



**The War of Resistance in Hunan: Power,
Disaster, and Survival, 1937-1945**

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Abstract

This work is a history of the War of Resistance in Hunan province, 1937-1945. I first discuss the political struggles of the Nationalists from 1927 to 1944 and the military campaigns that occurred in Hunan from 1937 to 1944. I argue against the notion that Chiang Kaishek and the Hunan governor, Xue Yue had a weak connection before and during the war. 1944 saw a decline in the cooperative dynamic between Chiang and Xue. A strategic disagreement between them led to disruption within the chain of command of the Chinese army, ultimately resulting in the complete collapse of Nationalist forces in Hunan in 1944 as the Japanese gained control over the area. The early phases of the war had seen some successes. After 1939, the Nationalists changed their military principle to guerrilla tactics from merely conventional warfare. This delivered some victories in battles surrounding Changsha. In addition, the Nationalists demonstrated their superior performance in a propaganda campaign over their Japanese competitor during the Second Battle of Changsha. The Nationalists attempted to mobilize the Hunanese populace to be involved in providing military assistance to Chinese troops at the front. Common people, particularly those originating from the rural regions of Hunan, were expected to enroll in classes aimed at teaching essential military skills and ideological doctrine. These classes did not fully awaken the people of Hunan to Chinese nationalism but did change their previously indifferent attitude toward the war. Hunan, a province known for its abundant rice output played a crucial role in the war by becoming the main supplier of rice to the Nationalist armies and the population residing in Nationalist-controlled China. The war also led to extensive destruction in Changsha, as much of the city was destroyed by consecutive Japanese air raids since 1937 and a fire in 1938.

This paper is dedicated to my dear loved ones, with a special remembrance of my late grandparents, whom I deeply regret not being able to say a proper goodbye to!

Acknowledgments

This research is the product of archive research in Changsha. This undertaking would have fallen short of its goal if not for the generous and indispensable contributions of numerous people, who have supported and aided in its completion in different ways. First, over the years, I would like to express my utmost appreciation towards my exceptional and commendable supervisory team. I have been fortunate to receive valuable suggestions and inspiration from Dr Joe Lawson, Dr Robert Dale, Prof Daniel Siemens, and Prof Tim Kirk. They have provided detailed annotations with suggestions on grammar and style taking into account that English is not my first language. My initial proposal lacked a social history aspect but over the past years, I have gained valuable insights on how to write from a grassroots perspective from all of my supervisors. The constructive and positive feedback I received from them was instrumental in aiding me through the most trying stages of my PhD, particularly during the pandemic that affected the entire world.

My field trips mainly consist of visits to the Hunan Provincial Archive and Provincial Library, but due to the COVID policy of the Chinese authorities, I would not have the opportunity to visit until 2023. In China accessing archives can be quite challenging as they do not offer print services to visitors and restrict the number of pages that can be read per day. I am grateful that the staff at the Hunan Provincial Archive permitted me to read documents beyond their daily limitations. Without their help, my limited schedule would have been greatly impacted by a longer time staying in Changsha.

The pandemic has exerted a great influence on my research. The entirety of my first year as a doctoral candidate was delving into secondary sources as the unavailability of primary sources proved to be a major

impediment. The War of Resistance against Japan and Modern China-Japan Relations platform, supported by the Chinese Academy of Social Science and the History Research of China has been releasing an abundance of online materials since 2020 including wartime journals, newspapers, and government documents covering a wide range of materials about Modern China since the 1840s. I was fortunate enough to acquire a myriad of pertinent documents, made by the Hunan Provincial Government both during and before the war from the platform. Utilizing various wartime periodicals and newspapers is crucial in providing evidence for my research of the social history during the war in Changsha and Hunan. I also obtain a lot of reports and documents from *Guoshiguan*. Without obtaining these sources and completing field trips in Changsha in 2023 I cannot complete my thesis.

I would like to express my gratitude to my family, especially my parents, for always lifting me up during difficult times. The COVID situation prevented me from going back to accompany them in the past couple of years but their support continued to inspire me to complete my PhD.

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Abbreviations

CCFZTWW *Chen Cheng fu zongtong wenwu* 陳誠副總統文物 [Artifacts of Vice President Chen Cheng].

CSSZ Changsha shi zhengfu mishushi 長沙市政府秘書室 ed., *Changsha shizheng* 長沙市政 [Municipal administration in Changsha] (Changsha: Changsha shizhengfu mishushi, 1935-1936).

DCGZD *Dacheng gu zhidui* 大成故紙堆.

DCLZP *Dacheng lao zhaopian* 大成老照片 [Dacheng old picture].

DGB *Dagongbao* 大公報 [Dagong newspaper].

DNRB *Dongnan ribao* 東南日報 [Southeastern Daily].

GMDZZD *Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan* 中國第二歷史檔案館, ed., *Guomindang zhengfu zhengzhi zhidu dang'an shiliao xuanbian shang* 國民黨政府政治制度檔案史料選編上 [Selected compilation of historical archives on the political system of the Nationalist government] (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1994).

GMWX Qin Xiaoyi 秦孝義編, ed., *Gemin wenxian* 革命文獻 [Revolutionary Documents] (Taipei: Zhongguo guomindang zhongyang weiyuanhui dangshi weiyuanhui, 1988).

GSGDA *Guoshiguan dang'an* 國使館檔案 [Academia Historica Archive].

HNGMRB *Hunan guomin ribao* 湖南國民日報 [Hunan Nationalist Daily].

HNSBS *Hunan sheng ge baoshe* 湖南省各報社 [Newspapers of Hunan].

HNSCYH *Hunan sheng canyihui* 湖南省參議會 [Hunan Provincial Senate].

HNSCZT *Hunan sheng caizhengting* 湖南省財政廳 [Hunan Provincial Treasury].

HNSDAG *Hunan sheng dang'an guan cang* 湖南省檔案館藏 [Collections of Hunan Provincial Archive].

HNSGLJ *Hunan sheng gongluju* 湖南省公路局 [Hunan Provincial Road Bureau].

HNSJST *Hunan sheng jiansheting* 湖南省建設廳 [Hunan Provincial Construction Bureau].

HNSMZT *Hunan sheng minzhengting* 湖南省民政廳 [Hunan Provincial Civil Affairs Bureau].

HNSZF *Hunan sheng zhengfu* 湖南省政府 [Hunan Provincial Government].

HNSZFGB *Hunan sheng zhengfu gongbao* 湖南省政府公報 [Hunan Provincial Government Gazette].

HNTGC *Hunan sheng tianfu liangshi guanlichu* 湖南省田賦糧食管理處 [Hunan Provincial Land Tax and Grain Administration Office].

JJSXS Guoli zhengzhi daxue renwen zhongxin 國立政治大學人文中心, ed., *Minguo zhi Jiang Jieshi xiansheng* 民國之蔣介石先生 1937-1945 [Mr. Chiang Kai-shek of the Republic of China 1937-1945] (Taipei: Zhengda renwen zhongxin, 2016).

JWHDA *Junshi weiyuanhui suo xia ge zhanqu dang'an huiji* 軍事委員會所轄各戰區檔案匯集 [Compilation of archives from various war areas under the MAC].

JZTAJ Pan Guangzhe 潘光哲 & Huang Zijin 黃自進, ed., *Jiang zongtong ai ji* 蔣中正總統愛記 [President Chiang Kaishek's fondness for taking notes] (Taipei: Guoshiguan, 2011).

JZTWW *Jiang Zhongzheng zongtong wenwu* 蔣中正總統文物 [Artifacts of President Chiang Kaishek].

JZZRJ Kangzhan lishi wenxian yanjiuhui 抗戰歷史文獻研究會, ed., *Jiang Zhongzheng riji* 1937-1945 蔣中正日記 1937-1945 [The diary of Chiang Kaishek] (Kangzhan lishi wenxian yanjiuhui, 2015).

KMJ *Kunmianji chugao* 困勉記初稿 [Draft of hardship records].

KRZZHNZCSL Hunan sheng dang'an guan and zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan, ed., *Kangri zhanzheng Hunan zhanchang shiliao* 抗日戰爭湖南戰場史料 1-6 [Historical materials of the Hunan battlefield during the War of Resistance against Japan volumes 1-6] (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2012).

KRZZMZC Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan, ed., *Kangri zhanzheng de zhengmian zhanchang* 抗日戰爭的正面戰場 [Battles at the front of the War of Resistance against Japan] (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1987).

LSJS Dijiu zhanqu liangshi guanlichu gouliang weiyuanhui 第九戰區糧食管理處購糧委員會編印, ed., *Liangshi jishi* 糧食紀實 [Documentary of grain] (Hunan: Dijiu zhanqu liangshi guanlichu gouliang weiyuanhui, 1940).

LZSL Hou Kunhong 侯坤宏, ed., *Liangzheng shiliao* 糧政史料 [Historical documents on grain policy] (Taipei: Guoshiguan).

SHBSCCSFC *Sihang lianhe banshichu Changsha fenchu* 四行聯合辦事處長沙分處 [The Changsha branch of the joint office of four banks].

SHJJZSHNFS *Shanhou jiuji zongshu Hunan fenshu* 善後救濟總署湖南分署 [Branch of the Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in Hunan].

SSXB *Shishi xinbao* 時事新報 [Current affairs news].

TJYK Hunan sheng zhengfu mishuchu diwu ke 湖南省政府秘書處第五科, ed., *Tongji yuekan* 統計月刊 [Statistical Monthly] (Changsha: Hunan sheng zhengfu mishuchu diwu ke, 1933-1937).

XNRB *Xinan ribao* 西南日報 [Southwestern Daily].

XZWN Hunan sheng zhengfu tongjishi 湖南省政府統計室編, ed., *Xiangzheng wu nian* 湘政五年 [Five years of administration in Hunan] (Hunan: Hunan sheng zhengfu tongjishi, 1941).

XZLN Hunan sheng zhengfu tongjishi, ed., *Xiangzheng liu nian* 湘政六年 [Six years of administration in Hunan] (Hunan: Hunan sheng zhengfu tongjishi, 1942).

XZLNTJT Hunan sheng zhengfu tongjishi, ed., *Xiangzheng liang nian tongji tu* 湘政兩年統計圖 [Statistical charts of two years of administration in Hunan] (Hunan: Hunan sheng zhengfu tongjishi, 1941).

XZY *Xingzhengyuan* 行政院 [Executive Yuan].

ZHMGDAZL *Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan*, ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dang'an ziliao huibian* 中華民國史檔案資料匯編 [Compilation of historical archive and materials of the Republic of China] (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1994-1998).

ZHMGZYSL Qin Xiaoyi, ed., *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian* 中華民國重要史料初編 [Preliminary compilation of important historical materials of the Republic of China] (Taipei: Zhongguo guomindang zhongyang weiyuanhui dangshi weiyuanhui, 1981-1988).

ZNJJTJ *Zhongnong jingji tongji* 中農經濟統計 [Statistical data on agricultural economics of China].

ZQLS Zhanqu liangshi gouchu yu guanli 戰區糧食購儲與管理 [Procurement, storage, and management of food supplies in war areas].

ZSMX *Zhanshi minxun* 戰時民訓 [Wartime civilian training].

ZSRB *Zhongshan ribao* 中山日報 [Zhongshan daily].

ZTJGDS Qin Xiaoyi, ed., *Zongtong Jianggong dashi changbian chugao* 總統蔣公大事長編初稿 [President Chiang Kaishek: key events and comprehensive draft] (Taipei, Zhongguo guomindang zhongyang weiyuanhui dangshi weiyuanhui, 1978-2008).

ZTJGSX Qin Xiaoyi, ed., *Zongtong Jianggong sixiang yanlun zongji* 總統蔣公思想言論總集 [Collected works of President Chiang Kaishek's thoughts and speeches] (Taipei: Zhongguo guomindang zhongyang weiyuanhui dangshi weiyuanhui, 1984).

Key terms with Chinese characters and full *Pinyin* (including abbreviations)

Bai Chongxi 白崇禧

bao 保

bao'antuan 保安團 [Peace Preservation Corps]

baojia 保甲

Baoding lujun junguan xuexiao 保定陸軍軍官學校 [Baoding Military Academy]

baohu shusan 保護疏散 [Protective evacuation]

Baike yancao gongsi 百克煙草公司 [Baiké tobacco company]

Beiyang lujun jiangwutang 北洋陸軍講武堂 [Beiyang Military Academy]

bi cao shengsuan 必操勝算 [a victory can be secured]

binhu diqu 濱湖地區 [Areas near Dongting Lake]

binhu xianfen 濱湖縣份 [Counties near Dongting Lake]

buzaihu 不在乎 [Do not care]

buzhuang 布莊 [fabric shops]

caomi 糙米 [brown rice]

Chang He 昌和

Chang Heng huizhan 長衡會戰 [The Changsha and Hengyang Campaign]

Changsha dajie 長沙大捷 [The great victory of Changsha]

Changsha huizhan 長沙會戰 [The Battles of Changsha]

Changsha zhenji weiyuanhui 賑濟委員會 [Changsha Relieve Disaster Council]

chayan dan 茶鹽蛋 [tea-soaked salted eggs]

Chen Cheng 陳誠

Chen Qian 程潛

chi zidan 吃子彈 [being shot at by police bullets]

Chiang Gui zhanzheng 蔣桂戰爭 [The Battle between Chiang Kaishek and Guangxi Clique]

Chuanjun 川軍 [Sichuan Army]

chijiuzhan 持久戰 [The prolong war]

dagongbao 大公報 [Dagong newspaper]

dahoufang 大後方 [The Great Rear]

dan 擔

Dayunshan 大雲山 [Dayun Mountain]

Dai Li 戴笠

dianyou xiexiang zanting yingye 店友下鄉暫停營業 [The shop is shut down and employees have left for the countryside]

dijiu zhanqu 第九戰區 [The Ninth War Area]

diyi pingmin zhuzhai 第一平民住宅 [the First Civilian Housing]

dongyangche 東洋車 [Toyo tires]

dou 斗

duanda 短打 [shorter garments]

duizhan 堆棧 [storage depots]

Disan ci Nanyue junshi huiyi 第三次南嶽軍事會議 [The Third Nanyue Military Conference]

ershi ba liangshi niandu 二十八糧食年度 [The 1939 GCY]

fabi 法幣 [Fa currency]

fajia 法價 [regulated price]

fanghutuan 防護團 [defense corps]

fangkongjuan 防空捐 [air raid precaution donation]

fangzhiqu 防制區 [restricted defensive area]

Fengtian jiangwutang 奉天講武堂 [Fengtian Military Academy]

fuqing 福慶

Gongfei 共匪 [Communist bandits]

gongliang 公糧 [collective grains]

gongyu 公寓 [the apartment]

gongzige 公子哥 [pampered sons of wealthy]

guanqiang 官腔 [the bureaucratic verbiage]

Guangxi lujun xiaoxuetang 廣西陸軍小學堂 [Guangxi Army Elementary School]

Guilin xingying 桂林行營 [the Guilin Field Headquarters]

gumi 穀米 [puddy rice and white rice]

guoli linshi Changsha daxue 國立長沙臨時大學 [The National Changsha Provisional University]

guomin gemingjun 國民革命軍 [National Revolutionary Army NRA]

guominbing 國民兵 [the National Citizen Soldier Group NCSG]

Guoshiguan 國史館 [Academia Historica]

haishang xingong 海上行宮 [Palace on the Sea]

Han Fujun 韓復榘

He Jian 何鍵

He Yingqin 何應欽

hualu wei tian 化路為田 [Turn roads into farmland]
huamingce 花名冊 [registers]
huangbaoche 黃包車 [rickshaw]
huang huo 荒貨 [used products]
huangjin xian 黃金籼 [Huangjing Indica]
huashi 華石
huazheng weiling 化整為零 [divided the integral into the individual]
Hubei sheng dongyuanhui 湖北省動員會 [the Hubei Mobilization Council]
Hunan guomin ribao 湖南國民日報 [Hunan Nationalist Daily]
Hunan jingji yanjiusuo 湖南經濟研究所 [the Economic Research Bureau of Hunan ERB]
Hunan minzhong ziweidui 湖南民眾自衛隊 [the Hunan People's Self-Defense Force]
Hunan nongye gaijinsuo 湖南農業改進所 [the Hunan Agriculture Improvement Bureau]
Hunan sheng linshi canyihui 湖南省臨時參議會 [Hunan Provincial Provisional Senate]
Hunan sheng yinhang jingji yanjiushi 湖南省銀行經濟研究室 [the Economic Research Office of Hunan Provincial Bank HPB]
hundun 混沌 [wontons]
houtui juezhan 後退決戰 [to pull out with the intent of mounting a decisive assault]
jiadeng liangzhengju 甲等糧政局 [First-Class Grain Administration Bureaus]
jiangwutang 講武堂 [Military Academy]
jianshe Xinan 建設西南 [the development of Southwest]
jiaofei 剿匪 [Suppressing bandits]
jiaogong 剿共 [Suppressing Communists]
jiaotong 交通 [road and railway]
jie jiaogong yi ding Xinan 藉剿共以定西南 [utilizing the suppressions on the CCP to pacify the Southwest]
jin 斤 [catties]
jin bibei jing shanzi yiqi he yi kangzhan 今彼輩竟擅自棄移,何以抗戰? [Now they have left Xuzhou without permission. This recurring situation casts doubt on our ability to persist in resisting]
jingying Sichuan 經營四川 [governance of Sichuan]
Jinsuijun 晉綏軍 [the Shanxi Clique Army]

jiqing 吉慶
jiu yi ba shibian 九一八事變 [the Mukden Incident]
jun 軍 [Army]
junmin bezuoshe 軍民合作社 [Military-Civilian Cooperative]
junmin bezuozhan 軍民合作站 [the Military-Civilian Cooperation Station
MCCS]
junshi weiyuanhui 軍事委員會 [Military Affair Council MAC]
junshi weiyuanhui meizhou zhankuang 軍事委員會每週戰況 [the MAC Weekly
Battle Situation]
junweihui zhixia 軍委會直轄 [MAC-controlled]
Kangding 康定
kangri jiuwang yundong 抗日救亡運動 [the National Resistance and Salvation
Movement against Japan]
kangzhan genjudi 抗戰根據地 [wartime resistance base]
kangzhan tunliang 抗戰屯糧 [to hoard rice throughout the war]
kangzhan xian 抗戰籼 [Kangzhan Indica]
kehuoqian 客夥錢 [guest money]
kezhan 客棧 [the inn]
Kong Xiangxi 孔祥熙
kuli 苦力 [coolies]
Kunming 昆明
Kunming jiangwutang 昆明講武堂 [Kunming Military Academy]
Laodaohe 撈刀河 [Laodao River]
Li Jishen 李濟深
Li Zongren 李宗仁
liang Guang shibian 兩廣事變 [the Guangdong and Guangxi Incident]
liangshi bu 糧食部 [The Ministry of Grain]
liangshi guanlichu 糧食管理處 [Grain Administration Office GAO]
liangshi niandu 糧食年度 [Grain Calendar Year GCY]
liangzhan 糧棧 [grain stores]
lianxin 蓮心
Lin Wei 林蔚
Liu Xiang 刘湘
Long Yun 龍雲
longtang 弄堂 [lanes]
Lu Daoyuan 魯道源

Luding 蘆定
liudouxi 綠豆稀 [mung bean soup]
lìguān 旅館 [hostel]
lujun daxue 陸軍大學 *Luda*
 Lushan 廬山
michang 米廠 [rice factories]
Miluohe 汨羅河 [Miluo River]
minfangtuan 民防團 [civil defense groups]
minzhong 民衆 [common people]
minzhong julebu 民眾俱樂部 [the People's Club]
minzhong zuxun 民眾組訓 [civilian training]
mu 畝
nongye guofang 農業國防 [Agricultural National Defense]
nuomifan 糯米飯 [sticky rice]
pingtiao 平糶 [leveling prices]
qian di zongsiling 前敵總司令 [a Chief Commander at the front]
qimi 齊米 [brown rice]
Qianjun 黔軍 [Guizhou Army]
qingbao 情報 [intelligence]
quanguo jingji weiyuanhui 全國經濟委員會 [the National Economic Council
 NEC]
rangwai an'nei 攘外安內 [giving in to the foreign, pacifying the local]
renliche 人力車 [rickshaw]
renliche fu 人力車夫 [rickshaw puller or driver]
renliche ye gonghui 人力車業公會 [the Rickshaw Association]
 Rongjing 榮經
sanfen junshi qifen zhengzhi 三分軍事七分政治 [three-part military and seven-
 part politics]
san ri bu kaizhang, kaizhang chi san nian 三日不開張, 開張吃三年 [make
 enough money in three days to live off of for the next three years]
shanghao 商號 [business establishments]
shangjiang 上將 [Full general]
shangqianxian 上前線 [go to the frontline]
shangwu 商務 [the Commercial Press]
shaobing 燒餅 [sesame flatbreads]
shaojiang 少將 [Major general]

sheng gouliang weiyuanhui 省購糧委員會 [Provincial Grain Procurement Council PGPC]
shouling 手令 [personal directive]
shi 師 [division]
shi 石
shuidao 水稻 [paddy rice]
shudian 書店 [bookstores]
shuju 書局 [chief bookstores]
shuota gan mo, gankuai qu yincha 說他幹末, 趕快去飲茶 [“Let’s not talk about it, let’s just have tea”]
Sichuan sheng zhanshi xiangcun fuwutuan 四川省戰時鄉村服務團 [the Sichuan Wartime Rural Service Corp]
siling zhangguan 司令長官 [The Commander in Chief]
suanmeitang 酸梅湯 [sour plum juice]
 Sun Du 孫渡
 Sun Lianzhong 孫連仲
 Tang En’bo 湯恩伯
tangbao 湯包 [dumplings]
tangshang 堂上
tanpai 攤派 [levies]
Tianjin jiangwutang 天津講武堂 [Tianjin Military Academy]
tianlu zhanfa 天鑪戰法 [tianlu tactics]
 Tianquan 天全
tingjin zongdui 挺進縱隊 [striding columns of troops]
Tianxingge 天心閣 [Tianxin Pavilion]
tongshi 通史 [general history]
tongsu ribao 通俗日報 [Tongsu daily]
tongxianghui 同鄉會 [native place societies]
tuaji 團級 [regimental level]
xiadengmi 下等米 [a lower grade of rice]
 Xiang 湘 [an abbreviation of Hunan]
xiangmi gaijin weiyuanhui 湘米改進委員會 [The Hunanese Rice Improvement Council HRIC]
 Xiang-Ya yiyuan 湘雅醫院 [Xiang-Ya Hospital]
xian zongli 先總理 [the former Premier]

Xikang jiansheng weiyuanhui 西康西康建省委員會 [The Xikang Provincial Preparatory Committee]
Xinqianghe 新牆河 [Xinqiang River]
xuanchuanzhan 宣傳戰 [a propaganda campaign]
 Xuzhou 徐州
 Xue Yue 薛岳
 Wang Boling 王柏齡
 Wang Jialie 王家烈
 Wang Lingji 王陵基
 Wang Yaowu 王耀武
wanli xian 萬利籼 [Wanli Indica]
weiyuanzhang 委員長 [Chairman]
wenshi ziliao 文史資料 [The Selected Works of Literature and Historical Materials]
wenxi dahuo 文夕大火 [the Great Fire in Changsha]
wuchan 物產 [commodities]
 Ya'an 雅安
 Yan Xishan 閻錫山
yangfu 洋服 [Western-style clothing]
 Yang Hanyu 楊漢域
yangmi 洋米 [foreign rice]
Yangyuan 洋元
yingye shijian wan sishi qi 營業時間晚四時起 [it is open from 4 pm]
Yinyuan 銀元
youzha doufu 油炸豆腐 [fried tofu]
 Yu Hanmou 余漢謀
Yuejun 粵軍 [the Guangdong Army]
Yuelu shuyuan 嶽麓書院 [Yuelu Academy]
yuliang 餘糧 [leftover grain]
Yunnan lujun jiangwutang 雲南陸軍講武堂 [Yunnan Military Academy]
zai qianfang zhenzhuo shiqing 在前方斟酌實情 [to reflect upon the actual situation at the front before taking actions]
 Zhao Zili 趙子立
zhanbao 戰報 [battle results]
zhanfang 棧房 [promptuaries]
 Zhang Fakui 張發奎
 Zhang Zhizhong 張治中

zhanqing 戰情 [the progress of battles]
zhanqu zhangguan silingbu 戰區長官司令部 [The War Area Chief Headquarters]
zhanshi minxun 戰時民訓 [Wartime civilian training]
zhanshi minzhong dongyuan gangyao 戰時民眾動員綱要 [the Wartime Mass Mobilization Outline]
zhanshi renwudui 戰時任務隊 [the Wartime Task Corp WTC]
zhengzhong 正中 [Cheng Chung Book]
zhidao shusan 指導疏散 [Guided Evacuation]
zhixiashi 直轄市 [a special municipality]
zhonghua 中華 [Chung Hwa Book]
Zhongwen 忠文書店 [Zhongwen Bookstore]
Zhongyuan dazhan 中原大戰 [the Central Plains War]
zhongyangjun 中央軍 [the Central Army]
zhongyang junxiao 中央軍校 [Nanjing Central Military Academy]
Zhongyang yinhang 中央銀行 [the Central Bank]
zhong zhong jiao nong 中中交農 [the Central Bank, the Bank of China, the Bank of Communications and the Farmers Bank of China]
zhongdengmi 中等米 [mid-grade rice]
zhongjiang 中將 [Lieutenant general]
Zhongyang nongye yanjiusuo 中央農業實驗所 [the National Agricultural Research Bureau NARB]
Zhou Jin 周競
zhulan 朱蘭
zixin bu zhi cuowu 自信不致錯誤 [I am firmly confident that those measures will not lead to any mistakes]
zuoniu zuoma 做牛做馬 [toiling away laboriously like oxen or horses]

Introduction

For decades, Communist political propaganda was the dominant narrative in the Chinese Mainland depicting the Chinese Nationalist Party, also known as Kuomintang KMT (or Guomindang GMD), and their involvement in the War of Resistance. Chinese historiography in the mainstream before the 1980s held a uniformly negative view of the KMT which was seen as engaging in passive war efforts while actively suppressing the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).¹ Frontal battlefields in Hunan led by the Nationalists received little attention, too. Their failures in Hunan, particularly during the 1944 Ichigo Operation were a key area of interest for Chinese scholars, which was linked to the Nationalists' anti-Communist ideology that allegedly restrained them from deploying their combat forces against the Japanese.² As censorship restrictions eased and academic research gained more autonomy from higher authorities, historians at Nanjing University in the 1980s began to reexamine the Nationalists' involvement in the war, shortly after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) ended and Deng Xiaoping came into power. The historiography of wartime Hunan evolved over the years showing changing perspectives and methodologies.

As time passed, more relevant accounts of wartime Hunan have been published. In their work for example, Xiao Dongliang and Yu Yingbin

¹ Huang Meizhen 黃美真, Zhang Jishun 張濟順, and Jin Guangyue 金光躍, "Jianguo yilai kangri zhanzheng yanjiu pingshu" 建國以來抗日戰爭史研究述評 [The historiography of the War of Resistance against Japan since the founding of the People's Republic of China], *Minguo dang'an* 民國檔案 04 (1987), doi:CNKI:SUN:GMDA.0.1987-04-012.2.3.

² Zhang Faliang 張發亮, "Kangri zhanzheng shengli hou Zhongguo Gongchandang lingdao renmin zhengqu guonei heping minzhu er douzheng de jige wenti" 抗日戰爭勝利後中國共產黨領導人民為爭取國內和平民主而鬥爭的幾個問題 [Several questions concerned how the CCP led the people in the pursuit of domestic peace and democracy after the victory of the War of Resistance against Japan], *Xin shixue tongxun* 新史學通訊, no.4 (1955), doi:CNKI:SUN:SXYK.0.1955-04-000; Jin Chunming 金春明, "Kangri zhanzheng shiqi zhongguo Gongchandang he Guomindang liangtiao kangzhan luxian de douzheng" 抗日戰爭時期中國共產黨和國民黨兩條抗戰路線的鬥爭 [Struggles between the CCP and the KMT in their two different resistance strategies during the War of Resistance against Japan], *Lishi jiaoxue* 歷史教學, no.6 (1963), doi:CNKI:SUN:LISI.0.1963-06-006.

prioritize the focus of the KMT and CCP's joint efforts and thoroughly analyze the impact on Hunan in terms of military, political, and economic factors.³

Luo Yuming's book transcends a traditional dichotomy between the KMT-led frontal battlefield and the CCP-led battlefield behind enemy lines providing a more impartial analysis of these two battlefields.⁴ These two works as general history (*tongshi* 通史) books offer a thorough overview of the history of wartime Hunan presenting a multifaceted portrayal of the province and establishing themselves as key sources for future studies in this field. Yet, both Huang Guangyou and Hu Chengsi argue that Chinese scholarship on the war after 1980 still has limitations including a narrow range of research, a singular focus on one aspect (politics and military), and biased and oversimplified conclusions drawn from the research.⁵ Most academic work during this period is narrative-based and focuses more on describing historical events than on doing in-depth analyses. Western historians have not explored the wartime history of Changsha and Hunan in depth. Some broader studies have explored the military and political history of Changsha but lacked details.⁶ Understanding of the city's defense tactics, battle preparations, and mass mobilization, as well as their interaction with Chongqing which housed the wartime Chinese central government needs further exploration.

³ Xiao Dongliang 肖棟樑 and Yu Yingbin 余應彬, *Hunan kangri zhanzheng shi* 湖南抗日戰爭史 [The history of the War of Resistance against Japan in Hunan] (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995).

⁴ Luo Yuming 羅玉明, *Kangri zhanzheng shi qi de Hunan zhanchang* 抗日戰爭時期的湖南戰場 [The Hunan battlefield during the War of Resistance against Japan] (Shanghai: Xuelin Chubanshe, 2002).

⁵ Huang Guangyou 黃廣友, "Liu Danian yu xin shiqi kangri zhanzheng shi yanjiu" 劉大年與新時期抗日戰爭史研究 [Liu Danian and the research of the history of the War of Resistance against Japan in the new era], *Nanjing daxue xuebao* 南京大學學報 54, no.4 (2017): 150, doi:CNKI:SUN:NJDX.0.2017-04-014; Hu Chengsi 胡丞嗣, "Kangzhan shiqi Changsha huizhan de shuxie yu quanshi" 抗戰時期長沙會戰的書寫與詮釋 [The writing and interpretation of the Battles of Changsha during the War of Resistance against Japan] (Master diss., Hunan Normal University, 2021), 3.

⁶ Stephen MacKinnon, "The Defense of the Central Yangtze," in *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War*, ed. Mark Peattie, Edward J. Drea, and Hans van de Ven (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Hans van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China 1925-1945* (London & New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003); Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II 1937-1945* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014).

After 2005, there is a surge in the production of documentary works, which delve into the details of major battles in Hunan.⁷ Historians also have shifted their attention from a broad overview of wartime Hunan to more specialized areas in their research expanding their focuses beyond political and military history to encompass other aspects such as the economic, social, and cultural landscape of Hunan during the war. For example, Liu Guowu's research centers on a transformation in mining, finance, and agriculture industries in wartime Hunan, examining the influence of central government policies, and providing a comprehensive analysis of their successes and setbacks.⁸ Scholarship places a greater emphasis on exploring and showing various dimensions of wartime Hunan in order to present an accurate and intricate portrayal of its historical evolution.⁹

The scope of my project covers various aspects of wartime Changsha and Hunan including military tactical shifts carried out by the Nationalists after 1939, a complex dynamic between Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue (薛岳) before and during the war, an evolution of the wartime Changsha society and the Nationalists' mobilization efforts during the war, such as grain administration and promoting military-civilian cooperation. Pertinent historiography on the previously mentioned subjects has been achieved to

⁷ See for example, Xing Ye and Xu Haiyun 邢燁 許海芸, ed., *Changsha huizhan* 長沙會戰 [The Battles of Changsha] (Beijing: Hangkong gongye chubanshe, 2016); Ma Zhengjian 馬正建, *Changsha da huizhan* 長沙大會戰 [The big Battles of Changsha] (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 2011).

⁸ Liu Guowu 劉國武, "Kangzhan shiqi Hunan de gongkuang ye" 抗戰時期湖南的工礦業 [Industry and mining in Hunan during the War of Resistance against Japan], *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu* 抗日戰爭研究, no.2 (2009), doi:CNKI:SUN:KANG.0.2009-02-003; Liu Guowu, "Lun Kangzhan shiqi Hunan de jinrong" 論抗戰時期湖南的金融 [A discussion on the finance in Hunan during the War of Resistance against Japan], *Hengyang shifan xueyuan xuebao* 衡陽師範學院學報 30, no.4 (2009), doi:10.13914/j.cnki.cn43-1453/z.2009.04.044; Liu Guowu, "Kangzhan shiqi Hunan de nongye shulun" 抗戰時期湖南的農業述論 [A discussion on agriculture in Hunan during the War of Resistance against Japan], *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu*, no.4 (2009), doi:CNKI:SUN:KANG.0.2009-04-008.

⁹ Yang Zijiao 楊子佼, "Gaige kaifang yilai Hunan kangzhan shi yanjiu shuping" 改革開放以來湖南抗戰史研究述評 [A review of the research on the history of the War of Resistance against Japan in Hunan since the reform and opening-up], *Shehui kexue dongtai* 社會科學動態, no.10 (2020), doi:CNKI:SUN:SKDT.0.2020-10-012.

uncover a more genuine account of the war in Hunan and Changsha, covering a wide range of topics. It still contains certain gaps that require further attention as being explored in the subsequent sections, along with a discussion involving a broad scholarship on the War of Resistance.

The Battles of Changsha

Chinese historians have explored most battles in wartime Hunan not only by investigating their strategic development and results but also by taking a more comprehensive perspective to delve into more intricate aspects. The Battles of Changsha (*Changsha huizhan* 長沙會戰), which took place in the capital of Hunan, became a central topic of debate in military history because of their recurrent nature and large scale. Ongoing research has not been able to overcome the limitations of post-1980s Chinese scholarship. This impeded a complete understanding of these battles. Chinese historiography focuses more on these battles themselves. Utilizing sources from wartime newspapers and journals, Guo Jie provides an overview of the First Battle of Changsha in 1939 discussing Xue Yue's involvement in the battle.¹⁰ Instead of taking a top-down approach, Gao Man's work involves incorporating information from *Dagong Newspaper* (*dagongbao* 大公報) to give a comprehensive view of the battle including its context, development, and eventual victory for the Nationalists.¹¹

Yet like many other documentary narratives of the Changsha Campaigns, these pieces often overlook a thorough assessment of military strategic objectives that the Nationalists and Japanese sought to achieve and

¹⁰ Guo Jie 郭傑, "Xue Yue yu diyi ci Changsha huizhan" 薛岳與第一次長沙會戰 [Xue Yue and the First Battle of Changsha], *Shaoguan xueyuan xuebao* 韶關學院學報 33, no.9 (2012), doi:CNKI:SUN:SSCG.0.2012-09-005.

¹¹ Gao Man 高曼, "Qian lun 'Dagongbao' zhong de diyi ci Changsha huizhan" 淺論大公報中的第一次長沙會戰 [A concise examination of the First Battle of Changsha as outlined in Dagongbao], *Chifeng xueyuan xuebao* 赤峰學院學報 35, no.3 (2014), doi:10.13398/j.cnki.issn1673-2596.2014.03.008.

their consequences for both sides.¹² Several overarching chronicles of the war also note the Battles of Changsha attributing the victories, particularly the 1942 one, to strategic achievements, unyielding determination among troops, and the involvement of local people.¹³ Historians largely agree that the Changsha Victory (*Changsha dajie* 長沙大捷) had a positive impact on uniting the people of Hunan and reinforcing their faith while elevating China's international image.¹⁴ Contrary to expectations, the urbanization process in Japanese-occupied Wuxi persisted despite the Japanese invasion and occupation, according to Toby Lincoln.¹⁵ However, the urbanization of Changsha was influenced in a different manner by the war from 1938 onwards. In light of urban and economic history, Luo Lin has carefully examined the detailed impacts of the Battles of Changsha and concluded that the Japanese invasions of Changsha hindered the city's urbanization process as they caused

¹² Another example is, Guo Xiong 郭雄, *Kangzhan shiqi de zhengmian zhanchang* 抗戰時期的正面戰場 [Battles at the front during the War of Resistance against Japan] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2005).

¹³ Guo Daijun 郭岱君 *et al.*, ed., *Chongtan kangzhan shi cong kangri dazhanlue de xingcheng dao Wuhan huizhan 1931-1938* 重探抗戰史: 從抗日大戰略的形成到武漢會戰 1931-1938 [Revisiting the history of the 2nd Sino-Japanese War: from the formulation of general Anti-Japanese strategy to the Battle of Wuhan: 1931-1938] (Taipei: Lianjing chubangongsi, 2015); Guo Daijun *et al.*, ed., *Chongtan kangzhan shi er kangri zhanzheng yu shijie dazhan beliu 1938.11-1945.08* 重探抗戰史二: 抗日戰爭與世界大戰合流 1938.11-1945.08 [Revisiting the 2nd Sino-Japanese War, the convergence of the War of Resistance against Japan and World War II, 1938.11-1945.08] (Taipei: Lianjing chubangongsi, 2022); Zhang Xianwen 張憲文 *et al.*, ed., *Zhongguo kangri zhanzheng shi 1931-1945* 中國抗日戰爭史 1931-1945 [A history of China's War of Resistance against Japan 1931-1945] (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2001); Guo Rugui 郭汝瑰 and Huang Yuzhan 黃玉章, ed., *Zhongguo kangri zhanzheng zhengmian zhanchang zuozhanji xia* 中國抗日戰爭正面戰場作戰記下冊 [Records of the Battles at the front during China's War of Resistance against Japan volume II] (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2010).

¹⁴ For example, see, Zhou Shengying 周盛盈, "Disan ci Changsha huizhan ji qi lishi yiyi" 第三次長沙會戰及其歷史意義 [The Third Battle of Changsha and its historical significance], *Xiangtan shifan xueyuan xuebao* 湘潭師範學院學報, no.4 (1995), doi:CNKI:SUN:XAFB.0.1995-04-003; Xue Qilin 薛其林, Tan Weiwei 譚緯緯 and Chen Ting 陳婷, "Changsha huizhan yu Hu Xiang jingshen" 長沙會戰與湖湘精神 [The Battle of Changsha and the spirit of Hunan], *Changsha daxue xuebao* 長沙大學學報 29, no.3 (May 2015), doi:CNKI:SUN:CSDX.0.2015-03-001.

¹⁵ Toby Lincoln, *Urbanizing China in War and Peace: The Case of Wuxi County* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, June 2015), 158.

a significant loss of urban construction, business, transportation, and education.¹⁶

Moreover, present research on the Battles of Changsha remains controversial as there are ongoing discussions about the following aspects. First, it has been noted in historiography that battles in Changsha were perceived as isolated operations. Hence, according to Hu Chengsi, an investigation into the Battles of Changsha should go beyond one specific battle and encompass a broader understanding of the three battles that occurred between 1939 and 1942.¹⁷ In 1939, the Nationalists developed a tactic that underwent significant improvements during the battles in Changsha resulting in a victory in 1942. Following their 1939 operation, the Japanese modified their advancement tactic by concentrating their forces solely in Hunan instead of dividing them into multiple battlefields. After conducting three operations in north Hunan, the Japanese also evolved their understanding of the Nationalists' new military concepts moving from a state of unfamiliarity to a thorough comprehension. The significance of this cannot be overlooked as a factor in an overwhelming Japanese victory during the Ichigo Operation in 1944. I argue that the Nationalists and Japanese were fighting in turn-based strategic conflicts for their own strategic goals. And, in my work, I analyze the Battles of Changsha from 1939 to 1944, covering them in chapters three and four.

Second, current research on Changsha Campaigns has not sufficiently examined a significant matter of tactical withdrawals of the National Revolutionary Army NRA (*guomin gemingjun* 國民革命軍) from the Changsha

¹⁶ Luo Lin 羅琳, "Changsha huizhan dui jindai Changsha chengshi fazhan yingxiang yanjiu" 長沙會戰對近代長沙城市發展影響研究 [A research on the impact of the Battles of Changsha on the modern urban development of Changsha], *Hubei jingji xueyuan xuebao* 湖北經濟學院學報 7, no.1 (January 2010), doi:CNKI:SUN:HBRW.0.2010-01-008.

¹⁷ Hu Chengsi, "Changsha Huizhan de shuxie," 3.

frontline, particularly from the perspective of a Japanese understanding. The core idea of the new 1939 tactic was “to use small groups of troops to slow down the Japanese advance and hold them until they exhausted their ammunition and rations” while deploying the main NRA forces in the flank of the Japanese advance to form an encirclement.¹⁸ When the Japanese troops arrived at the areas where ambushes had been prepared, all NRA troops could assemble superiority in force to strike their enemies from all sides. This gradually became a basic guide for the Nationalists after 1938, which had proved effective, especially in Changsha from 1939 to 1942, but finally led to a decisive defeat in 1944.

The success of the post-1939 tactic and its impact on securing victories heavily relies on how Japanese military commanders viewed and judged the retreat of Chinese troops at the front. I argue that the Japanese lacked a comprehensive understanding of the true intentions behind the tactical retreats of the NRA units until their unsuccessful attack on Changsha in 1942. By drawing on translated and published Japanese war history in Chinese, this thesis rethinks the three Battles of Changsha from 1939 to 1942 and examines crucial military values of the Nationalists’ tactic after 1939.

Third, the Nationalists were defeated during their second Changsha Campaign in 1941 but ultimately triumphed in their propaganda efforts against the Japanese. Chinese historians usually present the propaganda of military triumphs but downplay how the government used newspaper reports to conceal actual military failures.¹⁹ The main characteristics of the Nationalist propaganda strategy which aimed to maintain high public morale and address

¹⁸ “Dijiu zhanqu guanyu diyi ci Changsha huizhan zhanqian di wo xingshi gaiyao ji zhanchang zhuangtai de baogao” 第九戰區關於第一次長沙會戰戰前敵我形勢概要及戰場狀態的報告 [A report from the Ninth War Area on the overview of the enemy and our situation and battlefield conditions before the First Battle of Changsha] (October 1939), KRZZMZC, 1027; see also, van de Ven, *War*, 239.

¹⁹ See for example, Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 834.

their military defeat in Changsha after the battle can be demonstrated through those writings in post-battle newspapers and periodicals. The propaganda campaign led by the Nationalists to some extent, I argue, showed their capability to mobilize society playing a crucial role in their victory against a Japanese attack on Changsha three months later.

Keith Schoppa, in his book about wartime Zhejiang focusing on refugees in the province, argued that the destruction of the highways under the strategy of Scorched Earth in the 1942 military campaign in Zhejiang was “frantic and futile to stop the Japanese and seemed almost obscenely self-defeating,” which “obliterated the most successful provincial government reconstruction efforts of the 1930s.”²⁰ He further stated that “such questionable self-destruction seems to suggest not panic but, more importantly, a tragic loss of perspective and sense of reality on the part of both the military and civil authorities.”²¹

However, in my investigation, I dispute Schoppa’s claim that the active ruin of transportation by the Nationalists did not result in self-defeat, but rather, employing this tactical military approach in central China, in conjunction with the unique climate and topography there, successfully neutralized Japanese mobile warfare tactics and wear their advance out on the battlefield. What is more crucial is that it highlights the Nationalists’ capacity to efficiently rally a significant number of local laborers to partake in military endeavors of considerable magnitude, resembling a scenario from 1942 in Zhejiang, in which a large workforce of sixty-two thousand locals was mobilized to demolish railroad tracks, highways, and other small roads as Schoppa points out.²²

²⁰ R. Keith Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness: Refugees during the Sino-Japanese War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 249.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue

It is a consensus among historians that the wartime leadership of Chiang Kaishek involved utilizing personal instructions to dominate war-related decisions and operations, which undermined the reputation of local military leaders and caused NRA soldiers at the front to receive contradictory instructions from both Chiang and their superiors.²³ Drawing on Chang Jui-te, James Hudson argues that Chiang tended to assert dominance in any specific battle or encounter ultimately confusing the NRA chain of command and mistrusting the Nationalist generals.²⁴ Nevertheless, it should be noted that Hudson fails to take into account Chang's assertion that Chiang's actions were not indicative of a disregard for the NRA chain of command. Many Nationalist commanders, in reality, decided to ignore those instructions and come up with their own strategic methods.²⁵ Stephen MacKinnon argues in his article that Chiang's mere presence alone inspired courage in NRA troops and carried great symbolic importance for the Nationalist government in sustaining its war efforts.²⁶ This was acknowledged by his former adversaries from the 1920s and early 1930s. Chiang issued conflicting orders that were occasionally disregarded by local commanders. In terms of strategic significance, his personal instructions and telegrams reflected negotiations and suggestions for his Nationalist generals in regard to the careful deployment of troops and

²³ See, James J Hudson, "River Sands/Urban Spaces: Changsha in Modern Chinese History" (PhD diss., The University of Texas, 2015), 340-341; Wang Qisheng, "The Battle for Hunan and the Chinese Military's Response to Operation Ichigo," in *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War*, ed. Mark Peattie, Edward J. Drea, and Hans van de Ven (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 411-413; Xiao Xianyou 蕭先佑, "Xue Yue yu kangzhan shiqi dijiu zhanqu de fazhan" 薛岳與抗戰時期第九戰區的發展 [Xue Yue and the development of the Ninth War Area during the War of Resistance against Japan] (Master diss., National Chung Cheng University, 2013).

²⁴ Hudson, "River Sands," 329; Chang Jui-te, "Chiang Kai-shek's Coordination by Personal Directives," in *China at War: Regions of China, 1937-1945*, ed. Stephen R. Mackinnon *et al* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 66.

²⁵ Chang Jui-te, "Personal Directives," 41.

²⁶ MacKinnon, "The Central Yangtze," 206.

division structures which held both political and military relevance.²⁷

MacKinnon's argument is substantiated by examining the Battle of Wuhan and the subsequent defense of central China, which also encompasses the Battles of Changsha. Based on my evidence from wartime telegraphs exchanged between Chiang and divisional leaders in Hunan, I argue that Chiang exerted considerable control over the NRA troops in the Ninth War Area (*dijiu zhanqu* 第九戰區), potentially extending to a division level.²⁸ However, there is no clear evidence to support the claim that Chiang blatantly disregarded the operation of the Ninth War Area under Xue Yue during the battles.

Both Chinese and Taiwanese scholars direct their attention to Xue Yue, the wartime Hunan governor and leader of the Ninth War Area responsible for defending the province with an emphasis on his military achievements, leadership in battles, and military ideology.²⁹ Little scholarship, however, has examined his career before the war, specifically his dynamic with Chiang Kaishek. In his master's dissertation, Xiao Xianyou offers a comprehensive overview of the shifting rapport between Chiang and Xue progressing from antagonism to cooperation before the war. I draw my research on the pre-war connection between Xue and Chiang from the influence of Xiao. While it has been argued that Chiang lacked strong connections with regional military

²⁷ Ibid., 201-202.

²⁸ A war area was a wartime organization created by the Nationalists to lead a specific battle. After 1939, it was re-created to govern certain provinces in the Nationalist-controlled China. The Ninth War Area was responsible for defending Hunan, south Hubei and north Jiangxi. Some historians choose to translate a *zhanqu* into a war zone. However, according to the Nationalist wartime reports, this word had been translated into the war area (WA in abbreviation). This work uses the translation of war areas. See, KRZZMZC, 2.

²⁹ See for example, Chen Shouheng 陳壽恆 *et al.*, ed., *Shiliao congkan ba Xue Yue jiangjun yu guomin geming* 史料叢刊八: 薛岳將軍與國民革命 [Collected historical materials vol. 8: General Xue Yue and the national revolution] (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, 1988); Xiao Xianyou, "Xue Yue yu di jiu zhanqu"; Guo Jie, "Xue Yue yu Changsha huizhan"; Guo Jie 郭潔, "Kangzhan shiqi Xue Yue yanjiu" 抗戰時期薛岳研究 [Research on Xue Yue during the War of Resistance against Japan] (Master diss., Huazhong Normal University, 2007); Su Lingfeng 蘇玲鋒, "Kangzhan shiqi Xue Yue junshi sixiang yanjiu" 抗戰時期薛岳軍事思想研究 [Research on Xue Yue's military ideas the War of Resistance against Japan] (Master diss., University of Xiangtan, 2014).

commanders, his relationship with the general in Hunan during the war proved otherwise.³⁰

Convoluting situations surrounding the Ichigo Offensive in 1944 ultimately led to the rift between Xue and Chiang. A strategic divergence coupled with Chiang's growing distrust of Xue during the war was a cause. However, it is clear that the breakdown cannot be attributed to a negative historical relationship between the two military leaders. While serving as governor of wartime Hunan, Xue adhered to all military directives and policies from Chongqing including those related to agricultural production and grain distribution. Chiang showed a level of respect toward Xue, who held the position of leader in the Ninth War Area. Furthermore, understanding the connection between these two military figures shows the possibility that Chiang was able to trust a general from a different faction, even though this trust was somewhat restricted and was subject to change if further suspicions or divergence arose around Chiang.

Chiang's relationships with other military leaders, notably regional commanders, were strained before the outbreak of the war. However, his strong and mutually beneficial relationships with Xue Yue the wartime governor of Hunan challenges a typical depiction of the nature of the KMT and the ineffectiveness of the Nationalist government as not merely corrupt, inconsistent, and incompetent, particularly in the later stages of the war.³¹ Figures within the KMT were able to forge strong connections, through which to enhance the mobilization efforts of society and the public during wartime. Because of a positive relationship between Chongqing and Changsha and effective Nationalist mobilization efforts during the war, notable progress was

³⁰ Mitter, *Forgotten Ally*, 50.

³¹ Rana Mitter and Aaron William Moore, "China in World War II, 1937–1945: Experience, Memory, and Legacy," *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 2 (2011): 230, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25835677>.

made in increasing wartime rice production until 1942, coupled with the successful military-civilian cooperation in Hunan. Both of them are good examples for us to explore further the nature and effectiveness of the Nationalist government, which has been discussed further in this project. An instance from 1942 involved the Nationalist central government calling for greater rice and wheat allocations from agricultural provinces with only Hunan and Shaanxi actively supporting the request.³²

A Chinese failure in the 1944 Ichigo Operation has been a topic of discussion among historians. It is widely believed that the Nationalist military collapse was caused by factors, including unreliable logistics and supply, inadequate nutrition of their soldiers because of food shortages, a lack of medical care, and high inflation in Free China.³³ Historians including Hans van de Ven and Parks Coble, argue that Stilwell's role in bringing the most skilled Chinese soldiers from China Theater to Burma was crucial to the Chinese defeat in 1944.³⁴ However, apart from the factors above, I argue that this failure was the product of a combination of erroneous military tactics, political conflicts between Chiang and Xue, and a rice crisis in Hunan after 1943, which have been extensively explored in chapters three, four and five in great detail. A political disintegration between Chiang and Xue played a role in the Chinese failure in 1944. By investigating the relationship between Chiang and Xue before and during the war, particularly their role in the 1944 Ichigo Operation, my research analyzes the military downfall of the Nationalists and the collapse of their political standing thus, leading to the loss

³² Huang Junxia, "Nongye guofang," 175.

³³ See, for example, Wang Qisheng, "The Battle for Hunan," 403-422; Hans van de Ven, *China at War: Triumph and Tragedy in the Emergence of the New China 1937-1952* (London: Profile Books, 2017), 182-189; Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 1089-1092.

³⁴ Hans van de Ven, "Stilwell in the Stocks: the Chinese nationalists and the allied powers in the second world war," *Asian Affairs* 34:1 (2003): 254, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0306837032000136288> and Parks Coble, *The Collapse of Nationalist China: How Chiang Kaishek lost the Civil War* (Cambridge, 2023), 20.

of Changsha, Hengyang and the majority of Hunanese territories. The leadership of Chiang Kaishek, who built and expanded the party and army during the 1930s was also lost, as a lot of his factional forces had been defeated on the battlefields.

Coble in his book about Nationalist China presents the aftermath influence of the Ichigo. The most notable impact of the Ichigo was the unveiling of the severe decay in Chiang Kaishek's military as the campaign cut down on the amount of grain accessible for feeding Chinese troops, particularly during which the Nationalists no longer held power over Hunan, a crucial rice supplier for the Chinese military.³⁵ In fact, before the Ichigo raged on in Hunan, eight months of clashes between Chinese and Japanese troops inflicted significant damage on rice harvests in Lake Dongting, which shaped a negative outcome of the defense of Hunan in 1944, as detailed in chapter five.

Cobles also believes that the most corrosive result of the Ichigo was to increase corruption in the military and to lower morale.³⁶ Corruption resulted in the diversion of food and monetary benefits meant for the soldiers. This has been supported by Lloyd Eastman's statement that "meat, salt, and oil disappeared from the soldiers' diet for months at a time."³⁷ Coble then conclusively states that "Operation Ichigo revealed how drastically the fighting ability of the Nationalist forces had fallen."³⁸ Less rice collected and provided to the military from Hunan in 1944 before the Ichigo, in my opinion, should be also considered to slash the fighting ability of the Chinese military, even the corruption indeed existed. The 1943 Lake Dongting conflicts, therefore, had a

³⁵ Coble, *The Collapse of Nationalist China*, 22-23.

³⁶ Ibid., 24.

³⁷ Ibid., 25.

³⁸ Ibid.

similarly negative influence on the Nationalist military in the 1944 Hunan battlefield.

Using Eastman Coble claims that local military forces were authorized to purchase grain at rates significantly lower than market prices.³⁹ Such a statement is unfounded, in particular, it is not deemed suitable as an official practice. In essence, the local troops were not authorized to gather grains from the peasants, a detailed exploration of this subject is presented in chapter five of my writing.

Finally, Coble mentions that the issue of wartime inflation was particularly severe for individuals with steady salaries, such as teachers, civil servants, and military personnel, and it escalated significantly in the final phase of the war under the influence of Ichigo.⁴⁰ The everyday experiences of people in China were significantly affected by the war, especially when the hyperinflation was exacerbated by the Ichigo Operation, with the Nationalists losing control of massive territories with rich agricultural products, such as Hunan. In my research, I outlined the scenarios under the influence of hyperinflation and raging battles, in which a diverse group of people in wartime Changsha and Hunan, all of whom depended on fixed salaries to sustain themselves and their families.

The mass mobilization and cooperation between the army and civilian

In Chongqing, during the war, the Nationalists were dedicated to handling the aftermath of air raids, which included offering free medical treatment at hospitals to Public Works Bureau employees.⁴¹ Refugees were given employment opportunities by issuing identity documents as part of a relief

³⁹ Ibid., 23; see also, Lloyd Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution, 1937-1949* (Stanford: Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1984), 50-56.

⁴⁰ Coble, *The Collapse of Nationalist China*, 26.

⁴¹ Rana Mitter, *China's War with Japan, 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival* (London: Penguin Books), 178.

program.⁴² Rana Mitter acknowledges that the extent of refugee aid provided by the Nationalist government during wartime far exceeded any previous efforts in China serving as a key component of Nationalist propaganda.⁴³ Not only were refugees the focus of the social mobilization (propaganda) campaign but also the residents in regions beyond Chongqing were now facing substantial pressures including recruitment into the military (civilian-military cooperation) and the cultivation of more food to meet the needs of cities and armed forces (I discuss this later in the introduction).

Further research is needed in the area of social mobilization of the Nationalists in wartime Hunan, specifically concerning the mass mobilization that occurred across the province, to demonstrate their capacity to mobilize the society in wartime China. A prevailing view in Chinese scholarship is that the CCP utilized a strategy of extensive mobilization to unite the Chinese populace while the Nationalists' lack of popular support hindered their capacity to resist Japan.⁴⁴ But the Third Battle of Changsha in 1942 was a relatively successful attempt to trap and lure advancing Japanese forces, resulting in a remarkable victory that showcased the successful use of guerrilla warfare by the Nationalists and demonstrated effective cooperation between NRA units and the local population near the city. According to Xiao Dongliang, the National Resistance and Salvation Movement against Japan (*kangri jiuwang yundong* 抗日救亡運動) in Hunan was triggered by the Mukden incident, generating a public sentiment that was conducive to both conventional and guerrilla warfare against the Japanese invasions in the

⁴² Ibid., 177.

⁴³ Ibid., 178.

⁴⁴ Yang Kuisong, "Nationalist and Communist Guerrilla Warfare in North China," in *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War*, ed. Mark Peattie, Edward J. Drea, and Hans van de Ven (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 308-327.

province.⁴⁵ With Wuhan falling to the Japanese, the people of Hunan started to collaborate with the Chinese military. They actively engaged in six big battles and multiple guerrilla encounters strengthening the national effort in the war across the province.⁴⁶

The extent of knowledge of the Nationalist mobilization in Hunan during the war is limited in existing historiography. The topic of wartime mass mobilization in other provinces is frequently discussed. According to Peng Shaohui, the Sichuan Wartime Rural Service Corp (*Sichuan sheng zhanshi xiangcun fuwutuan* 四川省戰時鄉村服務團) was a result of the Nationalists' initiatives in providing education to local peasants, controlling resources in the countryside and offering social services to improve the welfare and mobilization of people during the war.⁴⁷ This organization was identified as the primary contributor to Sichuan's development as the country's largest military base during the war.⁴⁸ Qian Fengju shows that the Nationalists in Hubei set up different people's organizations like the Hubei Mobilization Council (*Hubei sheng dongyuanhui* 湖北省動員會), and released the Wartime Mass Mobilization Outline (*zhanshi minzhong dongyuan gangyao* 戰時民眾動員綱要) to promote collaboration between the military and civilians.⁴⁹ However, discrepancies between urban and rural regions posed a major obstacle as the countryside of Hubei remained largely unengaged.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Xiao Dongliang, "Hunan renmin zai kangri zhanzheng zhong de gongxian" 湖南人民在抗日戰爭中的貢獻 [The contributions of the people of Hunan during the War of Resistance against Japan], *Hunan shehui kexue* 湖南社會科學, no.4 (1995).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Peng Shaohui 彭紹輝, "Kangzhan yu minzhong dongyuan" 抗戰與民眾動員 [The War of Resistance and civilian mobilization] (Master diss., Sichuan Normal University, 2007).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Qian Fengju 錢鳳菊, "Shi lun kangzhan chuqi Guomindang zai Hubei sheng de minzhong dongyuan" 試論抗戰初期國民黨在湖北省的民眾動員 [An exploration of the mass mobilization by the Nationalists in Hubei during the early stage of the War of Resistance] (Master diss., Jilin University, 2007).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

When comparing Hubei and Hunan, two provinces dominated by the Ninth War Area, the latter's mass mobilization was more successful. Li Liang argues that a civilian group training program implemented by the Hunan provincial government in 1938 had a beneficial effect on meliorating the collective national identity and awareness of millions of Hunanese peasants.⁵¹ Li's argument is logical, but it still remains unclear if there is sufficient evidence to prove that most Hunanese, particularly those from a peasant background, identified with a sense of Chinese nationality. Although Hunanese peasants participated in an eight-week group training focused on enhancing reading and writing skills, the challenge of achieving an ideological conversion within a short time frame was still a strenuous one. It is worth mentioning that local military and administration institutions were able to mobilize over 60,000 local populaces for the Third Battle of Changsha, as chapter six states. The 1938 mass mobilization, particularly the implementation of a group training program, contributed to raising awareness of the war among the rural populace. Nevertheless, it did not fully succeed in instilling Hunanese peasants with a fervent sense of nationalism and patriotism. My project investigates in what ways local authorities organized and conducted the training program in 1938 and examines its influence on the Nationalist mass mobilization following 1939. At present, a focus of scholarship on wartime mass mobilization of the Nationalists in Hunan is primarily directed towards the pre-1939 era. Therefore, I highlight the Nationalists' efforts in mass mobilization in Hunan by focusing on two wartime organizations: the Military-Civilian Cooperation Station MCCA (*junmin hezuozhan* 軍民合作站) and the Wartime Task Corp WTC (*zhanshi*

⁵¹ Li Liang 李亮, "Kangzhan chuqi Hunan sheng zhengfu minzhong dongyuan yanjiu 1937-1938" 抗戰初期湖南省民眾動員研究 1937-1938 [Research on civilian mobilization in Hunan during the early stage of the War of Resistance, 1937-1938] (Master diss., Hunan Normal University, 2011).

renwudui 戰時任務隊). These two organizations were important in leading to the 1942 Changsha victory.

A different case could also indicate a stronger relationship between the government and the civilian population in wartime Hunan. 1941 saw the lowest rice harvest in Hunan during the war, and Changsha also was attacked twice by the Japanese. However, local authorities in Hunan waved land tax for peasants in those areas that suffered the conflicts most. In another province, Henan, a drought impacted the province in the summer of 1942, yet the arrival of relief failed to prevent famine.⁵² Even in such situations, the provincial government did not reduce taxes, the military requirements were prioritized over the needs of the civilian population, with Chinese troops in Henan confiscating grain and recruiting agricultural workers as soldiers and porters.⁵³ The outcome led to widespread hunger and famine. During Ichigo, the Chinese peasants in Henan directed their rage toward their own forces in response to the famine.⁵⁴ In 1944 Hunan, a large-scale resistance from below against the government was absent, and in 1942, the Nationalists succeeded in increasing wartime rice production reaching the highest harvests in the war.

The wartime everydayness in Hunan and Changsha

By introducing the idea of wartime everydayness van de Ven reveals three ways, in which we can observe wartime China emphasizing the value of individual identity and recollection.⁵⁵ First, it is crucial to analyze the impact of the war on public opinion, attitudes, and even everyday discussions in order to fully grasp the course of the conflict and its consequences for urban areas in China.

⁵² Micah Muscolino, "Refugees, Land Reclamation, and Militarized Landscapes in Wartime China: Huanglongshan, Shaanxi, 1937-45," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no.2 (2010): <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911810000057>.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Coble, *The Collapse of Nationalist China*, 20.

⁵⁵ Hans van de Ven, "Wartime everydayness: beyond the battlefield in China's Second World War," *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 13, no.1 (2019): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17535654.2019.1618625>.

An exploration of wartime everydayness in China sheds valuable insights into the changes in public attitudes induced by the war across different ranges of social, regional, and generational populations.⁵⁶ Although China and the Nationalists were weak and divided, they were able to retain governance of 50% of the country including Hunan while being exposed to assaults from industrialized Japan for more than seven years until 1944 after the Ichigo Operation, the most extensive of the Japanese land operations during WWII. A deeper comprehension of Chinese public sentiments toward the war such as their confidence in and commitment to supporting the government and the NRA in battle, is necessary to fully explain this phenomenon. In turn, it is important to analyze the Nationalists' competency in engaging the public for the war with Japan. Drawing upon the concept of wartime everydayness, this research analyzes the mass mobilization that took place in major counties in Hunan with a particular focus on interactions between the military and civilians.

Second, wartime everydayness allows for an exploration of personal perceptions and reactions of the Chinese population toward this hostile altercation. High-ranking military officials and political figures have predominantly shaped the narrative of the war with their politically motivated interpretations. However, this approach has been limited to creating only military or political history that mainly focuses on major combat engagements and partisan conflicts of both the Nationalists and Communists, including their guerrilla warfare, the Japanese bombings, and China's relationship with Allied powers.⁵⁷ Recently, more scholarly work has been centered on the

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 3.

history of the war beyond the battlefield.⁵⁸ Gaps in wartime Hunan and Changsha still remain. The wartime experience of ordinary Chinese, however, should be incorporated as a factor in the national conflict between China and Japan.

As van de Ven suggests, a large number of diaries and memoirs made public in recent times have exposed personal perspectives and accounts of wartime life and circumstances in various places demonstrating that common people were not faceless casualties overwhelmed by terrors and frenzies caused by the conflict.⁵⁹ Rather, they were individuals with their own emotions and spiritualities, who had actively participated in this national clash, or had to adjust to transformations in their lives due to the war. As we develop a better understanding of the war, we can shine a brighter light on the remembrances of ordinary Chinese people, different from narratives of renowned generals, preeminent politicians, and colossal battles. Aside from these sources, articles and writings that appeared in the newspapers, journals, and magazines of Changsha during the war had a similar value, I believe.

Third, wartime everydayness can outline the extensive consequences of the war on diverse social classes.⁶⁰ In other words, this is a different viewpoint compared to merely observing the war from a combat perspective. Gaining insight into the dilemmas, disparities, and circumstances surrounding residents during wartime in Chinese towns and villages is illuminating. By examining the experiences of different social groups in Changsha, this work sheds light on how the war left a strong impact on their lives but they found ways to persevere.

⁵⁸ See Toby Lincoln, *An Urban History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Lincoln, *Urbanizing China in War and Peace*; Joshua H. Howard, *Workers at War: Labor in China's Arsenal, 1937-1953* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Diana Lary, *The Chinese people at war: human suffering and social transformation, 1937-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁵⁹ van de Ven, "Wartime everydayness," 3.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Lincoln taking Wuxi and the surrounding countryside as his focus, argues that a “spatial differentiation between town and country meant that people had very different stories to tell of the invasion.”⁶¹ In fact, in different cities across massive territories of China during the war, the invasion brought about differing reflections on wartime experiences as well. Similar to Lincoln, Mark Baker argues that different spatial locations played a crucial role in determining wartime experiences, opportunities, and chances of survival.⁶² Baker draws attention to the tribulations faced by Zhengzhou, which encompassed flooding, frontline warfare, famine, aerial attacks by both American and Japanese forces, and two episodes of Japanese occupation,⁶³ a city that underwent a comparable wartime ordeal as Changsha.

Located in the Great Rear area (*dahoufang* 大後方 which meant the rear of one country at war, compared to the fighting front and of the same significance) but close to the frontline, Changsha was among the cities most affected by WWII, subjected to repeated air raids, frequent evacuations, continuous conflicts between the Chinese and Japanese, and a shift in daily life because of wartime circumstances, in which different groups of people had to find their ways to survive, particularly under the influence of inflation. Different from Zhengzhou, which grappled with widespread starvation of the 1942-43 famine, Changsha inhabitants were rejoicing over a big victory achieved by the army and people against Japanese invasions. In the Ichigo advance of June 1944, however, Changsha, much like the shrunken isolated

⁶¹ Toby Lincoln, “The Rural and Urban at War: Invasion and Reconstruction in China during the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance,” *Journal of Urban History* 47, no. 3 (2021): 552, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144211428684>.

⁶² Mark Baker, *Pivot of China: spatial politics and inequality in modern Zhengzhou* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2024), 91.

⁶³ Ibid.

Zhengzhou, was captured by the Japanese highlighting a period of vulnerability and defeat.⁶⁴

The 1938 Changsha Great Fire also known as *wenxi dahuo* (文夕大火) is deemed the most remarkable wartime event and story in Changsha. During the war, we see many man-made calamities as a result of implementing the widely criticized strategy of the ‘Scorched Earth.’ The destruction of the Qiantang River Bridge in Zhejiang by the Nationalists did not result in any civilian deaths, even though the order was delayed due to the high number of panicked people crossing the bridge.⁶⁵ Before the fire in Changsha, more than 90% of the population had been moved out while the small percentage left behind were kept in the dark about the planned fire resulting in the tragic disaster. A key component of the thesis involves a re-thinking of the fire taking a different perspective from the government and shining a light on the strength and perseverance of ordinary people. The fire has garnered significant attention in recent literature with many historians delving into the issue of accountability and identifying the figure responsible for giving the order to start the fire in addition to reconstructing the entire progression of the event. According to Li Changbao, the fire was a disastrous result of the Nationalists’ careless handling of political affairs and personnel stemming from the toothless implementation of the “scorched earth policy.”⁶⁶ A noteworthy piece of Taiwanese scholarship is a journal article by Yang Weizhen, who effectively utilizes the archives from Academia Historica (*guoshiguan* 國史館) including those from Dai Li 戴笠, who witnessed the Changsha fire, to provide a detailed

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness*, 244.

⁶⁶ Li Changbao 李常寶, “1938 nian Changsha dahuo de zai kaocha jian yu Liu Dayu Feng Ti yu Changsha wenxi dahuo xin tan yi wen shangque” 1938 年長沙大火的再考察—兼與劉大禹鄧倬與長沙文夕大火新探—文商榷 [A re-examination of the 1938 Great Fire in Changsha—discussion and comparison with Liu Dayu’s “A new exploration of the 1938 Great Fire in Changsha”], *Nanjing shehui kexue* 南京社會科學, no.7 (2015), doi:10.15937/j.cnki.issn1001-8263.2015.07.020.

account of the event.⁶⁷ Historians have not thoroughly consulted Dai's documents. Hudson's doctoral thesis also conducts a thorough examination of the primary figures involved in the event, specifically focusing on the influence of Chiang on both Hunan and Changsha authorities.⁶⁸

In Japanese-occupied areas, such as Wuxi, as Lincoln suggests, many pre-war continuations of state development could be implemented by the newly re-organized municipal or provincial governments in these provinces.⁶⁹ However, in Changsha, the same level of urban construction could not be reached because of ongoing conflicts between China and Japan. For example, a plan for the reconstruction of Changsha after the *wenxi dahuo* had never been implemented because of the battles.⁷⁰

While the scholarly work provides an in-depth understanding of the situation before and after the fire, there remain gaps in telling the story of Changsha citizens of the disaster. The fire did not stop at reducing people's homes into ashes but also compelled them to adapt and endure the harsh realities of war to survive. The second half of the thesis analyzes social transformation in Changsha. Despite being challenged by obstacles such as fire and ongoing Japanese attacks, the residents of Changsha adapted to a new way of living.

The attention of researchers has been redirected to the experiences of refugees in recent studies. Lincoln's work delves into the refugee encounters of

⁶⁷ Yang Weizhen 楊維真, "1938 nian Changsha dahuo shijian de diaocha yu jiantao" 1938 年長沙大火事件的調查與檢討 [An investigation and a review of the 1938 fire incident in Changsha], *Guoshiguan guankan* 國史館館刊, no.33 (September 2012): 42. Chiang Kaishek's trusted advisor Dai Li served as his spymaster during World War II, earning the titles of both "the claws and teeth" and the "Chinese Himmler" from the British. See, Frederice Wakeman Jr., *Spymaster: Dai Li and the Chinese Secret Service* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

⁶⁸ Hudson, "River Sands."

⁶⁹ Lincoln, *Urbanizing China in War and Peace*, 153.

⁷⁰ Guo Hui 郭輝, "Zai hou jiuji yu chengshi chongjian 1938 nian Changsha dahuo de shanhou gongzuo" 災後救濟與城市重建: 1938 年長沙大火的善後工作 [Post-disaster relief and urban reconstruction: the aftermath of the 1938 Changsha Great Fire], *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu*, no.3 (2023): 78-79, <https://doi:CNKI:SUN:KANG.0.2023-03-004>.

three groups residing in Shanghai amidst the Japanese incursion of China in 1937, and the role of native place societies (*tongxianghui* 同鄉會) in facilitating the return of refugees to their homeland.⁷¹ In light of the emphasis placed on East China Lincoln excludes any mention of what happened to those refugees after they went back home. My research offers a helpful supplement to depict the wartime experiences of those Hunanese refugees after they returned to Changsha and other regions of Hunan. Micah Muscolino focuses on the reclamation projects of the Nationalists in Huanglongshan Shaanxi province, from 1937 to 1945. According to Muscolino, efforts to reclaim land in China persisted well beyond the war altering the country's natural environment.⁷² Not only did the land reclamation project play a part in shaping refugees' life experiences during the war, but it also contributed to the rise in grain production in Free China, at least until 1941. In wartime Hunan, refugee resettlement in the west of the province for wasteland cultivation compared to other agricultural measures, was on a smaller scale and had a more limited impact.⁷³ Another wartime refugee writing is Schoppa's book on the crisis in Zhejiang, in which he argued how the Nationalist government's shortcomings exacerbated civilian suffering.⁷⁴

In the duration of the war, Changsha maintained its pre-war population of about 300,000 (with numbers soaring to 1,000,000 by the end of 1937), meaning that the city was not the final destination for refugees from eastern and southern China. Nonetheless, refugees remained intertwined with the

⁷¹ Toby Lincoln, "Fleeing from Firestorms: Government, Cities, Native Place Associations and Refugees in the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance," *Urban History* 38:3 (November 2011): 437, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926811000587>.

⁷² Muscolino, "Refugees, Land Reclamation, and Militarized Landscapes," 453.

⁷³ However, flooding occurred in many Hunanese counties near Lake Dongting because of the large-scale farming activities undertaken to increase wartime rice production ultimately leading to a devastating famine in 1946 that affected the entire province.

⁷⁴ Janet Y. Chen, "Republican History," in *A Companion to Chinese History*, ed. Michael Szonyi (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2016), 174; see also, Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness*.

city's wartime past and remembrances, forming a component of Changsha evacuation because of repeated Japanese air bombings. I discuss refugees in Changsha evacuations in the second part of the thesis.

The wartime everydayness of Changsha was defined by three key elements, the first being the city's exposure to frequent air raids starting in late 1937. Changsha was one of the first cities to endure air bombings, unlike Chongqing and other cities in China, the difficulty of digging air raid shelters in this city played a role in shaping its exceptional challenges in handling the aftermath of air raids. Because of this specific problem, evacuation became a more feasible solution for local authorities to save lives from Japanese airplanes. Escaping air raids by frequently leaving the city turned into a routine for the locals. Last, influenced by the war, particularly the fire, Changsha inhabitants had to come up with new approaches to ensure their survival. Thus, different societal clusters, like rickshaw pullers, shoe-shine kids, teahouse proprietors, and bookstore owners, forged economic bonds, which demonstrated how ordinary people adapted and persevered in the urban life experience of war. When it comes to the urban aspect of war, while there are in-depth studies on cities under Japanese occupation in the east and those in Nationalist-held rear areas, as Baker argues, little information is available on the cluster of central Chinese cities such as Changsha, Hengyang, and Zhengzhou, that faced the main brunt of the fighting during the war.⁷⁵ This project seeks to introduce at least some aspects of the urban history of wartime Changsha, in which people suffered Japanese air raids, a fire, intense frontline fighting, mass evacuations, and inflation.

Grain improvement and management in Hunan during the war

⁷⁵ Baker, *Pivot of China*, 90.

As mentioned before, producing food for urban areas and the military was an important part of the Nationalist mobilization during the war. In his analysis of the War of Resistance, Mitter points out that the Nationalist wartime economy exhibited promise by achieving a substantial increase in agricultural productivity.⁷⁶ China was dependent on importing large quantities of grain and rice from Southeast Asia for its food supply before the war as it was not self-sufficient in food production. In the early years of the war, there was a surge in rice imports while rice prices in major unoccupied Chinese cities remained generally unchanged and farmers were relatively well-off.⁷⁷ Good weather that always meant good harvests played a part in this, however, the government introduced measures that enhanced productivity, which involved utilizing refugee labor, applying modern pesticides, and offering loans to agricultural cooperatives.⁷⁸ Until 1940, a consistent level of food production particularly in rice and wheat along with other significant crops was observed leading to a stable food supply.⁷⁹

The Hunan provincial government had been actively involved since 1937 in planning and coordinating efforts to enhance rice varieties throughout the province to improve rice production in wartime. Li Shengju maintains that momentous headway had been achieved in the advancement and propagation of grain varieties in wartime Hunan culminating in a notable escalation of the total grain production in both Hunan and the entire country.⁸⁰ This succeeded in supplying a substantial quantity of grain for both military and civilians for

⁷⁶ Mitter, *China's War with Japan, 1937-1945*, 180.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., see also, van de Ven, *War*, 260-262.

⁸⁰ Li Shengju 李聖菊, "Lun kangzhan shiqi Hunan liangshi pinzhong de gailiang yu tuiguang" 論抗戰時期湖南糧食品種的改良與推廣 [On the improvement and promotion of grain crops in Hunan during the War of Resistance], *Huanan nongye daxue xuebao* 華南農業大學學報 6, no.2 (2007), doi:CNKI:SUN:HNNA.0.2007-02-021.

the duration of the war, while simultaneously strengthening the macro-control proficiency of grain management in areas governed by Nationalists.⁸¹

Huang Junxia focuses on the rice management policy implemented by Hunan authorities that swiftly implemented measures to align grain policies including increasing rice production, strengthening rice procurement and storage, and managing rice prices.⁸² Important to China's resistance, the "Agricultural National Defense" plan (*nongye guofang* 農業國防) unfortunately, caused significant damage to the rural economy in Hunan and rendered the policy impractical for a long period.⁸³ In their research, Luo Yumin and fellow scholars utilize Hunan and the Ninth War Area as case studies to explore the food supply of the NRA.⁸⁴ They argue that the Nationalists established a well-organized operational structure within central and regional administrations incorporating both administrative and military components and took steps to address the issue of military support.⁸⁵

Current scholarship lacks sufficient focus on the production and policies of grain during times of war in Hunan. There is more research on other provinces or Nationalist-controlled China as a whole compared to research conducted to focus on Hunan.⁸⁶ Hou Kunhong's book, using a lot of

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Huang Junxia 黃均霞, "Nongye guofang kangzhan shiqi Hunan liangzheng de kaiban yu tiaozheng" 農業國防 抗戰時期湖南糧政的開辦與調整 [Agricultural National Defense: founding and modifying of grain policies in Hunan during the War of Resistance], *Qiusuo* 求索 3 (2018), doi:10.16059/j.cnki.cn43-1008/c.2018.03.021.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Tang Shiqing 湯水清, Luo Yumin, and Wen Bo 溫波, "Kangzhan shiqi Guomindang jundui de liangshi gongji yi Hunan sheng he dijiu zhanqu wei li" 抗戰時期國民黨軍隊的糧食供給以湖南省和第九戰區為例 [Grain supply of the Nationalist army during the War of Resistance: a case study of Hunan and the Ninth War Area], *Junshi lishi yanjiu* 軍事歷史研究, no.3 (2004), doi:CNKI:SUN:JLSY.0.2004-03-010.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Xie Lumin 謝路明, "Kangzhan shiqi Hubei sheng guotongqu liangshi guanli pingshu" 抗戰時期湖北省國統區糧食管理述評 [A review of grain management in the Nationalist-controlled areas in Hubei during the War of Resistance] (Master diss., Central China Normal University, 2011); Wang Hongge 王紅格, "Kangzhan shiqi guomin zhengfu liangshi guanli zhengce yanjiu" 抗戰時期國民政府糧食管制政策研究 [Research on grain control policies of the Nationalist government during the War of Resistance] (Master diss., Central China Normal University, 2013); Luo Haiyan 羅海燕, "Kangzhan shiqi Sichuan liangshi

records from *Guoshiguan*, has gained recognition as a prominent piece of scholarship. It points out that the efforts in increasing wartime grain production led by the Department of Agriculture could have been a major achievement.⁸⁷ Although the Nationalists made important efforts, their ability to sustain a pre-war level was hindered by the destruction of numerous cultivated fields during the war.

Utilizing Sichuan as a case study, Li Jun examines food crop improvement led by the Sichuan Agricultural Improvement Institute.⁸⁸ According to Li, the Nationalists in Sichuan adopted two primary strategies for enhancing food crop production, expanding cultivation areas and improving harvests per unit area.⁸⁹ Li's findings demonstrate a rapid rise in total grain production but in reality, productivity of grain per land unit actually declined compared to pre-war levels.⁹⁰ Chen Lei argues that the Nationalists facilitated a growth of agricultural production, which led to progress in agricultural production in many provinces.⁹¹ This created a long period of stability for the local population in the Great Rear and laid a tangible groundwork for China's

guanli yanjiu” 抗戰時期四川糧食管理研究 [Research on grain management in Sichuan during the War of Resistance] (Master diss., Sichuan Normal University, 2015).

⁸⁷ Hou Kunhong 侯坤宏, *Kangri zhanzheng shiqi liangshi gongqiu wenti yanjiu* 抗日戰爭時期糧食供求問題研究 [Research on grain supply and demand problems during the War of Resistance against Japan] (Beijing: Tuanjian chubanshe, 2015), 197.

⁸⁸ Li Jun 李俊, “Kangzhan shiqi Sichuan sheng nongye gaijinsuo dui Chuan sheng liangshi zuowu zhi gailiang shulüe” 抗戰時期四川省農業改進所對川省糧食作物之改良述略 [A brief overview of agricultural improvements by Agricultural Improvement Bureau in Sichuan during the War of Resistance], *Tianfu xinlun* 天府新論 S2 (2006), doi:CNKI:SUN:TFXL.0.2006-S2-041.

⁸⁹ Li Jun, “Kangzhan shiqi dahoufang liangshi zengchan cuoshi ji qi chengxiao fenxi yi Sichuan wei li” 抗戰時期大後方糧食增產措施及其成效分析——以四川為例 [Measures and outcomes of increased grain production in the Great Rear during the War of Resistance: a case study of Sichuan], *Qiusuo*, no.5 (2011), doi:10.16059/j.cnki.cn43-1008/c.2011.05.030.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Chen Lei 陳雷, “Kangzhan shiqi guomin zhengfu de nongye tuiguang zhengce” 抗戰時期國民政府的農業推廣政策 [Agricultural extension policies of the Nationalist government during the War of Resistance], *Fuyang shifan xueyuan xuebao* 阜陽師範學院學報, no.3 (2009), doi:CNKI:SUN:FYSS.0.2009-03-044; another book by the author, Chen Lei, *Guomin zhengfu liangshi wenti yanjiu 1937-1945* 國民政府糧食問題研究: 1937-1945 [Research on grain problems of the Nationalist government: 1937-1945] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2019).

perseverance in the eight-year War of Resistance leading up to a momentous victory.⁹²

Further research is needed to address the remaining questions in the current scholarship on grain administration in wartime Hunan. First, the situation of grain production in Changsha city, or the county area was not clear, especially under the impact of the Changsha Campaigns and the 1938 Great Fire. Second, there is a consensus among historians that Hunan and the whole of Nationalist-controlled China saw significant progress in improving wartime grain yields. However, it is still unclear whether this significant progress in rice production increased the rice surplus in wartime Hunan. It is imperative that we ascertain the rice surplus available for export from the province. To clarify, did this quantity significantly surpass a pre-war level?

This thesis presents the pre-war average export of rice in Hunan and examines the effects of the Nationalists' rice production increase on the province's rice surplus during the war. In the interim, I explore the wartime rice production in Changsha and evaluate its outcomes in light of the Battles of Changsha and the 1938 fire. In addition, scholarly analysis is scarce on wartime fluctuations in rice prices in Hunan and its main cities. I thoroughly examine the increase in rice prices in Changsha and other cities in Hunan, using data from government agencies during the war, and discuss the resulting struggles of the extremely high prices of rice encountered by the local population. Evaluating high-priced rice in major Hunanese cities during the war, which indicated an exorbitant cost of living at the time, we can gain a valuable understanding of the driving forces that compelled Hunan residents to search for alternate means of survival. I also explore how the difficulties

⁹² Ibid.

experienced by the Hunanese during the war shaped their cooperation with the army and government in this thesis.

Primary sources and methodology

Given the significant military and political implications of the war, files, and records kept by the central government and diverse city and county governments all over China are highly valuable wartime documents affording a record of China's war. Those historical archives, located in both Taiwan and China, provide insight into the Nationalist war efforts including the NRA's organizational structure, reports made by different war areas, and documents related to the Military Affairs Commission MAC (*junshi weiyuanhui* 軍事委員會).⁹³ An extensive analysis of these sources can reveal the Nationalist military undertakings including their utilization of military tactics as well as telegraphed communication between the frontline and the central government in Chongqing. Certain Chinese archives have published key components of their collections, which enabled this project to progress during the COVID pandemic.⁹⁴ Consulting the same archives shows that the Nationalist military had a better performance in Changsha against the Japanese.

Furthermore, *Guoshiguan* has undertaken the digitization of a considerable collection of both pre-war and wartime telegrams exchanged between Xue Yue and Chiang Kaishek. These documents are indispensable in examining their relationships with different eras, as well as identifying factors that resulted in the collapse of their alliance, and subsequently undermined

⁹³ Relevant Archives in China involve the Second Historical Archives of China, and the Hunan Provincial Archive. In Taiwan, there are significant archives of Nationalist China during the war that are maintained by the Academia Historica (*Guoshiguan*) and the Academia Sinica (*Zhongyang yanjiuyuan*).

⁹⁴ For example, the Second Historical Archives of China publishes two compilations, KRZZMZC and ZHMGDASL. The Hunan Province Archive also publishes a compilation consisting of six volumes, KRZZHNZCSL.

the Nationalist defense of Hunan and Changsha in 1944. In addition, the Hunan Provincial Government gathered a range of reports from multiple levels of administration. At county-level archives, we find official registers (*huamingce* 花名冊) that document names of all public officials and common citizens, who took part in military engagements. These registers also include their personal information, main roles in battle, notable achievements, and information about deceased individuals. They are crucial for revealing the role of the Hunan people in the war, and the efforts to promote cooperation between the military and civilians in the province.

The 1938 Changsha Great Fire resulted in significant damage to the city. But official statistics only offer a general overview and fail to fully capture specific ways, in which the loss affected other important aspects of the war, such as the wartime mobilization of the Nationalists. Records from the Hunan Provincial Archive present essential information about the provincial government's purchase of 400,000 sacks, which had been reported missing or destroyed after the fire. The Nationalists faced significant difficulties in starting grain procurement in early 1939 because of a lack of sacks available to package the rice they had purchased from various counties in Hunan.

Extensive archival research has been carried out for this project, but I also incorporate personal narratives linked to Changsha during the war. Personal accounts from Nationalist generals, who fought in the war, such as memoirs, diaries, and biographies, can offer a unique insight into the individuals' retrospectives and their reflections thus, substantially illuminating the complex relationship between historical truth and political ideology. For example, Chiang Kaishek's diaries asserted his private feelings about writing and sending personal directives or telegrams to the frontline. The *Selected Works of Literature and Historical Materials* (*wenshi ziliao* 文史資料) are also valuable resources that contain memoirs and diaries of former Nationalist

generals and the general public. The nature of these sources suggests that they should be used and analyzed with caution. This is because some information is unclear because of inaccurate narratives and memories. However, they revealed unknown information about the war from the perspective of ordinary people, which had not been recorded in official documents. I investigate Martin Fromm's practices of utilizing personal narratives as primary sources in his historical works, "analyzing these personal recollections with critical scrutiny and consideration of discrepancies between these and the earlier official documents" in my writings.⁹⁵ Therefore, a thorough analysis of these writings, situated in their historical context in addition to a comprehensive examination of other related secondary sources have been employed.

Apart from the sources above, wartime newspapers and journals also include a lot of personal narratives of those who were living and enduring in wartime Changsha and Hunan. In Republican China, the newspaper industry and journals were the sole form of mass media making them the primary source of information for individuals to learn about the country and world outside of their immediate environment. The study of ideas and belief systems in history often involves the use of newspapers, as a primary source.⁹⁶ The second half of this thesis analyzes newspapers, such as Hunan Nationalist Daily (*Hunan guomin ribao* 湖南國民日報), and journals from the war era in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the experiences of Changsha residents, who survived the fire and lived through wartime with varying social statuses.

Being short, lacking detail and anecdotal, reports and articles on teahouse life in local newspapers help to address the gap in archival

⁹⁵ Martin Fromm, *Borderland Memories: Searching for Historical Identity in Post-Mao China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 16.

⁹⁶ Joseph Ross, "Missed Opportunities: How the Taiping Rebellion and American Civil War Changed American Attitudes Towards the Chinese Empire and China, 1850-1865" (PhD diss., Newcastle University, 2021), 26.

documents, and are equally important as archival records, as Wang Di suggests.⁹⁷ Articles focusing on small street businesses were commonly seen in local newspapers in Changsha, with some being part of a series. These articles draw upon the authors' firsthand experiences and research through which to provide valuable sources that might be viewed as oral histories and enrich our insight into the city's past. It is important to be mindful when using these anecdotal articles.

While my focus in that section on is the social history of ordinary people, consulting government reports remains necessary. For instance, the Hunan Provincial Archive contains a range of materials detailing the experiences of Changsha's rickshaw pullers (*renliche fu* 人力車夫) in Xiangtan, located to the south of Changsha. These reports present actions taken by both Xiangtan and Hunan administrations to relocate these pullers, permitting a minor group of them to remain and work in Xiangtan while transferring a portion of them to other counties in Hunan.

The case of Changsha rickshaw pullers in Xiangtan was connected to the Nationalists' military defense in Hunan. Local authorities organized the destruction of roads and bridges in counties near Changsha in anticipation of potential Japanese attacks, which have been recorded in many reports made by the Ninth War Area and Hunan Provincial Government. The Nationalists thought that implementing this action could deter Japanese attacks on neighboring counties after their takeover of Changsha. Single-wheeled carts were the only means of traversing the destruction condition of roads to transfer food, as chapters five and six state. This posed significant hindrances for the pullers to return to Changsha from the south. The second part of this project relies on a combination of first-hand accounts from city observers

⁹⁷ Wang Di, *The Teahouse: Small Business, Everyday Culture, and Public Politics in Chengdu, 1900–1950* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 21.

during the war and official government reports to reconstruct and portray the wartime experience of Changsha pullers and other social groups.

Thesis Structure

The thesis is split into two parts with the first half focusing on the military operations and political struggles in pre-war China and wartime Hunan. Part two of this work looks into the Nationalists' mobilization tactics in Hunan throughout the war and their repercussions on those who lived in the province. Amidst a great fire, attacks, and economic downturn, Changsha underwent a significant social transformation. In the first chapter, I delve into the pre-war relationship between Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue focusing on their involvement in the Northern Expedition and the Encirclement Campaign against the Communists (*jiaofei* 剿匪 or *jiaogong* 剿共) in Jiangxi and other regions in southwestern China. Xue, a military strategist who had developed a strong bond with Chiang during the Northern Expedition, later sided with the anti-Chiang group when he sensed discrimination from Chiang because of his Guangdong background. Without having a Whampoa background, Xue's ability to reconcile with Chiang and place himself as a trustworthy general for Chiang has been discussed in this chapter. The presence of more troops from Chiang's Central Army (*zhongyangjun* 中央軍) in the Southwest provinces shifted a power balance between the central government and local warlords. This greased the wheels for Chiang to work toward expanding his authority in more Chinese territories and establishing a wartime resistance base (*kangzhan genjudi* 抗戰根據地) for a potential war with Japan amidst escalating tensions between the two countries in the 1930s. Xue was instrumental in guiding the central army troops in their offensive against the CCP in Jiangxi as well as in overseeing the construction of military defenses in the Southwest provinces of Guizhou and Sichuan after the

completion of military operations. This led to a key decision for Chiang to appoint Xue to replace Zhang Zhizhong 張治中, a distinguished graduate of Whampoa, and govern Hunan, a vital province known for its significant agricultural output and dense population during the war.

Next, I look at how Chiang Kaishek consolidated power, centrally and locally in the 1930s and kept it that way for most of the war until 1944. Considering the continuing civil conflicts of the early 1930s and the potential threat posed by the presence of Japan in Manchuria, Chiang became more inclined to collaborate with other warlords to prevent new civil wars. Hence, prominent local warlords (Guangxi and Shanxi) were successful in maintaining their military power and control over their territories, with only a small fraction of them being deposed, such as Wang Jialie in Guizhou. Once Chiang was weakened as a result of influences from the outside (Japan) in 1944, disagreements and resistance against him among other Nationalist groups arose. China and the KMT have never achieved complete unity. The Battle of Xuzhou in 1938 and the Battles in Hunan exemplified the opposition of certain Nationalist leaders toward Chiang's leadership during the war.

I cover major battles taking place in Changsha and other Hunanese areas in chapters three and four. 1937 marked the beginning of a full-fledged war. In late 1938, a major shift occurred as China and Japan entered into a strategic stalemate instead of conducting extensive front-line operations. This made the Nationalists refine their tactics and achieve some success in the Changsha Campaigns. A noteworthy point is that the Nationalists in Changsha actively promoted a propaganda campaign against the Japanese in 1941 after experiencing a defeat in combat, increasing the military and public morale in the city. The next chapter discusses the negative impacts of the 1944 Battle of Hunan and the political impasse between Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue. Despite their endeavors, it appeared doubtful that the Nationalists could

protect Changsha and other cities by repeating the same tactic that had resulted in previous successes. The loss of most of Hunan, including Changsha, dealt a major blow to Chiang's wartime leadership in the KMT.

Chapter five of the thesis delves into an analysis of the Nationalists' methods and handling of grain policies and administration in Hunan during the war. Although losing farming lands in the province, the Nationalists made efforts to increase rice production during the war so they could maintain the pre-war level of rice output of Hunan. But the Nationalists procured more rice than the province could tolerate and Hunan, particularly Changsha, faced an acute shortage of rice that made life tough for those who lived there. The Nationalists faced a difficult situation in the course of their prolonged war with Japan: there was an insufficient supply of rice in the area near Dongting Lake (*binhu* area, *binhu diqu* 濱湖地區), an essential Hunan rice export hub. In fact, before 1943, numerous regions in Nationalist-controlled China were plagued by a food shortage, particularly Henan where a famine occurred between 1942 and 1943. For the people in Hunan, the sudden rise in price levels for rice because of the rice shortage in the *binhu* area created complications. Most farmers had to comply with lower prices stipulated by the government for trading their rice. The wartime hyperinflation, coupled with the numerous battles fought in Hunan between 1939 and 1943, had a significant impact on soaring rice prices. In chapter five, I discuss the situation, in which individuals from different social statuses bought white rice in wartime Changsha.

The focus of chapter six is on wartime social history, particularly in Changsha. During WWII, Changsha was one of the hardest-hit cities enduring Japanese attacks and countless air raids as well as a catastrophic fire that nearly destroyed the entire city. This chapter shows that Changsha residents similar to other Hunanese or Chinese people from different provinces demonstrated

remarkable adaptability and resourcefulness in navigating changes and challenges of wartime conditions and existence. Overcoming their anxieties amidst air strikes, Changsha residents adopted a more proactive stance by collaborating with the government to assist in the early evacuation of the city prior to each battle after 1939. Rural peasants in Hunan ardently engaged in group training classes, ensuring that the countryside was prepared to assist the military by fulfilling responsibilities that included building fortifications and demolishing roads. The joint effort of the army and citizens proved that the Nationalists could properly mobilize ordinary people as they worked toward an agreed-upon objective of effective local mobilization.

I explore the evolving social environment in Changsha and draw attention to the transformations in people's difficult circumstances during the war. Changsha underwent a significant transformation largely influenced by the devastating effects of the conflict and the 1938 Fire. People living in the city developed new sorts of wartime normal in order to survive.

After the Ichigo Operation in 1944, the Nationalists lost control over most of Hunan. Insufficient provisions caused by a rice risk in Hunan, a breakdown in the central-local relationship between Changsha and Chongqing, and the absence of changes in battle tactics led to their downfall. But we still observe an improved military performance of the NRA in Changsha, a feat in sustaining pre-war rice production levels in Hunan with losing many cultivated fields, and a productive cooperation between the military and civilians across the province. The presence of these elements did not prevent the Nationalist collapse in wartime Hunan, but it did aid in their ability to hold the province for seven years against a significantly stronger enemy than China.

**Part I. The Nationalist political struggles from 1927 to 1944 and
their influence on military operations in Hunan and Changsha
during China's War of Resistance against Japan**

CHAPTER 1

Chiang Kaishek and his Nationalist generals: Cultivating a strong relationship of trust with Xue Yue, a Cantonese military commander with non-Whampoa ancestry

Chiang removed He Jian 何鍵 as the governor of Hunan shortly after the war broke out because of Chiang's long-standing untrust during the 1930s. The next step for him was to locate a competent Nationalist general with a high degree of trustworthiness to govern wartime Hunan. This general was assigned the significant responsibility of governing a province that was agriculturally productive, highly populated, and of essential strategic value for China to survive in a prolonged war against Japan and to furnish their mobilization attempts and total war strategy. Chiang was impressed by Xue Yue whose military prowess was demonstrated during the Northern Expedition.¹ However, because of his Guangdong roots and support for anti-Chiang movements in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Xue separated himself from Chiang and Nanjing. An urgent demand to control the Red Army in Jiangxi since 1933 allowed Xue to join the Central Army. Xue saw an opening and used it to command the Encirclement Campaign against the Communists in several provinces of southwestern China thus, improving his previously tense relationship with Chiang.

An important objective of the Encirclement Campaign was to widen the central government's sphere of influence in those provinces beyond Nanjing's control. Xue took charge of the development of roads and airports after military campaigns in the southwest. Building a unified southwest was a

¹ From 1926 to 1928, Chiang Kaishek led the NRA in two stages of the Northern Expeditions, aiming to overthrow the warlords and the Beiyang Government (*beiyang zhengfu* 北洋政府) in Beijing.

top priority for the Nationalists because they were preparing for war against the Japanese during the 1930s. After the pacification of Guizhou in 1935, Xue developed his administrative skills by assuming the position of governing the province. This enabled him to be selected as the provincial governor and lead both civil and military affairs in the province during the war. Xue, a Guangdong military leader, who was not a graduate of the Whampoa Military Academy was chosen by Chiang to be the governor of wartime Hunan. I argue, therefore, that Chiang could rely on non-Whampoa commanders once he was reassured of their dedication and proficiency in both military and administrative affairs.

This chapter then illustrates how Xue and Chiang developed a trust-based connection before the war. It is often thought that Chiang had weak relationships with some regional commanders. A close bond with Xue, the wartime Hunan governor from 1938 to 1944, however, proves otherwise. A deteriorating bond between Xue and Chiang in 1944 amidst the Ichigo Operation cannot be put down to a bad historical relationship between these two leaders, which has been discussed in chapter four. Moreover, grasping Chiang's approach toward a trusted general during the war is essential since it challenges a prevailing notion that he had a habit of mistrusting his Nationalist generals and interfering in all aspects of the war as discussed in detail in chapter two.²

² See for example, Xiao Xianyou, "Xue Yue yu dijiu zhanqu," 165.

1.1 A chronic distrust: Chiang Kaishek's relationship with a non-Whampoa-educated military general

1.1.1 *The relationship between Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue in the 1920s*

Xue Yue, a general from Guangdong was educated at the Baoding Military Academy (*Baoding lujun jinguan xuexiao* 保定陸軍軍官學校) but did not finish his studies. In 1918, Xue joined the Guangdong Army (*Yuejun* 粵軍) and was later absorbed into Chiang Kaishek's forces during the National Revolutionary Movement, also referred to as the Northern Expedition. Xue was recognized by Chiang as an excellent frontline military leader during the revolutionary movement.³ The end of the Northern Expedition marked the beginning of a rift between the KMT and CCP, causing long-standing animosity when Chiang opted to crack down on the Communists. Bai Chongxi 白崇禧, a Guangxi leader, supported Chiang. Bai and Xue encountered major discrepancies and disputes while opposing the Communists resulting in the latter stepping down and going back to Guangdong. An animosity between these two generals started in the late 1920s and endured for the rest of the decade. It had a detrimental effect on the Battles of Hunan in 1944 during the Ichigo Operation, even though it was not a determining factor. I discuss this in chapter four.

Xue joined the second attempt to lead the NRA northwards. Chiang was delighted to have Xue back and hailed him as the key figure of the NRA in the Northern Expedition.⁴ Xue and the Fourth Army, however, felt resentful

³ Mao Sicheng 毛思誠編, ed., *Minguo shiwu nian yiqian zhi Jiang Jieshi xiansheng disan juan diba bian beifa kaishi shiqi* 民國十五年以前之蔣介石先生第三卷第八編北伐開始時期 [The beginning of the Northern Expedition period of Mr. Chiang Kai-shek before the 15th year of the Republic of China] (Taipei: Zhongyang wenwu chubanshe, 1971), 1106.

⁴ “Jiang Zhongzheng dianmian Xue Yue beifa zhanyi fengyong xiangqian” 蔣中正電勉薛岳北伐戰役奮勇向前 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram encouraged Xue Yue to bravely advance in the Northern Expedition campaign] (12 April 1928), JZTWW, 002-010100-00011-048, GSGDA.

when Chiang downsized some NRA divisions following military operations, leading them to participate in anti-Chiang movements initiated by Guangxi and Guangdong. During the Republic of China era, a dominant mode of livelihood was agrarianism, and associations between individuals were primarily reliant on family ties and geographic location. Chiang chose to disband the Fourth Army, made up of Guangdong soldiers (including Xue), showing his worry about the potential threat the army posed to his own group.⁵ Xue and the Fourth Army subsequently joined the coalition of forces against Chiang during the Chiang-Gui War (*Chiang Gui zhanzheng* 蔣桂戰爭) and the Central Plains War (*Zhongyuan dazhan* 中原大戰). Internal conflicts within the warlord coalition led to their defeat by Chiang and the subsequent decline of Guangxi's influence in Hunan. The Fourth Army sustained considerable losses in both wars and was reduced to a division under the control of Guangxi. Before becoming a subordinate under Chiang, Xue had strong connections with various military leaders in multiple provinces in Southern China. This prevented him from developing a close bond with Nanjing. However, the Encirclement Campaign presented Xue with a unique opportunity to possibly mend his strained relationship with Chiang and depart from Guangxi.

1.1.2 Two necessary go-betweens between Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue

Xue Yue had two influential individuals, who could serve as lobbyists and convince Chiang to reinstate Xue in the NRA. It proved his adeptness in dealing with interpersonal connections.⁶ First, Wang Boling 王柏齡, who led Xue during the Northern Expedition made sure to stay informed about the advancements and actions of his former subordinate's military career. Wang

⁵ Xiao Xianyou, "Xue Yue yu dijiu zhanqu," 38.

⁶ Ibid.

restated to Chiang that Xue remained steadfast in his loyalty and commitment to serving Chiang and had no complaints toward Nanjing.⁷ Chiang embraced Xue into his faction, displaying a positive outlook.⁸ With Wang's help, Xue worked toward calming Chiang's doubts and restoring their fractured relationship by verifying his resolute stance on the Guangdong policy of Nanjing.⁹

It remains uncertain if Xue requested Wang to prove his allegiance to Chiang, or if Wang initiated contact with Chiang independently. But we can draw key insights about the great potential for changing relationships between Chiang and Xue. Xue Yue and Bai were rivals during the Northern Expedition, implying that Xue was hindered from advancing and assuming a pivotal role in Guangxi. Therefore, Chiang capitalized on the disagreements among other Nationalist warlords to diminish their military forces and bolster his own.

Another significant figure was Chen Cheng 陳誠, a graduate of Baoding and became a key member of the Whampoa Clique. Zhang Fakui 張發奎, a Guangdong commander stated that Chen proposed Xue Yue to Chiang, who granted his approval to Chen.¹⁰ Thanks to his close relationship with Xue and the Fourth Army, Chen was convinced that Xue and Zhang could extend necessary military aid to Chiang.¹¹ The role that Chen played in bridging the gap between Chiang and Xue was pivotal. He could act as a mediator to

⁷ "Jiang Zhongzheng dian Wang Bailing qing yu Xue Yue lianluo" 蔣中正電王柏齡請與薛岳聯絡 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram to Wang Bailing requesting him to contact Xue Yue] (25 July 1931), JZTW, 002-070100-00020-081, GSGDA.

⁸ "Wang Bailing dian Jiang Zhongzheng yan Xue Yue yuyi fanzheng" 王柏齡電蔣中正言薛岳欲意反正 [Wang Bailing's telegram to Chiang Kaishek stating that Xue Yue intended to change sides] (26 July 1931), JZTW, 002-020200-00010-047, GSGDA.

⁹ "Jiang Zhongzheng dian Wang Bailing qing Xue Yue paiyuan lai xu" 蔣中正電王柏齡請薛岳派員來敘 [Chiang Kai-shek's telegram to Wang Bailing requesting Xue Yue to send someone to discuss] (2 September 1931), JZTW, 002-080200-00410-053, GSGDA; Xiao Xianyou, "Xue Yue yu dijiu zhanqu", 41-42.

¹⁰ Zhang Fakui 張發奎, *Jiang Jieshi yu wo Zhang Fakui shangjiang huiyilu* 蔣介石與我: 張發奎上將回憶錄 [Chiang Kaishek and I: the memoirs of general Zhang Fakui], ed. Xia Lianying 夏蓮瑛 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2008), 206.

¹¹ Ibid.

promote effective dialogues and avert any potential complications with a disparity at hand. For example, Xue declined an appointment to lead an NRA unit in 1933 and informed Chiang that he was more interested in collaborating with Chen. In reply to Chiang, Chen confirmed and supported Xue's request while also giving praise to Xue.¹² Chen successfully persuaded Chiang.

In the 1970s, a commonly held belief was that the Nationalist military was characterized by dishonesty, bribery, and an inability to properly lead the Chinese military and citizens during the war against Japan.¹³ Cooperation among different NRA divisions was intermittent because they each focused on their own objectives during the early stages of the war. As MacKinnon argues, however, that during the Battle of Wuhan from June to October 1938, generals responsible for the defense of the city demonstrated solidarity as constituting the Baoding generation.¹⁴ Cooperating on the frontline was something they were committed to exhibiting a congenial agreement with one another, demonstrating a communal spirit and appreciation for the professionalism of others, and engendering good chemistry at the moment.¹⁵ Chen Cheng, Wang Boling, and Xue Yue all demonstrated the Baoding spirit and their endorsement of Xue was not a form of mutual aid, as suggested by Zhang

¹² “Jiang Zhongzheng dian Chen Cheng ke xian ren Xue Yue wei diwu zongdui zhihuiguan zhihui disi diwu liang jun” 蔣中正電陳誠可先任薛岳為第五縱隊指揮官指揮第四第五兩軍 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram to Chen Cheng stating that Xue Yue could first be appointed as the commander of the Fifth Column to command both the Fourth and Fifth Armies] (14 December 1933), JZTWW, 002-070100-00032-047, GSGDA.

¹³ This view was perhaps first concluded by Theodore White, in *Thunder out of China*. It suggested providing “the background for the understanding of China today and of America's role in the Chinese revolution”. White characterized the Nationalist regime as a nasty and corrupt dictatorship that showed no desire to confront the Japanese. See, Theodore White and Annalee Jacoby, *Thunder out of China* (New York: William Sloane, 1946), 97-116; van de Ven, *war*, 6-7.

¹⁴ Stephen MacKinnon, *Wuhan, 1938: War, Refugees, and the Making of Modern China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2008), 28.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Fakui. The demonstration of their trust in Xue stemmed from his proficiency and competence as a soldier.

Once misunderstandings between the two leaders were resolved, Chiang instructed Xue to commence an operation against the CCP in Jiangxi.¹⁶ Beyond chasing and eliminating the Communists, the Encirclement Campaign had a more significant underlying goal. Nanjing enhanced its power and influence in the Southwest by seizing a chance to chase the CCP. This was crucial for the Nationalists in creating a base area for a potential war against Japan, too.

1.2 Attempts to gain Chiang Kaishek's trust: The effort to unify China's Southwest in the 1930s

1.2.1 Building China's Great Area: Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou

On 18 September 1931, Japan waged a sudden attack on Shenyang known as the Mukden Incident (*jiu yi ba shibian* 九一八事變). The following three months saw a Japanese occupation of all three Chinese Northeastern provinces. In January 1932 Chiang proclaimed that in the eventuality of a war being declared, Japan could swiftly take possession of the Chinese eastern coastal areas and Yangtze River basins within only three days because of an insufficient level of military forces possessed by China.¹⁷ Nanjing prioritized military reform and nation-building in anticipation of a potential war with Japan during the 1930s.

Critics heavily condemned Chiang's approach of "giving in to the foreign, pacifying the local (*rangwai an'nei* 攘外安內)" for being perceived as

¹⁶ Xiao Xianyou, "Xue Yue yu dijiu zhanqu," 42-44.

¹⁷ van de Ven, *War*, 151.

lacking the determination to resist the Japanese invasion.¹⁸ The Nationalists were determined to resist Japan, but also sought to eliminate the CCP and establish a stable central government in Nanjing for their national construction.¹⁹ Without a doubt, Chiang was hesitant to engage in hostilities shortly after the Mukden Incident. Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that he did not think about preparing for a potential war with Japan because of an overwhelming fixation on wiping out the CCP. Instead, he emphasized that proceeding with the war without proper preparation would inevitably lead to a complete defeat.²⁰

The Nationalists initiated a strategic approach to tire out the Japanese troops by engaging in a prolonged war (*chijiuzhan* 持久戰). By 1933, Chiang had repeatedly mentioned the concept of *chijiuzhan* in his diary. In April of that year, he stressed two crucial tactics in a public speech, a prolonged war against Japan and mobilization of the populace.²¹ Meeting the following two conditions was essential for a successful implementation of the prolonged war. First, the Nationalists should take precautions to conceal their preparations for war from the Japanese. Given this fact, Chiang's methods were to "maintain a low profile by using peace with Japan as a cover for diplomatic efforts" while utilizing "road and railway construction (*jiaotong* 交通) as a front for military projects, industrial development as a disguise for economic growth and education to conceal our national defense efforts."²²

¹⁸ This slogan came from one of Chiang's speeches, "Gao quanguo tongbao yizhi an'nei rangwai shu" 告全國同胞一致安內攘外書 [A proclamation to all compatriots: unite to pacify the interior and resist external aggression].

¹⁹ van de Ven, *War*, 151.

²⁰ Qin Xiaoyi, ZTJGDS, vol.2, 164; one of the best English works on the Nationalists' preparation for war with Japan, see van de Ven, *War*, 151-169.

²¹ Qin Xiaoyi, ZTJGDS, vol.2, 292-295.

²² *Ibid.*, 336.

Second, the Nationalists must obtain a base area with abundant resources to sustain their fight for an extended period. Chiang Kaishek sought the optimal location for a wartime base, considering both the Chinese northwest and southwest, particularly Sichuan.²³ In the next two years, Chiang journeyed to various provinces in Southwest and Northwest China ultimately concluding that “Sichuan could act as a prototype province for the development of a new China in the future.”²⁴ In 1934, Chiang began to envision the development and governance of Sichuan and the Southwest area (*jingying Sichuan* 經營四川 and *jianshe Xinan* 建設西南), implying that Sichuan had become the main priority for the wartime base.²⁵

One province alone was not enough to establish the Great Rear. A strategy, therefore, must cover all territories in the southwest such as Yunnan and Guizhou, and prioritize the development of transportation networks for improved connectivity. Untapped mineral reserves in Yunnan and Guizhou had great potential to contribute to the national revitalization efforts.²⁶ Though small in size, vast mineral reserves in Guizhou gave Chiang a feeling of assurance that implementing Nationalist reforms, such as the revival of *baojia* 保甲 and the establishment of the Peace Preservation Corps (*bao'antuan* 保安團) could effectively safeguard citizens from banditry and restore the authority of Nanjing there.²⁷

According to Guo Daijun, Chiang decided to build a wartime base area in Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou and to establish a provisional capital in

²³ Ibid., 351.

²⁴ Qin Xiaoyi, ZTJGSX, vol.13, 113-114.

²⁵ Yang Tianshi 楊天石, *Xunzhao zhenshi de Jiang Jieshi Jiang Jieshi riji jiedu er* 尋找真實的蔣介石: 蔣介石日記解讀二 [Looking for the real Chiang Kaishek: interpretation of Chiang Kai-shek's diaries II] (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 2010), 130-131; Guo Daijun, *Chongtan kangzhan*, 174.

²⁶ Qin Xiaoyi, ZTJGSX, vol.13, 182.

²⁷ Ibid., 175-178. *Baojia* is a traditional Chinese community-based system of law enforcement and civil control in the North Song Dynasty from 960-1127.

Chongqing.²⁸ These three provinces were vital choke points because of their topographies and circumstances. Vast reserves of minerals, agricultural goods, and manpower in these provinces provided the Nationalists with the necessary resources for a prolonged war with Japan. Many southwest provinces were independent from Nanjing, so it was crucial for Chiang to quickly bring them under control in order to create a favorable environment for building the wartime base area.²⁹

In April 1934, the start of the Fifth Encirclement Campaign in Jiangxi led to the Communists having to evacuate to massive territories in the southwest. Chiang and his German advisors devised a plan called “utilizing the suppressions on the CCP to pacify the Southwest (*jie jiaogong yi ding Xinan* 藉剿共以定西南).”³⁰ A covert execution of this task was crucial in order to avoid attracting the attention of Japan and other local warlords, with a particular focus on Guangxi, which posed a grave threat to Nanjing’s pacification in Guizhou and Sichuan. Guangxi had failed to detect Chiang’s true intentions when the Central Army led by Xue Yue advanced into Guizhou. Chiang wrote in his diary on 29 December 1934:

Our strategy is to disguise our resistance against the Japanese and prevent a civil war by using the suppression of Communist Banditry. I will be in charge of controlling the Communist Banditry forces in Guizhou and Sichuan as we work on building our southwest base. I shall contemplate this matter further.³¹

Chiang instructed the Central Army to enter the province once the main Red Army troops had departed for Sichuan creating frustration and

²⁸ Guo Daijun, *Chongtan kangzhan*, 174.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 175.

³¹ “Chiang Kaishek Diary” (29 December 1934), in *ibid.*

disturbance among Sichuan warlords.³² They were apprehensive about the encroachment of their territories by the presence of the powerful Central Army.³³ Sichuan warlords suggested gathering local troops to eradicate the remaining Red Army within the province. However, the Sichuan Army (*Chuanjun* 川軍) fell short in their military operation. As a result of his defeat by the Red Army, Liu Xiang 刘湘, the governor of Sichuan was forced to turn to Nanjing for assistance because his defeat inspired other warlords to compete for his power and influence.³⁴ Chiang was able to justify sending more Central Army forces to Sichuan and expanding Nanjing's influence there, therefore.

Liu Xiang and Nanjing came to many agreements, among which was the central government confirming him as governor to supervise all provincial issues and give financial aid to Sichuan. Liu allowed Central Army divisions to enter the province and also provided a suitable location for their operations.³⁵ Chiang benefited from deploying more Central Army forces to Sichuan because it changed the balance of military power in the ongoing clash with the Sichuan warlords. By doing so, he successfully dismantled the Sichuan warlords' established defense areas (*fangzhiqu* 防制區). Many warlords were compelled to give up their armed units and join forces with the Nanjing authority. This situation allowed Nanjing to influence Sichuan.

Chiang gained confidence in establishing a powerful wartime base, with an inclusion of the Chinese southwestern region under Nanjing. He asserted that an integration of Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou under the central authority signified a unification of the country's position and the

³² Guo Daijun, *Chongtan kangzhan*, 175.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Sun Zheng 孫震, *Bashi nian guoshi Chuan shi jianwenlu* 八十年國事川史見聞錄 [Record of eighty years of national affairs and observations of the history of Sichuan] (Taipei: Sichuan wenxian yanjiushe, 1979), 170; see also, Guo Daijun, *Chongtan kangzhan*, 175.

establishment of the nation's foundation.³⁶ A unification of the southwest encompassed more than just a transfer of administration and military control to the central government. A concerted effort was made to create the southwest Great Rear, merging the three Southwest provinces into a cohesive entity. Through military and administrative reforms, the central government restored peace in the provinces and established pacification areas. Nanjing had the power to control the area and influence its affairs. Within the following section, I examine in greater depth the Nationalists' establishment of a wartime base area in the Southwest and the contribution of Xue Yue to this undertaking.

1.2.2 Xue Yue and the pacification of Guizhou

Xue Yue completed a compilation and distribution in Taiwan in 1978 of his experiences during the Encirclement Campaign across several provinces.³⁷ Relying on his personal accounts and telegrams exchanged between him and Chiang Kaishek, this compilation is essential in comprehending campaigns of the Central Army in provinces like Jiangxi, Hunan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Sichuan, Xikang, and Shanxi. This book offers more than just a record of military campaigns. Numerous subjects are covered such as the restoration of *baojia* in counties, the development of air and road infrastructure, and an enumeration of households. This suggests that the Encirclement Campaign had a larger objective than solely combating the CCP and brigands through military means. The Nationalists utilized it as a crucial element in their efforts to build

³⁶ Qin Xiaoyi, ZTJGDS, vol.3, 206-208.

³⁷ The book is titled *The Records ofSuppressions of the CCP and Banditry* (*Jiaofei jishi* 剿匪紀實). Literally, *fei* refers to banditry but the Nationalists also called the CCP Communist banditry *Gongfei* 共匪. Here *fei* means both local banditry and the CCP's Red Army; see, Xue Yue and Shen Yunlong 沈雲龍, ed. *Jindai zhongguo shiliao congkan xubian disishi jiu ji jiaofei jishi* 近代中國史料叢刊續編第四十九輯剿匪紀實 [Modern China historical materials series, continuation, volume 49: records of bandit suppression] (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1978).

and unify the Chinese nation leading to accomplishments they reached during the Nanjing Decade (1928-1937). Also, the book examines multiple cities in Sichuan and Xikang, providing data about history, topography, population, land tax, education, roads, and waterways, agricultural goods, other commodities (*wuchan* 物產), and the customs of locals.³⁸

Firm support and endorsement of Wang Baili and Chen Cheng were important in mitigating Chiang's deep-seated suspicion toward Xue. The Encirclement Campaign allowed Xue to demonstrate his skills as a military leader, proving his loyalty to Chiang by following orders from Nanjing. He worked together with southwest warlords, supervised the construction of transportation infrastructure, and backed Nanjing to prevent opposition from Guangxi, all of which helped to dispel any concerns Chiang had about him. My interpretation of the Encirclement Campaign, in which Xue was involved is based on his book and research of relevant archival materials from *Guoshiguan*. The diaries and writings of Chiang are vital primary sources to grasp this campaign, too.

As the Red Army departed for Guizhou, Xue Yue took on the mission of guiding Central Army soldiers to this province that Nanjing had no authority over. After experiencing four defeats against the CCP, the Nationalists initiated the Fifth Encirclement Campaign in October 1933 under a strategy of three-part military and seven-part politics (*sanfen junshi qifen zhengzhi* 三分軍事七分政治). The Nationalists participated in building houses and roads, farming fields, reviving the *baojia* system, reforming local government structures, and decreasing burdensome taxes and levies.³⁹ They also provided relief and assistance to local refugees after occupying each Communist base.

³⁸ Ibid., 211-443.

³⁹ Xue Yue, "Gannan weijiao" 贛南圍剿 [Encirclement and suppression campaign in southern Jiangxi], in *ibid.*, 44.

Enlisting and mobilizing the general public benefited Xue in his later experience of governing and defending Hunan as it also required the participation of regular citizens in the resistance against the Japanese offensive on Changsha during the war.⁴⁰

In 1934, Xue and his troops pushed into Guizhou to track down Communist forces who had fled from Jiangxi. Being named the principal authority of Guizhou, Wang Jialie 王家烈 was not the sole ruler because multiple military leaders governed their own portions of the province. The Guizhou Army (*Qianjun* 黔軍), consisting of five divisions and three independent brigades struggled with limited weaponry and insufficient training for soldiers. Moreover, most troops were known for their lack of discipline with a significant number of soldiers being habitual opium users and having strained relationships with the local population.⁴¹ Wang fully understanding the circumstances, knew that the Guizhou Army lacked the power to repel the Red Army. The prospect of Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou, falling into the hands of either the Communists or the Central Army from Nanjing filled him with anxiety. Wang abandoned the pursuit of the CCP that had relocated to north Guizhou, after being defeated by the Red Army. He strongly believed that the Red Army would reach either Sichuan or Yunnan, allowing him to escape from suppressing the Communists.⁴²

Wang asked for help from Guangxi since he was worried about Nanjing gaining more control over Guizhou and posing a threat to his authority there. After much negotiation, the two provinces came to an agreement where Wang

⁴⁰ Xiao Xianyou, "Xue Yue yu dijiu zhanqu," 35.

⁴¹ Jiang Rongsen 蔣榮森, "Xiang Yue Gui Qian Kang Chuan Shan Gan zhuijiao" 湘粵桂黔康川陝甘追剿 [Pursuit and suppression in Hunan, Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, Yunnan, Sichuan, Shaanxi, and Gansu], in *Xue Yue jiangjun*, 187.

⁴² Ibid.

granted Guangxi permission to enter Guiyang and besiege the Central Army.⁴³ Guangxi posed a significant danger to Chiang because he aimed to set up a pacification area in Guizhou. Central Army troops there needed to contain the Red Army while also contending with a joint force of two warlords. It was suspected by Nanjing that Guizhou and Guangxi had merged because of their proximity allowing them to possess a more powerful military force than the Central Army in a restricted time. Xue Yue convinced Wang Jialie to agree to rearrange the Guizhou Army and change provincial administration before Guangxi forces arrived in Guiyang.⁴⁴ According to Xue, Wang showed his strong devotion to his country and homeland by allowing the Central Army to enter Guiyang and taking control of the revamped Guizhou Army to combat the Communists.⁴⁵ Actual circumstances may be more complex than what Xue indicated. Wang likely came to terms with the fact that he had lost the military power he could have utilized against Nanjing following the defeat of his Guizhou Army by the Communists. Knowing that the Guizhou Army was no match for the Communists, Chiang ordered Xue to stop the defeated soldiers from going back to Guiyang. Instead of compensating these soldiers for their losses, Chiang saw an opportunity to disarm Wang's private military forces.⁴⁶

Once Guiyang was under control, Xue's duties included such as implementing military reforms and enhancing transport and economy to establish a new Guizhou under Nanjing's rule. In regard to military transformation, Xue created 13 areas specifically targeting banditry in which the Central Army took the lead in eradicating Communist forces and local

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 189.

⁴⁶ "Jiang Zhongzheng dianshi Xue Yue jian ju Wang bu kuibing ru Guiyang qie xu jiaoxie chengchu" 蔣中正電示薛岳堅拒王部潰兵入貴陽且須繳械懲處 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram instructed Xue Yue to firmly reject the fleeing soldiers of Wang's troops from entering Guiyang and to require them to surrender their weapons for disciplinary action] (02 March 1932), JZTWW, 002-010200-00129-007, GSGDA.

ruffians. He thoroughly examined local militias and aimed to combine them with regional forces to eliminate mercenaries from the local military and make them more rooted in the local area.⁴⁷ This paved the way for a restructuring of the Peace Preservation Corps and a restoration of the *baojia* system. Necessary steps were taken by Xue to establish a solid foundation and framework for planned changes that aimed to establish a pacification area in Guizhou.

Xue assisted in a reorganization of the Guizhou Army, offering support in terms of equipment and instruction to enhance the military capability of the soldiers. When new troops of the Guizhou Army were merged under the unified direction of the Central Army, Wang Jialie's military strength was diminished. Before, the Guizhou Army had been consuming all of the province's annual budget, therefore, impeding the progress in politics, economy, and education across Guizhou.⁴⁸ Taking steps to rectify the situation, Xue scaled back the Army to only five divisions, each of which had a commander chosen in accordance with Chiang's instructions.⁴⁹

Later on, Xue Yue coordinated with the Central Army to construct roads and airports in Guizhou. Chiang made it clear that the construction of airports was imperative for Central Army divisions heading to Guizhou before Xue arrived in Guiyang.⁵⁰ According to a 1935 report by Xue sent to Chiang, Guizhou had a total of 10 airports (seven of which had been completed and the other three were in the process of construction) with the largest being

⁴⁷ Xue Yue, "Qian Dian Chuannan zhuijiao" 黔滇川南追剿 [Pursuit and suppression in southern Guizhou, Yunnan, and Sichuan], in *Jiaofei jishi*, 164.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ "Jiang Zhongzheng dian Xue Yue ru Qian yaowu nai duozhu jichang su xiangbao kaipi didian ji wangong riqi" 蔣中正電薛岳入黔要務乃多築機場速詳報開闢地點及完工日期 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram to Xue Yue instructed him to prioritize the construction of multiple airfields upon entering Guizhou, and to promptly provide detailed reports on the locations selected for development and the anticipated completion dates] (13 January 1935), JZTWW, 002-010200-00125-014, GSGDA.

located in Qing Town possessing a capacity for 30 airplanes.⁵¹ By May 1935, there were 15 finished airports with a further four under construction and preliminary investigations of the terrain for four prospective airports had been undertaken.⁵²

The Central Army also refurbished existing roads and constructed new routes that connected Guizhou to other parts of the southwest.⁵³ Xue affirmed in February 1935 that his army was able to finalize the construction of the Hunan-Guizhou Road (Guizhou component) in five months while the Sichuan-Guizhou Road (Guizhou fraction) would need three months.⁵⁴ The entirety of the Hunan-Guizhou Road was scheduled to be finished by July 1935.⁵⁵ According to a report by the National Economic Council NEC (*quanguo jingji weiyuanhui* 全國經濟委員會), the Sichuan-Guizhou Road was completed and operational before the war.⁵⁶ By constructing roads and airports, Nanjing solidified and expanded its influence over Guizhou and

⁵¹ “Xue Yue dian Jiang Zhongzheng baogao Guizhou ge jichang xingzhu jindu ji guimo daxiao” 薛岳電蔣中正報告貴州各機場興築進度及規模大小 [Xue Yue’s telegram to Chiang Kaishek reported on the progress and scale of construction for various airports in Guizhou] (14 January 1935), JZTWW, 002-090102-00002-214, GSGDA; Xue Yue, “Qian Dian zhuijiao,” 92-93.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵³ “Jiang Zhongzheng dian XueYue Guizhou muqian zui zhongyao renwu wei ganzhu Qian Chuan yu Qian Xiang liang gonglu” 蔣中正電薛岳貴州目前最重要工作為趕築黔川與黔湘兩公路 [Chiang Kaishek’s telegram to Xue Yue emphasized that the most important current task in Guizhou was to expedite the construction of Sichuan-Guizhou and Hunan-Guizhou Roads] (05 February 1935), JZTWW, 002-020200-00023-078, GSGDA; Xue Yue, “Qian Dian zhuijiao,” 89.

⁵⁴ “Xue Yue dian Jiang Zhongzheng chengbao Chuan Qian Xiang Qian gonglu gouzhu jihua ji yugu jingfei” 薛岳電蔣中正呈報川黔湘黔公路構築計劃及預估經費 [Xue Yue’s telegram to Chiang Kaishek reported on the construction plans and estimated costs for the Sichuan-Guizhou and Hunan-Guizhou Roads] (14 February 1935), JZTWW, 002-080200-00447-092, GSGDA; “Xue Yue dian Jiang Zhongzheng Xiang Qian lu Qian dongduan zhulu jihua” 薛岳電蔣中正湘黔路黔東段築路計畫 [Xue Yue’s telegram to Chiang Kaishek regarding the construction plan for the eastern section of the Xiang-Qian Road (Hunan-Guizhou Road)] (12 March 1935), JZTWW, 002-080200-00448-059, GSGDA.

⁵⁵ “Jiang Zhongzheng dian Gu Zhutong Wu Zhongxin Xiang Qian lu xiayue ji ke wancheng” 蔣中正電顧祝同吳忠信湘黔路下月即可完成 [Chiang Kai-shek’s telegram to Gu Zhutong and Wu Zhongxin stated that the Xiang-Qian Road (Hunan-Guizhou Road) could be completed as early as next month] (22 June 1935), JZTWW, 002-060100-00097-022, GSGDA.

⁵⁶ “Quanguo jingji weiyuanhui guanyu Sichuan sheng gonglu jianshe yijian” 全國經濟委員會關於四川省公路建設意見 [The National Economic Council’s opinions on road construction in Sichuan] (24 February 1936), ZHMGDAZL, part 5, vol.1, finance and economy 9, 232.

improved the flow of resources between Guizhou and other Chinese provinces.

The final task was to employ an economic weapon to exert influence over Guizhou and secure financial control for Nanjing. Before his move to Guizhou, Xue proposed to Chiang about creating a Guiyang branch of the Central Bank (*Zhongyang yinhang* 中央銀行) to facilitate a unification of financial and economic affairs in the southwest.⁵⁷ Chiang approved this plan. A circulation of *Yangyuan* or *Yinyuan* (洋元 or 銀元) within the market caused fiscal complications and hindered military provision procurement and the execution of commercial transactions in Guizhou. Xue spearheaded the implementation of paper currency (*fabi* 法幣) from the four banks (*zhong zhong jiao nong* 中中交農, the Central Bank, the Bank of China, the Bank of Communications, and the Farmers Bank of China) expanding its circulation across Guizhou and the entire southwest region.⁵⁸

In 1935, Xue in Guizhou sent a telegraph stating that the introduction of *fabi* in the market had improved its perception among the residents of the province.⁵⁹ This created essential conditions for the establishment of a Guiyang branch of the Central Bank. In late January 1935, Kong Xiangxi 孔祥熙, the president of the Central Bank declared a commencement of preparations for opening a branch in Guiyang after conducting a month-long investigation, as well as plans for the creation of two more branches in Sichuan

⁵⁷ “Jiang Zhongzheng Dian Xue Yue choubei Guiyang she zhongyang yinhang fenheng yi tongyu Chuan Dian Qian jinrong” 蔣中正電薛岳籌備貴陽設中央銀行分行以統馭川滇黔金融 [Chiang Kaishek’s telegram to Xue Yue instructed preparations for establishing a branch of the Central Bank in Guiyang to centrally control financial matters in Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou] (31 December 1934), JZTWW, 002-070100-00037-053, GSGDA; the original document from Guoshiguan is Xue Yue’s telegram and Chiang Kaishek’s responses were written on it, too.

⁵⁸ Jiang Rongsen, “Xiang Yue Gui Qian,” 184.

⁵⁹ “Xue Yue dian Jiang Zhongzheng zhongyang chaoyang liutong bing sheli zhongyang yinhang Guiyang fenheng” 薛岳電蔣中正中央鈔洋流通並設立中央銀行貴陽分行 [Xue Yue’s telegram to Chiang Kaishek proposed the circulation of Central Bank currency in Guiyang and the establishment of a branch of the Central Bank in Guiyang] (29 January 1935), JZTWW, 002-080200-00446-113, GSGDA.

and Changsha.⁶⁰ At the moment, an exchange rate of one *yuan* of *fabi* to 1.2 *yuan* of the Hong Kong Dollar was in effect.⁶¹ In February 1935, Xue Yue was officially named the Director of the Pacification Area in Guizhou by Chiang after Wang Jialie was replaced by a Nanjing representative. This marked that the influence of Nanjing had reached Guizhou.⁶²

1.2.3 The construction of Nationalist infrastructure in western Sichuan and Xikang

Once the Red Army fled from Guizhou, the Nationalists extended their pacification initiatives to encompass the southwest regions of Sichuan and Xikang. Following military operations, prompt infrastructure development including roads, airports, and counties, started in the newly pacified areas. In his book, Xue Yue provided a thorough account of various counties in the Northeast of Sichuan such as Nanchong, Suining, Mianyang, and so on. Road infrastructure in these counties was designed and constructed to meet high standards and linking them to Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan, was crucial to finalizing a transportation network in this area. Nanjing recognized the importance of constructing roads in western Sichuan to create a cohesive region encompassing Sichuan, Xikang and Yunnan that served as a strategic wartime base area. Xue led the Central Army in a series of operations at the end of 1935 and the beginning of 1936 taking back Tianquan 天全, Lushan 蘆山 and Rongjing 榮經 from the Communists. These counties held significant

⁶⁰ “Kong Xiangxi dian Jiang Zhongzheng guanyu yu Guiyang sheli zhongyang yinhang fenhang” 孔祥熙電蔣中正關於於貴陽設立中央銀行分行 [Kong Xiangxi’s telegram to Chiang Kaishek regarding establishing a branch of the Central Bank in Guiyang] (29 January 1935), JZTWW, 002-080200-00446-113, GSGDA; “Kong Xiangxi dian Jiang Zhongzheng qing paiyuan xietong zhongyang yinhang ren yuan fu Guizhou choushe Guiyang fenhang” 孔祥熙電蔣中正請派員協同中央銀行人員赴貴州籌設貴陽分行 [Kong Xiangxi’s telegram to Chiang Kaishek requested to send personnel to collaborate with Central Bank officials to prepare for establishing a Guiyang branch in Guizhou] (25 February 1935), JZTWW, 002-080200-00447-187, GSGDA.

⁶¹ Jiang Rongsen, “Xiang Yue Gui Qian,” 184.

⁶² Ibid., 190 and 194.

value because of their location near Ya'an 雅安, a key stronghold and passageway linking western Sichuan to Xikang, and Yunnan. Numerous attempts were undertaken in order to restore and reconstruct these counties.

First, in these three counties, a process of reviving and reconstructing bureaucracy and administration at the county level commenced. After the Rongjing campaign, Xue created a committee to handle issues, stemming from military operations, such as the allocation of food for nearby residents. He also coordinated the reimplementation of the *baojia* and finalized the registration of all households in the county. Utilizing local forces to defend the counties from Communist and unlawful activities, as well as providing instruction to local people was effectively implemented, culminating in local militias being able to join the Peace Preservation Forces and Communist Suppression Volunteers, who were responsible for safeguarding county safety.⁶³ The central government distributed 5,000 *yuan* to fund restoration work in Tianquan and Lushan.

Second, Xue Yue organized a transport office that hired local peasants and a military transport office to construct roads.⁶⁴ Building the Sichuan-Yunnan and Sichuan-Xikang roads was part of the second phase of the New Road Construction Stage launched by the NEC in the mid-1930s.⁶⁵ It was crucial to reclaim and rebuild the three counties in western Sichuan, particularly Rongjing, which served as the starting point for the two roads to Yunnan and Xikang. Map 1.1 shows a road that originated in Ya'an and extended south to Xichang 西昌 before arriving at Kunming 昆明, the capital of Yunnan.⁶⁶ A northwestern road led to Xikang passing through Rongjing,

⁶³ Xue Yue, "Chuanxi jieqiao" 川西截剿 [Suppression in western Sichuan], in *Jiaofei jishi*, 377-381.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 423.

⁶⁵ "Sichuan sheng gonglu jianshe yijian", 232.

⁶⁶ The map illustrates the construction of the Yunnan road as the second priority, known as *cizhu* 次築.

Luding 蘆定, and Kangding 康定 along the way.⁶⁷ Building the road from Ya'an to Rongjing took precedence over other tasks according to Map 1.1.

Utilizing five million *yuan* from Chiang, Xue managed to build the Sichuan-Xikang Road in 1936. He also conducted an extensive survey of 10 counties in Xikang encompassing Luding and Kangding. Data on the landscape, populace, military strength, farming output, number of livestock, and major roads were obtained through the survey.⁶⁸ According to an April 1936 order issued by Chiang, Xue needed to initiate promptly construction and strive to finish within three months.⁶⁹ The original start date was postponed by a month from May to June to allow for a measurement of the route and procurement of necessary construction materials.⁷⁰

In June 1936, the construction was halted because of the emergence of the Guangdong and Guangxi Incident (*liang Guang shibian* 兩廣事變).⁷¹ Chiang directed Xue to relocate his soldiers from Sichuan strategically positioning them in the area between Guizhou and Guangxi. Xue did not complete the entire road construction in Sichuan, however, recovered law and order in Ya'an and three important counties in western Sichuan from Communist occupation. Moreover, a road between Ya'an and Rongjing, which linked the two inter-provincial routes from Sichuan to Yunnan and Xikang, as well as a belt road in Ya'an had been built.⁷² The Xikang Provincial

⁶⁷ This road also was a second priority task.

⁶⁸ Xue Yue, "Xikang zhuidu" 西康追堵 [Pursuit and blockade in Xikang], in *Jiaofei jishi*, 310-329.

⁶⁹ "Jiang Zhongzheng dianling Xue Yue Hu Jiayi ganzhu Chuan Kang gonglu xianqi wancheng" 蔣中正電令薛岳胡家詒趕築川康公路限期完成 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram ordered Xue Yue and Hu Jiayi to expedite the construction of the Sichuan-Xikang Road and complete it by a specified deadline] (19 April 1936), JZTWW, 002-010200-00157-006, GSGDA.

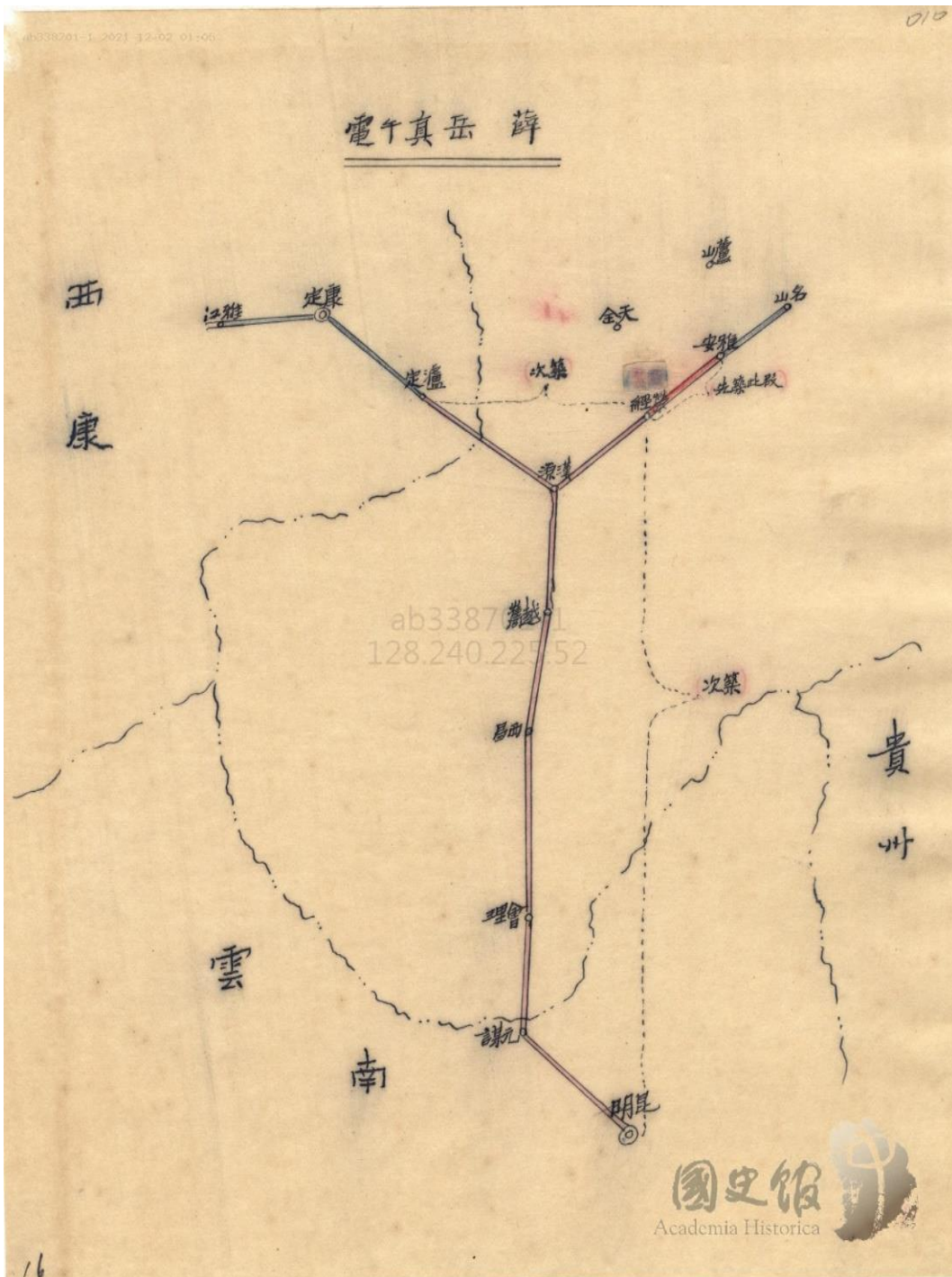
⁷⁰ "Xue Yue dian Jiang Zhongzheng kaizhu Chuang Kang gonglu jihua" 薛岳電蔣中正開築川康公路計畫 [Xue Yue's telegram to Chiang Kaishek regarding initiating the Sichuan-Xikang Road construction plan] (4 June 1936), JZTWW, 002-090102-00006-341, GSGDA.

⁷¹ This event involved an alliance of Guangxi and Guangdong in a rebellion against Chiang and his "*rangwai an'nei*" policy.

⁷² Xue Yue, "Xikang," 106.

Preparatory Committee (*Xikang jiansheng weiyuanhui* 西康西康建省委員會) was responsible for overseeing the remaining road construction project. After the war began, the Sichuan-Yunnan Road underwent major development for two years, expanding its reach from Chongqing to Kunming. The construction was finished by the end of 1940 creating a crucial connection between Yunnan and Sichuan.⁷³ Xue and his troops were also in charge of building three airports located in Ya'an, Rongjing, and Xichang.

⁷³ “Kangzhan wu nian lai zhi jiaotong” 抗戰五年來之交通 [Transportation during the five years of the War of Resistance against Japan] (1942), ZHMGDAZL, part 5, vol.2, finance and economy 10, 70.



Map 1.1 Sichuan-Yunan and Sichuan-Xikang. Source: “Xue Yue dian Jiang Zhongzheng kaizhu Chuan Dian lu Chuang Kang lu 薛岳電蔣中正開築川滇路川康路” (14 January 1936), JZTWW, 002-080200-00467-010, GSGDA.

1.2.4 Ruling the Southwest military affairs

Chiang Kaishek trusted Xue Yue who demonstrated his strong loyalty to Chiang in front of other warlords. For example, Xue successfully lessened the threat of Guangxi while the Central Army was stationed in Guizhou in 1935. Wang Jialie reached out to Guangxi for assistance in hampering the advancement of the Central Army to Guiyang. Using the excuse of attacking the Communists, Li Zongren 李宗仁 and Bai Chongxi conspired to send troops from Guangdong to Guizhou.⁷⁴ Chiang instructed Xue to prioritize obtaining grains to protect Guiyang and to carefully monitor the movement of Guangxi troops to avoid conflicts with them.⁷⁵ Preventing Wang from surrendering to Guangxi was another task.⁷⁶ Xue acted without delay to initiate a restructuring of the Guizhou Army upon arriving in Guiyang while removing the Communists and local looters. Consequently, the central government gained more control over the province, putting an end to Guangxi's ambitions to annex Guizhou.⁷⁷ Chiang was satisfied to see the restructuring of the 25th Army and the Guizhou government. Nanjing strengthened its control over both military and administrative affairs in Guizhou.⁷⁸ Xue established himself as a reliable representative of Nanjing in the southwest, assisting the central government in asserting its control over the southwest area while gaining admiration and allegiance from numerous local military leaders.

⁷⁴ Xiao Xianyou, "Xue Yue yu dijiu zhanqu," 45.

⁷⁵ "Jiang Zhongzheng dianling Xue Yue fangbei Yue Gui jun ru Qian" 蔣中正電令薛岳防備粵桂軍入黔 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram ordered Xue Yue to prepare for the Guangxi-Guangdong troops entering Guizhou] (15 February 1935), JZTWW, 002-010200-00128-003, GSGDA.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ "Xue Yue dian Jiang Zhongzheng jinzun wanshang tingzhi ru Qian" 薛岳電蔣中正謹遵婉商停止入黔 [Xue Yue's telegram to Chiang Kaishek respectfully followed the suggestion to cease entering Guizhou] (2 February 1935), JZTWW, 002-020200-00029-032, GSGDA.

⁷⁸ "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (2 May 1935), KMJ, vol.4, JZTWW, 002-060200-00004-007, GSGDA, 1.

To what extent were other provincial warlords willing to accept Chiang as a party and national leader recognizing the crucial role of their collaboration in consolidating Chiang's power? Analyzing the efforts of Nanjing to pacify the southwestern provinces is a great way to gain insight into this topic. Xue Yue was actually instructed by Chiang to support Wang Jialie in handling military and administrative affairs in Guizhou before his move to Guiyang. Chiang did not see the replacement of a warlord as a pressing issue that could incite regional conflicts, particularly he believed in the possibility of cooperation with them.⁷⁹ Chiang was resolute in delegating power to someone he trusted instead of Wang, who had chosen to side with Guangxi and defy the central government.⁸⁰ In order to gain the cooperation and backing of Governor Long Yun 龍雲 of Yunnan, Chiang gave him full authority over all Central Army troops in Yunnan and Guizhou.⁸¹ Xue also needed to accept Long's leadership.

Understanding the escalating tension between China and Japan sheds light on Chiang's strategy for uniting China. Because of the Mukden incident and ensuing military conflicts in North China and Shanghai, Chiang came to understand an urgent need to prepare for a possible full-scale war against Japan. As conditions deteriorated, it became crucial for the Nationalists to secure a strategic location for their wartime base area, enabling them to relocate the central government and essential resources. The Encirclement

⁷⁹ "Jiang Zhongzheng han Xue Yue xiang zhu Wang Jialie banli Qian zhong junshi ji difang shanhou shiyi" 蔣中正函薛岳襄助王家烈辦理黔中軍事及地方善後事宜 [Chiang Kaishek's letter to Xue Yue requested his assistance in assisting Wang Jialie in handling military affairs and local post-war matters in Guizhou] (2 February 1935), JZTWW, 002-080200-00211-115, GSGDA.

⁸⁰ "Xue Yue dian Jiang Zhongzheng Wang Jialie wei you yonghu zhongyang" 薛岳電蔣中正王家烈未有擁護中央 [Xue Yue's telegram to Chiang Kaishek stated that Wang Jialie had not shown support for the central government] (23 February 1935), JZTWW, 002-080200-00447-160, GSGDA.

⁸¹ "Jiang Zhongzheng dianling Xue Yue yu Long Yun qieshi lianxi jieshou qi zhihui" 蔣中正電令薛岳與龍雲切實連繫接受其指揮 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram ordered Xue Yue to effectively coordinate and accept the command of Long Yun] (12 February 1935), JZTWW, 002-010200-00127-057, GSGDA.

Campaign heightened anxiety among warlords in both the southwest and regions beyond Nanjing's control. Tensions between Chiang and his opponents would worsen.

Therefore, Chiang had no choice but to try to appease any opposing factions within the KMT while attempting to collaborate with southwest warlords in order to avoid potential military confrontations. Chiang hoped for a peaceful resolution to unite the southwest region of China rather than resorting to a civil war. Xue acted as a mediator between Nanjing and the southwest, actively facilitating negotiations with different warlords there.

Moving Wang Jialie out of Guizhou led to heightened vigilance among the other military warlords in the southwest, who were anxious about potential interference of their authorities from the central government. Xue traveled to Yunnan to negotiate with Long Yun about the Central Army's advance following an order from Chiang.⁸² Long's assistance and collaboration with the Central Army, coupled with his refusal to work with Guangxi empowered Chiang to conceive of a possibility of unifying the southwest without resorting to a civil war.⁸³ Chiang stated that Long could be trusted to support the central government but Wang could continue in his current role while being closely monitored.⁸⁴ As a result, Xue pledged allegiance to Long as the top commander leading the Central Army forces in Yunnan and Sichuan and they made a sincere vow of brotherhood.⁸⁵

Before Xue arrived in Yunnan, he and Chiang deliberated on a potential deployment of troops to Yunnan in pursuit of escaped Communists. Chiang

⁸² Jiang Rongsen, "Xiang Yue Gui Qian," 201.

⁸³ "He Zhonghan deng dian Jiang Zhongzheng cici Yue Gui jun yaoqiu yuan Qian yi" 賀衷寒等電蔣中正此次粵桂軍要求援黔意 [He Zhonghan and others telegraphed Chiang Kaishek about the real purpose behind the request from the Guangdong and Guangxi troops for assistance in Guizhou] (12 February 1935), JZTWW, 002-080200-00461-062, GSGDA.

⁸⁴ Pan Guangzhe & Huang Zijin, JZTAJ, vol.1, 129.

⁸⁵ Jiang Rongsen, "Xiang Yue Gui Qian," 201.

suggested to Xue, “Having a conversation with Long rather than simply following my commands would be more effective.”⁸⁶ Chiang handed over a portion of his control so that Long joined forces with the Central Army for the Encirclement Campaign in Yunnan and Sichuan. I argue that Chiang was able to share decision-making power with others, as detailed in the following two chapters of this work.

By supporting Nanjing during the Encirclement Campaign, Long managed to stay in power. This led to his appointment as Director of the Pacification Area in Guizhou in 1936 with Xue being Deputy Director. With the war looming Xue was nominated as the acting governor of Guizhou, Chiang appealed to Long for support in backing Xue who had little experience in governing a province.⁸⁷ Using the strong bond between Xue and Long, Chiang solidified his collaboration with Yunnan and he envisioned using their alliance as a successful model to garner support from other southwest provinces.

Xue conveyed the Central Army’s purpose for being in the Southwest establishing a close relationship with warlords there. Yang Seng 楊森, a warlord from Sichuan led his troops to join Xue after suppressing the CCP in Sichuan and then moving to Guizhou.⁸⁸ Yang’s group army was a major force that defended Changsha during the war. Other Southwest generals, such as Lu Daoyuan 魯道源, Sun Du 孫渡, Yang Hanyu 楊漢域, Wang Lingji 王陵基 were also engaged in most Battles of Changsha under the leadership of Xue Yue.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ “Jiang Zhongzheng dianshi Long Yun zhidao quefa jingyan zhi Qian sheng daili zhuxi Xue Yue” 蔣中正電示龍雲指導缺乏經驗之黔省代理主席薛岳 [Chiang Kaishek’s telegram instructed Long Yun to guide the inexperienced acting chairman of Guizhou, Xue Yue] (16 May 1937), JZTWW, 002-010200-00175-045, GSGDA.

⁸⁸ “Xue Yue dian Jiang Zhongzheng yi Yang Seng jun ni yi qi liang shi weizhi yu Qianxi zhu” 薛岳電蔣中正以楊森軍擬以其兩師位置於黔西駐 [Xue Yue’s telegram to Chiang Kaishek proposed that Yang Sen’s troops be stationed in western Guizhou with his two divisions] (19 March 1937), JZTWW, 002-080200-00480-071, GSGDA.

From 1939 to 1942, Xue became highly esteemed in the Ninth War Area because of the presence of numerous mid-level commanders and their troops from four southwest provinces in Hunan Theater.⁸⁹ Intense fighting in Changsha over three years was marked by a high level of cooperation among diverse units likely influenced by a strong camaraderie between these commanders and Xue Yue during the 1930s.

Conclusion

The Encirclement Campaign has sparked considerable discussion among historians regarding military strategies employed by the KMT. Military operations appeared to diminish in importance when contrasted with the consolidation of the southwest and the establishment of a wartime base in Nanjing. Utilizing military campaigns against the CCP, Nanjing expanded its influence in provinces such as Guizhou and Sichuan and cooperated with local warlords. Military warlords in the southwest were against the Central Army establishing a strong presence in their districts. Because of a lack of adequate forces, however, they had to cooperate with Nanjing to eliminate the Communists and consented to cede some of their oversight over the provinces as a condition of the alliance.

At the eruption of the war with Japan, the Nationalists broadened their range of operations to battle and restrain the Japanese in a plethora of areas simultaneously. This saved time for them to enable the transport of their military and industrial materials as well as factories from the southeastern shorelines and the Yangtze River Valley to the southwestern base area in which the Nationalists leveraged the abundance of resources available in Sichuan, Yunan, and Xikang to endure their prolonged conflict with Japan for eight

⁸⁹ Jiang Rongsen, "Xiang Yue Gui Qian," 201.

years. Xue Yue was a key Nanjing agent, who backed Chiang Kaishek in restoring Nanjing's rule in the southwest provinces while preventing Guangxi from growing its control in that area. His troublesome relationship with Chiang strained in the early 1930s was relatively restored by his active participation during the Encirclement Campaign. Xue had proven himself worthy of a key role in military administration and leadership. Notably, Xue and several warlords in the southwest benefited from an atmosphere of solidarity that made it possible for different NRA units of the Ninth War Area in Hunan to fully engage in joint military operations. This critical element enabled the Nationalists to maintain a presence in Hunan for seven years. It also offers us a perspective into the military operations of the Nationalist forces after 1939, different from their bad military performance, particularly a lack of interest in collaboration between various troops at the front during the early stage of the war.

CHAPTER 2

The cultivation of Chang Kaishek's wartime leadership from 1930 to 1943

Chiang Kaishek expanded his Whampoa faction by incorporating the southwest into Nanjing (including assuming authority over Hunan) soon after the start of the war. Nanjing also put in a lot of effort during the 1930s to achieve a unified China under Nationalist rule through a series of military and administrative reforms carried out at both central and local levels. In those provinces that were not under Nanjing's authority such as Jiangxi, Hunan, and most southwestern provinces, their reforms demonstrated a satisfactory degree of success. Chiang consolidated power for himself and his Whampoa faction nominally establishing himself as the leader of the KMT and the country during the war. Several provinces including Yunan, Shanxi, and Guangxi, however, maintained a certain level of independence throughout the entire war.

This chapter delves into how Chiang achieved the top authority in the central government and exerted control over the Chinese war areas that emerged during the war to extend his reach locally. Moreover, I analyze essential battles that occurred in the first phase of the war from 1937 to 1938 with a particular focus on the Battle of Xuzhou to gain a deeper understanding of how Chiang was able to intervene in the frontline from a distance and how interactions took place between him and frontal commanders. This offers an opportunity to see Chiang's impact on the decision-making process of those commanders at the front. Chiang held titles of head of state and leader of the party, I argue however, that his actual power came from his growing military and political influence (or the increasing power of his Whampoa Clique) overwhelming other Nationalist factions. This chapter aims to solve a key issue

of whether Chiang truly held absolute authority over all aspects of the war, too, a debate that has been heavily discussed by numerous historians.

In the 1930s, Chiang and other warlords established a mutually advantageous yet paradoxical relationship. In other words, as the Whampoa faction gained dominance in the KMT, other party factions were forced to grudgingly follow Chiang's leadership and maintain their strength and influence to survive. The influence of Chiang had not yet been firmly solidified across the army and the party, leaving room for other Nationalists to oppose him as seen in the first phase of the war.

2.1 The hierarchical command system of the NRA and Chiang Kaishek's role in the war

2.1.1 The 1930s Nationalist military reforms

In the 1930s, Chiang Kaishek carried out a series of military reforms to consolidate his authority within the Nanjing central government. Ruling through the military, as van de Ven suggests Chiang solidified the Nanjing government.¹ He was first given control over all military matters in the government and party as the head of the MAC. The appointment of Chiang as Chairman (*weiyuanzhang* 委員長) of the re-organized MAC in 1932 allowed him to control over all council matters. All directives from the MAC must bear the signature of either Chiang or the office directors designated by the Chairman with Chiang also wielding the power to appoint for the MAC.² This established him as the namely wartime leader. At a local level, Chiang utilized the Encirclement Campaign to set up the Field Headquarters (*xingying* 行營) that expanded his influence in numerous provinces beyond his control. The

¹ van de Ven, *War*, 140; A definitive work in English on the Nanjing reform in the 1930s was van de Ven's *War and Nationalism in China 1925-1945*, from page 131-151.

² "Junshi weiyuanhui fuwu guicheng" 軍事委員會服務規程 [Regulations for the MAC], ZHMGDAZL, part 5, vol.1, military 1, 4.

Field Headquarters held greater authority than just that of a military command post, exerting supreme power over local authorities within their jurisdiction to handle both military operations and a series of post-operation affairs including peacekeeping, economic development, party, civil and financial affairs of the local government.³ Nanjing recovered *baojia* to unite the common people (*minzhong* 民衆), inspect households, enhance the self-defending ability, and eliminate bandits in order to restore peace in the rural areas.⁴ *Baojia* was established as a crucial social mechanism to reassert central government supervision over local communities.⁵ Furthermore, the Field Headquarters held the power to restructure and supervise local militias and the Peace Preservation Forces in multiple provinces, which involved handpicking and appointing their commanders.⁶ Nanjing, therefore established and possessed devoted local forces in most Chinese provinces.

Far-reaching economic, social, and managerial reforms were put into effect following the Encirclement Campaign. This campaign centered around creating a favorable atmosphere for Nanjing to expand its influence to provinces beyond its reach. Chiang wielded even more influence over these provinces. After leading the Central Army to reclaim provinces in central and southwest China, Chiang solidified his military power and gained widespread

³ “Guomin zhengfu junshi weiyuanhui banbu Wuchang xingying zuzhi dagang ling” 國民政府軍事委員會頒佈武昌行營組織大綱令 [The MAC of the Nationalist government issued the outline of the organization of the Wuchang Field Headquarters] (6 March 1935), ZHMGDAZL, part 5, vol.1, military 1, 34.

⁴ “Yu E Wan san sheng jiaofei zong silingbu gongbu jiaofei qu nei gexian biancha baojia hukou tiaoli” 豫鄂皖三省剿匪總司令部公佈‘剿匪區內各縣編查保甲戶口條例’ [The command headquarters for suppressing bandits in Henan, Hubei, and Anhui announced regulations for registering and inspecting *baojia* and households in the militia control areas] (August 1932), GMDZZZD, vol.1, 407-414; see also, van de Ven, *War*, 144.

⁵ A definitive work in English on the Nationalists for the restoration of the *baojia* in the 1930s, see van de Ven, *War*, 142-146.

⁶ “Yu E Wan san sheng jiaofei zong silingbu banbu Yu E Wan san sheng jiaofei zong silingbu dangzheng weiyuanhui zuzhi tiaoli” 豫鄂皖三省剿匪總司令部頒佈‘豫鄂皖三省剿匪總司令部黨政委員會組織條例’ [The command headquarters for suppressing bandits in Henan, Hubei, and Anhui issued regulations detailing the organization and functions of the party and government committee within the command headquarters] (9 August 1932), GMDZZZD, vol.1, 403.

recognition as a dominant political figure of the 1930s. The outbreak of war in 1937 gave Chiang, the Chairman of the MAC a chance to possess supreme military power to lead wartime China. Through the growth of his faction, Chiang gained widespread acknowledgment and recognition of his leadership within the KMT. This averted any backlash from within the KMT that may have challenged his authority over the national leadership during the war. While publicly affirming their loyalty to Chairman Chiang, Li Zongren, Bai Chongxi, and Yan Xishan 閻錫山, rulers of Guangxi and Shanxi, maintained a high level of independence because of powerful military forces within their territories. Chiang faced animosity from the party, however, when a stronger outside force defeated his army as China had not yet achieved complete integration. He encountered numerous obstacles from anti-Chiang factions that impeded his rule and modernization agenda.

2.1.2 Leading wartime China: the War Area Chief Headquarters

If the MAC was an essential tool Chiang needed to secure control of the army at a central level, he then required added measures in war areas to confirm his authority over localized territories and to ensure his control and superiority in Free China (areas not occupied by the Japanese). The War Area Chief Headquarters (*zhanqu zhangguan silingbu* 戰區長官司令部) was established to exert local influence over regional commanders. Since 1937, the war area had existed, but the MAC had imposed more restrictions to curtail its authority after 1939. Following the Battle of Wuhan in October 1938 and the reorganization of 10 Chinese war areas in January 1939, the MAC stipulated the creation of a chief headquarters in each war area with direct oversight from the MAC for improving the NRA's operational command.⁷ The Commander

⁷ “Zhanqu zhangguan silingbu zuzhi dagang diyi tiao” 戰區長官司令部組織大綱第一條 [Article 1 of the organizational outline of the war area headquarters] (January 1939), ZHMGDAZL, part 5, vol.2, military 1, 54.

in Chief (*siling zhangguan* 司令長官) oversaw all military, party, and administration affairs in each war area following directives of the MAC chairman, meaning that the chief commander had no autonomy in making decisions.⁸

The MAC also exerted a large degree of control over war areas in two main respects. First, the MAC was in charge of coming up with battle plans and disseminating instructions without delay. From July 1937 until October 1938, the MAC was fully or partially involved in battle planning, providing guidance to be considered before each battle.⁹ War area leaders could suggest modifications to plans if needed but they were obligated to inform Chiang through a telegram. In February 1938, Chiang issued a core plan for the Battle of Xuzhou through a series of telegrams sent to Li Zongren at the front. Soon after, Li implemented alterations to move some NRA armies near the city, which was authorized by Chiang.¹⁰

During the Battle of Taiyuan that took place in the Second War Area of Shanxi, it was primarily the Shanxi Clique Army (*Jinsuijun* 晉綏軍) under Yan Xishan that issued battle plans rather than the NRA or the MAC.¹¹ One possible reason for this was that the NRA faced Japan in Shanghai on 13 August 1937, one month ahead of the Battle of Taiyuan. But more importantly, from the beginning of the war, it was apparent that Chiang lacked the

⁸ “Zhanqu zhangguan silingbu zuzhi dagang dier tiao” 戰區長官司令部組織大綱第二條 [Article 2 of the organizational outline of the war area headquarters] (January 1939), *Ibid.*

⁹ To give an example, ahead of the Battle of Xuzhou, the Ministry of Military Operations issued and transmitted a battle plan, in its own name, to the Fifth War Area, see “Junlingbu zuozhan jihua” 軍令部作戰計劃 [The operational plan of the Ministry of Military Operations] (April 1938), KRZZMZC, 557; see also, “Dui Wuhan fujin zuozhan zhi yijian tongshuaibu zhidao fang'an” 對武漢附近作戰之意見統帥部指導方案 [Command headquarters' guiding plan for operations near Wuhan] (1938), *Ibid.*, 646.

¹⁰ “Li Zongren chongxin bushu wu zhanqu zuozhan renwu ji Deng Xihou bushu nian jituanjun zuozhan renwu dian” 李宗仁重新部署五戰區作戰任務及鄧錫侯部署廿(二十)集團軍作戰任務電 [A telegram about Li Zongren redeployed the operational tasks of the Fifth War Area and Deng Xihou deployed the operational tasks of the 20th Group Army] (14 February 1938), ZHMGDAZL, part 5, vol.2, military 2, 512.

¹¹ “Di'er zhanqu jinsuijun zuozhan jihua” 第二戰區晉綏軍作戰計劃 [Military operations plan of the Shanxi Clique Army, the Second War Area] (1937), KRZZMZC, 447.

authority to lead all Chinese troops. This led to the need for the reorganization of the war area chief headquarters in order to better oversee all war areas. Most interestingly, Chiang only grew authoritative within the KMT because his central army units made up the majority of the NRA, meaning that the Whampoa faction needed to uphold their power or significant influence over crucial war-related decisions within the KMT rather than having complete command over military forces belonging to other factions, which is further discussed in this chapter.

Second, the MAC implemented further measures to accurately categorize NRA troops, who served in different war areas. The nature of the war shifted to a protracted struggle between China and Japan after the Battle of Wuhan in 1938 resulting in a need to deploy troops for prolonged defense in multiple war areas. Apart from troops led by the war area, the MAC also created a specific troop under its direct command (*junweihui zhixia* 軍委會直轄).¹² Typically, these forces were either a full-fledged field army (*jun* 軍) or a small number of top-performing divisions (*shi* 師) recognized for their superior combat prowess with other forces in a war area.¹³

During the 1939 Changsha Campaign, Xue Yue had at his disposal a total of 15 armies within the Ninth War Area. The MAC exercised authority over three armies, including the 74th Army, which had been trained by the Soviets and outfitted with advanced weaponry. Rather than participating in the battle for Changsha protection, the 74th Army was instructed to defend North Jiangxi, a less significant battleground.¹⁴ The MAC-controlled 74th Army was a reflection of immense power and influence in the war area from Chiang. Even

¹² “Dijiu zhanqu diyi ci Changsha huizhan wojun zhandou xuliebiao xu” 第九戰區第一次長沙會戰我軍戰鬥序列表續 [Follow-up table of the battle order of our army during the First Battle of Changsha of the Ninth War Area], KRZZHNZCSL, vol.1, 572.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

though the battle in 1939 remained unaffected, the MAC in fact limited the number of troops that a war area leader could directly control. On 1 March 1944, the MAC established the 24th Army Group, which consisted of three armies and the 74th Army as its main component demonstrating the MAC's heightened control over the Ninth War Area before the Ichigo.¹⁵ A lack of adequate troops left Xue Yue in a vulnerable position to deal with the Japanese attack at Changsha. Chapter four provides a more in-depth discussion of this topic.

Moreover, using the Field Headquarters structure, which was inherited from the Encirclement Campaign, Chiang intended to curb the power of war area commanders. He elevated the status of the Guilin Field Headquarters (*Guilin xingying* 桂林行營), giving it authority over the Ninth War Area and allowing it to oversee military operations in Southwest China under the MAC. An intricate command structure created conflict and disruption between war areas and the Field Headquarters, exerting negative effects on the effectiveness of the NRA's chain of command. In 1939, Chiang asked Chen Cheng and Bai Chongxi (the leader of the Guilin Field Headquarters) to travel to Hunan and negotiate with Xue for a plan made by the MAC. Chapter three covers this plan for the relocation of NRA soldiers from Changsha to South Hunan. Xue refused to carry out the plan and his discussion with Bai came to a standstill because of their ongoing conflicts dating back to the late 1920s, as mentioned in chapter one.

Chiang established a centralized military command through MAC at the central level and expanded local influence and control through the War Area Chief Headquarters. The Nationalist government had already formed

¹⁵ “Di ershisi jituanjun Chang Heng huizhan zhandou xiangbao” 第二十四集團軍長衡會戰戰鬥詳報 [Detailed report of the Battle of Changsha-Hengyang by the 24th Group Army] (28 May to 20 August 1944), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.4, 591.

several war areas in 1937. But a war area leader held little actual authority since Chiang selected a Chief Commander at the front (*qian di zongsiling* 前敵總司令) whom he handpicked to lead the fight. During the Battle of Shanghai, Chen Cheng was the actual commander at the front leading the battle, even though Feng Yuxiang 馮玉祥 held the position of Chief Commander of the Third War Area. Cheng Qian 程潛 was the Chief Commander of the First War Area during the Battle of Xuzhou overseeing coordinated operations in Henan. Chiang later appointed Xue as the chief commander at the front in the Battle of Lanfeng (a city in Henan) to provide cover for those troops withdrawing from Xuzhou.¹⁶

Qi Xisheng argues that Chiang rested on his cooperation with regional warlords who acknowledged him as the party and national leader to centralize his personal authority.¹⁷ One example of this was the actual control the central government had over Sichuan after 1937. According to Hou Kunhong, it was unlikely for the central government to possess actual authority over Sichuan because Central Army troops mainly resided in metropolises such as Chongqing and rarely left, meaning that the central administration's control over the province was largely constricted to these key cities.¹⁸

With the war shifting into a stalemate, many provinces in China were under the leadership of officers chosen by Chiang. From 1938 to 1944 before Ichigo in most war areas, the Central Army divisions emerged as a dominant force within the NRA, which led to Chiang gaining more control from central to local levels. Gaining actual control over the army after 1939, Chiang was still faced with criticism for his overbearing interference in the NRA's chain of

¹⁶ Shao Tuorong 邵拓榮, "Songhu Yudong Nanxun huizhan" 淞滬豫東南潯會戰 [The Battles in Shanghai, eastern Henan, and Nanxun], in *Xue Yue jiangjun*, 316.

¹⁷ Qi Xisheng 齊錫生, *Jianba nuzhang de mengyou Taipingyang zhanzheng qijian zhongmei junshi hezuo guanxi* 劍拔弩張的盟友: 太平洋戰爭期間的中美軍事合作關係 [Tense Allies: Sino-American military cooperation during the Pacific War] (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, lianjing chuban gongsi, 2011), 374.

¹⁸ Hou Kunhong, *Liangshi wenti*, 197.

command between 1937 and 1938. Chiang indeed issued directives, but it remains unclear whether his former opponents, such as Li Zongren, Yan Xishan, and Feng Yuxiang could carry them out. Next, I examine Chiang's leadership style during the first phase of the war.

2.2 Chiang Kaishek's wartime leadership

2.2.1 The use of personal directives: micromanagement of battles at the front

The manner, in which Chiang Kaishek led wartime China has been a contentious topic among historians. Some scholarly works suggest that Chiang was a fastidious micromanager who closely oversaw wartime policies and combat decisions frequently issuing guidance to top generals and officers at all levels of the battlefield.¹⁹ Chiang led wartime China by relying on a traditional Chinese approach to leadership, personal directives (*shouling* 手令). A long-standing official at the MAC headquarters showed that Chiang and his team had sent out over 120 boxes of personal directives from 1936 to 1948.²⁰ Eastman argued that a systemic breakdown of the NRA was because of the use of personal directives that disregarded the NRA chain of command.²¹ Chiang employed personal directives to strengthen his political influence since he believed that his own exhortations, as opposed to those instructions circulated through the bureaucratic system were more effective.²²

Before the 1937 Battle of Xinkou, Yan Xishan's troops near Wanshou Mountain in northern Shanxi were given contradictory instructions from both Yan and Chiang. Yan, as the Chief Commander of the Second War Area issued

¹⁹ For example, see Wang Qisheng, "The Battle for Hunan and the Chinese Military's Response to Operation Ichigo," in *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War*, ed. Mark Peattie, Edward J. Drea, and Hans van de Ven (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 20; Hudson, "River Sands," 340-341; and Xiao Xianyou, "Xue Yue yu dijiu zhanqu," 165.

²⁰ Chang Jui-te, "Personal Directives," 66.

²¹ Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction*, 146.

²² Chang Jui-te, "Personal Directives," 66.

orders to the Shanxi Army through the chain of command that had arrived before Chiang. The Generalissimo skipped Yan and communicated directly with the troops at the front.²³ The question of who had a more significant impact on the Shanxi military, Chiang or Yan is still not settled.

According to MacKinnon, the withdrawal of the German-trained and supported divisions from Shanghai had a direct impact on Chiang's potential to lead the Chinese defense in the Central Yangzi Valley in 1938, different from what he did in Shanghai one year earlier.²⁴ Most troops involved in the Battle of Shanghai were his Central Army, highlighting a greater influence of Chiang over forces coming from this particular faction, compared to other Nationalist units. The loss of German-trained divisions in the Battle of Shanghai led to a reduction in Chiang's influence over Chinese troops in Wuhan, too. In fact, the Central Army forces suffered a lot after the Shanghai and Xuzhou Campaigns. This implies that Chiang's power over every aspect of the war was not as consolidated as some historians argue, especially in the first phase of the war.

Many high-ranking officials in Chiang's faction such as Chen Cheng and Xue Yue were angry about the Generalissimo's meddling in their commands but lacked the courage to speak up.²⁵ But Chang Jui-te claims that using personal directives did not equate to Chiang completely ignoring the hierarchy of the NRA.²⁶ Furthermore, Chiang issued personal directives that touched on numerous subjects and only a few bypassed the chain of command within the NRA. He may have relied on personal directives for two reasons. First, the centralized command style and system of the Nationalists were the

²³ Ibid., 71.

²⁴ MacKinnon, *Wuhan*, 28.

²⁵ Chang Jui-te, "Personal Directives," 71.

²⁶ Ibid., 82.

root cause.²⁷ Many Nationalist leaders and commanders had a tendency to misuse the chain of command not just Chiang.

Second, Chiang led military campaigns based on personal directives, emphasizing the importance of personal politics and boosting morale to ensure the cohesion of the NRA.²⁸ China predominantly functioned as an agricultural society with familial relationships and geographical roots serving as major determinants of social connections. Being the chair of both the Whampoa Military Academy and the Central Military Academy, Chiang formed a mentor-mentee relationship with graduates, who later were appointed as commanders of the NRA at all levels by Chiang, who possessed an exclusive power to approve commanders above a regimental level (*tuanji* 團級).

In his analysis, Chang Jui-te delves into methods employed by Nationalist generals to avoid following directives issued by Chiang. Some were followed as directed but many others were ignored or bypassed using these five methods: outright rejecting the command, neglecting to seek directions, pretending to agree but failing to act, and indefinitely postponing the task.²⁹ When faced with a disagreeable situation, Nationalist generals had a diverse set of responses at their disposal. Li Zongren openly expressed his strong dissatisfaction with Chiang's interference in commanding and he obtained a clear promise from Chiang not to interfere in any military affairs for six years as a condition for assuming control of the Fifth War Area.³⁰ This promise from Chiang was proved during the Battle of Xuzhou, as the following section of this chapter discusses.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 76.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Li Zongren, *Li Zongren huiyilu* 李宗仁回憶錄 [Memoirs of Li Zongren], ed. Tang Degang 唐德剛 (Taipei: Yuanliu chuban, 2010), 550; see also, Chang Jui-te, "Personal Directives," 78-79.

Chang further states that during the Third Battle of Changsha at the end of 1941 and early 1942, Xue was unable to prevent Changsha's downfall because Chiang had moved a significant number of troops during a vital stage.³¹ Following this, Xue refused to comply with Chongqing's directive to relocate the war area headquarters to West Hunan opting instead to transfer some of his forces to Jiangxi.³² Deciphering why Xue refused to follow Chiang's orders can be linked to contrasting strategies employed by the two leaders, leading up to the battle in Hunan. Chang handpicked and explained the incident, but it contains a mistake in its historical context. The event occurred in the Fourth Changsha Battle during the 1944 Ichigo Operation, not the third one between 1941 and 1942, as supposed by Chang. In fact, the Nationalists reached a big victory in early 1942 instead of losing Changsha, which is the core theme in chapter three of my work. My focus in chapter four is on the transformation of their relationship (Chiang and Xue) from cooperation to conflict during the 1944 fight, covering the downfall of Changsha.

Historians have overemphasized the negative impact of Chiang's personal directives, in reality, Nationalist commanders were often successful in reducing their actual damage.³³ The war leadership style utilized by Chiang was not uncommon among Nationalist commanders. His attempt to centralize Nationalist rule through personal directives faced resistance from many regional commanders in various ways. For a deeper understanding of the use of personal directives, it is prudent to shift the focus away from the subject and examine a centralized foundation of the Nationalist command structure. Chang states that for the use of personal directives to work, there needed to be

³¹ Chang Jui-te, "Personal Directives," 79.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 82.

a constant and uninterrupted stream of accurate and up-to-date information from the frontline, which China struggled to achieve during the entire war.³⁴

2.2.2 Moving from contention to collaboration: a new understanding between Chiang Kaishek and his Nationalist associates

Chiang Kaishek strengthened his authority by relying on his role in the MAC, the crucial military organization in wartime China. Acceptance of Chiang as a leader of both the government and state by his former rivals such as Guangxi and Shanxi, remains a topic of dispute, particularly in the first phase of the war.

Over time, Baoding Nationalist generals united by their common educational backgrounds and bonds, began to accept and recognize Chiang's authority because of a pressing need to counter the Japanese invasion.³⁵ Chiang devised battle plans and frequently issued orders to local leaders but his control over the frontline was inconsistent.³⁶ Poor communication between the frontline and the rear command center led Chiang to depend on his Nationalist generals for full command authority sometimes. He issued conflicting orders but many commanders at the front ignored them. When Chiang recognized the significance of the situation and promptly issued directives and telegrams to his Nationalist general emphasizing the strategic use of troops and division structures that made sense from both political and military angles.³⁷ The withdrawal of NRA soldiers from Xuzhou proved that Chiang, although not enthusiastic, accepted to cooperate with military commanders and entrust them with sole discretion over battles. In other words, Chiang faced fierce opposition from powerful Nationalists compelling him to collaborate with them reluctantly.

³⁴ Ibid., 74.

³⁵ MacKinnon, *Wuhan*, 26-29.

³⁶ MacKinnon, "The Central Yangtze," 201-202.

³⁷ Ibid.

Understanding the Baoding generation is crucial to fully grasping a new wartime alliance between Chiang and key local leaders. A passionate spirit of Baoding graduates caused former rival Nationalist factions during the 1920s and 1930s to unite when the war began in 1937.³⁸ In addition, the new alliance developed to elevate Chiang to a position of leader for both the party and the nation while also posing a challenge to his authority in the military in the early stages of the war.

Founded in 1912, the Baoding Military Academy served as West Point or Sandhurst in 1920s China and produced top-notch military officers before the Whampoa Military Academy came into existence.³⁹ Baoding emphasized discipline, German and Japanese technology practices, and building a strong sense of unity among its students.⁴⁰ At Baoding, candidates were given the advantage of receiving professional military training instead of being instructed on political or party matters as advocated by Whampoa.

In the late period of the Qing Dynasty, a number of local military institutes (*jiangwutang* 講武堂) such as Yunnan Military Academy (*Yunnan lujun jiangwutang* 雲南陸軍講武堂 or *Kunming jiangwutang* 昆明講武堂), Northeast Military Academy (*Dongbei lujun jiangwutang* or *Fengtian jiangwutang* 奉天講武堂), and Beiyang Military Academy (*Beiyang lujun jiangwutang* 北洋陸軍講武堂 or *Tianjin jiangwutang* 天津講武堂), were founded. As MacKinnon suggests, graduates from these academies, all of whom had a shared educational background and dedication to professionalism, bore a strong resemblance to those from Baoding.⁴¹ At the start of the war, Nationalist leaders, who had attended local military academies were heavily

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 188.

⁴¹ MacKinnon, *Wuhan*, 27; however, MacKinnon writes that Li Zongren graduated from Yunan Military Academy. This is incorrect. Li graduated from Guangxi Military Academy (*Guangxi lujun xiaoxuetang* 廣西陸軍小學堂), another similar type of school for educating military elites.

involved in crafting battle strategies to support Chiang and command the battlefields.

The 1936 MAC Register of Officers in the Army, Navy, and Air Forces stated that only a limited number of military officers, who had graduated from Whampoa, including 17 Lieutenant generals (*zhongjiang* 中將), 75 Major generals (*shaojiang* 少將), and no Full generals (*shangjiang* 上將).⁴² The end of the war saw Whampoa graduates as the predominant group within the NRA officers. Before the war, few Whampoa graduates held high-ranking positions, such as Chief or Deputy Chief commanders in war areas, constituting 10 percent of the army and division commanders.⁴³ In 1944, there was a significant increase in the number of Whampoa students serving as officers below the highest ranks and lower-ranking commanders. For instance, one-third of commanders and vice commanders in army groups, which typically consist of three armies were graduates of Whampoa.⁴⁴ Similarly, 36% and 42% of the army and division commanders had attended the Whampoa Academy.⁴⁵

Before the war, however, Baoding graduates held a significant presence in the leadership of the NRA rivaling those who had received training from the local military academies.⁴⁶ According to Table 1, numerous graduates of Baoding rose to the ranks of lieutenant and major general.⁴⁷ Some local military academy graduates became Full Generals. Examining Baoding graduates among the most powerful generals before the war, it was found that

⁴² Chang Jui-te, "Nationalist Army Officers during the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945," *Modern Asian Studies*, 30, no.4, special Issue: War In Modern China (October 1996): 1034-1035.

⁴³ Ibid., 1035.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 1037.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Chang Jui-te, "Guojun chengyuan suzhi yu zhanli fenxi" 國軍成員素質與戰力分析 [Analysis of the quality and combat capability of the NRA soldiers], in *Zhongguo kangri zhanzheng shi xinbian junshi zuozhan* 中國抗日戰爭史新編: 軍事作戰 [New compilation of history of the War of Resistance against Japan: military operations], ed. Lü Fangshang 呂芳上 (Taipei: Guoshiguan, 2015), 59.

⁴⁷ Chang Jui-te, "Nationalist Army Officers," 1034.

higher rank commensurate with a greater proportion of Baoding graduates.⁴⁸ In the early phase of the war, 35% of army commanders were Baoding graduates, and 50% of the war area commanders, both Chief and Deputy Chief, had a background from Baoding in the later period.⁴⁹ In the army and division hierarchy, Whampoa graduates took over the role previously held by Baoding graduates, becoming the main contingent of the NRA as the war raged. Baoding graduates accounted for only 33% of the army commanders while for division commanders, the percentage was even lower at 15% in 1944.⁵⁰

Table 2.1 Statistics on the Background of the NRA generals and percentages in 1936. Source: Chang Jui-te, “Nationalist Army Officers during the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945,” 1034.⁵¹

Background Position	Total (%)	Full generals	Lt. generals	Major generals
Whampoa	92 (7.38)	0	17 (5.65)	75 (8.19)
Baoding	388 (311.11)	8 (25.81)	95 (31.56)	285 (31.15)
Foreign	159 (12.75)	6 (19.35)	51 (16.94)	102 (11.15)
<i>Luda</i>	215 (17.24)	2 (6.45)	43 (14.29)	170 (18.58)
Local academies	393 (31.52)	15 (48.39)	95 (31.56)	283 (30.93)
Total	1,247 (100.00)	31 (100.00)	301 (100.00)	915 (100.00)

The presence of Baoding-affiliated graduates was integral in the first phase of the war because it forged a sense of nationalistic allegiance that

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1037.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1036.

⁵⁰ Chang Jui-te, “Guojun chengyuan,” 61.

⁵¹ Luda, (*lujun daxue* 陸軍大學) was founded by Chiang to take the place of Baoding and Whampoa Military Academies.

brought Nationalist generals to work with Chiang as their wartime leader. This explains in part Qi Xisheng's argument that Chiang's position and leadership were dependent on the extent to which provincial and regional warlords recognized and embraced him as their leader. Until 1939, the Nationalists prioritized solidifying their internal cohesion by acknowledging Chiang as the leader of both the party and the state.⁵² More Baoding military leaders, including Xue Yue sided with Chiang as the primary leader augmenting the power of the Whampoa faction and Chiang's personal authority. The Baoding factor created a conducive atmosphere for a unification of the Nationalist generals under the leadership of Chiang. United by their comparable academic credentials, these generals displayed a cooperative and obliging attitude on the battlefield occasionally choosing to discreetly overlook Chiang's orders or personal directives.⁵³ This is obvious during the Battle of Xuzhou and Wuhan, even in the Battles of Changsha after 1939.

2.2.3 Retreating from Xuzhou

On 7 April 1938, the Japanese Imperial Headquarters in Tokyo launched their Xuzhou offensive, which involved coordinating and deploying numerous Japanese units in northern and central China before advancing on Hankou, a part of Wuhan that became a special city after 1927.⁵⁴ The Japanese were determined to occupy Xuzhou and wipe out the main NRA forces there. Xuzhou ended up falling into the hands of the Japanese, however, primary NRA forces broke through a Japanese blockade and retreated by employing a flexible tactic of "divided the integral into the individual" (*huazheng weiling* 化

⁵² Ryōko Iechika, *Jiang Jieshi yu Nanjing guomin zhengfu* 蔣介石與南京國民政府 [Chiang Kaishek and the Nanjing Nationalist Government], trans. Wang Shihua 王士花 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2005), 133.

⁵³ MacKinnon, *Wuhan*, 1938, 28.

⁵⁴ Wu Hsiang-hsiang, "Total Strategy Used by China and Some Major Engagements in the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945," in *Nationalist China During the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945*, ed. Paul K.T. Sih (Hicksville, New York: Exposition Press, 1977), 56.

整爲零).”⁵⁵ Splitting up their forces into smaller teams, the Nationalists discovered a weak spot in the Japanese blockade.

The question of who gave the retreat order remained a subject of debate for both historians and observers who experienced the war. Zhou Jin 周競, who was a staff officer for Bai Chongxi in the Battle of Xuzhou stated that Li Zongren led and supervised the retreat at a critical armed force gathering in early May 1938 with the support of other senior officers and generals from the Fifth War Area including Bai Chongxi, Tang En’bo 湯恩伯, Sun Lianzhong 孫連仲.⁵⁶ In his war book, Guo Rugui neglected to specify who was responsible for ordering the retreat from Xuzhou.⁵⁷ According to van de Ven and MacKinnon, Li Zongren was given the go-ahead by Chiang.⁵⁸ Van de Ven has developed his argument by extrapolating from Zhang Xianwen, who suggests that the decision to abandon Xuzhou was made at one MAC meeting in Hankou on 5 May 1938.⁵⁹ According to Guo Daijun, Li played a major role in the decision to give up Xuzhou while Chiang had considered surrendering the city before the fighting even started.⁶⁰

Understanding Chiang’s position on this retreat is crucial for interpreting the following two questions. First, Li decided to withdraw from the battle without consulting Chiang, who might have different opinions showing that Li was independent in commanding the battle while disregarding Chiang’s authority. Second, Li was not reprimanded for

⁵⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁵⁶ Zhou Jin, “Diwu zhanqu zhangguanbu Xuzhou tuwei huiyilu” 第五戰區長官部徐州突圍回憶錄 [Memoirs of the breakout from Xuzhou by the commander headquarters of the Fifth War Area], *Guixiawang* 桂系網, accessed 10 November 2021, https://web.archive.org/web/20131103202726/http://www.guixiawang.com/html/krzz/krzz_1149_3842.html.

⁵⁷ Guo Rugui and Huang Yuzhang, *Kangri zhanzheng zuozhanji*, 670. Guo was a former Nationalist general allied himself with the CCP in the Chinese Civil War from 1946 to 1949.

⁵⁸ See van de Ven, *War*, 225; MacKinnon, *Wuhan*, 1938, 35.

⁵⁹ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 455. Zhang does not make it clear where he obtains the source of the MAC’s conference record or telegram sent from the MAC to the Fifth War Area.

⁶⁰ Guo Daijun, *Chongtan kangzhan*, 432-433.

disobeying Chiang's orders to protect Xuzhou, meaning that Chiang would trust in his Nationalist military leaders to make informed decisions at the front regardless of whether they were part of his Whampoa faction or not.

Chiang's thoughts and reactions during April-May 1938 were recorded in his diary. On 27 April, he (first) wrote about the Battle of Xuzhou:

If Xuzhou falls into the hands of the Japanese, the Longhai Railway will be cut off... if the enemy advances towards the west from Xuzhou, our forces in west Shandong, north Anhui, and south Henan must remain stationary and engage in guerilla warfare.⁶¹

These could be his original ideas for handling a potential downfall of Xuzhou, as suggested by Guo Daijun. On 13 May, Chiang elaborated on the Japanese invasion of Xuzhou further:

Enemy forces intend to encircle Xuzhou from the north and south along the Longhai Railways while reinforcing their troops and utilizing tanks to wipe out the city.⁶²

Chiang remained optimistic and confident in the outcome of the battle. He firmly believed that the Japanese could be surrounded and defeated from behind because of the weakness of their transport in the rear.⁶³ Until 15 May, Chiang had not spoken about giving up Xuzhou or the MAC conference mentioned by Zhang Xianwen. From 15 to 17 May, Chiang messaged Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi instructing them to position troops near Xuzhou

⁶¹ "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (27 April 1938), JJSXS, 1938, 206; See also, "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (27 April 1938), KMJ, vol.5, JZTWW, 002-060200-00005-010, GSGDA, 3.

⁶² "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (13 May 1938), JZZRJ, 1938, 43.

⁶³ "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (14 May 1938), *ibid.*, 43; Guo Daijun states that on 14 May, Chiang Kaishek started to consider giving up Xuzhou. However, Chiang's diary shows that he was confident in the battle. In the evening, Chiang even wrote, "I calmly deal with the command and prepare battle plans all day, why should I feel anxious about the enemy?" See "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (14 May 1938), in KMJ, vol.5, 5.

and outlining a thorough defense plan for the city.⁶⁴ But he expressed concern as he had not heard back from the two Guangxi leaders.⁶⁵ Chiang also urged Li to disrupt the Japanese plan to surround Xuzhou.⁶⁶ On 18 May, Chiang learned that Li and Bai had pulled back from Xuzhou and he was greatly aggrieved:

Now they [Li and Bai], have left Xuzhou without permission.
This recurring situation casts doubt on our ability to persist in
resisting (*jin bibei jing shanzi yiqi he yi kangzhan* 今彼輩竟擅自棄
移,何以抗戰?) ... the departure of leaders will weaken the
morale of our forces defending the city.⁶⁷

The Japanese seized control of Xuzhou the following day.

After the fall of Xuzhou, Li Zongren sent a telegram to Chiang on 24 May, expressing a dire situation he was facing at the front:

After departing from Xuzhou, I directed the battle in Su County.
Sadly, on 18 May, we were not able to hold onto the county. As a
result, I was cut off from my communication team, which led to
my inability to keep you [Chiang] updated over the next few
days.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ “Chiang Kaishek Diary” (15-17 May 1938), JJSXS, 1938, 244-249.

⁶⁵ “Chiang Kaishek Diary” (17 May 1938), JZZRJ, 1938, 44.

⁶⁶ “Jiang weiyuanzhang zhi diwu zhanqu siling zhangguan Li Zongren junshi weiyuanhui fu zong canmouzhang Bai Chongxi gaozhi diqing ji wojun bushu yi qi gushou yunhexian yu Xuzhou guofang gongshi er fensui diren zhi da baowei jihua dian” 蔣委員長致第五戰區司令長官李宗仁軍事委員會副總參謀長白崇禧告知敵情及我軍部署以期固守運河線與徐州國防工事而粉碎敵人之大包圍計劃電 [Chiang Kaishek’s telegram to Li Zongren (chief commander of the Fifth War Area) and Bai Chongxi (deputy general staff of the MAC) informing about the enemy situation and our troop deployments to secure the canal line and Xuzhou national defense works, aiming to crush the enemy’s grand encirclement plan] (17 May 1938), ZHMGZYSL, part 2, vol.2, 267-269.

⁶⁷ “Chiang Kaishek Diary” (18 May 1938), JZZRJ, 1938, 44; see also, “Chiang Kaishek Diary” (18 May 1938), KMJ, vol.5, 5.

⁶⁸ “Diwu zhanqu siling zhangguan Li Zongren junshi weiyuanhui fu zong canmouzhang Bai Chongxi baogao cheli Xuzhou dian” 第五戰區司令長官李宗仁軍事委員會副總參謀長白崇禧報告撤離徐州電 [A telegram from Li Zongren (chief commander of the Fifth War Area) and Bai Chongxi (deputy general staff of the MAC) reported the withdrawal from Xuzhou] (24 May 1938), ZHMGZYSL, part 2, vol.2, 271.

Chiang showed no sign of anger or irritation when reading it.

Communications between Li Zongren and a Nationalist general who participated in and documented the retreat demonstrated that Chiang was not informed about the plan to vacate Xuzhou. Before leaving, it was important to seek Chiang's permission, but Li refused with the following words:

Why do you need permission? If he [Chiang] usually agrees, what sets this request apart? If he disagrees and demands that we fight in Xuzhou, our defeat in battle will be inevitable. Refusing to fight back will go against his orders and result in us facing the same repercussions. Thus, it is wise to avoid talking to him via radio until the breakout is over and then utilize a telegram to reach him.⁶⁹

This also showed that Chiang was unaware of the situation in Xuzhou when the city was being evacuated. It in part was because Li was separated from his communication personnel as he said and also possibly because of his unwillingness to tell Chiang of this decision.

Historians, including Diana Lary, acknowledge the strategic leadership of the Xuzhou retreat in evacuating a large portion of NRA soldiers from the Japanese siege.⁷⁰ Due to the limited number of Japanese soldiers, it was not possible to capture the city and eliminate all of the NRA forces.⁷¹ Chiang sent a reply to Li on 24 May regarding the retreat and also followed up with another telegram to show his satisfaction with the decision:

⁶⁹ Lai Huipeng 赖慧鹏, "Tai'erzhuang zhi zhan he Xuzhou tuwei qinli ji" 臺兒莊之戰與徐州突圍親歷記 [Personal accounts of the Battle of Taierzhuang and the breakout from Xuzhou], in *Xuzhou huizhan yuan Guomindang jiangling kangri zhanzheng qinli ji* 徐州會戰原國民黨將領抗日戰爭親歷記 [Personal accounts of the Battle of Xuzhou by former KMT generals during the War of Resistance against Japan], ed. Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi quanguo weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui 中國人民政治協商會議全國委員會文史資料研究委員會 (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1985), 139; see also, Chang Jui-te, "Personal Directives," 86.

⁷⁰ Diana Lary, "Defending China: The Battles of the Xuzhou Campaign," in *Warfare in Chinese History*, ed. Hans van de Ven (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 398-427.

⁷¹ van de Ven, *War*, 225.

I have witnessed the successful and organized retreat from Xuzhou in south Shandong...I hope you will continue your efforts to revive our nation.⁷²

Chiang had a completely opposite attitude towards Han Fujū 韓復榘, which resulted in Han being executed for retreating from Jinan and refusing to follow orders to protect Tai'an. Chiang might have been secretly preparing for potential future actions without publicly disclosing his intentions, the assembly of a large guerrilla warfare force for the NRA troops after the relinquishment of Xuzhou, as he articulated in his diary on 27 April 1938. While not always obedient to Chiang, the Nationalist generals encountered disparate results. Those possessing powerful military forces or holding similar beliefs as Chiang regarding military strategies were not prone to implementing severe penalties. Unlike Han, Li Zongren had the strength to challenge Chiang's leadership without fear of punishment.

2.2.4 Establishing Chiang Kaishek's leadership from 1939 to 1943

Graduates of the local military academy were crucial in the Nationalist military, especially at the start of the war against Japan creating a complicated situation for Chiang Kaishek to handle as the highest commander. Facing obstacles, Chiang strengthened his control during the war by establishing the MAC as the dominant military organization and restructuring the War Area Chief Headquarters to fully support the central government's monitoring of each war area. In 1944, junior officers, who were thoroughly educated and trained at Whampoa receiving extensive political instruction and indoctrination with party beliefs, were deployed to various war areas. As the

⁷² "Jiang Jieshi zhi Li Zongren midian gao" 蔣介石致李宗仁密電稿 [Chiang Kaishek's confidential telegram to Li Zongren] (27 May 1938), KRZZZMZC, 642.

founder and former chairman of Whampoa, Chiang's influence on the graduates was heightened once they assumed command positions at division and army levels compared to war area leaders. Bypassing war area chief and deputy-chief commanders to reach out to those Whampoa graduated commanders, Chiang could incapacitate the credibility and effectiveness of war area leaders.

The 1944 Ichigo Offensive dealt a crushing blow to the Nationalist forces, resulting in major defeats in Henan, Hunan, and Guangxi. Historians generally agree that a failure to sustain efficient logistics and supplies, insufficient nourishment for the majority of Nationalist soldiers because of food shortages, limited access to medical treatment, and serious inflation in Free China were all widely acknowledged as contributing factors to the military downfall.⁷³ Changes in the military leadership of lower-ranked commanders meant that Chiang's personal directives had a catastrophic impact on the battles in Henan and Hunan, particularly the preponderance of lower-ranking officers from the Central Army or Whampoa Faction in those two war areas (Henan was under the First War Area and Tang En'bo who was one of essential general of the Central Army Clique).⁷⁴

The impact of Chiang's directives can also be seen in his tighter grasp on units under war area leaders, a key topic discussed in chapters three and four as shown in many telegram exchanges between troops in Hunan and the central government in Chongqing. Whampoa graduates contributed a substantial 42% of overall members in a divisional level of the NRA commanders in 1944, totaling 132 out of 314 and 36% of army commanders, which was 40 out of 111, had graduated from Whampoa.⁷⁵ Many newly

⁷³ See, for example, Wang Qisheng, "The Battle for Hunan," 403-422; van de Ven, *China at War*, 182-189; Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 1089-1092.

⁷⁴ Chang Jui-Te, "Nationalist Army Officers," 1035.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1036.

appointed army and division leaders were promoted during the two years when Japan and China were at war in Southeast Asia but without any major battles in the China Theater.

After the Third Battle of Changsha, the Ninth War Area consisted of 37 divisions. 34 of those divisions were involved in the 1944 battles, however, 31 commanders were replaced. Among these divisional commanders, 12 had graduated from Whampoa, two from *Luda*, one from Nanjing Central Military Academy (*zhongyang junxiao* 中央軍校) and one had received military training in Japan.⁷⁶ Many military leaders from foreign or *Luda* backgrounds were often linked to the Whampoa Clique. Of the 31 division leaders, over half were associated with the Whampoa Clique. Chiang's commands should be considered the most important to carry out for them rather than those of the war area leader (Xue Yue). Therefore, the detrimental effects of Chiang's personal directives and his centralization of power in the Nationalist military were a crucial factor in the military breakdowns across numerous battlefields in 1944, if not the most significant. Chapter four interprets the reasons behind the Ninth War Area's collapse in Hunan in 1944 and its connection to Chiang's interference from a distance.

While Chiang shared authority with other territorial commanders during the Battle of Xuzhou, there are still certain aspects that require clarification. First, it was challenging to demonstrate how Chiang took the initiative to delegate authority and decision-making responsibilities. Chiang entrusted Li Zongren with the task of formulating an alternate battle plan and

⁷⁶ “Dijiu zhanqu disan ci Changsha huizhan wojun zhandou xuliebiao” 第九戰區第三次長沙會戰我軍戰鬥序列表 [The battle order of our army in the Third Battle of Changsha of the Ninth War Area], KRZZHNZCSL, vol.3, 667; “Chang Heng huizhan wojun canzhan budui zhandou xulie” 長衡會戰我軍參戰部隊戰鬥序列 [The battle order of our army participating in the Battle of Changsha-Hengyang], KRZZHNZCSL, vol.4, 893-894. See also, Long Honghao 隆鴻昊, “Kangzhan shiqi dijiu zhanqu junshi shi yanjiu” 抗戰時期第九戰區軍事史研究 [A military history study of the Ninth War Area during the War of Resistance against Japan] (PhD diss., Shoudu Normal University, 2014), 113.

respected the decision to withdraw from Xuzhou without obtaining his authorization. Although Chiang seemed satisfied in his telegram to Li on 24 May 1938, his true feelings of anger were also disclosed in his diary entry earlier on 18 May upon hearing about the retreat from Xuzhou.

Chiang may have had difficulty controlling Li as noted by Chang Jui-te as many Nationalist generals were adept at handling unfavorable circumstances. Giving Li space and power could have been a calculated move by Chiang to broker a deal with his former opponents and enlist their support, particularly when Chiang was still forming his leadership in the early years of the war. After the Battle of Wuhan, the Central Army spread out to different war areas and Chiang became the leader of the party and nation from 1939 to 1943. The 1944 defeat was devastating for the Nationalists, damaging China's international image and leaving Chiang vulnerable in terms of his political and wartime leadership because many Central Army troops suffered heavy casualties at the hands of the Japanese in combat. Chiang and his Central Army were significantly weakened by the Japanese, resulting in a loss of support from provincial leaders. A rift with former trusted generals like Xue Yue also appeared.

Second, Chiang refrained from reprimanding Li likely due to a shared appraisal of the circumstances in Xuzhou. In anticipation of the imminent fall of Xuzhou to Japan, Chiang planned to initiate guerrilla operations in north China in late April 1938. In chapter four, I argue that a shared understanding of the frontline occurrences between local commanders and Chiang empowered the latter to grant his subordinates the exclusive right to act without major intervention. After 1939, the Battles of Changsha shed light on this phenomenon, which has been examined further in the two chapters to follow.

Conclusion

After 1928, Chiang Kaishek implemented various actions to establish and spread the influence of Nanjing beyond those lower Yangtze River provinces to other territories across China. The Nationalists took back control of many provinces including Hunan and established a wartime base area in Sichuan to withstand a strong adversary for eight years. At the same time, Chiang attempted to strengthen his authority by initiating the Encirclement Campaign against the CCP in provinces that were still beyond his control. The influence of Nanjing extended to those provinces through the presence of several Central Army units there and the reintroduction of *baojia* which helped maintain control over local bureaucracies and militias at provincial, municipal, and county levels by the central government.

Chiang expanded Nanjing's influence throughout China and solidified his faction as the dominant one within the KMT. Li Zongren, Yan Xishan and Feng Yuxiang were formidable regional warlords who could not confront Chiang's centralized authority. Nevertheless, they were able to retain their independence and could act as opponents of Chiang. Avoiding another civil war, Chiang strived to collaborate and compete with them in establishing a unified government. As the conflict with Japan erupted, local leaders understood the importance of joining forces with Chiang acknowledging him as the head of both the party and the country to prevent China from falling into Japanese control. Thanks to this partnership, Chiang rose to become the top leader during the war in China. However, generals from Baoding and local military academies did not always obey Chiang's commands during battles. The Xuzhou retreat saw Li disregard Chiang's instructions and in chapter three and four I analyze interactions between Xue Yue, a Baoding general, who regularly challenged Chiang's decisions throughout the war.

During the 1930s, Chiang Kaishek solidified his power and reorganized the MAC, elevating it to the top decision-making organization during the war. However, his military and political influence still depended on the level of agreement between him and regional commanders, particularly those, who held significant power and controlled specific regions. From 1939 to 1943, the Central Army, consisting of officers from Whampoa emerged as a crucial component of the NRA. Chiang never was able to have full control over forces not in his own faction. The 1944 collapse of the Central Army across China had dire implications, both militarily and politically for Chiang's wartime rule and leadership, as it had been seen as an opening for other Nationalist factions to vie for power within the party and government. The fact that Chiang relied on personal directives showed his deep concern and unease about the situation on the frontline as a soldier and leader. As his introspection in the diary revealed in the aftermath of the failure in 1944 Henan, Chiang had scant trust in his own Nationalist officers and regularly felt compelled to meddle.⁷⁷ Interventions of the Generalissimo created a climate of fear among NRA commanders causing them to be concerned about being replaced. This became a major factor in the collapse of Hunan in 1944. Moving on, the next chapter concentrates on the military campaigns that happened near Changsha from 1939 to 1942, so as to appraise a tactical approach adopted by the Nationalists post-1939. In addition, I analyze discrepancies in strategies for defending Changsha between Xue and Chiang and how they impacted the outcome of the 1944 Hunan battle during a brutal Japanese attack in chapter four.

⁷⁷ Chang Jui-te, "Personal Directive," 83; See also, "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (13 May 1944), JZZRJ, 1944, 68.

CHAPTER 3

Changsha campaigns from 1939 to 1942

Post-1980 Chinese scholarship, which has centered on the first phase of the War of Resistance until the Battle of Wuhan in October 1938 provides an examination of the Nationalist conventional warfare on the frontline. My discussion here intimates that a re-study of the timeframe from the fall of Wuhan to the Japanese assault on Pearl Harbor in 1941 as a part of the second phase of the war is essential, too. Throughout these years, the Nationalists and their military forces, the NRA fought on their own without much help from external forces. By drawing on their previous experiences in 1937 and 1938, the Nationalists devised a tactic that proved to be successful in defeating the Japanese before aligning with the Allied powers.

This chapter has been constructed based on the new Chinese scholarship on the war that emerged in the 1980s, which also has shaped the current Western scholarship on this topic. I also consult both published and unpublished archives from China and Taiwan. I seek to provide a synopsis of the three Battles of Changsha that took place between September 1939 and January 1942, including an evaluation of a new tactic that the Nationalists developed after 1939 whilst also addressing the main dilemmas present in existing scholarly writings on these battles. I delve into publicity efforts surrounding the Great Victory in Changsha in 1941 to examine how the Nationalists shaped post-battle narratives to influence the morale of soldiers and people in the city.

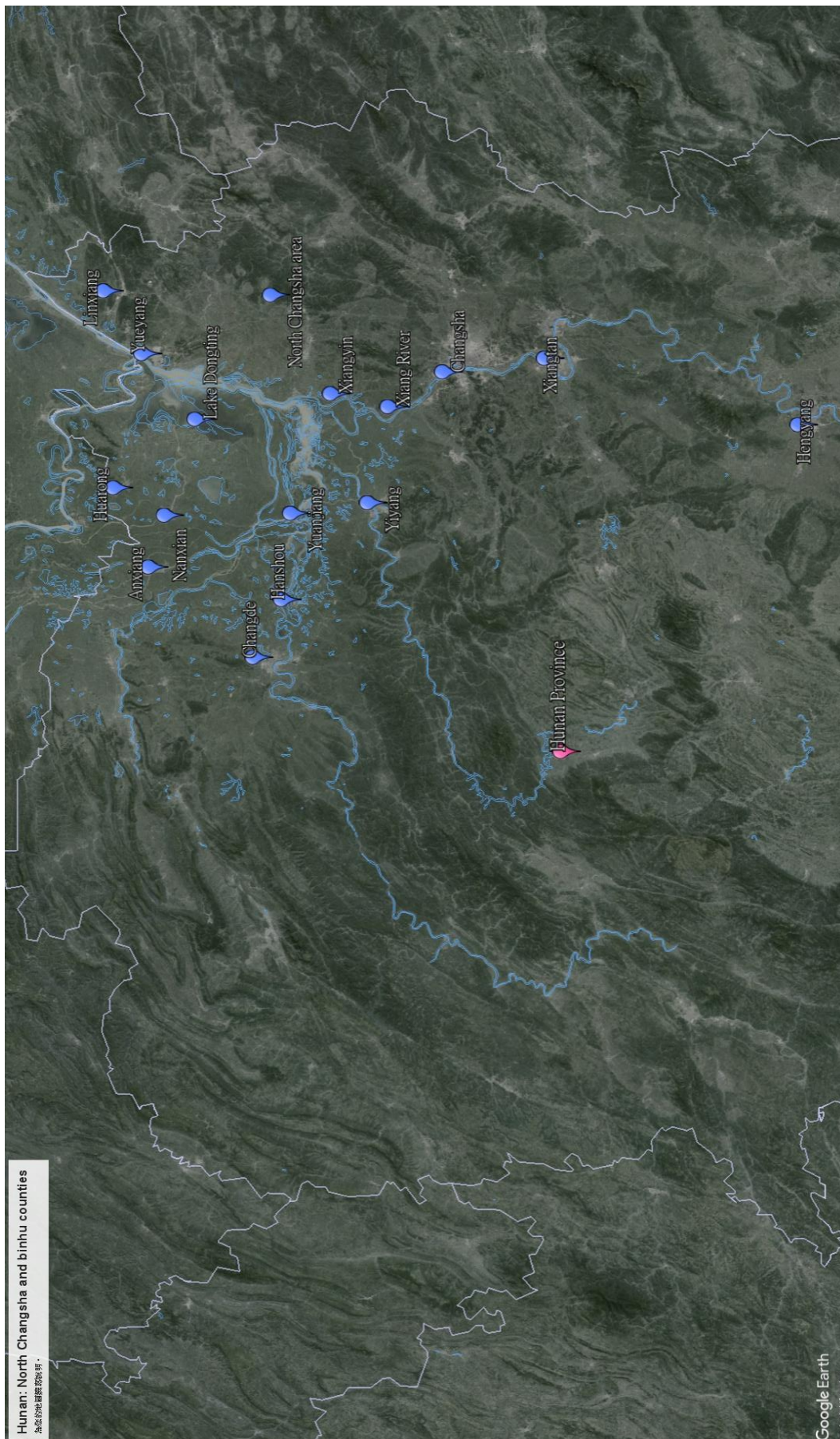
I argue that the Nationalists had come across a useful tactic that while not very effective in attacking, brought about defensive victories for important cities like Changsha in the second stage of the war. An in-depth analysis of the Battles of Changsha can aid in establishing a comprehensive understanding of

battles that transpired from 1939 to 1942 while clarifying the strategic implications of each battle for both China and Japan. Many other primary sources such as personal writings and oral accounts of important wartime military leaders as well as pertinent secondary works in Chinese and English, have been consulted.¹

The Third Battle of Changsha in early 1942 is where this chapter ends. Chapter four delves into the fourth battle also well known as the Changsha and Hengyang Campaign (*Chang Heng huizhan* 長衡會戰), which was part of the Japanese Ichigo Operation in Hunan between May and August 1944. My intent is to apply this as an illustration to gain further insights into the wartime centralized-local relationship between Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue (Chongqing and Changsha) and its impact on the campaign of the Nationalists in 1944 Hunan.

Both conventional and guerrilla warfare tactics were utilized in the defense of Changsha. Mobilizing the public to provide military aid was a crucial element in the wartime history of Changsha and Hunan. In chapter six, I discuss a new type of wartime normal that emerged among the Hunanese. It developed since the Nationalists attempted to mobilize the local population, particularly peasants, to establish a kind of military-civilian cooperation across the province.

¹ Chen Cheng, *Chen Cheng xianshen huiyilu kangri zhanzheng* 陳誠先生回憶錄抗日戰爭 [Memoirs of Mr. Chen Cheng on the War of Resistance against Japan], ed. He Zhiling 何智霖 (Taipei: Guoshiguan, 2005); Wang Shijie 王世傑, *Wang Shijie riji* 王世傑日記 [Diary of Wang Shijie] (Taipei: Guoshiguan, 1990); Chen Shouheng, *Xue Yue Jiangjun*.



Map 3.1 Hunan: North Changsha and *binhu* counties. Source: Google Earth.

3.1 The first-ever clash between China and Japan in North Changsha

3.1.1 The strategic significance of Changsha and the formation of a new tactic for defending the city

After their occupation of Wuhan in 1938, the Japanese march to Hunan continued until they stopped at Lake Dongting, 80 kilometers north away from Changsha.² Six years of stalemated warfare between the Nationalists and the Japanese commenced. Even though Changsha had not seen military actions until 1939, it was tragically razed to the ground by municipal authorities with the permission of Chiang Kaishek, which occurred because of a miscalculation of the Japanese advance influenced by a false report that the Japanese had crossed a nearby river close to the city. Beginning in late 1938 and lasting until the end of the Ichigo Operation in 1944, the North Changsha transitioned from a previous position well-known as the Great Rear to the major battlefield in China Theater, witnessing the most battles between China and Japan.

Hunan or Xiang 湘 is an inland province in central China. It is situated downstream of the Xiang River and south of Dongting Lake.³ The Guangzhou-Wuhan Railway and Beiping-Yunan Road gave Hunan a crucial position. Moreover, the hilly landscapes of North Changsha proved to be advantageous for Japanese mobile forces making it an unfavorable location for defensive positioning. Utilizing the eastern mountainous landscapes of Changsha the NRA skillfully hid their soldiers and executed precise attacks on the Japanese flanks.⁴

² Mitter, *Forgotten Ally*, 168.

³ Literally, Xiangbei 湘北 refers to areas in north Hunan because the Chinese character Xiang is the abbreviation of Hunan. However, in some wartime writings, different writers had used Xiangbei particularly to refer to North Changsha. As a result, in this project, I tend to use Xiangbei to refer to areas in northward Changsha where most fighting took place during the war.

⁴ “Diyi ci Changsha huizhan Xiangbei dajie” 第一次長沙會戰—湘北大捷 [First Battle of Changsha — victory in Northern Changsha], ZHMGZYS, part 2, vol.2, 435.

If Japan were to gain control of Changsha, it would provide them with the necessary push to rapidly move towards seizing Yichang and Shashi, two vital cities that served as gateways along the Yangtze River to Chongqing.⁵ Hunan was indispensable for the functioning of China, offering an abundance of agricultural produce as well as a dependable source of military recruits.⁶ For the Nationalists, maintaining control of Hunan, in particular, the *binhu* area, which was the most productive area for rice was essential to sustaining their prolonged war against the Japanese.⁷

As the war dragged on, China and Japan remained locked in continuous battles. Battles in North Changsha were a vivid embodiment of the drawn-out attrition. In specific conflicts, the Japanese carried out short-term and limited operations aimed at eliminating the primary military forces of the NRA, which became their offensive strategy in China after the end of 1938.⁸ To counter this, the Nationalists built several defensive lines at the front to exhaust the Japanese troops of their weapons and supplies while luring them into a well-planned ambush for a decisive battle. Employing this tactic helped the Nationalists gain an edge before engaging in a decisive battle against the Japanese.

The Nationalists learned valuable lessons from their past battles against Japan, specifically in 1938 Xuzhou and Wuhan. These experiences helped them develop a useful tactic for dealing with the changing offensive capability of the Japanese in a prolonged war. As the Battle of Xuzhou approached, the NRA

⁵ “Dijiu zhanqu qiandi zongsiling bu zhihui ge budui Ganxi zuozhan jihua dagang” 第九戰區前敵總司令部指揮各部隊贛西作戰計劃大綱 [An operational plan for western Jiangxi of the chief command headquarters at the front of the Ninth War Area] (1 September 1939), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.1, 93-94.

⁶ “Diyi ci Changsha huizhan”, 435.

⁷ “Dijiu zhanqu Ganxi zuozhan”, 94-95.

⁸ After the Battle of Wuhan, the Japanese reduced their troops in China and avoided overextending their battles into new territories. See, Tobe Ryoichi, “The Japanese 11th Army in Central China, 1938-1941,” in *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War*, ed. Mark Peattie, Edward J. Drea, and Hans van de Ven (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 215-216.

was restricted to positional strategies leaving them vulnerable to the Japanese offensive and unable to launch any assertive counter-offensives. The Nationalists almost lost all battles and had to give up large areas in North and Southeast China because of a lack of weapons and supplies, as well as the use of an incorrect tactic.

Following the fall of Nanjing in late 1937, Chinese military leaders slowly realized that a different approach was needed, in which positional, mobile, and guerrilla tactics were all utilized while avoiding positional warfare against the Japanese and instead, relying more on mobile and guerrilla warfare. Chiang Kaishek advanced a new operational strategy:

We should protect Wuhan as the focal point and engage in a prolonged war with the deployment of guerilla tactics in the external regions of each war area. It is critical to set up strong defensive sites in the hilly areas of eastern Hunan, western Jiangxi, Anhui, and southern Henan with the deployment of considerable forces, prepared to contend with the enemy, waiting for their advance in deep and fight within our new positions.⁹

This new approach can be defined as a defensive tactic that sought to pull out with the intent of mounting a decisive assault (*houtui juezhan* 後退決戰). Its essence was to employ small units of soldiers to obstruct the Japanese advancement and maintain containment of the Japanese until they ran out of their ammunition and provisions while positioning the primary NRA troops in the two wings of the Japanese offensive to encircle the enemies.¹⁰ As the Japanese forces approached the area where ambushes had been placed, all NRA troops with their superior numbers joined forces and launched a powerful

⁹ “Junshi weiyuanhui disan qi zuozhan jihua” 軍事委員會第三期作戰計劃 [The third phase operational plan of the MAC] (13 December 1937), KRZZZMZC, 18.

¹⁰ “Dijiu zhanqu guanyu diyi ci Changsha huizhan baogao”, 1027; see also, van de Ven, *War*, 239.

attack from all sides.¹¹ The Nationalists embraced this principle in 1939 and scored some success with it in Changsha until 1942. But their repeated employment of this tactic without any variations became one of the factors that led to their military collapse in 1944. Also, a few guerrilla troops moved to the Japanese rear to demolish railway networks and counterattack Japanese forces retreating from the main battlefield. This plan necessitated the enlistment of local people to work with the NRA in order to disrupt transportation and stir up disarray in the Japanese rear. The NRA transformed farmlands, roads, and railways into wet and unusable areas, making it difficult for the Japanese to deploy their significant forces, especially their mobile warfare units and heavy weaponry.

Xue Yue's core military idea was to rally a sizable number of NRA forces to execute an encirclement tactic against the Japanese. Leveraging the topographical features of North Changsha, he adapted his previous approach and secured major victories for the Chinese side. 14 NRA divisions under the command of Xue failed to fully encircle and obliterate merely one Japanese divisional force during the Battle of Lanfeng, a minor battlefield of the Battle of Xuzhou.¹²

Chiang sent a frustrated message to Cheng Qian, the First War Area commander in Henan expressing his disappointment that the NRA's failure in Lanfeng had become a laughingstock through ages in the country's war history.¹³ Zhang Xianwen argues that the NRA forces could not win the battle and repeat their success in Taierzhuang because they lacked the bravery and proactivity to engage in an offensive against the Japanese.¹⁴ This perspective,

¹¹ Chen Cheng, *Chen Cheng huiyilu*, 106-107.

¹² "Jiang Zhongzhen dian Cheng Qian" 蔣中正電程潛 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram to Cheng Qian] (28 May 1938), JZTWW, 002-020300-00010-065, GSGDA.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 466.

however, fails to acknowledge the strength of weapons owned by a Japanese division. A larger number of troops did not help the NRA troops defeat the Japanese in combat.¹⁵ In the wake of the hasty departure of the local populace and officials from the conflict area, substantial obstacles were presented in terms of the logistics, transmission, and conveyance of injured soldiers for the NRA troops.¹⁶

Attempting yet again, Xue Yue sought to conduct a sizable siege in the midst of the Wanjialing Campaign during the Battle of Wuhan. Topography and meteorological conditions in the Central China region deviated from other zones within the China Theater. Mountainous terrain nullified the Japanese edge in speed and sweltering temperatures caused them extreme suffering.¹⁷ Roads were in a deplorable condition and turned into morasses after frequent precipitation. The NRA hindered the Japanese advance by destroying roads, forcing them to abandon their modern transportation and resort to an outdated method of transportation like riding on packhorses.¹⁸ This campaign also revealed an indispensable necessity of collaboration between the army and local citizens since the NRA was supported by the people and organizations in the area.¹⁹

Three fundamental factors must be considered for the Nationalists to realize their new tactic fruitfully encompassing the distinctive landscape and climate of Central China, a deterioration of roads, and a solid partnership with

¹⁵ Guo Daijun, *Chongtan kangzhan*, 447.

¹⁶ Song Xilian 宋希濂, "Lanfeng zhanyi de huiyi" 蘭封戰役的回憶 [Memories of the Battle of Lanfen], in *Wenshi ziliao xuanji bedingben dishiji ce zong* 54-56 文史資料選輯合訂本第十九冊總 54-56 [Collected Edition of the Selected Works of Literature and Historical Materials volume 19 total volumes 54-56], ed. Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi quanguo weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui 中國人民政治協商會議全國委員會文史資料研究委員會編 (Beijing: zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1986), 165.

¹⁷ Tobe Ryoichi, "The Japanese 11th Army in Central China, 1938-1941," 229.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Wu Yizhi 吳逸志, *Xue Boling jiangjun zhibui zhi De'an Wanjialing dajie huiyi* 薛伯陵將軍指揮之德安萬家嶺大捷回憶 [Memoirs of the victory at Wanjialing commanded by General Xue Yue] (Changsha: Xindian, 1940), 376-377. Wu Yizhi was the chief of staff at the headquarters of the Ninth War Area.

the local population. Opting to initially pull out and then confront Japan with a more formidable force proved to be a wise tactic in dealing with the Japanese whose offensive capability had been restricted after 1938.

Over time, Xue Yue developed an understanding of the necessity of shifting a military balance between the NRA and Japanese forces before the enemies entered the area where ambushes were planned. This directly decided the outcome of the following decisive battle in that ambushing area.²⁰ Efforts to wear out the Japanese forces in the preliminary phase of a battle were imperative in overturning the inequitable power. Even though Xue lacked experience in devising a plan for an encirclement action for the Battle of Lanfeng, the same tactic when put into practice at Wanjialing attained the feat of vanquishing a Japanese division in a single battle. And then he brought his tactical ideas to Changsha, a place that seemed to be the ideal setting for attaining the fullest potential of this tactic.

3.1.2 Main controversies in the existing historiography of the Battles of Changsha

Generally, military campaigns in the vicinity of Changsha have been treated separately as isolated occurrences with no correlation between them. Some PRC scholarship categorizes the first two battles as a part of the early stage of the strategic stalemate between China and Japan following the fall of Wuhan, with the third and fourth Changsha campaigns being characterized as operations in China Theater under the context of the outbreak of the Pacific War.²¹ Taiwanese scholarship typically regards the first three Changsha

²⁰ “Xue Yue zhi Jiang Jieshi midian” 薛岳致蒋介石密電 [Xue Yue’s confidential telegram to Chiang Kaishek] (24 October 1939), KRZZMZC, 1032; The Lanfeng Battle saw the Japanese greatly outnumbered by the NRA soldiers, yet the well-equipped Japanese division was able to hold off the larger NRA forces. Before facing another encounter at the Battle of Wanjialing, the Japanese 106th Division had not yet recovered their strength due to exhaustion from previous battles.

²¹ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*; Guo Rugui and Huang Yuzhan, *Kangri zhanzheng zuozhanji*.

Operations as essential engagements in the mid-period of the war.²² Here, my aim is not to oppose their viewpoints. In fact, this way of defining and categorizing the Battles of Changsha and their historical significance might lead to a lack of understanding regarding the real purposes in strategies of both the Chinese and Japanese sides behind these battles around Changsha. Thus, I adopt a new way that is to assess these battles as a whole with strategic impact on both China and Japan.

The 1939 clash can be interpreted as a probing attack to detect the main forces of the NRA in Hunan for the Japanese, but for the Nationalists, it too was the first attempt to put into practice their new tactic of countering Japanese advances while gradually falling back to lure the enemies into areas near Changsha where ambushing forces had been deployed. Securing the two wings was of critical importance to the Japanese and Nationalists. In the vast territories of North Changsha, the Nationalists availed themselves of their internal supply and transportation connections to provide for their soldiers and transport them quickly. Harnessing guerrilla troops and local people to dismantle roads and railroads in this region formed obstructions to slow the Japanese advance down from north to Changsha.

Previous studies on the war gave scant consideration to the important question of the NRA's strategic withdrawals from the front lines.²³ The Japanese firmly believed that it was their attack that either defeated the NRA troops or compelled them to withdraw. I argue, however, that the Japanese were not fully conscious of the authentic rationale behind the fact that the NRA troops fell back at the front after their first two operations in North

²² See, for example, He Zhilin & Su Shengxiong 蘇聖雄, "Zhongqi zhongyao zuozhan" 中期重要作戰 [Major operations in the middle stage of the war], in *Zhongguo kangri zhanzheng shi xinbian jushi zuozhan*, 217.

²³ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*; Guo Rugui and Huang Yuzhan, *Kangri zhanzheng zuozhanji*; Lü Fangshang, ed., *Zhongguo kangri zhanzheng shi xinbian*.

Changsha. This directly led to a Japanese attack on Changsha in early 1942 without a judiciously devised plan for a siege of the city.

The Nationalists persisted in maintaining the old tactic, believing that it would yield a victory in the 1944 battle. Having determined the mistakes of their previous operations, the Japanese opted to abandon their plan of a narrow advance in Changsha's northern areas and instead, advanced on a much broader scale, positioning their strongest battalions on two wings. I argue that the Battles of Changsha were analogous to turn-based clashes between the Nationalists and the Japanese. Commanders from both sides had to be proactive or reactive in adapting their tactics in order to achieve their desired outcomes from the engagements. Changsha campaigns from 1939 to 1942 also indicated an evolution of the Nationalists improving their tactics in theory and practice, which was key to their victory in 1942.

The Third Battle of Changsha in 1942 had been widely seen as a great triumph for the Nationalists, however, the remaining fights were more challenging to reach the same level of success, especially given the collapse of the NRA at the front in the second battle in 1941. In an effort to propagandize a positive view of the government and keep up strong military and public morale, the Nationalists consistently highlighted three times major achievements they had made in protecting Changsha. Propagandizing three consecutive Changsha victories, the Nationalists managed to alleviate concerns about Japanese attacks and uplifted the morale of the local population. It instilled a sense of confidence that the city could be defended by the army and the government among local people. This was particularly important as Changsha experienced a heightening of hardship because of frequent Japanese air raids and rising rice prices, which drove up living costs. In this chapter, I delve into a thorough examination of the Nationalist propaganda campaign following their loss in Changsha in 1941.

Van de Ven, consulting wartime reports and records of the Nationalists concludes that the First Battle of Changsha ended with “a comprehensive Japanese defeat” and China triumphed again in the second battle.²⁴ The Nationalists could be observed as triumphant in the first confrontation, but the Japanese retreat should not be equated with a complete defeat. A different standard in the definition of victory during a battle between China and Japan led to this outcome. Approaching the boundaries of Changsha, the Japanese attack quickly faded away because of the difficulties of supplying the infantry and the casualties among their soldiers inflicted by the Chinese resistance. Their supposition that most of the chief forces of the Ninth War Area had been discovered and eliminated was inaccurate but they still controlled initiatives to attack or retreat from the battlefield. The presence of numerous NRA soldiers in Hunan meant that the Nationalists could declare their first Changsha victory in spite of the Japanese declarations of success of Tokyo.

A lack of unity about abandoning or defending Changsha between Chiang and Xue, however, made the NRA forces at the front miss the optimal moment to seize advantage of the situation to entrap and chase the Japanese, who were withdrawing from Changsha. The following section covers this topic. Neither China nor Japan could thoroughly attain their original objectives of this battle. Interestingly enough, divergent perspectives between Changsha and Chongqing during the 1939 battle eventually evolved into an essential factor that disintegrated the relationship between Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue in 1944. This further exerted a seriously negative effect on the political and military failure of the Nationalists in Hunan.

²⁴ van de Ven, *War*, 239 and 247.

3.1.3 Changsha, defending or not

The first Japanese operation in North Changsha took place from 17 September to 6 October 1939. Japan tended to eliminate the main forces of the Ninth War Area (especially troops from the Central Army) in the northern outskirts of Changsha believing that would undermine China's determination to continue the war because of the strategic importance of the NRA forces to the Nationalists. On 18 September (the conflict in north Jiangxi occurred earlier on 15 September), the Japanese 11th Army deployed the 13th Division (two regiments), the Sixth Division, and two regiments of the Third Division to launch the Xiang-Gan River Operation (also known as the First Battle of Changsha on the Chinese side).²⁵ The Japanese intended to quickly end this operation and recover the situation before the battle after reaching their objectives.

The original plan of the NRA as outlined in a MAC telegram to Xue Yue on 21 April 1939, involved making use of the Xinqiang (*Xinqianghe* 新牆河) and Miluo Rivers (*Miluohe* 汨羅河) to resist the Japanese forces gradually, which was to deplete their rations and ammunition for at least one week to weaken their attacking capability followed by luring the Japanese to advance further into the outskirts of Changsha and launch a powerful counterattack.²⁶ Zhang Xianwen claims in his book that it was Xue, who drew up this battle plan.²⁷ To be precise, the original proposal dispatched from Chongqing signified that both Chiang and Xue embraced a similar tactical idea for this campaign.²⁸ But they still came across some differences in tactical ideas,

²⁵ Ryoichi, "The Japanese 11th Army in Central China, 1938-1941," 218; Zhong Qihe and Liu Songmao 钟啟河 劉松茂, ed., *Hunan kangzhan rizhi* 湖南抗戰日誌 [Diary chronicles of the War of Resistance in Hunan] (Changsha: Guofang keji daxue chubanshe, 2008), 101-102.

²⁶ Zhong Qihe and Liu Songmao, *Hunan kangzhan*, 94-95.

²⁷ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 613.

²⁸ Evidence from the Taiwanese chronicles of the war confirms that the telegraph came from Chongqing; see Guofangbu shizheng bianyiju 國防部史政編譯局, ed., *Kangri zhanshi: Diyi ci Changsha huizhan* 抗日戰

especially regarding Changsha's defense. This hindered the NRA from attempting to implement their new tactic.

Before the 1939 confrontation, Chiang and Xue had contrasting ideas on the defense or surrender of Changsha. Chiang exhibited a degree of hesitation and trepidation when attempting to uphold Changsha, however, still sought to exploit an empty city, with all military and civilian personnel including essential resources transferring from the city as a lure to draw the Japanese forces into battle. Xue possessed the determination and assurance to repel the Japanese forces assaulting the city. Although the differing attitudes between Chiang (the central government) and Xue (the Ninth War Area, local authorities) did not impact the outcome of the 1939 battle, there was a possibility that Chiang would have assumed command on Changsha or disregarded Xue's orders, directly leading the NRA troops in the Hunan Theater. Unfortunately, Chiang's attempt to take control of the Ninth War Area's command power in 1944 during the heightened Japanese offensive caused a strain in the relationship between Changsha and Chongqing. This eventually led to the downfall of the Nationalists at the Hunan front, which has been treated as the core topic of the next chapter.

Telegrams exchanged between Chiang and Xue before September 1939 disclosed Chiang's doubtful and vacillating mindset before the battle. On 1 April, Chiang instructed Xue to not shift any reserve forces that must stay in position for the final defense of south Changsha and instead augment the troops in the eastern parts of the city.²⁹ Four days later, Chiang sent a follow-up telegraph to Xue emphasizing the importance of utilizing ambushes and

史: 第一次長沙會戰 [A history of the War of Resistance against Japan: the First Battle of Changsha] (Taipei: Guofangbu shizheng bianyiju, 1981), 9.

²⁹ "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (1 April 1939), JJSXS, 1939, 176.

nighttime attacks in the defense of North Changsha and protecting the city.³⁰ These two telegraphs suggested that Chiang had the desire to defend Changsha but he refrained from deploying a significant number of NRA soldiers to the battlefield. In other words, Chiang managed to weather the loss of Changsha as long as most of the Hunanese territories remained under Nationalist control. Chiang issued a personal directive on 15 April, indicating a shift in his position on the defense of Changsha. He proposed that the NRA steered clear of confrontations until the Japanese forces had entered Changsha and then initiated a counterattack.³¹

Chiang contemplated Changsha as a feasible aim for a future counterstrike as soon as the Japanese forces had penetrated into the city. He neglected the possibility that the Japanese infiltrated Changsha with minimal losses of their troops and promptly withdrew before the NRA could strike back. Xue Yue disagreed with this viewpoint and instead suggested a head-on attack on the Japanese forces in Changsha. Dispatching a strong division or army to hinder and slow down the Japanese soldiers attacking Changsha gave other NRA troops in the war area a chance to initiate a siege. In August, Chiang gave his approval to Xue's April proposal, which involved arranging ambushes in Changsha, camouflaging soldiers as peasants and beggars, and assigning a division to protect the city for two weeks.³² There seemed to be a

³⁰ "Jiang Zhongzheng dian Xue Yue" 蔣中正電薛岳 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram to Xue Yue] (5 April 1939), JZTW, 002-090106-00014-045, GSGDA; see also, "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (5 April 1939), JJSXS, 1939, 183.

³¹ "Jiang weiyuanzhang zhi dijiu zhanqu dai siling zhangguan Xue Yue zhishi xiangzhen diqing shouling" 蔣委員長致第九戰區代司令長官薛岳指示詳偵敵情手令 [Chairman Chiang's personal directive to the acting chief commander Xue Yue of the Ninth War Area for a detailed investigation of the enemy situation] (15 April 1939), ZHMGZYS, part 2, vol.2, 433; see also, "Jiang Jieshi zhi Xue Yue Chen Cheng diangao" 蔣介石致薛岳陳誠電稿 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram to Xue Yue and Chen Cheng] (15 April 1939), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.1, 233. Chiang often changed his mind in many battles during the war, I discuss this in the next chapter.

³² "Jiang Zhongzheng dianshi Xue Yue Chen Cheng zai Changsha dui di zhi yinying ji celue" 蔣中正電示薛岳陳誠在長沙對敵之因應及策略 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram instructing Xue Yue and Chen Cheng on handling the enemy in Changsha and strategy] (15 April 1939), JZTW, 002-010300-00022-020, GSGDA; and "Jiang weiyuanzhang zhi dijiu zhanqu dai siling zhangguan Xue Yue zhishi jiji beizhan shouling" 蔣委

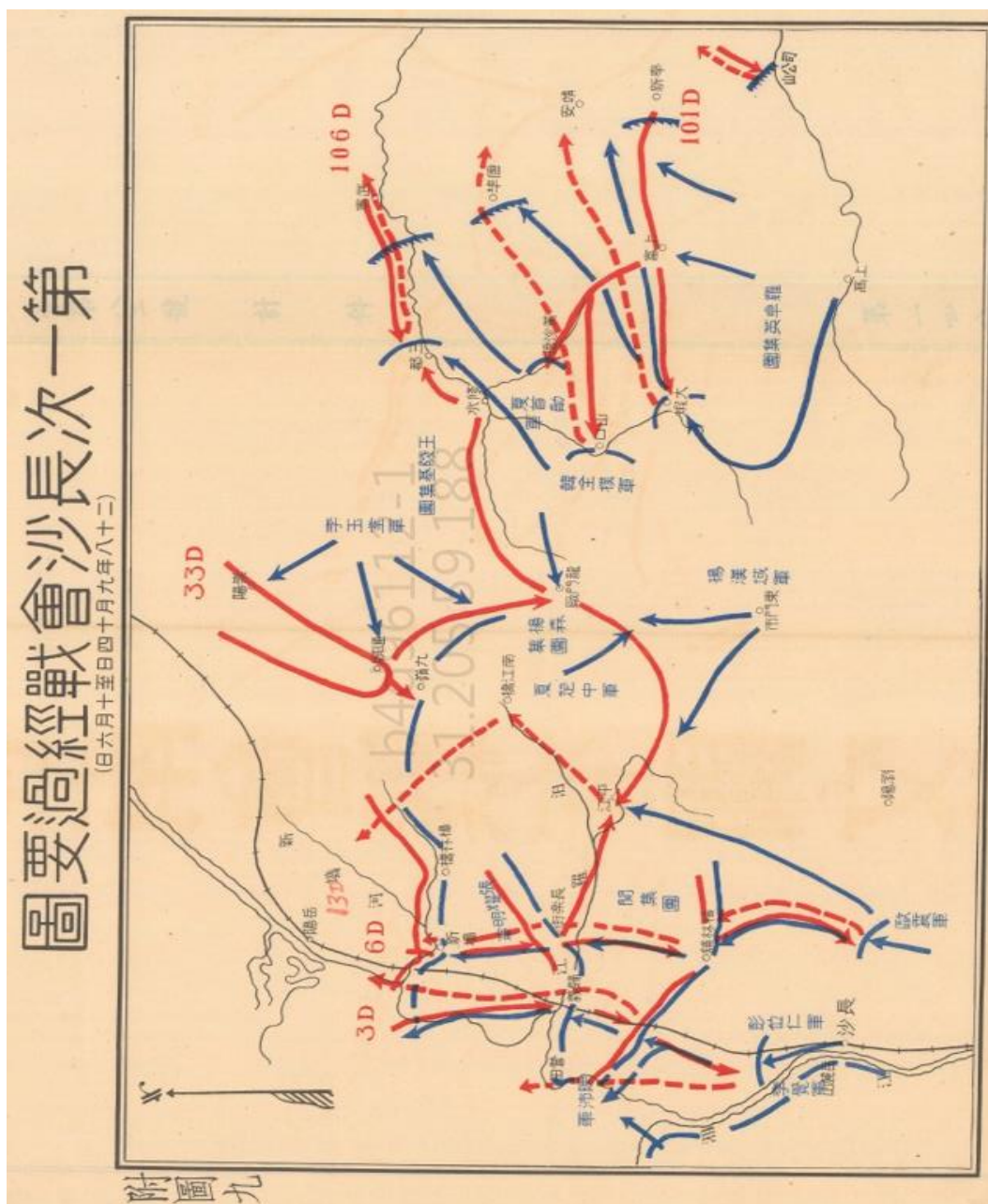
compromise between Changsha and Chongqing before the commencement of the battle.

Between 18 and 24 September 1939, the Japanese penetrated the first defensive line built by the NRA along the Xinqiang River and seized several towns. This was due in part to their strong offensive with advanced weapons. Based on their predetermined plan, the Ninth War Area pulled out while the battle raged on. Present circumstances at the front, however, were troubling for Chongqing with a doubt if Changsha could withstand the Japanese offensive.

On 24 September, Chiang held a conference with top MAC leaders namely Xu Yongchang, Bai Chongxi, and Chen Cheng while the NRA and Japanese troops fought at Miluo River. The meeting aimed to address two plans either to defend Changsha or to withdraw and move the NRA forces to the south and east of the city for a counterattack against invading Japanese forces. In light of the potential approval of the second plan by Chongqing, the Ninth War Area had to reposition troops from the Miluo River to the southern and eastern mountain areas. Chiang went with the second plan that was taking the NRA southward, resembling his idea on 1 April that year.³³

員長致第九戰區代司令長官薛岳指示積極備戰手令 [Chairman Chiang's personal directive to the acting chief commander Xue Yue of the Ninth War Area to actively prepare for the fighting] (27 August 1939), ZHMGZYSL, part 2, vol.2, 434.

³³ Zhong Qihe and Liu Songmao, *Hunan kangzhan*, 104-105. But from a report made by the Ninth War Area, Chiang Kaishek seemed to decide to continue to defend Changsha. "Xiangbei zhanyi jingguo gaiyao" 湘北戰役經過概要 [An overview of the fighting in Northern Changsha] (October 1939), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.1, 198.



Map 3.2 The First Battle of Changsha. Source: “Guofangbu shiliaoju bianzhi diyi ci Changsha huizhan jingguo yaotu 國防部史料局編製第一次長沙會戰經過要圖二十八年九月十四日至十月六日” (14 September to 6 October 1939), JZTWW, 002-020300-00012-085, GSGDA.

Xue Yue was compelled to organize and execute the removal of the NRA forces from the Miluo River. But his dissatisfaction with the instruction from Chongqing and Chiang was manifestly conspicuous. Chiang ordered Bai and Chen to Hunan to persuade Xue. Chen viewed that it was essential to defend and fight in Changsha to sustain the morale of the NRA forces in Hunan. He lent his support to Xue to fend off the Japanese while sending a telegram to Chiang to affirm the defense of the city.³⁴ The amicable connection between his wife and Madame Song Meiling allowed Xue's plan to be accepted by Chiang with Madame Song's backing.³⁵ Chen again acted as a mediator between Chiang and Xue.

One unresolved issue remained concerning the timing of the MAC meeting. Xue maintained that he had been informed by Chen and Bai about the directive to evacuate before the battle ensued.³⁶ A telegram from Lin Wei 林蔚, director of Chiang's Personal Staff Office confirmed that the conference in Chongqing was held on 24 September and involved instructing Xue to retreat south on 25 and 26 of that month.³⁷ Xu and Chen, who were both at the meeting, started recording the event in their diaries and other personal writings after 25 September.³⁸ Chen and Xue reached a consensus on 29 September that retreating to Zhuzhou, a southern city near Changsha, was not the optimal route for their campaign according to Chen's diary.³⁹ Reaching a final agreement between Xue and Chiang to defend Changsha, the NRA

³⁴ He Zhiling & Su Shengxiong, "Zhongqi zuozhan," 219-220.

³⁵ Zhong Qihe and Liu Songmao, *Hunan kangzhan*, 105.

³⁶ Shao Tuorong and Jiang Rongsen, "Changsha san ci dajie yu jiuyuan Changde huizhan" 長沙三次大捷與救援常德會戰 [The three great victories of Changsha and the fighting to rescue Changde], in *Xue Yue Jiangjun*, 338.

³⁷ He Zhiling & Su Shengxiong, "Zhongqi zuozhan," 219; Zhang Xianwen, influenced by Xue's words, also states that this event happened before the battle. See Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 614.

³⁸ For instance, Chen recollected that Chiang had directed him not to guard Changsha, and then proceeded to Hunan along with Bai after the battle began. See, Chen Cheng, *Chen Cheng huiyilu*, 100.

³⁹ "Chen Cheng minguo ershi ba nian riji" 陳誠民國二十八年日記 [Chen Cheng's diary in 1939], *Chen Cheng fu zongtong riji ji shi sou riji yi* 陳誠副總統日記暨石叟日記一 [Shisou diary of vice president Chen Cheng], vol.1, CCFZTWW, 008-010204-00004-010, GSGDA.

troops still failed to seize the optimum moment to attack Japanese troops that had advanced near the fringes of Changsha. In fact, the Japanese commanders at the front curtailed the advancement of their primary forces on 29 September, assigning a squad of troops to proceed southward instead.⁴⁰

3.1.4 *Quick ending*

Main Japanese troops ceased their march south on 29 September.⁴¹ According to Japanese war chronicles, many Japanese commanders at the front believed that Chinese troops pulled out from the Miluo River because of a rapid Japanese offensive.⁴² Chinese and Japanese soldiers clashed mostly in the vicinity of the Xinqiang and Miluo Rivers between 18 and 26 September. Facing a tragic loss of human lives, the NRA was able to hold off the Japanese advance for seven days. Breaking through the two defensive lines of the NRA also made the Japanese suffer a great number of casualties and losses in equipment before they could take down the Ninth War Area troops.⁴³ The Japanese went against their original goal of wiping out the main forces of the Ninth War Area by not actively attacking when the NRA moved south following Chiang's southern movement order.

When Xue just was told the order from Chongqing to retreat to the south, Chiang altered his idea and transmitted a telegraph on 26 September to Xue, requesting an assembly of six divisions close to Changsha to counter the

⁴⁰ Riben fangweiting fangwei yanxiusuo zhanshishi 日本防衛廳防衛研修所戰史室, ed., *Rijun duibua zuozhan jiyao congshu er: chuqi lujun zuozhan er Huazhong Huanan zuozhan ji duibua zhanlue zhi zhuanbian* 日軍對華作戰紀要叢書二: 初期陸軍作戰二華中華南作戰及對華戰略之轉變 [Japanese military operations in China series II: early army operations two and operations in central and southern China and changes in strategy towards China], trans. Guofangbu shizheng bianyiju 國防部史政編譯局 (Taipei: Guofangbu shizheng bianyiju, 1987), 612.

⁴¹ He Zhiling & Su Shengxiong, "Zhongqi zuozhan," 220.

⁴² *Huazhong Huanan zuozhan*, 610-611.

⁴³ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 616.

Japanese once they reached the city.⁴⁴ Xue received the go-ahead from Chiang to deploy a team of NRA ambushers in the North Changsha region. These ambushes participated in hand-to-hand combat and successfully eradicated the Japanese troops that reached these areas.⁴⁵ As the number of Chinese troops arriving in Changsha grew, the Japanese acknowledged that they could not defeat the NRA forces and subsequently issued the final retreat order on 1 October. The First Battle of Changsha came to an abrupt end as the Japanese retreated.

Japan reported that its troops were pulled out following the achievement of their goal to eliminate the primary NRA forces and restore the Hunan battlefield to its former state within a limited time. Nevertheless, the NRA learned of a Japanese operational order during the battle that revealed a different perspective:

It is crucial that our armed forces expeditiously return to their initial locations to uphold combat preparedness and remain watchful of potential retaliation from Chinese military units in order to avert a perilous scenario.⁴⁶

In addition to their involvement in Hunan, the Japanese also launched two conflicts in North Jiangxi and South Hubei. This hindered their ability to amass troops and crush the main NRA forces in Hunan. After their examination of the NRA's strength in Hunan, the Japanese saw the necessity of

⁴⁴ “Weizuo dui Changsha fujin youdi jianmiezhàn zhī zhīshì” 委座對長沙附近誘敵殲滅戰之指示 [Instructions from the Chairman regarding the annihilation fighting to lure and destroy enemies near Changsha] (26 September 1939), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.1, 27.

⁴⁵ “Zai Changsha yibei diqu youdi jianmiezhàn zhī zhīdào fāng’àn” 在長沙以北地區誘敵殲滅戰之指導方案 [Guidelines for the battle to lure and annihilate the enemy in the area north of Changsha] (27 September 1939), *ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁶ “Lü jituan zuozhàn mínglíng dìsì qīshí hào” 呂集團作戰命令第四七四號 [Lü (Chinese troops) collective combat order no.474] (5 October 1939), in *Changsha huizhàn jì* 長沙會戰記 [Historical accounts of the Battle of Changsha], ed. Dijiu zhanqu siling zhangguan silingbu canmouchu 第九戰區司令長官司令部參謀處編 (November 1939), 17.

gathering stronger forces and directing their attacks towards North Changsha. September of 1941 witnessed a forceful and determined Japanese attack there. The Nationalists demonstrated the practicality of their newest tactic in ensnaring the Japanese in ambush areas, although facing operational plan differences between Changsha and Chongqing that hindered their counterattack during the battle. Also, the Japanese did not comprehend the authentic purpose of the NRA's tactical retreat from their fortified lines, which foreshadowed a Japanese defeat in early 1942.

3.2 A full-scale military breakdown: the Second Changsha Campaign in 1941

3.2.1 A dire misjudgment of the Japanese military tactics by the Ninth War Region

The Second Battle of Changsha lasting from 7 September to 2 October 1941 was the second Japanese operation in Hunan. According to van de Ven, this battle mirrored what took place in 1939 where it began with a Japanese attack and ended with their speedy retreat and the Nationalists responded with the same approach of gradual withdrawal for a decisive battle on the outskirts of Changsha.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, the NRA suffered a disastrous defeat as a result of a flawed plan and misguided judgment by the Ninth War Area and Xue Yue at the start of the battle. The Japanese shifted their tactics, concentrating their limited forces in Hunan with a stronger presence. This involved the mobilization of four divisions and nine regiments consisting of 120,000 troops and utilizing 20 naval ships, 200 motorboats and 100 airplanes.⁴⁸ The Japanese carried out their offensive by organizing three separate groups. One group

⁴⁷ van de Ven, *War*, 247.

⁴⁸ Zhong Qihe and Liu Songmao, *Hunan kangzhan*, 147-148; see also, Riben fangweiting fangwei yanxiusuo zhanshishi, ed., *Xianggang Changsha zuozhan* 香港長沙作戰 [Operations for Hong Kong and Changsha], trans. Guofangbu shizheng bianyiju (Taipei: Guofangbu shizheng bianyiju, 1987), 490-493, 532.

headed south along the Guangzhou-Wuhan Railway, another was stationed by Dongting Lake and the Xiang River, and the third was situated east of Changsha.⁴⁹

Xue Yue used the same tactic as before but with fewer troops than in 1939. Also, he wrongly assessed the true motive behind a Japanese mop-up action at Dayun Mountain (*Dayunshan* 大雲山) on the north shore of the Xinqiang River in South Hubei. As a consequence, the Ninth War Area was unable to impede the Japanese advance for a week at the two river-defensive lines. After Yichang fell in 1941, Chongqing changed its defense plan to focus on western Hunan. This has been discussed more in the next chapter. Many skilled NRA units, which had fought valiantly in 1939, were moved away from the war area. Because the main Japanese forces never reached the outskirts of Changsha in 1939, Xue decided to conduct the decisive battle in a more northern area away from Changsha. This allowed the Japanese to approach the site where the NRA had established ambushes, considerably reducing the gap between them and the NRA.

A 1941 Ninth War Area report suggested leading the enemies towards the region south of the Miluo to Laodao Rivers (*Laodaohe* 撈刀河) in the event of a Japanese assault on Changsha.⁵⁰ The northern outskirts of Changsha are where the Laodao River is located according to Map 3.3.⁵¹ Taking on this bold plan was a risk since moving to a more northerly place shortened the Japanese forces' march time and distance to the decisive battle with the NRA. This allowed them to maintain a formidable attack capability. The war area

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ “Dijiu zhanqu di'er ci Changsha huizhan zhandou xiangbao” 第九戰區第二次長沙會戰戰鬥詳報 [The battle report of the Second Battle of Changsha by the Ninth War Area], KRZZHNZCSL, vol.2, 5.

⁵¹ On the map, the second river from the bottom is the Laodao River, marked by a white line. Changsha 長沙 is situated in the bottom left-hand corner.

struggled to lay siege to the Japanese due to time constraints. The second battle was doomed to failure for the Chinese side from the start, therefore.

On 18 September, the Second Changsha Operation began as the Japanese attacked the first NRA defensive line at Xinqiang River. Nevertheless, a prelude combat broke out at Dayun Mountain where Ninth War Area guerrilla forces were stationed. Japanese transportation corps faced heightened danger once the battle began as NRA guerrilla forces in the north posed a threat to their movements. On 7 September, the Japanese 40th Division was assigned a mopping-up mission at the mountain. Still, the operation unexpectedly escalated into a large-scale fight when two NRA armies from the Xinqiang River and an additional Japanese regiment joined the fight.

Telegrams sent from Changsha to Chongqing indicated that the Ninth War Area saw the mopping-up as an isolated Japanese operation and did not connect it to a follow-up offensive on Changsha.⁵² Zhang Xianwen states that the NRA's inadequate preparations led to a failure to concentrate their forces and deal a decisive blow to the 40th Division.⁵³ This gave the Japanese enough time to plan their advance towards Changsha.⁵⁴ His viewpoint lacks clarity and contains contradictions. He stresses the Japanese significant losses that resulted from their ignorance of the nearby NRA troops at Dayun Mountain.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, he clarifies that the NRA failed to focus on containing and eliminating the Japanese forces in the mountain area, allowing the enemies to complete their military preparations before the Changsha operation.⁵⁶ He

⁵² For example, in a telegram, Xue said, "the present enemies in our war area, except for sending a small group of forces to harass us, have no other attempts." See, "Xue Yue zhi Jiang Jieshi Xu Yongchang midian" 薛岳致蔣介石徐永昌密電 [Xue Yue's confidential telegram to Chiang Kaishek and Xu Yongchang] (8 September 1941), KRZZZMZC, 1090-1091.

⁵³ Zhang Xianwen, *Zhongguo kangzhan shi*, 819.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

further states that the downfall of the Xinqiang River defensive line was linked to the intense fighting at Dayun Mountain beforehand.⁵⁷

Xue Yue dispatched two out of the three armies stationed at Xinqiang River to reinforce NRA troops at Dayun Mountain. This resulted in a high number of casualties for the Japanese 40th Division, consisting of half of their fatalities in the Second Battle of Changsha.⁵⁸ Indeed, the sole instance of a Japanese division being defeated in a battle only took place in Wanjialing during the 1938 Battle of Wuhan. The Ninth War Area had actively engaged in the Japanese campaign in the mountains and caused high Japanese casualties. It begs the question of whether it was wise to exert such great effort on the mountain beforehand. This weakened the NRA forces responsible for protecting North Changsha, particularly the first line of defense at Xinqiang River.

Xue came to understand the true intentions of the Japanese on 17 September, one day before the Japanese attack on the Xinqiang River.⁵⁹ Regrettably, the opportunity had already elapsed. If anticipating the Japanese offensive on Changsha rather than Dayun Mountain had been possible, withdrawing from the mountain would have been the most logical choice. In just two days, the Japanese managed to achieve what had previously taken them eight days back in 1939, penetrating the first defense line and advancing to the Miluo River, where the second line of defense had been strategically positioned.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *Changsha zuozhan*, 554.

⁵⁹ “Dijiu zhanqu dier ci Changsha huizhan”, 10-11.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 11; “Di’er ci Changsha huizhan di’er shi qi jituanjun zuozhan jingguo gaiyao baogaoshu” 第二次長沙會戰第二十七集團軍作戰經過概要報告書 [The summary report of the operations of the 27th Group Army during the Second Battle of Changsha] (29 October 1941), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.2, 69; “Di’er shi qi jituanjun di’er ci Changsha huizhan zhandou xiangbao” 第二十七集團軍第二次長沙會戰戰鬥詳報 [The detailed battle report of the 27th Group Army during the Second Battle of Changsha], *ibid.*, 88; Also see, Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 820.

3.2.2 *A swift collapse of the NRA's defense in the north of Changsha*

After meeting with no considerable resistance in the two days of fighting at the Xinqiang River, a section of the Japanese military achieved the first penetration of the Miluo River. This resulted in many obstacles for the NRA divisions that were supposed to assemble for the decisive battle in the ambush area or those designated for the Japanese two wings. Receiving delayed orders from Xue on 18 September, these forces began to prepare for dispatch. After a tiring march, these exhausted soldiers immediately engaged in fighting without a chance to establish a defensive position.⁶¹ Most NRA troops were unable to keep up with the swift movement of the Japanese. Map 3.4 shows four NRA armies starting their journey from south to north, indicated by blue arrows at the bottom. Many of them were unexpectedly attacked while marching or on their way to their designated defensive points.⁶²

A swift advancement of the Japanese spurred Xue to put his risky plan into action and head towards the Miluo River for a decisive battle. This resulted in an earlier confrontation between the major NRA forces and the Japanese forces. Xue gathered about 12 divisions (four armies) to form a defensive line along the southern bank of the Miluo River while ordering the remaining troops near the Xinqiang River to launch an attack from the north.⁶³ The Japanese intercepted and decoded this order altering their plan from a southern offensive to a strategic outflanking of the 12 NRA divisions.⁶⁴

⁶¹ “Lujun diqi shi si jun di'er ci Changsha huizhan zhandou xiangbao” 陸軍第七十四軍第二次長沙會戰戰鬥詳報 [The detailed battle report of the 74th Army in the Second Battle of Changsha] (December 1941), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.2, 163.

⁶² “Di'er shi qi jituanjun zhandou”, 112.

⁶³ “Dijiu zhanqu di'er ci Changsha huizhan”, 12; see also, “Xue Yue zhi Xu Yongchang midian” 薛岳致徐永昌密電 [Xue Yue's confidential telegram to Xu Yongchang] (18 September 1941), KRZZZMZC, 1094.

⁶⁴ *Changsha zuozhan*, 572. Zhang Xianwen argues that the radio codes used by the Ninth War Area during the battle were too simple to decode which was one of the reasons contributing to the defeat of the NRA, see, Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 821.

On 26 September, many of these NRA units were forced to retreat southward due to heavy losses suffered from the Japanese attack.

The same day, the NRA 74th Army, supplied by the Soviets came across Japanese troops at Chunhua Mountain, located 30 kilometers northeast of Changsha after traveling for five days from North Jiangxi. Three Japanese divisions launched an offensive against the 74th Army, resulting in a fierce two-day battle where control of strategic positions changed hands daily. The 74th Army retreated because of heavy losses and the reinforcement of Japanese troops from the north, meaning that there were no Chinese forces that could resist the Japanese advancing to Changsha. Japanese troops achieved their objective of attacking the primary forces of the NRA in the Ninth War Area after receiving orders to fall back on 1 October. The Nationalists, however, faced a significant setback since over 15 armies suffered significant casualties, including the 74th Army.⁶⁵ Their new tactic failed to be victorious, and a part of Changsha was briefly occupied by the Japanese. To review the Second Battle of Changsha, Chiang Kaishek held the third military conference at Nanyue shortly after the battle had ended in October 1941.

3.2.3 The Third Nanyue Military Conference

The Third Nanyue Military Conference (*Disan ci Nanyue junshi huiyi* 第三次南嶽軍事會議) was held in late October 1941. Throughout the war, Chongqing organized and conducted a series of such military conferences, at which high-level military generals and officers from various war areas convened. Chiang was renowned for his stern demeanor, when delivering speeches and scolding

⁶⁵ Shao Tuorong and Jiang Rongseng, “Changsha san ci dajie,” 369; The commander of the NRA 10th Army had confirmed that “the remaining troops of our army were equal to the number of troops of a regiment, combat capacities had been collapsed, a lot of weapons and equipment had been lost during the battle.” See, “Li Yutang dian Jiang Zhongzheng zhankuang” 李玉堂電蔣中正戰況 [Li Yutang’s telegram to Chiang Kaishek regarding the fighting situation] (2 October 1943), JZTWW, 002-090200-00069-155, GSGDA.

Nationalist military officers for their mistakes in combat.⁶⁶ At the Third Nanyue Conference shortly after the defeat in Changsha, the primary focus was to analyze the tactical and combat blunders of the Ninth War Area from the following perspectives.

First, Chiang reiterated the importance of persisting in a prolonged war to trade space for time and outlined how this approach could be utilized in a particular battle. In a single battle the NRA forces must extend their time on the battlefield to prevent the enemies from occupying strategic positions.⁶⁷ He explained that it entailed prolonging a battle instead of trying to occupy those vulnerable positions.⁶⁸

Chiang's speech in line with the overall Nationalist strategy aimed to extend the length of each battle and strategically disperse the fighting to make every part of the battlefield impactful in depleting the Japanese. Chiang disputed the notion that using an NRA army to resist a Japanese division, brigade, or regiment for a few days could fulfill the duty of resistance and added that this behavior was a typical demonstration of mental feebleness that was often seen in those nations, who had been brought under subjugation.⁶⁹

Second, Chiang reiterated the crucial role of fortifications and proposed a method of building them from the inside out gradually increasing in scale. The plan was to first solidify the most important location (the commander's headquarters in a war area) and then gradually expand defenses from the center to encompass other areas of the battlefield.⁷⁰ In his statement,

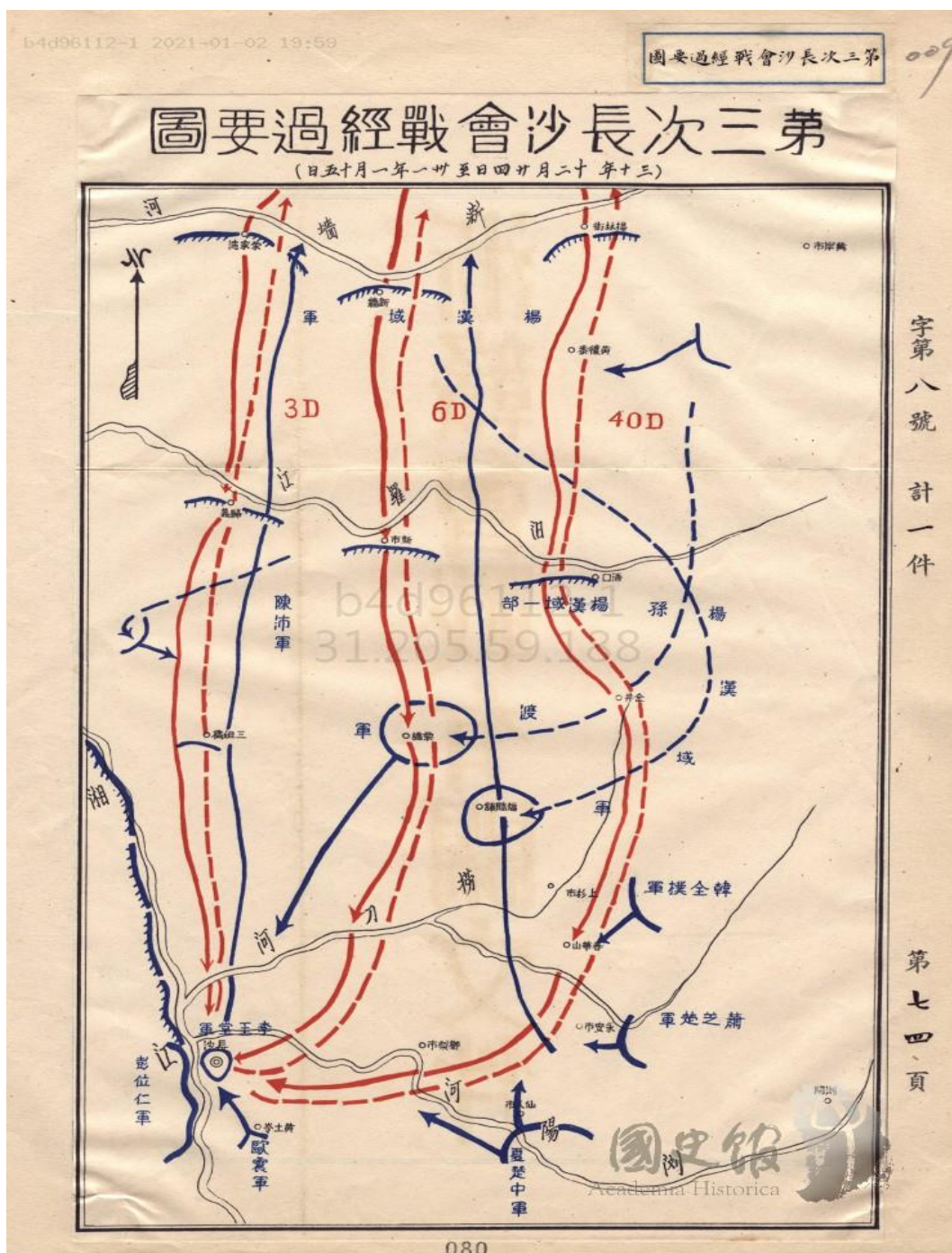
⁶⁶ van de Ven, *War*, 230.

⁶⁷ "Jiang weiyuanzhang dui disan ci Nanyue junshi huiyi xunci yi" 蔣委員長對第三次南嶽軍事會議訓詞 — [Chairman Chiang's instructions at the Third Nanyue Military Conference one] (20 October 1941), ZHMGZYS, part 2, vol.1, 351.

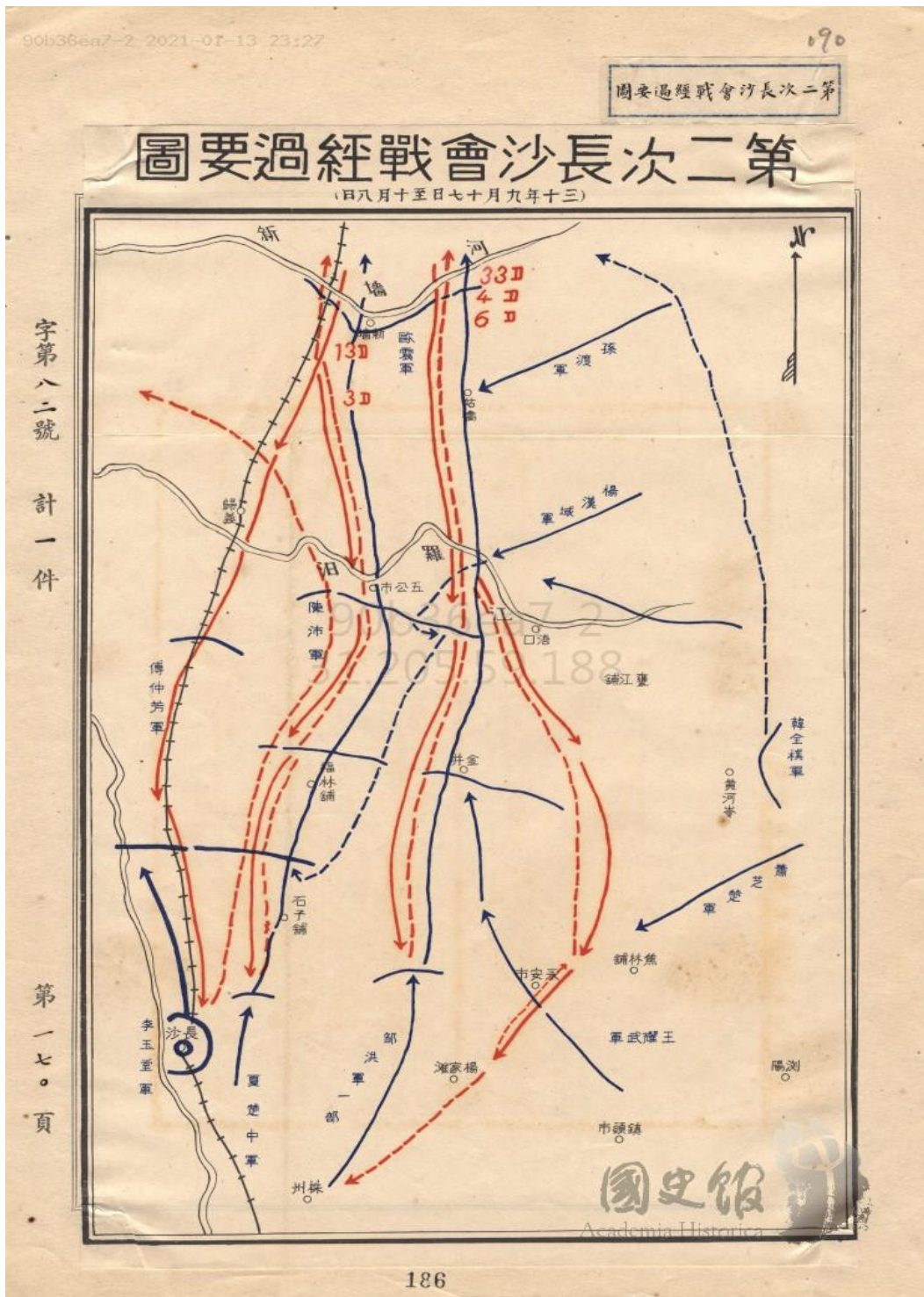
⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 361.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 356.



Map 3.3 The Third Battle of Changsha. Source: "Guofangbu shiliaoju bianzhi disan ci Changsha huizhan jingguo yaotu 國防部史料局編製第三次長沙會戰經過要圖三十年十二月二十四日至三十一年一月十五日" (24 December 1941 to 15 January 1942), JZTWW, 002-020300-00014-009, GSGDA.



Map 3.4 The Second Battle of Changsha. Source: "Guofangbu shiliaoju bianzhi dier ci Changsha huizhan jingguo yaotu 國防部史料局編製第二次長沙會戰經過要圖" (17 September to 8 October 1941), JZTWW, 002-020300-00013-090, GSGDA.

Chiang emphasized the importance of matching the scale of fortification with the number of troops available.⁷¹ The Second Battle of Changsha saw a dire predicament unfold since the NRA with a larger number of soldiers was unable to withstand the concentrated Japanese offensive because of extensive defensive positions.⁷²

Finally, Chiang censured the commanders in the Ninth War Area for careless organizational approaches, poor command skills, and corruption while accusing their piecemeal attacks on the Japanese.⁷³ Instead, he outlined a shift towards prioritizing the fortification of the essential bases and abandoning any of them that lacked defense capacities.⁷⁴ Changsha clearly served as the base for the Ninth War Area. Overall, Chiang directed the NRA to reinforce and defend vital strategic points for a minimum of five days by using the accurate number of troops present in a war area.⁷⁵

Upon the second Changsha campaign, the Ninth War Area understood the problems exposed, which Chiang critically scrutinized and reviewed. He also articulated a tactic referred to as ‘magnet war’ as the principle for the rest of the war. This tactic was to utilize a cohort of forces as a magnet to constrain the enemies in one place thereby affording the primary NRA forces more time to set up a siege.⁷⁶ Taking advantage of this principle that served as a good supplement, Xue was able to shape and perfect his tactic in defending Changsha. Consequently, the Third Nanyue Military Conference carried

⁷¹ Ibid., 355-356.

⁷² According to Li Yutang’s telegram, the NRA 10th Army had been deployed to defend a line 40 kilometers wide. “Li Yutang dian Jiang Zhongzheng”.

⁷³ “Jiang disan ci Nanyue junshi huiyi”, 356.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 359.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 355 and 358.

⁷⁶ “Jiang weiyuanzhang dui disan ci Nanyue junshi huiyi xunci san” 蔣委員長對第三次南嶽軍事會議訓詞三 [Chairman Chiang’s instructions at the Third Nanyue Military Conference three] (21 October 1941), ZHMGZYS, part 2, vol.1, 384.

significant weight after the defeat of the Ninth War Area and the demoralization of its soldiers.

3.2.4 *The propaganda of the “Victory of Changsha”*

In the second fight, the Nationalists suffered a military defeat but emerged victorious in a propaganda campaign (*xuanchuanzhan* 宣傳戰) against the Japanese. In Changsha, administrative and military authorities utilized all of their publicity apparatuses to furnish extensive promotion of the “Second Triumph in Changsha”.⁷⁷ The Chinese scholarship on this subject focuses more on presenting a desired outcome of the propaganda that the Nationalists wanted to reach rather than delving into specifics of how they attempted to cover up their defeat by manipulating post-battle writings.

A recent Chinese study on wartime Hunan suggests that the propaganda was successful in depicting the Second Battle of Changsha as a great Chinese victory commencing with a Japanese loss at the Dayun Mountain and following with the enemies being lured to Changsha where many NRA troops had been ordered there for ambushes.⁷⁸ The success of the Nationalists in Changsha attracted foreign journalists to the location of the battle. After observing the abundance of Japanese trophies left behind, the journalists questioned local villagers and NRA soldiers, assuming that the Chinese had emerged victorious once again.⁷⁹ In this section, I explore how the Nationalists manipulated language to turn a shameful loss into a victory against the Japanese offensive, using publications from wartime newspapers and magazines. It was another clear indication of their ability to mobilize the society in wartime Changsha and Hunan because the propaganda boosted public morale after the battle.

⁷⁷ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 834.

⁷⁸ Xing Ye & Xu Haiyun, *Changsha*, 129.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

The propaganda was characterized by the following three aspects. First, the Nationalists attempted to merge the Japanese mopping-up at Dayun Mountain with the later offensive on the Xinqiang River. This actually changed the battle's starting date and concealed their defeat near the river. Several advance positions were strategically placed along the defensive line at the Xinqiang River with some located on the river's northern bank. These positions were close to the guerrilla base at Dayun Mountain. From 7 to 17 September 1941, Xue Yue ordered two armies situated by the south shore of the river to join the fighting at the mountain, which frustrated their defensive power in the Xinqiang River defensive line. This narrative style presented the Dayun Mountain campaign as a component of the two-week conflict upstream on the Xinqiang River. A perception was that the Second Battle of Changsha began on 7 September rather than 18 September 1941.

The fight at the two river defensive lines was briefly summarized as the NRA troops putting up a small resistance before tactically retreating.⁸⁰ It prevented excessive discussion about the defeat in battle or the breakdown of the NRA forces on the battlefield. There could be a question raised by the general populace regarding the NRA soldiers' short two-day defense of the Xinqiang River. Lengthening the duration of the fight convinced them that NRA troops endured 10 days of fighting at both Dayun Mountain and Xinqiang River. This propaganda effort successfully presented the public with a new outlook on the true event that occurred at the front. Furthermore, the Ninth War Area's misjudgments in comprehending the real purpose behind the Japanese operation at Dayun Mountain and the reasons for their downfall at the Xinqiang River line were also obscured.

⁸⁰ Ibid.; see also, Miao Chonghan 繆冲漢, "Wokou de yezhu zhanshu" 倭寇的野豬戰術 [Wild boar tactics of the Japanese], HNGMRB, 18 October 1941.

Second, the propaganda strived to highlight the early skirmishes at Dayun Mountain, and the heavy casualties inflicted on the Japanese. A full-blown offensive was carried out by the Japanese on the Xinqiang River on 18 September. But newspapers and periodicals portrayed it as a cover-up for their failure at Dayun Mountain.⁸¹ Similarly, the MAC Weekly Battle Situation (*junshi weiyuanhui meizhou zhankuang* 軍事委員會每週戰況) reported that the Japanese made another attempt to take Changsha after their previous defeat at Dayun Mountain.⁸² As mentioned, the Japanese planned to wipe out the NRA guerilla forces before their attack in northern Changsha. Despite the significant casualties among Japanese soldiers, the NRA's defensive power at the Xinqiang River was considerably diminished. The propaganda successfully convinced locals that Chinese soldiers had won a significant mountain battle in the beginning and only suffered losses at the Xinqiang River.

Third, the quick withdrawal of Japanese forces from Changsha allowed the Nationalists to benefit from the situation, as it obscured the fact that a section of the city was under Japanese control. The Japanese forces did not inflict the same level of destruction in Changsha as they did in 1937 in Nanjing. In comparison, a Japanese operational order obtained and translated by the NRA stated that no Japanese soldiers were allowed to set fire to civilian houses.⁸³ This order implied that the city showed no vestiges of Japanese occupation. Once the battle broke out, municipal authorities of Changsha

⁸¹ Zheng Shen 振聲, "Erci zhan Changsha" 二次戰長沙 [The second fighting in Changsha], HNGMRB, 1 November 1941; another similar writing, Yang Shiyong 楊世英, "Xinqianghe shangyou de fanjizhan" 新牆河上游的反擊戰 [Counterattack on the upper Xinqiang River], *Shaoyang zhongyang ribao* 邵陽中央日報 (27 September 1941), in *Di'er ci Changsha huizhan jishi* 第二次長沙會戰紀實 [Documentary of the Second Battle of Changsha] (Changsha, 1941), 131-132.

⁸² "Junshi weiyuanhui fabu meizhou zhankuang" 軍事委員會發布每週戰況 [The MAC issued weekly fighting situations], in *Di'er ci Changsha huizhan jishi*, 10.

⁸³ "Bubin dishi ba liandui di'er dadui yaozhi ji zhishi" 步兵第十八聯隊第二大隊要旨及指示 [The summary and instructions of the 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment], in *Di'er ci Changsha huizhan fulu dijun jimi wenjian yiben* 第二次長沙會戰俘虜敵軍機密文件譯本 [Translation of captured enemy military confidential documents during the Second Battle of Changsha], ed. Jingzhong canmouchu bianyigu 精忠參謀處編譯股 (Changsha: Jingzhong canmouchu bianyigu, 1941), 62; see also, KRZZHNZCSL, vol.2, 592.

evacuated most of the city's population. The second half of this work delves further into this topic. After witnessing their unharmed homes upon their return to the city, people were reassured by newspaper reports and rumors that Changsha had not been occupied by the Japanese.⁸⁴ The scene in post-battle Changsha could have had a profound impact on locals, especially considering the challenge of knowing the number of inhabitants, who could read and understand the Nationalist propaganda being circulated through publications.

The Nationalists defined victory in Changsha differently than the Japanese, placing greater importance on holding the city. Even though he wanted to abandon the city, Chiang stood by his statement that "Changsha has always been a symbol of righteousness for our country and is not easily subdued by foreign nations and this is undoubtedly true."⁸⁵ This illuminated the Nationalists' propaganda strategy of the Changsha victory, appraising their successes or failures based on the possession or loss of Changsha.

Propaganda of the Changsha victory effectively boosted morale among soldiers and civilians by propagandizing resistance and a counterattack to the enemies. Xue Yue was compared to Paul von Hindenburg in post-battle newspapers.⁸⁶ For the defeated NRA troops, the fact that Changsha remained in the hands of the war area inspired them to that their losses in battle did not hinder the ultimate triumph. But the Nationalists were still negatively affected by this propaganda, especially after their successful military campaign leading to a diminished consideration of any potential flaws with their new 1939 military tactic. At the Third Nanyue Military Conference after the defeat in 1941 Changsha, Chiang Kaishek stated that "although we hold Changsha, it is

⁸⁴ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 829.

⁸⁵ Qin Xiaoyi, ZTJGDS, vol.4, 423.

⁸⁶ Lin Chong 林冲, "Zhongguo de Xingdengbao Xue Yue jiangjun" 中國的興登堡薛岳將軍 [General Xue Yue, Paul von Hindenburg of China], *Xianggang xingdao bao* 香港星島報 (4 October 1938), in *Dì'èr cì Changsha huizhan jishi*, 266-271.

not due to our military victory.”⁸⁷ Instructions from the Generalissimo during the conference served as an emphatic warning to his Nationalist generals that the second Changsha campaign was a sign of ignominy rather than an achievement. After scoring a significant win in 1942, military officials of the Ninth War Area including Xue, were misguided into thinking that the new tactic they had formulated in 1939 would result in a similar outcome in Changsha. The fall of Changsha in 1944 can be attributed to various factors but persisting in repeating the old tactic was certainly a contributing one.

3.3 The Changsha Victory: the Third Battle of Changsha

3.3.1 *Defending Changsha: The military ideologies of Xue Yue*

Chiang came up with a tactic called the “magnet battle” at the Third Nanyue Military Conference. It required the NRA to remain steadfast like a magnet pulling in and immobilizing the enemies while creating a chance to counter their aggression.⁸⁸ The NRA made this tactic their top priority in anticipation of upcoming battles. In reality, this strategy was in line with Xue Yue’s military ideologies, which involved formulating a decisive battle and assembling a powerful troop to contain the Japanese attack in Changsha. Xue developed his *tianlu* tactics (*tianlu zhanfa* 天鑪戰法), building upon the “magnet battle”. The main principle of the *tianlu* tactics was as follows:

Tianluzhan requires certain prerequisites for it to be successful in terms of withdrawing and maintaining resistance. Firstly, completely demolish all forms of transportation such as roads and railways, that connect to enemies to nullify their benefits of heavy weaponry. Secondly, it is necessary to evacuate the countryside moving people and supplies away from the front to prevent them from being seized by enemies. Thirdly, ambush

⁸⁷ “Jiang xunci san” (21 October 1941), 387.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 384.

regions should be strategically reinforced with an imposing force [an NRA army]. Finally, the depth defensive positions should be established to create a sustained attrition of the enemy forces before engaging in decisive combat.⁸⁹

In 1939, Xue Yue divided his troops into four groups and set up three defensive lines north of Changsha during the campaign. A garrison force was positioned in three defensive lines responsible for delaying and luring the Japanese into the trap set in Changsha; a field force launched guerrilla warfare targeted the Japanese rear to disrupt their transportation, communication, logistics, and supply lines; an assault force was divided with the majority dispatched to the Japanese flanks and a minor faction disguised in civilian dress to ambush, eliminate Japanese commanding officers, disrupt communication and create disorder; a reserve force provided defense for strategic locations and strengthened the attacking soldiers once the counter-offensives were initiated.⁹⁰ Relying on effective military-civilian cooperation, the Ninth War Area was able to utilize the labor of local peasants for important tasks like gathering military supplies and evacuating the countryside and its population, as chapter six details.⁹¹

After a crushing loss in 1941, Xue implemented modifications by expanding the three existing defensive lines into three separate defensive zones. This was to build a fortified structure that could endure the Japanese attack for an extended time. Positioned at Xinqiang River, the first defense zone was to weaken the Japanese forces. NRA forces in this region retreated to the

⁸⁹ Xue Yue, “Tianluzhan” 天鑪戰 [Tianlu tactics], in *Xue Yue jiangjun*, 390.

⁹⁰ “Dijiu zhanqu guanyu diyi ci Changsha huizhan jingyan yu jiaoxun de baogao” 第九戰區關於第一次長沙會戰經驗與教訓的報告 [A report made by the Ninth War Area on the experience and lessons learned from the First Battle of Changsha] (11 October 1939), KRZZZMZC, 1077-1080; “Xue Yue zhi Jiang Jieshi midian” 薛岳致蔣介石密電 [Xue Yue’s confidential telegram to Chiang Kaishek] (9 October 1939), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.1, 234-236; “Xue Yue zhi Jiang Jieshi midian”, KRZZZMZC, 1031-1034.

⁹¹ Discourse in this thesis will then be extended to account for the destruction of transport around Changsha organized by the Hunan authority and the mustering of local people for this endeavor.

mountains in the east and awaited instructions from Xue before moving on to Changsha for the final decisive battle.⁹² NRA troops, stationed at the second defensive area situated between the Miluo and Laodao Rivers were tasked with wearing out the Japanese and luring them to advance toward Changsha.⁹³ After completing their missions, these troops withdrew to the east to regroup and prepare for a march to surround the Japanese in Changsha. The Greater Changsha area was the ultimate stronghold, with the city acting as a strategic location for the deployment of a strong NRA unit to halt the Japanese offensive.⁹⁴

After a collapse in the second battle, the Ninth War Area swiftly analyzed their loss and implemented necessary changes to their defense tactics. They also restored a significant number of their outposts and fortifications at the front.⁹⁵ Xue compiled a book entitled *Tianluzhan* designed for senior and subordinate officers inside the war area to gain insight into his tactics. He urged combat troops to stay resolute in their determination to engage in a life-or-death battle for victory rather than confining themselves to short-term fights lasting three, five, or eight days to fulfill their objectives.⁹⁶ Propaganda of the Changsha victory boosted the morale of both military personnel and civilians in the city, thus maintaining a decent level of functionality for the NRA troops in Hunan. As the Pacific War erupted, Chinese soldiers and civilians became

⁹² “Disan ci Changsha huizhan jingguo” 第三次長沙會戰經過 [The course of the Third Battle of Changsha] (19 December 1941-16 January 1942), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.3, 219.

⁹³ Ibid., 220.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ “Dijiu zhanqu guanyu disan ci Changsha huizhan qian di wo xingshi gaiyao de baogao” 第九戰區關於第三次長沙會戰前敵我形勢概要的報告 [A report made by the Ninth War Area on the overview of the enemy and our situation before the Third Battle of Changsha] (February 1942), KRZZZMZC, 1123; See also, “Dijiu zhanqu disan ci Changsha huizhan zhandou yaobao” 第九戰區第三次長沙會戰戰鬥要報 [The battle report of the Ninth War Area on the Third Battle of Changsha] (January 1942), ZHMGDAZL, part 5, vol.2, military 3, 540.

⁹⁶ Lu Jiabang 路家榜 and Wu Jingmo 吳敬模, ed., *Xue Yue kangzhan shougao* 薛岳抗戰手稿 [Xue Yue's manuscripts during the War of Resistance] (Zhongguo xinguang yinshuguan, 1948), 79.

increasingly determined to achieve success in their resistance efforts.⁹⁷ Instead of making the same tactical mistake, the Nationalists were well-prepared for a third battle in North Changsha, having detected a potential Japanese attack and taking precautions a week beforehand.⁹⁸

3.3.2 An unexpected move: the Japanese offensive on Changsha

The Japanese 23rd Army launched an attack on British-controlled Hong Kong on 8 December 1941. A MAC directive in the following day instructed that the Fourth and Ninth War Areas mobilized two armies to Guangdong to contain the Japanese and back up British allies. In order to impede the southern progress of the two NRA armies, the Japanese 11th Army decided to attack Hunan. From 23 December onwards, a fight raged on for one week between Xinqiang and Miluo Rivers. After breaking through two defensive lines, the Japanese reached the southern shore of the Miluo River. Any further actions in Hunan became insignificant after the fall of Hong Kong to the Japanese on 25 December.⁹⁹ Five days later, the Japanese carried out a surprise attack on Changsha diverging from their original plan to engage in battle in Hunan within two weeks.¹⁰⁰

Intricate motives drove the Japanese attack on Changsha, which surpassed their operational plan. According to Guo Rugui and Zhang Xianwen, the Japanese had considered capturing Changsha before the battle but this was not included in their combat plan.¹⁰¹ The Japanese made quick progress, breaching two NRA defensive areas and solidifying their

⁹⁷ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 956.

⁹⁸ “Dijiu zhanqu disan ci Changsha huizhan zhandou xiangbao” 第九戰區第三次長沙會戰戰鬥詳報 [A detailed battle report of the Ninth War Area on the Third Battle of Changsha] (19 December 1941-6 January 1942), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.3, 5.

⁹⁹ *Xianggang Changsha zuozhan*, 742

¹⁰⁰ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 959.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 960; see also, Guo Rugui and Huang Yuzhang, *Kangri zhanzheng zuozhanji*, 1037.

determination to take control of the city.¹⁰² It has been suggested that the Japanese forces redirected their attention to annihilating the NRA troops, who made their way south from the Miluo River to Changsha, causing the Japanese to advance towards the city.¹⁰³ This clarifies the intention of the Japanese to eliminate the NRA forces. However, it refrains from indicating whether their intention included capturing the city and their assessment of the reasons for the NRA's retreat to the south. Certain Japanese leaders on the battlefield believed it was possible to capture Changsha before the NRA troops, who were headed to Guangdong returned.¹⁰⁴

The Japanese assumed that the NRA had lost their combativeness and resolve to resist after retreating south from Miluo River. According to Zhang, after the Second Battle of Changsha in 1941 the Japanese also believed that once they broke through the river, there were no remaining Chinese forces to confront them from the Miluo River down to Changsha.¹⁰⁵ However, I argue that this false judgment did not arise during the Second Battle of Changsha, instead, was attributed to their actions back in 1939.

During the war, the Japanese often changed their initial plans for unexpected operations. After the Japanese takeover of Shanghai in 1937, the Tokyo General Staff and front commander Iwane Matsui displayed no interest in seizing Nanjing. But Yanagawa Heisuker, leader of the 10th Army directed his forces to ignore restrictions on their operation zones and chase after the NRA soldiers who were withdrawing from Shanghai. Upon discovering that the NRA troops were now only half as strong and the soldiers were

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ According to Japanese intelligence, the NRA forces stationed at Miluo River kept up a tenacious resistance against the Japanese even as their major forces were withdrawing southward to Changsha. Various Japanese divisions, enthusiastic for success and glory, elected to proceed to the south. *Xianggang Changsha zuozhan*, 786-794.

¹⁰⁴ Guo Daijun, *Chongtan kangzhan er*, 283.

¹⁰⁵ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 960.

discouraged, Matsui sanctioned an occupation of Nanjing as a strategy to coerce the Nationalists into surrendering.¹⁰⁶

Most Japanese commanders in the 1939 North Changsha campaign assumed that the NRA had to fall back to the southern region because of the rapid progress of Japanese forces. A catastrophic downfall of the Ninth War Area in September 1941 only reinforced their belief that the retreat of NRA troops meant their complete collapse. I argue that the Japanese downfall in 1942 Changsha could not be solely credited to their sudden shift in an operational plan, but also the effective utilization of a new tactic by the Nationalists since 1939. Through this tactic, the Japanese were misled to believe that the NRA units were withdrawing from the front lines because of deteriorated combat effectiveness. In other words, the tactical falling back proved effective in luring the Japanese forces.

In 1937, circumstances were dissimilar. After the Battle of Shanghai, specifically during the first stage of the war, Japan directed its strongest military powers toward fighting in China. Observations made during the Battle of Lanfeng indicated that the Japanese 14th Division possessed a notable edge in terms of heavy weaponry, surpassing that of the entire Chinese forces.¹⁰⁷ This allowed them to expand a military campaign beyond their assigned operational area. But in 1942, the absence of a strategic plan by the Japanese to attack Changsha could be perceived as evidence of a defeat of their move owing to a shortage of weaponry and rations.

3.3.3 The Changsha victory

On 1 January 1942, the Japanese went on their unplanned offensive to Changsha. Two days of fierce fighting including street clashes did not allow the

¹⁰⁶ van de Ven, *China at War*, 97.

¹⁰⁷ The Japanese 14th Division had 48 150mm howitzers but China only had 44. After the Battle of Shanghai, this figure was reduced to less than 22. Guo Daijun, *Chongtan kangzhan*, 447.

Japanese to occupy the city and they had to flee from the well-constructed blockade of the NRA surrounding Changsha. The Changsha victory was facilitated by the use of the *tianlu zhanfa* (including good military-civilian cooperation). The Japanese suffered a defeat because of their overextended operation, poor battle planning, underestimation of the NRA's resolve, and harsh winter weather in Hunan.

The Japanese had a flawed plan for attacking the city. Their first attack was strong but petered out after just two days.¹⁰⁸ Most Japanese units suffered an ammunition shortage as a direct result of the original plan to complete the operation in two weeks.¹⁰⁹ Bayonet fights were a common sight in and out of Changsha. The scarcity of effective weaponry or explosives caused a considerable decline in the Japanese offensive toward breaching the city walls. The Nationalists placed their heavy artillery on Yuelu Mountain, west of Changsha, which mirrored their previous operation in 1938 in Taierzhuang where they utilized 15cm howitzers. After their second operation in Changsha, the Japanese were convinced that the Nationalists were still weak and anxious about facing another assault and saw launching another Changsha campaign as a way to force the Nationalists to give up their resistance.¹¹⁰ Obviously, they were wrong.

¹⁰⁸ “Di’er shi qi jituanjun disan ci Changsha huizhan zhandou xiangbao” 第二十七集團軍第三次長沙會戰戰鬥詳報 [A detailed battle report of the 27th Group Army on the Third Battle of Changsha], KRZZHNZCSL, vol.3, 113.

¹⁰⁹ According to a telegraph from Xue to the 27th Group Army and the Japanese Third Division’s orders cut off by the NRA on 1 January 1942, this Japanese division nearly consumed most of its ammunition and grain, “Di’er shi qi jituanjun xiangbao”, 117; Each infantry soldier had 120 bullets and one grenade. The grain and food of each soldier were only for two days of consumption. The Japanese did not expect a long-term operation, see, Jingzhong jun 精忠軍編, ed., *Disan ci Changsha huizhan fuhuo disan shituan zuozhan mingling* 第三次長沙會戰俘獲敵三師團作戰命令 [Captured operational orders of the enemy 3rd Division during the Third Battle of Changsha] (10 February 1942), 18; This figure has been proved in the Japanese war history that most soldiers had to fight with their 120 bullets, see *Xianggang Changsha zuozhan*, 789.

¹¹⁰ Junshi weiyuanhui junlingbu 軍事委員會軍令部編, ed., *Kangzhan cankao congshu disan shi ba zhong disan ci Changsha huizhan zhi jiantao* 抗戰參考叢書第三十八種第三次長沙會戰之檢討 [A review of the Third Battle of Changsha, volume 38 in the series of reference books on the War of Resistance] (Junshi weiyuanhui junlingbu, 1942), 67.

Zhang Xianwen states that the Japanese expedition to the southern border of the Miluo River transpired smoothly leading to a change in their initial plan to attack Changsha.¹¹¹ This statement is somewhat correct since the NRA aimed to tire out the Japanese soldiers near the two rivers and lure them toward Changsha instead of engaging in all-out combat. Unusual and harsh weather in Hunan made the battle challenging for the Japanese. According to an NRA report on 26 December night, “It was raining and snowing with a piercing cold wind, which sadly resulted in the death of some soldiers due to the inhospitable weather.”¹¹² As the Japanese marched onward to the Miluo River, the landscape was blanketed in a shimmering silver sheen. Difficulties arose for the Japanese as they tried to cross the river because of the unceasing rise in water level, caused by a mix of precipitation in the form of rain and snow.¹¹³

Adverse weather conditions posed major obstacles for the Japanese as they struggled to move forward between the Xinqiang and Miluo Rivers. This is different from Zhang Xianwen’s view that the Japanese operation was executed without any issues. The Japanese commanders believed that the NRA’s pullback demonstrated a loss of their capability and determination to stand their ground. After crossing the Miluo River, their confidence in facing no resistance from the NRA was solidified. I argue that inadequate knowledge of the Nationalists’ new tactic since 1939 led the Japanese to make a mistake in attacking Changsha, ignoring challenging weather and limited resources.

When the Japanese encroached upon Changsha, the NRA initiated a counteroffensive. On 4 January, roughly 20 divisions from the Ninth War Area surrounded the Japanese troops. This presented a greater obstacle for the

¹¹¹ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 959.

¹¹² “Di’er shi qi jituanjun xiangbao”, 104.

¹¹³ *Xianggang Changsha zuozhan*, 770.

Japanese to withdraw compared to previous instances in both 1939 and 1941. From 4 to 16 January, the Japanese nearly lost their determination to fight, but they frantically searched for weaknesses in the NRA's encirclement. They moved forward by 10 kilometers each day.¹¹⁴ Many Japanese soldiers drowned to die when crossing the Miluo River. In 1939, the Japanese troops only took five days to reach the north of the Xinqiang River. However, on this occasion, it took them twice as long to travel the same distance.

3.3.4 The Changsha Battles and the Nationalist military performance

In the first phase of the war, it became clear that the NRA was lacking in efficient tactics and logistical prowess. But the Battles of Changsha saw their attempts to address these issues, although not all were resolved. In November 1938 at the First Nanyue Military Conference, Chiang Kaishek criticized the NRA for relying on obsolete defensive tactics by only creating single defensive lines rather than constructing multiple and deep defenses.¹¹⁵ Timely execution of various military directives was lacking. Field commanders faced difficulties in deploying troops in a swift and adaptable manner because of a lack of intelligence on Japanese movements. Inadequate confidentiality measures in multiple operational plans made it possible for the Japanese to detect and locate the NRA's forward placements.¹¹⁶ In his reports on the Battle of Shanghai, von Falkenhausen emphasized:

The loss of the NRA in Shanghai could be attributed to errors in strategy, mismanagement, and inadequate personnel; a disconnect in communication between their friendly forces was frequent; most divisions acted autonomously without any

¹¹⁴ Yang Seng 杨森, *Jiushi yiwang* 九十憶往 [Memories of the past at ninety years old] (Taipei: Longwen chubanshe, 1990), 157. Yang Seng was the commander of the 27th Group Army.

¹¹⁵ "Jiang weiyuanzhang diyi ci Nanyue junshi huiyi xunci" 蔣委員長第一次南嶽軍事會議訓詞 [Chairman Chiang's instructions at the First Nanyue Military Conference] (26 November 1938), ZHMGZYS, part 2, vol.1, 139-49.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 139-49 and 150-158.

mutual aid; the artillery and specialized divisions such as tank units were not conscious of the need for collaboration with the infantry to attain successful results nor did they comprehend the expertise of indirect fire.¹¹⁷

Improvements in the NRA were on full display during the Third Battle of Changsha. By working together, artillery troops situated on Yuelu Mountain, and infantry forces positioned in the city were able to tip the balance of heavy weaponry in favor of the NRA. Before the Japanese attacked Changsha, Xue Yue commanded his troops at Xinqiang and Miluo Rivers to swiftly move toward the city. Each division and army were assigned a specific area to engage in combat with a fixed date to reach the outskirts of Changsha for the decisive battle. In 1939, the NRA missed their chance to retaliate against the Japanese troops, but they did not make the same mistake twice. Xue organized an ambush battle at a war area level, which had been formerly at a level of an army ambush in 1939.¹¹⁸

One of the most notable achievements of the NRA was an enhancement of deep defensive structures and a deployment of troops in flanking positions. Units were instructed in the NRA training protocol to disperse and organize themselves in a deeper formation instead of a single line when under attack.¹¹⁹ Unfortunately, most NRA troops did not utilize these methods and instead stuck to single defensive positions before 1939. If the Japanese breached a defensive line, they would destroy all NRA defensive troops. Previously, considerable NRA reserves were deployed in areas that were targeted by the Japanese front attack. Consequently, there was a high number

¹¹⁷ “Deguo junshi guwen cheng Jiang Zhongzheng Shanghai fangmian zuozhan jingyan” 德國軍事顧問呈蔣中正上海方面作戰經驗 [A report on military operations and fighting experience in Shanghai from German military advisors to Chiang Kaishek] (7 September 1937), *Guomin zhengfu* 國民政府 [The Nationalist Government], 001-070006-00001-005, GSGDA.

¹¹⁸ Guo Daijun, *Chongtan kangzhan er*, 284.

¹¹⁹ van de Ven, *War*, 229.

of casualties. As von Falkenhausen pointed out, reserve forces should have been strategically deployed in two wings.¹²⁰ Henry de Fremery also criticized the NRA for their unwise strategy of protecting a front with a single line of trenches and failing to recognize the importance of shifting their reserves to the Japanese flanks.¹²¹

The *tianlu zhanfa* proved effective in helping the Ninth War Area overcome these difficulties. An operational order given to the NRA 20th and 58th Armies for the Third Battle of Changsha demonstrated that:

The 20th Army must defend the Xinqiang River positions against enemy attacks for at least 10 days while the 58th Army surrounded and attacked from the east and west.¹²²

Good cooperation among different troops, especially flanking units, was crucial for the successful execution of this action. During the first phase of the war, we observed a level of collaboration between Chiang Kaishek's factional soldiers and those of other military leaders.¹²³ The Battles of Changsha illustrated an ongoing solidarity within the Ninth War Area. As stated in chapter one, Xue Yue played a pivotal role in this matter owing to his strong alliances with military figures from the southwestern regions.

Issues of inadequate intelligence and desertion of soldiers persisted. The Japanese gained the upper hand in the Second Battle due to an error in judgment made by the Ninth War Area, causing the NRA to falter at the front

¹²⁰ "Deguo junshi guwen cheng Jiang Zhongzheng Shanghai zuozhan jingyan disan ci baogao" 德國軍事顧問呈蔣中正上海作戰經驗第三次報告 [The third report on the Shanghai fighting experience presented by German military advisors to Chiang Kaishek] (October 1937), *Guomin zhengfu*, 001-070006-00001-007, GSGDA.

¹²¹ van de Ven, *War*, 229.

¹²² "Disan ci Changsha huizhan zhandou xiangbao", 7-8.

¹²³ van de Ven, *War*, 229.

lines. Afterward, many regular NRA soldiers had fled.¹²⁴ Again, the Ninth War Area repeated the mistake of building single defensive fortifications. Although faced with overwhelming loss, the Ninth War Area was able to examine their problems and prevent them in the following battle, illustrating their ability for self-adjustment.¹²⁵ These weaknesses were not isolated incidents, instead, they were interconnected. A commander's misjudgment would lead to chaos in the command structure ultimately culminating in a catastrophic defeat on the battlefield as well as the desertion of soldiers at the front.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the war, a testament to the Japanese military's strength was that they employed their entire navy, tanks, artillery, amphibious combat capacity, and airforce to the forefront. The Japanese were also proved to be vulnerable. Due to the lack of a proper strategy, they were drawn into a conflict they did not foresee and sunk ever deeper into the mire.¹²⁶ Divisional commanders were keen to achieve fame as demonstrated by their actions in 1937 Nanjing and 1942 Changsha where they advanced beyond their designated supply lines and operational areas. It was apparent in the Battle of Taierzhuang in 1938 that without the collaboration of the navy and the airforce, and the benefit of supply lines, the Japanese were defenseless, especially when facing an army that combined positional, mobile, and guerrilla tactics.¹²⁷ Identifying these Japanese weaknesses accurately, the

¹²⁴ From the 27th Group Army's report, there were over half of the soldiers fled into many armies and divisions during the Second Battle of Changsha. "Di ershiqi jituanjun zuozhan jingguo", 71; see also, "Yang Seng guanyu di'er ci Changsha huizhan zhi jiantao yu suojian suowen dijun zhi xin zhanfa de baogao" 楊森關於第二次長沙會戰之檢討與所見所聞敵軍之新戰法的報告 [Yang Sen's report on the review of the Second Battle of Changsha and observations on the enemy's new tactics] (October 1941), KRZZZMZC, 1107.

¹²⁵ The Chinese troops corrected their mistakes by mainly using wire communication to avoid operational plans being cut off by the Japanese. *Xianggang Changsha zuozhan*, 789.

¹²⁶ van de Ven, *War*, 227.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 228.

Nationalists formulated a new tactic of retreating to engage in a decisive battle and striving for the two wings after 1939.

During the second phase of the war, the Japanese focused on fortifying their seized domains constraining the scope of forces and operational regions while utilizing both political and military approaches to annihilate China's will to fight. They faced challenges in terms of their offensive strength and logistical capabilities and persisted in launching multiple military campaigns to locally defeat the primary Chinese forces. However, they did not often succeed in their missions.

A possibility existed that Japanese officers in the field may be tempted to exceed their intended tactics and pursue a more hazardous approach. As the war shifted to its second stage, the Japanese proved incapable of adequately solving any problems that had arisen in the first phase. In light of the downsizing of their armed forces in China, it proved challenging for the Japanese to complete the mission of obliterating the primary combatants of multiple Chinese war areas.

Battles in Hunan from 1939 to 1942 brought to light the preexisting flaws of the NRA. The war comprised two markedly disparate forces. Nevertheless, the Japanese strategy for the war after 1938 provided the NRA with the possibility to continue their resistance. Their newly implemented tactic after 1939 proved to be successful in securing some victories but they were faced with another complete military defeat in 1941. We have seen the NRA's ability to self-adjust and the process of their military tactics, developing from imperfect to mature. Unlike their prior fruitless efforts, this time they had assimilated their previous combat experience, thereby enabling them to swiftly pull away from the looming pall of defeat.

Over two years of the war, the Nationalists employed a tactic that combined elements of positional defense, mobile, and guerrilla warfare in

their resistance against the Japanese. Although not the only one utilized, this approach proved pivotal in repelling a relatively smaller Japanese offensive and meeting the limited timeline of a single battle. The Japanese wanted to quickly end the fight, but the Nationalists' intention was to prolong a battle. Combat outcomes were generally satisfactory. When the Japanese commenced a massive attack with a considerable army, the Nationalists had no choice but to modify their tactic rather than merely repeating the old one at the frontline. The Nationalists were able to maintain control of Changsha until 1944, however, after protracted and sustained military engagements in Hunan from 1939 to 1943, their resistance gradually weakened. It was demonstrated by the downfall of the NRA forces at the front, leading to the loss of Changsha and most of the Hunan territories. This was because of the unwillingness to update their effective but overused battle tactic, a political rift in the central-local relations between Chongqing and Changsha, the destruction of Hunan's most important rice source, and difficulties in wartime living conditions of ordinary people. The remaining chapters of this work encompass all of these factors.

CHAPTER 4

A changing wartime central-local relationship: Changsha and Chongqing during the war and its influence on the Battle of Hunan in 1944

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the relationship between Xue Yue and Chiang Kaishek was strained. But in the 1930s, Xue improved this relationship, as we saw in chapter one, and became a non-Whampoa military figure trusted by Chiang. An urgent plan to build China's southwest into a base area against the approaching Japanese invasion allowed Xue to join Chiang's faction.

In the first chapter, I re-examine shifts in the relationship between Chiang and Xue before the war. This offers a closer look into how the war impacted their relationship. Chiang was partial to his Whampoa Clique generals like Tang En'bo. As a Guangdong general, Xue gained Chiang's trust allowing us to observe Chiang's stance towards previously unallied Nationalist leaders and the extent of his confidence in them. Chiang shared his power with some Nationalist leaders during the first phase of the war as seen in the Battle of Xuzhou. From 1939 to 1942, Chiang refrained from interfering too much in the Battles of Changsha when Xue was in charge as the commander in chief of the Ninth War Area.

The Fourth Battle of Changsha served to highlight a remarkable disparity in the way Xue and Chiang were preparing for the impending battle. From 1939 to 1942, they maintained a unified principle in defending Changsha, saving for minor discrepancies. In April and May 1944, while the Japanese were still fighting in Henan, Xue requested for more NRA troops to be deployed in Hunan as a precaution against a potential Japanese offensive on Changsha. A plan devised by Xue failed to materialize because Chiang did not

approve of sending more troops to support Xue. Given a deficiency of troops, Xue was obliged to mobilize resistance with the units available locally in the war area. These NRA forces with limited and deteriorated combat strengths were not able to wear the Japanese advance down. It is yet to be elucidated why Chiang declined to offer further military aid to Hunan and Xue. An investigation into whether Chiang had a specific strategy for the battle that differed from Xue's can reveal valuable information. It is only right that Chiang should be accountable for the failure in 1944 Hunan. With Xue obstinately sticking to the *tianlu zhanfa* that had already been employed three times, however, it seemed to be fated for the Changsha to fall.

This chapter delves into a comprehensive analysis of the 1944 Changsha battle and the relationship between Chiang and Xue from 1939 to 1942. I argue that in a province or war area under full Nationalist rule, assuming that there were no significant divergences in the military and administration matters between the local leaders and Chiang, authorities over directing combat and battle planning were assigned to the regional commanders. This could be attributed to a cordial alliance established between war areas and Chongqing since the war, in addition to the partial confidence of Chiang vested in those regional commanders, who he trusted. A good central-local relationship had a positive impact on the NRA's combat performance at the front. Nevertheless, when differences in strategic or tactical plans emerged between the war areas and Chongqing, regional commanders encountered difficulties in finalizing preparations and issuing commands by themselves.

4.1 A constructive superior-subordinate relationship: Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue before 1944

4.1.1 *A distinguished follower and committed challenger of Generalissimo: Xue Yue in the War of Resistance from 1937 to 1938*

In the 1930s, the relationship between Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue experienced a remarkable transformation from animosity to amicability. Xue demonstrated his competence as a commander to Chiang through their joint achievements in the Encirclement Campaign against the CCP and the pacification of China's Southwest. Xue, as a former anti-Chiang member switched sides supporting the Nanjing government. When the war broke out, however, Xue and his military peers from Baoding or local military academies found ways to circumvent Chiang's instructions in critical situations. Chiang was very opposed to embracing Xue's unique opinions and rebelliousness, but he experienced a change of perspective during the Battle of Wuhan. Chiang even reexamined his misjudgments and ill-temper towards his Nationalist commanders.

When the war first broke out, Chiang disallowed Xue from joining the battle in Shanghai and instead ordered him to govern in Guizhou. The reason for this was the development of a strong rapport and advantageous connections between Xue and the Southwest warlords following 1936, which proved crucial in establishing a solid foothold there and opposing Japan in the future for the central government.¹ After one month had passed since the start of the battle, Xue made his way to Shanghai and post-battle wholeheartedly devoted himself to reorganizing and providing instruction to troops, who had been evacuated from Shanghai, assembling them into a powerful guerilla unit in Anhui. These troops later became important guerrilla forces (*tingjin zongdui*

¹ Shao Tuorong, "Songhu Yudong Nanxun," 304.

挺進縱隊, literally should be translated into striding columns of troops) of the Ninth War Area.² During the Battle of Xuzhou, even though the NRA led by Xue was unsuccessful in annihilating the Japanese Fourth Division in Lanfeng, a concept of centering on stronger military forces to encircle the Japanese became a paramount principle in creating his military tactics later in Hunan. The great success achieved in Wanjialing during the Battle of Wuhan was an illustration of the advantage and effectiveness of Xue's military ideologies, particularly in the realm of the topography of central China.

Chiang and Xue experienced their first divergence in the Battle of Wuhan. Chiang instructed Xue to head west to Jiangxi for defensive purposes rather than launching an attack on the Japanese in Wanjialing. Nevertheless, Xue remained resolute in his beliefs and steadfastly refused to comply with Chiang's directive.³ The news of an impressive victory from Wanjialing brought back memories for Chiang of his irritable demeanor toward his Nationalist generals during the war.⁴ Before Xue moved to Changsha to assume control of the Ninth War Area at the end of 1938, Chiang was thoroughly satisfied with Xue's competency on the battlefields, including his establishment of the guerrilla warfare forces following the guerrilla warfare manual published in 1937. Chiang, furthermore, held back from accusing Xue of his disobedience. After the Battle of Wanjialing, his faith in Xue evolved to a heightened level, a sentiment that was displayed in the following example. In October 1938, Xue officially requested to step down from his position in the army because of a major disagreement with some fellow generals. Chiang allowed Xue to have autonomy in decision-making to keep the military stable

² Ibid.

³ Chiang did not agree with Xue's plan to fight in Wanjialing. Xue finally managed to convince Chiang to support his plan after three days of emphasizing its significance. See, *ibid.*

⁴ "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (10 October 1938), *JZZRJ*, 1938, 91.

and appease him.⁵ Unlike Zhang Fakui and many other generals from Guangdong, Xue obtained a greater level of trust and assurance from Chiang. Therefore, Chiang appointed Xue to take on a greater level of obligation by assigning him to supervise the Ninth War Area and granting him the authority of governorship over Hunan, replacing Zhang Zhizhong, a loyal supporter of Chiang and a graduate of Whampoa.

4.1.2 An absolute authority: Chiang Kaishek's leadership style over the Ninth War Area from 1939 to 1943

Between 1938 and 1939, Chiang Kaishek was successful in solidifying his power primarily when the MAC was instituted as the highest military organization to manage wartime China while wielding authority over all war areas of the country. His control of Hunan was precisely characterized in two aspects. First, it is vital to make clear the extent of authority Xue Yue could possess to direct the positioning and movement of the NRA within his command area, which encompassed Hunan, North Jiangxi, and South Hubei, particularly given that the MAC had the preeminence in fixing the strategic defense and tactics of the NRA. Examining this can determine whether Chiang involved himself in all facets of military matters in Hunan or if Xue had some degree of independence in terms of constructing military plans or leading military campaigns. At the end of 1938, Xue was established as the actual commander of the Ninth War Area. Essential strategic territories pertinent to the Ninth War Area had been transferred from Wuhan, Hubei to Changsha, Hunan, especially widespread zones in North Changsha. Nevertheless, Chiang and Xue experienced strategic disparities in defending Hunan and Changsha.

⁵ “Jiang Zhongzheng ji dian Xue Yue daxiao ciyi bing wei qi quanquan chuzhi jinyao shiyi” 蔣中正急電薛岳打消辭意並委其全權處置緊要事宜 [Chiang Kaishek's urgent telegram to Xue Yue to withdraw his resignation and entrust him with full authority to handle critical matters] (24 October 1938), JZTWW, 002-010300-00017-035, GSGDA. Chiang did not provide a clear explanation of the power that could be exercised when dealing with military affairs or shifting personnel within the army.

In chapter three, I argued that Xue constructed three defensive lines along three rivers of North Changsha. The objective was to make use of the natural fortifications of rivers to slow down the Japanese advancement. Changsha was chosen to act as a tactical decoy to draw Japanese forces toward the city's outskirts, where the main troops of the war area had already been prepared in advance for an encirclement and a counterattack. This tactic proved to be effective for the Nationalists after 1939. The Ninth War Area witnessed a collaborative effort between the army and additional forces, such as guerrilla troops and the WTC, composed of ordinary Hunanese civilians. In other words, the war area was supplied with the most formidable NRA forces in the nation and an effective tactical and social groundwork in anticipation of the Japanese attack.

After the 1939 fight, Chiang sent a personal directive to Bai Chongxi, the head of Guilin Field Headquarters, an order included a troop redeployment of the Ninth War Area that its major troops needed to move to the west of Hunan from North Changsha.⁶ This resulted in a decrease in the fighting strength in North Changsha and went against Xue's military tactics of concentrating all forces in the region to defend Changsha. Observations of the event show two key features of the method, by which Chiang issued personal directives. First, he employed a strong choice of words using phrases like "I am firmly confident that those measures will not lead to any mistakes (*zixin bu zhi cuowu* 自信不致錯誤)."⁷ The choice of words and phrases compelled numerous regional commanders to re-evaluate changing their plans in line with Chiang's

⁶ "Jiang Zhongzheng dianshi Bai Chongxi Jiangnan ge zhanqu chuzhi zhidao gaikuang wang zhenzhuo yu Gu Zhutong Chen Cheng Xue Yue shangji congshu duanxing" 蔣中正電示白崇禧江南各戰區處置指導概況望斟酌與顧祝同陳誠薛岳商計從速斷行 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram to Bai Chongxi to instruct him to consider the general situation and handling guidelines for those war areas located in the south of the Yangtze River and to deliberate and act swiftly in consultation with Gu Zhutong, Chen Cheng, and Xue Yue] (10 October 1939), JZTWW, 002-090106-00014-103, GSGDA, 2-3.

⁷ Ibid., 3

intentions and give up their original conceptions that were more fitting to the current circumstances at the forefront. His telegrams or directives consistently featured this type of writing style. In an additional example, within a telegram transmitted to Li Zongren, Chiang stated that “the Japanese contingent surrounding the Long-Hai Railway is not adequate and if the NRA can join forces in combat, a victory can be secured (*bi cao shengsuan* 必操勝算).”⁸

The second feature was his tendency to explain orders and personal directives as being suggestive to his Nationalist generals as Chiang often did to add a comment like “to reflect upon the actual situation at the front before taking actions (*zai qianfang zhenzhuo shiqing* 在前方斟酌實情).”⁹ Chang Jui-te argues that this stemmed from the apprehension that commanders, such as Bai did not accede to his behest whereupon Chiang made supplementary remarks, urging them to take into account prevailing circumstances at the front.¹⁰ Bai had the potential to reject Chiang’s command, however, this should not be interpreted as suggesting that other officers inferior to Bai in rank could also take such action.

Despite certain instructions from Chiang being disregarded or contradicted regarding specific military operations, a discussion on troop deployment was still essential. For example, before the Battle of Xuzhou, Li Zongren decided to retreat from the city without informing Chiang. Nevertheless, he submitted a revised edition of his battle plan to Chiang, who agreed to it before the battle started, as noted in chapter two. As one more instance, the personal directive, comprised of a deployment strategy for three war areas was sent to Bai, who consequently should at the minimum

⁸ “Jiang Zhongzheng dian Li Zongren deng rijun bijin Longhai xian bingli buzu” 蔣中正電李宗仁等日軍逼近隴海線兵力不足 [Chiang Kaishek sent a telegram to Lizongren and others stating that the Japanese forces approached the Longhai Railway line with insufficient troops] (14 May 1938), JZTWW, 002-020300-00010-038, GSGDA, 1.

⁹ “Jiang Zhongzheng dianshi Bai Chongxi”, 3.

¹⁰ Chang Jui-te, “Personal Directive,” 79.

communicate the decree to the commanding officers of those three war areas instead of as Chang suggests, simply dismissing Chiang's orders. When seeking assistance from Nationalist generals or trusted associates, Chiang would often grant them restricted power to lead on the frontline. Xue was authorized to make decisions based on his own discretion as previously deliberated. During the pre-war era, Bai was seen as a troublesome warlord, who was averse to Chiang. However, Chiang recognized his military talent and appointed Bai as the head of the Guilin Field Headquarters with authority over all Southwest matters.¹¹

The 1939 order mentioned above that came from Chongqing, concerning the relocation of NRA forces, was substantially discordant with the perception of Xue in defending Changsha and Hunan. Chiang, following a loss in the key city of Yichang, which served as an entry point to the wartime capital of Chongqing, explicitly directed Xue to rapidly deploy more troops to western Hunan in 1940. Chiang inscribed in his diary on 24 June, "I still think that the displacement of the primary forces from east Hunan to the west and losing Changsha has no significant effect on the result of the War of Resistance."¹² This shows that Chiang never wavered from the notion of deserting Changsha, an idea that had come about during the First Battle of Changsha.

In essence, Changsha was less important to Chiang than many other cities, such as Chongqing, Yichang, and a different Hunanese city, Hengyang. Xue perceived the protection of Changsha as a crucial tactic undertaking. As tensions reached their climax in 1939, Chiang convened a conference to explore an option of relocating from Changsha to either Hengyang or Guangxi

¹¹ Xiao Xianyou, "Xue Yue yu dijiu zhanqu," 165.

¹² "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (24 June 1940), JZZRJ, 1940, 87; see also, "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (24 June 1940), JJSXS, 1940, 326.

in the event of the city's imminent defeat. Xue articulated his dissent toward Chiang and emphatically advocated for combat in Changsha (see chapter three). An opposing viewpoint on Changsha's role in the war ultimately swelled into a huge strategic disparity between these two military leaders when the flame of the Ichigo Operation expanded in Hunan in 1944.

Xue aimed to persuade Chiang to reconsider his deployment strategy by emphasizing the crucial role of Changsha in protecting Hunan. As a compromise, Xue also agreed to send some troops to western Hunan at Chiang's request.¹³ Chiang decided to support the new proposal from Xue after thorough consideration, but he still did reduce certain number of troops that could be deployed from east and north Hunan. As indicated by Chiang in response to Xue:

The Ninth War Area should strategically deploy the NRA forces with the smallest number of troops in North Jiangxi. Troops headed by Wang Yaowu 王耀武 [the commander of the 74th Army] should focus their attention, especially on Changsha as a form of backup troops. In the future, the Ninth War Area should take precedence in the defense of Changsha rather than deploying troops separately to other locations.¹⁴

The Second Battle of Changsha ended with a Chinese failure because of a strategic blunder committed by the Ninth War Area, as the previous chapter discussed. In late 1939 following instruction from Chongqing, the transfer of multiple NRA units, such as the 52nd, 53rd, 60th, 70th, 79th, and 87th Armies played a crucial role in diminishing the defensive capability of the war area,

¹³ "Cheng fu guanyu zuozhan bushu zhi yijian" 呈復關於作戰部署之意見 [Replies on a report on opinions regarding fighting deployment] (4 July 1940), JZTWW, 002-020300-00004-056, GSGDA, 3-4.

¹⁴ "Jiang Zhongzheng dian Xue Yue yi Wang Yaowu jun jizhong zuo ceying Changsha huizhan zhi zong yubeidui" 蔣中正電薛岳以王耀武軍集中作策應長沙會戰之總預備隊 [Chiang Kai-shek's telegram to Xue Yue stated the concentration of Wang Yaowu's army as the general reserve force to support the Battle of Changsha] (28 September 1940), JZTWW, 002-020300-00004-061, GSGDA, 1-2.

too. Chiang gave Xue a certain degree of prerogative and autonomy to manage the military affairs of the war area. Notwithstanding, a discordance in their comprehension of the strategic magnitude of Changsha foreshadowed a tumultuous event in 1944.

Comprehending another aspect of Chiang's wartime authority over Hunan is to clarify his involvement in the first three Battles of Changsha, which is indispensable to investigating his ties with Xue. To be specific, was Xue authorized by Chiang to form battle plans, considering that the MAC was responsible for devising them? On the other hand, did Xue encounter any obstacles that hindered the chain of command of the Ninth War Area during the battles imposed by Chiang and the central government?

In general, from 1939 to 1942, the Ninth War Area was primarily responsible for conducting and issuing battle plans autonomously, with Chiang's directives being directed to the Headquarters office before reaching the NRA troops through Xue Yue. For example, on the eve of the First Battle of Changsha, the Ninth War Area Headquarters gave orders for the preparation for the battle to all NRA troops inhabiting the war area and then the very following day conveyed directives from the MAC headed by Chiang.¹⁵ After the MAC introduced new orders for the battle, Chiang began by transmitting a message to Xue, who then passed down orders under altered instructions to commanders at all levels.

Chiang habitually acclimatized himself to shifting his opinion, something that happened on a consistent basis across the duration of the war. During the Battle of Shanghai, when more Japanese forces landed in Hangzhou Bay on 5 November 1937, the NRA troops in the area were

¹⁵ "Dui Xiangbei zhunbei yingzhan zhi zhishi" 對湘北準備應戰之指示 [Instructions for preparation to engage in battle in Northern Changsha] (19 September 1939), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.1, 14, and "Weizuo dui quanban diqing ji zuozhan shang zhi zhishi" 委座對全般敵情及作戰上之指示 [Chairman's general instruction on enemy situation and operational strategy], *ibid.*, 15.

confronted with a complete envelopment from the south to the north by the Japanese.¹⁶ The same day, Chiang gave his approval for a withdrawal but quickly reversed his decision, and then for two days he dithered over whether or not to issue a directive for a full-scale retreat.¹⁷ A two-day postponement resulted in a significant decrease in morale and a complete breakdown of the command structure.¹⁸ Because of the Japanese ceaseless bombing and pursuit of the grand, an orderly retreat from Shanghai became completely unfeasible.

In chapter three, I introduced how Chiang called for a top-level meeting in Chongqing on 24 September 1939. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the possibility of retreating from Changsha and potentially moving to South Hunan or Guangxi for the sake of resistance. Two telegraphs were sent to Xue Yue instructing him to get ready for the immediate movement of NRA forces to the southern area once Changsha was seized by the Japanese.¹⁹ Xue did not fully carry out Chiang's orders. On 25 September, he ordered most of the NRA troops to head south while also dispatching some forces toward Changsha and its nearby areas in the east, as part of his plan to lure the Japanese to Changsha.²⁰ Although Chiang eventually agreed to fight in Changsha, his sudden reversal of decision prevented the Ninth War Area from launching a counteroffensive timely. While NRA troops were heading south, the Japanese suddenly changed their direction from south to east.

Proving that Chiang issued direct orders to commanders in the Ninth War Area, disregarding directives from Xue during the Changsha battles, is a

¹⁶ van de Ven, *War*, 216; Guo Daijun, *Chongtan kangzhan*, 337.

¹⁷ "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (8 November 1937), JZZRJ, 1937, 130.

¹⁸ van de Ven, *War*, 216.

¹⁹ "Weizuo dui ben zhanqu zuozhan zhi zhidao" 委座對本戰區作戰之指導 [Chairman's instructions for fighting in the war area] (24 September 1939), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.1, 23, and "Weizuo dui zuozhan shang zhishi" 委座對作戰上指示 [Chairman's instructions on fighting] (25 September 1939), *ibid.*, 24. However, in these two telegrams, Chiang both mentioned providing strong resistance in Changsha. This explains that he did not give up fighting in Changsha but saw the city as a point to exhaust the Japanese.

²⁰ "Dui Xiangbei zhuanjin zuozhan zhi zhidao" 對湘轉進作戰之指導 [Guidance on the advance operation in Hunan] (25 September 1939), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.1, 25.

challenging task without substantial evidence. Battle reports or telegrams exchanged between Chiang and the army officers, now accessible to our examination, offer valuable information. These documents demonstrated that Chiang was in charge of directing military actions in the Ninth War Area with authority extending to at least the field army and division levels.

To be specific, most army and division commanders needed to transmit telegrams to Chongqing to report on the progress of battles (*zhanqing* 戰情), battle results (*zhanbao* 戰報), and intelligence (*qingbao* 情報). Most of these telegrams confirmed that their actions were carried out on the orders of Xue, the top commander of the war area. During the Second Battle of Changsha, the NRA 26th Army suffered heavy losses and Xue was the one, who urgently commanded them to escape a Japanese blockade. Chiang and Chongqing were out of the loop regarding the 26th Army's operations. The army leader sent a telegram to Chiang on 26 September 1941 to convey the seriousness of their situation after being surrounded by the Japanese: "Our army carried out their breakout yesterday as instructed by Commander Xue."²¹

During the First Battle of Changsha in 1939, the leader of the 15th Group Army maintained daily communication with Chongqing. Careful analysis of these telegrams reveals at least two definite points. First, Xue's orders were followed without question by the military group in every single task they undertook. Between 7 September and 13 October, this group sent a total of 29 telegrams to Chongqing, seven of which were related to military operations or the movement of units, and all were under the command of Xue.²²

²¹ "Xiao Zhichu zhi Jiang Jieshi midian" 蕭之楚致蔣介石密電 [Xiao Zhichu's confidential telegram to Chiang Kaishek] (26 September 1941), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.2, 256.

²² See, "Guan Linzheng zhi Jiang Jieshi midian" 關麟徵致蔣介石密電 [Guan Linzheng's confidential telegram to Chiang Kaishek] (7 September to 13 October 1939), *ibid.*, vol.1, 239- 249.

Second, these telegrams proved that Chiang possessed the competence to efficiently oversee all elements of the Ninth War Area and was well-informed about their actions. In case of a disagreement between Chiang and Xue about the current situation at the front, Chiang had the power to issue instructions directly to divisions. Chiang showed minimal interference in the Ninth War Area during the first three Battles of Changsha. NRA forces demonstrated exceptional persistence and harmonious functioning under the Ninth War Area's unified command structure, as seen on the battlefield. In 1942, they completed a remarkable feat against the Japanese. As the diverging opinions of Chiang and Xue became clearer, it resulted in a troublesome state.

4.2 The Battle of Changsha and Hengyang during the Ichigo Operation in 1944

4.2.1 A clear divergence of strategy between Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue with respect to the fortification of Changsha

In April 1944, Japan began the Ichigo Operation, which lasted until December of that year. This military campaign involved a significant number of troops spread across several Chinese provinces, such as Henan, Hunan, and Guangxi after thorough preparation. 150 Japanese regiments were mobilized surpassing 140 regiments that participated in the Wuhan Operation of 1938 (China had around 120 NRA combat divisions and over one million soldiers protecting Wuhan).

Historians such as van de Ven, reach a consensus that China suffered severe repercussions due to the Allied defeats in Burma.²³ Van de Ven discerns two factors contributing to the Chinese loss in Operation Ichigo: a large part of Chennault's air force in China was redeployed to Burma, with the aircraft

²³ Van de Ven, "Stilwell in the Stocks," 254.

remaining in China being utilized for safeguarding US heavy bomber bases rather than assisting the Chinese army while the Yunnan Army was not employed to combat the Ichigo offensive or to safeguard American assets in China.²⁴ In March 1943 Chiang Kaishek approved a proposal from the Department of Military Operations, developed with General Joseph Stilwell to train 31 divisions, comprising 400,000 soldiers.²⁵ Ramgarh, India, was chosen as the location for the training of 100,000 NRA soldiers as X Force while 30 divisions were to be trained in Yunnan and Guilin with the former divisions to be referred to as Y Force and the latter as Z Force. Both the removal of Chennault's air force and the positioning of the Yunnan Army (Y Force) in Burma notably diminished overall Chinese defensive strength to resist the Ichigo Operation. But I am still suspicious about whether these troops could be used to resist in Hunan or somewhere in China. The relocation of the Y Force to Burma by Stilwell had the effect of diminishing China's resistance on the whole, however, more locally in Hunan, complicated reasons are worthwhile for further discussion, particularly given that it was the time when Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue held different strategic understandings of the defense of Hunan and the Nationalists actually had established impressive defensive forces at Hengyang, a city south of Changsha.

Coble, supported by van de Ven's observations, argues that Japanese army leaders in the field often deviated from the intended directives set in Tokyo, choosing to either disregard them entirely or push beyond the original scope.²⁶ It was reasonable to believe, therefore, for the Chinese leadership that, "Ichigo should go for the jugular and take Chongqing."²⁷ The hypothesis was

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Zang Yunhu, "Chinese Operations in Yunnan and Central Burma," in *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War*, ed. Mark Peattie, Edward J. Drea, and Hans van de Ven (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 387.

²⁶ Coble, *The Collapse of Nationalist China*, 20; van de Ven, *China at War*, 181.

²⁷ Ibid.

advanced that Chiang and Xue held contrasting views on the defensive strategy for Hunan during the operation, with a possible implication being that the Nationalist government was willing to sacrifice Changsha to secure the protection of Chongqing. Thus, Chiang had to strategically utilize his limited forces, particularly after his best soldiers were sent to Burma, to engage the Japanese at a point, in which Chinese troops could offer a stronger defense or even counterattack, instead of futilely protecting cities that were unlikely to be saved. The primary focus of my discussion revolves around the strategic divergence between Chiang and Xue, Chiang's defensive tactics for Hengyang, and his uncertainty regarding Xue Yue's loyalty during the Battle for Hunan in 1944.

Xue was in charge of the Ninth War Area from 1939 to 1942 and Chiang gave him the freedom to carry out his military ideas. The war area helped Chongqing to protect Hunan, a province with abundant agricultural resources, and secured a great victory in Changsha in early 1942, causing significant losses to the Japanese forces. Even so, Chiang's indefinite standpoint on the status of Changsha that it was not the key to affecting China's war with Japan eventually provoked a strategic rift between him and Xue just before the Battle of Hunan in 1944.

When viewed through two separate viewpoints, Chiang and Xue were moving further apart in their actions. First, they disagreed on choosing the location of a decisive battle, with Changsha or Hengyang being the options, which has been discussed later in detail. The Ninth War Area had faced a dilemma since the First Changsha Campaign in 1939: defend Changsha, using a formidable army or not? Moreover, following the capture of Changsha in late June 1944, Chiang tended to support the retreat to Guangxi while Xue was determined to resume fighting in Hunan right away. The chain of command of

the Ninth War Area was thrown into chaos, leading to the NRA's defeat in Hunan and the Japanese taking control of Hengyang.

It was clear to both Chiang and Xue that a different approach was required to resist the upcoming Japanese offensive. According to Zhao Zili 趙子立, a Nationalist official in the Ninth War Area, "Xue Yue firmly believed that the Japanese army was too divided and insufficient in numbers to carry out a large-scale attack."²⁸ Zhang Xianwen agrees that Xue was ill-prepared for potential combat in the Hunanese Theatre and that there were power struggles among top officers in the war area.²⁹ The assertion is baseless. In May 1944, Chiang sternly cautioned Xue about potential consequences: "If the Japanese were to penetrate the Beiping-Wuhan Railroad, they would continue to the Guangzhou-Wuhan Railroad to link their railway from north to south."³⁰ Xue revised his tactical plan as well, "We must have a solid military presence in Pingjiang, Hengyang, Changsha, and Liuyang to effectively defend against any threats additionally, our main forces should be split into two groups to engage in a decisive battle in the northern regions of Lu River and Lian River."³¹

²⁸ Zhao Zili 趙子立 and Wang Guanglun 王光倫, "Chang Heng zhanyi" 長衡戰役 [The Battle of Changsha and Hengyang], in *Hunan si da huizhan: yuan Guomindang jiangling kangri zhanzheng qinli ji* 湖南四大會戰: 原國民黨將領抗日戰爭親歷記 [Four major battles in Hunan: personal accounts of Former nationalist generals in the War of Resistance against Japan], ed. Quanguo zhengxie Hunan si da huizhan bianxiezu 全國政協湖南四大會戰編寫組編 (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1995), 404.

²⁹ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 1071.

³⁰ "Jiang Zhongzheng dian Xue Yue ridi ji Pinghan tielu hou bi xiang Yuehanlu jingong wu xi jiji zhunbei" 蔣中正電薛岳日敵繼平漢路後必向粵漢路進攻務希積極準備 [Chiang Kaishek's telegram to Xue Yue required him to prepare for the fighting actively since the Japanese enemy would surely attack the Yuehan Railway after their advance to the Pinghan Railway] (14 May 1944), JZTWW, 002-090106-00016-526, GSGDA.

³¹ Shao Tuorong and Jiang Rongseng, "Chang Heng huizhan Nanchang shouxian yu jieji guitian" 長衡會戰南昌受降與解甲歸田 [The Battle of Changsha and Hengyang, the surrender of the Japanese in Nanchang, and returning to civilian life], in *Xue Yue jiangjun*, 440; this plan had been collected in a report made by the Ninth War Area after the Battle of Changsha and Hengyang (the Fourth Changsha Campaign was a part of it). See, "Dijiu zhanqu Chang Heng zuji zhan zhandou xiangbao zuozhan zhidao ji bingli" 第九戰區長衡阻擊戰戰鬥詳報作戰指導及兵力 [Detailed battle report, operational guidance, and forces of the Ninth War Area in the Changsha-Hengyang defensive Battle] (25 May to 10 October 1944), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.4, 510.

The new battle plan, different from his previous plans of fighting in Changsha implied that Xue had acknowledged variations in the upcoming Japanese assault. Consequently, he opted to shift a decisive battle position southward from Changsha in order to prolong the duration for weakening and exhausting the Japanese attack from the north. According to Zhang Xianwen, Chiang approved the plan but Xue did not have enough soldiers to carry it out.³² Chiang's stance on the plan was unclear but an insufficient number of military forces in the Ninth War Area was held accountable for the downfall of Changsha.

It seemed that Chiang did not openly deny Xue's plan. Regardless, the MAC's official plan on 28 May suggested that Chiang held differing opinions about the upcoming battle. This plan mandated the Ninth War Area to mobilize and organize 10 armies of local soldiers to counter a Japanese force, comprising 150,000 troops.³³ In addition, the NRA 10th Army, known for its outstanding city-safeguarding capability during the war was relocated to Hengyang. Despite being under Xue's leadership, it was the MAC that wielded the real command. The Battle of Changsha was off-limits for the 10th Army unless the MAC gave the go-ahead. The MAC directed two armies, one from the Third War Area and one from the Sixth War Area to promptly aid the Hunan front on 31 May. The 24th Army Group, which originated from the Soviet-aided 74th Army was under the command of the Sixth War Area and supervised by the MAC. Their primary task was to safeguard the Xiang River's western side.³⁴ Around six armies were available for the Ninth War Area in North Changsha, a number that closely mirrored the troops involved in the

³² Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 1072; "Dijiu zhanqu Chang Heng zuji zhan", 510.

³³ "Dijiu zhanqu Hunan huizhan zuozhan zhidao fang'an" 第九戰區湖南會戰作戰指導方案 [Operational plan and guidance for the fighting in Hunan of the Ninth War Area] (May to July 1944), KRZZZMZC, 1255.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1257.

former three battles. Nevertheless, they had to confront a more powerful Japanese offensive.

As opposed to their earlier confrontations with three to six Japanese divisions, this time the NRA encountered a far more powerful offensive from the Japanese, consisting of three columns over a large area of seventy-five miles wide and thirty miles deep.³⁵ Chiang also denied Xue, who asked for more troops to reinforce Changsha and only permitted the deployment of two armies. Map 4.1 clearly shows five red arrows (only three arrows in the previous three battles as shown in Maps 3.2-3.4) pointing north-south, indicating a substantial deployment of Japanese troops for the 1944 battle. As the fight commenced, the NRA's advantage in manpower dwindled, especially without the support of reinforcements from the other two war areas. Due to the need to cover wide fronts, most detachments were unable to concentrate their defensive forces.³⁶

Numerous historians, including Zhang Xianwen, Wang Qisheng, and Guo Daijun are in agreement that the MAC had not adequately readied itself for the fight in Hunan due to an underestimation of the number of troops that the Japanese were able to mobilize.³⁷ Wang also argues that in mid-May Chiang only issued a mere suggestive instruction to the Ninth War Area regarding preparations rather than redeploying troops from other war areas to

³⁵ Wang Qisheng, "Battle of Hunan," 409; according to Xue's report after the battle in 1942, there were three Japanese divisions alongside three to four bridges (around 100,000 men) who attacked the NRA in North Changsha, see "Xue Yue baogao disan ci Changsha huizhan rijun sanxian bingli peibei qingxing midian" 薛岳報告第三次長沙會戰日軍三綫兵力配備情形密電 [Xue Yue's confidential telegram reporting the Japanese three-line troop deployment during the Third Battle of Changsha] (30 January 1942), ZHMGDAZL, part 5, vol.2, military 3, 543-544.

³⁶ "Junlingbu ni Chang Heng huizhan jingguo zhandou yaobao zuozhan jiantao" 軍令部擬長衡會戰經過戰鬥要報: 作戰檢討 [The battle summary of the Ministry of Military Operations of the Changsha-Hengyang Campaign: fighting review] (26 August 1944), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.4, 506-507.

³⁷ See, Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*; Wang Qisheng, "Battle of Hunan"; Guo Daijun, *Chongtan kangzhan er*.

reinforce Hunan, demonstrating his underestimation of the imminent Japanese attack.³⁸

On 6 May 1944, the MAC learned that the Japanese were moving south with 10 divisions. Chiang then sent a telegram to Xue, emphasizing a need for defensive preparations in the Ninth War Area.³⁹ The Japanese needed to deploy a larger number of soldiers than before in their pursuit to capture Changsha. Chiang anticipated in his diary that the Japanese would amass at least nine divisions to breach the Guangzhou-Wuhan Railway.⁴⁰ In addition, Chiang clearly stated in his telegram to the Ninth War Area on 28 May that the Japanese must gather a minimum of eight divisions for their attack on Changsha.⁴¹ The likelihood was not that Chongqing would underestimate the Japanese and their deployment of a considerable amount of troops in their attack. A heated debate within the MAC showed that Chiang's reluctance to fight in Changsha heavily influenced his decision-making process leading up to the Japanese offensive on Hunan. In other words, Chiang ultimately made the strategic choice to protect Hengyang rather than Changsha as the focal point during the Battle for Hunan in 1944.

³⁸ "Junlingbu Chang Heng huizhan jiantao"; see also, Wang Qisheng, "Battle of Hunan," 409.

³⁹ "Jiang weiyuanzhang zhi dijiu zhanqu siling zhangguan Xue Yue zhishi diqing ji gouzhu gongshi" 蔣委員長致第九戰區司令長官薛岳指示敵情及構築工事 [Chairman Chiang's instructions to the commander-in-chief of the Ninth War Area, Xue Yue on the enemy situation and how to build fortification] (6 May 1944), ZHMGZYS, part 2, vol.2, 643.

⁴⁰ "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (28 May 1944), JZZRJ, 1944, 74.

⁴¹ "Dijiu zhanqu Chang Heng zuji zhan zhandou xiangbao zuozhan jingguo" 第九戰區長衡阻擊戰戰鬥詳報作戰經過 [Detailed battle report and operational course of the Changsha-Hengyang defensive battle of the Ninth War Area] (31 May 1944), KRZZHNZCSL, vol.4, 513.



Map 4.1 The Battle of Changsha-Hengyang. Source: “Guofangbu shiliaoju bianzhi Chang Heng huizhan jingguo yaotu 國防部史料局編製長衡會戰經過要圖” (26 May to 8 August 1944), JZTWW, 002-020300-00014-117, GSGDA.

4.2.2 *Fighting in Hunan or Guangxi?*

Top MAC members had a heated discussion about whether to mobilize resistance in Hunan or retreat to Guangxi before the start of the Fourth Battle in Changsha in order to gain more time for preparation before facing the Japanese. Almost all of the MAC members, led and controlled by Bai Chongxi supported a decision to transfer to Guangxi because they believed the Guangzhou-Wuhan Railroad (mainly in Hunan) was too vulnerable to withstand or defend. A prevailing opinion was that the NRA should pull out to the Hunan-Guangxi Railroad and engage in combat with Japan either at the Hunan-Guangxi border, or in the surrounding area of Guilin, the capital of Guangxi.⁴² It was clear that they lacked confidence in going up against a formidable Japanese offensive along the Guangzhou-Wuhan Railway in Hunan. A well-planned shift to Guangxi could provide an extra month to prepare a solid defense and bring in additional troops from other war areas.

Xu Yongchang, the Supreme Commander of the Ministry of Military Operations and the Ministry of Military Administration was firmly against the relocation from Hunan to Guangxi. He held the belief that escaping from the Guangzhou-Wuhan Railroad (Hunan) could have adverse effects on the War of Resistance following the downfall of the NRA in Henan.⁴³ He went on to say that the Japanese were intent on annihilating the ground forces of the NRA highlighting emphatically that they could not mount simultaneous assaults on two or three fronts.⁴⁴ Xu was backed by Chiang,⁴⁵ who appeared receptive to the possibility of engaging in combat in Hunan.

⁴² Wang Qisheng, "Battle of Hunan," 408.

⁴³ Guo Daijun, *Chongtan kangzhan er*, 390-391.

⁴⁴ Wang Qisheng 王奇生, "Hunan huizhan zhongguo jundui dui rijun yi hao zuozhan de huiying" 湖南會戰: 中國軍隊對日軍「一號作戰」的回應 [The Battle of Hunan: responses of the Chinese forces to the Japanese Ichigo Operation], *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu*, no.3 (2004): 9, doi:CNKI:SUN:KANG.0.2004-03-000.

⁴⁵ Guo Daijun, *Chongtan kangzhan er*, 390-391.

However, I argue that the idea of a strategic retreat to Guangxi influenced Chiang to formulate his own plan for battling in Hunan. Chiang had a clear plan as supported by his order to move the 10th Army to Hengyang. This indicated his inclination toward selecting a location south of Changsha in order to secure more space and time for a decisive battle with the Japanese. Furthermore, his directive about the role of Changsha showed a clear intention that was to use the city as a means of wearing down and weakening the Japanese troops, rather than focusing on defending it. It appeared logical, therefore, that Chiang solely urged Xue Yue to utilize current troops to resist within the war area.

Chiang came up with a blueprint to safeguard Hengyang and considered Changsha as an important position to deplete the Japanese offensive, a fundamental aspect of his defense strategy for Hengyang. Changsha was doomed to fall because Chiang refused to fight a hopeless defensive battle there. A root cause of Chiang's actions was attributed to his doubt about the capability of his Nationalist generals. After the Battle of Henan concluded, his faith in the military aptitude of his commanders at the front was further shaken because the NRA experienced an unprecedented collapse, deepening his feeling of despondency. Recorded in his diary on 13 May 1944 was the following:

As of now, the situation involving party, military, and diplomatic issues is not up to par. In managing military deployments, I have chosen to ignore the procedure set by the Ministry of Military Operations. Instead, I have chosen to primarily depend on verbal interaction. My lack of faith in incompetent leaders has caused me to act independently, bringing about detrimental outcomes on the battlefield in Henan... I need to refrain from interfering personally in frontline military operations in the future.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (13 May 1944), JZZRJ, 1944, 68.

Chiang failed to correct the mistakes he noted in his diary before the battle in Hunan. This led to an increased sense of distrust toward Xue Yue during the Battles of Hunan. An ill-advised move to put the MAC plan into action and shift the 10th Army to Hengyang on 28 May without consulting Xue in the decision-making process, proved to be the quick downfall of Changsha. As a result, their formerly unbreakable relationship was weakened. The breakdown of this relationship between Chiang and Xue that formed in the 1930s caused a serious disruption within the command structure and organization of the Ninth War Area.

Chiang certainly had well-founded rationales for his decision to fight in Hengyang rather than in Changsha. The destruction of the US air bases in Hunan, particularly near Hengyang, was a key motivation behind the Japanese decision to commence the Ichigo offensive. In Hengyang, Chinese military forces showed a heightened level of resistance over 47 days because of ensuring to protect the American air base nearby. Hengyang, situated as a crucial intersection within the transportation network of southern China, stood as a city positioned 190 kilometers to the south of Changsha along the Wuhan-Canton railway, where two tributaries of the Xiang River converged and a railway extended from the city to Guangxi province.⁴⁷ Japanese armored vehicles were neutralized by the rivers located to the east and north, the hills in the southern region, and the flooded paddy fields and canals in the western area.

While differing in strategic choices for the decisive battle location with Xue, Chiang maintained consistency by employing the 1939 defensive tactic of withdrawing first and then opposing the Japanese offensive. Hence a more

⁴⁷ Van de Ven, *China at War*, 186.

extensive distance from north to south (compared to Changsha) proved beneficial for the Chinese, giving them extra time to deplete Japanese soldiers' ammunition and supplies before the decisive battle at Hengyang, where Chiang employed the top-tier troop, the NRA 10th Army, renowned for their proficiency in defending cities. Following the battle the Japanese appraised the defenses of Hengyang as the most effective they encountered in China during the entire war.⁴⁸ Yet these effective defenses did not prevent a Nationalist collapse in Hunan, during which Chongqing no longer had dominance over its key agricultural resource.

4.2.3 The broken relationship between Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue

The defense of Changsha in 1944 was a catastrophic failure, far worse than the defeat of the NRA in 1941 at the same location. Xue Yue had a sizable military presence but the Ninth War Area faced challenges in mirroring their previous victory in 1942 over well-prepared but much stronger Japanese forces. Before launching their offensive, the Japanese carefully analyzed and evaluated the Nationalist methods employed previously in Changsha campaigns. They forecasted that the Chinese forces were to hold off their enemies by retreating, attacking from the sides, and luring them into a trap in Changsha, Hengyang, and Ningxiang.⁴⁹ Even though it never came to fruition, the Japanese were spot on in their prediction of Xue's plan to place the ambush area in the southern part of Changsha (Ningxiang).

On this occasion, the Japanese deployed their most elite troops in both wings, with an express intention of attacking the NRA forces in order to crack Xue's tactical core of controlling and fighting the two flanks.⁵⁰ They put in

⁴⁸ Zhang Xianwen, *Kangri zhanzheng shi*, 1082-1084; van de Ven, *China at War*, 186.

⁴⁹ Riben fangweiting fangwei yanxiusuo zhanshishi, *Yihao zuozhan er Hunan huizhan* 一號作戰二湖南會戰 [The Ichigo Operation two: the Battle in Hunan], trans. Guofangbu shizheng bianyiju (Taipei: Guofangbu shizheng bianyiju, 1987), 101.

⁵⁰ Wang Qisheng, "Battle of Hunan," 409.

effort to fortify their second-string troops, as opposed to in their previous engagements. Once Chinese fortifications were breached by the primary Japanese forces, their second-line corps was tasked with aiding in the attack on a small group of NRA soldiers, who were still holding their ground in the defensive lines to hinder the Japanese advance. According to Wang Qisheng, the Nationalists had more troops involved in the entire Ichigo Operation but the Japanese had the numerical edge in significant zones.⁵¹

The Nationalists encountered challenges in the battle that began in late May 1944 since they lacked sufficient troops and relied on outdated tactics predicted by their enemies. In a swift move, the Japanese managed to breach two NRA defensive lines at Xinqiang and Miluo Rivers and reached the outskirts of Changsha in just 10 days. As there were no other NRA troops to fight against the Japanese invasion, Changsha was forced to rely solely on the NRA 4th Army for defense eventually resulting in its downfall.

The rapid loss of Changsha intensified Chiang's skepticism toward Xue. As the fight raged on in Hunan, Chongqing took on the responsibility of managing the Ninth War Area, resulting in a chaotic chain of command within the war area. Yang Seng observed that "our armies fought on their own in the battle, leaving us susceptible to being defeated one by one by the enemies."⁵² Xue Yue blamed Chongqing for the chaos at the front, citing their interference from a distance:

As the enemy approached Hengyang, I was preparing to coordinate a widespread flanking attack with the Japanese near the city... nevertheless, our higher-ups gave orders from a distance, resulting in our troops having to defend and fight in multiple areas.⁵³

⁵¹ Wang Qisheng, "Hunan huizhan," 11.

⁵² Yang Seng, *Jiushi yiwang*, 166.

⁵³ Shao Tuorong and Jiang Rongseng, "Chang Heng huizhan," 427.

Xue, the commander of the Ninth War Area witnessed a significant decline in his standing within various units following the fall of Changsha.

A lasting feud between Xue and Bai Chongxi only widened the gap between Xue and Chiang. With the disagreement between Xue and Bai at hand, Chiang saw a perfect opportunity to enlist Xue, a proficient general, as chapter one suggested, but it also resulted in a rift between them (Chiang and Xue) in 1944. Various factions within the Nationalists greatly weakened their efforts in combat. An unclear decision of whether to confront the enemy in Hunan, particularly after the fall of Changsha or withdraw to Guangxi left Chongqing unable to come up with a suitable strategy to protect both provinces. Xue was worried that Chiang could strip him of his power and influence in Hunan by appointing someone like Bai. After hearing that Chongqing may back the idea of relocating their forces to Guangxi and deserting Hunan, Xue furiously exclaimed, “No way! I will not go to Guangxi and defend it. It is terrible that we are not fighting in Hunan and instead sending our troops to Guangxi, which is his [Bai’s] base.”⁵⁴ With the ongoing battle, Xue’s unease became more pronounced.

Xue Yue and Bai Chongxi briefly crossed paths on 14 July 1944 when Changsha had fallen, and the Battle of Hengyang was in full swing. Xue rejected firmly Bai’s idea to distribute remaining soldiers from the war area along the Hunan-Guangxi Railroad as a precaution against the potential Japanese invasion of Guangxi and the possible fall of Hengyang.⁵⁵ Bai and Xue had opposing plans, with Bai pushing for the Guangxi operation while Xue prepared to assist Hengyang and join the Hunan battle. Chiang commanded

⁵⁴ Zhao Zili and Wang Guanglun, “Chang Heng zhanyi,” 403.

⁵⁵ Cheng Siyuan 程思遠, *Bai Chongxi zhuan bainian zhongguo fengyun shilu* 白崇禧傳: 百年中國風雲實錄 [The biography of Bai Chongxi: chronicles of a century of China’s turbulent times] (Harbin: Beifang wenyi chubanshe, 2011), 237-238.

Bai to assume the leadership of the Fourth and Ninth War Areas. A possibility of Bai superseding his position in the war area undoubtedly sparked a reaction in Xue. More military commanders at the front came to understand that Bai was calling the shots in the war area while Xue was just a powerless pawn.⁵⁶

Responses given by Xue Yue to Chongqing brought about a major change in the relationship between him and Chiang, following the Battle of Hunan in 1944. After Hengyang was seized by the Japanese, Chiang asked the Ninth War Area to withdraw to western Hunan but Xue rejected this request.⁵⁷ Instead, Xue pushed for an election of a local chairman to pacify the Hunanese people and restructure the Hunan government.⁵⁸ This event had been mentioned by Chang Jui-te, who made a mistake in stating this case that happened in 1942 during the Third Battle of Changsha. Most generals in the Ninth War Area lost respect and admiration for Xue because of his denial of the order to relocate to West Hunan. They heeded instructions from Chongqing obediently while turning a deaf ear to Xue.⁵⁹ Zhao Zili also pointed out that Xue had encountered a notable diminishment in his influence and standing within the war area, as many military commanders had deserted him and joined Bai Chongxi moving to Guangxi.⁶⁰

A gradual erosion of mutual trust between Chiang and Xue impacted the defense of Hengyang and caused the disintegration of the Ninth War Area,

⁵⁶ Shao Tuorong and Jiang Rongseng, "Chang Heng huizhan," 428.

⁵⁷ "Jiang Zhongzheng shoulingce" 蔣中正手令冊 [Chiang Kaishek's personal directive booklet] (16 October 1944), JZTW, 002-080200-00579-001, GSGDA, 26.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Shao Tuorong and Jiang Rongseng, "Chang Heng huizhan," 434; see also, Xiao Xianyou, "Xue Yue yu dijiu zhanqu," 167.

⁶⁰ Zhao Zili and Wang Guangle, "Chang Heng Zhanyi," 416; Shao Tuorong and Jiang Rongseng, "Chang Heng huizhan," 432; During the 1930s, Yang Seng and Xue Yue developed a strong and intimate connection, and following the Battle of Hengyang, Yang Seng began to take action independently of Xue Yue's instructions. see "Yang Seng dian Jiang Zhongzheng ershiqi jituanjun gejun zhanli boruo ji qing zhun gaibu xiyi" 楊森電蔣中正二十七集團軍各軍戰力薄弱及請準該部西移 [Yang Sen's telegram to Chiang Kaishek about the weak combat capabilities of the 27th Group Army requesting permission for the unit to move westward] (02 September 1944), JZTW, 002-090200-00083-210, GSGDA; see also, Xiao Xianyou, "Xue Yue yu dijiu Zhanqu," 167.

once considered the strongest in China from 1938. Even as the power of Xue continued to decline in the war area, Chiang still did not have complete authority over units there under his command. This explained that Chiang's control over the army was weakening. During the Hengyang defense, Chiang relied on phone instructions to guide the nearby NRA troops in aiding the 10th Army's protection of the city but this did not work effectively. The leader of the 62nd Army commanded his subordinates to ignore or reply to Chiang's call by stating the commander was away, dodging any potential orders from Chiang.⁶¹

A rift between Chiang and Xue was not caused exclusively by Chiang's diminishing confidence in his Nationalist generals, including Xue following the 1944 Henan Campaign. His wariness toward Xue resulted in a dilemma. Jay Taylor asserts that Chiang was given irrefutable grounds to forbid a dispersal of US weaponry to those commanders in East China because certain Guangdong generals namely Xue and Zhang Fakui may have been deceitful in their dealings with the Chongqing government.⁶² A growing unease of Chiang toward his potentially disloyal generals was reflected in his disallowance of Americans to arm and equip the NRA troops in the Ninth War Area, particularly in vulnerable cities, such as Changsha and Hengyang. An issue of his generals' loyalty was becoming more prominent to Chiang than his pursuit of victory against the Japanese on the frontlines.⁶³

From a strategic and political perspective, Chiang needed to confront the Japanese in Hunan. A failure of the Chinese military in Henan and the potential loss of Hunan could impact greatly Americans' perspectives on Chongqing and Chiang's credibility within the party and nation. Instead of

⁶¹ Chang Jui-de, "Personal directive," 80.

⁶² Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 272.

⁶³ Ibid.

fearing that Xue would seize American weapons, Chiang should have been prepared for a potential Japanese assault on Hunan even if he had doubts about Xue's disloyalties. Chiang should provide Xue with weapons made in China and discuss an air supply plan with Chennault to support the Hunan front.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, Chiang neither did them before the Japanese attacked Hunan and developed his defense plan without discussing it with Xue. He was somewhat justified in his hesitation to believe Xue. As the Ichigo Operation unfolded, speculation arose that Zhang Fakui, Xue Yue, and Yu Hanmou 余漢謀 had covertly strategized to establish a self-governing government in East China, with Li Jishen 李濟深 as its head upon severing their connection to Chongqing.⁶⁵

Taylor highlights that both Chennault and Stilwell failed to convince Chiang to reconsider his decisions about an allocation of American armed weapons.⁶⁶ Chennault was upset when Chiang declined to offer support for Xue but acknowledged eventually that Chiang was inflexible and that persuading him proved futile. In fact, Stilwell was content to see Chiang take responsibility for the defeat of Chinese soldiers in Hunan and other eastern provinces.⁶⁷ It would move him nearer to the objective of leading the Chinese forces in the land as he aspired. Therefore, Chiang and Stilwell hold equal responsibility for the downfall of the Ninth War Area in Hunan.⁶⁸

Taylor offers a potential perspective to examine the reasons behind Chiang's unusual actions before the Battle of Hunan, including his instruction to decrease the number of troops available to Xue and his decision to move the

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Zhang Fakui, *Zhang Fakui huiyilu*, 325.

⁶⁶ Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 273.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

10th Army to Hengyang without first consulting Xue. This perspective differs from previous writings on the Chinese campaign during the Ichigo Operation as they either neglect to mention Chiang's withholding of American military supplies intended for Xue or diminish its significance as a minor event with no consequence on the outcome of the Battles of Hunan. To deal with the uncertainty of Xue, Chiang took it upon himself to lead the battle. Simultaneously, Chiang selected Bai Chongxi, a reliable person, whom he trusted to lead the Ninth War Area in Hunan. The decision only added to Xue's worry of being replaced amidst the intensifying battle. A cooperative bond between these two leaders took a turn for the worse, creating disorder in the hierarchical structure of the Ninth War Area.

1939 marked the start of battles in Hunan that effectively illustrated Chiang's leadership style during the war and its two main traits. First, Chiang and his regional leaders reached a mutual understanding regarding strategy and military actions, allowing the latter to have a restricted level of liberty and self-management. He also delegated the task of formulating battle plans and commanding to those he trusted.

Second, when differences between him and local leaders became apparent, or if he questioned their loyalty without concrete evidence, Chiang took control of all aspects of the operation. Battle plans were put into place by Chiang to bypass the chain of command in war areas directly influencing the NRA's actions. Chiang also appointed trusted individuals to the front to assume command of local commanders.

The failure of the NRA in the Ichigo Operation spelled disaster for Chiang's political standing and the authority he had garnered especially after 1939. Chiang rose to the pinnacle of power in the MAC and institutionalized the war-area headquarters, solidifying his role as the head of the party and a prominent leader on a national level. With more and more low-ranked

generals from Whampoa and *Luda* being assigned to different war areas, they made up the majority of the Nationalist military. His authority and control reached its peak by 1943. The ill-fated Ichigo Operation led to a disastrous collapse of the NRA, notably a defeat of Central Army units in Henan and Hunan. Chiang's position also weakened inside the government and party.

Chiang established his dominance within the KMT by building the strength of his faction while aligning with influential regional military leaders, who acknowledged him as the leader of both the party and the nation. The Nationalists achieved unity by maintaining a balance of power. Through his unbeatable military power, Chiang controlled the KMT and maintained his political supremacy tightly. While Chiang maintained a strong position in the KMT, an outside force weakened his power and disrupted the balance which could have resulted in animosity against him from other military commanders and provincial factions.

Albert Wedemeyer and Chiang discussed a potential relocation of the Nationalist government. The Ichigo Operation was nearing its end and the Japanese had reached the borderline of Sichuan and Guizhou, with a high possibility of continuing a march toward Chongqing. Wedemeyer thus suggested that Chiang withdraw from Chongqing and move the central government to Yunnan in order to impact the result of the war in China. Chiang objected to the proposal and insisted on remaining in Chongqing. Wedemeyer believed that relocating to Yunnan would incite Chairman Long Yun to rebel against the Generalissimo, therefore.⁶⁹

Wedemeyer's assumption gained more evidence when Chiang instructed, He Yingqin 何應欽 to travel to Yunnan and assess government affairs in December 1944. Long Yun rejected it strongly, fearing the coming of

⁶⁹ Qi Xisheng, *Zhongmei junshi bezuo guanxi*, 517.

He was to erode his power in the province.⁷⁰ In chapter one, it was made clear that Long, a regional warlord actively promoted the central government's actions against the Red Army and allied himself with Xue Yue's Central Army in 1936. But this time, without hesitation, Long disobeyed Chiang's instruction. The strained relationship between Chiang and Xue may have contributed to Long's growing aversion and bitterness toward Chongqing. It could also be attributed to the weakened state of the Central Army after the Ichigo Operation, which further led to a decrease in Chiang's military forces and political clout within the KMT. In reality, Chiang became suspicious of Long Yun's secret cooperation with the CCP in April of that year, when the Ichigo Operation unfolded in Henan.⁷¹

Right from the start of the war up until 1939, when the war entered its second phase, the Nationalists habitually kept cohesion within the party. After seeing Japan being stuck in the Pacific War, with the U.S. and many Central Army units being defeated in the China Theater, Nationalist commanders (formerly warlords) began to dispute Chiang's leading role instead of admitting him as a wartime national leader, as they had done in 1939 to keep the cohesion of the party.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that in a region with unhindered Nationalist influence, a shared understanding of military and bureaucratic matters between provincial commanders and the central government could induce Chiang to delegate command authority in battle. This would positively influence the NRA's combat performance on the battlefield. Nevertheless, when discrepancies on the strategic or tactical level became apparent, the field commanders found it

⁷⁰ Ibid., 517-518.

⁷¹ "Chiang Kaishek Diary" (25 April 1944), JZZRJ, 1944, 58.

burdensome to implement their envisioned strategies before the combat because of staunch resistance and hindrances from Chongqing and Chiang Kaishek.

Military operations in wartime Hunan demonstrated that Chiang Kaishek held an opinion that Xue Yue was a proficient commander able to craft battle plans and preside over a war area. Consequently, he had thoughtfully and thoroughly contemplated taking on board most proposals from Xue concerning, for instance, tactical positioning and protection. But his faith in Xue was not always unshakable. 1944 saw a return of Chiang's doubts of Xue plausibly as a result of the preceding NRA military disaster in Henan, as well as Xue's potential untrustworthy conduct and Guangdong ancestry. Furthermore, Chiang held a distinct perspective on the significance of Changsha leading up to the 1944 battle. After losing Changsha, Chiang assumed a more hands-on role in the military operation of the Ninth War Area. The separation of Chiang and Xue not only depleted the power of Chiang due to the departure of one of his followers but it also had detrimental effects on the other commanders, who were committed to Chiang. Given this fact, the wartime history in Hunan, particularly the correlation between Xue and Chiang brings into focus two aspects of the wartime Nationalists: the party and the government had been structured to function as a collective with a centralized leading style, however, fragmentation within the party and government determined it could not operate like other centralized governments around the world.

Coble argues that Operation Ichigo demonstrated a significant decline in the combat effectiveness of the Nationalist forces.⁷² Less rice provided to the military from Hunan in 1944 before the Ichigo Operation should be

⁷² Coble, *The Collapse of Nationalist China*, 25.

considered to influence the fighting ability of the NRA forces even the corruption in the military indeed existed. Chapter five explores the repercussions of the Nationalist collapse in 1944 under the Ichigo offensive through the lens of the rice crisis that unfolded in Hunan in 1943. The everyday experiences of people in China were significantly affected by the war, especially when the hyperinflation was exacerbated by the Ichigo Operation, with the Nationalists losing control of massive territories with rich agricultural products, such as Hunan. According to journalist Cao Juren, the final year of the war was considered the “darkest hour” for China from a military perspective.⁷³ The impact of Operation Ichigo magnified the severe circumstances by which numerous Chinese experienced likely causing concern that they and their families may not make it through to witness the triumph of the war. An intriguing aspect is that even after losing the majority of territories in Hunan, the Nationalists were able to enlist a large labor force from the rural areas in the western region of the province in the latter part of 1944 and 1945. This particular scenario is extensively discussed in chapter six, which delves into the Nationalist strategies for mass mobilization during wartime in Hunan.

⁷³ Ibid., 19.

**Part II. Settled in the Great Rear not far from the frontline: life
and survival in Changsha and Hunan during the war**

CHAPTER 5

Feeding the Army and Local Population: the Nationalist Grain Policy in Hunan During the War of Resistance

This chapter delves into a crucial element of the war that spread throughout the entire Hunan: the Nationalists' mobilization. I focus on rice production, collection, and distribution across the province, as well as rice prices in wartime Changsha, the primary rice market in pre-war Hunan under hyperinflation.

Rice imports from the province were crucial for sustaining the Nationalist-controlled areas and their military in Hunan. The Hunan Provincial Government and the Ninth War Area ramped up grain production and acquisition after 1938 to provide sustenance for both military and civilians. This chapter, therefore, reveals that the outbreak of war brought about a significant decrease in agricultural fields in Hunan in 1937 and a following two-year decline in rice production across the province. Rice production returned to its 1937 level in late 1939. 1941 saw Hunan achieve significant achievement in increasing wartime rice production that was equivalent to the highest yields of the 1930s.

Although achieved results in increasing rice in wartime Hunan after 1939, I argue that the Nationalists made miscalculations in two key areas of their grain policy-making. First, they enforced unjustifiable quotas for rice collection in Hunan, relying on an incorrect calculation of the province's rice surplus. A significant consideration was acquiring more rice to sustain the four million-strong army and the ballooning population in the Great Rear. However, the province was unable to meet the allocated quotas. An imprecision in the estimation was caused by an absence of reliable data on rice exports. The central government held a rough approximation rather than

precise statistics of the information on the production and export of Hunanese rice. Reports sent during the war from Changsha to Chongqing revealed that the central government's rice harvest calculations for Hunan were incorrect due to flawed assessments made by the Hunan Provincial Government.

The central and local governments made a second miscalculation by setting a lower regulated price for their compulsory purchase of rice from farmers in Hunan. From 1939, when the large-scale rice acquisition began in Hunan, most peasants, particularly those living in the *binhu* area were forced to sell their rice at a reduced price, fixed by the local government. In late 1941, as this chapter shows, the central authority stipulated prices of paddy rice and white rice in Hunan at 15 and 30 *yuan* per *shi* 石, respectively.¹ Market prices were three times greater than them. Regulated prices were not enough to support the livelihood and production of peasants.

Skyrocketing living expenses caused by hyperinflation were another factor, such as the Battles of Changsha, that undermined Changsha's resistance to the Japanese in the war. From 1939 to 1940, the Nationalists worked to control the increase in rice prices. Changsha, as the most prominent rice market could offer people a cheaper price to buy rice compared to Hengyang, the second largest Hunanese county. Grave results ensued from the three battles near Changsha, causing a significant shortage of rice due to interrupted supply. Rice production growth in wartime Changsha faced obstacles because of its near-frontline location, different from counties like Hengyang in South Hunan or those in the *binhu* area like Changde. Rice prices in Changsha skyrocketed and became unmanageable, particularly after 1942.

The focus of this chapter is on the grain administration in wartime Hunan. It covers pre-war Hunanese rice exports, measures taken by the Hunan

¹ The first section of this chapter details the Chinese weight units employed by the Nationalists and locals for measuring rice in Hunan.

Provincial Government to increase rice since 1937, their rice procurement from 1939 to 1943, and a sharp rise in rice prices in Changsha. I argue that the Nationalists dealt with rice-related issues until the Third Battle of Changsha, which ended in early 1942, specifically through the implementation of policies, aimed at increasing rice production while encountering many problems and obstacles. From mid-1942 onward, gradually Hunan was unable to fulfill rising rice demands imposed by the central government. The Nationalists' military and political downfall in Hunan in 1944 was exacerbated by a shortage of rice, along with an overused military tactic and a central-local political breakdown (namely Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue). Also, the people of Hunan were burdened by exorbitant rice prices, forcing them to allocate a significant portion of their earnings toward purchasing the staple rice.

5.1 Export of Hunanese rice before the war

5.1.1 The annual rice output in Hunan during the 1930s²

Understanding the Nationalists' grain administration before the war, specifically annual rice supplies from Hunanese counties can grasp the yearly rice production of the province. Key issues to be dealt with include rice production, consumption and surplus in the province. Central government institutions relied on forms or reports from provincial and county governments to produce data. Inadequate surveys and varying measurement methods in different counties of Hunan left these institutions with imprecise figures about annual rice yields before the war. A dependable investigation of

² Throughout this chapter, rice predominantly refers to paddy rice (*shuidao* 水稻), with a conversion rate of one unit of paddy rice to 0.5 unit of brown rice (*qimi* 齊米, also known as *caomi* 糙米).

the rice harvest in Hunan was conducted by local officials in 1929 but data from certain counties in west Hunan was omitted from their report.³

In his publication on Chinese agriculture, Zhang Xinyi, an esteemed expert in Chinese agricultural statistics provided a rough estimation of the paddy rice yield in 1931 Hunan (see table 5.1).⁴ In a report by the National Agricultural Research Bureau NARB (*Zhongyang nongye yanjiusuo* 中央農業實驗所), annual rice yields in Hunan between 1931 and 1934 were included (also see table 5.1). The Hunan Provincial Government and the Economic Research Bureau of Hunan ERB (*Hunan jingji yanjiusuo* 湖南經濟研究所) published their estimations, which indicated pre-war Hunan rice harvests were generally around 100 million *dan* 擔.⁵ The Executive Yuan's 1937 report indicated that the average pre-war rice production in Hunan was about 103 million *dan*.⁶ Table 5.1 illustrates that the yearly output of rice, particularly between 1934 and 1936 was between 100 and 150 million *dan*. Hunan was the third-highest-yielding province in China for rice after Guangdong and Sichuan.

*Table 5.1 Rice Harvests in Hunan before the War.*⁷

³ Zhang Renjia 張人價, "Hunan zhi gumi" 湖南之穀米 [Rice of Hunan], in *Hu Xiang wenku yi bian: Hunan minguo jingji shiliao xuankan er* 湖湘文庫乙編: 湖南民國經濟史料選刊二 [Hunan (Xiang) archive, second part: selected economic historical materials of the Republic of China Era in Hunan, volume two], ed. Zeng Saifeng 曾賽豐 and Cao Youpeng 曹有鵬 (Changsha: Hu xiang wenku bianji chubanshe, 2013), 455.

⁴ Ibid., 449.

⁵ Pinghan tielu guanliju jingji diaochazu 平漢鐵路管理局經濟調查組編, ed., *Changsha jingji diaocha* 長沙經濟調查 [An investigation of the economy of Changsha] (Hankou: Pinghan tielu guanliju jingji diaochazu, 1937), 129.

⁶ "Quanguo gesheng liangshi zhanqian linian pingjun chanliang" 全國各省糧食戰前歷年平均產量 [Annual average grain production in China before the war in each province] (1937), LZSL, vol.6, 469.

⁷ Zhang Renjia, "Hunan gumi," 449-451; "Hunan quansheng gexian zhuyao zuowu pingchang nian zhi mianji ji chanliang tongjibiao" 湖南全省各縣主要作物平常年之面積及產量統計表 [Statistical table of area and yield of main crops in each county of Hunan in normal years] (January 1933), TJYK 1, no.1, statistics: 19, 22, and 23; "Zuijin si nian lai gesheng zhuyao zuowu zhi chanliang bijiao" 最近四年來各省主要作物之產量比較 [Comparison of yields of major crops in each province over the last four years] (August 1936), *Minguo ershi san nian nongqing baogao* 民國二十三年農情報告彙編 [Compilation of the 1934 agricultural reports], ed. Shiyebu zhongyang nongye shiyansuo nongye jingjike 實業部中央農業實驗所經濟科編 (Nanjing: Shiyebu zhongyang nongye shiyansuo, 1936), 21; *Changsha jingji diaocha*, 129;

Source	Unit ⁸	Production	Year
A Yearbook of Chinese Economy 1932	<i>dan</i>	91,090,000	1932
Statistics Monthly ⁹	<i>dan</i>	107,777,715	1932
	<i>dan</i>	101,658,510	1933
Crop Reporting in China 1934	<i>dan</i>	91,095,000	1931
	<i>dan</i>	121,812,000	1932
	<i>dan</i>	101,745,000	1933
	<i>dan</i>	70,319,000	1934
	<i>dan</i>	108,994,000	1935
	<i>dan</i>	121,405,000	1936
A Yearbook of Chinese Economy, 1934	<i>dan</i>	70,310,000	1934
Zhang Xinyi's General Agricultural Status in China	<i>dan</i>	107,778,000	Average
ERB's report	<i>shi</i>	140,955,130	1935
<i>Jinling</i> University in China Report	<i>dan</i>	157,000,000	Good year
		(108,000,000)	Average
Hunan Provincial Government	<i>dan</i>	146,300,000	1932
Hunan Provincial Government	<i>shi</i>	135,239,983	1936

Wang Guoyu 王國宇, ed., *Hunan jingji tongshi xiandai juan* 湖南經濟通史現代卷 [A general economic history of Hunan: modern era volume] (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2013), 176; “Linian quanguo gedi daogu chanliang guji” 歷年全國各地稻穀產量估計 [Estimated Rice and grain production in China over the years] (1943), ZHMGDAZL, part 5, vol.2, finance and economy 8, 337; “Hunan sheng ge shixian ershi wu nian qiushou liangshi qingxing diaochabiao” 湖南省各市縣二十五年秋收糧食情形調查表 [Autumn Harvest Grain Situation Survey Form for Cities and Counties in Hunan 1936] (April 1937), TJYK 2, no.4: 49-51.

⁸ About the difference between *dan* and *shi*, the former is a weight unit, per *dan* or *shidan* 市擔 is equal to 100 *jin* 斤 (catties) or *shijin* (市斤), the latter is a volume unit, per *shi* is equal to 10 *dou* or *shidou* 市斗, equal to 100 liters or *shi* liters (*shibeng* 市升). There was no formula to convert between *shi* and *dan*. One *shi* of two different types of rice weighed differently. Weights of one-*shi* rice and paddy rice were also different. According to the report of the Ninth War Area Food Administrative Office, one *shi* of brown rice was equal to 148 *jin* of paddy rice (which is equal to 1.48 *dan*). According to the Ministry of Economy of the Nationalist Government's report, one *shi* of paddy rice is equivalent to 1.14 *dan*; however, this might be pertinent to high-grade paddy rice. The Ninth War Area, while procuring rice, purchased paddy rice of superior quality, whereby one *shi* of paddy rice with a weight of 107 *jin* or more would be deemed suitable for the acquisition. In this project, I use that one *shi* of paddy rice is equal to 1.14 *dan*.

⁹ The Hunan Provincial Government released this monthly statistic through its Statistical Office.

5.1.2 The primary rice-growing regions in Hunan

While Hunan was famous for its surplus, some rice production areas or counties struggled to produce enough rice to meet their local demands. Many believed that in a good year, 45 Hunanese counties were able to produce excess rice while 23 faced a rice shortage and seven were self-sustaining.¹⁰ The ERB conducted an inquiry that revealed a stark contrast. Their findings showed that only 33 counties exported rice while 31 counties relied on imports.¹¹ Xiangtan and Hengyang, two significant food counties showed a distinct contrast in rice surplus. Xiangtan had enough rice to feed its people but the county was unable to export rice.¹² Hengyang, the largest rice production county in Hunan had to use coarse cereals to compensate for its limited rice supply.¹³ The phenomenon was evident in central and south Hunan where rice was a top product but over 50% of the Hunanese population lived.

Changde, Yuanjiang, and Hanshou are situated in the Yuan River Basin and the *binhu* area. Hunanese people, thus, became accustomed to calling them counties near the Dongting Lake (*binhu xianfen* 濱湖縣份). 10 *binhu* counties (in Map 3.1) were renowned for their bountiful rice harvests.¹⁴ Although they only made up 16% of the province's population, 10 counties occupied 23 to 26% of the rice production in Hunan.¹⁵ The ERB's survey indicated that *binhu* counties could export 4.5 million *shi* of rice per annum

¹⁰ Fu Shaohui 符少輝 & Liu Chunyang 劉純陽, ed., *Hunan nongye shi* 湖南農業史 [A history of the agriculture of Hunan] (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2012), 577; see also, "Hunan sheng nongye gaijinsuo sanshi niandu shiye jihua" 湖南省農業改進所三十年度事業計畫 [A 1941 plan of the Hunan Agriculture Improvement Bureau], *Hunan jianshe jikan* 湖南建設季刊, no.1 (1941): 121.

¹¹ Zhang Renjia, "Hunan gumi," 449. In 1937, the Hunan provincial government announced that 35 counties had a rice surplus while 38 counties faced shortages and only three were able to sustain themselves. See "Xiang liangshi yingkuai qingxing" 湘糧食盈虧情形 [Grain surplus and shortage situations in Hunan], HNGMRB, 22 March 1937.

¹² Zhang Renjia, "Hunan gumi," 449.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Changde, Lixian, Nanxian, Huarong, An'xiang, Xiangyin, Yueyang, Hanshou, Yiyang and Yuanjiang.

¹⁵ Hunan sheng yinhang jingji yanjiushi 湖南省銀行經濟研究室編, ed., *Jingji congkan Hunan binhu gexian nongchanpin diaocha* 經濟叢刊湖南濱湖各縣農產品調查 [Economic series: agricultural product survey of binhu counties] (Leiyang: Hunan sheng yinhang jingji yanjiushi, 1942), 8-9.

before the war.¹⁶ In 1940, the Economic Research Office of Hunan Provincial Bank HPB (*Hunan sheng yinhang jingji yanjiushi* 湖南省銀行經濟研究室) reached a similar result, stating that 10 counties could export 4.65 million *shi* of rice.¹⁷ The *binhu* area was the only place capable of yielding a plentiful harvest of rice, as well as facilitating a large-scale export within the province or beyond in Hunan before the war.

Calculating the definitive number for a yearly rice surplus in Hunan posed a challenge. Achieving a figure could be done by taking the total population of the province and multiplying it by the average consumption of rice for each person. But this approach necessitated precise demographics of a regional population and their average rice consumption. In 1933, the provincial government began an investigation into the farming output and main crops in Hunan and released the result in 1937. The total amount of rice produced was 114.7 million *shi* with a consumption of 112.8 million *shi*, meaning that the province could leave a remainder of 1.9 million *shi*.¹⁸ This showed that the rice surplus in Hunan appeared to be quite limited each year. The NARB also found that rice was the main staple in the diets of 75% of Hunanese inhabitants in 1938.¹⁹ But in those areas where rice was scarce locals depended on coarse grains for sustenance, allowing the county authority to export rice.

¹⁶ Zhang Renjia, "Hunan gumi," 455-457.

¹⁷ *Hunan binhu nongchanpin*, 12.

¹⁸ These figures were calculated based on the annual consumption of 1.86 *shi* of white rice, equal to 3.72 *shi* of paddy rice per capita and a population of 30 million. See, "Hunan sheng gexian xianmi gongji yueshu ji qi ying xiaofei yueshu jian yingchushu" 湖南省各縣秈米供給約數及其應消費約數間盈絀數 [A comparison of surplus and deficit figures between estimated indica rice supply and corresponding estimated consumption in each county in Hunan] (March 1937), TJYK 2, no.2&3: 84; see also, "A comparison of surplus or deficit between the estimated population served by indica rice supply and actual population figures in each county of Hunan" 湖南省各縣秈米供給之人口約數及人口數間之盈絀 [A comparison of surplus or deficit between the indica rice supply to estimated population and actual population figures in each county of Hunan] (March 1937), *ibid.*, 90.

¹⁹ "Quanguo ershi er sheng zhuyao shiliang gongren shiyong suo zhan baifenlü biao" 全國二十二省主要食糧供人食用所佔百分率表 [A percentage table of major grain consumption in 22 provinces in China] (October 1938), LZSL, vol.6, 509.

Zhong Xingyong points out two factors that impacted rice exports from Hunan before the war. First, in the province, most grains were possessed by landowners and affluent tycoons who used them for export and trade. Second, Hunanese farmers kept lower-quality grain and sold higher-quality rice consistently to increase their earnings while drawing sustenance from consuming corn, sweet potatoes, and other rough grains.²⁰ In comparison to other grains, rice had a higher price point, which would be more lucrative for sales. Within Lanshan County during the late Qing Dynasty, vast areas of land were utilized for rice cultivation. In contrast, the local populace relied upon a diet of wheat and other grains, and rice harvests were sold for financial gain as opposed to being harvested for sustenance.²¹ For centuries, sweet potatoes have been a staple in Central Hunan starting from the Qing Dynasty.²²

While the ERB was in their inquiry in 1934 and 1935, Hengyang was experiencing a shortage of rice but was able to ship rice out as the main population consumed coarse cereals.²³ 1934 saw 33 rice-surplus Hunanese counties exported seven million *shi* of a mix of rice and other grains. Those *binhu* counties, like Changde and Anxiang managed to store more rice for export over one million *shi* each.²⁴

A long-standing consumption of coarse grains among the Hunanese population resulted in an estimated rice annual harvest of 126 million *shi* if accounting for other crops, such as corn, wheat, and peas and converting them

²⁰ Zhong Xingyong 鍾興永, “Jindai Xiang migu maoyi kaocha” 近代湘米穀貿易考察 [A study of Hunanese rice and grain trade in modern Hunan], *Hunan nongye daxue xuebao* 湖南農業大學學報 2, no.3 (September 2001): 49, doi:10.13331/j.cnki.jhau(ss).2001.03.014.

²¹ Wang Kaiyun 王闓運, ed., *Guiyang zhili zhou zhi* 桂陽直隸州志 [Records of Zhili Prefecture in Guiyang county] (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2011), 429-430.

²² Zhong Xingyong, “Xiang migu kaocha,” 49.

²³ Zhang Renjia, “Hunan gumi,” 459.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 456-457.

to the equivalent amount of rice.²⁵ Subtracting a yearly consumption of 112.8 million *shi*, the excess rice numbered 12.7 million *shi*. Thus, based on the available information, an annual rice surplus in Hunan was expected to be between 1.9 and 12.7 million *shi*.²⁶ The rice surplus (4.65 million *shi*) in 10 *binhu* counties was, I suggest, approximately equal to the amount of rice that could be exported from Hunan. Hunanese authorities considered those 10 *binhu* counties to be the top suppliers and most rice procurement took place there before 1941.

The Bank of China's 1936 document series on rice supplies in the country reflected that Hunan had an annual rice surplus of 10.8 million *dan* (9.47 million *shi*).²⁷ But this number posed a problem because it was calculated based on a production of 76.6 million *dan* of white rice (roughly 153 million *dan* of paddy rice). This rice production was possible in a good year but was not achieved in Hunan during the 1930s. The Hunan Provincial Government estimated that there was around 10 million *shi* of rice surplus in Hunan in September 1939, as indicated in their telegraphs to the central government. Estimations of rice surplus in Hunan were exaggerated and erroneous, therefore, creating a big problem for the grain administration in wartime Hunan. Considering ongoing battles and shifting circumstances in and out of China, it was not a practical decision for the central government to lower established high quotas for rice in Hunan during the war.

²⁵ "Hunan sheng gexian xianmi bing qita zuowu yongzuo shiliang bufen zhe wei xianmi zhi quannian gongji gongshi yueshu" 湖南省各縣秈米並其他作物用作食糧部分折為秈米之全年供給公石約數 [Estimated annual supply in gongshi of indica rice and other crops (converted to indica rice) used as food in each county of Hunan] (March 1937), TJYK 2, no.2&3: 161.

²⁶ The Hunan Provincial Government projected a rice surplus of one million to five million *shi* in Hunan, see Hunan sheng zhengfu mishuchu 湖南省政府秘書處編, ed., *Hunan sheng zhengfu shizheng chengji baogao* 湖南省政府施政成績報告 [Governance performance report of the Hunan Provincial Government] (Changsha: Hunan sheng zhengfu mishuchu, 1936), 32.

²⁷ Zhu Xizhou 朱西周, *Shangpin yanjiu congshu mi* 商品研究叢書:米 [Commodity research series: rice] (Shanghai: Zhongguo yinhang jingji yanjiushi, 1937), 98.

5.1.3 Hunanese rice and Guangdong before the war

While it may be challenging to know the rice surplus in pre-war Hunan examining the amount of rice exported from the province in the 1930s can provide useful insights. An ERB report revealed that exported rice for 1932, 1933, and 1934 totaled 839,000, 2.33 million, and 1.55 million *dan* respectively.²⁸ Rice exports in 1935 numbered 2.44 million *dan* while the latter half of 1936 saw a shipment of 3.4 million *shi* (six million *shi* in total for the two years), according to the *Hunan guomin ribao* and *Dagongbao*.²⁹ Before the war, the norm for Hunanese rice export was between two and three million *dan*.³⁰

Yet, these data remained puzzling as original texts did not indicate whether Hunan exported white or paddy rice. Two pieces of news in 1937 discussed scrutiny of the quality of rice, showing that Hunanese rice exports prioritized brown rice over paddy rice.³¹ One *dan* or *shi* of brown rice was approximately equivalent to two units of paddy rice while producing one unit of mid-grade rice (*zhongdengmi* 中等米) needed 2.38 units of paddy rice.³² Original news referred to “paddy rice and white rice (*gumi* 穀米)”, thus, suggesting that data encompassed both types of rice exports. A 1942 report revealed that white rice exports from Hunan to Guangdong were between two to three million *shi*, no more than five to six million *shi* of paddy rice because

²⁸ Zhang Renjia, “Hunan *gumi*,” 467.

²⁹ “Xiang chan *gumi* jin si nian chukou tongji” 湘產穀米近四年出口統計 [Export statistics of Hunan rice and grain in the past four years], HNGMRB, 19 February 1937; see also, “Xiangmi chukou bannian tongji sanbai wan shi” 湘米出口半年統計三百萬石 [Half-year export statistics of Hunanese rice, three million *shi*], DGB, 28 January 1937.

³⁰ *Changsha jingji diaocha*, 129.

³¹ “Xiangmi jianyansuo jianyan caomi hege shuliang” 湘米檢驗所檢驗糙米合格數量 [The quantity of qualified brown rice inspected by the Hunan Rice Inspection Bureau], HNGMRB, 19 March 1937.

³² *Dijiu zhanqu liangshi guanlichu gouliang weiyuanhui* 第九戰區管理處購糧委員會, *Liangguan guizhang* 糧管規章 [Grain administration regulations] (Hunan: Dijiu zhanqu liangshi guanlichu gouliang weiyuanhui, 1940), 196. In some counties, the mid-quality rice is also named *shumi* (熟米), which literally refers to cooked rice but here means machine-milling rice with a mid-quality.

of good harvests before 1937.³³ The Hunan Provincial Provisional Senate (*Hunan sheng linshi canyihui* 湖南省臨時參議會) released a formal missive in 1942 stating that Hunan could only export a maximum of four or five million *shi* of paddy rice annually.³⁴

Hunanese rice had limited exports in the early 1930s because of a lack of proper transportation within the province. Transporting rice in Hunan, in particular from the south and west posed a significant difficulty, and shipping rice out of the province was no easier. The Yangtze River was important in shipping Hunanese rice to main rice markets such as Hankou and Shanghai.

Even though Guangdong produced the most rice in 1930s China, it still faced a shortage and had to import from outside. Until 1936, Hunanese rice had a negligible presence in Canton because of a lower rice quality and expensive river transport. Guangdong imported around 10 million *shi* of foreign rice (*yangmi* 洋米) annually before the war.³⁵ The completion of the Yuehan Railway (also known as the Canton-Hankow Railway) in 1936 created a window for Hunanese rice to gain more ground in the Canton market. That year Guangdong and Hunan met an agreement to transport 100,000 *shi* of tax-exempted Hunanese rice.³⁶ Nanjing also issued policies to address the rice shortage in Guangdong, such as allowing half-price fees for Yuehan Railway shipments and introducing more direct freight trains between Changsha and

³³ Ruan Youqiu 阮有秋, "Hunan liangzheng de jiantao" 湖南糧政的檢討 [Review of grain administration in Hunan] (31 May 1942), LZSL, vol.5, 492.

³⁴ "Hunan sheng linshi canyihui gonghan" 湖南省臨時參議會公函 [A missive from the Hunan Provincial Provisional Senate] (1942), *Hunan sheng zhanshi zhengou liangshi shishi banfa* 湖南省戰時徵購糧食實施辦法 [Implementation measures for the grain requisition and procurement during wartime Hunan], XZY, 014-040504-0144, GSGDA, 7.

³⁵ *Hunan shizheng chengji*, 32. Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar (Burma) were the primary suppliers of foreign rice to Guangdong. See, Zhu Zhouxi, *Mi*, 205.

³⁶ *Hunan shizheng chengji*, 33.

Canton.³⁷ 90,000 tons of rice were shipped to Canton equivalent to roughly 1.78 million *dan* between January and April 1937.³⁸

Guangdong appealed to Nanjing to grant duty-free permission for the import of foreign rice (four million *shi* consisting of white rice and paddy rice). Nanjing gave their approval. Foreign-grown rice was of higher quality and more cost-efficient than locally-grown rice. Exempting foreign rice from import taxes made it even more appealing to Cantonese consumers. Changsha rice market experienced a domino effect because of the case of Guangdong duty-free foreign rice, leading to a one *yuan* drop in rice prices, therefore.³⁹ Many Hunanese businessmen went to Nanjing to beg the central government to annul the case, claiming that Hunan was capable of providing all four million *shi* of rice.⁴⁰ In his telegram to Nanjing, He Jian (Hunan governor) estimated an aggregate rice stockpile in the province to exceed 10 million *shi*.⁴¹

I argue that the case of Guangdong duty-free foreign rice casts light on the wartime grain administration in Hunan in two aspects. First, Hunan could ship out its surplus rice close to four million *dan* without affecting local rice consumption. Even during the war, the central government never allotted quotas for Hunan lower than this number. Second, the protests of the Hunanese businessmen in Nanjing and He Jian's petition to terminate the case of Guangdong duty-free foreign rice convinced the central government that

³⁷ "Yuehan lu zen kai zhuanche yunmi fu Yue" 粵漢路增開專車運米赴粵 [Additional direct freight trains on the Yuehan Railway for rice transport to Guangdong], DGB, 28 January 1937; "Yuehan tielu Xiangmi yun Yue wuzhe shoufei" 粵漢鐵路湘米運粵五折收費 [Half-price charges of the Yuehan Railway for the transport of Hunanese rice to Guangdong], HNGMRB, 28 February 1937.

³⁸ From January to May 1937, 2,441,918 *dan* of rice had been exported. "Gumi chukou linian tongji" 穀米出口歷年統計 [Statistics over the years of grain and rice export], DGB, 26 July 1937.

³⁹ "Yangmi mianshui Xiang sheng mishang huyu chexiao" 洋米免稅湘省米商呼籲撤銷 [Merchants in Hunan urged repeal of the case of tax exemption for foreign rice], DGB, 29 March 1937.

⁴⁰ "Changsha shi ge mishang dianqing chexiao Yue sheng yangmi mianshui an" 長沙市各米商電請撤銷粵省洋米免稅案 [Merchants in Changsha requested repeal of the case of tax exemption for foreign rice in Guangdong], DGB, 27 March 1937.

⁴¹ "He zhuxi zai dian zhongyang chexiao yangmi mianshui an" 何主席再電中央撤銷洋米免稅按案 [A telegram from Chairman He requested the Central Government again to revoke tax exemption for foreign rice], DGB, 11 April 1937.

Hunan could export four million *shi* of rice or more each year. The question of whether the 10 million *shi* of rice was prepared for export or allocated as sustenance for local usages remained unanswered by He Jian.

The ERB's 1934 research series emphasized the importance of grasping accurate information on rice cultivation and distribution, as well as examining the value and primary markets for Hunanese rice. It incited contemplation about the amount of rice Hunan could generate, the county with the highest and lowest production, the surplus or deficit in rice for different counties, and the rice demand in each county.⁴² Both central and provincial governments could only have approximate figures for the yearly rice production and consumption in Hunan. This in part brought about an overestimation of actual rice production in Hunan leading up to compulsory purchases and collection of rice on a larger scale during the war.

5.1.4 Determinants that dictated rice prices in Changsha before the outbreak of war

A lack of available means of transportation resulted in an abundance of rice that went unused. In the early 1930s, rice was affordable. Prices of mid-grade rice in Changsha (middle Hunan) between January and March 1936 were 8.7 to 9.5 *yuan* per *shi*.⁴³ Hengyang (south Hunan) sold mid-quality rice for 12 *yuan* per *shi*.⁴⁴ Rice was sold at nine *yuan* per *shi* in Changde (*binhu* area).⁴⁵ Not being the biggest rice-producing county or having the largest rice surplus

⁴² Zhang Renjia, "Hunan gumi," 561.

⁴³ "Hunan sheng Changsha deng ba xianshi lingshou wujiabiao" 湖南省長沙等八縣市零售物價表 [The table of retail prices for Changsha and eight other cities and counties in Hunan] (January 1936), TJYK 2, no.1: 25-36. From January to June 1937, brown rice was sold in Changsha at the price between six to seven *yuan* per *shi*, see "Shenghuo bixupin shijia tongji" 生活必需品市價統計 [Statistical data on the market prices of necessities], HNGMRB, 1 January to 31 June 1937.

⁴⁴ "Hunan ba xianshi wujiabiao," 25-36.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

did not prevent Changsha from maintaining lower rice prices as it was the preeminent rice market in the province.

Rice prices in Changsha were influenced by harvests across the whole province, particularly *binhu* counties. Changsha County was deemed to be in a shortage of rice. An analysis by the provincial government in 1933 exposed a lack of around 1.7 million *dan* of rice annually in the county.⁴⁶ Changsha's annual yield of rice fell short of the necessary amount to sustain its population of 1.733 million, as it would only have been sufficient for 820,000 people.⁴⁷ As a result of a lack of grain, Changsha required a considerable quantity of rice to be relayed from other areas of the province.

Over 60% of rice sold in the Changsha rice market came from *binhu* counties and this percentage grew to 90% between 1931 and 1934.⁴⁸ Due to bandit activity in four *binhu* counties, rice exports to Changsha decreased in late 1930, resulting in a rise in rice prices in Changsha early the following year.⁴⁹ Rice prices in Changsha saw a sudden rise in 1935 because of the destruction of rice crops, caused by flooding in Dongting Lake.⁵⁰ Changsha was isolated when the CCP took control in June 1930, thus, causing rice prices to skyrocket by two *yuan*.⁵¹ This case presents an opportunity to examine how

⁴⁶ "Hunan sheng gexian xianmi quannian gongji," 84. The production of rice and other crops was not enough to feed the local population, lacking 1, 624, 000 *dan*; see also, "Hunan sheng gexian xianmi bing qita zuowu yongzuo shiliang bufen zhe wei xianmi zhi quannian gongji yueshu ji xianmi quannian ying xiaofei yueshu jian yingchu shu" 湖南省各縣秈米並其他作物用作食糧部分折為秈米之全年供給約數及秈米全年應消費約數間盈絀數 [A comparison of surplus or deficit between the estimated annual supplies of indica rice and other crops (converted to indica rice) used as food and annual indica rice consumption estimates in each county of Hunan] (March 1937), TJYK 2, no.2&3: 86.

⁴⁷ "Hunan sheng xianmi ke gongji zhi renkou yueshu ji renkou shu jian zhi yingchu," 90. The production of rice and other crops could match 863,000 people's annual consumption of grains; see also, "Hunan sheng gexian xianmi ji qita zuowu yongzuo shiliang bufen zhe wei xianmi zhi quannian ke gongji renkou yueshu ji renkou shu jian yingchu" 湖南省各縣秈米並其他作物用作食糧部分折為秈米之全年可供給人口約數及人口數間盈絀 [A comparison of the surplus and deficit between the estimated population served by indica rice and other crops (converted into indica rice) used as food and actual population figures in each county of Hunan] (March 1937), TJYK 2, no.2&3: 92-93.

⁴⁸ Zhang Renjia, "Hunan gumi," 478.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 523.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 516 and 520.

⁵¹ Ibid., 518 and 523.

the war impacted rice prices in Changsha. To push back against the Japanese offensives in Changsha, the Nationalists engaged in large-scale road destruction operations in Hunan. Though they were able to hold off the Japanese advancement, the Nationalists suffered a lot as their rice transportation from the *binhu* counties was hindered. Later on in this chapter I delve into this matter.

Before the war, Changsha City was not only the primary grain marketplace of the county but also of Hunan. In 1935 over 90 rice factories (*michang* 米廠), exceeding 70 grain stores (*liangzhan* 糧棧) and 61 storage depots (*duizhan* 堆棧) in the city, which stockpiled rice of up to 11 million *shi*.⁵² To ensure reasonable rice prices and avert a rice shortage for the large population in Changsha, two crucial prerequisites must be fulfilled: adequate stockpiling of rice and a consistent supply of rice from Lake Dongting.

5.2 Increasing rice production in wartime Hunan

5.2.1 Wartime rice production tasks for Hunan

1935 and 1936 marked a period of peak rice production in Hunan during the 1930s. Soon after, the Japanese launched a large-scale offensive against the Nationalists. Hunan remained relatively uninvolved in the war with most of the fighting taking place in east and north China. For seven years following the Japanese occupation of Yueyang and Linxiang (two *binhu* counties in North Hunan) in 1938, Hunan especially areas north of Changsha was considered a focal point of the ongoing conflict. The presence of Japanese troops in the north posed a significant threat to the Nationalists' farming production.

⁵² Tan Zhongchi 譚仲池, ed., *Huxiang Wenku: Changsha tongshi xiandai juan* 湖湘文庫長沙通史現代卷 [Hunan (Xiang) archive: a general history of Changsha in the modern era] (Changsha: Huxiang wenku bianji chubanshe and Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 2013), 504.

Rice harvests in wartime Hunan were generally on par with pre-war production averages until 1942, also seeing some declines in the first two years of the war. Through their promotion of beneficial agricultural policies, the Nationalists increased rice production during the war. Hunan was one of the first provinces to adopt policies aimed at increasing wartime rice production. Having shipped Hunanese rice to Canton since 1936, the provincial government realized a need to improve the quantity and quality of Hunanese rice that was not well-liked by the Guangdong population because of its typical soggiess and substantial presence of barnyard grass.⁵³ The construction of the Yuehan Railway opened up opportunities to increase the presence of Hunanese rice in other Chinese provinces like Guangdong and Guangxi by enhancing shipping.

During the height of the war in 1938, Hunan was under pressure to meet demanding quotas for rice regulated by the central government, which needed a lot of grain to supply the military and store rice in the Great Rear. Ensuring Chongqing received a minimum of four million *dan* of rice every year, a main priority for Hunan was to maintain pre-war levels of harvests while producing more rice during the war.

Key methods to ramp up rice production involved refining agricultural technologies (improving rice varieties for increased yield per *mu* 畝) and propagating double-crop paddies in certain regions (Dongting Lake) while reducing cultivation of non-crucial crops (e.g., glutinous rice).⁵⁴ In this section, my focus is improving rice varieties from wartime Hunan. The propagation of improved rice varieties from 1938 to 1942 yielded positive results in the

⁵³ “Shengfu tongling ge xianzhang ducu nongmin gailiang daomi pinzhi” 省府通令各縣長督促農民改良穀米品質 [The provincial government issued a decree for county magistrates to supervise farmers in improving grain quality], DGB, 23 July 1937.

⁵⁴ The opening up of wilderness in West Hunan was a key component of the project; however, the primary focus was the advancement of improved rice varieties.

primary rice-producing regions. However, I argue that the Nationalists in Hunan maintained its pre-war production level rather than harvesting more rice.

5.2.2 Uplifting the manufacture of rice and other crops from 1939 to 1942

To increase rice output, the Nationalists concentrated on refining rice strains and expanding the cultivation of improved varieties in the main rice-producing areas and counties across Hunan. The Hunanese Rice Improvement Council HRIC (*xiangmi gaijin weiyuanhui* 湘米改進委員會), created by the provincial government divided the province into three main rice cultivation areas, south Hunan (Hengyang), middle Hunan (Changsha) and the *binhu* area (10 major counties) to test rice varieties based on specific farming conditions in different areas before the war.⁵⁵ In 1936 and 1937, the propagation was still in its early stages and had made progress to promote 31,000 *mu* in four counties as Table 5.2 shows.

Between 1938 and 1942 Hunan saw significant development to improve rice production, expanding quickly beyond a few counties to cover most rice-producing regions across the province. By 1942, almost half of Hunanese counties had adopted better-quality rice breeds.⁵⁶ In July 1938, provincial authorities established the Hunan Agriculture Improvement Bureau HAIB (*Hunan nongye gaijinsuo* 湖南農業改進所). Through widespread testing on different rice varieties in the province, the HAIB produced 10 advanced rice strains namely Wanli Indica (*wanli xian* 萬利秈), Huangjing Indica (*huangjin xian* 黃金秈), Kangzhan Indica (*kangzhan xian* 抗戰秈) and Shengli Indica

⁵⁵ “Xiangmi gaijinhui jiji gaijin dao zhong” 湘米改進會積極改進稻種 [The HRIC actively improved rice varieties], ZSRB, 14 March 1937.

⁵⁶ Hunan sheng zhengfu 湖南省政府編, ed., *Hunan sheng zhengfu sanshi yi niandu zhengji bijiao* 湖南省政府三十一年度政績比較 [A comparison of administration achievements of the Hunan provincial government in 1942] (Hunan: Hunan sheng zhengfu, 1942), 32.

(*shengli xian* 勝利縣).⁵⁷ The top-performing one among those tested was Wanli Indica which provided a significant 50 *jin* (0.5 *dan*) per *mu* growth over local rice strains and from 1938 to 1942, 3.5 million *mu* of land fields were cultivated with Wanli Indica, which produced an additional 1.7 million *dan* of rice.⁵⁸

Table 5.2 displays two conspicuous characteristics during the spread of improved rice varieties in wartime Hunan. First, the center of this task moved from South Hunan to Dongting Lake over time. In the early stages of the war, South Hunan emerged as the primary location for cultivating improved rice strains thanks to its well-known rice production and distance from the frontline. By 1940, Hengyang, the principal city in South Hunan was the primary site for cultivating most of the improved rice strains, accounting for half of the promotion efforts in the province.⁵⁹ In 1941, *binhu* counties gradually took over South Hunan's role as the main region for the advancement of improved rice strains that were only planted in a small number of *binhu* counties in 1938, mainly on the western side, occupying a small plot of land. In the next year (1939), more *binhu* counties became involved in this work. Approximately one-third of the land in *binhu* counties was utilized for cultivating improved rice strains in 1940.⁶⁰

Second, the promotion work was influenced by the Changsha Campaigns. The Nationalists believed that the south and middle Hunan (locations south of Changsha, such as Xiangtan) were the most secure places for their rice growth from 1938 to 1942, especially after the Japanese intrusion

⁵⁷ Bai Sijiu 白思九, "Ben sheng liangshi zengchan gaishu" 本省糧食增產概述 [An overview of increased grain production in the province], *Hunan nongye yuekan* 湖南農業月刊 2, no.7&8 (1942): 7.

⁵⁸ Zhou Shenghan 周聲漢, "Zhanshi Hunan zhi nongye jianshe" 戰時湖南之農業建設 [Agricultural construction in wartime Hunan], *Quanguo nonglin shiyan yanjiu baogao jiyao* 全國農林試驗研究報告輯要 [Summary research reports on national agricultural and forestry experiment] 3, no.3&4 (1941): 17.

⁵⁹ XZWN, vol.1, Construction of agriculture, 17.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

of two Hunanese counties in the north in 1938 and the ensuing 1939 First Battle of Changsha. In 1940, a consensus among Nationalists was that the Japanese were planning to attack Changsha again. Thus, they were reluctant to alter South Hunan as the center for growing improved rice strains, even though more land in the west Dongting Lake was being cultivated with those improved rice varieties.

Dongting Lake is in North Hunan and most *binhu* counties are on the lake's west side with only three on the east, according to Map 3.1. Xiangyin was one of three counties attacked by the Japanese in 1939. The Nationalists viewed the *binhu* area as a dangerous region that could become a target for the Japanese. Until 1942, after two years of peace in the western part of the lake, the Nationalists spread improved rice varieties to more *binhu* counties, which extended beyond the southern and central areas of Hunan.

Changsha City, the provincial metropolis of Hunan and home to the Changsha County Government was an area for rice production and the center of the Hunanese rice market before the war. The implementation of improved rice varieties was hindered by conflicts and follow-up government-enforced evacuations of the city. Table 5.2 shows that the promotion of improved rice was postponed until 1939 potentially because of the Great Fire of 1938 and the First Changsha Campaign. The promotion work, however, advanced slowly and was unable to keep up with the level of rice production and the market magnitude of Changsha. From 1939 to 1942, promotional areas in Changsha were around 20,000 *mu*, which was lower than Hengyang's progress in 1937 (see Table 5.2).

The Nationalists did not focus on promoting improved rice in wartime Changsha because of its location near the frontline. Changsha, therefore, was faced with a deficit of rice as military campaigns disrupted rice imports from other counties and local rice production declined. Changsha could not feed its

sizable population and rice prices there were also influenced by the war to be fluctuated. Following the Third Battle of Changsha in late 1941 and early 1942 the city experienced a sudden and significant increase in rice prices.

According to post-war statistics, from 1938 to 1944 Hunan saw the promotion and cultivation of nine million *mu* of improved rice varieties increasing 427 million *jin* (4.27 million *dan*) of rice, equivalent to half of the province's pre-war annual rice production.⁶¹ However, behind the figure that the Nationalists achieved, there were underlying issues that had been causing obstacles in their wartime agricultural production.

The Nationalists emphasized the positive impact of their improved rice strains on the rice harvests in Hunan but ignored whether it increased overall rice production. In early August 1941 right before the harvest season, the HAIB predicted an increase in rice and other coarse cereals of over four million *dan* (reaching a final yield of six million *dan*).⁶² But this figure was problematic. 1941 harvests were the least abundant for the duration of the war with only 85 million *dan* of rice being produced, a significant decrease from the previous year's yields of 110 million *shi* (around 119 million *dan*).⁶³ Although more advanced rice strains were planted over a larger territory, overall rice production in 1941 Hunan did not see any growth.

⁶¹ *Hunan sheng nongling shuilizhi nongcun jingji zongshu nongye* 湖南省農林水利志農村經濟綜述農業 [Agricultural, forestry, and water conservancy chronicle of Hunan: overview of rural economy and agriculture] (Changsha: Hunan chubanshe, 1991), 963.

⁶² Hunan liangshi zengchan zong dudaochu 湖南糧食增產總督導處編, ed., *Hunan sheng sanshi niandu liangshi zengchan baogao* 湖南省三十年度糧食增產報告 [An annual report on increased grain production in Hunan 1941] (Hunan: Hunan sheng nongye gaijinsuo, 1941), 1-2.

⁶³ XZLN, Construction of agriculture, 11. This was the statistical figure from the provincial government. Central agricultural institution's estimation was 93 million *dan*. See, "Linian gedi daogu guji", 337.

Table 5.2 Improved Rice Variety Promotion in Hunan, 1937-1942.⁶⁴

Years	Total acreage of improved rice (<i>mu</i>)	Region	County Number	Major Counties Promotion Acreages (<i>mu</i>)
1937	31,926	South Hunan, and Dongting Lake	4	Hengyang (29,903)
1938	138,491	South Hunan, Middle Hunan, and Dongting Lake	9	Hengyang (43,773), Lixian (45,404) ⁶⁵
1939	114,991		16	Hengyang (60,889), Xiangtan (12,134), Changde (6,306), Changsha (4,470)
1940	685,753		19	Hengyang (359,332), Xiangtan (68,524), Changde (90,969), Lixian (89,750), Changsha (7,052)
1941	882,540	South Hunan, Middle Hunan, Dongting Lake, And West Hunan	24	Hengyang (70,727), Xiangtan (90,648), Changde (91,355), Lixian (516,889), Zhijiang (31,933), ⁶⁶ Changsha (253)
1942	1,727,577		31	Hengyang (163,481), Xiangtan (333,214), Changde (150,474), Lixian (525,096), Anxiang (338,878) ⁶⁷ , Changsha (10,000)

⁶⁴ Ibid., 16-18; XZLN, Construction of agriculture, 8.

⁶⁵ Lixian, is one of 10 rice surplus *binhu* counties.

⁶⁶ Zhijiang, a county in west Hunan, belonged to the rice deficit area. During the war, Hunan local authorities organized large-scale cultivations of wasted lands in west Hunan.

⁶⁷ Anxiang, is a county north of Dongting Lake, belonging to the 10 *binhu* counties.

The occurrences of drought and infestations in 1941 called for consideration. Also, Hunan was hit hard by two battles in North Changsha, both occurring within a short span of two months and disrupting the harvesting season from September to October. The Nationalists put in significant effort in 1941 to raise rice yields by promoting improved varieties in numerous counties. However, they could only ensure that the total production stayed around 100 million *dan*, an estimated average production in pre-war Hunan. In other words, without the cultivation of those improved strains, rice harvests in 1941 could have been even more detrimental.

Widespread devastation of the city caused by the war was catastrophic. Changsha suffered a loss of two million *dan* of rice in 1938 after the fire.⁶⁸ Three Japanese invasions in North Changsha also caused a greater loss of rice and other agricultural products. However, we are still lacking sufficient information or an assessment of the scale of the damage. The provincial government waived land tax (representing approximately 1.7 million *shi* of rice) for one year in 1942 in most of the northern districts in Changsha County.⁶⁹ This explained the precarious wartime nature of a Hunanese county in terms of providing insufficient grains to nourish the local people, not to mention supplying rations for the military.

Given the war-torn circumstances, it was challenging to ensure a consistent rice harvest particularly in a province heavily impacted by enemy assaults. The Nationalists in Hunan upheld the pre-war rice yield level through practical agricultural policies. Even though they did not meet their ambitious target of increasing rice production, they continued to advocate for better rice

⁶⁸ Wang Guoyu, *Hunan jingji tongshi*, 399; Tan Zhongchi, *Changsha tongshi*, 707.

⁶⁹ “Xiangbei zhanqu tianfu huading huomian quyu” 湘北戰區田賦劃定豁免區域 [Tax-exempt areas for land taxes in the northern Changsha battle area], DGB, 5 November 1942; see also, “Ben sheng zhenshi zhengou jinkuang” 本省徵實徵購近況 [Recent status grain procurement in the province] (January 1943), HNSZFGB, no.1151, 2369.

varieties that kept Hunan maintaining a pre-war level of rice harvests. When the fighting moved to Dongting Lake, the only region in the province that produced a surplus of rice and was of utmost importance in the war for the propagation of higher-yielding rice varieties, the Nationalists were confronted with a dire crisis of their rice production and supplies.

5.2.3 Crisis of 1943

Before the war, the Hunan Provincial Government estimated that the average rice production in each *binhu* county was around two million *dan*.⁷⁰ A 1935 autumnal harvest report also proved that these counties produced more than two million *shi* of rice.⁷¹ In 1940, the provincial bank conducted a series of agricultural investigations across the province, focusing on major crops and products in *binhu* counties, stating that these counties kept their pre-war rice harvest levels.⁷² This meant that the whole *binhu* area could export four million *shi* of rice annually as suggested in the first section of this chapter. Utilizing the cultivation of improved rice varieties, as well as a targeted policy to exclusively grow two-season rice for the *binhu* area, most counties there were able to be in a rice surplus status. Nevertheless, rice production for 1943 suffered due to the eight-month battle that occurred from April to December.

Huarong was the first county to bear the brunt of the Japanese offensive and occupation in March 1943. The Nationalist forces remained steadfast in their resistance and retook the county until May. The conflict lasting for two months resulted in a setback for the spring rice planting in the county. Japan made a bold move in May when they dispatched 100,000 troops to attack the

⁷⁰ “Hunan sheng ge xian zuowu changliang bijiao” 湖南省各縣作物產量比較 [A comparison of crop yields in counties of Hunan] (March 1937), TJYK 2, no.2&3: 80.

⁷¹ “Qiushou liangshi qingxing diaochabiao”, 49-51. Changde, Lixian, Yiyang, and Anxiang were the top four rice-producing counties.

⁷² *Hunan binghu*, 7-8; Zhang Renjia, “Hunan gumi,” 456. Yueyang, which had been under Japanese control since 1938, was able to export approximately 100,000 *shi* of rice in the 1930s.

entire *binhu* area including Nanxian and Anxiang. Despite not being major targets or captured by the Japanese, Hanshou and Yuanjiang were still deeply involved in the battle. In most *binhu* counties, farmers sowed seeds during April (Huarong was in the late of the month) and transplanted rice seedlings one month later.⁷³ As a result of the Dongting Lake Battle, at least half of the *binhu* counties experienced a disruption in spring cultivation. Later on that year, for example, the rice produced in Nanxian was only one-fifth of the usual yearly yields.⁷⁴ A preliminary assessment by the provincial government revealed that the battle had caused a loss of 16 million *shi* of grains (comprising rice and other crops) in 10 *binhu* counties.⁷⁵ Another example was that 1943 harvests in Yuanjiang, one of the *binhu* counties ranged from 70% to 100% lower than expected due to the battle that caused damage to the embankment and led to flooding of numerous fields with lake waters.⁷⁶

The Japanese invasion of Dongting Lake caused a dire predicament with rice production and distribution in Hunan. By 1940, the Nationalists had migrated to the *binhu* area to promote improved rice strains as the previous section shows. Between 1941 and 1942 Lixian and Anxiang, two *binhu* counties took over from Hengyang (south Hunan), becoming the leading counties for promoting improved rice varieties. Dongting Lake was already renowned for its rice surplus before the war and its significance was increased in wartime Hunan. 1943 conflicts had a severe impact on the rice harvest in *binhu* counties, leading to a rice shortage in the *binhu* area and even the whole province.

⁷³ Zhang Renjia, "Hunan gumi," 433-436.

⁷⁴ "Nanxian fu zao tianzai bennian shoucheng jiwei" 南縣復遭天災本年收成極微 [Nan county was struck by natural disasters again with extremely poor harvests this year], HNGMRB, 3 August 1943.

⁷⁵ "Binghu zaiqing canzhong" 濱湖災情慘重 [Severe disasters in the binhu area], DGB, 6 February 1944.

⁷⁶ "Guanyu Hunan sheng Yuanjiang xian yi jiu si san zaiqian zhuangkuang" 關於湖南省沅江縣一九四三災歉狀況 [Regarding the 1943 disaster and poor harvest situation in Yuanjiang county, Hunan] (1943), HNTGC, 00039-001-00439-00001, HNSDAG.

A rice shortage in *binhu* counties was also exacerbated by Chongqing's high quotas for rice. Until September 1941, most *binhu* counties were accountable for providing military supplies. Following this, compulsory purchases of military-designated rice were broadened to include all Hunanese counties. A potential for a lack of rice in many *binhu* counties had occurred by the time of the Japanese offensive in 1943. Pressures of war and government demands for rice made it unfeasible for Hunan to maintain its pre-war rice export standard after 1942. In fact, Hunan provided a larger quantity of rice than its pre-war surplus, which has been further discussed in the following section.

Thus, I argue that until 1942, the end of the Third Battle of Changsha, the Nationalists in Hunan employed progressive agricultural policies to promote the cultivation of improved rice varieties in many areas, such as south and middle Hunan and Dongting Lake. This ensured that the province could maintain its pre-war rice production levels, which could be utilized to feed both the army and civilians. Nevertheless, difficulties remained. The Japanese attack on Changsha, from 1939 to 1942 prevented the promotion of improved rice strains there. The 1943 Dongting Lake Battle ruined the most essential grain reserve in Hunan. Earlier in 1942, Hunan was confronted with a lack of rice as its exports surpassed pre-war levels.

Inflations of rice prices in Hunan were influenced by the lake conflicts. In May 1943, the start of clashes lasting for two weeks resulted in a 150-*yuan* increase in rice prices within three days and fluctuating prices in Changsha during morning and evening hours.⁷⁷ Rice production and supplies were one aspect of the Nationalist wartime mobilization. Their rice procurement from Hunanese peasants and administration of rice prices in major Hunanese cities

⁷⁷ "Changsha chuxia" 長沙初夏 [Early summer in Changsha], HNGMRB, 19 May 1943.

were also critical to affecting their bad performances in the 1944 Ichigo operation. The Nationalists did not circumvent a marked decline in the combat potency of the army because of a lack of grain provisions. Compulsory rice procurement also affected ordinary people, particularly Hunanese peasants, who faced financial strain from higher wartime production costs and government-mandated rice prices that were lower than actual market prices.

5.3 Compulsory procurement of rice

5.3.1 Initial chaos: the first-time procuring rice in the binhu area from March to September 1939

The Nationalists needed to produce more rice in Hunan during the war to both fulfill military needs and satisfy local consumption. Their grain policies, especially compulsory purchase and the collection of land tax in kind sought to allocate rice in a way that could maintain the combat readiness of their forces and promote social stability. Unfortunately, the Nationalists did not increase rice production in wartime Hunan but they collected excess rice from peasants.

After 1938 in various provinces and war areas, the Nationalists created multiple grain institutions that were responsible for acquiring enough food supplies to meet military needs. In early 1939, every war area established a Grain Administration Office GAO (*liangshi guanlichu* 糧食管理處) which focused on purchasing military rice.⁷⁸ The MAC devised a plan to hoard rice throughout the war (*kangzhan tunliang* 抗戰屯糧) to provide an annual ration of one million to three million troops.⁷⁹ The GAO was responsible for preparing a three-month stockpile of rice for the war area. A Provincial Grain

⁷⁸ “Jingjibu guanyu 1939 nian gongzuo baogao” 經濟部關於 1939 年工作報告 [A 1939 work report of the Ministry of Economic Affairs] (October 1939), ZHMGDAZL, part 5, vol.2, finance and economy 5, 127.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 128.

Procurement Council PGPC (*sheng gouliang weiyuanhui* 省購糧委員會) in each war area was to store rice for three months in the rear of the war area and six months of piled-up inventory in the Great Rear, covering seven provinces such as Hunan and Sichuan. I mainly focus on examining rice procurement of the GAO of the Ninth War Area in Hunan.

In 1939, the GAO was responsible for two main tasks: distributing military rations and storing rice for future use. That year in April, they started their first but chaotic rice procurement in Dongting Lake, which coincided with the Battle of Nanchang led by the Ninth War Area. The Japanese incursion of Nanchang intensified the Nationalists' fear of a potential Japanese assault on Changsha and Hunan. Rumor had it that a county government dumped over 10,000 *shi* of rice into Dongting Lake as it was impossible to transfer and evacuate.⁸⁰ To transport leftover grain (*yuliang* 餘糧) from the lake, the GAO initiated a procurement with no prior blueprint in *binhu* counties thus, resulting in a circumstance where grievances from the public were heard in various counties.⁸¹ Moreover, a considerable portion of rice was lost while procuring and transporting it.

A 1939 GAO report shed light on ongoing problems regarding rice procurement. First, the GAO could not acquire sufficient rice to meet allocated rice quotas. Their goal was to buy all the rice needed within a short period. This hindered proper inspection, especially for rice that had been stored for a few years and was inedible.⁸² Second, after the Japanese launched an attack on Nanchang, the population in *binhu* counties was compelled to evacuate. Thus,

⁸⁰ “Dijiu zhanqu liangguanchu diyi qi qianggou binghu shiliang sunshi yuanyin” 第九戰區糧管處第一期搶購濱湖食糧損失原因 [Reasons for losses in the first phase of grain procurement in the binhu area by the GAO of the Ninth War Area] (13 December 1938), ZQLS, vol.1, XZY, 014-040504-0026, GSGDA, 103.

⁸¹ “Guanyu qianggou Xiang sheng binghu gexian xingu” 關於搶購湘省濱湖各縣新穀 [Regarding the new grain procurement from binhu counties in Hunan] (9 July 1940), ZQLS, vol.2, XZY, 014-040504-0027, GSGDA, 17.

⁸² “Dijiu zhanqu diyi qi qianggou”, 103.

GAO officials and staff encountered difficulties in finding peasants to purchase rice from.⁸³ In addition, the GAO had to shift one million *shi* of rice purchased from *binhu* counties within 45 days. Although equipped with 4,000 to 5,000 ships, many of which were specifically designated for carrying coal or dung, there were numerous shipwrecks and significant losses of rice due to spoilage.⁸⁴ It is unclear from the source why vessels sank, however, many of them were not suitable to handle such heavy loads of rice.

Rice bought from peasants needed to be packed, yet the Nationalists lacked the required sacks. The Ministry of Military Administration allocated 150,000 *yuan* to the Hunan Provincial Government in March 1938 for the purchase of 400,000 sacks in Changsha.⁸⁵ Because of insufficient supplies of large sacks in the city market, the provincial government dispatched their representatives to Hong Kong for outstanding quantity. Changsha received most sacks in the summer of 1938, which were then stored in the Bank of Hunan's depot. The provincial government and certain Hunanese counties utilized some sacks to transport and purchase military provisions while the remaining 280,000 were destroyed in the 1938 Great Fire.⁸⁶ This posed a challenge for procuring rice at a provincial level. In November 1938, for example, the County magistrate of Huarong traveled to Changsha to request 3,000 sacks for future rice procurement and transportation needs.⁸⁷ The sacks he obtained were ruined in a nearby dock of Changsha because of the fire.

The GAO's first-time rice procurement in early 1939 brought to light two issues that require additional scrutiny. First, most *binhu* counties struggled

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 103-104.

⁸⁵ "Guanyu daigou madai yi an" 關於代購麻袋一案 [Regarding the case of procuring sacks] (12 December 1939), HNSCZT, 00042-001-00066-00034, HNSDAG.

⁸⁶ "Changsha madai xi bei dahuo fenhui" 長沙麻袋悉被大火焚毀 [Sacks in Changsha completely destroyed by fire] (04 February 1939), HNSCZT, 00042-001-00066-00022, HNSDAG.

⁸⁷ "Chengbao madai sunshi qingxing" 呈報麻袋損失情形 [Report on sack losses] (23 November 1938), HNSCZT, 00043-001-00066-00021, HNSDAG.

to meet rice quotas set by the GAO. Lixian provided the largest quantity of rice, reaching 10,000 *shi*.⁸⁸ A report from the Changde County Government highlighted the hardships involved in procuring rice. Due to an influx of troops and refugees, Changde required 130,000 *shi* of rice but most of local rice stockpile had already been exported by merchants, therefore, leaving the county with very little storage.⁸⁹ A shortage of workers made it even more difficult to transport the bought rice since there was a need to gather around 60,000 locals to help demolish roads within the county for the military.⁹⁰

As most rice was transported and gathered in the Changsha market, it was logical for *binhu* counties to have limited reserves. Changsha faced a shortage of rice, too. In early 1939, an influx of NRA soldiers in Hunan led to a significant rise in rice consumption. A report from the Changsha County Government exposed that the county was facing a rice shortage and heavily relied on rice from Dongting Lake and soldiers stationed near the county were consuming 300 to 400 *shi* of white rice daily.⁹¹

Nine NRA divisions, comprising over 270,000 soldiers in Yueyang County needed a daily supply of 2,000 *shi* of paddy rice (1000 *shi* of brown rice).⁹² An absence of big battles in Hunan during 1938 and early 1939 did not alleviate the province's difficulties in providing sufficient food for its expanding population, soldiers, and refugees. With the escalation of clashes

⁸⁸ "Lixian qianggou liangshi qingxing" 澧縣搶購糧食情形 [Grain procurement situation in Lixian county] (2 May 1939), HNSJST, 00080-002-00042-00003, HNSDAG.

⁸⁹ "Changde xian zhengfu shenqing zhan qi gouqi qiangyun yuliang" 常德縣政府申請展期購齊搶運餘糧 [Changde county government applied for extensions to purchase and transport surplus grain] (1 May 1939), HNSJST, 00080-002-00042-00006, HNSDAG.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ "Xiang binhu ge xian caiyun liangmi jieji gei Changsha xian" 向濱湖各縣採運糧米接濟給長沙縣 [Procuring and transporting rice from binhu counties to provide relief to Changsha county] (16 March 1939), HNSJST, 00080-002-00272-00015, HNSDAG.

⁹² In November 1938, the Japanese had taken control of the county of Yueyang, however, the Nationalists were able to maintain control over 19 villages of the county; "Tongchou banli liangshi yunji" 統籌辦理糧食運濟 [Coordinated management of food relief operations] (February 1939), HNSJST, 00080-002-00272-00006, HNSDAG.

after 1939, the province saw a rise in the number of troops. This increased the probability of the coercive purchase of more rice from the locals.

The GAO purchased rice at prices lower than market prices since its first-time procurement in 1939. In February 1939, the GAO decreed that rice in all *binhu* counties did not cost more than five *yuan*.⁹³ The GAO sent staff to every county to set prices, using the standard measurement unit (*shi*). For instance, in Huarong, one *shi* of rice was equivalent to 1.22 local units (*huashi* 華石).⁹⁴ Hence, the GAO regulated the price of one *shi* of rice at 2.45 *yuan* in Huarong, working out the price for one *huashi* of rice that was 2.99 *yuan*. In March 1939, the GAO further determined the price for purchasing one *shi* of rice to be at 3-3.6 *yuan*.⁹⁵ In Huarong, for example, one *shi* of rice was sold at three *yuan*, meaning that 3.66 *yuan* should be paid to buy one *huashi* of rice to peasants. According to the GAO, the market price in Huarong was 3.8 *yuan*, resulting in a 0.14-*yuan* deviation in the price.⁹⁶ The Lixian County Government reported that the GAO's regulated price was below one *yuan* in comparison to the market price.⁹⁷ Both the GAO and the central government stipulated procurement prices that were lower than market prices in Hunan during the war. In September 1939, when Hunan initiated its large-scale rice purchase in Dongting Lake, the GAO enforced prices lower than the March

⁹³ "Guanyu guiding binhu ge xian he Chang Tao mijia" 關於規定濱湖各縣和常桃米價 [Regarding regulations on rice prices in binhu counties and Changde and Taoyuan counties] (15 February 1939), HNSJST, 00080-0002-00042-00055, HNSDAG.

⁹⁴ "Guiding Changsha ji binghu ge xian xingu jiagebiao" 規定長沙及濱湖各縣新穀價格表 [Regulations on prices of new grain in changsha and binhu counties] (28 August 1939), HNSJST, 00080-002-00043-00006, HNSDAG.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ "Lixian xian zhengfu guanyu gaozhi caigou junmi kunnan qingxing" 澧縣縣政府關於告知採購軍米困難情形 [Regarding notification on difficulties in procuring military rice by Lixian county government] (11 March 1939), HNSJST, 00080-002-00043-00035, HNSDAG.

standard (in Huarong the price was 2.45 *yuan* per *shi*) until March of the following year when prices increased.⁹⁸

In areas of Yueyang under Japanese control, rice was bought from local peasants at a rate of 3.5 *yuan* per *shi*.⁹⁹ Many residents fled from Nationalist-controlled villages to seek refuge in the Japan-dominated regions because of the beneficial rice price. Rice prices in North Changsha were two *yuan*, meaning that two *shi* of newly harvested rice did not equal the worth of one *shi* of aged rice from last year.¹⁰⁰

At the end of August, the GAO ended its first chaotic rice procurement buying one million *shi* of rice. The central government was not satisfied with this result and expected more rice to be bought and shipped rear from Hunan. In the same month, the GAO submitted a detailed plan to Chongqing for buying rice in the *binhu* area but it was interrupted by the First Battle of Changsha. The GAO should overcome the three problems mentioned in their report, as introduced earlier in this section, but battles taking place in the province and problems caused by them were even more challenging things that the GAO had to face.

5.3.2 Rice procurement from 1939 to 1944

Drawing from their experience in buying rice from March to August 1939, the GAO crafted a new plan for purchasing four million *shi* of rice in September, based on an estimation of a rice surplus of 10 million *shi* in most *binhu* counties.¹⁰¹ The procurement was supposed to be completed timely but it was

⁹⁸ “Changsha binghu gexian”; “Binghu gexian gujia disenbiao” 濱湖各縣穀價遞增表 [Progressive increase in grain prices in binhu counties] (September 1939–January 1941), LSJS, 8.

⁹⁹ “Guanyu qing xiang Xiangbei qianfang gouyun daogu” 關於請向湘北前方購運稻穀 [Regarding the request to purchase and transport rice to the frontline in northern Changsha] (16 September 1939), HNSJST, 00080-002-00043-00011, HNSDAG.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ “Hunan sheng zhengfu qiangyun binhu yuliang houyi mianzi diyong” 湖南省政府搶運濱湖餘糧後移免資敵用 [The Hunan provincial government secured and transported surplus grain from the binhu area

postponed because of the First Battle of Changsha in late September. The GAO imposed strict control on acquiring rice from *binhu* counties by prohibiting any private trade or transport of rice beyond the region.¹⁰² Two to three months was the usual duration of the controlled period in the area. Their goal was to procure most of the needed rice as soon as the yearly rice harvest was over.

The Nationalists created the “Grain Calendar Year GCY (*liangshi niandu* 糧食年度)” to implement their grain policies in wartime China. GCY began in October when the year’s fall harvests were happening and ended in September of the next year before a new fall harvest. The 1939 GCY (*ershi ba liangshi niandu* 二十八糧食年度) theoretically started in October 1939 and ended in September 1940. Local governments and grain organizations altered starting dates or durations based on when a fall harvest in a province or other urgent scenarios. For example, the first-time rice procurement of the GAO in Hunan happened since April 1939 as mentioned before, meaning that the 1939 GCY was from April 1939 to July 1940.¹⁰³ And the 1940 GCY spanned from August 1940 until the end of July 1941.¹⁰⁴

The provincial government’s records indicated that only 1.14 million *shi* of rice was acquired in 1939 GCY by the GAO.¹⁰⁵ In its April rice procurement for that year, the GAO had bought approximately one million *shi* of rice, meaning that only 140,000 *shi* were acquired in the remaining of the

to the rear keeping it from being used by the enemies] (9 September 1938), ZQLS, vol.1, 8. In reality, the GAO only needed to buy 2.24 million *shi* of rice, and the PGPC should buy the rest of the rice, see, XZWN, vol.2, grain administration, 3.

¹⁰² LSJS, 11.

¹⁰³ XZWN, vol.2, grain administration, 4.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 3.

1939 GCY.¹⁰⁶ Meeting a four million *shi* quota was no easy feat.¹⁰⁷ The main cause was a delay in transferring funds between the GAO and banks, along with the First Battle of Changsha, which paused procurement for at least a month. It took much longer to recover roads and waterways leading to Dongting Lake, which were destroyed in preparation for the battle. I discuss this in detail in the next section.

A 1940 GCY rice procurement recommendation from the GAO for three million *shi* was rejected by the central government.¹⁰⁸ Chongqing raised their quota to five and later six million *shi*. This included a plan that the Sixth War Area procured two million *shi* in Hunan.¹⁰⁹ The GAO was responsible for procuring three million *shi* as stipulated and ended up obtaining a lower amount of rice numbering 2.22 million *shi*.¹¹⁰ Considering pre-war export figures in Hunan, the three-million-based plan was a feasible option for the GAO to carry out. Yet, rice was in high demand from Chongqing during the war.

Rice procurement from 1939 to 1940 GCYs was chaotic. In Hunan, GAO and PGPC (being answerable to the MAC) had separate obligations to buy rice with the latter being to acquire rice for non-military needs as outlined by the MAC. The Ministry of Grain (*liangshibu* 糧食部) was established by the

¹⁰⁶ In another report by the GAO, in 1939 their two times of buying rice were around one million *shi*, “Hunan liangshi guanli jinkuang” 湖南糧食管理近況 [The current situation of grain administration in Hunan] (December 1940), LSJS, appendix, 2.

¹⁰⁷ The Hunan PGPC should buy three million *shi* of rice that would not be used for the military. The total amount of four million *shi* was a military rations requirement. However, the actual amount of rice that Hunan had provided was over four million *shi* in the 1939 GCY.

¹⁰⁸ “Dijiu zhanqu liangshi guanlichu caigou ershijiu nian chuchan gumi jihua dagang” 第九戰區糧食管理處採購二十九年出產穀米計劃大綱 [Outline of the 1940 grain procurement plan by the GAO of the Ninth War Area], ZQLS, vol.2, 32.

¹⁰⁹ Later this plan had been changed to buy seven million *shi* of rice including the Seventh War Area to buy one million *shi*. See, “Guanyu qianggou binhu liangshi” 關於搶購濱湖糧食 [Regarding the procurement of grain from the binhu area] (13 September 1940), ZQLS, vol.2, 43; “Liu qi jiu zhanqu bennian qiushou gouliang banfa” 六七九戰區本年秋收購糧辦法 [Autumn grain procurement measures of the Sixth, Seventh, and Ninth War Areas this year] (May 1941), *ibid.*, 72.

¹¹⁰ XZWN, vol.2, grain administration, 3.

central government in May 1941 to streamline the management of grain-related matters accompanied by the creation of three First-Class Grain Administration Bureaus (*jiadeng liangzhengju* 甲等糧政局), one of which was located in Hunan. The new bureau was intended to oversee all rice procurement in Hunan.

1941 marked a significant milestone in the annals of China's grain policy since Chongqing published a new policy that stipulated to collect the land tax in kind. This obviated a need for peasants to use money to pay their taxes, yet, allowing them to pay with rice or wheat. Chongqing regulated the standard for collecting land tax for each GCY. In the 1941 GCY in Hunan, one *yuan* of land tax was equal to two *dou* (斗, 0.2 *shi*) of rice or wheat of the same value.¹¹¹ Rice collection in Hunan exceeded the designated standard of 2.2 million *shi*, reaching 2.6 million *shi*.¹¹²

Due to the 5.1 million *shi* of rice quota assigned to Hunan, however, the provincial government implemented a new policy that no longer relied on the *binhu* counties for rice procurement in the 1941 GCY.¹¹³ Around 2.9 million *shi* of rice were bought by the end of November.¹¹⁴ During the 1941 GCY (August 1941 to August 1942), Hunan met its assigned quota of procuring 5.1 million *shi* of rice (ultimately securing 5.4 million *shi*), a feat it had not achieved since the start of the war.¹¹⁵ Autumn rice harvests in 1941 as previously discussed were the lowest during the war. Hunan, however,

¹¹¹ *Hunan sheng zhanshi tianfu zhenshou shiwu shishi banfa* 湖南省戰時田賦徵收實物實施辦法 [Implementation measures for the collection of land tax in kind during the war in Hunan], XZY, 014-040201-0124, GSGDA, 24.

¹¹² "Tianfu zhenshi ji zhengou liangshi shishi gaikuang" 田賦徵實及徵購糧食實施概況 [Implementation Overview of the collection of land tax in kind and grain procurement], GMWX, vol.115, 296-297.

¹¹³ The regulated rice allocation quota was 7,100,000 *shi*, which included an estimated 100,000 *shi* of damages during transportation. However, the Ministry of Grains agreed that one million *shi* of rice as military rations would be taken from the amount collected as land tax in kind, and also agreed to a reduction of one million *shi* of rice intended to provide with the Sixth and Ninth War Areas. XZLN, grain administration, 1.

¹¹⁴ XZWN, vol.2, grain administration, 6.

¹¹⁵ XZLN, grain administration, 1.

distributed rice over eight million *shi* to Chongqing in the 1941 GCY, 2.6 million *shi* of which was collected through the land tax.¹¹⁶ The Nationalists indeed obtained more rice from Hunanese peasants by the collection of land tax in kind.

During the upcoming GCY (August 1942-July 1943), the rice collected through land tax was 4.4 million *shi* while 5.6 million *shi* came from compulsory procurement (with actual totals of 4.9 million and 5.8 million *shi* obtained).¹¹⁷ Eight months of clashes near Dongting Lake in 1943 had an immediate impact on Hunan's rice supplies. The 1943 GCY (August 1943-July 1944) saw a lower land tax and procurement quota, only reaching a combined amount of 3.7 and 3.8 million *shi* respectively. Indeed, Hunan faced the daunting task of meeting its high rice quotas after the Battle of Dongting Lake. A telegram from Chongqing to Xue Yue reported that only 2.2 million *shi* of rice had been obtained until the first half of December 1943.¹¹⁸ The opportune moment to complete rice procurement or land tax collection was after the year's fall harvest from September to December, meaning that the allocated rice quota was not easy to meet for the 1943 GCY. The Nationalists finally obtained 7.67 million *shi* of rice from the province, a big decline from the previous GCY, even below the amount collected in the 1941 GCY.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ "Sanshi niandu gesheng shi tianfu zhengshou shuliangbiao" 三十年度各省市田賦徵收數量表 [Land tax collection table for various provinces and cities in 1941], LZSL, vol.6, 494.

¹¹⁷ "Sanshi yi niandu gesheng tianfu shiwu zhenggou shouqi shu'e bijiaobiao" 三十一年度各省田賦實物徵購收起數額比較表 [Comparison table of the amount of collecting land tax in kind and procurement of provinces in 1942], LZSL, vol.6, 496.

¹¹⁸ "Caizhengbu liangshibu dian chen Xiang sheng zhenshi zhengou buzhi ken ling Xue zhuxi yan chi gexian jiajin cuishou" 財政部糧食部電陳湘省徵實徵購數不足懇令薛主席嚴飭各縣加緊催收 [Telegrams from the Ministry of Finance and Grain reported insufficient collection of land tax in kind and procurement of grains in Hunan and requested to order Chairman Xue to instruct counties to intensify efforts in collecting] (6 January 1944), LZSL, vol.5, 575-576.

¹¹⁹ "Sanshi er niandu gesheng tianfu zhengzhi zhengou zhengjie shouqi shu'e biao" 三十二年度各省田賦徵實徵購徵借收起數額表 [Land tax collection, procurement, and borrowing amount table for provinces in 1943], LSZL, vol.6, 499.

The Nationalists heavily relied on Hunan for military rice during the war. However, excessive rice quotas and low regulated prices for rice procurement (to be further discussed in the next section) ended up negating all efforts made by the Nationalists' grain administration in Hunan. They acquired a sizable quantity of rice from Hunan and other areas but this did not prevent the NRA soldiers from facing hardships on the battlefields because of insufficient food provisions. The Nationalists collected eight million *shi* of rice in the 1941 GCY, half of which had been allocated for military rations.¹²⁰ Approximately 4.93 million *dan* of rice was reserved for military consumption in the next GCY (1942).¹²¹ The military saw a drop of 1.33 million *dan* in rice provisions in the 1943 GCY, with only 3.6 million *dan* of rice going to the army.¹²² The fighting at Dongting Lake in 1943 had a detrimental influence on military rice supplies in Hunan. A crucial lack of rice, low regulated prices, and rice price surges across the province, I argue, also led to the downfall of the Nationalists in Hunan in 1944.

5.3.3 Excessive collection and compulsory procurement of rice

Chongqing consistently raised their allocated quotas of rice in Hunan since 1939 with two main goals in sight: to support an enormous military presence of three to four million soldiers and control rice and other crops grown in the territories under their rule to prevent the Japanese from seizing them. Using compulsory procurement and land tax collection in kind, the Nationalists controlled a considerable amount of rice in Hunan.

Chongqing and its sub-agricultural institutions were only knowledgeable about estimated annual rice production in both pre-war and

¹²⁰ "Gesheng linian peibo junliangbiao" 各省歷年配撥軍糧表 [Annual allocation of military rations by province over the years], LZSL, vol.6, 505. The Hunan Grain Administration Bureaus declared that they provided 5.44 *shi* of rice to the army, as suggested earlier in this section.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

wartime Hunan. Much information from provincial and county-level administration was often inaccurate. This resulted in an exaggerated estimation of rice yields of Hunanese rice. Statistical data covered in telegrams from Hunan about rice production in *binhu* counties after the 1939 fall harvests exposed problems. The first report indicated that 10 *binhu* counties may see a surplus of 10 million *shi* in 1939 fall harvests.¹²³ Furthermore, another report revealed that there was a surplus of 10 million *shi* of rice in Hunan, including seven million *shi* from *binhu* counties and three million *shi* from other Hunanese counties.¹²⁴ A different telegraph showed that all *binhu* counties could store 16 million *shi* of rice after subtracting local consumption.¹²⁵

At first, Chongqing was skeptical of the 10 million *shi* reported by Hunan authorities and their estimation was four to seven million *shi*.¹²⁶ Later on, they finalized a procurement scheme of seven million *shi* of rice for the 1939 GCY with four million *shi* set aside for military purposes. A surplus of seven million *shi* of rice was an uncommon feat in pre-war Hunan. It is unclear from the original texts whether the figures mentioned referred to white rice or paddy rice. But in pre-war Hunan, shipping out two to five million *shi* of both processed and unprocessed rice, primarily from *binhu* counties did not affect local consumption, as suggested earlier in the first section of this chapter. According to a 1941 government report of Hunan, 107.2 million *shi* of rice were produced and the remainder after the local consumption of 106.8 million *shi* was approximately 400,000 *shi* in 1939.¹²⁷ Even with the consumption of alternative coarse grains to preserve and export extra rice, as stated previously

¹²³ ZQLS, vol.1, 7

¹²⁴ “Chao Chen siling zhangguan daidian” 抄陳司令長官代電 [Transcribe Commander Chen’s telegram] (September 1938), *ibid.*, 10.

¹²⁵ “Chao Xue dai siling zhangguan dian” 抄薛代司令長官電 [Transcribe Deputy Commander Xue’s telegram] (8 September 1938), *ibid.*, 11.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹²⁷ XZLNTJT, 2.

in this chapter, 1939 in Hunan was a normal rather than a good year for rice production.

Chongqing believed that the GAO's failure to meet the 1939 GCY quota was a result of delayed bank funds instead of a scarcity of rice in Hunan.¹²⁸ In the 1940 GCY, Chongqing increased its allocated quota for Hunan to six million *shi* and requested urgently the four banks to release funds to the GAO.¹²⁹ The GAO abandoned their approach in the 1939 GCY, in which they planned to purchase four million *shi* of rice. Instead, they developed a plan to procure three million *shi*. Chongqing rejected this plan because they thought that rice procured in Hunan should exceed what had been bought in Jiangxi where six million *shi* had been purchased.¹³⁰

Even though 1940 rice harvests did not differ from the previous year, some problems were exposed among *binhu* counties. In March 1941 at the time still part of the 1940 GCY, Xue Yue sent a report to Chongqing detailing concerns about rice supplies in those counties:

A thorough examination of *binhu* counties revealed that in 1940's fall, rice production was at 70% of the average yield amounting to approximately 32 million *shi*. Subtracting local rice consumption in 10 *binhu* counties, a total of 27 million *shi* (calculated based on approximately 4.5 million people with a yearly consumption of six *shi* per person), approximately 4.9 million *shi* of rice remained. During seven months stationed at the northern and southwestern peripheries of Dongting Lake, soldiers from the Sixth and Ninth War Areas purchased 1.1 million *shi* of rice. The PGPC of the Six War Area purchased one million *shi*. Both the GAO and Army Service Station of the Ninth War Area procured 500,000 and 330,000 *shi* of rice respectively. Other Hunanese counties that were experiencing a

¹²⁸ "Guanyu qiangou Xiang sheng binhu yugu" 關於搶購湘省濱湖餘穀 [Regarding the procurement of surplus grain from the binhu area in Hunan] (21-28 August 1940), ZQLS, vol.2, 28.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 68.

food shortage also bought 1.6 million *shi* of rice. 1.25 million *shi* of rice was dispatched to Guangdong and Guangxi (one million *shi* from pre-existing storage and 250,000 *shi* of newly harvested rice). The aggregate of this rice amounted to around 4.8 million *shi*. Of 10 *binhu* counties, there was not a significant amount of rice remaining.¹³¹

Two important observations need further discussion from this report. First, 10 *binhu* counties provided rice to nearby provinces along with meeting quotas for military provisions and grain stockpiles in the Great Rear. Second, *binhu* counties had around five million *shi* of rice surplus in 1940, the same amount as before the war but this was not enough to meet the 1940 GCY rice quota. Thus, by the end of 1941, Hunan authorities had to expand their rice procurement to include all counties across the province, as the previous subsection states. A provincial decree passed in May 1941 mandated that Hunanese counties with insufficient rice supplies should sustain themselves on coarse cereals and vegetables instead of relying on rice from *binhu* counties.¹³²

A 1940 GAO report likewise exposed analogous predicaments in *binhu* counties:

This year [1940] had a rice surplus estimated to be five million *shi*. Accordingly, our bureau was responsible for purchasing three million *shi* of rice. The total number of military rations and rice supplies allocated to the Soldier Service Station in our war area was four million *shi*. 10,000 *shi* had been sent to other Hunanese grain-deficit counties while two million *shi* were allocated to Guangdong and Guangxi. *Binhu* counties must provide 12 million *shi* of rice.¹³³

¹³¹ “Xue Yue dian xingzhengyuan caizhengbu” 薛岳電行政院財政部 [Telegram from Xue Yue to the Executive Yuan and the Ministry of Finance] (21 March 1941), Ibid., 57.

¹³² “Shengfu tongling gexian peishi zaliang shucai yihou bu de yilai binghu jieji” 省府通令各縣配食雜糧蔬菜以後不得依賴濱湖接濟 [The decree from the provincial government to counties that distributing and consuming miscellaneous grains, and vegetables instead of relying on supplying from the *binhu* area], DGB, 17 May 1941.

¹³³ “Hunan liangshi guanli,” appendix, 2.

At the start of the 1941 GCY (beginning in August 1941), the Nationalists resorted to collecting land tax in kind to acquire more rice and wheat since obtaining grain from outside sources was not feasible during the Pacific War. But rice provisions in Hunan were becoming more demanding, especially after the Second and Third Battles of Changsha and a meager yield in the province because of infestations and drought.¹³⁴ The provincial government granted a tax exemption to counties invaded by the Japanese at the end of 1941 and early 1942. That year, however, the rice quota from Chongqing increased again.

An overabundance of rice quotas and destruction, caused by the Battles of Changsha in 1941 and 1942 resulted in a severe rice shortage in Hunan. The matter was deliberated at the 1941 National Political Consultative Conference, during which the situation in Hunan was reflected. Yet, the central government seemed to evade responsibility and pass the buck to provincial authorities. The Hunan Provisional Assembly addressed the province's rice risk in the same year. Rumors circulated in Chongqing that the Hunan Provincial Government obtained a total of 10 million *shi* of rice, which surpassed the central government's set quota of seven million *shi*.¹³⁵ Concurrently in Hunan, various military units employed unapproved and incidental levies (*tanpai* 攤派) to obtain more rice from locals, even though the Ninth War Area headquarters instructed that respective county governments in an area, where troops were stationed must buy all military supplies for soldiers.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Ruan Youqiu, "Hunan liangzheng," 492. The source did not provide information on the type of infestations affecting Hunan. As suggested in the last section, the 1941 rice harvests were only 85,030,820 *shi*.

¹³⁵ "Qing yanjin Xiang sheng feifa zhengou liangshi gaishan liangzheng guanli" 請嚴禁湘省非法徵購糧食改善糧政管理 [Strict prohibition of illegal grain procurement in Hunan to improve grain administration] (November 1941), LZSL, vol.5, 254-255.

¹³⁶ "Tiaoji junmin liangshi shengfu guiding gumi jiage goumai banfa" 調劑軍民糧食省府規定穀米價格購買辦法 [Regulations of the provincial government on price purchasing methods for adjusting military-civilian food supplies], HNGMRB, 2 June 1941.

It was Chongqing, not Hunanese authorities that regulated the quota of 10 million *shi* of rice. The allocated quota consisted of seven million *shi* from compulsory procurement with 100,000 *shi* designated for potential damage during transit, 2.45 million *shi* from land tax, and 1.25 million *shi* as part of government *tanpai* for rice storage.¹³⁷ Chongqing allocated more than nine million *shi* of rice to local grain institutions, which were acquired through purchase or taxation. This amount consisted of most of Hunan's rice quota, although not all of it.

The provincial government also had to obtain collective rice (*gongliang* 公糧) to distribute among their employees. According to van de Ven, the local government became heavily reliant on *tanpai* after the central government took control of the land tax in 1941.¹³⁸ Chongqing in 1942 GCY permitted that collective grain supplies for county-level government staff in both Sichuan and Hunan be subtracted from the central government's allocated quotas.¹³⁹ An impression of a reduced responsibility for Hunan was deceptive. In reality, Hunan became the main source of military provisions instead of Sichuan that year thanks to a bountiful rice harvest that allowed Chongqing to increase its rice quotas for the 1942 GCY.¹⁴⁰

1943 witnessed the Japanese invasion of Dongting Lake which caused notable devastation to rice reserves and agricultural production. Several *binhu* counties were unable to provide military rice, meaning that the Nationalists forfeited the only region (*binhu* area) with the ability to export rice on a considerable scale in Hunan. The total land tax and mandatory procurement

¹³⁷ Ruan Youqiu, "Hunan liangzheng," 492.

¹³⁸ van de Ven, *War*, 278.

¹³⁹ "Guofang zui gao weiyuanhui mishuting wei sanshi yi niandu Chuan Xiang liang sheng xianji gongliang guiru zhongyang suo zhen shiwulei zhipai" 國防最高委員會秘書廳為三十一年度川湘兩省縣級公糧歸入中央所徵實物類支配 [The Secretariat of the National Defense Council regulated that the county-level collective grain for Sichuan and Hunan was allocated from the central government's collection of land tax in kind in 1942] (2 February 1942), LZSL, vol.5, 344.

¹⁴⁰ "Junliangbiao," 505.

of rice in 1943 GCY was lower than the previous year and dropped beneath the rice collection in 1941, as detailed in the section before. If the Japanese had not attacked the Dongting Lake in 1943, the Nationalists still faced difficulties in maintaining their high rice quotas in Hunan (10 million *shi* of rice in 1942 GCY) for too long.

5.4 Buying rice in wartime Changsha and Hunan

5.4.1 Rice price hikes from 1939 to 1943 in Hunan

Fluctuations in rice prices could be categorized into three distinct periods. While Hunan became a key battleground in the second phase of the war from 1939 to 1940, there was an observed increase in rice prices in main Hunanese cities, such as Changsha and Hengyang. In general, prices remained consistent due to the provincial government's three times attempts to control pricing, which has been explained later in this chapter.

In February 1939, mid-quality rice was priced at 8 *yuan* per *shi* in Changsha, 12 *yuan* per *shi* in Hengyang as well as 6.4 *yuan* per *shi* in Xiangyin.¹⁴¹ Rice prices in Changsha and Hengyang had stayed stable since the war began keeping the same level as before. The First Battle of Changsha (late September to early October 1939) and large-scale rice procurement led by the GAO near Dongting Lake caused a surge in rice prices across various areas. In March 1940, medium-grade rice in Changsha was sold at 13.8 *yuan* per *shi*, 5.4 *yuan* higher than the previous year.¹⁴² Mid-grade rice prices (10.7 *yuan*)

¹⁴¹ Peng Heqing 彭河清, "Dongting hupan qing fengshou" 洞庭湖畔慶豐收 [Abundant harvest celebration on the banks of Dongting Lake], HNGMRB, 7 August 1939.

¹⁴² "Changsha hangqing" 長沙行情 [The market situation in Changsha], HNGMRB, 2 March 1940. Paddy rice was sold at 6.9 *yuan*. In *Dagongbao*, it showed a different price in Changsha in 1940 that high-quality rice was only sold at 10 *yuan* per *shi*; see, "Gumi songjia lai yuan xudao" 穀米鬆價來源續到 [The decline in rice prices was due to the ongoing arrival of rice], DGB, 16 March 1940.

dropped by 3.1 *yuan* and paddy rice prices (5.23 to 5.56 *yuan*) decreased by 1.34 *yuan* (up to 1.67 *yuan*), both occurring in July.¹⁴³

August saw a considerable hike in rice with mid-grade rice being priced at 12 *yuan* per *shi* (11.2 *yuan* for unpolished brown rice), and paddy rice selling for no less than six *yuan* per *shi* showing a two-*yuan* jump in the price of polished rice and a one-*yuan* increase in paddy rice.¹⁴⁴ Until the end of this month, people had to pay 16 to 17 *yuan* to buy one *shi* of mid-quality rice in middle Hunan.¹⁴⁵ The Ninth War Area implemented three policies that aimed to stabilize rice prices in 10 *binhu* counties and fix them at 5.5 to 6 *yuan* per *shi* for paddy rice in September.¹⁴⁶ In Changsha, mid-grade rice was sold at 15 *yuan* per *shi* and paddy rice was priced between 6.89 *yuan* and 7.23 *yuan*.¹⁴⁷

In light of continuous surges in rice prices during October, Hunan provincial authorities released a price control policy on 10 November to cut down prices of vital commodities (including rice) by 40% with paddy rice and mid-grade rice priced at seven and 15 *yuan* per *shi* respectively (September prices).¹⁴⁸ In Changsha, one *shi* of brown rice was sold at 18.4 *yuan* (9.2 *yuan* for paddy rice) before this price control.¹⁴⁹ Brown rice was priced at twice the price of paddy rice. The price of mid-grade rice was a bit higher than brown

¹⁴³ “Changsha hangqing”, HNGMRB, 16 July 1940.

¹⁴⁴ “Changsha hangqing”, HNGMRB, 5 August 1940.

¹⁴⁵ “Leiyang mijia tuzhang” 耒陽米價突漲 [Sudden spike in rice prices in Leiyang], DGB, 30 August 1940. The original text did not clarify the type of rice, mostly referring to mid-quality rice.

¹⁴⁶ “Xue zhangguan guiding guanzhi liangshi banfa” 薛長官規定管制糧食辦法 [Chief Xue regulated methods to control grain], DGB, 13 September 1940. The price of paddy rice in Changde, Yiyang and Ningxiang was six *yuan* per *shi* (5.9 *yuan* in Lixian and Linli, 5.7 *yuan* in Hanshou and Yuanjiang, 5.6 *yuan* in Nanxian, Anxiang and Xiangyin, 5.5 *yuan* in Huarong).

¹⁴⁷ “Changsha hangqing”, HNGMRB, 13 September 1940.

¹⁴⁸ “Zhengfu dangjun guiding Changsha gumi jiage” 政府當局規定長沙穀米價格 [Government authorities set prices for rice in Changsha], HNGMRB, 10 November 1940.

¹⁴⁹ “Changsha hangqing”, *ibid*.

rice. Leiyang, a county in Middle Hunan, and similar areas saw brown rice as a lower grade of rice (*xiadengmi* 下等米).¹⁵⁰

By the end of November, regulated prices for mid-quality rice and paddy rice had gone up to 17.9 and 8.8 *yuan* per *shi*.¹⁵¹ The municipal authority in Changsha further lowered prices in December preserving prices set in November. From 1939 to 1940, the First Battle of Changsha had an impact on rice prices but the Nationalists attempted to reduce prices for Changsha inhabitants to procure enough rice. Mid-grade rice prices rose by roughly eight to nine *yuan* per *shi* in comparison to pre-war levels. People, who bought rice were charged in *dou* (0.1 *shi*), meaning that one *dou* of mid-quality rice increased by 0.8 to 0.9 *yuan* and an extra one *yuan* was needed to pay to buy one *dou* of mid-quality rice. The Nationalists in Hunan were able to maintain a relatively low level of rice prices throughout 1937-1938 and the first half of 1939, however, I argue that rice prices spiraled out of control in Changsha and the whole of Hunan amidst ongoing clashes.

1941 saw Changsha being targeted by the Japanese twice, therefore, leaving behind a catastrophic aftermath including the lowest rice harvest during the war and rice price increase. Before February 1941, Changsha locals still benefited from an affordable price that was put in place in November of the previous year.¹⁵² A small price hike of one *yuan* for paddy rice and two

¹⁵⁰ “Hunan sheng Leiyang xiancheng qi yuefen lingshou wujiabiao” 湖南省耒陽縣城七月份零售物價表 [July retail price table for goods in Leiyang city, Hunan], *Hunan sheng yinhang yuekan* 湖南省銀行月刊 1, no.4 (July 1941): 49.

¹⁵¹ “Changsha hangqing”, HNGMRB, 22 November 1940.

¹⁵² “Ben sheng gexian gumi pingjia hou jiamu yilanbiao” 本省各縣穀米平價後價目一覽表 [Table of rice prices after price control in counties of the province], HNGMRB, 4 February 1941. Hengyang sold 10 *yuan* per *shi* of paddy rice and 20 *yuan* of mid-quality rice, in *binhu* counties, the average prices of one *shi* of paddy rice and brown rice were seven and 14.66 *yuan*.

yuan for mid-grade rice concluded this month since the Ninth War Area increased shipping fees for transferring rice from Dongting Lake.¹⁵³

In April 1941, most Hunanese counties released newly controlled prices for paddy rice at 10 *yuan* and mid-grade rice at 21 *yuan* in Changsha.¹⁵⁴ By mid-April, Changsha County issued its price for brown rice at 22 *yuan* per *shi*.¹⁵⁵ In June, the provincial government raised prices in 10 *binhu* counties to 12 *yuan* per *shi* of paddy rice and 25 *yuan* for one *shi* of brown rice.¹⁵⁶ Other counties still maintained prices following predetermined costs set in April. Brown rice in Changsha was priced higher at 36 *yuan* per *shi* based on the most current government-stipulated standard.¹⁵⁷ Before the two Changsha Battles in 1941 rice prices had already started to rise.

By mid-December, the standard price of machine-processed rice in Changsha was 96 *yuan* per *shi*, only 10 days before the third Battle of Changsha and shortly after the second one.¹⁵⁸ But different grades of rice went up and down around 25 *yuan* per *shi* in February 1941. Within a fortnight, machine-produced rice prices increased from 115 to 145 *yuan* in December.¹⁵⁹ Near-

¹⁵³ “Changsha hangqing”, HNGMRB, 24 February 1941; see also, “Xue zhangguan shouling guiding gouyun binghu liangshi banfa” 薛長官手令規定購運濱湖糧食辦法 [Chief Xue’s directive about the Purchase and Transport Methods of grains from the binhu area], HNGMRB, 2 February 1941.

¹⁵⁴ “Ben sheng gexian di’er ci ping bao gumi jiamubiao” 本省各縣第二次平報穀米價目表 [Second periodic report on controlling rice prices by counties of this province], HNGMRB, 6 April 1941. In Hengyang, prices were higher than in Changsha, which was 13 and 25 *yuan* respectively. Average prices of paddy rice and mid-quality rice were eight and 17 *yuan*.

¹⁵⁵ “Disan qi er ci pingding wujiabiao” 第三期二次平定物價表 [Third period, second time of price control table], HNGMRB, 16 April 1941.

¹⁵⁶ “Tiaoji junmin liangshi shengfu guiding gumi jiage”.

¹⁵⁷ “Shimi youmei deng pingding jiage gongbu shixing” 食米油煤等評定價格公佈施行 [Announcement and implementation of controlled prices for rice, cooking oil, coal, etc], DGB, 13 June 1941.

¹⁵⁸ In 1937, before the war, price of one *shi* of machine-processed rice was more than two to three *yuan* than mid-quality rice. In 1940, one *shi* of machine-processed rice was 21 *yuan* when the time that one *shi* of brown rice was 15 *yuan*. After the Second Battle of Changsha, it rose from 80 to 115 *yuan*. See, “Shimi weihe zhangjia” 食米為何漲價 [Reasons for the rice price spike], HNGMRB, 16 December 1941.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.; the mid-quality rice also increased from 24 *yuan* per *shi* in April 1941 to 106 *yuan* per *shi* in December 1941, see “Minliang gongsi kuai chengli le” 民糧公司快成立了 [The people’s grain company was about to be established], HNGMRB, 19 December 1941.

catastrophic implications of the two Changsha Battles negated Hunan authorities' attempts to control rice prices.

Rice prices in Changsha had reached extremely high levels in early 1942. According to Table 5.3, machine-processed rice prices increased by approximately 100 *yuan* from March to December. A 1942 ERB report showed that mid-grade rice prices in Changsha increased by 70 *yuan* between April and December.¹⁶⁰ In January 1943, Hunan authorities launched an inquiry into establishing a comprehensive price control for most products sold in the province by using prices in November 1942 as a starting point. The Changsha Price Regulation Conference slightly increased prices twice in March about a month after its initial meeting.

The Changsha municipal government released regulated prices for over 30 other essential items, including rice, cooking oil, salt, and vegetables in early 1943. Certain business owners chose to reduce the standard of their products against the price reduction policy. For example, they increased profits by blending white rice with lower-grade grains like broken rice or inferior cereals.¹⁶¹ The price control was short-lived because of the Dongting Lake Battle in May 1943, which caused a sudden and drastic rise in brown rice prices from 80 *yuan* to 310 *yuan* per *shi*.¹⁶² In just two weeks prices rose to 400 *yuan*, and then further increased to 600 *yuan* shortly after.¹⁶³ The municipal administration and Xue Yue took action to lower prices twice in June and July. As the year came to a close, rice prices shot up once more.

¹⁶⁰ "Gedi lingshou wujiabiao" 各地零售物價表 [Retail price table by places] (15 April, 1942), *Jingji yuekan* 經濟月刊 2, no.6 (1942): 57; "Qu nian shiyi yue ji ben yue shi ri Chang wujia diaochabiao" 去年十一月底及本月十日長物價調查表 [Price survey table for the end of November last year and the 10th of this month in Changsha], HNGMRB, 16 January 1943.

¹⁶¹ Zhou Lixin 周禮忻, "Pingjia sheng zhong hua Changsha" 平價聲中話長沙 [A description of Changsha under the rice control], *Guoxun xunkan* 國訊旬刊, no.330 (March 1943): 8.

¹⁶² "Chang gumi jiage bodong chengli minshi weiyuanhui" 長穀米價格波動成立民食委員會 [Fluctuations in rice prices in Changsha and the establishment of the People's Food Council], HNGMRB, 2 May 1943.

¹⁶³ "Changsha chuxia".

Table 5.3 Increase in the price of rice of varying grades in Changsha from 1942-4 (*yuan per shi*)¹⁶⁴

Rice grade Years	Paddy rice	Brown rice (low- quality rice)	Mid- quality rice	High- quality rice	Machine- processed rice
1942					
January					145
March					200
April			230		
December		255	290	325	316
1943					
January		255			330
March		290			
May		370-600			
June		520			
July		350			
August		360			
November		600			
December		650			790
1944					
January					1,400
February					1,400
March					1,400
April		1,200			1,400

¹⁶⁴ “Chun zai Changsha” 春在長沙 [Spring in Changsha], HNGMRB, 11 March 1942; “Chang wujia diaochabiao”; “Ben sheng wujia san banfa” 本省物價三辦法 [Three methods for price regulation in this province], HNGMRB, 17 January 1943; “Guanzhi wujia huiyi juxing si ci changhui gumi jiage chongxin heding” 管制物價會議舉行四次常會穀米價格重新核定 [The Rice Control Meeting was held a fourth-time regular meeting to re-regulate rice prices], HNGMRB, 1 March 1943; “Changsha guanzhi wujia huiyi heding wujiabiao” 長沙管制物價會議核定物價表 [The Price Control Meeting in Changsha approved the price list], DGB, 13 April 1943; “Changsha chuxia”; “Guanzhi wujia diba ci xianjiabiao” 管制物價第八次限價表 [Eighth-time price control table], DGB, 26 June 1943; “Xue zhangguan jiandi pingtiao jiage mei shishi sanbai wushi yuan” 薛長官減低平糶價格每市石三百五十元 [Chief Xue reduced the flat price to 350 yuan per shishi], HNGMRB, 18 July 1943; “Changsha shi mi mei jiage heding” 長沙市米煤價格核定 [Determination of rice and coal prices in Changsha], HNGMRB, 4 August 1939; “Qimi mei shi shoujia da liubai yu yuan” 齊米每石售價達六百餘元 [The selling price of brown rice reached over 600 yuan per shishi], HNGMRB, 16 November 1943; “Changsha wujia heding” 長沙物價核定 [Price approval in Changsha], DGB, 9 December 1943; “Benshi wujia zhangfeng you qi” 本市物價漲風又起 [Prices in the city were rising again], HNGMRB, 10 April 1944; “Wujia guanzhi huiyi heding wujia gongzibiao” 管制物價會議核定物價工資表 [The Price Control Meeting confirmed price and wage schedule], DGB, 25 April 1944.

During 1942 and 1943, machine-processed rice prices increased from 145 to 330 *yuan* and then to 790 *yuan* per *shi* doubling in price each year. Nevertheless, prices in the first four months of 1944 were almost twice as much as the previous year. 1943 Dongting Lake Battle caused a rice deficit in *binhu* counties and a noticeable rise in rice prices in Changsha. Spiraling rice prices in wartime Changsha were a result of both the hyperinflation in Nationalist-controlled China and the battles in the Hunan theater as well as the 1938 Great Fire, which has been further examined in the following section.

5.4.2 The relationships between price spikes of rice and battles erupted in Hunan

Factors that influenced wartime rice prices were intricate, including the Japanese-instigated economic embargo of Nationalist-controlled China, changing global circumstances, and the general wartime hyperinflation. I focus on exploring how the battles in Hunan (Changsha and the *binhu* area) had affected rice prices in Changsha.

Wartime general hyperinflation was crucial in driving up product prices including rice. From 1939 onwards, rice prices steadily rose across unoccupied China because of the effects of war and reached a critical level by 1940. The Farmers Bank of China's investigation covered wartime prices of mid-quality rice in major Chinese cities, which reflected that prices in Hengyang in 1939 skyrocketed by 235%, compared to the 1936 level.¹⁶⁵ 1939 rice pricing indexes in two major cities in Sichuan (Chongqing and Chengdu) were a mere 98% and 99% of their 1936 levels.¹⁶⁶ The First Battle of Changsha in September 1939 brought about this outcome.

¹⁶⁵ Yang Shoubiao 楊壽標, "Liangjia yu nongmin jingji" 糧價與農民經濟 [Grain prices and the rural economy], GMWX, vol.113, 207; "Zhanshi ge zhongyao chengshi zhongdengmi lingshou jiage ji zhishu" 戰時各重要城市中等米零售價格及指數 [Retail prices and indices of mid-grade rice in important cities during the war], LZSL, vol.6, 487.

¹⁶⁶ Yang Shoubiao, "Liangjia," 207.

Sichuan in 1940 faced a sharp hike in rice prices with an index in Chongqing increasing by five times from the previous year.¹⁶⁷ 1940 rice pricing index registered a 368% increase in Hengyang.¹⁶⁸ The following year saw an intensified trend in rice pricing because rice pricing indexes rose to 2,607% in Chongqing, 2,051% in Chengdu, and 1,900% in Hengyang.¹⁶⁹ During the first two months of 1942, rice prices in Hengyang rose at a higher rate (4,750%) than those in Chongqing (3,143%) and Chengdu (2,365%).¹⁷⁰ Wartime hyperinflation was a major factor that caused a rapid rise in rice prices in Chinese cities under Nationalist control, according to the findings of this investigation of the Farmers Bank of China. Hengyang had a higher price index than Chongqing in 1939 and was the fastest-growing city among those examined at the beginning of 1942, when the Third Battle of Changsha ended.¹⁷¹ An important aspect that deserves further analysis in understanding wartime rice price fluctuations in Hunan is those battles taking place across the province.

I pointed out two essential conditions that rice prices in Changsha were extensively influenced by the inflow of imports from outside, particularly from *binhu* counties, and furthermore by the city's capacity for storing rice, in section 5.1.4. On one side, most *binhu* counties were expected to have sufficient rice production and could sell their surplus to Changsha. On the other hand, any barriers on all roads or waterways that would disrupt the transport of rice to Changsha must be avoided. Safeguarding rice shipments from Dongting Lake proved to be a difficult undertaking for Changsha, given its location near the frontline. The 1938 Great Fire also destroyed the city's rice stockpiles,

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 207-208

¹⁶⁸ "Zhongdengmi jiage zhishu", 488.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 487-488.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 488.

causing a permanent decrease in reserves. The Nationalists faced challenges in keeping rice prices stable in wartime Changsha.

The Ninth War Area employed a strategy of destroying roads and railways in massive areas north of Changsha. This was to hinder a potential Japanese invasion after 1939. Rice shipments to Changsha were riddled with complications because of this strategy. According to a 1940 GAO report, roads and railways in most *binhu* counties and the northern areas of Changsha were destroyed because of their close location to the frontline.¹⁷² Xue Yue proposed turning all roads and railways into fields as a means of destroying them (*hualu wei tian* 化路為田) while wiping out any of them within a 100-kilometer radius of the first defense line in North Changsha and then preparing for further destruction in the region between 100 and 200 kilometers.¹⁷³ Changde, one of *binhu* counties was reported to have implemented road destruction in a 1939 central government report.¹⁷⁴ This also impeded the rice export and procurement of the local grain institution in *binhu* counties.

Chen Cheng recorded the destruction of the roads in northern Changsha before the First Battle of Changsha in his memoir:

Our task was to locate and revive former paddy fields, remove the edge of the lake, and create a lake in its place while choosing the side of the mountain to create cliffs, converting the routes the Japanese had to navigate into deep and irregular trenches and warping the general road surface into a convex shape rendering it undrivable and hindering both sides of the roads. Despite being challenging, we were able to finish the task.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² LSJS, 18.

¹⁷³ Xue Yue *jiangjun*, 334.

¹⁷⁴ “Xiang sheng pohuai jiaotong qingxing” 湘省破壞交通情形 [The destruction of transportation in Hunan] (13 May 1939), JZTWW, 002-080200-00518-030, GSGDA.

¹⁷⁵ Chen Cheng, *Chen Cheng huiyilu*, 121.

Red lines on map 5.1 represent roads that required complete destruction and black dashed lines with crosses indicate demolished railways. Yuanjiang, Yiyang, and Changde (the west side of Dongting Lake, the area on the top-left of the map), as well as Xiangyin (the east side of the lake), had no roads or railways connecting to Changsha (in the middle of the map).

The strategy of destroying transportation routes, I argue, hindered the Japanese from attacking Changsha, yet caused serious impediments to supply shipment, particularly rice from *binhu* counties to other parts of Hunan. After each battle, the Nationalists needed a lot of time to repair the damage caused to roads or railways. For two years leading up to the Second Changsha Campaign in September 1941, there was no conflict between China and Japan in Hunan. This allowed for rice transport to resume between Changsha and Dongting Lake, although not to the same extent as before the war. Experiencing a gradual increase, rice prices in Changsha remained manageable during this period.

1941 witnessed Changsha being attacked by the Japanese twice, once in mid-September and then again at the close of December. Two months were insufficient for necessary repairs of roads and railways in North Changsha for rice transport from the *binhu* area. 1941 rice harvests in *binhu* counties were below par the normal year yielding no more than half of their typical amount.¹⁷⁶ After two fights in Changsha in 1941, the rice shortage grew worse.

River transport in Hunan proved to be a better way. Before the war peasants or businessmen spent anywhere from two to six days transporting rice from *binhu* counties to Changsha.¹⁷⁷ Rice was primarily transported to Changsha via the Xiang River. With the Japanese looming as a potential danger, the Ninth War Area closed off Dongting Lake and water channels

¹⁷⁶ “Binhu zhi xing” 濱湖之行 [A trip to the binhu area], DGB, 30 July 1941.

¹⁷⁷ Zhang Renjia, “Hunan gumi,” 479.

through which to reach Changsha. They used torpedoes to block Japanese warships in rivers, too.¹⁷⁸ Yet, this did not prevent the Japanese troops from landing in Xiangyin, a *binhu* county, for four attacks during their Changsha Operations. Due to the blockades, river channels were constrained, which resulted in extended transport periods and a heightened risk of boat overturning.¹⁷⁹ In the harsh winter of 1939, rivers were too low for big boats to carry a lot of rice.¹⁸⁰ Following this, locals, who operated small boats on rivers were hired to transport a restricted quantity of rice with lower pay but many of them rejected this job.¹⁸¹

Large-scale rice procurement for military rations in *binhu* counties caused a sharp increase in rice prices across Hunan including Changsha by 1941. Most *binhu* counties found difficulty in providing more rice to those rice-deficit counties. From 1941 Hunanese counties in the rear were also obligated to supply military rice. Changsha City and County gave a combined over 1.3 million *shi* of rice to three war areas, with nearly 600,000 *shi* coming from the city.¹⁸² The only small amount of rice stored in the city and county was depleted by this.

Rice storage in Changsha City was a problem, with which the municipal government never dealt after the 1938 Great Fire. Approximately 300,000 people inhabited the city. The government conducted multiple evacuations for the population as a precaution against Japanese invasions or air raids, as the upcoming chapter states. After evacuations, the number of people living in the city dropped to 50,000 and no more than 80,000.¹⁸³ But in times

¹⁷⁸ LSJS, 18.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² XZLN, grain administration, 5.

¹⁸³ “Jingbeibu bugao guiding pingtiao ji gouliang banfa” 警備部佈告規定平糶及購糧辦法 [An announcement by the Garrison Command regarding regulations on flat purchase and grain buying

of pressing battle, all civilians must flee, many of whom returned to the city after the battle. For example, in 1941 273,422 people lived in Changsha.¹⁸⁴ The population of Changsha increased by 229,084 following the end of the Third Battle of Changsha in 1942.¹⁸⁵ The monthly rice consumption of 300,000 people was 50,000 *shi*.¹⁸⁶ Before the fire, Changsha had ample reserves of hundreds of *shi* of rice that could be utilized in times of need if rice supplies from outside were disrupted.¹⁸⁷ A 1941 statistical report by the provincial government, reflected that seven rice storehouses were in Changsha in 1937.¹⁸⁸ Abandonment of the rice storehouses post-fire led to an insufficiency in rice storage within the city.¹⁸⁹ The municipal authority never rebuilt these storehouses,¹⁹⁰ meaning that Changsha faced a rice shortage due to a lack of proper storage, particularly when bad weather prevented rice businessmen from using river transport to bring in supplies from *binhu* counties.¹⁹¹

In pre-war Hunan, Changsha, the most populous city, was known for being the biggest rice market, in which the bulk of Hunanese rice was gathered to trade and distribute. Residents had access to more affordable rice than counties with a similar population like Hengyang. Changsha in reality had a scarcity of rice because of ongoing conflicts and the 1938 Great Fire, particularly after the end of 1941. While the Communists cut off roads to Changsha during their occupation in 1930, the Nationalists went a step further this time by blockading all routes (railways and waterways) to the city to deter

methods], DGB, 22 May 1941; “Chang shi pingtiaohui zhi gougouzheng” 長市平糶會製購米證 [Municipal Flat Purchase of Rice Committee of Changsha issued rice purchase certificates], DGB, 25 May 1941.

¹⁸⁴ XZLN, home affairs, 18.

¹⁸⁵ XZLN, home affairs: households, 26.

¹⁸⁶ “Shimi zhangjia”.

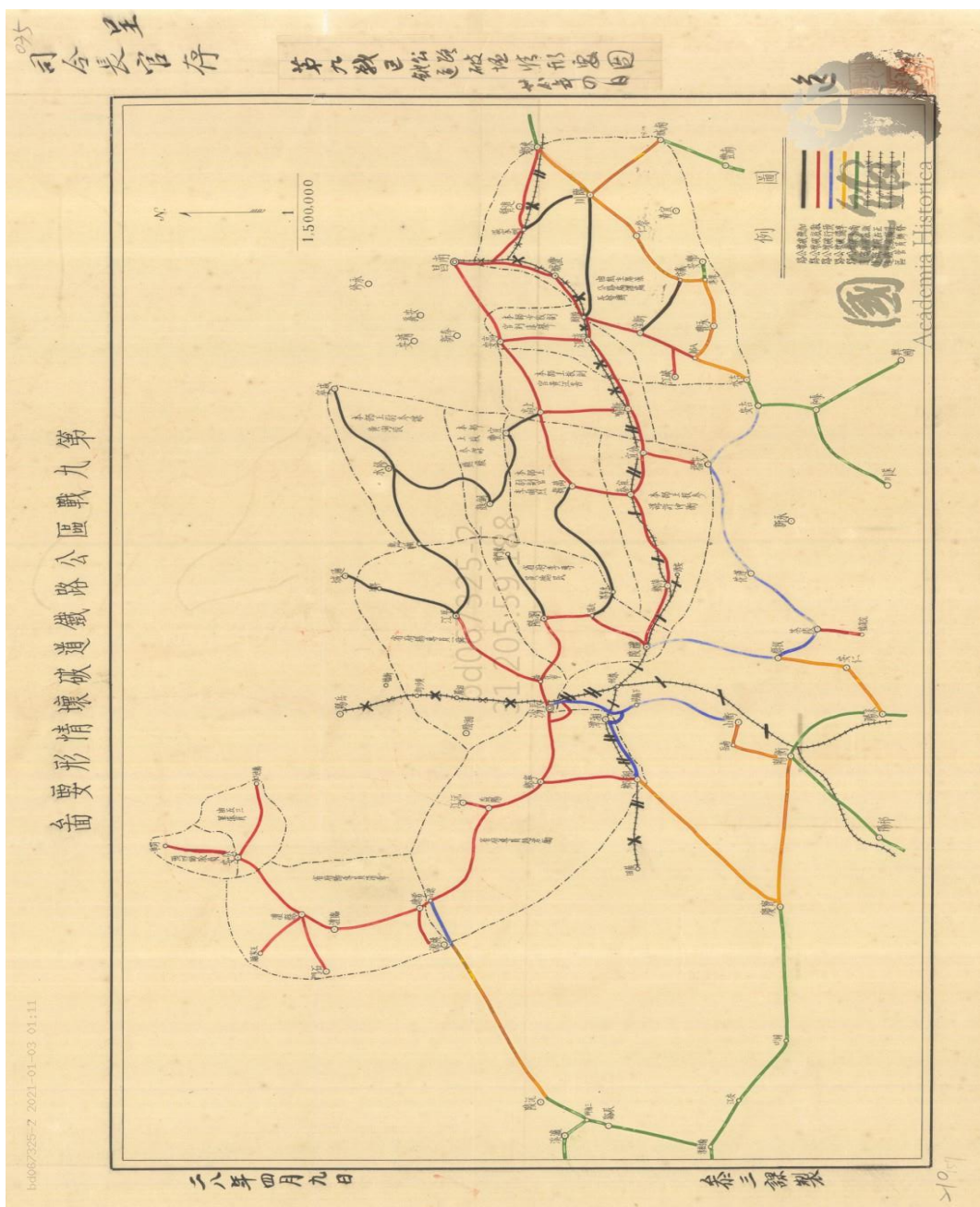
¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ XZWN, vol.2, grain administration, 36-45.

¹⁸⁹ “Shimi zhangjia”.

¹⁹⁰ XZWN, 36-45.

¹⁹¹ “Shimi zhangjia”.



Map 5.1 The condition of destruction of roads and railways in the Ninth War Area. Source: “Dijiu zhanqu gonglu tiedao pohuai qingxing yaotu 第九戰區公路鐵道破壞情形要圖” (April 1939), CCFZTWW, 008-010701-00047-035, GSGDA.

potential Japanese invasions. By doing so, they were able to maintain control over the city but also depleted its resistance ability in this war.

5.4.3 Lower stipulated prices for rice procurement in wartime Hunan

During wartime in Hunan, the Nationalists enforced stipulated prices (*fajia* 法價) below market prices to acquire a considerable amount of rice from local farmers. Lower stipulated prices did not help them buy cheaper military rice, but harmed agricultural production, and ordinary people's lives in the province.

The GAO was responsible for determining stipulated prices in all *binhu* counties before the 1941 GCY (which began in August). As Table 5.4 shows, they standardized a low price in September 1939 but later raised it up by March 1940. According to the provincial government, the average price of paddy rice in the province was anticipated to be five *yuan*.¹⁹² After the 1940 GCY (starting from August), the GAO increased stipulated prices in most *binhu* counties and then further raised them in January 1941. Tough conditions faced by Hunanese farmers were taken into consideration by Hunan authorities when making changes to procurement prices for grain in a single year. The GAO set a stipulated price lower than the average market price for paddy rice, which was nine *yuan* in 1940. Just before the 1940 GCY ended, the municipal government in Changsha lowered the price of paddy rice on the market, which, however, was two to three times the stipulated price, in June 1941. If Hunan authorities did not enforce a price control policy, actual prices in the market would be higher. As the 1941 GCY drew to a close, the GAO attempted to raise stipulated prices but they were unable to keep pace with the rapidly increasing market prices.

¹⁹² XZWN, grain administration, 48. In July 1940 Changsha, a *shi* of paddy rice cost 5.6 *yuan*.

Table 5.4 Regulated price for rice procurement (paddy rice) in Hunan from 1939-42 (*yuan* per *shi*)¹⁹³

Date	Stipulated price	Market price ¹⁹⁴
1939 GCY (from August 1939 to July 1940)	2.45 to 4.4 (average 3.215)	5
1940 GCY (from August 1940 to July 1941)	6 to 7	9 to 18
1941 GCY (from August 1941 to July 1942) ¹⁹⁵	21 to 22	17.9 to 45
1942 GCY (August 1942 to July 1943)	80	90 to 127.5

In September 1941, the central government took control of setting stipulated prices that differentiated between two price categories for *binhu* counties and the remaining counties in Hunan. Chongqing published its stipulated prices in August 1941. Market rice prices were higher over two times than the regulated prices fixed by Chongqing as Table 5.4 shows. By the close of 1941, the least expensive brown rice had been 90 *yuan* per *shi* (45 *yuan* for paddy rice). Prices in Changsha and Hengyang were higher.¹⁹⁶ Machine-processed rice in Changsha was over 110 *yuan* per *shi*.¹⁹⁷

Chongqing fixed an annual grain procurement price for the 1942 GCY at 80 *yuan* starting in August. Hunan authorities suggested a price hike to 100 *yuan*, a proposal that was turned down by Chongqing because of cost implications and the potential for a domino effect on other provinces.¹⁹⁸ The

¹⁹³ LSJS, 8; XZWN, vol.2, grain administration, 6.

¹⁹⁴ In most wartime official reports and data, a market price referenced a government-set price (*pingjia* 評價 or 平價). In most cities, people could buy rice at this price. But this fixed price varied from the real market prices or the prices on the underground market.

¹⁹⁵ The GCY concluded in November, marking the end of the data collection.

¹⁹⁶ In December 1941, one *shi* of mid-quality rice was sold at 169.3 *yuan*. See “Zhongguo ge zhongyao chengshi zhongdengmi lingshou jiage” 中國各重要城市中等米零售價格 [Retail prices of medium-grade rice in major Chinese cities], ZNJJJT 2, no.11&12 (31 December 1942): 57.

¹⁹⁷ “Shimi zhangjia”; as suggested in 5.4.2, in February 1941, one *shi* paddy rice’s price (8.8 *yuan*) in Changsha was higher at 1.7 *yuan* than the average price in most *binhu* counties, two months later, it increased to a two *yuan* of difference.

¹⁹⁸ “Ben niandu gouliang jiage” 本年度購糧價格 [Grain purchase prices for this year], HNGMRB, 7 August 1942.

Nationalists needed cheap rice and wheat to continue their war with Japan, therefore, stipulated prices by Chongqing remained the same throughout the entire GCY.

Military rations had a different cost comprising a purchase price and fees of wrapping and transport by both boats and porters. In the 1939 GCY, one *shi* of brown rice for the army was 25 *yuan*, a price incorporated eight *yuan* paid to peasants, 1.6 *yuan* for packaging, 1.6 *yuan* for bag expenses, 13 *yuan* for shipment fees by two porters (most *binhu* counties were situated 300 *li* 里 or 150 kilometers distant from Changsha and the frontline to its north) and other fees at one *yuan*.¹⁹⁹ In the 1941 GCY, the stipulated price for rice was 15 *yuan* (later able to be raised to 22 *yuan*) and the total cost for army rice was 105 *yuan* per *shi* including other costs, such as shipping.²⁰⁰ Between 1939 and 1941, the expense of transporting rice from Changsha to the frontline rose from 13 to 50 *yuan*, and river shipping from Dongting Lake to Changsha was priced at 9.7 *yuan* in 1941.²⁰¹

Chongqing decided to collect land tax in kind instead of money in 1941 to limit the amount of currency in circulation and reserve funds for necessary expenses. Removing the role of the market in grain (rice) distribution, the policy achieved two results: reducing government currency circulation and limiting food price inflation that was comparatively lower than other products like apparel.²⁰² Compulsory rice and wheat procurement in various provinces put a heavy financial burden on Chongqing. Grain prices

¹⁹⁹ “Hunan liangzheng gaikuang er” 湖南糧政概況二 [Overview of grain administration in Hunan (Part 2)], DGB, 17 September 1941; XZWN, vol.2, grain administration, 7.

²⁰⁰ “Hunan liangzheng”. The provincial government’s estimation was 120.9 *yuan*, see, XZWN, vol.2, grain administration, 7.

²⁰¹ “Hunan liangzheng”. The source did not show the price of river shipment from the lake to Changsha in 1939 and 1940.

²⁰² van de Ven, *War*, 276. In fact, in Hengyang, from 1937 to 1942, mostly the inflation of food was the lowest one in all categories of products, see, “Hengyang lingshou wujia zhishu” 衡陽零售物價指數 [The retail price index of Hengyang], ZNJJTJ 2, no.11&12 (31 December 1942): 32.

also increased. Eastman argued that by implementing the collection of land tax in kind, Chongqing guaranteed significant reserves of rice and other harvests and cut back spending from the government on the market.²⁰³ Although rice inflation remained lower than other products, I argue that the two Changsha Battles in 1941 and 1942, and the 1943 Dongting Lake conflict caused rice prices in Changsha to soar to unprecedented heights, leading to a scenario, in which ordinary people faced severe hardships in buying rice.

5.4.4 Enduring the consistently escalating prices of rice caused by inflation

The war caused Changsha residents and those in other counties of Hunan to endure steep rice prices. According to a 1941 report from the provincial government, the average cost for producing one *shi* of paddy rice was 3.056 *yuan* before the war.²⁰⁴ However, the GAO's stipulated prices in 1939 were far too low for peasants living in *binhu* counties to cover the cost of rice production. The GAO declared that their stipulated prices mirrored pre-war selling prices in the open markets.²⁰⁵ In fact, ERB's survey demonstrated that rice prices before the war in most *binhu* counties had hit three *yuan* per *shi*.²⁰⁶

Wartime expenses of rice production saw a rapid increase. In Nanxian in 1941, producing one *shi* of rice was estimated to be 20 *yuan*, though prices varied from 16 to 20 *yuan*.²⁰⁷ In August of that year, the stipulated price from Chongqing created a 5-*yuan* difference between the cost and profit for peasants. Another *binhu* county (name unknown) also had a stipulated price

²⁰³ Eastman, *Seeds of destruction*, 50.

²⁰⁴ XZWN, grain administration, 17.

²⁰⁵ LSJS, 7-8.

²⁰⁶ *Hunan binhu*, 21-140. For example, on January 5, 1937, the timely price of paddy rice from Dongting Lake (*da hegu* 大河穀) was 3.8 *yuan* per *shi*. The ERB estimated the average cost of shipment fees from near-lake counties was between 0.15 and 0.2 *yuan* per *shi* of rice before the war. Thus, market rice prices in near-lake counties should be over three *yuan*. See, Zhang Renjia, "Hunan gumi," 477 and 479; "Gumi shijia you zhang yijiao" 穀米市價又漲一角 [The rice and grain prices increased by 0.1 *yuan* again], HNGMRB, 5 January 1937.

²⁰⁷ "Binhu zhi xing."

for rice that was 5.9 *yuan* below the real cost of production for farmers during that same year.²⁰⁸

By late November 1942, problems had become more dire. Rice production expenses rose to over 30 times the pre-war level far outpacing the inflation of rice prices.²⁰⁹ In 1942, five liters (1 *shi*=100 liters) of brown rice was the cost of a casual laborer's work whereas just half a liter of brown rice was sufficient to hire one before the war.²¹⁰ A half liter of brown rice was sold at 0.035 *yuan* in January 1937. Five liters of rice was 12.75 *yuan* based on one *shi* of brown rice in late 1942. Rice prices experienced a 36-fold increase but labor costs skyrocketed 352 times. As a result, peasants had to minimize their spending on fertilizers or hire as few laborers as feasible. This could further influence rice harvests.

Peasants from *binhu* counties used to ship and sell their rice in Changsha before the war. After 1939, local grain institutions assumed control of nearly all private boats in these counties while sealing off all waterways from Dongting Lake to Changsha as a part of the city's defensive strategy. In 1941 and 1942 local authorities possessed 3,200 and 4,900 boats for rice procurement and shipment.²¹¹ Peasants had no alternative but to peddle their rice to grain institutions. Before September 1941, local authorities urged people to either sell more rice at stipulated prices or donate it without payment. Meeting a larger rice quota, the provincial government enacted a new policy crafted by Chongqing, which regulated that all remaining rice had to be sold with six *shi* of paddy rice (equivalent to three *shi* of brown rice)

²⁰⁸ Ruan Youqiu, "Hunan liangzheng," 491.

²⁰⁹ "Hunan zhi nongye wenti" 湖南之農業問題 [Problems on agriculture in Hunan], DGB, 27 November 1942.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Hunan sheng zhengfu, ed., *Hunan sheng zhengfu sanshi nian zhengji bijiao* 湖南省政府三十年政績比較 [A comparison of administration achievements of the Hunan provincial government in 1941] (Hunan: Hunan sheng zhengfu), 70; *Sanshi yi nian zhengji bijiao*, 80.

subtracted for individuals (without considering gender and age) and 150 *shi* of rice reserved for the regular functioning of rice shops.²¹²

After 1942, Changsha was still plagued by price inflation. The municipal government had to take measures to decrease the portion of rice expenditure occupied by a worker's wage. In early 1943, the Changsha Price Control Council decreed that a rice milling worker's daily wage was 3.45 *yuan* (1259.25 *yuan* a year).²¹³ Thus, a prescribed yearly consumption of brown rice per person by the central government namely three *shi* depleted more than half of a rice milling worker's yearly earnings.²¹⁴ In April 1944, the municipal authority set the basic daily wage for a worker at three liters of brown rice (23 *yuan* in January and 36 *yuan* in April as a result of fluctuations in rice prices).²¹⁵ Three *shi* of brown rice (3,600 *yuan*, a standard in April) accounted for only 27% of their yearly incomes (13,140 *yuan*).

Plasterers in wartime Changsha earned higher wages. In February 1943, a plasterer was paid 11.5 *yuan* daily. They saved 3,432.5 *yuan* after buying three *shi* of rice occupying 82% of their total salaries (4197.5 *yuan*). From January 1944 onwards a plasterer received five liters of brown rice each day amounting to 35 *yuan* in January and 60 *yuan* in April.²¹⁶ Cutting rice expenditures allowed them to save 84% of their salaries. The estimated minimum amount of rice allotted to laborers was not enough to sustain their daily calorie requirements, especially for those who were employed in building military fortifications or destroying roads for the upcoming Changsha battles. The Nationalists failed to prevent rice prices from increasing but they were able to

²¹² "Xue zhangguan guiding liangshi guanzhi banfa."

²¹³ "Chang guanqu wujia huiyi heding gexiang gongzi" 長管區物價會議核定各項工資 [The price council of Changsha controlled area approved various wages], HNGMRB, 3 February 1943.

²¹⁴ The rice price was 255 *yuan* per *shi* and three *shi* of rice was 765 *yuan*.

²¹⁵ "Chang shi wujia gongzi guanzhi wujia huiyi chongxin guiding" 長市物價工資管制物價會議重新規定 [The Price Control Conference of Changsha re-regulated wages and prices], DGB, 18 January 1944.

²¹⁶ "Chang shi wujia gongzi guanzhi."

ensure that some workers could maintain a basic standard of living by tying their wages to the price of rice. The practice of connecting wages to rice was first implemented for primary school teachers in 1941.²¹⁷

Prices of soap skyrocketed from 73 *yuan* in 1943 to 360 *yuan* in 1944 and brown rice doubled in price from about 600 to 1200 *yuan* per *shi*.²¹⁸ After 1942 in China, rice prices rose at a slower pace compared to other basic needs. As a result, people began spending less on food and more on other crucial items. Sky-high rice prices still remained a difficult obstacle for most Chinese. In Hunan, the Dongting Lake Battle of 1943 resulted in a sharp increase in rice prices in May over a brief period, as the last chapter states. Without expecting an assault on *binhu* counties in 1943, rice prices in Hunan would have climbed gradually before hitting an extremely high point.

War-torn Changsha experienced its most serious rice price inflation starting in 1941 when all types of rice ballooned to six times their original prices before the war. In July, a Changsha-based writer survived by writing for newspapers earning three *yuan* per 1,000 words barely enough to buy 4.5 *jin* of white rice.²¹⁹ People obtained 4.5 *jin* of rice for three *yuan*, meaning that one *jin* of white rice was sold for 0.67 *yuan* and a *shi* of white rice cost approximately 58 *yuan* (1.14 *dan* of rice was equivalent to one *shi* and one *dan* was equal to 100 *jin*). The price rose by 22 *yuan* from the June government-controlled price within one month.

Between May and August 1941, Hunan Tongsu Daily (*Hunan tongsu ribao* 通俗日報) staff members earned monthly salaries ranging from 40 to 140

²¹⁷ “Xiaojiao xingei gaifa guwu” 小教薪給改發穀物 [Teachers in primary school were changed to be paid in grain as salaries] (8 September 1941), HNSZFGB, no.1048-1049, 79.

²¹⁸ “Huakai hualuo hua Changsha” 花開花落話長沙 [Talking about the bloom and fade of Changsha], DNRB, 15 May 1944.

²¹⁹ “Zhanshi shenghuo shuoying” 戰時生活縮影 [A microcosm of wartime life], DGB, 2 August 1941.

yuan and benefited from a 10 or 15-*yuan* rice allowance.²²⁰ Therefore, newspaper staff had a satisfactory year thanks to generous salaries and a bonus for rice. Every employee, however, received their wages daily and their monthly incomes were based on the number of days they worked that month. A distribution employee, for example, earned 50 *yuan* each month as a regular income. A salary register of the Tongsu Daily in June 1941 showed that a distribution employee, who worked only 11 days earned 18.37 *yuan* and a 5.5-*yuan* rice allowance.²²¹ This meant that this person earned less than one *yuan* per day. Notably, two battles occurred in Changsha in 1941, one starting in mid-September and lasting until October, and the other beginning at the end of December and extending into early 1942. Many citizens were compelled to cut back on their working hours, meaning that most of them had to accept a decline in their incomes for that particular year.

During wartime in Hunan, individuals employed by government institutions received collective grains at a low cost. In April 1941, the salary range in the Hunan Construction Bureau was from 43 to 210 *yuan* in a month. Before October 1942, government personnel were able to purchase two *dou* of low-priced rice for six *yuan* (30 *yuan* per *shi*).²²² This was much lower than the average rice prices in Changsha, which were then more than 200 *yuan*. Between January and June 1943, everyone inside the bureau got subsidies of 100 *yuan* base amount along with a living allowance depending on staff

²²⁰ “Hunan tongsu ribao liuyue fengxinbiao” 湖南通俗報社六月俸薪表 [June salary list of Hunan Tongsu Daily] (June 1941), HNSBS, 00073-001-00009-00010, HNSDAG; “Hunan sheng tongsu ribao liuyue zhiyuan mijinbiao” 湖南省通俗報社六月職員米津表 [June rice allowance table for staff of Hunan Tongsu Daily] (June 1941), HNSBS, 00073-001-00009-00012, HNSDAG. The records for salary and rice allowance of Tongsu Daily from May to August 1941 are gathered by the Hunan Provincial Archive.

²²¹ See “Tongsu ribao liuyue fengxin”, and “Tongsu ribao liuyue mijin”.

²²² “Hunan sheng jiansheting gongwuyuan zhanshi shenghuofei” 湖南省建設廳公務員戰時生活費 [War-time living expenses for civil servants of the Hunan Construction Bureau] (April 1941), HNSJST, 00080-001-00011-00001, HNSDAG.

salaries.²²³ The Chief Secretary, for instance, earned 400 *yuan* every month plus an additional 100 *yuan* in basic subsidy and 120 *yuan* living allowances.²²⁴ Being eligible for a 100 *yuan* basic subsidy, an average section member with a monthly income of 40 *yuan* only received an additional 40 *yuan* living allowance.²²⁵ A living allowance was more advantageous for those with a higher basic income. Before the Ichigo Operation in May 1944, monthly salaries for all staff had not risen from the previous year but their basic subsidies went up to 400 *yuan* and additional living allowances equaled their basic monthly salaries.²²⁶

After October 1942, the Nationalists declared that government employees were given free collective rice based on their ages, which was designed to make life easier for government employees.²²⁷ In fact, collective grains were procured or collected in grain-productive provinces such as Hunan. The amount of rice collected in 1944 GCY was only five million *shi* far less than the amount of rice collected in 1942 GCY and 1943 GCY because of the 1943 battle in the *binhu* area and the Ichigo.²²⁸ Government employees of Hunan were forced to buy rice from the market at a steep price. Those with lower monthly incomes found this particularly challenging.

²²³ “Hunan sheng jiansheting zhiyuan shenghuo buzhuferi yiyue” 湖南省建設廳職員生活補助費一月 [January living allowance for employees of the Hunan Construction Bureau] (January 1943), HNSJST, 00080-001-00012-00001, HNSDAG.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ “Hunan sheng jiansheting zhiyuan shenghuo buzhuferi eryue” 湖南省建設廳職員生活補助費二月 [February living allowance for employees of the Hunan Construction Bureau], (February 1943), HNSJST, 00080-001-00012-00002, HNSDAG.

²²⁶ “Hunan sheng jiansheting gexiang zhanshi shenghuo buzhuferi” 湖南省建設廳各項戰時生活補助費 [Various wartime living subsidies in the Hunan Construction Bureau] (May 1944), HNSJST, 00080-001-00012-00006, HNSDAG.

²²⁷ Each month government employees over the age of 31 received one *shi* of rice without charge, those between the ages of 26 and 30 were allotted 0.8 *shi* of rice, and individuals under the age of 25 received 0.6 *shi*. Government workers also could receive the same amount of rice. Hou Kunhong, *Liangshi wenti*, 93.

²²⁸ “Xiang sheng yin zhanshi guanxi liangshi jin neng zhen de wu baiwan shi” 湘省因戰事關係糧食僅能徵得五百萬石 [Only five million *shi* of grains had been collected in Hunan because of the battle] (1944), HNSZF, 00022-001-00123-001, HNSDAG.

Local population in Changsha faced a more severe issue because of the rice deficit. The effects of war prevented Changsha from receiving its usual rice imports and left the city without the means to stockpile an adequate amount of rice for emergencies. In May 1941 Changsha began the initiation of *pingtiao* 平糶, a policy that was to sell grain stored in granaries at fair prices to people during famine years.²²⁹ It was almost unprecedented that Changsha would have to depend on *pingtiao* to address a rice shortage before the war. Provincial grain institutions and the municipal authority obtained 20,000 *shi* of paddy rice (10,000 *shi* of brown rice) from external sources and Changsha County's granaries and dispensed them to the city for sale that month.²³⁰

The 1938 Great Fire and subsequent evacuations mandated by municipal authorities resulted in a considerable reduction in the population of Changsha with approximately 60,000 to 80,000 residents remaining in the city and the estimated daily consumption of brown rice per individual was 0.7 liters, equivalent to 2.555 *shi* a year (lower than the standard of three *shi* per year regulated by Chongqing).²³¹ According to *Dagongbao*, Changsha residents consumed 420 to 560 *shi* of brown rice in one day and in 1941 *pingtiao* prepared rice was only available to be sold in Changsha for up to 35 days.²³² This figure looked problematic because in May 1941 over 270,000 people were living in Changsha, in which the monthly rice consumption was over 50,000 *shi*, as 5.4.2 states.²³³ Thus, municipal authorities imposed a daily limit on the purchase of 3.5 liters of rice and 3.5 liters of broad beans sold at the same rate.²³⁴

²²⁹ Tan Zhongchi, *Changsha tongshi*, 750.

²³⁰ "Changsha minshi wulü" 長沙民食無慮 [No concerns about grain for the people in Changsha], DGB, 21 May 1941.

²³¹ "Chang shi goumi zheng."

²³² Ibid.

²³³ XZLN, home affairs, 18.

²³⁴ "Shenghui minshi wuyu" 省會民食無虞 [No concerns about grain for the people in the province's capital], DGB, 30 May 1941.

Between January and June 1942, following the end of the Third Changsha Battle, the population of Changsha nearly returned to its pre-war level again when over 229,094 people relocated to the city (with only 6,317 emigrations).²³⁵ Xue Yue in 1943 and 1944 organized two instances of *pingtiao*, through which to sell fair-priced rice in Changsha. In 1944, 20,000 *shi* of rice hit the market and each person could only buy five liters in a day (less than the 1941 standard as people bought 3.5 liters of broad beans).²³⁶

Conclusion

The Nationalists believed that China was able to outlast Japan in a prolonged war. In 1943, most *binhu* counties, a key source of rice surplus in Hunan, saw considerable rice losses highlighting the difficulties for them to maintain a prolonged war. Examining the Nationalists' wartime mobilization, this chapter analyzed the policies implemented in wartime Hunan to manage agricultural production and grain administration. I argue that the Nationalists applied appropriate agricultural practices to increase rice production in wartime Hunan and sustained its pre-war harvest levels by 1942. Food supplies beyond the province had worsened one year earlier. Hunan had to offer more rice because of grain deficits in other Nationalist-controlled provinces.

The Nationalists obtained a large amount of rice by enforcing low stipulated prices that harmed Hunanese farmers, who could not make ends meet because of their production costs. Analyzing market prices and stipulated prices showed a gap of 50 to 60 *yuan* per *shi* of rice. This placed a significant strain on Hunanese farmers, who endured a considerable burden of 300 million *yuan* because of the imposition of a 50-*yuan* price difference for one *shi*

²³⁵ XZLN, home affairs: households, 26.

²³⁶ "Huakai hualuo Changsha."

of rice and the procurement of seven million *shi* in 1942.²³⁷ 300 million *yuan* was equivalent to five times the annual revenue of the Hunan government. A burden of five million *yuan* fell on each county with every individual expected to bear a minimum of 12 *yuan* based on the population of 28 million.²³⁸

Hunan authorities took action to promote the cultivation of improved rice variety across the province. But the lack of financial and labor resources in rural areas resulted in a decrease in agricultural cultivation.²³⁹ Hunan experienced a surge in soldier enlistment, particularly in *binhu* counties, resulting in a labor shortage in 1941.²⁴⁰ Back-to-back Changsha Campaigns in 1941 and 1942, however, along with ensuing conflicts that took place among *binhu* counties in 1943 decimated rice harvests in Hunan and caused a shortage of rice there. This had an immediate effect on the Nationalists' military rations in 1944. After 1942, Changsha was suffering from serious rice shortages and rice prices had risen sharply because of the destruction of the city's rice storage system in the 1938 Great Fire and curtailed imports of rice from Dongting Lake. One focus of this chapter is on the difficulties met by Changsha residents in buying rice at excessively high prices and a rice shortage in the city. Paying for high-priced rice to survive became a part of the daily lives of those affected by the war.

A war resulted in widespread destruction across a province and a city. The people of Hunan made a significant contribution to their country. Yet, achieving a national war victory against a stronger and more industrialized opponent than China seemed unattainable with only the resources of one province. The reasons behind the downfall of the Nationalists in Hunan in

²³⁷ "Hunan sheng linshi canyihui diliu ci dahui" 湖南省臨時參議會第六次大會 [Sixth general assembly of Hunan Provincial Provisional Senate] (May 1942), HNSCYH, 00023-001-00076-00001, HNSDAG.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ "Hunan sheng linshi canyihui disici dahui" 湖南省臨時參議會第四次大會 [Fourth general assembly of Hunan Provincial Provisional Senate] (May 1941), HNSCYH, 00023-001-00074-00001, HNSDAG.

²⁴⁰ *Hunan sheng zengchan baogao*, 20.

1944 were intricate. Their reluctance to modify an overused military tactic to protect Changsha and the province, a deteriorating central-local relationship between Changsha and Chongqing (Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue), and the decimation of crucial farming production that provided military provisions should be included. The Nationalists were able to secure support from the people of Changsha and Hunan for their war mobilization. There were sporadic instances of opposition to the government because of ongoing food shortages and rising prices of many products but widespread resistance from below was not seen in wartime Hunan. The upcoming chapter provides insight into how ordinary people coped with these challenges in their daily lives.

CHAPTER 6

New normal and social changes in wartime Changsha and Hunan

Hunan, particularly Changsha was targeted by a string of Japanese air raids since late 1937. Unlike Chongqing, known for its mountainous terrain and convenient bomb shelters dug into the mountains,¹ Changsha faced challenges in constructing air raid shelters, leading to prolonged suffering for its residents until 1939 when more shelters were finally completed. The city was evacuated by a large number of people when the Japanese began bombing or attacking the city. Evacuations of Changsha were ingrained in the daily life of its residents, who left the city at dawn and returned before dusk to escape from Japanese airplanes. Recurring evacuations caused people to work fewer hours and earn less money with a majority struggling to cope with the expensive living cost of the war, especially high rice prices, and other life-essential items.

Municipal authorities were able to evacuate most of the population in late 1938, but a ruthless fire still ravaged Changsha in which the Japanese had not yet arrived. The wartime period in China reflected spatial differences, which also brought about unique encounters and memories that had been deeply ingrained in the minds of Changsha locals. I focus on various challenges that were widespread during the war, including repeated Japanese aerial bombardments, evacuations of Changsha citizens, the fire, and the social metamorphosis of street businesses in wartime Changsha, in this chapter.

Furthermore, militarizing Hunanese peasants and fostering cooperation between civilians and the army was achieved through an

¹ Tan Gang, "Living Underground: Bomb Shelters and Daily Lives in Wartime Chongqing (1937-1945)," *Journal of Urban History* 43, no. 3 (2017): 383, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144215579056>.

education training program organized by Hunan authorities and two key wartime organizations. Not all the people in Changsha and Hunan promptly responded by aiding and supporting the Nationalists in their military campaigns and political mobilization. After realizing the importance of defeating the Japanese to restore their daily lives, more people geared up and were more willing to comply with the government's rules. The Nationalists continued to face opposition from the people. This caused damage to their established army-civilian cooperation. Hunanese civilians, although faced with the difficulties of war, felt compelled to stand by their government as there was no other option to survive.

Repeated victories in protecting Changsha instilled a strong belief and determination among the Hunanese people, particularly Changsha residents that China would ultimately emerge victorious in the war. Although they only emerged victorious in one major battle in Changsha, the Nationalists were able to keep their grip on the city and their propaganda campaign portrayed a string of triumphs as indicated in chapter three. Changsha bore the brunt of the devastation in WWII, but residents in the city, I argue, displayed a high level of resilience and contributed to military victories of the city against Japanese invasions, even in the face of the steep cost of living from 1941 and beyond, different from their initial confusion and fears about the city's fate in late 1937 when the first Japanese air raid unfolded. In exploring this, it is beneficial to examine changes in society across various social groups under the influence of the war, especially in the aftermath of air raids, city evacuations, fire, and Japanese invasions. Nationalist mobilization efforts across Hunan also played a role in this, too. While the Japanese controlled much of Hunan in early 1945 the Nationalists managed to mobilize a considerable workforce in the western part of the province to sabotage roads and build fortifications.

Much like the Chinese from other provinces, the Hunanese illustrated exceptional flexibility and adaptability in handling the shifts in situations and existence for the duration of the war, as Wang Di argues that, in Chengdu, “everyday culture, in which the teahouse played a major role, showed both tenacity and flexibility.”² Different social groups in Changsha also cultivated new sorts of everyday life that shaped a unique public sentiment that persisted as a memory of the wartime years.

6.1 A sort of wartime normal: air raids in Changsha

6.1.1 The true effects of Japanese airstrikes in a Chinese city

Much of the existing research regarding Japanese air raids has been concentrated on Chongqing. Edna Tow’s work sheds light on Japanese air raids that occurred in wartime Chongqing. In this work, Tow argues that the Japanese high command crafted a scheme to undermine Chinese determination and unity as the war morphed into a protracted and extended conflict.³ This piece provides a clear understanding of the Chongqing bombings, including statistics on Japanese aircraft, explosives, sorties and Chinese civilian deaths. The Nationalists in Chongqing implemented various tactics to deploy anti-aircraft weapons and devise a comprehensive civil defense plan with air raid shelters.⁴ These defensive measures met their objectives of saving lives and controlling destruction, given that the population of Chongqing rose during the three peak years of Japanese bombardment (1939 to 1941) without any considerable rise in casualties.⁵

² Wang Di, *The Teahouse*, 2.

³ Edna Tow, “The Great Bombing of Chongqing and the Anti-Japanese War, 1937-1945,” in *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War*, ed. Mark Peattie, Edward J. Drea, and Hans van de Ven (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 256.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 258-274.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Early mixed feelings of Chongqing people to the air raids evolved into a shift in their daily habits and taking extra safety measures (such as moving to the countryside or seeking refuge in nearby protected areas).⁶ Air bombardments showed no discrimination toward their targets. Even those seeking refuge in Chongqing from the frontline were not safe in the Great Rear of China during wartime. Tow portrays the daily routines of Chongqing amidst constant bombings such as extended stays in the “wet, dark, and suffocating” shelters, complying with government directives, and periodic evacuations to the countryside.⁷ But feelings and firsthand accounts of those who experienced aerial raids are still absent.

Van de Ven encapsulates the Great Bombing of Chongqing by focusing on the personal accounts of two elite Chinese individuals, who lived through constant air raids. Qi Pangyuan, a Chinese student seeking shelter in Chongqing detailed her frightening experience during an air raid: “The air defense siren which made me jump out of bed after waking from my dreams in moonlit nights... cut deep, deep wounds into my heart which will never heal,” it also deepened her anger: “to lack a feeling of safety while roving through one’s own country and when even clear skies mean violence, how can I forget that?”⁸ Stories of those who experienced war can give us a deeper understanding of how ordinary people felt, thought, and responded, by sharing their unique personal memories.

Chongqing was not the first city to suffer from air raids as Changsha had already endured numerous attacks from 1937. After the Japanese occupation of the city, Changsha was targeted by the Allies in 1944.⁹ As the

⁶ Ibid., 278-279.

⁷ Ibid., 273-279.

⁸ van de Ven, *China at War*, 125.

⁹ Junshi 君實, “Xiazha Changsha de shikuang” 瞎炸長沙的實況 [Details of the blind bombing of Changsha], *Wenyou* 文友 4, no.6 (1945).

conflict began in Beiping and extended to Shanghai, most Changsha residents firmly believed that the Japanese would not be able to reach their city.¹⁰ A sort of optimism among the local population was dashed when Japanese airplanes arrived, even though their troops never made it to Hunan. It dawned on the locals that the war was slowly encroaching on their homeland.

People in Chongqing may have heard or read about Japanese air raids in other Chinese cities before they were faced with them. Changsha residents, however, did not know about air raids that were existing in China. Most of them had never seen or expected to encounter such an event and were unprepared for what was about to happen. Personal narratives could depict a transformation from inexperienced to experienced city residents during air raids rather than simply offering general observations. Their personal thoughts and opinions on the deafening sound of airplane engines and air raid sirens, in comparison to their first encounter, cannot be fully disclosed, but I believe can give us a peek into how some of them endured and overcame their fears of bombings.

Generating fear and anxiety in numerous Chinese cities, air attacks did not achieve Japan's goal of making China surrender.¹¹ Air raids in Changsha caught locals by surprise heightening the already extraordinary experience and evoking an unanticipated feeling of personal involvement in the war. In this context, Tow argues that Chongqing residents had no trouble imagining themselves as part of the war and could empathize with soldiers on the frontline.¹² With the growing prevalence of this sentiment, a bridge could be

¹⁰ Ruth Altman, *Hsiang-Ya Journal* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977), 95.

¹¹ Chang Jui-te, "Zai hongzha de yinying xia kangzhan shiqi Chongqing minzhong dui kongxi de xinli fanying" 在轟炸的陰影下抗戰時期重慶民眾對空襲的心理反應 [In the shadow of bombing: psychological reactions of Chongqing residents to air raids during the War of Resistance], in *Jindai guojia de yingbian yu tuxin* 近代國家的應變與圖新 [Response and reform of modern states], ed. Lin Liyue 林麗月 (Taipei: Taiwan tangshan chubanshe, 2006), 277-278.

¹² Tow, "The Great Bombing," 281.

built to unite the people and the army potentially strengthening their collaboration. Bombings also sparked anger and led to a collective realization that united the ordinary people in resistance against Japanese aggression.¹³

In the following section, instead of describing air raids from the perspective of the government, I illustrate certain stories that happened among Changsha citizens to show the city while it was being subjected to air raids with an emphasis on several of the aspects involved: the first Japanese aerial bombings of the city, problems with building bomb-proof shelters, the city's response to air raid sirens, bombings of the University of Hunan, and the conditions on the roads in Changsha after the airstrikes. These instances demonstrated how the people of Changsha and Hunan, despite their initial fear of Japanese aircraft, cultivated resilience and determination to adapt to constant air raids during the war.

6.1.2 Sudden disarray and confusion by unanticipated aerial attacks

Despite air raid sirens causing concern, Changsha remained peaceful until November 1937. However, the city was at risk because its air defense system was insufficient. A war correspondent wrote about this matter:

Bombs were dropped by Japanese planes in Liling, Zhuzhou, and Hengyang but Changsha was not their target. If this [an air raid] were to happen, 400,000 Changsha citizens would have no access to air defense shelters and would be left without a place to seek safety. When air raid sirens sounded, wealthy families quickly went to homemade underground shelters near their homes. The municipal government allegedly used over 100,000 *yuan* of air defense levies (*fangkongjuan* 防空捐) to dig bomb

¹³ Yuan Chengyi 袁成毅, *Kangri zhanzheng shiqi guomin zhengfu dui ri fangkong yanjiu 1931-1945* 抗日戰爭時期國民政府對日防空研究 1931-1945 [Research on the air defenses of the Nationalist Government against Japan during the War of Resistance, 1931-1945] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2016), 165; Tow, "The Great Bombing," 281.

shelters and purchase anti-aircraft artillery that could arrive in Changsha at least three months.¹⁴

Changsha faced numerous challenges when trying to construct underground air raid shelters, unlike Nanjing and Shanghai. Wealthy families donated money to purchase a large volume of wood and concrete materials for shelter construction but underground water remained an issue. No matter how deep they dug, water encompassed the entire structure and resembled a well, making it impractical to pay such a high remuneration of 200 *yuan* in Changsha for workers to dig shelters.¹⁵ The Changsha municipality had a dilemma to resolve in the 1930s regarding underground water. The granite underneath the surface made construction a challenging and costly task.¹⁶ Air defense shelters were crucial in saving lives while providing a sense of safety and reassurance to people during air raids as Tow states.¹⁷ According to Tan Gang, the total number of shelters in operation within Chongqing's jurisdiction, including both public and private ones, reached 1,823 by November 1943 with a total capacity of 444,968.¹⁸ Chongqing possessed the highest number of bomb shelters during wartime in China and globally, which benefited from "Chongqing's mountainous natural environment also provided favorable natural conditions for the shelters."¹⁹ When juxtaposed with the bombings that ravaged London, Berlin, and Tokyo in WWII, the bombings in Chongqing, despite causing fewer casualties, persisted for the

¹⁴ Fang Jiada 方家達, "Zhanshi de Changsha" 戰時的長沙 [Changsha during the war], *Fenghuo* 烽火, no.12 (21 November 1937): 15.

¹⁵ Wang Jing 王京, "Zai Changsha" 在長沙 [Living in Changsha], *Xinming* 新命 2, no.1, (20 May 1940): 53.

¹⁶ Wang Zhengji 王正己, "Ershi nian lai Changsha shizheng zhi huigu" 二十年來長沙市政之回顧 [A review of 20 years of municipal administration of Changsha], *Hunan dagongbao ershi zhounian jiniankan* 湖南大公報二十周年紀念刊 (1935): 293.

¹⁷ Tow, "The Great Bombing," 278.

¹⁸ Tan Gang, "Living Underground," 384.

¹⁹ Ibid.

longest period ever recorded worldwide.²⁰ Bombardment of Japanese planes in 1937 and 1938 left Changsha citizens feeling frustrated, insecure, and agitated because of a lack of air raid shelters. It was not until 1940 that Changsha saw the construction of just 55 air raid shelters while Hengyang had a much higher number of 1,207 shelters.²¹ Yet, by June 1942, the figure had increased to 928 encompassing all shelters within Changsha County.²²

At 3 p.m. on 24 November 1937, the Japanese made their first bombing attack on Changsha. 300 civilians lost their lives.²³ The Japanese aerial bombardment inflicted immense terror and dread on people living in Changsha. Phillips Foster Greene, an American doctor at Changsha Xiang-Ya Hospital (Xiang-Ya yiyuan 湘雅醫院 also known as Hunan-Yale Medical School and Hospital) described his observations:

The day was sunny with light clouds. I was working in the office and heard a blast, realized the windows were shaking but did not think of bombs until the second one fell. I went to the roof with the flags as fast as I could. There was a great roaring of planes but all on the other side of a cloud bank. All four bombers seem to have been 250 pounders, all aimed at the railroad station. None hit it or the tracks, but one went into a hotel where a wedding was going on, the place packed. A second hit another hotel filled with down-river refugees-about 60 injured, 20 killed outright. The street there now is lined with coffins, some of the carved camphor wood, some the plain boards.²⁴

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ XZWN, vol.2, air defense, 6.

²² XZLN, air defense, 5.

²³ Hunan sheng difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 湖南省地方誌編纂委員會編, ed., *Hunan tongjian er* 湖南通鑒二 [Hunan chronicle volume 2] (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2008), 1201. The Hunan provincial government reported 54 fatalities and 58 injured persons, “Guanyu jiansong diji xiji Hunan sunhai qingxing tongjibiao de daidian” 關於檢送敵機襲擊湖南損害情形統計表的代電 [Regarding a telegram forwarding the statistical table of damage caused by enemy aircraft raids in Hunan] (13 March 1939), HNSZF, 00022-004-00337-00001, HNSDAG; XZWN, vol.2, air defense, 9.

²⁴ Altman, *Hsiang-Ya Journal*, 99.

A bombing on 7 August 1938 destroyed over 100 business stores. A large section of the main downtown road was destroyed with fire and corpses scattered throughout. About 1,000 people died. When air raid sirens sounded the next morning, tumult and chaos broke out on the streets and engulfed the entire city. Though a false alarm, a chaotic aftermath caused multiple fatalities from car collisions.²⁵ Changsha was situated in the rear before the first aerial assault, implying a feeling of peace at a distance from the front. As expected, the city was not exempt from the war and people had to adapt to frequent Japanese air raids that were a common occurrence.

6.1.3 *Changsha under air raids*

Changsha lacked a proper air defense network and most residents were unaware of how to defend against air attacks. A war correspondent in Changsha captured how the people there reacted when they were suddenly faced with an air raid:

Japanese planes arrived in Changsha by mid-December 1937 but no loud sirens alerted the city of an impending air attack. The Japanese seemed to shift their plan of bombing the train station and instead, ended up dropping bombs on two nearby hotels. A birthday was being celebrated by one family while the other family was busy with a wedding. A lack of precautionary measures caused the deaths of numerous people during the bombing.²⁶

²⁵ Wei Dongming 魏東明, “Changsha de wenhua minyun he minxun” 長沙的文化民運和民訓 [The cultural and civic movements and civilian training in Changsha], *Quanmin kangzhan* 全民抗戰, no.21 (September 1938): 248.

²⁶ Yun Xian 芸嫻, “Kongxi xia de Changsha” 空襲下的長沙 [Changsha under air raids], *Funü wenhua zhanshi tekan* 婦女文化戰時特刊 2, no.4 (May 1938): 15.

But some were spotting airplanes presuming they were from Chinese air forces, revealing their limited knowledge of air strikes. Bombs left no chance for escape. Both above and below-ground shelters were hard to come by in Changsha then. It was bombarded from the air multiple times by February 1938. Changsha residents' response was still naive and full of fear but they instinctively fled instead of staying to watch planes in the sky. Gatherings started to disband once wails of air defense sirens sounded. Traders and vendors, who typically operated out of stores shut their doors while those who were used to leisurely walks hurried to a faster jog.²⁷ Wealthy women and madams, who were thoroughly terrified were being transported in motor vehicles that emitted deafening honks.²⁸ As military vehicles accelerated along the streets, rickshaw pullers were forced to discharge their passengers who visibly trembled yet were powerless to act. At first, those new to Changsha were unaware of any secure areas and could not purchase necessary supplies due to the closure of many stores during the daytime.²⁹

It was the final days of students and faculty presence at the National Changsha Provisional University (*guoli linshi Changsha daxue* 國立長沙臨時大學). Warning sirens required that students and faculty break off their classes and retreat to underground areas on the campus. Several teenage pupils skilled in running positioned themselves at the doorway to observe the sky, anticipating a possible aerial battle. Most students and teachers chose to stay indoors and engage in dialogue with other people:

Am I correct in conjecturing that the sirens will be sounded on days with sunshine? Fortunately, Changsha is regularly foggy, which otherwise would have hindered us from traversing the

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

river [The Xiang River] to elude the onslaught. Two days from now, we will be heading to the countryside to impart knowledge to the villagers. Our institute is transitioning to Yunnan, would you like to join us? Unfortunately, I shall not.³⁰

Japanese planes that were anticipated to arrive but did not and stilling of sirens consoled Changsha from the fear of air strikes. Talks between students and their teachers showed two things that need further discussion. First, Changsha residents were well-informed about the fact that no Japanese airplanes were flying during rainy or foggy days. This proved their improved knowledge of air raids. It also helped protect their lives from bombs as I discuss later in this chapter. Moreover, as early as 1938, provincial authorities implemented a group training program that involved college students being deployed to the countryside. I explore this further in the second section of this chapter.

Somber days shrouded in fog and rain had gone by. In early spring 1938, persistent sunniness inspired air raid sirens of Changsha to sound more often. Only being able to hear sirens without any visual proof of Japanese aircraft was tiresome.³¹ Numerous shelters and chambers were established providing people with a sense of security and dependence to confront an approaching air raid. Changsha appeared to be habituated to the likelihood that Japanese airplanes would not come.

After the fall of Shanghai in 1937, a family moved to Changsha and documented their first experience with a bombing:

On 9 February at noon [1938], customary sirens sounded but with a heightened urgency. We had been engaged in needlework at home that day and did not take it seriously. Loud blasts suddenly shook the windows causing them to rattle and

³⁰ Ibid., 14-15.

³¹ Ibid., 15.

tremble... We realized an aerial attack was coming and quickly went downstairs. We all were remiss in using nearby shelters, though it had already become too late.³²

It was a novel experience for them to be beneath an aerial bombardment, dissimilar from observing air battles in the Shanghai concession. Two weeks later, on 17 February, air defense sirens blared once again. Having been through a similar situation before, the Shanghai family wasted no time in heading to the barnyards nearby for protection.³³ The next morning, loud sirens woke everyone up and many rushed to the shelters to stay safe. After that event, whenever the sirens wailed, the city dwellers were constantly edgy and dispersed chaotically. Even with air defense shelters in place, Changsha residents remained anxious about potential air attacks. Many times, alarm sirens did not signal the presence of Japanese planes, therefore, the populace had overlooked fleeing resulting in fatalities. But the people of Changsha had become aware of the looming danger posed by air raids and had learned to take steps to shield themselves from Japanese bombardment.

6.1.4 Yuelu Mountain burning up

The Japanese did not give Changsha any respite, however, caused destructive chaos on Yuelu Mountain destroying the University of Hunan. The university was engulfed in flames between 2:20 pm and 2:40 pm on 10 April 1938 leaving a lasting memory for the younger wartime generation.³⁴ Before the aerial attack, the atmosphere was serene and there were no signs of a calamity that would ensue.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Xiao Guoying 蕭國英, "Yuelushan zai kongxi xia" 岳麓山在空襲下 [Yuelu Mountain under air raids], HNGMRB, 21 April 1938.

Seeking a break from their routine campus lives, teachers and students of the University of Hunan crossed the tranquil Xiang River to indulge in city life in downtown Changsha. Weekends were a common time for urban residents to escape the hustle and bustle of the city and industrial districts. They wanted to use their free time during the week to connect with friends taking in the river view from the mountain and simply enjoying the pleasant spring season.³⁵ The campus was eerily quiet. This was in stark contrast to the bustling hills and valleys of Yuelu Mountain filled with crowds and noise.

A sudden blaring of air raid sirens across the river sparked fear and dread among the mountain region signaling impending bombings. White clouds above seemed to speed up as if trying to escape the people below.³⁶ There were 27 planes in total. Anti-aircraft guns could not hit the Japanese planes flying at altitudes beyond their range. Visible effects of bombs were evident: the mountain was rocked, the white smoke of the anti-aircraft guns was ascending and the ground was anointed with blood.³⁷ Instant destruction was caused to the library, a factory, student housing, and other structures by a series of incendiary bomb explosions.

After 50 minutes, the siren was turned off. Some individuals came out of earthen holes and seemed to have suffered a loss of their ability to hear.³⁸ Ambulance service members rescued and transported those in need to medical facilities. Firefighters contained the fire which had spread to the library and other buildings. There were not many casualties because students left the campus for Changsha. Two students and one laborer lost their lives and

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

around 10 students sustained significant injuries requiring hospital treatment.³⁹

The campus was left in ruins after 140 bombs were set off, thus leaving no area untouched. The library was heavily damaged by the bombing and suffered a significant loss of its extensive collection because of the fire, as Plate 6.1 shows. It was reported that the air raid caused the university to lose resources valued at more than two million *yuan* and destroyed over 50,000 books.⁴⁰ The library had collected 69,010 books amounting to 120,000 *yuan* in March 1937.⁴¹ Barring a small amount that was removed before the air raid, most of the collections were destroyed. After moving to Chenxi, a county in West Hunan, the library recovered its holdings of 30,000 books (only half of its previous book collection before the air raid) by purchasing new and used books and soliciting contributions from the society.⁴² Until 1942, the library held onto 58,304 volumes.⁴³

The University of Hunan was regarded with immense pride and honor by the people of Hunan with students giving it special recognition as one of the most prestigious universities in China. It took great pride in its long history and cultural heritage, a successor to Yuelu Academy (*Yuelu shuyuan* 嶽麓書院) one of the four academies of classical learning in the Song Dynasty. Thus, the University of Hunan held a significant symbolic value to both Changsha and Hunan and was particularly meaningful to intellectuals and

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Di Qie 狄茄, "Hunan daxue zai Chenxi" 湖南大學在辰溪 [The University of Hunan in Chenxi], *Xuesheng zhi you* 學生之友 4, no.3 (March 1942): 43; see "Guoli Hunan daxue tushuguan jinkuang" 國立湖南大學圖書館近況 [The current status of the library of the National University of Hunan], *Zhonghua tushuguan xiehui huibao* 中華圖書館協會會報 14, no.1 (1939): 18.

⁴¹ *Minguo ershi liu niandu guoli Hunan daxue gaikuang* 民國二十六年度國立湖南大學概況 [Overview of the National University of Hunan in 1937], 1937, 53; see also "Hunan daxue tushuguan," 18.

⁴² "Hunan daxue tushuguan," 18.

⁴³ Di Qie, "Hunan daxue," 43.

students within the province.⁴⁴ I suggest that the Japanese bombing of the University of Hunan provoked a surge of younger students engaging in the province-wide peasant training program devised and guided by the Hunan government, to equip peasants with both military skills and resistance awareness.

The provincial government had mobilized over 3,000 Hunanese students (high school, college, and university students) to go to the countryside since 1938. After the bombing of the University of Hunan, students became enraged and realized that their school life would not resume unless the Japanese were defeated. It was hard to assess how other Changsha citizens responded to the incident. After the bombing in April, there was a temporary halt in Japanese bombardment allowing them to savor a longer period of peacefulness.

⁴⁴ Xiao Guoying, "Yuelushan."



Plate 6.1 The library building of the Hunan University. Source: Tian Fulong 田伏隆, ed., *Hunan lishi tudian san* 湖南歷史圖典三 [Hunan historical atlas, volume 3] (Changsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 2012), 289.

6.1.5 A city of despair and panic: a thunderous sound of air raid sirens in Changsha

Since the outbreak of the war on several occasions, the air defense sirens had been activated, without any Japanese planes being spotted in Changsha's sky. Changsha experienced a short respite after the bombing of Yuelu Mountain. Those pampered sons of wealthy (*gongzige* 公子哥) or influential families and dignitaries seemed to go about their lives without realizing the war that their country was facing.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, it seemed that Changsha was not exempt from Japanese air raids. As the war spread across China, the Japanese began targeting cities in the Great Rear with air raids to weaken the spirits of both the NRA troops and Chinese civilians. The year 1938 saw 36 aerial assaults and 466 planes targeting Changsha, making it the most heavily bombed city in Hunan.⁴⁶ A sudden bombing in Yueyang was a shock to Changsha residents, who had reasons to expect another air raid on their city in the not-too-distant future.

Another merciless air assault descended upon the city on 23 July 1938. After air raid alarms were heard, an emergency alert was activated 17 minutes later while Buddhist monks in temples began chanting the sutras as a plea for Changsha.⁴⁷ Many people climbed onto the roofs of their homes to see what would appear in the sky. They appeared to have disregarded the potential danger of watching the sky amidst the blaring sirens. Shortly after, sounds of Japanese planes were heard coming from the north, arriving at 11 a.m. The peaceful atmosphere of Changsha was disrupted by the roar of airplane

⁴⁵ Fang Jiada, "Fan hongzha hui qian yiri zhi Changsha bei zha" 反轟炸會前一日之長沙被炸 [Changsha was bombed the day before the anti-bombing gathering], *Dafeng* 大風, no.16 (August 1938): 482.

⁴⁶ XZWN, vol.2, air defense, 10.

⁴⁷ Fang Jiada, "Changsha bei zha," 482.

engines on a sunny day. Taking cover in the clouds, the Japanese stayed undetected and avoided being targeted by anti-aircraft guns.⁴⁸

Both Liuyang Gate and the train station located in the northern part of Changsha were targeted by the Japanese, which was witnessed and recorded by a reporter:

When we prepared to leave our house, bombs went off in nearby streets. The building we were in was violently trembling. My companion was petrified and could not move his legs. Another explosion could be heard from a surrounding area as we departed...air defense sirens stopped sounding after 49 minutes of bombardment.⁴⁹

The intense heat of summer made it nearly impossible to extinguish the fires that caused significant damage to 30 buildings in total. Flames kept burning and although a few people were able to see the flames and the destroyed homes, they could not get too close. Families were tirelessly searching for each other and children were desperately calling for their parents.⁵⁰ Changsha was filled with sadness and despair. The municipal authority started evacuating people, those who relied on the city for their survival and were paid low wages could not leave. Leaving Changsha resulted in them losing their jobs. The presence of the group of people caused numerous challenges for Changsha evacuations, which I discuss in the next section.

As bombs rained down on Liuzheng Street, a shop that dealt in goods from South China experienced major losses. Approximately 30 people, including employees and the shop's families scrambled to a shelter they had

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 483.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

built for safety. The shelter was in ruins and only a young girl was rescued but succumbed to her injuries on the way to the hospital.⁵¹ Blaring sirens accompanied by a traffic control halted pedestrian movement forcing those in a food market to stay inside with only a few able to leave and survive the bombing.⁵²

Changsha residents were terrified by Japanese aerial raids on the city, however, they also learned that living in the Great Rear was no different from living in any other area of the country. Battlefields had expanded to encompass more than half of Hunan by the end of 1938. Aerial bombardments persisted without respite until Changsha was occupied by the Japanese in 1944. I argue that Changsha citizens and people from other parts of Hunan had shown that they were adjusting to living with air raids for the following reasons.

First, casualties were reduced after 1938. Before 1938, on average, the Japanese dropped a bomb that killed one person in Hunan.⁵³ But from January to June of 1939, one bomb was no longer enough to kill one.⁵⁴ And even two bombs could not claim a single victim after July 1939.⁵⁵ In 1938 and 1939, the entire province was bombarded by the Japanese with 8,141 and 8,155 bombs, respectively, yet, casualties in 1939 were 581 less than the figure in 1938.⁵⁶ In 1940 and 1941, Hunan was hit with 3,941 and 4,743 bombs, however, resulting in comparable casualties (1940 saw 111 fewer casualties than 1941).⁵⁷

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Zhang Ziyang 張資揚, "Diji xi Xiang diwo sunshi zhi qingsuan" 敵機襲湘敵我損失之清算 [Calculation and liquidation of enemy and our losses from enemy aircraft raids in Hunan], *Hunan fangkong yuekan* 湖南防空月刊, no.5&6 (June 1940): 8.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ XZWN, vol.2, air defense, 9. The casualties were 8,902 in 1938 and 8,321 in 1939.

⁵⁷ XZLN, air defense, 9. The casualties were 4,548 in 1940 and 4,659 in 1941.

Second, the initial terror of air raids vanished among the people, especially after learning that Japanese bombers targeted cities and transportation centers. According to the provincial government's statistics, 1939 in Hunan saw a significant increase in building destruction reaching a total of 13,482, which was twice the amount in the preceding and succeeding years.⁵⁸ The provincial government also released 20 documents from 1937 to early 1941 about Japanese bombings of cities in Hunan. These documents showed that after 1939 Japanese air raids targeted transportation pathways, stations, and industrial factories.⁵⁹ Tan Gang argues that while the bombings instilled terror and continual unease, the situation did not deteriorate, and the Chongqing residents did not undergo psychological collapse, contrary to expectations of Japan, showed a gradual increase in calmness, strength, and bravery following a series of bombings.⁶⁰ In the same manner, Changsha residents accustomed themselves to living under the threat of aerial bombardment, leaving when air raids occurred and returning when they concluded, a circumstance that had become an ordinary occurrence.

6.2 An unforgettable experience of Changsha inhabitants during wartime: evacuation to the countryside

6.2.1 Air raids evacuations: a provisional solution

To avert casualties and mitigate the consequences of Japanese air raids on Changsha, both provincial and municipal authorities issued decrees to orchestrate wide-scale evacuations of the city after 1937. Facing difficulties with

⁵⁸ Ibid. In 1941, the destruction of buildings was 28,260.

⁵⁹ “Wei jiansong yi jiu si ling nian jiu yuefen Xiang jing kongxi cishu ji sunhai qingxing tongjibiao de gonghan” 為檢送一九四零年九月份湘境空襲次數及損害情形統計表的公函 [Official letter submitting statistical table of air raid frequency and damage in Hunan territory for September 1940] (11 September 1940), HNSZF, 00022-004-00337-00017, HNSDAG.

⁶⁰ Tan Gang, “Living Underground,” 389.

the construction of air-raid shelters in Changsha, evacuating residents appeared to be the most viable option for protecting people from bombings.

Completing evacuations in Changsha before 1939 was particularly challenging because of the absence of effective plans. Changsha residents showed an attitude of “not giving a damn about (*buzaihu* 不在乎)” air strikes and grew accustomed to disregarding government warnings to move to the countryside.⁶¹ But Japanese bombs were so powerful that people were forced to flee to save themselves quickly. This was demonstrated through a series of aerial bombings that occurred in 1938 as the previous section states.

Streets in Changsha filled with people of all ages and genders once air defense alerts sounded. Almost everyone brought a basket, bag, or suitcase as they fled the city. This particular exodus of individuals might endure for an entire day and night.⁶² It was not uncommon for Japanese planes to be spotted in the Changsha sky before 10 am. Changsha residents soon realized the dangers involved in conducting business and working in the morning as they encountered these situations more regularly.⁶³

Chaos broke out on the streets as soon as sirens went off. People heading towards the city center abruptly changed direction while those heading away quickened their steps. Changsha was soon swarmed with different types of transportation comprising four-wheelers, motor coaches, lorries, and rickshaws (human-powered transport). Many buses and coaches were overcrowded with people. Some firmly grasped onto an iron bar or screw

⁶¹ Yuan Chengyi, *Kangzhan shiqi fangkong yanjiu*, 166.

⁶² Tao Ming 陶銘, “Qianye yu zuori zhi Changshashi” 前夜與昨日之長沙市 [Changsha of the night before and yesterday], DGB, 24 July 1938.

⁶³ Xie Qingyun 謝青雲, “Changsha jianying” 長沙剪影 [Silhouette of Changsha], DNRB, 1 October 1938.

attached to the bus's sides and back.⁶⁴ Urgent alarms prompted shopkeepers, who were the last to vacate due to store closures, to hasten their exit.

Chaotic situations before air raids in Changsha proved that the government had not taken immediate action to maintain order on the streets. Evacuations were disorderly and government staff and guards were inexperienced in fulfilling their duties. Gendarmes would only take action to maintain order on the streets when they heard urgent alarms followed by air raid sirens sounded. Thereafter, civil defense groups (*minfangtuan* 民防團 or *fanghutuan* 防護團), policemen, and peace preservation corps joined to help people either enter defensive shelters or keep on evacuating.⁶⁵ Their tardy actions were in part because Japanese airplanes sometimes did not come even though the sounding of sirens. This left them uncertain about their duties.

An additional narrative depicting disorderly evacuations in Changsha before 1939 concerned the management of the ferry on the Xiang River. To locate a refuge in the west of Changsha, it was essential to take the route of crossing the river to the countryside. On a daily basis, a great number of people carted their luggage in order to use ferries in the morning hours. It would have been prudent for local authorities to have marshaled and regulated extra ferries on the river as part of their emergency evacuation protocol. Unfortunately, this was not the case. High demand for ferry rides operated by businessmen caused the price of the ferry rides to skyrocket within a couple of days from 0.01 *yuan* to 0.6 or 0.7 *yuan* per person.⁶⁶ People were only able to purchase affordable tickets again after the garrison headquarters in Changsha officially declared

⁶⁴ Mu Zhen 木楨, "Jingbao hou de Changsha 警報後的長沙 [After the alarm in Changsha], *Zhandou* 戰鬥, no.23 (March 1938): 6.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Wei Dongming, "Changsha de wenhua," 248.

that price increases were going to be considered acts of robbery and theft.⁶⁷

6.2.2 Difficulties encountered in the evacuation process of Changsha

A primary purpose of air-raid evacuation was to minimize the number of people in Changsha during a Japanese air bombardment. In fact, local authorities seemed to have contrived a long-term program to transfer more of the population to other Hunanese counties or other provinces in the Great Rear but encountered considerable obstacles, therefore.

After the war began and Nanjing fell in late 1937, a huge influx of individuals from provinces east of Wuhan made their way to Changsha. The city became a special municipality (*zhixiashi* 直轄市) in 1933 with a population of 310,000 in 1929. This figure grew to nearly 400,000 before the war and then reached a peak of one million by late 1937 decreasing to 300,000 after the Battle of Wuhan ended in October 1938.⁶⁸ According to the Changsha Police Station's records, the population in the city in June 1938 was 510,000 people, excluding refugees following numerous evacuations.⁶⁹ However, this number might be lower than the actual figure as there were rumors that the city was home to around 800,000 individuals.⁷⁰ The high population of Changsha posed a major challenge for the local authorities in protecting people from casualties during air raids. A primary challenge for municipal officials was quickly and safely moving the large population.

Another difficulty was that different people within Changsha possessed disparate perceptions regarding the evacuation. Injured soldiers, refugees and local residents were three distinct groups of people, who comprised a focus of

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Bin Mingai 賓敏陔, "Changsha shi renkou shusan wenti" 長沙市人口疏散問題 [The issue of population evacuation in Changsha], HNGMRB, 23 June 1938.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

the government's evacuation program. Above 15,000 injured soldiers had been transported to Changsha by 1938 and the municipality established a management office for treating wounded soldiers, as Plate 6.2 shows.⁷¹ Those with minor wounds that had healed and recovered sufficiently were redeployed to the battlefield. In the event of an aerial assault on Changsha, soldiers with serious injuries found it difficult to escape quickly.

A non-stop influx of refugees made their way to Changsha becoming another cohort that the local authorities had to move. More than 1,000 refugees, who were sent elsewhere after reaching Changsha returned.⁷² Convincing refugees to evacuate was a laborious process, particularly for those who came from East China with successful businesses and were reluctant to leave the city or move to the countryside. Wealthy refugees and job-seeking scholars in Changsha were not as eager to live in rural areas or less developed counties.⁷³ Poor refugees relying on selling newspapers or government support faced insecurities when they relocated as they were unable to find work or receive government aid.⁷⁴

Changsha residents were the main group to be evacuated. Once Changsha was bombed by Japan in 1937, provincial and municipal authorities implemented measures to aid the residents in evacuating. Notwithstanding, an increasing influx of Chinese eastern coast refugees to Changsha made locals feel that the city was a safe haven.⁷⁵ Many of those evacuated to the countryside returned to Changsha, therefore. Although more people actively participated

⁷¹ Ibid; In late 1937, over 20,000 wounded soldiers were transported to Hunan, by 1938, their numbers increased to 30,000 with most of them being stationed in Changsha, see, Hunan sheng zhengxie wenshi weiyuanhui 湖南省政協文史委員會, ed., *Hunan kangzhan huashi* 湖南抗戰畫史 [A pictorial history of the War of Resistance in Hunan] (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995), 62-63.

⁷² Bin Mingai, "Changsha shusan."

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

in evacuation during air strikes, they were expected to only be in rural areas for a brief period before going back to the city. A strategic evacuation plan was created by the Hunan government to keep a smaller population in Changsha. This was different from people's anticipation.

Changsha residents were aware that Hunan and Changsha could potentially face a Japanese invasion as the war reached the Yangtze River Valley. Following the loss of Wuhan and Guangzhou in October 1938, the largest evacuation since the war began in Changsha. More people left the city after the Mid-Autumn Festival that year. Schools were relocated to the west and south of Hunan, stores were closed down and business activities ceased. Some affluent families in Changsha erected firewalls to safeguard their homes and belongings before departing.⁷⁶ The evacuation this time was a success as 90% of the city's residents left before the 1938 Great Fire in November.⁷⁷ The fire was a part of the Nationalists' "scorched earth strategy", which has been discussed in detail later in this chapter. The American doctor Greene wrote about the exodus of individuals from Changsha between 26 October and 1 November 1938:

There were a lot of fears among people living in the city. A week later the entire city was leaving by boat, trains, buses, rickshas, and wheelbarrows. The people in town are moving out furiously, buying everything they can. You never saw more business going on in the days before China New Year—this, in spite of the air raids... By November 11, only a small fraction of the city's half-million population remained.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Tan Zhongchi, *Changsha tongshi*, 642.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 645.

⁷⁸ Altman, *Hsiang-Ya Journal*, 112.



Plate 6.2 Wounded soldier hospital in Changsha. Sources: *Hunan huashi*, 63.

After experiencing early disorder, both Hunan provincial and Changsha municipal governments accomplished their evacuation initiative to forestall additional fatalities from Japanese air raids and the 1938 fire occurrence. They also accumulated experiences invaluable in coordinating future evacuations after 1939 when the city was under threat of being invaded by the Japanese.

6.2.3 Evacuations before the Battles of Changsha

Besides evacuating the city because of continuous Japanese air raids, local authorities, and the Ninth War Area implemented evacuations as a way for their military operations. During the Japanese attack on Nanchang in April 1939, Changsha once again initiated evacuation procedures. Greene jotted down his observations on the city's situation:

On April 18, the government started to blow up buildings. The railway machine shops went up one after the other. Nothing remains between here and Yochow [Yueyang], of bridges, rails, or ties. Even the railway stations have been demolished and the building material carried away. They were leaving not one stone on another for the Japanese to possess.⁷⁹

People slowly made their way back to Changsha after the fire, but the population stayed below 50,000. It was not until May and June of 1939 that the number of people rose to 200,000 and 300,000.⁸⁰ Between 1939 and 1942, the population of Changsha remained consistent with its pre-war numbers.⁸¹ As Japan launched its first military attack in North Changsha, preparations for a full-scale evacuation of the city were made. By 25 September 1939, the battle was nearing the outskirts of Changsha and the Hunan People's Self-Defense

⁷⁹ Ibid., 122.

⁸⁰ Ye Yafu 葉亞夫, "Changsha zai xinsheng zhong" 長沙在新生中 [Changsha in revival], ZSRB, 28 December 1939.

⁸¹ XZLN, home affairs, 18.

Force (*Hunan minzhong ziweidui* 湖南民眾自衛隊) aided in the evacuation of the remaining people. The government and self-defense forces ensured a smooth and orderly evacuation.

Different from their responses to Japanese bombings in 1938, residents were more prepared to evacuate. Having faced several harrowing air raids and a catastrophic fire, more people believed that complying with the government evacuation was a wise way to stay alive. Changsha saw a sharp decrease in its population by two-thirds within a mere three days after the evacuation was declared.⁸² No one wanted to leave. A reporter captured the sentiments of those who remained in the city on the eve of the evacuation during the First Battle of Changsha:

All stores and shops were once again shuttered. The majority of people donned grass-green attire to evade detection from Japanese aircraft flying in the air. There were heartfelt goodbyes as people left the city with many hoping that it would not be the last time they would see Changsha. At the time of sundown, the throng had made its way to the Xiang River. Materials and resources necessary for the transfer were located there and the ferry transportation was made easier with the help of local residents. When night descended, ferry operations ceased. Suddenly, the murmur of mortar fire was faintly heard from the north. During that moment, numerous individuals intently stared at Changsha in the moonlight. It was their parting glance at the city. Verbalization could not convey their thoughts and feelings as there was no way of predicting when they would be returning to Changsha.⁸³

Following the Second Battle of Changsha in September 1941, Changsha residents believed they had emerged victorious as their homes remained

⁸² Ye Yafu, "Changsha xinsheng."

⁸³ Zhang Shifang 張十方, "Hui Changsha, bie Changsha" 會長沙, 別長沙 [Meeting Changsha, parting from Changsha], SSXB, 21 February 1940.

impeccably maintained. An unexpected arrival of another battle, only two months after the previous one, forced them to face reality and start evacuating again on 22 December 1941.⁸⁴

In advance of the Third Changsha Battle, the municipality employed two new approaches, labeled “Guided Evacuation (*zhidao shusan* 指導疏散)” and “Protective Evacuation (*baohu shusan* 保護疏散)”. The first step involved assigning staff to educate and persuade every household about the importance of prioritizing the transport of seniors and children.⁸⁵ Then the government urged and instructed guilds representing different trades to aid in transporting vital materials and products out of Changsha.⁸⁶ The evacuation was finished on 30 December one day before the Japanese attack on Changsha within the designated one-week period.

Evacuation ordered by the government in 1939 was manageable, but it was important to complete all tasks within three days. The belated order was due to the differing views of the Ninth War Area and Chongqing (Chiang and Xue) on whether to maintain or abandon the city, as chapter three states. In September 1941 the evacuation process was somewhat slow because the NRA forces at the front collapsed quickly. Local authorities improved their handling of the situation and enlisted more social organizations (such as guilds in Changsha) to aid in the evacuation after two months. Their performances were successful in achieving their goals of saving lives and mitigating damage. A high level of cooperation between Changsha locals and authorities was reflected in evacuations. This benefited from good cooperation between the army and civilians established after 1938 in Hunan. The upcoming section

⁸⁴ Chen Zhen 陳陣, “Mingcheng zaji yi” 名城雜記一 [Miscellaneous notes on a famous city, part one], HNGMRB, 17 March 1942.

⁸⁵ Chen Zhen, “Mingcheng zaji er” 名城雜記二 [Miscellaneous notes on a famous city, part two], HNGMRB, 18 March 1942.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

dives into the military assistance, which shaped the military-civilian cooperation, provided by the Hunanese to the Nationalists during the war.

6.3 The synergy between the military and the general population

6.3.1 Civilian training in Hunan

The war brought about a need for a different role for the Hunanese people and led to a unique way of life for them during the wartime period. The Hunan Provincial Government devised a civilian training strategy (*minzhong zuxun* 民眾組訓) that united two diverse groups, students and farmers. Six months of training allowed students to share their unique wartime memories and vocalize their sentiments about the war. Among peasants, there was a new responsibility during the war either providing military support or working alongside the army.

Unlike forced conscription, the collective training program involved elements of combat, politics, and education to enhance defensive skills and understanding of warfare among peasants, as well as inspiring their devotion to Chinese nationalism and patriotism. The biggest difference was that after taking classes, most peasants were not enlisted and dispatched to the army. Learning from the Japanese tactics in North China, the Nationalists realized the importance of giving proper political guidance to local mass organizations.⁸⁷ The Hunan government organized over 3,300 students from high schools or universities to provide them with a short-term course before going to the countryside.⁸⁸

In fact, from 1935 to 1937, Hunan authorities held annual concentrated military training for students aiming to instill military and political principles

⁸⁷ Luo Dun 羅敦, "Xuesheng men xiexiang keyi zuo de jiuguo gongzuo" 學生們下鄉可以作的救國工作 [National salvation work that students can engage in the countryside], ZSMX, no.5 (24 January 1938): 2.

⁸⁸ *Hunan huashi*, 61.

in the youth of the province.⁸⁹ The year-long training involved attending classes on such as air defense, toxicology, military manners, and firearm skills.⁹⁰ Students aged 16 to 21, inclusive of those from high school, normal college, and university, who did not attend the training would not receive their educational qualifications.⁹¹ The provincial government compiled comprehensive records to indicate the number of students who finished, attended, or abstained from the training, and particular subjects that were examined in the curriculum.⁹² Female students had the option to participate in military care training.⁹³ Instead of NRA officers, these students could step in and go to remote areas to instruct local farmers who commonly harbor a disapproving opinion of the military.

Many student instructors recorded their firsthand encounters and difficulties and submitted them to the provincial government which was responsible for publishing them in a series of journals titled *Wartime Civilian Training* (*zhanshi minxun* 戰時民訓 numbered 36 in total). The writing style of these articles was different from government reports. Thus, I suggest that these writings can offer a more accurate portrayal of Hunanese farmers presenting their thoughts and responses towards education and the war. It is important to

⁸⁹ “Hunan xuesheng jixun zongdui guan sheng xingmingce” 湖南學生集訓總隊官生姓名冊 [A roster of officials and students in the Hunan Student Training Corps] (1937), HNSZF, 00022-003-00016-00001, HNSDAG.

⁹⁰ “Hunan sheng xuesheng jizhong xunlian zongdui di'er dadui diqi zhongdui xuesheng Zou Kechou meizhou jishilu” 湖南省學生集中訓練總隊第二大隊第七中隊學生鄒科憐每週記事錄 [Weekly journal record of student Zou Kechou from the seventh squad of the second battalion of the Hunan Student Training Corps] (1938), HNSZF, 00022-003-00020-001, HNSDAG; the syllabus further encompassed tutelage on Chinese history, the New Life Movement and political instruction, see also, “Hunan sheng xuesheng jizhong xunlian zongdui quanqi gongzuo baogao” 湖南省學生集中訓練總隊全期工作報告 [A full-term work report of the Hunan Student Training Corps] (1946), HNSZF, 00022-003-00052-00001, HNSDAG.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² “Hunan xuesheng jixun xingmingce”.

⁹³ See, “Gaozhong ji tongdeng xuexiao Gong Shaoxin ji Zhang Yunzi junshi kanhu jiaoyu qiman zhengmingshu” 高中及同等學校龔紹辛及張芸子軍事看護教育期滿證明書 [Certificate of completion for military nursing education for Gong Shaoxin and Zhang Yunzi from high school and equivalent institutions] (July 1937), HNSZF, 00022-003-00039-001, HNSDAG.

approach these writings with a critical mindset, given their official publishing nature.

Students thought that there was a significant gap between the inhabitants of rural villages and those in urban areas until they went to the countryside. A perception of peasants among city residents was often biased with many viewing peasants as uneducated, uncultured, and lacking knowledge of hygiene.⁹⁴ Peasants despised those living in cities labeling them as “city scoundrels.”⁹⁵ It was paramount to bridge the divide between peasants and townspeople to foster a more amicable relationship, therefore.

One student instructor concluded three characteristics of the townspeople were frowned upon by the peasants:

First, peasants held a distaste for the bureaucratic verbiage [*guanqiang* 官腔] used by city residents. Those with experience living in or visiting cities were described as native dogs that turned into cave dogs to bark. Second, peasants held disdain toward townspeople due to their contrasting styles of attire. Peasants tended to wear shorter garments [*duanda* 短打, traditional Chinese attire] and often viewed attires popularized in cities as exotic [*yangfu* 洋服]. Finally, it was an accepted norm among peasants that men and women should not engage in any physical contact, conversation, or joviality.⁹⁶

Therefore, most student instructors made arrangements for female student instructors to teach women in the community during their training.

It was uncertain if most peasants had a distaste for the bureaucratic jargon used by city residents. These languages were incomprehensible to most of them given their illiteracy. When first met student instructors, some peasants

⁹⁴ Jiang Muliang 蔣牧良, “Cong ‘bu da shun yan’ shuo qi” 從 <不大順眼> 說起 [Starting from talking ‘not quite right’], ZSMX, no.1 (10 January 1938): 12.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

said: “we are already 21 years old and too old to attend classes.”⁹⁷ Student instructors conveyed their thoughts in a cultured manner, using sophisticated phrases, such as “my comrades in arms”, “annexing my lands” and “fighting and enduring to the end.”⁹⁸ Peasants could better grasp the concept of hitting Japan rather than explaining the need for Chinese resistance against Japanese aggression.⁹⁹ This phenomenon was observed in a similar example. During a training session, a student instructor asked: “Are you willing to go to the frontline (*shangqianxian* 上前線),” peasants of the Shaquan village responded: “Sir, this is Shaquan village.”¹⁰⁰ The villagers were unaware of the idea of the frontline and only caught on that their village’s name was similar to “going to the frontline”.

Many Hunanese peasants showed hesitance and reluctance towards joining classes. A perspective was that their lives revolved around farming or working in nearby factories.¹⁰¹ Peasants saw no value in attending classes. According to villagers, their decision to not join the military or undergo training was not based on unwillingness but because their main source of livelihood came from working and farming.¹⁰² Furthermore, their hesitation reflected their anxiety about being drafted by local authorities because most

⁹⁷ Yong Zhi 用之, “Wo zai xiangcun shishi liudong jiaoxue de jingyan” 我在鄉村實施流動教學的經驗 [My experience implementing mobile teaching in rural areas], *Minjiao zhi you* 民教之友, no.5&6 (October 1, 1939): 13.

⁹⁸ Huang Yaju 黃鴨舉, “Xiangcun xuanchuan guilai” 鄉村宣傳歸來 [Returning from rural outreach], DGB, 11 December 1937.

⁹⁹ Bai Deng 白澄, “Guanyu xiaxiang xuanchuan” 關於下鄉宣傳 [Regarding rural outreach campaigns], DGB, 19 April 1938.

¹⁰⁰ Qiu 秋, “Gei yiwei minxun pengyou” 給一位民訓朋友 [To a friend in civilian training], HNGMRB, 20 April 1938.

¹⁰¹ Yong Zhi, “liudong jiaoxue,” 13.

¹⁰² Shen Haiming 沈海鳴, “Paichu xunlian zhang’ai zhi yi fa” 排除訓練障礙之一法 [A method to overcome training obstacles], ZSMX, no.19 (4 April 1938): 4.

peasants believed they would be dispatched to army outposts or the frontline as soon as they finished classes.¹⁰³

In the past, it was the duty of the army under the command of local warlords to offer military training to ordinary people including students and peasants in Hunan. Military officers prioritized carrying out orders from the higher-ups yet neglected the feelings and living situations of peasants.¹⁰⁴ The government and military's reputation took a hit among the peasantry. There were numerous instances of class absences as peasants either left their villages or built roads nearby to avoid attending classes, therefore.¹⁰⁵ Those well-to-do peasants used the money to hire others to attend classes or to buy off local authorities, such as heads of *baojia* or the village, to be exempt from the course registry.¹⁰⁶ Hunanese peasants also faced ill-health issues. Many young peasants were unable to handle the physical demands of training because of poor medical cleanliness and inadequate nutrition. For example, some were observed coughing up blood after just 10 minutes of running.¹⁰⁷

Leaving the city behind and going into the countryside while teaching rustic populaces brought about new challenges and adventures for student instructors. When villagers first met these young students, they were skeptical and asked if the government was planning to enlist soldiers. Students clarified in a composed manner: "We are not military but students from high schools and universities here to teach you skills to protect your home from the

¹⁰³ Gu Minquan 顧民權, "Zenyang jiechu minxun de jidian kunnan" 怎樣解除民訓的幾點困難 [How to resolve several difficulties in civilian training], ZSMX, no.20 (11 April 1938): 11.

¹⁰⁴ Yuan Han 元漢, "Nongcun zhenji zhuangding zhi kunnan wenti he jie jue tujing" 農村徵集壯丁之困難問題和解決途徑 [Difficulties and solutions regarding the draft of young men in rural areas], ZSRB, 6 February 1938.

¹⁰⁵ Zhang Yaohua 章耀華, "Zenyang congshi minxun gongzuo" 怎樣從事民訓工作 [How to engage in civilian training work], HNGMRB, 22 May 1938.

¹⁰⁶ Yuan Han, "Nongcun zhuangding wenti."

¹⁰⁷ Zou Hongcao 鄒鴻操, "Minxun gongzuo de jige shiji wenti" 民訓工作的幾個實際問題 [Several practical issues in civilian training work], ZSMX, no.6&7 (31 January 1938): 5.

Japanese invasion.”¹⁰⁸ They were also flexible in their work taking into consideration the living situations of peasants and adapting accordingly to assist them in their learning. As an example, a remote village where most locals were reliant on the conveyance of coal to survive. The training council assisted in talks with the coal company to allow farmers to change their work schedule to attend morning classes.¹⁰⁹ Student instructors to some degree disrupted stereotypically negative views of peasants toward local government and the army, but also let them know the difference between taking classes and being drafted. Instructing farmers was no easy feat. Students went to the isolated countryside, where they lived in poor and simple conditions. They faced resistance from peasants while fulfilling their duties. However, they persisted in their work, driven by the program’s urgency set by the provincial government and these students’ patriotism and sense of Chinese identity.¹¹⁰

Mass training in the countryside was designed to enhance the self-defense capabilities of peasants, who therefore could provide supplementary assistance for the military and to instill a sense of Chinese nationalism and patriotism among rural areas in Hunan. Two rounds of training happened after 1938 with each lasting eight weeks. On days when the weather was not bad, two hours of training did not sufficiently allow every peasant to learn and understand military tactics and political courses.¹¹¹ While 700,000 peasants were trained,¹¹² they had not been able to fend off the Japanese had they attacked Hunan.

¹⁰⁸ “Zenyang shi minzhong leyu shouxun?” 怎樣使民眾樂於受訓 [How to make people willing to undergo training], ZSMX, no.15 (7 March 1938): 2.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Wu Ping 吳萍, “Ershi tian de minxun shenghuo” 二十天的民訓生活 [20 days of civilian training life], HNGMRB, 23 March 1938.

¹¹¹ Dui Yuan 隊員, “Guanyu zuxun minzhong” 關於組訓民眾 [Regarding organizing training for the masses], HNGMRB, 31 March 1938.

¹¹² *Hunan huashi*, 61.

Li Liang argues that the training program was successful in enhancing the collective national identity and awareness of millions of Hunanese peasants.¹¹³ But there is still doubt about whether this outcome was truly reached. I argue that the training program had a beneficial impact on Hunanese peasants and the Nationalists with the following two aspects. First, it mentally equipped the rural population with an expectation that this type of training, different from being drafted, would become a customary occurrence in their daily routines. Second, before Hunan became a major battleground in China, the Nationalists gained valuable experience in dealing with challenges and problems that arose during their countryside mobilization. As the 1939 Changsha Battle loomed, there was insufficient time to begin training peasants, making it improbable for the collaboration between peasants and soldiers to reach the level of familiarity, witnessed during the battle, therefore. Although it did not completely meet its original objectives, the 1938 training program was a significant event that made rural residents aware of the looming war and eased their fears about being drafted. This important step promoted collaboration between the Chinese military and civilians while allowing the peasant population to recognize and accept their new role in the war.

6.3.2 The Military-Civilian Cooperation Station

Along with participating in training classes, the rural population in Hunan was also obliged to cooperate with the army by providing military assistance. The Political Department at the Ninth War Area Commander Headquarters aimed to create cordial and advantageous connections between NRA and the Hunanese people. They established a new organization, a Military-Civilian Cooperative (*junmin hezuoshe* 軍民合作社) in early 1939 under the Ninth War

¹¹³ Li Liang, "Hunan minzhong dongyuan yanjiu," 42.

Area.¹¹⁴ Over the next three months, a total of eight cooperatives were formed.¹¹⁵ Cooperatives were established in other counties like Pingjiang, Xiangtan, and Hengshan with an executive and party secretary leading each one.¹¹⁶ A cooperative consisted of a recruit, rescue, guide, food, and marketing team to provide necessary military assistance such as buying food, providing guidance, and helping to transfer wounded soldiers during a battle.¹¹⁷ The 1938 collective training program taught peasants how to work together as part of a team. This reduced the time cooperatives spent teaching peasants these tasks before they could assist the army.

A cooperative evolved into an MCCR. During the First Battle of Changsha, cooperation stations were indispensable in mobilizing peasants nearby to destroy roads, railways, and bridges as well as aid injured and military carriages. It demonstrated the importance of collaboration between the army and the populace in China's national strife with Japan. The formation of this new wartime organization caught the attention of both society and the Nationalist central authorities following the battle.¹¹⁸

The MCCR was created to mobilize ordinary people in Hunan and boost their relationship with the army.¹¹⁹ It assisted military operations by mobilizing and directing the involvement of ordinary people in fulfilling diverse wartime tasks. During the First Battle of Changsha, the NRA soldiers

¹¹⁴ "Jiu zhanqu zhengzhibu zushe junmin hezuoshe" 九戰區政治部組設軍民合作社 [The Political Department of the Ninth War Area established Military-Civilian Cooperatives], HNGMRB, 8 February 1939.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ "Heng Tan she junmin hezuoshe" 衡潭設軍民合作社 [Military-Civilian cooperatives were organized in Hengyang and Xiangtan], HNGMRB, 6 March 1939.

¹¹⁷ "Jiu zhanqu junmin hezuoshe".

¹¹⁸ "Yige zhanshi de xin jigou junmin hezuozhan" 一個戰時的新機構: 軍民合作站 [A new wartime institution: MCCR], HNGMRB, 24 January 1940.

¹¹⁹ "Dijiu zhanqu junmin hezuozhan zhounian gongzuo baogao" 第九戰區軍民合作站週年工作報告 [An annual work report of the MCCR in the Ninth War Area] (April 1940), JWHDA, 00000-015-00114-00001, HNSDAG.

with help from local villagers, destroyed most roads and railways from the Xinqiang River to the outskirts of the city.¹²⁰ In a place where a cooperation station had been created, peasants could be free from being forcibly drafted or coerced into selling their crops against their will.¹²¹ Peasants lent a hand to the arrival or passing of NRA troops.¹²² This improved the relationship between civilians and the military. In Xiangtan, a county south of Changsha, the situation was stable during the 1939 Battle of Changsha:

A porter informed us [a wartime journalist and his colleagues] on 29 September 1939 that nearly all people living along the Changsha-Hengyang Road escaped during the 1938 Changsha fire. The situation was different this time. Over the past few weeks, more than 30,000 locals were mobilized to destroy roadways to prevent a potential Japanese attack [on Xiangtan] if they had occupied Changsha. Cooperation stations provided accurate intelligence about the situation in Changsha. Since most cooperation stations were still functioning, local people believed that there was no need to evacuate.¹²³

The cooperation station helped to diffuse the tense atmosphere brought about by the conflict in the north and stabilized the county for any urgent situation such as an evacuation.

The Hunan government and Ninth War Area conducted a large-scale evacuation of residents from the city and surrounding northern counties throughout the three Changsha Battles. Clearing a city and countryside was a crucial task that was to move local populations (mainly elders and children) to hills 15 kilometers away from railways and waterways to avoid supplies from

¹²⁰ “Zhanshi xin jigou junmin hezuozhan”.

¹²¹ “Junmin hezuozhan zhounian baogao”.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ “Zhanshi xin jigou junmin hezuozhan”.

being used by the Japanese.¹²⁴ As Plate 6.3 shows, Changsha residents (peasants) evacuated in the absence of the army. The evacuation order was efficient and an old woman even had the strength to carry weighty objects while walking. I argue that, therefore, a dependable bond between the Hunanese population and local authorities was solidified and upheld until 1942 at least. This enabled smooth and willing adherence to government directives from below.

The cooperative station mobilized trained peasants to support the military in combat. A Ninth War Area report stated:

Due to our thorough civilian training, the enemies could not obtain information from locals to locate our troops and transportation as they assailed our front lines... they were left without sustenance and had no choice but to retreat after using up all their supplies.¹²⁵

As chapter three stated, most Japanese soldiers struggled with inadequate ammunition and supplies including food and bullets when their Changsha offensive was unfolding. The Nationalists mobilized the Hunanese society to support their war efforts as demonstrated by the cooperation of the local population in evacuation and providing aid to the army.

The MCCA acted as a bridge between the NRA and the public. A cooperation station sat in a tiny village that was 10 kilometers from Changsha east of the Wuhan-Guangzhou railway and west of the Xiang River.¹²⁶ NRA troops of the war area marched north from south Hunan seeking aid from

¹²⁴ “Dijiu zhanqu diyi ci Changsha huizhan baogao”, 1080.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Qi Nong 濟農, “Shenghuo yu gongzuo Hunan XX junmin hezuozhan jishi” 生活與工作-湖南 XX 軍民合作站紀實 [Life and work: documentary of a ‘XX’ MCCA in Hunan], *Shengli zhoukan* 勝利周刊, no.85&86 (7 July 1940): 18.

nearby residents to transport supplies or obtain sustenance via the station. As the 1939 Changsha Campaign was unfolding, an NRA division from south Hunan was marching to the frontline in the north and arrived at a cooperation station post sundown at 21:00. It was tough for them to secure a place to stay since they were not familiar with the surrounding villages.¹²⁷ These soldiers sought aid from the station, which provided them with rice, salt, vegetables, and a spot to rest for the night.¹²⁸ The soldiers were thankful to the station for their support in ensuring their timely arrival at the defending zones for battles. The station was highly regarded by the army. In the early phase of the war, most local people living near the battlefield escaped from there and the remaining were inexperienced in aiding the military.¹²⁹ This created difficulties for the army to obtain provisions. The cooperation station ensured the smooth progress of the NRA troops to the Northern Changsha region for the Changsha Campaigns.

Locals hired by the station could also earn money from their jobs since there was a constant need for labor because of frequent military relocations. The cooperation station established a team of over 90 people at the nearby dock to make up a transport and supply team, organized into nine separate cells.¹³⁰ A payment rate of 0.2 *yuan* per 5 kilometers was stipulated for transporting items to a neighboring station located within a 30-kilometer distance.¹³¹

The cooperation station mediated disputes between civilians and soldiers.¹³² As a result of a few misunderstandings which progressed into

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ “Junmin hezuozhan zhounian baogao”.

¹³⁰ Qi Nong, “Shenghuo yu gongzuo,” 18.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² “Zhanshi xin jigou junmin hezuozhan”.

conflict with some soldiers, a peasant was battered by them and sustained such serious wounds that he was not able to move.¹³³ His spouse divulged the event to the cooperation station. After deliberation between the station and the head of the forces, the wrongdoers were reprimanded and the peasant was recompensed with two *yuan*.¹³⁴

After the first battle in Changsha in 1939, Chongqing recognized the success of the M CCS in the Ninth War Area and urged the formation of equivalent stations in other war areas.¹³⁵ From March to December 1939, more than 50,000 people from Hunan were recruited by cooperation stations in the province, reaching a high of 9,000 in September (during the First Battle of Changsha).¹³⁶ A lot of cooperation stations could be found throughout North Changsha and most *binhu* counties conveniently placed along routes that connected nearby towns and counties. The northern Changsha area witnessed the most M CCSs because of its highest military importance.¹³⁷

Cooperation stations in Hunan, while successful in promoting civil-military cooperation, did not fully achieve their intended purpose. The Political Department of the Ninth War Area stated that a total of 90 cooperation stations were put in place since 1939 but 70 of them were unable to sustain operations for more than a year due to tough financial circumstances.¹³⁸ Operations of those stations, particularly after 1942, should have been heavily affected by severe hyperinflation in Hunan even though we still lack evidence to prove this. Another form of institution had taken over the duty of the M CCS.

¹³³ Qi Nong, "Shenghuo yu gongzuo," 18.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ "Ma Junchao cheng Jiang Zhongzheng baobiao" 馬俊超呈蔣中正報表 [Ma Junchao's report to Chiang Kaishek] (12 November 1939), JZTWW, 002-080200-00517-177, GSGDA.

¹³⁶ "Junmin hezuozhan zhounian baogao".

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

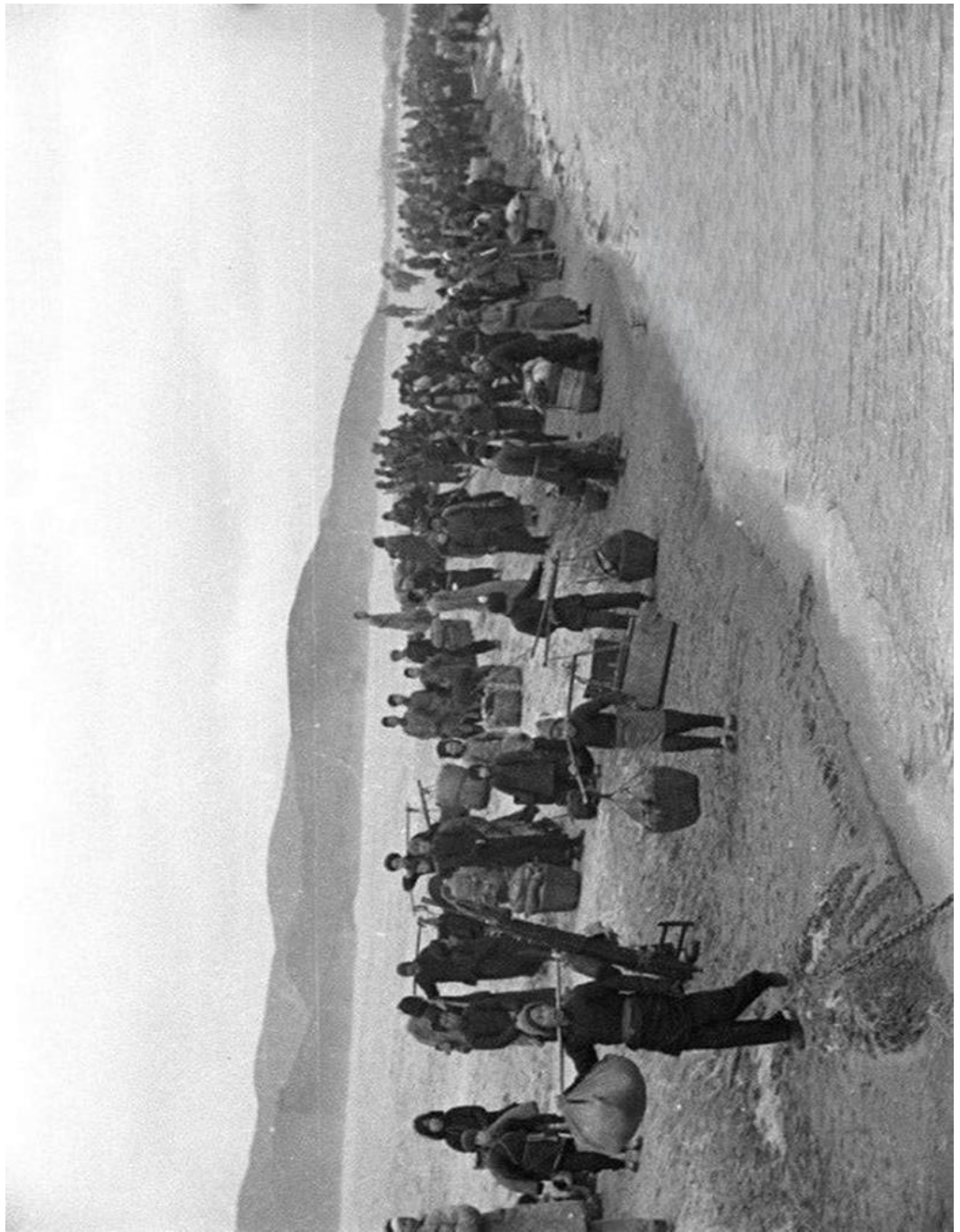


Plate 6.3 In the Third Battle of Changsha, the inhabitants of Changsha were relocating from the city. Source: “Disan ci Changsha huizhan qijian minzhong xiejia daikou cheli zhanhuo zhong de Changsha 第三次長沙會戰期間民眾攜家帶口撤離戰火中的長沙” (1941), DCLZP, DCGZD.

After 1940, each county in Hunan was assigned the task of mobilizing the local population through a WTC belonging to the National Citizen Soldier Group NCSG (*guominbing* 國民兵). The NCSG, founded in each county across Hunan, was dedicated to preparing individuals (aged 18 to 45) for possible military enlistment. Before the war, it was a type of military service but it transformed into a form of social military instruction to equip civilians with military tactics and political ideologies during the war. The NCSG system was officially founded in 1939 by the Nationalist government with the aim of training citizen soldiers in the unoccupied China of Japan.¹³⁹

In 1941, Hunan authorities planned to establish the WTC to offer military support to NRA units during battles.¹⁴⁰ The NCSGs in Hunan, especially in North Changsha saw some success as a result of the crucial contributions of the WTCs in the Third Battle of Changsha, during which the NCSGs from 12 counties in the North Changsha area were called upon to aid the NRA in fending off the Japanese attack. In Changsha county, an impressive 45,000 members of the WTC had been mobilized with over 20,000 WTC members actively engaged in road obstructions, 3,900 involved in the construction of defensive fortifications, and 6,700 from stretcher teams aiding in evacuations and transport of wounded soldiers from the frontline.¹⁴¹ The 1942 Changsha Great Victory was the most famous example as Chang Jui-te suggests, of a strategy that “destroyed roads to reduce the enemy’s mobility shifted toward the enemy’s rear and exterior lines, and attacked the enemy’s

¹³⁹ Du Xinru 杜心如, “Guominbing zuxun zhi jiantao yu tiaozheng” 國民兵組訓之檢討與調整 [Reviews and adjustments of the NCSG], *Xunlian yuekan* 訓練月刊 2, no.3 (1941): 56.

¹⁴⁰ “Hunan sheng sanshi niandu guominbing jianshe jihua gangyao” 湖南省三十年度國民兵建設計劃綱要 [An outline of the NCSG construction plan for 1941 in Hunan], *Zhenxun yuekan* 徵訓月刊 1, no.1 (1941): 87; Jingzhong dangzheng zhandou zhihuibu 精忠黨政戰鬥指揮部編, ed., *Disan ci Changsha huizhan zhong dangzheng zhandou jishi* 第三次長沙會戰中黨政戰鬥紀實 [Documentary of the political and party of the Nationalists’ fight during the Third Battle of Changsha] (Changsha: Jingzhong dangzheng zhandou zhihuibu), 28.

¹⁴¹ *Disan ci Changsha huizhan zhandou jishi*, 12.

supply lines.”¹⁴² This was a victory for ordinary people who took part in the battle, too, of much more significance than a mere military or propaganda victory to sustain Changsha’s resistance throughout the war.

6.4 Wartime societal shifts in Changsha and Hunan

6.4.1 *Memory and identity of the 1938 Great Fire*

After Wuhan fell in 1938, Chiang Kaishek predicted that the Japanese would soon turn their attention to Changsha. In order to comply with Chiang’s instructions to burn and demolish Changsha if it was captured by the Japanese, Hunan authorities summoned 100 squads in cooperation with the local law enforcement, supplied with kerosene and firewood.¹⁴³

Two viewpoints explained how the fire flared up. First, there was an erroneous report that indicated that the Japanese had crossed the Xin River located near Changsha, in reality, they were still located north of the Xinqiang River, 150 kilometers away from Changsha.¹⁴⁴ Another view was that an accidental blunder caused the fire. All fire crews were given orders to ignite the city when the warning was broadcasted or to commence burning if they observed other locations being engulfed in flames.¹⁴⁵ Despite their differences, both views showcased the negative consequences of the scorched earth policy. Chiang should be held accountable for this calamity because of his decision-making approach. His directive to burn Changsha, analogous to his preceding resolution to breach the Yellow River dikes, resulted from apprehension of a potential Japanese action rather than what they actually executed.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Chang Jui-te, “The Nationalist Army on the Eve of the War,” in *the Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945*, ed. Mark Peattie, Edward Drea and Hans van de Ven (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 88.

¹⁴³ van de Ven, *China at War*, 108.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid; see also Tan Zhongchi, *Changsha tongshi*, 651.

¹⁴⁵ Yang Weizhen, “1938 nian Changsha dahuo,” 42.

¹⁴⁶ van de Ven, *China at War*, 107; Hudson, “River Sands/Urban Spaces,” 340-341.

Three high-ranking members of the security and police force division were given capital punishment by Chiang after the citywide fire was looked into. To some extent, punitive measures taken by the central government against the three officials at Chiang's Whampoa camp placated the public's ire.¹⁴⁷ The Nationalists took rapid and fitting measures including the offering of assistance to a great number of displaced persons, the tidying of thoroughfares, the reconstruction of desolated edifices, and the revival of the market and transit systems after the fire. Seven days later, all of these undertakings had been concluded. It can be observed from Plate 6.9 that the reconstruction of civilian houses was done. As Chiang left Changsha on 20 November, he noticed that people had already begun to stroll through the streets and peruse the markets.

Hunan authorities wasted no time in taking proactive measures to restore and reconstruct post-fire Changsha. A Changsha City Council was commissioned to oversee the reconstruction of Changsha and provide loans to local small-scale businesses. With backing from the central government, the council made building the sewer system and expanding the urban area a top priority.¹⁴⁸ The plan did not include setting up any factories in the newly developed areas of Changsha.¹⁴⁹ Repeated Japanese air raids and potential attacks on the city were a cause for alarm. This prompted the thought of evacuating certain areas including industrial facilities. Nevertheless, relocating these factories proved to be a formidable task.

The YMCA and International Relief Committee IRC extended help to the inhabitants of Changsha following the fire. The IRC established a

¹⁴⁷ Yang Weizhen, "1938 nian Changsha dahuo," 48-49.

¹⁴⁸ "Hunan sheng linshi canyihui diyi ci dahui" 湖南省臨時參議會第一次大會 [The first meeting of the Hunan Provincial Provisional Senate] (August 1939), HNSCYH, 00023-001-00071-00001, HNSDAG.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

Changsha Fire Relief which provided free food to over 1,000 individuals every day through a distribution point managed by six staff members.¹⁵⁰ The Nationalists gave extensive financial support to those local non-government organizations in Changsha.¹⁵¹ While engaged in warfare with Japan, the Nationalists still remained committed to the advancement of Chinese society through economic development and enhancements to the lives of its citizens.¹⁵²

Over five days the fire destroyed most business spaces (85%) and dwellings (70%).¹⁵³ Authorities at the provincial and municipal levels joined forces to bring back order and public transportation to the city within a month. Unfortunately, the significant damage inflicted by the fire in the older parts of the town was irreversible. Countless buildings, landmarks, and cultural artifacts were consumed by the fire, during which a significant portion of Changsha's past was erased.

My aim is not to pinpoint the culprit of the calamity or the convoluted and obscure causes of the fire.¹⁵⁴ Rather, I intend to relate the narratives of four people, two war correspondents, a youthful employee of the Changsha YMCA, and the American doctor, Greene who endured the fire on that night. I seek to portray the situation of Changsha before, during, and after the fire from below instead of writing the fire from a government perspective. This approach can

¹⁵⁰ "A report of the Changsha International Relief Committee" (31 December 1938), SHJJZSHNFS, 00077-002-00012-00001, HNSDAG.

¹⁵¹ Hudson, "River Sands/Urban Spaces," 331.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ "Changsha International Relief Committee."

¹⁵⁴ For further study, one of the notable Chinese works is Yang Weizhen's journal article titled "1938 nian Changsha dahuo." This article makes effective use of valuable archives from Guoshiguan including documents from Dai Li 戴笠, who was present in Changsha during the fire. Dai's documents have not been extensively utilized by historians. In Hudson's PhD dissertation titled "River Sands/Urban Spaces: Changsha in Modern Chinese History," there is a comprehensive discussion about the individual responsible for ordering the fire and Chiang Kaishek's involvement in the decision to burn Changsha.

provide a more intimate and relatable understanding of how the fire affected a city and its inhabitants.

By compiling narratives from individuals directly affected by the fire, we can restore a scene that highlights their experiences, feelings, and challenges in the aftermath. This approach also sheds light on an aspect that may have been overlooked in an official government report namely emphasizing the human side of a tragedy. Variations existing in individual stories may be because of different factors such as socio-economic status and place of abode. But these stories presented a collective experience that neither victims nor survivors could ever forget integral to the Changsha people's wartime memory and identity.

The 1938 Fire that Liu Liangmo and his team from Changsha YMCA were confronted with was unlike any they had experienced before. Their lives were put in jeopardy in the scorching Changsha. As the Guangzhou-Wuhan railroad and Pingjiang front were facing immense pressure, Liu was urged by his colleagues to leave Changsha quickly.¹⁵⁵ But most volunteers remained convinced of the importance of their work and left before the definitive moment. The atmosphere was intense in the days leading up to the fire in Changsha. Injured soldiers lying at the train station pleaded for help from medical staff but received no response. To support these soldiers, the YMCA gathered over 1,000 eggs and nearly 500 cotton coats.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Liu Liangmo 劉良模, "Cong huohai zhong chongchu Changsha" 從火海中衝出長沙 [Breaking out from the flames of Changsha], DNRB, 29 November 1938.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

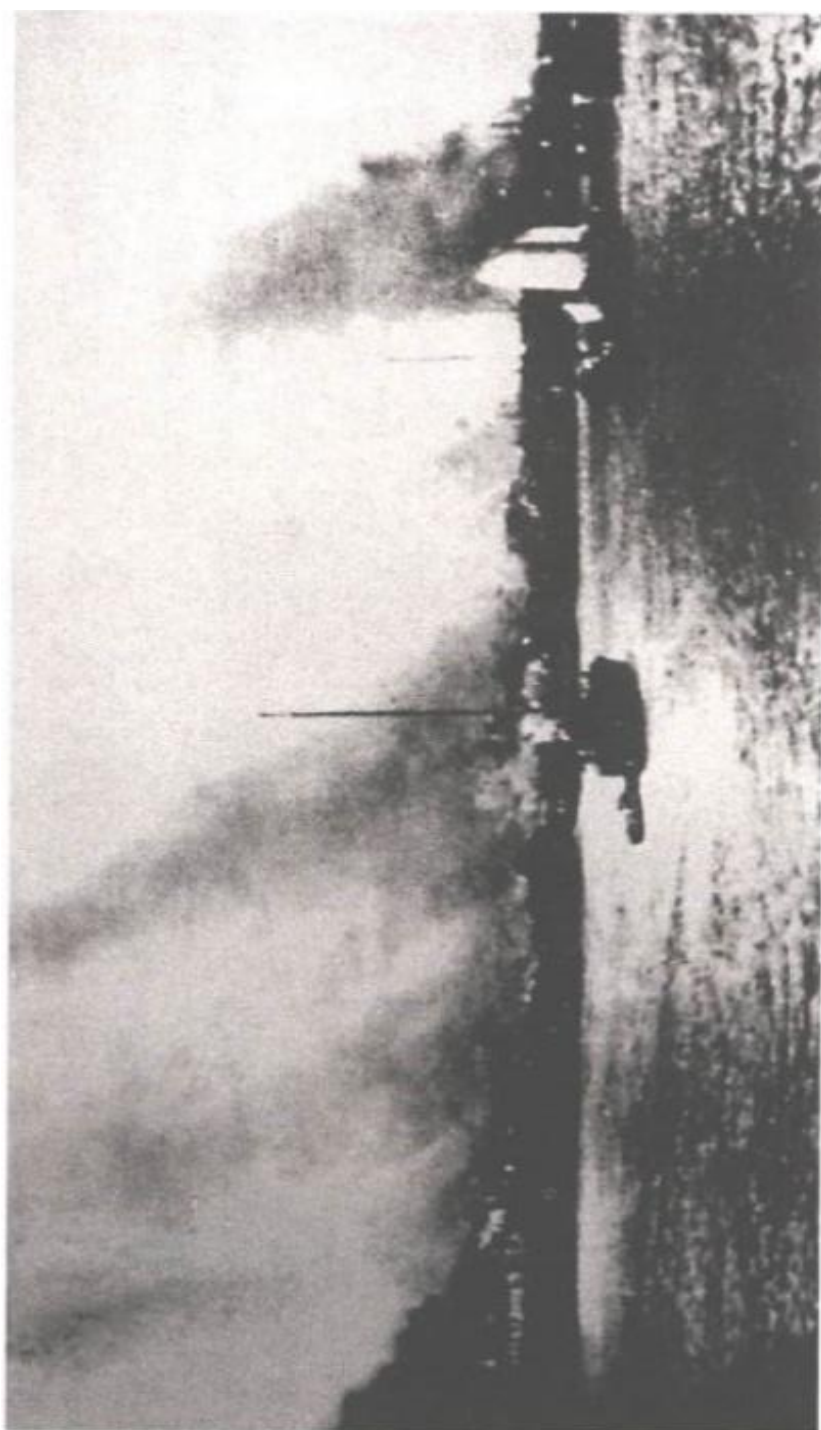
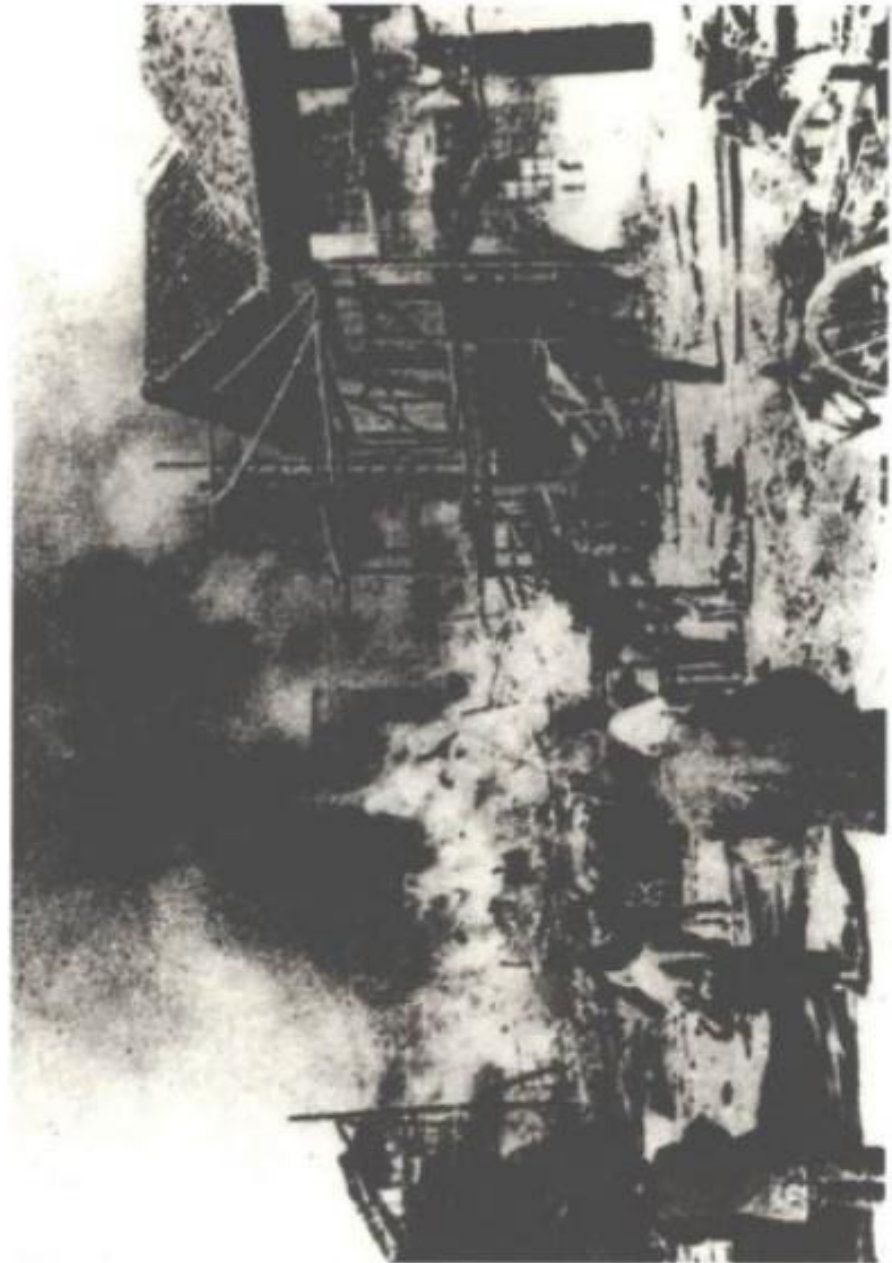


Plate 6.4 The fire near Xiang River. Source: Tian Fulong, *Hunan lishi tudian san*, 240.



Plate 6.5 *Wenxi dahuo*. Source: Tian Fulong, *Hunan lishi tudian san*, 240.



*Plate 6.6 Houses after the fire. Source: Tian Fulong, *Hunan lishi tudian san*, 240.*



Plate 6.7 A junior high school was on fire. Source: Tian Fulong, *Hunan lishi tudian san*, 241.



Plate 6.8 Changsha after the fire. Source: Tian Fulong, *Hunan lishi tudian san*, 261.

YMCA volunteers stationed at Pingjiang were industrious in fulfilling their obligations while providing care to injured soldiers, which also induced locals to form civilian task groups to assist with supplies, stretchers, and self-defense services at the front.¹⁵⁷ On 12 November, the day commemorated the birth anniversary of the former Premier (*xian zongli* 先總理) Sun Yatsen. All YMCA volunteers assembled to participate in the torch march at 6 p.m. Before the war, over 30,000 Changsha residents celebrated the event, but the pressure of the war caused a smaller scale with only 1,000 to 2,000 people.¹⁵⁸ Everything went on well and as usual.

Fang Jiada, a journalist residing in Changsha on that fire night also came to understand circumstances that appeared customary but beneath a dreadful wartime ambiance:

The luminescence of most of the lamps had been reduced, making it difficult to spot the city's citizens. Troops ambulated in the murk, lorries were arriving and departing to convey the final remaining supplies in Changsha. It was unimaginable that Changsha would be decimated by a prodigious fire on that day given that the frontline was still at a distance of 100 kilometers away.¹⁵⁹

Another journalist Jiang Xingde arrived in Changsha on 10 November 1938 when the city had implemented a curfew.¹⁶⁰ Words spread quickly among the Changsha inhabitants that the Japanese were coming to the city that was to be burned. This incited more people to hastily evacuate.¹⁶¹ Jiang decided to remain in Changsha for a few days to observe the warlike conditions in the

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Liu Liangmo, "Chongchu Changsha."

¹⁵⁹ Fang Jiada, "Liang huaye dahuo huimie le Changsha" 兩晝夜大火毀滅了長沙 [A devastating fire destroyed Changsha overnight], DNRB, 22 November 1938.

¹⁶⁰ Jiang Xingde 蔣星德, "Zouru Xinan" 走入西南 [Entering the southwest], SSXB, 10 December 1938.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

city.¹⁶² On 12 November, Jiang was sitting in a peaceful night environment when he heard distant gunfire. Through attentive listening, he inferred that the Japanese forces had not yet reached Changsha and the city had reached a pivotal moment, though not its ultimate conclusion.¹⁶³

Jiang stepped outside at midnight and saw a peculiar sight of many people walking down the streets with all their belongings.¹⁶⁴ Law enforcement officers were in attendance and did not impede pedestrians from departing. Every two residences situated in proximity to the streets were observed to have one displaying combustible materials such as paper and other kindling at its entrance and gas and kerosene were found to be present.¹⁶⁵ Everything seemed to be in place for the fire to be set in motion. Changsha was on the brink but the Japanese still had a long way to go before reaching the city. Jiang was confused about whether any unexpected shifts happened at the front.¹⁶⁶ He experienced befuddlement retracing his steps to the abode yet struggled to fall asleep that night.

Instantly, Jiang vaulted from his bed following a reverberation of the loud blast and proceeded to the door with only a few items. He saw the fire increasing from all sides, waking up people from their slumber and the pandemonium of the streets caused the elderly and infirm being trampled underfoot with children crying out for their mothers.¹⁶⁷ Jiang and his associates were lucky to leave the city from the south gate, glancing back in the direction of Tianxin Pavilion (*Tianxinge* 天心閣) to witness the whole city fire

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

and the sky had taken on a scarlet hue.¹⁶⁸ Following a journey of three hours, they were en route to Hengyang.

At approximately 2 a.m., Fang Jiada heard loud shouting and weeping coming from the windows. The fire was rapidly escalating. By the break of dawn, it was impossible to find a whole house and an elderly lady was bawling: “My son had passed away.”¹⁶⁹ It was essential to enhance fortifications and evacuate the city to hinder the Japanese from obtaining sustenance and other necessities. The local government indeed took action to remove most people from the city as the previous section states. A wise decision, however, was to delay the plan to burn Changsha since local authorities did not share any information and the remaining residents were still uninformed.

Because he had gone an entire night without sleep, Fang bedded down in the abode of a fruit and vegetable retailer outside the city. On 13 November in the afternoon, he endeavored to re-enter the city which had been engulfed by fire and smog that obstructed the means of access.¹⁷⁰ Early the next morning, Fang revisited only to observe that the city had been laid to ruin due to an excessive number of ignition points.¹⁷¹ Dogs foraged for sustenance in the wreckage with no one in sight. The fire on Yuelu Mountain blazed fiercely. After the air raids, the ramshackle campus of the University of Hunan had been consumed by flames again. A clamor of anguish of people could be heard all day.

After the Sun Yatsen memorial, Liu Liangmo and his comrades went back to the YMCA building to prepare 1,000 eggs and remained until 1 a.m.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Fang Jiada, “Liang huaye dahuo.”

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

The day was momentous and invigorating for them as they lent a hand to the homeless soldiers and participated in the celebration festivity.¹⁷² Just before 3 a.m., someone abruptly banged on the door vocalizing: “Wake up, wake up; there is a fire.”¹⁷³ Liu and his peers leaped out of their beds and were greeted by a sky engulfed in a fiery red glow.¹⁷⁴ Yet they deemed it should be regarded as an incidental fire. Upon the YMCA edifice being encompassed by the conflagration an hour later, they hastily retrieved the most imperative documents preparing to flee.¹⁷⁵

At that moment, many citizens had no other choice but to take asylum in the YMCA which had a sizable open area. Even though there was a raging fire, these people were shaking because of the cold autumn weather and their thin clothing. YMCA volunteers provided clothing and eggs to those in need. On reaching the roof of the building, Liu gazed at the raging fire that consumed Changsha and explosions echoed through the air.¹⁷⁶ He was unnerved by the night winds, which blew from every direction and made the citywide fire even more ferocious.¹⁷⁷

The fire had become intense and was dangerously close to the YMCA building with the main hall completely engulfed in blazing flames extending up to the upper levels. Liu and his colleagues utilized water to preserve the hall but other locations like lodging and shared communal areas, were on fire.¹⁷⁸ It was anticipated that the entire structure was soon overtaken by fire thus requiring them to evacuate. Unfortunately, they had no means of escape.

¹⁷² Liu Liangmo, “Chongchu Changsha.”

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Fan Shizhi 范式之, “Changsha dahuo tuwei ji” 長沙大火突圍記 [Records of the breakout from the Great Fire of Changsha], *Quanmin kangzhan*, no.42 (December 1938): 546.

¹⁷⁶ Liu Liangmo, “Chongchu Changsha.”

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Four associates of Liu assuming respirators to avoid suffocation, voluntarily looked for an exit.¹⁷⁹ After a half-hour, they returned. The following day, their entire team left the city.

Greene's account of the fire night portrayed a clear and unsettling image of a burning city:

Places of business and homes are securely padlocked... uncanny stillness in the usually busy thoroughfares... a deserted and evidently doomed city. Toward nightfall soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets took positions along the silent street.¹⁸⁰

His description of Changsha before the fire mirrored Jiang Xingde's narrative that the city was enveloped in hopelessness and hush. When the clock struck three, a fire was seen to have begun in the south, however, many assumed it to be a small fire and went back to sleep. 30 minutes later, the fire seemed to expand throughout the city from east to west.

Greene was lucky that the municipal government regulated not to destroy foreign buildings. This allowed their hospital to remain in good shape. An army hospital adjacent to them was amid an inferno. Poor fellows struggled to escape through windows and doors using their elbows only and injured and maimed soldiers there perished in the fire.¹⁸¹ Greene jotted down the scene he spotted while leaving the burning city:

By now the sun was coming up, a gorgeous red in the east but with the red flames streaking to the very sky south of us the sunrise looked so far away. It seemed so quiet and detached in another world and different from the man-made inferno beside

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Altman, *Hsiang-Ya Journal*, 112.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

us. The wind died down completely. All day long the fires blazed, and munitions dumps went off singly and together...¹⁸²

According to a wounded soldier's recollection, a fire broke out at the Confucius Temple's Fourth Shelter for Injured Soldiers, resulting in the demise of no less than 100 bedridden soldiers.¹⁸³ The soldiers escaping the fire suffered from hunger and cold without any medical aid.¹⁸⁴

Moreover, Greene provided insight into the challenging conditions that the residents of Changsha were confronted with following the fire:

These days bring such insight into what the sturdy, honest Changsha people are facing. They come to the hospital deeply apologetic because of having no money; burned clean out; every bit of money they had, gone; too proud to let me see half they feel or half they are going through unless I stumble upon it by accident. As I see this in family after family, this damnable business of the fire burns into me.¹⁸⁵

Fire survivors are sharing their stories with us. The collective memory of wartime Changsha will always include those who lost their lives in the fire. The deafening sound of flames, the suffocating haze of smoke, and the underserved devastation left an indelible impression on people of the wartime era, who witnessed the Changsha fire for two consecutive days and nights.

The *wenxi dahuo* and Japanese air attacks were enough to stir up the majority of Changsha's residents as the war approached their homelands. Assessing whether Changsha residents had given up trust in the government after the fire was no easy feat. More people, however, began to understand that

¹⁸² Ibid., 114.

¹⁸³ Fan Shizhi, "Changsha tuwei," 547.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Altman, *Hsiang-Ya Journal*, 116.

the war was responsible for repeated air raids and the devastating fire that almost destroyed their homes. They eagerly awaited the end of the war anticipating a chance to resume their pre-war way of living in Hunan and Changsha.

Beyond inflicting severe harm to the city, the fire also provoked social changes in the city. Consequently, the fire had a similar effect on wartime life and society in Changsha as the war did. These social transformations, as important symbols and embodiments of the city and its people demonstrated a remarkable capability to adjust and conform to what the Changsha citizens developed and attained from living a strenuous wartime life. One of the key characteristics of the wartime experience of Changsha and its inhabitants was their capacity to adapt to challenging conditions and develop new strategies for survival. The following sections illuminate the hardships that the residents of Changsha and Hunan came across. I also delve into unique wartime struggles faced by diverse Changsha populations, and their resilience in overcoming the hardships brought on by the war and the fire.



Plate 6.9 A boy taking a seat amidst the charred remains of the house. Source: *Zhongguo jindai yingxiang ziliao* 中國近代影像資料庫, <https://www.lzp360.com/picture/4f1c9820bff684af4fd07cf07fa57a69269832.jhtml>. This website needs a membership to access photos. The picture was obtained from the Hunan Provincial Library through access.

6.4.2 *The struggles of daily life in wartime Changsha and Hunan*

People in Changsha and Hunan faced more difficulties caused by the war. Before the Third Battle of Changsha in late 1941, a farmer from Changsha experienced a great deal of hardships due to the NRA's forced requisition of his fields for military defenses. During wartime in Changsha, the army requisitioned fields and lands, making them eligible for a tax exemption. The NRA 10th Army, in charge of protecting the city during the battle, requested all 27 *mu* of fields belonging to a farmer, Wang Shi'an 王石麓, who was living in the south outskirts of the city.¹⁸⁶ In 1942, the grain institution erroneously gauged Wang's fields at 13 *mu* as being requisitioned by the army and this amount was not obligated to the land tax.¹⁸⁷ Being eligible for exemption (only 13 *mu* of fields), Wang was still required to pay taxes for the remaining 14 *mu* of fields, paying a total of 68 *yuan* for the 1942 land tax.¹⁸⁸ The provincial government waived this tax in 1944. But Wang's fields suffered from deterioration because of the improper use of water storage by NRA soldiers as a deliberated defense tactic.¹⁸⁹ Wang encountered a trying period in 1942 and 1943 as he had no crops to rely on and was still required to cover his taxes and manage the steep living costs.

On 13 November 1938, the Hunan provincial government ordered the immediate dismissal of most road maintenance technicians and workers because of the complete destruction of roads and transit routes (along the

¹⁸⁶ "Guanyu dishi jun gouzhu guofang gongshi zhengyong Wang Shi'an tiandi mianfu" 關於第十軍構築國防工事徵用王石麓田地免賦 [Regarding exempting taxes of Wang Shi'an fields being requisitioned by the Tenth Army for their construction of national defense fortifications] (2 March 1944), HNTGC, 00039-001-00401-00002, HNSDAG.

¹⁸⁷ "Guanyu zaoju ye hu Wang Shi'an jianmian fushui ken an shiji qingxi yuyi huomian" 關於造具業戶王石麓減免賦稅懇按實際情形予以豁免 [Regarding preparing households Wang Shi'an's reduced tax exemptions, hoping to exempt them from actual situations] (22 February 1944), HNTGC, 00039-001-00401-00003, HNSDAG.

¹⁸⁸ "Dishi jun zhengyong tiandi"

¹⁸⁹ "Wang Shi'an jianmian tianfu"

routes 80% of station staff were laid off, while 20% were retained).¹⁹⁰ In April 1939, the transport mileage in Hunan decreased by one-third within one month, compared to 1937.¹⁹¹ Roads between Changsha and other Hunanese counties in the north including *binhu* counties such as Changde, Yuanjiang, and Yiyang had suffered extensive damage.¹⁹² Most maintenance workers on these roads no longer had jobs. In October of that year (1939), areas in south Changsha experienced a continuation of road destruction and personnel dismissal. In 1939, the destruction of more than 70,000 kilometers of roads had occurred in Hunan.¹⁹³

Yet, the local government provided additional compensation to individuals whose employment was terminated. September brought job losses for most people. Taking into consideration the hardships endured by the station staff due to the First Battle of Changsha, the plan was to provide an extra one and a half months' salary. For instance, a coach conductor at the east station of Changsha, who had a monthly salary of 40 *yuan* was dismissed at the end of September and received a severance payment of 60 *yuan* (40 *yuan* for October income and an extra half month of 20 *yuan*).¹⁹⁴ Maintenance workers were compensated for their salaries in October and November as well as a one-off payment of half of their monthly salary.¹⁹⁵ This was above the norm for

¹⁹⁰ "Guanyu pohuai luduan xianqi zi qian yangludui bing yantu zhansuo yuangong caijian" 關於破壞路段限期資遣養路隊並沿途站所員工裁減 [Regarding a deadline for dismissing the road maintenance team and reducing staff at stations along the way because of the destruction of road sections] (29 November 1939), HNSJST, 00081-001-00199-00001, HNSDAG.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ "Hunan sheng gongluju guanliju gongli lucheng bijiaobiao" 湖南省公路局管理局公路里程比較表 [A comparison table of road mileage of the Hunan Provincial Road Bureau and Administration Bureau] (1939), HNSJST, 00081-001-00199-00002, HNSDAG.

¹⁹⁴ "Chezhan zhansuo zhiyuan jia fa ban ge yue fengxin" 車站站所職員加發半個月俸薪 [Station staff to receive an additional half month's salary] (1939), HNSJST, 00081-001-00199-00006, HNSDAG.

¹⁹⁵ "Guanyu caijian pohuai luduan ji zhan duan yuangong xinxiang" 關於裁減破壞路段及站段員工薪餉 [Regarding the reduction of salaries for employees in destructive road sections and stations] (3 May 1940), HNSJST, 00081-001-00199-00010, HNSDAG.

others. Even though the government provided some compensation, the war caused many people to lose their jobs and struggle to provide for their families.

Although the Nationalists lost control of a large part of Hunan including Changsha and Hengyang, in 1944 and 1945, they still received support from the people to aid their military-related fortifications, construction, or ration transport in west Hunan. In 1944, Taoyuan County citizens assisted the NRA with water, food, and guidance, whereas all the local government officers escaped when the fight started.¹⁹⁶ In early 1945, the Nationalists mobilized local people for military assistance. They hired 11,000 people in Qianyang County for military construction.¹⁹⁷ In another county, Hongjiang over 70,000 peasants had been employed for road destruction.¹⁹⁸

There were sporadic instances in certain areas like Ningxiang where people resisted because they did not always endure what was going on. In Shitan Village, Ningxiang, peasants from four *baos* 保 torched a state-owned salt store as they could no longer afford an illegal hike in prices for salt. In March 1943, people in most Hunanese counties were allocated a specific amount of salt at a relatively low price by the government and they were required to buy it within a month. The state-owned store offered salt to peasants from the 1st to 14th *baos* for 150 *yuan* per *jin* until 25 May.¹⁹⁹ Afterward, the store temporarily shut down and reopened in early June but

¹⁹⁶ “Guanyu Taoyuan xian fuxu de anjian” 關於桃源縣撫卹的案件 [Regarding the relief cases in Taoyuan county] (1944), HNSMZT, 00033-001-000182-00016, HNSDAG.

¹⁹⁷ “Hunan sheng Qianyang xian xiezhu guojun gouzhu gongshi” 湖南省黔陽縣協助國軍構築工事 [Assistance in constructing military fortifications for the NRA in Qianyang county, Hunan] (1945), HNSJST, 0080-002-00197-00013, HNSDAG.

¹⁹⁸ “Guanyu qing yu fengling pohuai gonglu” 關於請予奉令破壞公路 [Regarding the request to destroy roads as ordered] (09 February 1945), HNSJST, 00080-01281-00076, HNSDAG.

¹⁹⁹ “Guanyu Ningxiang xian Shitan xiang renmin daohui dianzhi qiangjie yan jin yi an” 關於湖南省寧鄉石潭鄉人民搗毀店址搶劫鹽斤一案 [Regarding the case of people vandalizing store locations and robbing salts in Shitan township, Ningxiang, Hunan] (31 July 1943), HNSMZT, 00042-001-00129-00013, HNSDAG.

with a price hike to 163 *yuan* per *jin*.²⁰⁰ This meant that those from the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th *baos* did not acquire their allocated salt for May and had to pay a greater amount of money. Therefore, peasants from the four *baos* proposed to use the 150 *yuan* to get their portions for May, which was refused. The store was left in ruins and a total of 330 *jin* of salt and 6100 *yuan* in cash were snatched during heated conflicts involving 200 individuals.²⁰¹ According to the Ningxiang government's report, the Shitan Village case did not happen only once but it was a widespread issue in multiple counties.²⁰² Intense reactions from local citizens were primarily attributed to exorbitant prices of salt during wartime Hunan. In 1944 Yuanjiang, a *binhu* county, one *shi* of paddy rice was roughly equal in value to just one *jin* of salt.²⁰³ A lack of hope for survival was predicted to lead the Hunanese people to become more willing to resist fiercely against local authorities.

Earlier in 1941 Xiangyin, a *binhu* county, encountered challenges when the county government attempted to recruit locals to provide military assistance. In compliance with the order of the NRA 99th Army, the county must undertake military construction in a sparsely populated location near the lake considering the possibility of a Japanese invasion of Changsha from Dongting Lake.²⁰⁴ Hiring local peasants for the work meant searching for those living over 10 kilometers away and constructing newly temporary

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² "Guanyu Shitan xiang renmin yu shiyan gongmaidian jiufen yi an" 關於石潭鄉人民與食鹽公賣店糾紛一案 [Regarding the dispute between the people of Shitan township and the state-run salt store] (29 August 1943), HNSMZT, 00042-001-00129-00014, HNSDAG.

²⁰³ "Guanyu Yuanjiang xian xia han ji nongzuo qingxing" 關於沅江縣夏旱及農作情形 [Regarding the summer drought and agricultural conditions in Yuanjiang county] (July 1945), HNTGC, 00039-001-00439-00008, HNSDAG.

²⁰⁴ "Xiangyin guanyu shenqing tongchou banli zhengong choufa minfu huoshi" 湘陰關於申請統籌辦理徵工籌發民伙伙食 [Application of Xiangyin for coordinated management of labor conscription and provisioning of food for civilian workers] (03 January 1941), HNSJST, 00080-002-000279-00035, HNSDAG.

dwellings for these peasants.²⁰⁵ The low pay and self-provisioning aspect of the job made it unappealing to most peasants resulting in a low number of takers.²⁰⁶ The county faced the challenging task of dealing with both road destruction and daily transport of 2,000 *shi* of rice, too.²⁰⁷ Defenses at Xiangyin were unable to withstand invading Japanese forces as shown by their four successful landings from the lake dating back to 1939. The Hunan people, while at times uncooperative with the government, did not put up the same resistance as the Henan people did to vent their anger on NRA troops led by Tang Enbo during a Japanese invasion of their land in 1944.²⁰⁸ However, opposition persisted in Hunan to a certain degree, which adversely affected the Nationalists' moves to mobilize the populace for war.

6.4.3 A shifting predilection for reading: wartime bookshops and second-hand book trading stalls

Changsha was renowned for its cultural significance throughout the Middle Ages of China. Before the war, bookstores there flourished due to its multiple universities such as the University of Hunan. All the chief bookstores (*shuju* 書局), including the Commercial Press (*shangwu* 商務), Chung Hwa Book (*zhonghua* 中華), and Cheng Chung Book (*zhengzhong* 正中), had inaugurated their branch stores in Changsha. The number of smaller-scale bookstores (*shudian* 書店) stocking books on a variety of topics was immeasurable. As the war progressed and Changsha became the major battlefield of China, book trades experienced a steep drop in variety and caliber. The war also caused a sharp reduction in bookstores. Allegedly only 24 bookstores had sold newly released books including those that supplied course

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ van de Ven, *War*, 284.

textbooks at the end of 1942, compared to the original 74 bookstores in 1936.²⁰⁹ The relocation of various educational institutions to cities in the southwest of China, such as Chongqing and Kunming, contributed to the decrease in the number of bookstores in Changsha.²¹⁰

The next three elements further emphasized the significant economic decline experienced by this industry. First, most books, especially journals, and magazines offered in stores, lost the essence that they should be timely.²¹¹ As a precaution against potential Japanese aggression towards Changsha, the main roads and railways surrounding the city were either disconnected or destroyed. The decimation of the Changsha transportation network presented immense challenges in obtaining and transferring goods including books, from other areas. Many branch stores of those renowned bookstores relocated to cities, such as Zhaoyang in south Hunan. Due to transport obstacles, the majority of books that were marketed and sold in Changsha were antiquated. For example, a periodical was initially issued in Chongqing in September, however, Changsha readers had to endure a period of two to three months of frustration before procuring and perusing the book until November or December.²¹²

Second, wartime Changsha was reliant on the importation of books from external locations, for instance, Chongqing, Shanghai, Guilin, Hong Kong, and so on, and most bookstores opted to introduce these books simultaneously. With the Pacific War having begun, importing books from Hong Kong was no longer viable, leading to an occurrence wherein most

²⁰⁹ “Zhanshi Changsha de shudian” 戰時長沙的書店 [Bookstores in wartime Changsha], HNGMRB, 12 December 1941; “Changsha shi shangye fenlei tongjibiao” 長沙市商業分類統計表 [Commercial classification statistics table of Changsha city], in *Changsha shi zhengfu xingzheng tongji* 長沙市政府行政統計 [Administrative statistics of Changsha municipal government], no.24&25, ed. Changsha shi zhengfu diyi ke 長沙市政府第一科 (Changsha: Changsha shi zhengfu diyi ke, 1937), 28.

²¹⁰ “Changsha de shudian.”

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

booksellers would commonly carry the same types of publications. One store was offering magazines related to cultures and the life of the younger generation, and the other outlets only had the same.²¹³

As time had progressed books accessible for purchase in the marketplace diminished in range. Before the war, the Changsha populace was typically offered romance novels as opposed to publications about the military and war, which were virtually unheard of.²¹⁴ As the conflict began, the popularity of military-related literature surged prompting bookstores to become stocked with volumes related to military theory, reference material, and international relations. Certain bookstores altered their focus to specialize in military texts with one example being Zhongwen Bookstore (忠文書店), which had a more extensive inventory mainly comprised of military-related books.²¹⁵ Furthermore, various other genres of books, such as magazines, as well as those related to art, music, and opera, conformed to the wartime trend.²¹⁶ In this regard, the war had transformed Changsha's bookstores, no longer a venue for romance literature. Evident from the assorted tastes in books among the Changsha population, for many it appeared that the war with Japan had become a primary concern.

Bookstore proprietors were confronted with formidable stress to manage their operations, not solely stemming from complications with imports, but also the augmented expense of living brought about by inflation in the locality. Due to this, the inhabitants of Changsha had to shell out a greater sum when procuring a new book and they habitually gravitated towards the small stalls that supplied pre-owned books to patrons. The war

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

created favorable conditions for the development and success of a singular sector, the pre-war established used bookstalls in Changsha, while simultaneously causing a certain level of reduction in the new book business in the city. The bookstall sector in wartime Changsha, however, discovered methods to stay afloat. Following 1938, bookstores in Changsha that remained in operation had to downsize their operations. The largest of these had a capital of 10,000 *yuan*, whereas the least endowed had only 500 *yuan* to work with; the aggregate amount of funds for the whole sector (including second-hand bookstores) totaled 200,000 *yuan*.²¹⁷ The industry maintained a sum of 150,000 *yuan* in market funds in 1936.²¹⁸ It illustrated how the industry had adapted and prospered despite the decreasing number of bookstores, which also found ways to survive and even thrive by, for instance, shifting their focus to the pre-owned books market.

In the war-torn Changsha of 1941 and beyond, the growing cost of living and operations compelled booksellers to increase their prices manifold to make ends meet and achieve higher profits. A new price reflecting total purchase costs, including postage rates could be found where the book's original price was printed.²¹⁹ As the prices of recently published books increased, more Changsha citizens sought out bookstores and stalls that sold second-hand books in hopes of obtaining them at more cost-effective prices. Second-hand book stalls, therefore, became the preferred choice for many as they allowed people to satisfy their reading needs at a lower cost, gradually taking the place of bookstores. In the southern part of Changsha, a wide variety of second-hand books had been sold in small stalls and stores,

²¹⁷ Ibid. The source did not mention the precise day when the article was written. It was printed in the newspaper on 12 December 1942, but it may have been penned before that date.

²¹⁸ "Changsha shi shangye fenlei tongjibiao," 28.

²¹⁹ "Changsha de jiushutan" 長沙的舊書攤 [The secondhand bookstalls of Changsha], HNGMRB, 10 February 1942.

including original and translated Western books, literary Chinese magazines issued between 1936 and 1937, scholarly traditional Chinese books, textbooks, and even the Seven Heroes and the Five Gallants-style of ancient novels.²²⁰

Larger used bookstores (not just stalls with limited space) did not provide books at an economical price. Readers could purchase good binding books, textbooks, and magazines from small-scale book stalls for cheap rates of only 0.3 and 0.4 *yuan* per book. This was a result of acquiring from scavengers with only a cost of 0.2 *yuan* per *jin* (500g), as well as the adaptive business model did not require a fixed brick-and-mortar presence eliminating the need for spending on operational expenses.²²¹ Amidst this scenario, second-hand book vendors began to thrive extraordinarily as a street trade in wartime Changsha. Their budgetary requirements were minimal with a maximum expenditure of 500 *yuan*. A well-known maxim in Changsha suggested that “those who opened a business selling used products [*huang huo* 荒貨] could make enough money in three days to live off of for the next three years [*san ri bu kaizhang, kaizhang chi san nian* 三日不開張,開張吃三年].”²²² The prevalence of second-hand book vendors in Changsha was indicative of the public’s desire to reduce spending on necessities, as well as a means of providing income to the underprivileged through small-scale street commerce. During the war, it had become a noticeable ornamentation on boulevards of Changsha.

6.4.4 Two special wartime scenes: night markets and injured soldiers

Before the war, Changsha was booming. However, in 1938 when the war was coming closer to Hunan, the sight of abandoned streets was remarkable as the city was saturated with fear and terror because of Japanese air strikes. On days

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

when the sun was shining, stores in bustling thoroughfares and narrow lanes alike shuttered their entrances, which had been adorned with notices, “The shop is shut down and employees have left for the countryside (*dianyou xiaxiang zanting yingye* 店友下鄉暫停營業),” or “it is open from 4 pm (*yingye shijian wan sishi qi* 營業時間晚四時起).” Changsha was exposed to a higher risk of violence and bombing from Japanese aircraft when the weather was clear and sunny. The city was divided into two distinct parts of the day, morning and night. During the daylight hours, Changsha was unpopulated and deserted, however, the cityscape changed by the evening usually after 5 p.m.²²³

Following dusk, Changsha evidenced its vibrancy with a bustling and thronged atmosphere: “Roads began to become reverberant with the sounds of activity as merchants returning from the rural areas inaugurated their stores. Rickshaws and other modes of transportation crawled along the streets illuminated by electric lights.”²²⁴ During the night, people should be more watchful of vehicles to avoid being struck by them when traversing the streets of Changsha, which were flooded with private automobiles, trucks, and military-style vehicles. By establishing multiple stores and shops, Zhejiang businesspeople created the conditions for a short-term flourishing of business in Changsha.²²⁵

Previous to the fire, recreational facilities were teeming with guests. The opulent theatrical production “*Palace on the Sea*” (*haishang xingong* 海上行宮) and similar theatrical works gained immense traction, particularly amongst the affluent exiles, who had formerly occupied prominent positions in society

²²³ Shao bing lao wu 少兵老伍, “Wo dao le Hengyang” 我到了衡陽 [I have arrived in Hengyang], XNRB, 1 April 1939. The author seemed to use a pen name with the submission of the article.

²²⁴ Zhu Jianhong 朱劍虹, “Changsha de yeshi” 長沙的夜市 [The night market in Changsha], XNRB, 3 December 1938.

²²⁵ Wang Keng 汪鏗, “Hunan de xianzhuang” 湖南的現狀 [The current situation in Hunan], ZSRB, 7 August 1938.

before their relocation to Changsha.²²⁶ Xiang operas were also exhibited. At the People's Club (*minzhong julebu* 民眾俱樂部), various individuals whiled away time in the ping-pong chambers and the golf green remained well-frequented. At that time, locals were in awe of a spellbinding scene filled with magnificent radiance, substituting nighttime for daytime. The evening market was lively with commercial activities in Changsha before the fire as vendors on the streets sold wontons (*hundun* 混沌), sesame flatbreads (*shaobing* 燒餅), fried tofu (*youzha doufu* 油炸豆腐), tea-soaked salted eggs (*chayan dan* 茶鹽蛋) and sticky rice (*nuomifan* 糯米飯) all night long, and vendors were abundant during summer nights, selling mung bean soup (*liudouxi* 綠豆稀) and sour plum juice (*suanmeitang* 酸梅湯).²²⁷ Information about the night market post-1939 is scarce, but the 1938 Great Fire had a notable impact hindering its restoration to its former state before the fire.

Moreover, the unusual night scene of the city was complemented by a special wartime scene of injured soldiers, an exclusive wartime feature in Changsha. A narrative of the demeanor of hurt combatants on the streets of Changsha was given:

The soldiers carrying iron bars attacked citizens and clashed with gendarmes attempting to put an end to the abhorrent conduct of those soldiers. The wounded soldiers outnumbered the gendarmes, subsequently taking possession of their firearms.²²⁸

In the early time of the war, Hunan Tongxianghui organized to save local Hunanese in Shanghai to return to Hunan, guidance provided by the

²²⁶ Zhu Jianhong, "Changsha."

²²⁷ Tan Zhongchi, *Changsha tongshi*, 706.

²²⁸ Fang Jiada, "Zhanshi de Changsha," 15.

tongxianghui during the expedition included cautions about potential enemy assaults, advising mothers to ensure their children remained silent, men to refrain from smoking, and everyone to adhere to their allotted food portions.²²⁹ Similar guidance, or more precisely forced regulations were put in place by the Hunan authorities to govern their evacuation strategies. Those in the military who had been wounded appeared to be granted special treatment during Changsha evacuations. Upon hearing the sound of air raid sirens, citizens would evacuate to the surrounding rural areas. Unfortunately, there was no guarantee of safety there, due to the threat of bullets from police officers—violation of regulations during evacuations faced being shot at by police bullets (*chi zidan* 吃子彈).²³⁰ The potential causes of punishment included donning white apparel, gazing at Japanese aircraft, and failing to adhere to the evacuation flow of individuals. It appeared that these regulations were only utilized to confine common citizens in Changsha, whereas injured soldiers were excluded from them.²³¹ The described scenario likely occurred solely in the early stages of the city's evacuation, as the majority of residents showed reluctance to participate in the government-led evacuations. Evacuations in Changsha, especially during direct Japanese invasions were executed successfully because of the commendable army-civilian collaboration established throughout Hunan province as mentioned in the preceding section.

Injured soldiers could flout regulations due to their superior strength relative to policemen.²³² When the police sought to convince them to follow the rules, the wounded soldiers shouted: “I was at the forefront, willing to die

²²⁹ Lincoln, “Fleeing from firestorms,” 444.

²³⁰ Wang Jing, “Zai Changsha,” 53.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

while you all were having a good time in the back. I am not scared of planes, so why are you scared and not willing to fight the Japanese? Let us take on them [policemen],” therefore, Changsha was not the center of the Great Rear but was a sanctuary for injured troops.²³³ Evaluating the prevalence of this occurrence among wounded soldiers poses a challenge, however, it did incite a few civilians to impersonate injured soldiers and infiltrate private residences of individuals in Changsha. This damaged the standing of the military forces and created an unfavorable perception among the populace, which in turn accounted for the reluctance of ordinary people to cooperate with local authorities in the first two years of the war.

6.4.5 Civilian housing and hotels

The civilian housing in Changsha was a place, through which to provide us an insightful glance into the wartime standard of living of the local populace. In Chinese society, many coolies (*kuli* 苦力) were residing in cities while undertaking manual jobs with meager wages. Their dwelling was far from satisfactory. The extravagant buildings, including foreign-style houses and mansions, were beyond their financial capabilities. Thus, in many cities’ suburbs, there was low-income housing for a multitude of families occupying austere and unrefined dwellings that appeared like small, cramped cubicles. In Changsha, a wide road in the southern suburb was lined with tidy and orderly civilian housing, neighboring a factory for the impoverished. It resembled lanes (*longtang* 弄堂) in Shanghai. 144 houses with a grey hue had been organized into seven even ranks (two vertical and five horizontal), small paths

²³³ Ibid.

made of sandy soil had been constructed between each rank and trees lined the paths.²³⁴

Changsha civilian housing constituted one of the municipal constructs executed by the Changsha government in the course of its inaugural three-year governance plan in 1935.²³⁵ By 1936 the First Civilian Housing (*diyi pingmin zhuzhai* 第一平民住宅) had been finished, accommodating 318 households with a complete population of 1,320.²³⁶ Of all the households, 899 people (218 households) had an income of 10 *yuan* or lower, and 482 out of the 1320 people were unemployed.²³⁷ In 1937, the government allocated the same funds 20,000 *yuan*, to build a greater number of civilian homes.²³⁸

The municipal government implemented a rule in 1935 to oversee civilian housing operations, regulating two households to live in one house. A rent of 1.1 *yuan* was assigned to each house with occupants of the upper level required to pay 0.5 *yuan* and those on the ground floor paying 0.6 *yuan*.²³⁹ No charges were imposed for the use of the kitchen. Civilian housing in Changsha was designed to accommodate two groups of people.²⁴⁰ Firstly, it was intended for those individuals whose houses had been forcibly removed because of municipal road construction. Furthermore, the housing units were intended for distribution among those facing financial hardship, who were also

²³⁴ “Changsha shi de pingmin zhuzhai” 長沙市的平民住宅 [Civilian housing in Changsha], HNGMRB, 24 January 1942.

²³⁵ Hunan sheng zhengfu 湖南省政府編 ed., *Hunan sheng di yici sannian shizheng jibua* 湖南省政府第一次三年施政計劃 [The first three-year administrative plan of the Hunan provincial government] (Changsha: Hunan sheng zhengfu, 1935), 98.

²³⁶ Changsha shizhengfu di yi ke 長沙市政府第一科 ed., *Changsha shizhengfu xingzheng tongji ershi si wu niandu bekan* 長沙市政府行政統計二十四五年度合刊 [Combined administrative statistics of Changsha municipal government for 1935 and 1936] (Changsha: Changsha shizhengfu, 1937), 65.

²³⁷ Ibid., 66.

²³⁸ *Hunan sheng sannian jibua*, 98.

²³⁹ “Changsha shi pingmin zhuzhai linyong guicheng” 長沙市平民住宅賃用規程 [Regulations on the rental of civilian housing of Changsha], CSSZ, no.19 & 21 (1938): 65.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

expected to have a job. The government actually approved a considerable number of jobless households.

Hunan guomin ribao featured a piece on civilian housing from 1942.

The newspaper did not make known the exact date of the article's composition, but its information differed from the reports and statutes issued by the municipality in 1936. The article suggested that each house was rented for the mere sum of 0.7 *yuan*, a negligible figure when put in the context of the living expenses in the city, which was not even enough to purchase a packet of cigarettes.²⁴¹ Judging from this depiction, it is logical to surmise that this article should have been created following the outbreak of the war. Based on the guidelines of civilian housing, each house should be leased to two separate households, one residing on the upper level and another on the lower level.²⁴² The article additionally reveals a discrepancy in the rent (1.1 *yuan* regulated by the Changsha government in 1935) with the upper-level suites charged at 0.3 *yuan* and the lower floor at 0.4 *yuan*.²⁴³ The kitchen, which was not regarded as a common area had been transformed into a sleeping chamber as the family inhabiting downstairs was obligated to finance it.²⁴⁴ As soon as the war started, it seemed that the local government had cut the rent taking 0.4 *yuan* from each house and 0.2 *yuan* from every household.

The two-households-in-one-home policy proved advantageous to the local government allowing for an accurate tally of the occupants.²⁴⁵ The accruing of 144 dwellings corresponded to 288 households as children typically resided with their parents. This ultimately led to an estimated

²⁴¹ "Pingmin zhuzhai." The original article was published in 1942 in *Hunan guomin ribao*, a local newspaper in wartime Changsha.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

population of greater than 1,300 people incurring a rent of 100.8 *yuan* to be submitted to the municipal government.²⁴⁶ This amount has seen minimal fluctuation from the 1,320 figure recorded in the 1935 report, assembled and examined by the Changsha municipal government.

Engaging in gambling activities was strictly forbidden in the living quarters and any individuals found to have indulged in such activities would be removed from their residences.²⁴⁷ The majority of the population held jobs, leaving the housing area deserted during the daylight hours apart from a miniature grocery store with a few children amusing themselves with games.²⁴⁸ Each row of dwellings chose a head from the inhabitants to assist the appointee of the civic administration in supervising. This was analogous to the *baojia* system, employed by the Nationalists to govern the nation.²⁴⁹

The article does not indicate if there were any comparable cost-effective dwellings in Changsha. Nevertheless, civilian abodes were constructed and organized by the local administration to give Changsha inhabitants access to low-cost housing, as an essential municipal construction before the war. Upon the outbreak of the war, it appeared that they kept the rental prices the same or even lowered them rather than raising them as expected.

Perusing hotels was another method to evaluate the urban lifestyle in wartime Changsha. Options were as follows: the apartment (*gongyu* 公寓) being the most deluxe, the hostel (*lüguan* 旅館) being the second finest, and the inn (*kezhan* 客棧) being the most basic.²⁵⁰ Citing municipal figures, before the fire, when the hotel industry was flourishing in Changsha, there were

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ “Ni zhidao ma, Changsha de lüguan you duoshao” 你知道嗎長沙的旅館有多少 [Do you know how many hotels there are in Changsha?], HNGMRB, 14 December 1941.

more than 800 hotels, comprising an area of eight square kilometers, with 600 of the establishments having been officially registered with the municipal government.²⁵¹ Another perspective suggests that there were four levels of hotels with a total of 500 in Changsha in 1937.²⁵²

Upon the commencement of evacuation procedures in Changsha to confront the Japanese air raids, approximately 70 rudimentary hotels without air raid shelters were prohibited. After the fire, this industry was in a period of recession, only approximately 320 hotels were running in the city and by 1940 the amount had decreased to 243 hotels that were still in operation.²⁵³ As of 1941, the sum of hotels in the municipality totaled 166 with the most noteworthy having 10,000 *yuan* in assets and the least having only 200 to 300 *yuan* in financing.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² He Wenyan 何文元, "Changsha shizheng gaikuang" 長沙市政概況 [An overview of the municipal administration in Changsha], *Shizheng pinglun* 市政評論 5, no.1 (1937): 29; see also, Tan Zhongchi, *Changsha tongshi*, 706.

²⁵³ "Changsha lüguan."

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

長沙市第一平民住宅之內境

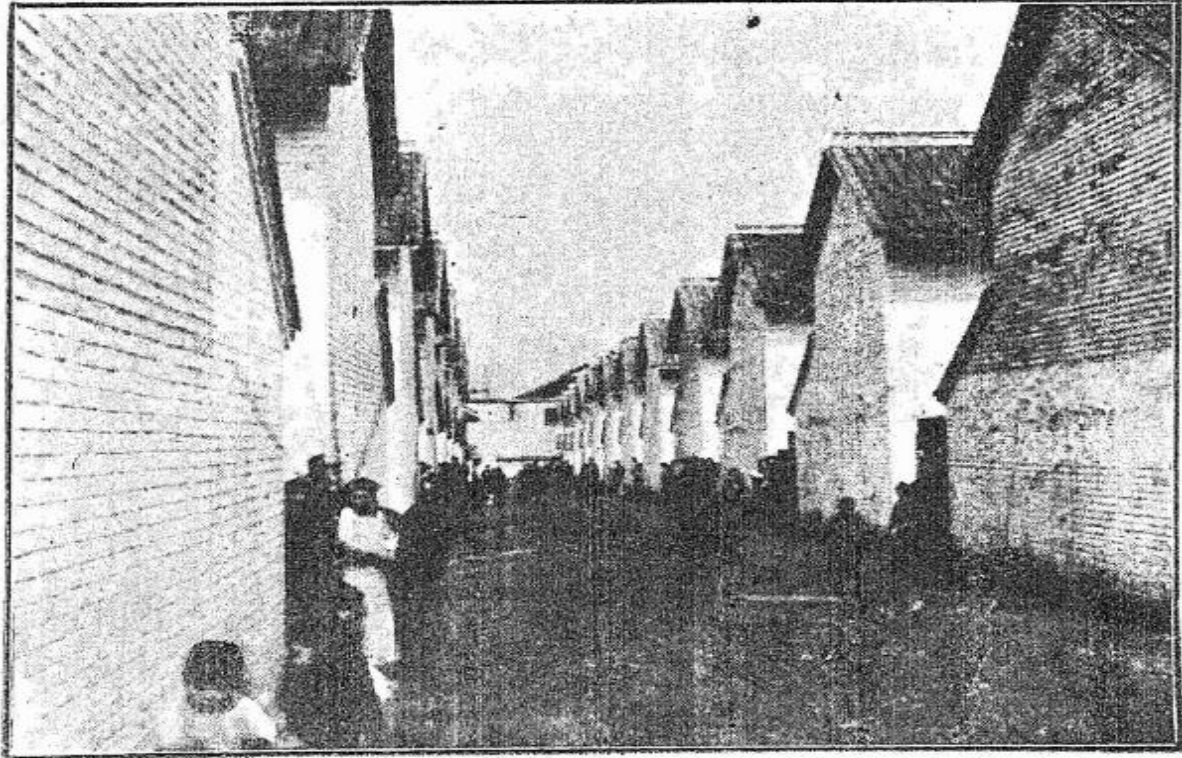


Plate 6.10 Inner surroundings of the First Changsha Civilian Housing. Source: “Changsha shi di yi pingmin zhuzhai zhi neijing” 長沙市第一平民住宅之內境, CSSZ, no.22-27 (February 1936): 30.

第一平民住宅外景

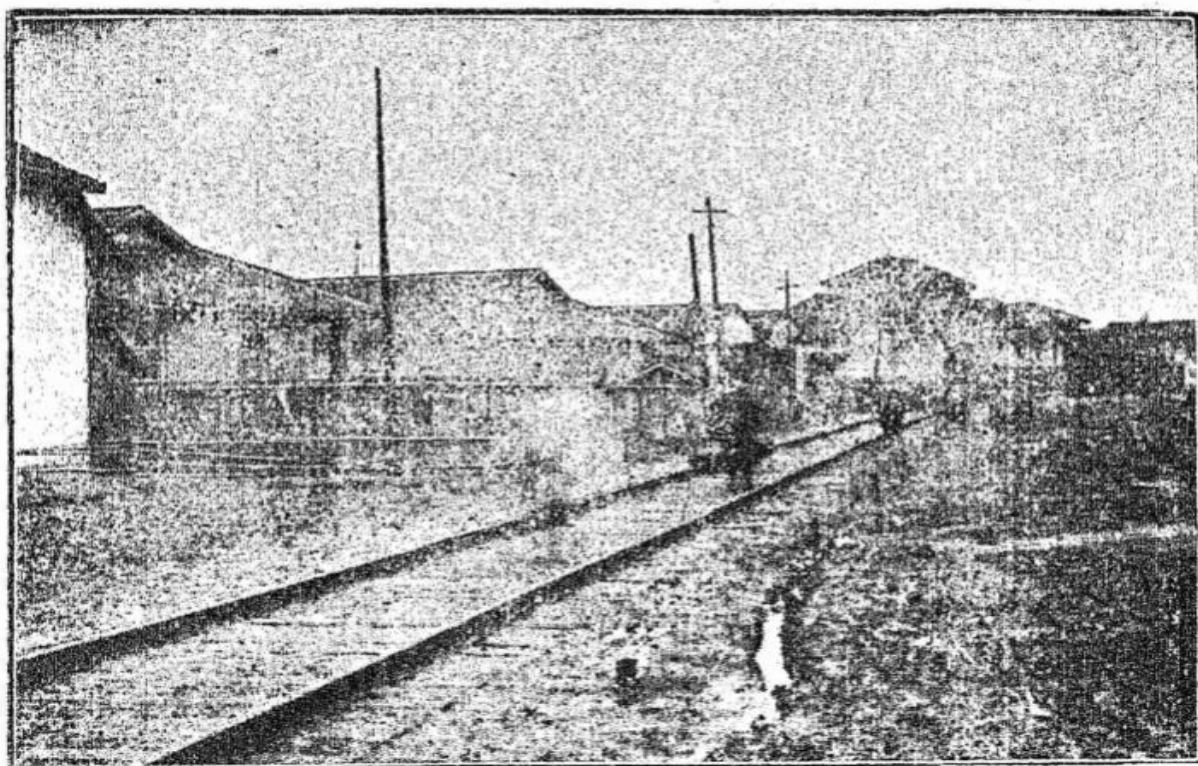


Plate 6.11 The outside surroundings of the First Changsha Civilian Dwellings. Source: “Di yi pingmin zhuzhai waijing 第一平民住宅外景,” CSSZ, no.28-33 (July 1936): 22.

第一平民住宅頭門

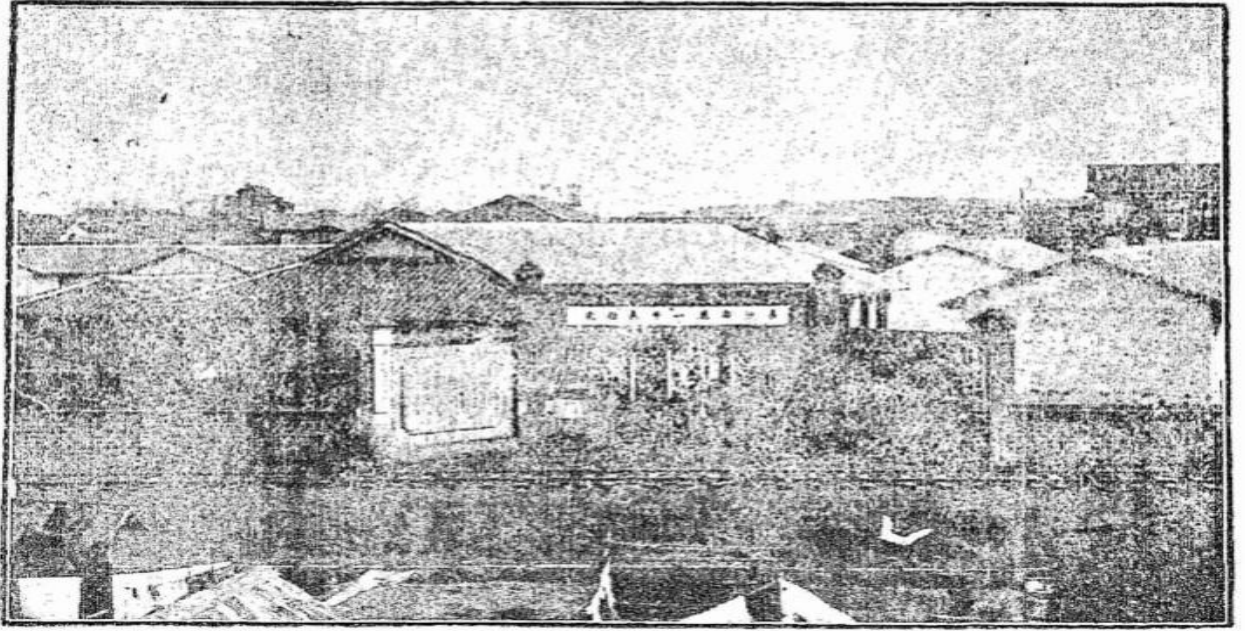


Plate 6.12 The Gate of the First Changsha Civilian Dwellings. Source: “Di yi pingmin zhuzhai toumen 第一平民住宅頭門,” CSSZ, no.28-33: 22.

第一平民住宅公共會場

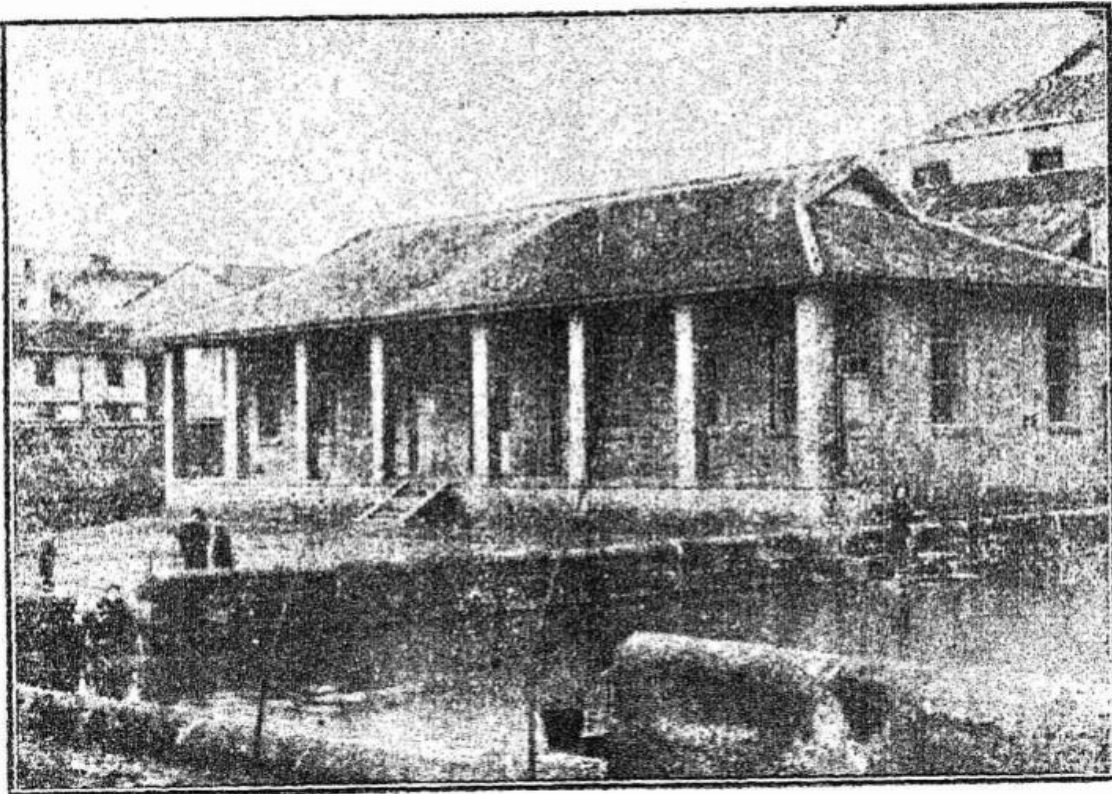


Plate 6.13 Common venue of the First Changsha Civilian Housing. Source: “Di yi pingmin zhuzhai gongong huichang 第一平民公共會場,” CSSZ, no.28-33: 23.

As Changsha was a driving force in the progress of the New Life Movement, it was expected that hotels without formal registration with the municipal authority were on the blacklist. This brought about the materialization of two informal lodgings: fabric shops (*buzhuang* 布莊) and business establishments (*shanghao* 商號).²⁵⁵ Under the guise of fabric stores and business establishments, a clandestine operation unfolded offering illicit services such as prostitution and gambling in order to evade detection by the military guard. The cost per night for a room was approximately three *yuan* with the most expensive option being 10 *yuan* inclusive of meals.²⁵⁶ It was observed that Changsha hotel proprietors discovered their own approaches to curtail costs or store owners came upon the opportunity to grow their business by broadening the services of a hotel, during which Changsha and the entire of Free China were experiencing severe inflation. As it turns out, these two types of informal accommodation had a financial association with rickshaw pullers in Changsha, which I further explore later, combined with my discussion on rickshaw pullers.

6.4.6 Shoeshine and Street teahouses

In urban areas of China, shoe polishers, with wooden boxes provided shoe-shining services to customers. The industry could be found everywhere, with countless kiosks selling newspapers and cigarettes scattered across China. The environment in which a person shined shoes in Changsha in the year 1942:

The remuneration for polishing a pair of shoes was 0.3 *yuan*. Not including days of precipitation, a shoe polisher could acquire no less than 5 *yuan* and a maximum of 150 *yuan* in a month. By accounting for the outlay of shoe-cleaning sponges,

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

which amounted to 50 to 60 *yuan* per month (the sponge was sold for 5 *yuan* per box in Changsha), they could earn a sum of 100 *yuan*.²⁵⁷

In early 1942, the market price of mid-grade rice in Changsha was approximately 150 *yuan* per *shi* (15 *yuan* per *dou*) which climbed to 300 *yuan* per *shi* in September that year. As depicted in chapter five, the central government enforced that each peasant should maintain five *dou* paddy rice per month (three *shi* per year).²⁵⁸ This resulted in urban populations only being able to procure the same amount of rice. One *shi* of brown rice was roughly equal to two corresponding units of paddy rice, manufacturing one *shi* of middling-grade rice necessitates 2.38 *shi* of paddy rice.²⁵⁹ Thus five *dou* of paddy rice was equal to 2.5 *dou* brown rice and roughly 2.1 *dou* of mid-quality rice. Buying 2.1 *dou* mid-quality rice needed to pay 31.5 *yuan* in early 1942 but should pay 63 *yuan* later that year. This meant shoeshiners were forced to expend more than 50% of their remuneration on rice. The conditions, in which they lived in wartime Changsha from 1942 onwards were far from ideal.

In the mid-1930s, Shanghai saw the emergence of leather shoe shops that employed young girls to impeccably shine shoes for a cost of 0.05 *yuan* per pair.²⁶⁰ It was the first group of shoeshiners in China. Changsha's shoe-shining industry was an initiative that stemmed from the devastating 1938 Great Fire. The magnitude of those who experienced hardship due to the fire was substantial. Providing relief and assistance was not sufficient to fully address the refugee situation after the fire. Thus, under the auspices of the

²⁵⁷ "Changsha de caxie ye" 長沙的擦鞋業 [The shoe-shining industry in Changsha], HNGMRB, 26 January 1942.

²⁵⁸ "Xue zhangguan guiding liangshi guanzhi banfa."

²⁵⁹ *Liangguan guizhang*, 196.

²⁶⁰ "Caxie ye."

Changsha Relieve Disaster Council (*Changsha zhenji weiyuanhui* 賑濟委員會), the inception of a shoeshine squad initiated a novel industry in the city.²⁶¹ Considering the inflation rate in Changsha the wages of a shoeshine worker were relatively high at least before 1942, which increased the number of people opting for this occupation. During the three years following the Great Fire, over 110 juveniles were occupied in this line of work across the city.²⁶²

A notable group of children was dedicated to the job of shining and polishing shoes in wartime Changsha. Upon meeting a customer, these children vied for the same chance simultaneously, with the successful one being the one to utter the words: “He/she allowed me to do it.”²⁶³ After finishing the job, they left together. These children lacked proper organization and regulation by the municipal government. There were no customary guild rules in comparison to other traditional street trades, however, shoe-shining had still taken on certain characteristics from them. For example, in this young industry, the younger generation could not stand a chance against the senior generation when it came to vying for the same customer on the street.

In wartime Changsha, the market remained competitive granting the shoeshine children an opportunity to augment their revenue. Businesspeople had to explore various methods for publicizing their wares, and the wooden cases of shoeshine children piqued their interest. Because the shoeshine children traversed the city, it gave the Changsha businessmen the idea to exploit those wood boxes for promotional purposes.

In the fall of 1940, Changsha Baike tobacco company [*Baike yancao gongsi* 百克煙草公司] produced a number of gleaming boxes and disseminated them to multiple shoeshine children in

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

the city. These custom-made boxes had a superior quality and appearance and were painted in a blue hue. Each box featured the company's primary wares printed in white font. The shoe-shine youngsters were delighted to obtain these striking boxes without incurring a cost and they may not be aware of the commercials and emblems on the packaging.²⁶⁴

Generally speaking, shining shoes was not an esteemed profession especially for children, although it was more remunerative than some occupations. It is unclear whether the children engaging in this occupation were doing so to sustain their families or if they were independent. Despite the unfortunate reality that some children had to labor in order to provide sustenance for themselves or their families in this war-ravaged city. For those business owners, locating an effective but no-cost medium to present their publicity efforts was a positive change to survive and even develop their organizations.

By 1941, Changsha had endured a devastating fire and two military clashes (the third one initiated at the close of the year). Despite the various changes happening around them, the teahouse industry and the public's fascination with tea drinking stayed consistent, mirroring the unwavering habits of Chengdu locals, who frequented teahouses even amidst wartime disruptions.²⁶⁵ Teahouse trade in Chengdu, as Wang Di suggests, lacked a well-established training system for prospective masters of tea as a small proportion of individuals in the teahouse industry were apprentices with only 10 out of 3,885 people being apprentices, comprising 0.25% of the total and 0.7% of all hired workers.²⁶⁶ In Changsha, the trade had its comprehensive apprentice system. The title *fuqing* 福慶 was traditionally used for those who ran

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Wang Di, *The teahouse*, 115.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 87.

teahouses. Those particularly tasked with fabricating the breadboard intended for the making of desserts were generally known as *jiqing* 吉慶 and waiters named *tangshang* 堂上. Teahouses were known to take on apprentices to educate them in the practice of *jiqing*. With three years of training, a *jiqing* would be equipped to launch a teahouse.²⁶⁷

By the close of 1941, Changsha boasted over 160 different varieties of teahouses.²⁶⁸ The largest teahouse held a capital of 10,000 *yuan*. An expenditure of 200 *yuan* was sufficient to inaugurate and manage a minor teahouse in the city. Certain teahouses had endured for more than a century and as late as the latter portion of 1941 new teahouses were still being established in Changsha. Teahouses of moderate size had the potential to earn 10 *yuan* per day, however, for those with a larger capacity, estimating daily revenue was more difficult.²⁶⁹

The dimensions of all the teahouses were identical, consisting of the typical items, for example, a series of tables and a plethora of teapots. How many teapots a teahouse held decided its scale and illustrated its financial stability. The teahouse was top-notch having more than 50 sets of teapots, the second tier was between 20 to 30 sets and the last level had fewer than 10.²⁷⁰ Within a teahouse, it was uncommon to have baignoire or individual spaces usually with more than 10 tables being arranged into multiple lines. A patron who entered the teahouse took a seat close to a table, on which a waiter placed a teapot and two cups. Two *yuan* was sufficient for patrons to stay the entire day without any disruption. In wartime Chengdu, a teahouse was too, the “only place today where one could spend more than half a day at a cost of five

²⁶⁷ “Changsha de chaguan cha yu chaguan” 長沙的茶館茶與茶館 [Teahouses in Changsha: tea and teahouses], HNGMRB, 22 December 1941.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

yuan.”²⁷¹ While the price of a bowl of tea kept going up, the expense of drinking tea stayed reasonably low. As an illustration, in 1943 the combined cost of tea and listening to a storyteller was around one *yuan* in Chengdu.²⁷² The two varieties of tea that received the most acclaim in Changsha were *zhulan* 朱蘭 and *lianxin* 蓮心.²⁷³

In wartime Changsha especially as the circumstances grew more difficult with the prolonged conflicts between China and Japan near the city, teahouse proprietors had to come up with measures to reduce their overhead expenses to secure the perpetuation of their trades and survival. Matches became scarce in the market due to hyperinflation making their importation too expensive.²⁷⁴ This caused a scenario, in which most Changsha teahouses were not able to furnish matches to their customers. According to the statistics made by the Nationalist officials in Changsha, in early 1942, an aggregate of 7,200 small boxes of matches was sold at 860 *yuan* per box, yet that price rose to 1,950 *yuan* at the close of the year.²⁷⁵ In the same year, the cost of white rice in Changsha experienced a 180 *yuan* ascendancy, from 300 to 450 *yuan*.²⁷⁶ By the beginning of 1944, the sale of one box of matches increased from 22,000 to 40,000 *yuan* per box by mid-year.²⁷⁷ Those accustomed to smoking cigarettes

²⁷¹ Wang Di, *The teahouse*, 8.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 125.

²⁷³ “Changsha de chaguan.”

²⁷⁴ “Zhanshi huochai zhuanmai zanxing shishi xize” 戰時火柴專賣暫行條例實施細則 [Temporary regulations on the implementation of the wartime match monopoly] (December 1942), HNSJST, 00080-001-000453-00026, HNSDAG. The Nationalists monopolized the match companies. The main sources of matches came from outside China. After 1942, it was no longer possible to import matches from outside. This led to a price increase for matches in Changsha.

²⁷⁵ “Jiu yue shisi zhi ershi ri wujia diaochabiao” 九月十四至二十日物價調查表 [Price survey form from 14 to 20 September] (21 September 1942), SHBSCCSFC, 00053-002-00033-00006, HNSDAG; see also, “Shi er yue qi zhi shi er yue shisan ri wujia diaochabiao” 十二月七至十二月十三日物價調查表 [Price survey form from 7 to 13 December] (15 December 1942), SHBSCCSFC, 00053-002-00033-00020, HNSDAG.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ “Yi yue shi zhi shiliu ri wujia diaochabiao” 一月十至一月十六日物價調查 [Price survey form from 10 to 16 January] (January 1944), SHBSCCSFC, 00053-002-00033-00024, HNSDAG; “Wu yue ershi er zhi ershi ba ri wujia diaochabiao” 五月二十二至二十八日物價調查表 [Price survey form from 22 to 28 May] (May 1944), SHBSCCSFC, 00053-002-00033-00044, HNSDAG.

had to cry out to waiters, “Furnish me with a match!” Ultimately, the waiter presented them with a lit incense stick.

The teahouse in Changsha was a reflection of society at large, providing a window, from which to observe the city’s specific circumstances during the war. A wartime correspondent recorded a scene in a teahouse in 1941 Changsha:

Seated at a table, an individual attired in a short-sleeved shirt was vocalizing opinions on current politics and military affairs. At a neighboring table, an adult male wearing a customary robe consuming desserts in the company of two women seemed unconcerned with the events close by. From time to time, individuals may employ expletives to manifest their dissatisfaction with the current arduous life situation and the exorbitant prices of fundamental commodities. Teahouses in the city were frequented by people of all social standings.²⁷⁸

It is also noteworthy that businessmen desired to converse and reached bargains with their patrons in teahouses. This was similar to the situation in Chengdu, in which the teahouse was not “merely a place for relaxing, but was a multifunctional public space.”²⁷⁹ People typically utilized the teahouse as a space for engaging in business discussions, job searches, social interactions with friends, and various other purposes. The people of Changsha seemed to remain undisturbed by the air raids as they savored peanuts and sat peacefully in various teahouses.²⁸⁰ This was partly because, following years of enduring continuous air raids beginning in 1937, they had become habituated to this form of warfare, in addition to the augmented strain of conducting business

²⁷⁸ “Changsha de chaguan.”

²⁷⁹ Wang Di, *The teahouse*, 114.

²⁸⁰ “Changsha de chaguan.”

while living with significant inflation, which may have caused them to forget the fright instigated by air raids.

In wartime Changsha, when evening descended, teahouses were a preferred option for leisure pursuits. People in a teahouse engaged in conversations, covering a wide range of subjects, from everyday experiences to political matters, frequently sharing insights into societal conventions and traditions. In a city being invaded, the populace became more perceptive to battlefield happenings even if they were many kilometers away. The 1943 campaign in the *binhu* area was yet a disruption to the tranquil and cozy existence of every citizen of Changsha. Feeling apprehensive, people in teahouses initiated a discussion related to the clashes that had been less devastating than the fighting that had occurred at the Xinqiang River earlier this year.²⁸¹ After perusing the news of “The enemies occupied Gong’ an,” a county in Hubei near the Dongting Lake, Changsha people began to decipher its implication and supposed that the enemy would “proceed onward west and our area may be (secure)...” thus, a sentiment of security seized their psyches.²⁸² Just then, another one proclaimed: “Let’s not talk about it, let’s just have tea [*shuota gan mo, gankuai qu yincha* 說他幹末, 趕快去飲茶],” and “I want to 10 soup dumplings [*tangbao* 湯包] and peanuts...”.²⁸³ In the cozy atmosphere of the teahouse, the discussion of the battle had been forgotten and instead, steaming hot soup dumplings had replaced it. During the war, numerous individuals experienced profound spiritual despair finding solace in visiting a teahouse as a temporary respite. According to Wang Di, the teahouse

²⁸¹ “Changsha chu xia” 長沙初夏 [Early summer in Changsha], HNGMRB, 19 May 1943.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

was a sanctuary, where individuals could discover fleeting peace and fulfillment.²⁸⁴

A variety of whimsical and inventive phrases could be identified inscribed on the walls of teahouses. For instance, certain teahouses implemented paper for their windows, however, with the words “notice and be mindful of the glass of windows” inscribed upon them.²⁸⁵ It is hard to explain the meaning of these kinds of behaviors in teahouses, perhaps that was a style that Changsha people played a trick on others. Though these may have been present prior to the commencement of war.

Wang Di points out that in Chengdu many “small venders—butchers, restaurant owners, barbers, and food stand operators—might be shareholders or have other economic ties to a particular teahouse.”²⁸⁶ Typically, food peddlers and butchers positioned their stalls in front of teahouses, allowing customers to acquire meat for takeaway after partaking in tea and socializing with other teahouse visitors. Teahouses, butchers, and restaurants viewed each other not as rivals, but as collaborators in the business realm. In wartime Changsha, little information reveals that teahouses established analogous economic ties with other small street businesses. In contrast, rickshaw pullers and informal hotels worked together to increase their earnings for survival. I discuss the economic ties between them next.

6.4.7 Rickshaws pullers in wartime Changsha

Rickshaws (*renliche* 人力車), a type of man-power-vehicle that was more commonly known as east-foreign-vehicle (*dongyangche* 東洋車) or *yangche* 洋車

²⁸⁴ Wang Di, *The teahouse*, 126.

²⁸⁵ “Changsha de chaguan.”

²⁸⁶ Wang Di, *The teahouse*, 42.

which meant foreign vehicle or *huangbaoche* 黃包車 in Shanghai, which stood for yellow carriage for rent or rickshaw.

In Changsha, the use of all three names was widespread. During the wartime period, automobiles and buses were scarce, and trams were not in existence in the city. Because of the narrow streets of Changsha, as shown in Plates 6.10 and 6.12, rickshaws constituted the primary mode of conveyance on the city's streets:

During the day-lit hours, the din of multiple voices was the most ubiquitous trait in the black and winding alleys resounding with noise in Changsha. Pedestrians must take care when traversing roads with the presence of peddlers' gongs, rickshaw bells, wheels in motion, and pullers' voices. During respites, pullers typically felt comfortable leaving their pull carts out in the open, seated on the edge of the vehicle while conversing with passersby. At night, all rickshaw pullers brought a diminutive oil lantern constructed from three panes of glass with them. These lamps resembled fireflies in the summer season emitting flickering glimmers along the streets. After the theatrical presentation, most patrons chose rickshaws as a preferred method of transportation to their domiciles. Flickering flames fashioned a vibrant atmosphere in the night sky of Changsha.²⁸⁷

Rickshaws originating in Japan were not initially indigenous to China and they first appeared in Shanghai and Beiping before being introduced to Changsha from Shanghai.²⁸⁸ Until 1935, the number of rickshaws in Changsha saw a dramatic increase from 900 (late Qing Dynasty) to 3,115 because of the thriving market in the city.²⁸⁹ Wood wheels had been rendered redundant by iron.

²⁸⁷ "Changsha de renliche" 長沙的人力車 [Rickshaws in Changsha], HNGMRB, 25 December 1941.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

Following the *wenxi dahuo* and multiple evacuations in the municipality more than 200 rickshaws and pullers relocated south to Xiangtan and Hengyang.²⁹⁰ Repeated Japanese air assaults on Changsha compelled more pullers to evacuate. This led to a further reduction in the number of rickshaws in Changsha. Once the government reconstructed Changsha after the fire, the city was repopulated by rickshaw peddlers and pullers. Until 1941, Changsha had a total of 3,000 rickshaws in operation.²⁹¹ This figure appeared to be flawed as it was unable to depict the struggles faced by pullers upon their return from the south to Changsha and their difficult exile experiences, especially their lives in Xiangtan.

After the fire, 188 rickshaw pullers fled from Changsha to Xiangtan. These pullers had multiple clashes with regional pullers in the context of vying for passengers, which resulted in hardships in running their business and keeping their viability in the county.²⁹² The destruction of the Changsha-Xiangtan Road including a bridge made the journey back to Changsha impossible.²⁹³ In May 1939, the Xiangtan County government ordained that these 188 rickshaws were permitted to operate in the region. However, by October of that year, more than 800 rickshaws had come to Xiangtan from Changsha.²⁹⁴

Xiangtan was considerably less developed than Changsha. Japanese air raids and the disruption of roads led to considerable difficulty for the county in obtaining food and other essential items from external sources. As indicated in the preceding chapter, the Nationalists conducted significant levels of road

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² “Xiangtan xian zhengfu de xunling” 湘潭縣政府的訓令 [Instructive directive from the Xiangtan county government] (21 November 1939), HNSGLJ, 00081-001-00673-00010, HNSDAG.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

devastation principally in the Northern Changsha region. This countered the Japanese advance by balancing their mobile warfare but at the same time, hindered the Nationalists' ability to transport resources within or from the province. Moreover, major routes that connected nearby districts to Changsha were destroyed to prevent the Japanese from invading these regions once they sized Changsha. For example, Xiangtan, although proximate to Changsha, situated in the south, remained serene as most of the clashes happened in the north. However, the primary thoroughfare for travel in the county leading to Changsha was significantly damaged with only single-wheeled carts capable of traversing it.²⁹⁵ This made it much more difficult to obtain rice from Changsha and other *binhu* counties in the north. Being abundant in rice, Xiangtan faced challenges in providing food for its growing population during the war. This trend was observed in various regions in Hunan province after 1937.

A decision by the government in Xiangtan to only allow the 188 regulated rickshaws to remain in the county left approximately 700 rickshaw pullers without a place to go. This unexpected turn of events meant that these pullers could not return to Changsha, their original home, or stay in Xiangtan. However, provincial authorities stepped in to provide some assistance by allowing some of them to relocate further south to Hengyang.²⁹⁶

In Changsha, renting rickshaws was widespread with more than 90% of them being hired out to people who paid a rental fee. Promptuaries (*zhanfang* 棧房) were in charge of supervising the lease of rickshaws and levied a processing charge from proprietors.²⁹⁷ 19 promptuaries, a reduction from 32 in

²⁹⁵ "Changsha xian daolu yi zunling pohuai" 長沙縣道路已遵令破壞 [Roads in Changsha county had been destroyed as ordered] (21 January 1943), HNSGLJ, 00081-001-00595-00024, HNSDAG.

²⁹⁶ "Xiangtan xian zhengfu guanyu huifu banli Changsha renliche zai Xiangtan xingshi qingxing" 湘潭縣政府關於回覆辦理長沙人力車在湘潭行駛情形 [Xiangtan county government's replies on dealing with the situation of Changsha rickshaws and their operations in Xiangtan] (20 December 1939), HNSGLJ, 00081-001-00673-00011, HNSDAG.

²⁹⁷ "Renliche."

1935 were present in Changsha in 1941 with the biggest one in scale being *Chang He* 昌和, controlling around 100 rickshaws.²⁹⁸ A promptuary was a place where rickshaws were gathered before leasing. All proprietors who did not pull by themselves placed their vehicles in a promptuary to be rented out.²⁹⁹

Those seeking tenancy from a promptuary holder should remit a deposit of approximately 10 *yuan*, in addition to regular rent.³⁰⁰ The rental amount was four *yuan* until 1937, at which point it ascended to 7.5 *yuan* in 1939.³⁰¹ This was the standard monthly rental payment due from a puller. Promptuary bosses received a handling charge of 1.4 *yuan* while the local police station imposed taxation of 0.6 *yuan*, and rickshaw owners on the other hand, earned 5.5 *yuan* from the rent.³⁰² Be that as it may, proprietors ought to assume responsibility for repairing their vehicles, and repair costs were abridged by promptuary bosses from the 5.5 *yuan* that owners acquired.³⁰³

1939 saw a rise in prices of various goods leading to a shift in rental rates. Rickshaw proprietors determined that 5.5 *yuan* was only sufficient to cover maintenance costs. Subsequently, an accord was reached regarding a new guideline that monthly rent had been reduced to 2.4 *yuan* but pullers must repair vehicles on their own.³⁰⁴ This policy was proscribed in April 1940.³⁰⁵ Promptuaries kept doing rental work and pullers paid a one-off rent of 7.5 *yuan*. Yet, a quarter of rickshaw proprietors persisted in their advocacy for the 1939 policy.³⁰⁶ The 1939 policy reflected a direct rental process between owners and tenants bypassing intermediaries. To some extent, owners

²⁹⁸ Ibid; see also, “Changsha shi shangye tongjibiao,” 28.

²⁹⁹ “Renliche.”

³⁰⁰ “Renliche.”

³⁰¹ The original text used 降低到 7.5 元 (decreased to 7.5 yuan). It might be a typo.

³⁰² “Renliche.”

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

increased their incomes by not having to cover any repair costs. And, they also avoided paying a handling fee to promptuaries.

We are unable to get an understanding of how pullers felt about the former rent policy and the new 1939 regulation. Opting for single-payment rent might be a time- and resource-efficient solution for them without considering repair concerns. Keeping in view of the high inflation in Changsha, a 5.1 *yuan* decrease in rent seemed to be insignificant in comparison to the cost of repairs.

On 1 May 1942, the daily rental cost in Changsha was established at 0.65 *yuan* thus, leading to a surge in monthly rent to 19.5 *yuan*.³⁰⁷ That year when the rent was hiked to 1.55 *yuan* per day, Changsha pullers retaliated with a boycott but saw no results.³⁰⁸ In comparison with other Hunanese cities, such as Hengyang's eight *yuan* and Hengshan's 10 *yuan* per day, or cities beyond the province like Guilin's 12 *yuan* per day, rent in Changsha was relatively low.³⁰⁹ In 1943, most rickshaw proprietors were displeased with the 1.55-*yuan* daily rate as 46.5 *yuan* (monthly rent) was insufficient to cover maintenance costs for a month throughout the year.³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ "Changsha shi renliche gong daibiao de cheng jianshao zujin bing chexiao renliche zhan" 長沙市人力車工代表的呈減少租金並撤銷人力車棧 [Representatives of Changsha rickshaw workers petitioning for rent reduction and removal of the rickshaw promptuaries] (18 June 1943), HNSGLJ, 00081-001-00673-00017, HNSDAG.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ "Renliche ye gonghui chengqing zhengli renliche ji zengjia chezu" 人力車業公會呈請整理人力車及增加車租 [The Rickshaw Association petitions for the reorganization of rickshaws and an increase in rent] (17 November 1943), HNSGLJ, 00081-001-00669-00020, HNSDAG.

³¹⁰ Ibid.



Plate 6.14 Narrow streets in Changsha and rickshaws. Source: *Zhongguo jindai yingxiang ziliao* 中國近代影像資料庫, <https://www.lzp360.com/picture/dc1c30f8c8ff6c2a8eec67ac07b6a3ceo0c.jhtml>. The picture was obtained from the Hunan Provincial Library through access.



Plate 6.15 Rickshaw pullers in Changsha. Source: *Zhongguo jindai yingxiang zilia* o 中國近代影像資料庫, <https://www.lzp360.com/picture/2ed0c13c0b6e8f4f6dff216e14d249a9ptnu.jhtml>. The picture was obtained from the Hunan Provincial Library through access.



Plate 6.16 Rickshaws on the streets of Changsha. Source: *Zhongguo jindai ying xiang ziliao* 中國近代影像資料庫, <https://www.lzp360.com/picture/a44b27f501b04d540d2ee0a5b4d4c8013ywq.jhtml>. The picture was obtained from the Hunan Provincial Library through access.

On 17 November, the Rickshaw Association (*renliche ye gonghui* 人力車業公會) of Changsha asked that a daily rental fee be raised to 15 *yuan* with a one-off payment of 450 *yuan* to be paid for a month's use.³¹¹ The Changsha municipal government partially endorsed this petition by determining a daily rate of six *yuan* under the standard set in Hengyang (eight *yuan*).³¹² After the war had been in progress for six years, Changsha pullers paid 180 *yuan* in rickshaw rent each month. Their lives were made difficult by the constant threat of Japanese air raids and city attacks which resulted in transportation restrictions and a decrease in working hours.³¹³ A daily outlay of a rickshaw driver such as the costs of sustenance, footwear, and petroleum illumination, ranged from 23 to 24 *yuan* between 1942 and 1943.³¹⁴

Interestingly, rickshaw drivers in Changsha did not exhibit a strong longing for monetary gain based on some wartime writings. One of the distinguishing characteristics of Changsha pullers was their refusal to hasten their pace when towing vehicles.³¹⁵ They always slowly paced up not running or walking fast. People who had been to Changsha or lived there likely formed an unfavorable impression of the surliness of rickshaw pullers.³¹⁶ Local inhabitants never recommended to their acquaintances visiting Changsha to take rickshaws except in cases of necessity.

If passengers were to urge the pullers impatiently, they simply ceased and disembarked the passengers announcing: "You can hasten by yourself, I will not do this"; "sir if you wish to be expeditious, why are you not by

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ "Jianshao zujin bing chexiao renliche zhan".

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Pei Zhong 沛中, "Changsha de huangbaoche" 長沙的黃包車 [Rickshaw in Changsha], *Xindongfang* 新東方 4, no.2 (August 1941): 191.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

automobile?”³¹⁷ Consequently, they did not ask for beseeching pecuniary reimbursement and gratuities from the patrons while merely observing them. Should passengers not act, the pullers continued to query: “Why are you not hastening?”³¹⁸ This was a not-too-bad situation. More adverse was for pullers to take a seat on their vehicles while demanding passengers to pull: “I situate myself and then you can attempt to move forward.”³¹⁹ Beforehand, it should be declared if any pullers were willing to run fast, with the understanding that a greater fee was necessary. A minority of pullers preferred to undertake this task when the weather was sunny rather than when it was rainy.³²⁰ Another feature was in the process of weighing up prices. If a passenger received a quote of 0.2 *yuan* from one puller, it was unlikely that a different puller would offer a fare of 0.18 *yuan* to acquire a potential customer.³²¹ Moreover, if one puller had gained enough money in a single day, no more work would be done.³²²

A journalist suggested that Changsha pullers strived to work with human-like diligence rather than toiling away laboriously like oxen or horses (*zuoniū zuoma* 做牛做馬).³²³ I believe this could be one reason why pullers in Changsha received satisfactory pay or were convinced their earnings could suffice for their lives. In fact, the rickshaw rent standard in Changsha until 1941 was lower, different from other cities in Hunan and China. Understandably, they acquired such a custom given the low expense of living since 1938 in Changsha. Although war raged on, Changsha pullers managed to discover alternative channels for generating revenue.

³¹⁷ Shao Qing 少青, “Xianhua Changsha” 閒話長沙 [Idle talk about Changsha], *Zhongguo shehui* 中國社會 4, no.3 (April 1938): 31.

³¹⁸ Pei Zhong, “Huangbaoche,” 191.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Shao Qing, “Xianhua Changsha,” 31.

Informal lodgings formed a mutually beneficial partnership with Changsha rickshaw pullers helping them earn enough to survive during the war. Individuals arriving in Changsha might be conscious of the following events:

If new arrivals knew a certain hotel that was reputed for its quality and reputation and requested a rickshaw driver to take them there. Typically, after covering half of the journey, the puller revealed that the hotel had been demolished by air raids or had ceased operations and recommended an unfamiliar hotel to the travelers. Following the occupancy of the hotel by the guests, the lodging proprietor allotted the puller a sum equivalent to one-half of the room tariff, referred to as ‘guest money (*kehuoqian* 客夥錢)’.³²⁴

Generally speaking, the site and atmosphere of the aforementioned informal accommodation were quite inferior, while other groups of underprivileged laborers, like sex workers and street performers, were abundant in the vicinity.³²⁵

Conclusion

This chapter sheds light on three wartime normals that both locals of Changsha and other Hunan areas had to live with during wartime. After their initial trepidations and disorientations when confronting Japanese air bombardments on the city, Changsha residents sharpened their proficiencies and mentalities to coexist with the presence of Japanese airplanes. With the understanding that fleeing the city could prevent their deaths at the hands of Japanese bombs, more individuals were willing to make the move to follow evacuations arranged by local authorities. In Changsha and other cities in

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

Hunan, government-led evacuations saved lives. As part of the battle plan, it was important to expeditiously move the people and food resources from any region that was deemed vulnerable to Japanese assault. This prevented the enemies from exploiting these resources to enhance their offensive potential.

In addition, the shifting atmosphere of war required young students and peasants to take on more roles and adapt accordingly. Students left their studies to journey to far-flung regions and isolated villages educating rural residents about the war and promoting Chinese patriotism. Different from compulsory enlistment, the group training program gained widespread support from peasants in Hunan and helped to build strong military-civilian cooperation in the province. The 1942 victory in Changsha was the product of the combined efforts of the army and locals. It further instilled confidence in the people of Changsha and the province toward the war. Interacting with the military-civilian cooperation station, rendering military services, and even collective farming and reaping with the NRA armies became common wartime occurrences for peasants.

After numerous aerial bombings, great fire, and ground attacks on Changsha and Hunan, the locals remained resilient in their struggles for survival. They were gradually becoming accustomed to their new life in wartime. Yet, a continuous rise in food prices was becoming too much for city residents and farmers in the countryside. Peasants were not reaping the benefits of rice price hikes as they were unable to meet the expenses of production by selling their rice at a lower government-stipulated price. This added strain on top of the already high cost of living. Low-paid government employees and workers struggled when there was a shortage of collective grains. Most residents in Changsha were greatly affected by high rice prices because the ongoing war led to reduced working hours which meant lower

incomes. It was anticipated that the Hunanese, especially peasants, would display hostility toward the government or at least reject the demand to cooperate with the government. There were sporadic instances of opposition from the countryside in some counties, however, the Nationalists were still able to mobilize a considerable amount of labor for their military fortifications and ration transport in west Hunan until 1945.

Changsha people along with their fellow Hunan residents developed their stunning adaptability and adjustability from living a tough wartime life. This was proved by the lives of different groups of Hunanese, such as bookstore owners, teahouse proprietors, and rickshaw pullers, who had been affected by the war most during wartime in Changsha but had developed new channels to increase their incomes. Facing high rice prices in 1941 and 1942, the destitute discovered a spot in the vegetable and medicine market where they could get a meal with rice for only 0.5 *yuan*.³²⁶ Rice noodles, as the previously top breakfast pick for Changsha residents had been replaced to save their expenditures on food.

This chapter aimed to highlight the fact that the wartime history of Hunan was much more than a mere military endeavor or a politically driven effort to mobilize locals. Wartime mobilizations were the product of a mutual connection between the ruling power and the citizens. Leaving aside the main political and military figures, new perspectives emerge regarding the war in Changsha and Hunan.

³²⁶ “Changsha yijiao nanmenkou caichang” 長沙一角南門口菜場 [A farm market in the south gate corner of Changsha], HNGMRB, 19 February 1942.

Conclusion

From 1938 until the Ichigo Operation in 1944, China and Japan had been involved in a six-year stalemate that shaped the nature of the second period of the Second Sino-Japanese War. The Japanese shifted their strategies from seeking a swift victory in the war to utilizing small-scale attacks to weaken the Nationalist military and resources in order to break China's resolve to resist. Chinese strategies were to establish different fortresses in strategic locations that were difficult to attack but easy to defend.

During the second stage of the war, the Nationalists were successful in dominating their selected bases but their ability to sustain a prolonged war against the Japanese weakened over time. A prolonged war was considered by most Nationalists including Chiang Kaishek as the sole way to defeat Japan. Van de Ven argues that "contrary to their own belief, or perhaps better, their hope, they [the Nationalists] could not outlast Japan in a war of attrition."¹ This was because of the reality that "China was an agrarian society that could not cope with the demands imposed by modern warfare."² In Hunan, the Nationalists offered resistance and defense holding most areas of the province from the Japanese attacks between 1939 and 1944. At the same time, they were exhausting their strength in battle as the conflict spread from North Changsha to the *binhu* area, where the key rice production and export center of the province was located.

China was not as strong as Japan in industrial and military power. Yet, developing effective military strategies and available war resources was vital for the Nationalists during the war. Since 1938, the Nationalists had employed a specific tactic on the battlefield that had proven to be the most effective for them as outlined in earlier chapters. Food supplies, enlistment of troops, and

¹ van de Ven, *War*, 252.

² Ibid.

civilian support were crucial too. Both the Hunan Provincial Government and the Ninth War Area launched a widespread campaign to increase food production and procure grain throughout the province in order to provide sustenance for soldiers and civilians alike. Ongoing clashes had repeatedly hindered their endeavors. After 1943 rice supplies started to become an issue in Hunan. This determined whether the Nationalists would be able to sustain modern warfare in Hunan for a longer period. In 1944, also because the Nationalists were not willing to change their overused and old tactic which had been well grasped by Japan and a political breakdown between two key military figures, Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue, Hunan and Changsha became impossible to defend.

The Nationalists resorted to brutal tactics in order to sustain their operations and obtain resources from limited areas under their control. This led to a sense of alienation among large parts of the civilian population but did not secure what the Nationalists needed, and further wrecked the combat effectiveness of their own forces. Hunanese people did not hit the Nationalists and their forces within the province on such a large scale as people in Hunan did. In several counties, resistance and rebellion persisted because peasants endured the oppressive effects of war in their daily lives. Under the intense Japanese offensive, ordinary citizens had limited involvement in war efforts. Because of the assistance of locals, the Nationalists were able to acquire military supplies including rations and receive guidance that aided them in achieving some victories in combat and potentially prolonging their resistance in the war against Japan. The people in Hunan, however, were unable to protect their homes from being taken by the Japanese.

In Hunan, the Nationalists faced many formidable challenges that ultimately led to their military and political downfall in the province during the War of Resistance. First, the war saw a significant amount of tension

between Chiang Kaishek and most regional military leaders, a fact widely accepted. Chiang became highly involved and in control of every aspect of the war utilizing personal directives to circumvent the NRA's chain of command and directly exerting his influence at a divisional level of the army. Historians fiercely criticize Chiang's wartime leadership and management style that harmed the military performance of the NRA on the battlefield, as chapter two suggested. Chiang indeed exerted his personal influence on numerous battles. This was because of a chronic mistrust between Chiang and those generals outside his Whampoa faction.

The war serves as an example of how the local and central governments in Changsha and Chongqing were interdependent. Xue Yue had been a part of the anti-Chiang faction and was a non-Whampoa regional commander but Chiang managed to forge an affectionate and mutually beneficial connection with him. Before the war erupted, Xue successfully led the central army troops in subduing the Red Army and pacifying multiple provinces in China's southwest. This further solidified his previously strained ties with Chiang after the Northern Expedition. After the 1938 Great Fire in Changsha, Xue was appointed as the governor of Hunan replacing a distinguished Whampoa general trusted by Chiang.

From 1937 to 1944, Xue Yue directed several battles independently across different Chinese combat areas from Lanfeng in Henan, Wanjialing in Jiangxi, and eventually to Changsha in Hunan. The Battle of Wanjialing and the first three Changsha Campaigns show two patterns that demonstrated the dynamic between him and Chiang: Xue either disobeyed Chiang or provided justifications for his strategic decisions. Because Chiang had granted him a great deal of individual authority, Xue was able to thoroughly test and improve his military tactics before he assumed the post of Chief Commander of the Ninth War Area defending Changsha and Hunan. In Lanfen and Wanjialing,

his military ideas proved to be imperfect though still scored some victories. After that, Xue introduced the tactic to North Changsha, a strategic location perfect for drawing the enemy into a trap in which ambushes had been strategically set up beforehand. Changsha obviously was the lure.

The renowned *tianlu* tactics, which were shaped by his early military beliefs and refined during the first two battles in Changsha, were a defining achievement of Xue Yue's military career. *Tianlu* tactics played a crucial role in securing a great victory on the Chinese side in early 1942. In 1941, around six months earlier, a small group of Japanese forces entered Changsha and briefly occupied the city. On the battleground, the NRA troops took a severe drubbing at the hands of the Japanese powerful attack. Despite the transitory nature of the Changsha occupation, it enabled the Nationalists to orchestrate a calculated propaganda drive against the Japanese triumph in the city. Writings in newspapers and journals after the battle became the platform in which the Nationalists manipulated words to convert a shameful defeat into a victory by courageously confronting the Japanese incursion. Both the Nationalists and the Japanese had different definitions of their victories in Changsha. The Nationalists deemed the possession of Changsha as the only measure of a major triumph while the Japanese focused on taking down the main forces of the NRA at the front. The Changsha victory propaganda maintained a high level of morale among Chinese soldiers and civilians. However, both Xue Yue and the Ninth War Area were deceived into an illusion that *tianlu* tactics would continue to lead them to victory. Thus, they overlooked conducting a proper review of the tactics after the 1942 victory, which became one of the key reasons contributing to the failure in 1944 during the Ichigo Operation era.

Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue held slightly different strategic ideologies as seen in their conflicting views on the crucial role of Changsha in protecting Hunan during the war. Yet, this minor discrepancy eventually progressed into a

substantial disparity before the 1944 Hunan Battles. Xue held a view that a strong NRA army should be utilized to defend Changsha and prevent the Japanese forces from leaving the vicinity of the city. This was to gain enough time for other NRA units to reach Changsha and form larger ambushes that would assemble the entire forces of the Ninth War Area. On the contrary, Chiang was inclined to abandon Changsha as he maintained that the city was defenseless. He also envisioned an empty Changsha, where both military and civilian personnel had evacuated, that could draw and assault the Japanese who failed to hold their ground upon entering. During the First Battle of Changsha, it was precisely because Chiang was undecided over whether should the NRA defend or give up Changsha that the Ninth War Area missed the best time to launch a counterattack against those Japanese forces who arrived at the outskirts of the city.

In 1944, Chiang remained steadfast in his belief that Changsha should be utilized as a strategic point to wear down the Japanese forces rather than being defended with determination after predicting the Japanese mobilized on a larger-scale attack on Hunan. He, therefore, relocated the NRA 10th Army, a competent unit that had proven its capacity to protect Changsha in 1942 to Hengyang without a consultation with Xue Yue. The MAC instructed Xue to gather and utilize existing forces available inside the war area to confront a stronger Japanese enemy. Historians such as Wang Qisheng and Zhang Xianwen, argue that both Chiang and Xue misjudged the Japanese offensive power before the battle leading to the Nationalists' failure. This is incorrect. In fact, Xue had already lost the most prominent forces, which could be used to defend Changsha, even before the battle began. At the end of June 1944, Changsha shifted to the hands of Japan. This further instilled in Chiang a sense that Xue was not able to direct the Ninth War Area. As a result, he directed the Hunan front from a distance. Xue was furious with the

Generalissimo's interference, as it impeded his attempts to support the 10th Army in Hengyang and failed to prevent the city from falling into Japanese hands. Through his analysis, Taylor sheds light on the Ichigo Operation in Hunan, explaining how Chiang's suspicions of Xue who had close ties to the Americans, arose during a period of heightened strain between Chiang and Joseph Stilwell. However, I argue that a significant divergence in strategy between Chiang and Xue was the primary factor that contributed to the downfall of their collaborative alliance. The intensive interference of Chiang from Chongqing caused the failure of the 1944 Battles in Hunan but it was not the only reason. Historians should refrain from overstating the significance of the event of 1944 and depicting Chiang as a micromanager who dominated every aspect of other battles and possibly the entire war.

Second, the Nationalists made a considerable effort to boost rice production in multiple provinces known for growing rice. Newly improved rice strains were tested in different parts of Hunan by local agricultural organizations such as HRIC, before the war. Improved rice varieties had been cultivated across the province from 1938 to 1942. One improved rice variety, *Wanli Indica* offered a significant advantage increasing yields by an average of 50 catties per *mu* compared to local Hunanese strains. By 1942, over 30 counties had promoted better-quality rice varieties. The Changsha Campaigns largely affected the promotion of improved rice variety in Hunan. Before 1942, the main region for this work was in South Hunan. Cultivation of improved varieties in the *binghu* area, located near the North Changsha battlefield, experienced slower progress compared to South Hunan. Until 1942, the *binghu* area became as the main agricultural center for growing improved rice varieties overtaking South Hunan which had previously held this position. Moreover, the process of improved rice variety promotion in Changsha was significantly delayed due to ongoing military operations in the area. Therefore,

the Nationalists did not consider Changsha as a significant region for agricultural production during the war. The 1938 catastrophic fire resulted in the utter destruction of the urban rice storage mechanism thus compelling Changsha to heavily rely on imported rice. In 1941, two back-to-back battles led to a rice shortage and a sharp increase in its prices in urban areas due to the difficulty of transporting rice into the city from external sources. The Nationalists indeed achieved increasing rice production in Hunan, especially considering the context that they lost a lot of cultivated fields after the war began. In reality, this achievement in Hunan was to maintain a pre-war average rice production rather than improving the province's ability to export. Notwithstanding, during the war, the Nationalists tended to stockpile a significant amount of rice in their hands, further increasing difficulties for Hunan to meet such needs. The year 1943 saw a significant and grave rice crisis in Hunan since the Japanese launched an almost eight-month operation near Lake Dongting.

Grain administration, particularly rice procurement and allocation was another aspect of wartime mobilization efforts for the Nationalists. Hunan was renowned for its rice cultivation during the pre-war era. The completion of the Guangdong-Wuhan Railway in 1936 led to a significant increase in exports of Hunanese rice reducing reliance on shipment through the Yangtze River. Hunanese rice was exported at an average amount of four million *shi*, which was equal to a rice surplus in 10 *binhu* counties. Insufficient and unreliable statistical data prevented the Nationalists from determining the precise quantity of Hunanese rice suitable for export. The GAO additionally overestimated the surplus of rice in 1939. An erroneous belief that the Nationalists could purchase and collect more rice from Hunan triggered the implementation of their disastrous grain administration after 1939.

The GAO initiated rice procurement in *binhu* counties in March 1939 before the central-led grain procurement later that year. Because of inadequate sack availability following the Changsha fire along with challenges in organizing vessel transport in the province, the GAO failed to meet Chongqing's expectations for rice procurement. In September 1939, the GAO intended to purchase four million *shi* for the 1939 GCY but only acquired 1.14 million *shi*. The GAO projected to purchase three million *shi* of rice in the upcoming GCY(1940). It seemed that Chongqing was hoping for a greater quantity of rice from Hunan leading the GAO to adjust the rice amount to five and later six million *shi*. Three million *shi* was deemed a workable plan taking into account the export figures from the *binhu* area before the war. Once more the GAO fell short of fulfilling the plan purchasing only around two million *shi*. From 1939 to 1941, the GAO did not procure the pre-determined amount of rice in Hunan.

In 1941, the Nationalists implemented the collection of land tax in kind and simultaneously procured rice from peasants. This to some degree slowed down the rice price rise eliminating a need for increased monetary payment for rice procurement. From 1941 to 1942, Hunan saw a progressive rise in the amount of rice collected each year with a peak of over 10 million *shi* in the 1942 GCY. Furthermore, this policy ensured that the government maintained a strong hold on the distribution of rice for the army. Military success on the Hunan battlefield was notable until 1943 with a great victory in Changsha and the protection of most *binhu* counties. Protracted clashes in Lake Dongting in 1943, however, resulted in a severe scarcity of rice. Rice production in Hunan fell below expectations in 1943 with only 2.2 million *shi* collected by the government showing a significant decline compared to the previous year.

Hunanese people faced challenging living circumstances during the war as they had to sell their rice at a lower price stipulated by the government. Since 1939, the GAO had been procuring rice in Hunan consistently regulating price standards below actual market prices or government-controlled prices. Peasants in *binhu* counties were hesitant to sell making it challenging to purchase rice for the GAO. 1939 price discrepancies were minimal. In September of that year, however, stipulated prices even fell below the March standard. The GAO had the authority to control prices until 1941 when the central government assumed this responsibility. Hunan provincial authorities tended to set higher prices compared to the lower standards of Chongqing. Despite the impossibility of keeping up with market price hikes, the GAO adjusted prices throughout the year. But Chongqing tended to regulate a fixed price for the entire year. Xue Yue, on behalf of the provincial government requested Chongqing to raise regulated prices in 1941 and 1942. The decision to regulate a lower price was justified in part by the difference in cost between military rations and market consumption. Consideration must be given to the compulsory procurement price as well as the expenses for warping and transport via boats and porters when buying rice for the army. In 1941, a significant increase in rice collection in Hunan occurred, meaning that a larger financial burden for military rice transport that Chongqing had to pay.

Finally, the daily struggle of the ordinary people in Hunan and Changsha during wartime was characterized by persistent inflation of essential goods such as rice and the devastating impact of Japanese air attacks and other man-made catastrophes including the 1938 Great Fire in Changsha. The government imposed rice procurement at a lower price on peasants while urban citizens were left to bear escalating rice prices. Hunan was a rice-rich province before the war. People there could enjoy a relatively reasonable price in comparison to many provinces. Difficulties arose for locals in buying rice

since the war began. Hyperinflation in the Nationalist-controlled areas had a significant impact on the fluctuation of rice prices. Hunan was heavily targeted by Japanese forces from 1939 to 1944 also resulting in a significant escalation of rice prices. Hengyang saw a significant increase surpassing that of Chongqing and Chengdu, two major cities in Sichuan because of the First Battle of Changsha. The impact of two back-to-back battles in Changsha led to a more serious rice pricing index in Hengyang compared to other cities in 1942. My research indicates that the combined impact of the Battles of Changsha and hyperinflation was crucial in driving up rice prices in wartime Hunan.

The widespread destruction of transportation routes caused by battles and because of defensive strategies implemented by the Nationalists made importing rice from Lake Dongting to Changsha increasingly difficult. The presence of torpedoes set up by the Nationalists to deter Japanese warships from attacking Dongting Lake made river transport in Hunan a daunting endeavor. This led to longer periods of river transport and an elevated likelihood of boat overturning. Rice prices in Changsha experienced a sudden and significant rise during the 1943 Dongting Lake clashes and by the end of the year they had nearly doubled once again.

The war brought about considerable hardship for the countryside and urban residents since they grappled with exorbitant rice prices. Lower government-stipulated prices for Hunanese peasants selling their rice prevented them from reaping profits and covering the expenses of producing rice. In 1941, significant differences arose in rice production costs and regulated prices of governments in *binhu* counties. Rice production costs in Hunan also spiked, surpassing the inflation rate of rice prices. Wartime labor expenses were a hindrance to harvesting because peasants were unable to pay for hired workers.

People in Changsha did not have better living conditions compared to farmers because a significant portion of their income was spent on buying rice. Locals were still faced with a persistent challenge due to consistently high rice prices despite its slower increase in pricing after 1942 in comparison to other essential products. As the main method of salary payment, the Nationalists directly provided rice to people in Changsha. This method enabled some workers to uphold a basic living standard to a certain extent. But price inflation for other items in the city proved to be another barrier for them.

A monthly rice allowance was beneficial for most government and newspaper employees. Nevertheless, the problem was that their wages or any allowances were contingent on the number of working days in a given month. Changsha residents cut back their work hours due to ongoing Japanese air attacks and multiple clashes in the area. Simultaneous with a steep increase in rice prices, individuals saw a decrease in their monthly earnings. Both central and local government employees were eligible for reasonably priced collective grains. From October 1942, collective grains were distributed at no cost. Notably, all of them also received a primary subsidy as well as a bonus living allowance. There was no change in their monthly salaries between 1942 and 1944. Employees with higher salaries were entitled to higher allowances. The rice collected by the Nationalists was designated as collective grains once they had allocated an adequate portion for the army. 1943 clashes near Lake Dongting led to a substantial decrease in rice production in the region making collective grain collection a more daunting task. Thus, most government employees received an increase in their living allowance. But they were forced to search for expensive rice in the marketplace posing a significant challenge for those with lower salaries.

The hardships faced by individuals were a reflection of the societal changes brought about by the war in Hunan and Changsha. Japanese air raids,

Changsha evacuations, and shifting societal dynamics during the war prompted the Changsha people and all Hunanese to establish novel forms of everyday life. Indeed, fear spread among the inhabitants of Changsha because of Japanese air raids, particularly in 1937 and 1938. The existence of air raid shelters in a city instilled a feeling of safety among the population. But constructing shelters in Changsha proved to be challenging resulting in a lower number of shelters compared to other cities in Hunan such as Hengyang. Despite challenges brought on by bombings, Changsha citizens demonstrated their remarkable adaptability in living in their damaged city. The number of people killed in air raids decreased after 1939. They had grown accustomed to adapting to new wartime normalcy-coexisting with Japanese aircraft in their daily lives. The start of the war was initially met with shock and disbelief but gradually transformed into a grave acknowledgment of the circumstances among people in Changsha. An impressive metamorphosis took place in Changsha bringing about a sense of order and harmony. The streets of the city were once riddled with chaos and destruction but exuded a semblance of normalcy. In light of the scarcity of shelters in the city, Changsha residents actively joined in evacuations organized by local authorities. It perhaps was the most viable way to prevent them from being killed by Japanese airplanes. As a component of their defensive strategy in Changsha, the Nationalists actively carried out evacuations to protect civilians from Japanese air raids and attacks and to hinder the enemy from acquiring any war resources in the event of a potential occupation of the city. This further exemplified a satisfactory level of synergy between the civilian populace and government officials.

Changsha and Hunan saw a significant level of collaboration between the military and civilians during the war. In 1938, the provincial government enlisted over 3,000 students to teach peasants in rural areas about the war and Chinese nationalism while also assisting them in enhancing their self-defense

abilities and providing military aid to the NRA. The eight-week program encountered difficulties in fulfilling its ambitious goal of enhancing a sense of Chinese nationalism among farmers and equipping them to resist against a potential Japanese offensive. The Nationalists still benefited from the program that helped to promote good military-civilian cooperation after 1939. During the war, the Nationalists mobilized Hunan society through the implementation of two new institutions, the MCCS and WTC. Historians have long criticized the Nationalists for their alleged inability to rally the Chinese population for the war. But the 1942 victory in Changsha challenged the belief that military and civilian cooperation was ineffective, led by the Nationalists.

The 1938 fire in Changsha had a destructive effect on the city and also caused difficulties for those living in the province during the war. This work provides escape stories of three individuals, who survived the fire. It aims to illustrate these individuals were not merely passive victims of the war or disaster, but actively participated in China's national conflict with many being involved in the war in various capacities. Chinese individuals who survived the war have been imparting their narratives to us while recollections of those who passed away linger in the collective memory of the wartime generation. The *wenxi dabuo* and the war had a profound impact on the societal landscape of Changsha, in which different social groups had to find their ways to survive the war.

Rickshaw pullers in Changsha were among one of the hardest-hit groups of people during the war. After the fire, many Changsha pullers departed for other small cities where they had to contend with local pullers for business. The fire and destruction of their homes compelled them to leave Changsha. Almost all major roads leading from Changsha to other southern cities were destroyed by the Nationalists impeding the return of these pullers to their hometowns. With the aid of the provincial government, a portion of

these rickshaw pullers were transferred to Hengyang. Yet, it seems that returning to Changsha was a more favorable choice for pullers because of the city's lower rental rates compared to other major cities in Hunan. After experiencing two years of peace, it was likely that most pullers were able to return to Changsha in the years 1942 and 1943. Along with the cost of other basic necessities, rent also saw considerable hikes. Many pullers established a distinct connection with newly established informal hotels in Changsha utilizing it to earn extra income, referred to as "guest money" during the war.

In conclusion, this project has explored the following aspects of the wartime history of Changsha and Hunan including a new military tactic after 1939, the wartime relationship between Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue (a central-local relationship), a new sort of wartime life in Changsha (public morale), and wartime mobilization in Hunan (grain production and allocation). My objective was to illustrate the close connection between these vital elements and the performance of the Nationalist forces in combat. The Nationalists emerged victorious in Changsha by employing a new and effective tactic that encompassed both operational and guerrilla tactics with substantial aid from the local populace.

A solid pre-war alliance between Chiang and Xue enabled the Ninth War Area to establish a cohesive chain of command that functioned effectively without strong influence and interference from Chongqing. The central government also benefited from a symbiotic relationship between Chiang and Xue to push forward their wartime mobilization dimension in Hunan, particularly in areas such as grain administration and military-civilian cooperation. Even with the Japanese taking control of most of the province in 1944, the Hunanese people did not completely lose their trust in their government. This can be proved by the mobilization of the Nationalists to

gather local manpower for their military construction efforts in west Hunan in early 1945.

The defeat of the Nationalists in Hunan during the Ichigo Operation can be partially ascribed to the strongest Japanese attack thus far in the war. However, this could also be attributed to a lack of changes in battle tactics since 1939, a disagreement between Chiang Kaishek and Xue Yue and insufficient grain provisions. Although Hunan did not experience any significant rebellions during the war, the locals remained in resistance against the government resulting in some hindrance to military-civil cooperation. From this angle, the strategic stalemate between China and Japan did not come to fruition as foreseen by the Nationalists who maintained the stance that Japan was unable to endure a prolonged war. The Nationalists failed to halt the decline of their military strength and the ensuing social unrest. Also, they proved ineffective in meeting the requirements of modern warfare over a prolonged period. More military failures in the frontal battlefield in China were a distinct possibility had the US not won the Pacific War in 1944.

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