scouts’ glad tidings; they brought modern Germany out of the depths of fire and water” (in Cao 1937, 3). In 1943, Chiang would report to the *New York Times* that Chinese Girl Scouts “did real ‘scouting,’ hunting out Japanese camps” (NYT 1943c). Scouting strengthened children and inculcated discipline (Chu 1936, 12).

Especially during the New Life Movement, scouting also reinforced traditional values, such as sincerity and filial duty (Shen [1939] 1947, 45), an overt goal of government scouting regulations (Guomin zhengfu 1933). Boy Scouts thus helped to inculcate civic-mindedness among junior high school students, while also introducing modern skills (Culp 2007, 178). By integrating cognition with practice, pro-scouting educators, such as Chen Heqin and Liao Shicheng, were helping to strengthen Chiang Kai-shek’s role as head of the Boy Scouts and promoter of self-discipline in the context of national “rejuvenation” (Fan 1935a, 10–11, 32; Shen [1939] 1947, 9). This pedagogical move was compatible with Chiang’s own Confucian philosophical appreciation for the “unity of knowledge and action” (Ch. *zhi xing he yi*; see Wakeman 1973, 238).

Scouting manuals also encouraged loyalty to Chiang Kai-shek as national head of the Chinese Scouting Association. Scouting manuals were published by the loyal Huangpu Clique’s publishing house, the Zhengzhong Shuju, as well as by the Chinese General Boy Scout Headquarters.<sup>13</sup> Chiang spoke at Boy Scout meetings, wrote for Boy Scout circulars, and met with Boy Scouts (Wan 1930). Girl Scouts celebrated the Generalissimo’s birthday (L. Feng 1936, 1), and Boy Scouts saluted him. Thus, Chiang Kai-shek promoted veneration of his own military leadership, in keeping with his success in cultivating a base of support among young

cadets in the Whompoa Military Academy.

Like her husband, Madame Chiang Kai-shek patronized the Girl Scouts, who were integral to her war orphanages (Billingham 1936). On Children's Day, Madame Chiang awarded red ribbons to scouts (Guomin zhengfu 1931–1941), who wore them as prizes (Guomin zhengfu 1930–1942). In conjunction with the New Life Movement, the government celebrated the twenty-ninth anniversary of International Women's Day with a parade that included Girl Scouts; publicity photographs showed Madame Chiang pinning badges to a girl's uniform and adjusting a girl's cap (Jiang n.d.). The Chiangs thus cultivated personal loyalty among children through the Chinese Scouting Association.

### **Gender and Role Models for Scouts**

Despite a similar emphasis on Nationalist revolution for Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, the significance of revolution was different for Girl Scouts, because gender equality was more central to their identity and mission. Although many manuals were non-gender-specific, manuals directed specifically to Girl Scouts expended much greater effort to integrate them into a global and historical context. Boys' manuals provided fewer examples of romantic military heroes (e.g., Fan 1935a, 67; compare with the “modern knight” of the Boy Scouts of America 1911, 237) and perhaps assumed that literary representations of military heroes already dominated the imaginations of young men (e.g., Yeh 1998, 120–121). Girl Scouts, far more than Boy Scouts, needed to justify their organization as socially legitimate by presenting the historical and social contexts that allowed girls to transgress gender norms in order to serve the state.

*The New Elementary Girl Scout Reader* connected modern Girl Scouts with female heroes of the past and around the world. As Culp has noted, the choice of heroines reflected Guomindang directives; thus, for example, Florence Nightingale was used to encourage nursing among girls (Fan 1935b, 75; Culp 2007, 202). Following trends since the turn of the century (see Judge 2001, 798; Mann 2000, 846–847), *The New Elementary Girl Scout Reader* ranked the historical soldier Hua Mulan among international military heroines and scouts such as Sacajawea, Laura Secord, and Grace Darling (e.g., Fan 1935b, 27–28). Some female soldiers, such as Xie Bingying, expressed a desire “to carry on the tradition of Hua Mulan” to liberate China (Gilmartin 1995, 189). The textbook provoked what we might cheekily call a “Mulan



complex” by asking girls, at the end of the lesson, a series of questions connecting these heroines to the modern Girl Scout movement (Fan 1935b, 35–36). The textbook thus created a lineage of heroines for the girls to emulate. Women’s magazines reinforced an imagined community of Girl Scouts by photographing and identifying individual Girl Scouts and scout leaders by name (e.g., *Jindai funü* 1928, 5; *Liangyou* 1928, 26; Y. Huang 1928, 31; W. Zhang 1934, 21; Jing 1930, 2; R. Yang 1930, 1).

Although scouting remained dominated by boys (Shen [1939] 1947, 1),<sup>14</sup> that very male dominance pushed some girls to prove themselves. Taking for granted the overwhelmingly masculine culture of scouting (even while acknowledging the contributions of Girl Scouts), leaders addressed scouts as “brothers” in general scouting meetings (e.g., G. Xu 1937, 8). After a meeting in Hangzhou, one Girl Scout complained about the lack of female participation when she wrote: “Do we female compatriots really have no social standing? Or is it that we are not as capable as men?” (J. Zhang 1938, 13). She implied that Chinese girls needed to earn social standing by serving the war front. Although aiming at equal representation, she claimed that the work “most suited” to female compatriots was the care of wounded soldiers (J. Zhang 1938, 12).

The Central Training Division tended to emphasize girls’ roles in medical services and boys’ roles in military services (J. Liu 2010, 18; Culp 2007, 202–203). The Chinese Girl Scouts categorized female medical personnel in the Red Cross during the European Great War as “Girl Scouts” (Fan 1935b, 75). Boy Scout manuals also praised the service of Girl Scouts as nurses (Fan 1935a, 17). In competitions, Girl Scouts practiced bandaging the wounded. They also demonstrated, in choreographed performances, how to carry the wounded off the battlefield (figure 6). Early training in sweeping the streets (e.g., F. Yang 1936) prepared girls to survey the damage of war and to clean the battlefield. As historian Nicola Spakowski (2009) has argued, cleaning the battlefield and tending the wounded were the most arduous tasks and fell to those with the least authority—young women. In this way, participation in the Girl Scouts helped prepare young women for demanding work as nurses.

### **The Battle of Shanghai and Yang Huimin as a Model**

Having argued that membership in the Boy Scouts should not be considered a form of military service, scout leaders then made special exceptions for scouts to serve in the military as China entered the war in 1937 (Shen [1939] 1947, 3). Scouts alluded to the experiences of the

European Great War to indicate that China was following a global trend in allowing children to serve during “extraordinary times” (e.g., G. Xu 1937, 8). Prominent educator Zhang Zonglin edited *The Wartime Reader* with illustrations of grenades and warplanes overhead. Scout manuals included lyrics for children to sing that they were the “small troops of China.” In 1937, the Chinese General Boy Scout Headquarters began to publish the magazine *Wartime Scouts* each Saturday as reference material to guide Wartime Service Scouts. In the inaugural issue, the editor directly asked “little friends” to “rise up! Rise up! Rise up!” to volunteer their services to the war effort (NYT 1937b). *Wartime Scouts* insisted that patriotism transcended divisions of gender and age.



Figure 6. Members of a Girl Scout troop demonstrate ways to carry the wounded. *Source: Xinsheng Zhoukan* [New life weekly] (1935).

Nevertheless, journalists in *Wartime Scouts* maintained age restrictions to protect very young children from direct military combat. The magazine reminded children that they needed to be at least twelve to join the Boy Scouts officially (G. Xu 1937, 8). Only scouts fifteen or older could join paramilitary troops (*Zhanshi tongzijun* 1937a, 17). Given the difficulty the Nationalist Army had in conscripting soldiers (Landdeck 2014), such efforts to protect overzealous

youngsters from direct military combat were remarkable. Instead, the army enlisted children as laborers during the war (Plum 2012, 250–253). Soldiers also told children that the army was retreating from the Japanese in part because of a lack of proper supplies, and the army thus needed scouts to procure provisions and materials rather than to serve as soldiers on the front line (*Zhanshi tongzijun* 1938a, 3). These messages reinforced scouting manuals, which quoted Sun Yat-sen on the importance of production (Shen [1939] 1947, 69). According to *Wartime Scouts*, industrial work thus constituted as much of a contribution as armed combat, and was deemed more age-appropriate for children.

One major focus of wartime propaganda was the battle of August 14, 1937, in which Japanese forces heavily bombed the Chinese-controlled areas of Shanghai. A reporter for *Wartime Scouts* claimed that 2,700 scouts aided the Chinese effort during the Battle of Shanghai, a number repeated by other estimates (Lü 1937, 13). Scouts voiced their heroic desire to sacrifice everything, including “the security of careers and family,” to “shed blood” on the battlefield (Cang 1938, 3). Indeed, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts sometimes went missing in action during their rescue work (SB 1937).

One Girl Scout, twenty-two-year-old Yang Huimin (1915–1992), left her native Nanjing to join the Shanghai Wartime Service Scouts (Xia 1939, 43). She crossed enemy fire to provide a Nationalist flag and supplies to soldiers in the Sihang Warehouse. At the time, Yang Huimin’s brother, Yang Ruifu, was serving as second-in-command of the “lone heroes” who were left behind as civilians and the rest of the army retreated to safety (Harmsen 2013, 203). Impressed by Yang Huimin’s courage, the soldiers flew the Chinese flag over the Sihang Warehouse, in full view of the members of the International Settlement (which remained safe from Japanese attack). The small unit of soldiers projected itself as a full battalion (numbering eight hundred) in order to help ward off the advancement of the Japanese troops. Chinese applauded the heroism of the “lone heroes” to protect the retreating civilians and expected the incident to elicit sympathy from around the world (Yun 1938, 341).

Made famous by their heroism during the Battle of Shanghai, the Yangs became spokespeople for the Nationalist war effort. After the battle, the Yang siblings called for volunteers (e.g., SB 1938b) and were celebrated in the press (*Xian shibao* 1938, 5). A journalist visited Yang Ruifu, who had been injured in the line of duty, with the express purpose of finding and interviewing his sister the Girl Scout (Y. Shi 1935, 5). With her extraordinary bravery, Yang

Huimin quickly overshadowed her brother. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek noted her contributions (Chiang 1938, 12), and Madame Chiang gave Yang Huimin a special award in recognition of her valor (*Zhanshi tongzijun* 1940, 12; L. Huang 1946). Appearing also on magazine covers with movie stars (*Kangzhan huabao* 1937b), Yang Huimin became something of a celebrity.

In the pages of *Wartime Scouting* and other journals, Yang Huimin herself recalled the events of the Battle of Shanghai. Even though government officers encouraged her to retreat to safety, Yang had maintained her determination to serve and was permitted to help solicit contributions (H. Yang 1938a, 7) along with the rest of her troop (*Zhanshi tongzijun* 1938b); the commanding officer allowed her to go to the front (H. Yang 1939b, 35). Likewise, when a soldier offered her a gun on the battlefield, she eagerly shot a round of bullets until an officer commanded her to return inside to safety (H. Yang 1938b, 7). Even though Yang modestly acknowledged that she did not know if she had hit any Japanese troops (H. Yang 1938b, 7), her actions followed a pattern; she consistently sought permission from reluctant officials to serve in dangerous positions.

Because of the paramilitary affiliation of the Wartime Service Scouts, Yang's uniform signaled that she had a legitimate role to play. She later recalled, "He [the officer] perhaps thought I was the wrong person, but once he saw that I was wearing a scout uniform, he carefully listened to what I had to say" (H. Yang 1939b, 36). She then quoted her conversations with the commanding officer, in which she announced that she was number 44 in the First Shanghai Wartime Service Scout Troop (H. Yang 1939b, 36). Her official status as a scout gave her a legitimate voice. Like Xie Bingying before her, Yang Huimin tended to refer to her uniform in her memoirs; she later recalled that she had not even noticed that her Girl Scout uniform was soaked through, because she was so busy talking with the soldiers (H. Yang 1938b, 7). By focusing on the uniform, Yang directed attention to her role rather than to herself. The uniform allowed young girls to mimic the trappings of heroism. In reenacting the role of Yang Huimin, regular girls probably wore Girl Scout uniforms when they repeated Yang's lines, agreeing with her "good brothers" about the need to sacrifice for the nation (T. Xu 1938, 48).

Yang focused primarily on the bravery of her good brothers rather than her own. "When the heroes saw me arrive," she wrote, "they were full of smiles as they spoke freely with me about the cowardice of the Japanese troops" (H. Yang 1938b, 7). Her role is a bit more

prominent in that statement than the reader might at first recognize, especially since she also wrote, “When my brothers saw me like this, their courage increased” (H. Yang 1938b, 7). For her part, Yang was delighted to be called a “compatriot” by the soldiers (Yang 1938b, 7). Thus, Yang highlighted the way that her presence helped to galvanize the regular troops. Nationalists sought to sustain that effect through media representations. Her photograph, in uniform, was juxtaposed against the embers smoldering under the warehouse, and her image thus became emblematic of the Battle of Shanghai (e.g., *Kangzhan huabao* 1937a, 10).

Yang self-consciously took up the mantle of spokesperson for the Chinese war effort abroad. New York’s Chinatown greeted her with a public parade, and Chinese Americans spent eight thousand dollars welcoming representatives from China (*Funü wenxian* 1939b, 43). The Chinese news media marveled at the “hundreds of thousands of Americans” who listened to Yang’s speeches (W. Gao 1939, 15). Yang personally met Eleanor Roosevelt, who presided over the Second World Congress of Youth (Chun 1947, 8; W. Gao 1939, 17; *Funü wenxian* 1939b, 43). In the United States, Yang was heralded as a Girl Guide and war “veteran”—the only representative at the Second World Congress of Youth to have a head shot displayed in the *New York Times* (NYT 1938d). In this head shot, she wears a *cheongsam* that contrasts with portraits of her languid pose in uniform. The Chinese press also noted that American newspapers had published her photograph, covered her story (e.g., Nan 1938, 1), and interviewed her on the radio despite her limited English (W. Gao 1939, 15). Afterward, Yang and the other Girl Scouts went on a goodwill tour of the United States (NYT 1938e). Yang also traveled across Europe in 1939 (Gang 1939, 5; *Funü wenxian* 1939a, 41).

In her travels, Yang continued the scouting practice of soliciting funds for the Chinese war effort (e.g., *Waibu zhoukan* 1935, 26; *Anqing Nüzhong Xiaokan* 1935b, 42; *Liushengji* 1938, 1; Zhu and Ye 1934). In the United States, she helped raise twenty-five thousand dollars (*Funü wenxian* 1939b, 44), and she continued to collect money for the war effort while on tour in Holland (*Kangzhan yaoxun* 1939, 5). Extending the notion of Chinese American transnationalism, Yang included Chinese Americans in the category of “children of China” who needed to struggle for the Nationalist revolution (H. Yang 1939a, 2). Chinese applauded Chinese Americans for supporting the war effort (*Funü shenghuo* 1935, 1), often through monetary contributions (NYT 1937a). In the United States, Chinese American Girl Scouts sang the Chinese national anthem, “Sanmin zhuyi,” at a wartime fundraiser headed by award-winning

novelist Pearl S. Buck (NYT 1941). When U.S. Girl Scouts raised sixteen hundred dollars in aid for the Chinese cause, Chinese Girl Scouts used the funds to distribute relief through the Chinese Red Cross (*Zhongguo hongshizihui huiwu tongxun* 1941). In China, Girl Scouts personally distributed rice to those too weak to collect aid (*Dongfang huakan* 1941, 8; *Liangyou* 1941, 24).

Girl Scouts like Yang Huimin conveyed an image of international friendship and peace. When Yang attended the Second World Congress of Youth in 1938, it was as one of six representatives of China. Although the Catholic Church and the Boy Scouts of America boycotted the meeting because it included representatives from Communist countries (NYT 1938a–b), the Girl Scouts, the American YMCA, the Chinese YMCA, and the Chinese Student Christian Association all sent participants (NYT 1937e; World Youth Conference, 1938, 39–40). The White House also supported the event (NYT 1938c). With an explicit message of peace, delegates suggested an oil embargo against Japan (World Youth Conference 1938, 7). Yang recounted to Americans the horrors of war (W. Gao 1939, 16) and reported that Chinese scouts saved both Chinese and Japanese wounded (Nan 1938, 1). Perhaps because many in the United States were still aiming to avoid war, the American press also emphasized the ability of Chinese and Japanese—Girl Scouts, at least—to get along while camping in the United States (NYT 1937b–c).

China accepted some of these messages of global friendship, but turned the discourse toward an argument in favor of China's inclusion in the global community, in contrast to Japan's self-imposed exile. Yang told Chinese audiences that she felt moved by the friendship and sympathy that she felt from other representatives, and the pride that she felt when the Chinese flag was flown (*Funü wenxian* 1939b, 43). After she returned to China, Yang relayed the highlights of the World Youth Congress to journalists there (*Funü wenxian* 1939b, 43). In contrast to her stance in the United States, however, Yang emphasized the heroism of martyrs in the Chinese press. Like the American press, Chinese journals reported the shared goals of civic training among Chinese and Japanese Girl Scouts (D. Zhang 1937, 40–41), but Japanese membership had already begun to wane because of pressures to join national youth groups (Kage 2010, 28). Demonstrating China's global engagement in contrast to Japanese isolationism, in 1943, Madame Chiang toured the United States and was received by Chinese American Boy and Girl Scouts (NYT 1943a). Thus, Chinese references to Japanese scouts occurred at a time when Japan was turning instead to overtly Fascist organizations—and this may have been one reason

the Guomindang continued the Boy Scouts despite also creating (often for an older demographic) the Three People's Principles Youth Corps (Ch. Sanminzhuyi Qingniantuan).

As a Girl Scout, Yang Huimin was associated, perhaps too freely, with the YMCA and wartime relief measures. The magazine *Outlook* reproduced a photograph of Yang dressed in her uniform, greeting a child amid a crowd of listeners, and asserted that Yang was then “in the U.S.A. presiding [over] the world YMCA” (*Zhanwang* 1939, 9). The U.S. Girl Scouts did hold a world meeting in 1947, which professor of religious education Jiang Yizhen, then in the United States, attended (*Zhongguo tongzijun zonghui gongbao*, 1947a; NYT 1943b). Perhaps because of the association between scouting and Christianity, Yang distanced herself from Christianity by explaining that she was never a believer, not even when she was on the battlefield (H. Yan 1939b, 35).

Yang continued to fulfill her duties as a patriotic Girl Scout in China. She upheld traditional female norms by serving as a nurse tending the wounded, according to her duties in the Shanghai Wartime Service Scouts (Chiang 1938, 12), although she announced that she wished she could, instead, engage in real military combat (H. Yang 1938c, 15). Her preferences may have contributed to her allegedly lackluster performance as a nurse (L. Huang 1946, 4). Beyond this functional role, she played a symbolic role in reminding audiences about the bravery of Guomindang soldiers in the Battle of Shanghai. Yang toured unoccupied China to rally support for the resistance (*Kangzhan yaoxun* 1939), making special appearances at Boy Scout meetings (e.g., SB 1938c). During the battle itself, soldiers had written calligraphy on handkerchiefs to give her as souvenirs, and those mementos continued to remind her of their bravery in the face of battle (H. Yang 1939b, 37).

The Battle of Sihang Warehouse was memorialized in drama and films about the incident, including a 1938 propaganda film by director Ying Yunwei called *Eight Hundred Heroes* (sometimes translated as *The Lone Battalion*) (Zang 1939, 26). The film depicts Yang Huimin swimming across Suzhou Creek in a scene that showcased the new aesthetic of female robustness (Y. Gao 2013, 215). In the movie, Yang solemnly salutes the Chinese soldiers and leads them in a procession for the flag-raising ceremony (figure 7). Because Yang left for the United States before the production of the film, the director was not able to interview her about her actions, and thus the film is not a wholly or strictly accurate portrayal of the events; Yang had not in fact swum to the warehouse across Suzhou Creek with the flag as the film depicted. In

keeping with her personal modesty, Yang protested that she did not consider herself as brave as the film suggested her to be (H. Yang 1939b, 36). As Yang implicitly acknowledged, the director had designed the Suzhou Creek scene to exaggerate Yang's valor for propaganda purposes; the choice of swimming drew on popular associations linking swimming with both middle-class femininity and the Girl Scouts. Despite her corrections to the scene, Yang Huimin appeared with female swim champion Yang Xiuqiong (Li 1938, 28) in articles advertising the film (e.g., *Kangzhan huabao* 1937a, 10). Yang Huimin also appeared against the backdrop of historical photographs of the battlefield; the juxtaposition of the actors and the Yang siblings highlighted the film's basis in real-life events.

The government capitalized on the Battle of Shanghai for national and international audiences. News articles about the incident emphasize the admiration with which foreigners viewed the heroic Chinese resistance (*Zhanshi tongzijun* 1937b, 5). Promotions for the film were multilingual, in English, French, Russian, and Chinese (e.g., Zang 1939, 26), and the flag-raising scene closes by panning out to a multinational audience saluting the flag of the Republic of China. The film was screened both domestically and abroad in order to rally support for the Chinese defense against Japan (Johnson 2012, 163). After watching *Eight Hundred Heroes*, an American Girl Scout wrote to establish a correspondence between her troop and the Chinese Girl Scouts (*Tongzijun jiaoxuezu* 1945, 16). Thus, the Nationalist Party also tapped into the international nature of the scouting movement to help bolster support abroad. In the film narrative of *Eight Hundred Heroes*, the Girl Scout much more clearly instigates the flag-raising ritual and march than was the case on the synchronic cover of *Children's World*; in both cases, however, the Girl Scout salutes her brothers, aligning them in a common cause.

Nationalist propaganda emphasized Yang Huimin's "girlhood," in terms of both gender and age, to highlight further her extraordinary contributions and dedication to the war effort. Yang herself drew attention to her "girlhood" in ways that would bolster both Chinese emancipation and women's liberation. During his interviews with Yang on *Believe It or Not!*, Robert Ripley noted that she was a gentle and lovely Chinese girl "who could not weigh more than ninety pounds" (W. Gao 1939, 16); her physical delicacy and affinity for flowers contrasted with her valor (Sheng 1946, 5). At twenty-two years of age during the Battle of Shanghai, Yang nevertheless called herself "a weak little girl," who "naturally did her best to sacrifice herself for her nation" because "saving the country does not differentiate between men



and women, nor between old and young” (H. Yang 1938c, 15). She also exhorted the Chinese government to increase its military education of China’s youth (X. Feng 1939, 21). Thus, Yang may have allowed her image as a weak girl to be manipulated for the Chinese war effort, but she also implicitly argued that equality among citizens was necessary to obtain national salvation.



Figure 7. A newspaper captures a moment from the film *Eight Hundred Heroes*, in which Chen Boer plays Yang Huimin dressed in a Girl Scout uniform. Source: *Xinxing* [New form] (1938, 36).

The Chinese press reported that Yang represented the model of the Chinese “New Woman” in the United States (Nan 1938, 1). She was featured among other modern women in wartime China (*Zhanwang* 1939, 9). According to Yang, during her travels, she also witnessed the way that women in other countries had emancipated themselves (H. Yang 1940, 30). Using her newfound international perspective to critique the women’s movement in China, Yang argued that Chinese women were too attracted to “weak beauty” instead of “robust beauty” (H.

Yang 1940, 31). She criticized “Westernized” Chinese women for sleeping in and wearing cosmetics, and thus associated women’s liberation with a virtuous lifestyle and national patriotism (H. Yang 1940, 31–32). Although her union of physical and spiritual emancipation for national ends thus echoed Chiang Kai-shek’s New Life Movement, Yang shifted her emphasis from weak girlhood to strong womanhood in part as a result of her increasing maturity and international experience.

### **Conclusion**

It is perhaps overly facile to point to wartime mobilization as the singular factor that militarized children’s culture in the years preceding the War of Resistance. Despite assurances to parents about the difference between recreation and military training, already implicit in camping and maintaining public order was a drive to train children to protect national territory. Chinese drew on international trends, first inspired by British colonial experiences in the Boer War, to invigorate and strengthen children. The participation of girls complicated this mission with issues of sexual propriety and female protection, but the exclusion of girls would have undermined the Guomindang commitment to revolution and anti-imperialism. Given the Guomindang’s suspicion of radical youth (Huang Jianli 1996, 191), the Chinese Girl Scouts may have seemed a relatively safe place to foster and unleash militaristic impulses among Chinese girls.

The example of Yang Huimin indicates some of the tensions in the Guomindang idealization of the Girl Scout. The Chinese Scouting Association aimed to preserve gender difference, especially when encouraging girls to serve as nurses rather than armed soldiers. Nationalist propaganda emphasized girlhood because the poignancy of girls’ sacrifices made them especially helpful models. It was her distinctiveness that allowed the Chinese Girl Scout to stand out in military culture. Ironically, the Chinese Girl Scout was also more universally recognizable as a part of a global institution (NYT 1937d); she thus especially appealed to Western audiences because scouting indicated China’s continued commitment to international cooperation, in contrast to Japan. Yang played with images of female weakness and military strength for her own ends, and she implied that the Chinese Girl Scouts’ national distinctiveness did not mean marginality on the world stage, nor did their institutional similarities mean conformity to American pressures to avoid war.

The Guomindang showcased Yang in part as an answer to the need to create new heroines for girls, but the championing of particular models could also be problematic. Yang readily accepted her role as a “weak little girl” who encouraged her “good brothers” and galvanized audiences. Yet, like many Chinese women who recognized “egalitarianism as sameness rather than difference” (Finnane 1999, 16), Yang pushed for opportunities to engage in armed combat and passively endured her assignment as a nurse. Once vaunted for her mobility for war mobilization and lauded for escaping the clutches of the Japanese (Ting 1939, 7), Yang began to incur suspicion as the war wore on. In 1942, Yang Huimin was thrown into military prison under suspicion of colluding with the enemy (Chun 1947, 8; *Haixing* 1946, 1; SB 1946). Actress Hu Die, the mistress of secret service head Dai Li, accused Yang of robbery (Lao 1946, 3). Although Yang was eventually acquitted in 1946 (*Shanghai texie* 1946, 7; SB 1946), some members of the press denigrated her character (L. Huang 1946, 4), and others expressed surprise that an innocent and brave child had grown into a criminal (Zhou 1946, 3). Because she had so publically represented the Guomindang war effort, these accusations may have also tarnished the party’s credibility.

Especially in her capacity as a spokesperson for the Chinese cause, Yang’s contribution was primarily ritualistic. In fact, she was celebrated for presenting a flag as part of a nationalistic ritual, often performed by scouts. Uniforms, flags, and salutes formed Yang’s staple vocabulary. As in the case of children’s play, ritual and symbol created a world of meaning for scouts (Chudacoff 2007). Rituals, such as choreographed demonstrations of troops carrying the wounded off the field, helped prepare Girl Scouts for the harsh realities of war. Scouting rituals invited children to decode and to navigate wartime experiences through the lens of patriotism, so much so that they could interpret military withdrawal as a grand defense of national territory in the Sihang Warehouse. Such ritualistic symbols were, of course, intended to inspire civilians, including children, to contribute to the war effort, both within and alongside the formal military. Thus, the case of the Chinese Girl Scouts should also help us reconsider “militarization,” not only as a mechanism that prompted children to enter the military services but also as a set of tropes to help them understand the war and their own roles within it.

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## Notes

- 1 For more on the Chinese “Modern Girl,” see Tani Barlow (2008) and Madeleine Dong (2008). For more on androgyny and the female soldier, see Antonia Finnane (1999) and Christina Gilmartin (1995).
- 2 Concerned about the “feminization” of Protestantism and the sedentary idleness of urban youth at home in the West, Christians established YMCAs to promote “muscular Christianity” (Putney 2003, 6). Muscular Christianity dovetailed with missionary rhetoric that characterized Chinese as “the sick man of Asia,” in need of sports and physical training (Morris 2004). Christian missionaries attributed the liveliness of a new generation of Chinese boys to outdoor camping and scouting (Sparham 1920, 52) and defined scouting in terms of outdoor recreation to appeal to Chinese (Clark 1917, 502).
- 3 In China, the YMCA played an important role in establishing Boy Scouts (Culp 2007, 178–179; Wasserstrom 1991, 34), especially YMCAs that were originally affiliated with local foreign Boy Scouts (see SB 1916a–b). Chinese Christians traced the Chinese origins of Boy Scouts to the boys club established by Reverend Yan Jialin (also known as Yen Chia-lin), in conjunction with the YMCA, in 1912 in the city of Wuchang (Fan 1935a, 57). G. S. Kemp, principal of Boone University, was also a scout leader in Wuchang (Kemp 1920, 196). On the occasion of the 1915 Far Eastern Games, the first national meeting of Chinese Boy Scouts was held (Kemp 1920, 197). As a result of the 1915 meeting, major missionary universities established Boy Scout troops (Kemp 1920, 197). Scouting thus developed in conjunction with the rise of physical education in schools. Responding to Chinese pressure, Christian missionaries allowed the Boy Scouts to be “open to every class and religion” (Kemp 1920, 199–200).
- 4 Li “returned” to China to teach engineering. Fellow scout Hong Weileng became a professor at Yenching University in Beijing, and another scout, Li Zhaochang, became a professor of Chinese language at the University of Hawaii (see H. Chen [1942] 1993).
- 5 Many early Chinese manuals referred specifically to “Girl Guides,” following the British system (e.g., SB 1924f); in the United States, Girl Scouts were also originally called “Girl Guides” due to British influences (Rothschild 1981, 116). Girl Guides were more hierarchical than the Campfire Girls. Chinese scout leaders reported that in 1912, Sir Robert Baden-Powell and his sister Agnes published a manual entitled *How Girls Can Help to Build Up the Empire*. Chinese observers noted that these renewed efforts of the Girl Guides coincided with the induction of English princesses to the organization (G. Chen 1932b, 24; Shen [1939] 1947, 65). Chinese Scouts thus insinuated the imperialistic implications of the scouting movement in ways that stressed nationalistic rather than religious connections.
- 6 For the registration and numbers of scouts, see records publicized by the Chinese Scouting Association; for example, *Zhongguo tongzijun zonghui gongbao* (1947b–c). For registration forms, see, for example, *Hubeisheng zhengfu gongbao* (1935).
- 7 Scouting drew on international trends for “child-centered” education by providing an

- age-graded scale of activities for scouts. Boys entered Cub Scouts between eight and twelve years of age; Boy Scouts between twelve and fifteen years of age; and Eagle Scouts (Ch. *qingnian tongzijun*) after the age of eighteen (Guomin zhengfu 1933; also see Fan 19365b, 16. For girls, Brownie Scouts began before the age of eleven; Girl Scouts between eleven and sixteen years of age; and Eagle Scouts after the age of sixteen (Shen [1939] 1947, 5). In addition, “Naval Scouts” welcomed children fourteen and older. These regulations dovetailed with contemporary educational trends for age appropriate learning.
- 8 For more on the Star (Mingxing) Motion Picture Company, see X. Huang (2009).
- 9 For example, see entries in *Ling Long* [“Elegant and fine”] (1933b–i; 1934); *Tuhua shibao* (1928, 575); *Sheying huabao* 1933c. Yingjin Zhang notes that *Liangyou* helped to commodify and aestheticize the female body in the late 1920s and early 1930s (2007, 123); see especially her analysis of portraits of female athletes as a reflection of new standards for female robustness (Y. Zhang 2007, 145–149). For the recirculation of stock images, compare, for example, *Dazhong huabao* (1934, 37) and *Ling Long* (1933d); compare Lu Shidong (1935a) and Lu Shidong (1935b, 11); *Sheying huabao* credited *Ling Long* (1933b, 16).
- 10 For further visual examples of scouts standing guard, see also *Tuhua shibao* (1930, 1); *Xuexiao shenghuo* (1930, 27), and *Jiankang jiating* (1937, 12). Most events were also gender-specific; for example, girls danced (SB 1922b), and there was also more mention of girls swimming in water-based competitions (e.g., SB 1923p, 1924d, 1924h). Because of its muscle-stretching (rather than muscle-bunching) effects, swimming was considered an especially feminine activity (Y. Gao 2013, 171), as well as especially middle-class activity (Y. Gao 2013, 168, 200). Two-legged racing was also gender-specific rather than co-ed (SB 1923e), for obvious reasons. In a spread on the “Inspection of Jiangsu scouts,” the pictorial magazine *The Young Companion* showed young Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts lined up for review together, but reading and talking in separate tents (C. Chen 1931, 34).
- 11 Children’s textbooks depicted illustrations of Boy Scouts marching in parades, led by Boy and Girl Scouts holding the national and party flags, among crowds of urban onlookers. In one children’s textbook, which Princeton’s Cotsen Children’s Collection dates to the 1930s, students learned to write a letter to their grandparents, featured alongside an illustration of marching Boy Scouts (*Ertong xin chi du* n.d., 38). The letter writer actually describes his father’s departure, but the illustration reinforces his stance as a patriotic young man, one who is ready to replace his father on the front lines. The textbook thus uses the patriotism of youth to galvanize an older generation.

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