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War and Postal Communication in Republican China

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War and Postal Communication in Republican China

Ling-chieh Chen

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2023

Department of History

SOAS, University of London

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War and Postal Communication in Republican China

Abstract

This thesis explores why and how the postal service continued to service the public in unfortunate conditions when China was involved in conflicts and wars in the Republican era. It discusses the national and international transformation and maintenance of postal communications in China during these protracted wars and conflicts of the early twentieth century, with a particular focus on the ideas of postal modernity and the modern national postal service as an extension of national sovereignty. It asks how postal communication could be maintained by only one national postal service, while the state was divided into several mutually hostile regimes, and why the system survived until the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War, but did not eventually make it through the Chinese Civil War and the end of the Nationalist regime on the mainland in 1949. It attempts to provide a reappraisal of the modernisation concept of postal communications in previous studies and argues that the modernity of the postal service and communication was changeable and flexible, and that it was shaped by the complicated interactions between the state and society in Republican China. Through the analysis of official records, newspapers, private sources, and mail items, this study suggests that the maintenance of China's national postal service involved the imagination of a modern state for the Chinese, the modern postal system's internationality and transnationality, the neutralisation of the Chinese Postal Service due to foreign postal staff management, and the public's needs for postal communication. Observing postal communication in wartime China, 'postal sovereignty' was more related to the autonomy of

China's national postal administration and was conceptualised by former Chinese postal employees as an absolute right of the state only after the 1950s. It reflects the interweaving of multiple Chinese nation-building efforts and the imagination of a modern state. Finally, the case of the Chinese Postal Service in wars and conflicts shows that the 'modern' and 'national' postal system was not only a communication service in a state but also an international institution, which in fact operated beyond nations and regimes to ensure that postal communication worked worldwide and met users' postal needs.

War and Postal Communication in Republican China

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Acronyms

Organisations

CATC, Central Air Transport Co. (中央航空)

CNAC, China National Aviation Corporation (中國航空)

CER, Chinese Eastern Railway (中東鐵路)

CPTA, Committee for Postal and Telecommunications Administration (郵電管理委員會)

DG, Directorate-General of Posts (郵政總局)

IMS, Imperial Chinese Maritime Customs Service (大清海關, 1854-1911); CMS, Chinese Maritime Customs Service (中國海關, 1911-1949)

IPS, Imperial Chinese Postal Service (大清郵政, 1896-1911); CPS, Chinese Postal Service (中華郵政 1911-1949; relocated to Taiwan as Chunghwa Post after 1949)

MOC, Ministry of Communications (交通部)

MOFA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (外交部)

SCC, Shanghai City Chamber of Commerce (上海市商會)

SMC, Shanghai Municipal Council of the International Settlement (上海公共租界工部局)

SPU, Shanghai Postal Union (上海郵務工會)

SMR, South Manchuria Railway (南滿州鐵道)

Archives

AH, Academia Historica, Taiwan (國史館)

MHAS, Archives, Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica (中央研究院近代史研究所檔案館)

DAJ, Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (外務省外交史料館)

NAA, National Archives Administration, Taiwan (國家發展委員會檔案管理局)

NCL, National Central Library, Taiwan (國家圖書館)

SMA, Shanghai Municipal Archives (上海市檔案館)

SOAS, SOAS Library Special Collections

TH, Taiwan Historica (國史館臺灣文獻館)

PM, The Archive of the Postal Museum, UK

TNA, The National Archives, UK

SHAC, The Second Historical Archives of China (中國第二歷史檔案館)

Introduction

國破山河在，城春草木深。

感時花濺淚，恨別鳥驚心。

烽火連三月，家書抵萬金。

白頭搔更短，渾欲不勝簪。

Though a country be sundered, hills and rivers endure;

And spring comes green again to trees and grasses in Chang'an city.

Where petals have been shed like tears

And lonely birds have sung their grief.

After the war fires of three months,

One message from home is worth a ton of gold.

I stroke my white hair. It has grown too thin

To hold the hairpins any more.

— Du Fu 杜甫, 'A Spring View' (春望)¹

1. Research Questions and Main Argument

The Tang poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) left a famous poem over a thousand years ago describing the difficulty of correspondence and the preciousness of family letters: 'After the war fires of three months, one message from home is worth a ton of gold.'² How could it not be the same in the wartime of the Republican era?

The objective of this thesis is to study the national and international transformation

¹ Qiu Xieyou, *Xinyi Tang shi sanbai shou* (New Translation of the Three Hundred Tang Poems) (Taipei: Sanmin shuju, 2003), 255. The English translation is based on Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu 江亢虎, *The Jade Mountain: A Chinese Anthology, Being Three Hundred Poems of the T'ang Dynasty 618–906* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 148.

² Qiu Xieyou, *Xinyi Tang shi sanbai shou*, 255; *The Jade Mountain*, 148.

and maintenance of postal communications in China,³ with a particular focus on postal modernity and sovereignty, both internal and national, during the protracted wars and conflicts of the early twentieth century.

China's national postal service was established in 1896. It then joined the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in 1914. This marks the beginning of China's entry into the international postal network as a modern sovereign state. With the support of the state, the institution developed significantly throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, in the first half of the twentieth century, China was often in a state of political instability and crisis. It was involved in several protracted domestic and international conflicts and wars. But even in such conditions, the postal service seemed to still work for the public.

During the most difficult time of the Second World War, for instance, postal communication played an important role in maintaining people's relationships with family and friends who were often separated by thousands of miles. Even if people lived under different hostile regimes, they could still contact each other by post. Du Runping 杜潤枰, for example, was a postal clerk in Guiyang. She frequently, almost every day, communicated with her boyfriend and later fiancé Wang Yisun 王貽蓀 in Chongqing in the far western part of the country under Nationalist rule during the last two years of WWII. Meanwhile, she also kept in touch with her family in Zhutang 祝塘, a small town in the eastern province of Jiangsu, that was occupied by Japan under Wang Jingwei's regime.⁴ In her memoirs, *The Great Flowing River (Juliuhe 巨流河)*, Chi Pang-yuan 齊邦媛 (1924–), a professor emeritus of English born

³ In this thesis, China, the Chinese government, etc. generally refer to mainland China and its government at that time.

⁴ Wang Yisun and Du Runping, *Guanshan wanli qing: Wang Yisun, Du Runping zhangshi qingshu yu jiaxin*, two volumes (Taipei: Kaiyuan shuju, 2019); Du Runping, *Du Runping zhangshi riji 1939* (Taipei: Kaiyuan shuju, 2020).

in Northeast China who emigrated to Taiwan in 1947, mentions the importance of writing letters as the only way of communication during wartime. She and her friend Zhang Dafei 張大飛 (1918–1945), also a refugee from Manchuria and later a Chinese Air Force pilot, were pen pals for six years. While she stayed in Shapingba 沙坪壩 (Chongqing), Zhang flew everywhere, including to the US for training.⁵ She describes the postal service as a ‘stabilising force’ in the society during the time of turmoil, even after moving to Taiwan.⁶ These records show that in a situation where the attempt to escape war and occupation often resulted in suffering and separation from families that made the need for communication even more urgent, the postal service seemed to still have been accessible and helpful, no matter how much the war interrupted transportation and impacted the Chinese state and society.

How the postal system was maintained in wartime is an issue worth exploring. It is not only related to the understanding of postal history in China per se but also a way to observe how it was related to the changes in the Chinese state and its sovereignty during turbulent times. If one of the characteristics of a modern postal service was to be a state monopoly, who managed the postal service on behalf of the state in the case of China during wars and conflicts in the Republican era? In fact, China has a long history of letter culture and mail communication, while a national postal service did not exist until 1896. This Western or ‘modern’ type of postal service gradually, but not completely, superseded the original private-owned *minxinju* 民信局 (private postal hongs or private postal agencies) and became the main postal system used by the people all over the country in the early twentieth century. The service in the late nineteenth century was the provision of a unified service under state

⁵ Qi Bangyuan (Chi Pang-yuan), *Juliuhe* (Taipei: Tianxia wenhua, 2014), 154–161, 174.

⁶ Qi Bangyuan, *Juliuhe*, 181.

ownership and was believed to be more effective in its operations and increasing national revenue. However, war and the unstable situation it created were a serious challenge for this young and still developing 'national' institution's centralised and 'unified' state management.⁷ In this thesis, I will focus on internal and international events in the Republican era to observe their impact on the postal service, in particular during a series of civil wars, revolutions, and two world wars. I will analyse how and why, even under such unfavourable conditions, this national service could be maintained and even relatively reliable.

Previous studies on the Chinese Postal Service (CPS) have focused on its institutional history and seen it in the context of the larger process of China's modernisation from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. War and uncertain circumstances as a variable during the same period seem to be less touched upon. Although the modernisation narrative might make it easy to construct a straightforward narrative of the history of the postal service in China, more subtle forms of political change and the impact of war on communications in the Republican era are easily overlooked. One issue, as mentioned above, is how to interpret China's postal service under weak and chaotic state sovereignty. Another issue that can be seen is that state management of postal communications seems to be taken for granted or almost a condition for postal modernisation. However, this new service and the 'progress' it also represented unintentionally gave legitimate power to Chinese governments to manage and even control personal correspondence, which is also an important but rarely mentioned characteristic of postal 'modernisation,' as will be shown in later chapters. On the one hand, a state-run postal service can be regarded as a powerful and efficient service for the Chinese people in wartime, but on the other hand, people's reliance on it made them vulnerable to

⁷ The Chinese Postal Service claims to be a young institution in its report. See *Annual Report 1911*, 1.

the state intervening in private communications, especially in the state of political conflicts and war. How to evaluate the influence of wars on communication is one of the main concerns of the thesis. The postal statistics show that the CPS continued to expand, and more people relied on its service.

Another aspect that has been ignored is that China made an effort to participate in the international community,⁸ which included international mail exchange and membership in the UPU. Some studies in diplomatic history touch on the development of postal communications in early twentieth-century China within the context of international relations.⁹ However, they appear to be primarily interested in negotiations concerning China's participation in international organisations, and most of them do not focus on the postal service per se, not even international mail operations and its contribution to the Chinese society.¹⁰ In fact, international postal communication is not only an issue that illustrates the ways in which the CPS was connected to global networks of communication, but also relates to the Chinese people themselves who engaged in international correspondence through the national postal service. Both these aspects provide a different angle from which China's involvement in global communications can be investigated.

To a certain extent, the UPU membership reflects how the new institution was linked to the international network of nations that China coveted to join as a modern sovereign state.

⁸ Xu Guoqi, *China and the Great War: China's Pursuit of a New National Identity and Internationalization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁹ William C. Kirby, 'The Internationalization of China: Foreign Relations at Home and Abroad in the Republican Era,' *The China Quarterly* 150 (June 1997): 433–458. Xu Fengyuan, 'Zhongguo guojihua de licheng: yi Qingmo Minchu canyu Wanguo youzheng lianmeng wei li' (The Progress of Chinese Internationalisation: A Case of Participating in the Universal Postal Union during the Late Qing and Early Republican Era), *Zhongxing shixue* 11 (2005): 1–22.

¹⁰ See also Lin Zhilong, 'Wanguo youzheng lianmeng Zhongguo daibiaoquan zhengyi shimo: 1949–1971' (The Question of Representation of China in International Organisations: The Case of the Universal Postal Union, 1949–1971), *Xingda renwen xuebao* 38 (2007): 291–307.

However, from the late Qing to the Republican era, the country was not only involved in many international conflicts and two world wars but also continued to be politically fragmented, first in the so-called warlord era from 1916 to 1928 and then in the Nationalist-Communist Civil Wars from 1927 to 1937 and 1945 to 1949. These domestic conflicts between rival regional regimes and international warfare repeatedly challenged the national postal service, which theoretically was meant to be a centralised institution effectively managed by a unified state with unchallenged authority, and international communications more generally.

The maintenance of domestic and international postal communication in wartime China is highly related to how the postal service became a 'modern' institution. How to redefine the modernity of postal communication will be the core of my discussion. Thus, this research intends to explore why and how the postal service continued to serve the public in unfortunate conditions when China was involved in conflicts and wars in the Republican era. It aims to explore the relationship between the state and society through the national service of postal communications in a period of instability. It examines how political conflicts and war may have strengthened the Chinese state by asserting its sovereignty in the eyes of the international community, but also by invading the personal sphere of correspondence of its people. In this sense, this thesis will consider tighter control of communications as an aspect of postal modernity in China.

Moreover, this research places the arguments about the process of the nationalisation of the postal service within the context of a global history of communication. Being a state monopoly was an important feature of the modern type of Western postal operations, which can be frequently seen in Chinese historical sources as the most significant difference from the original Chinese system. Before this 'modernisation' of the system, postal services used to

be privately run by the so-called *minxinju*, while the Chinese Imperial Courier Station system was for official use only. Postal nationalisation was the biggest part of this transformation that happened still under Qing rule. But more importantly, the Western postal system seemed to effectively link each national postal service to a global communication network. With new means of communication and transportation developing in the late nineteenth century, such as the telegraph and international postal services, China's reforms also show that it gradually integrated into a new order of international communication networks. In this sense, the establishment of a national postal service in China was no longer only a domestic affair but also a part of international interactions. This thesis suggests that China's international obligation was a crucial factor in explaining why China's postal service was maintained in wartime. As a member state of the international postal system, China also shared the responsibility to ensure that the postal transport network was unimpeded.

The writing of this history cannot avoid the discussion of Western influence as it is intrinsically a transnational history. The CPS was introduced, established, and even managed by foreigners. Until 1911, it was a department of the Imperial Chinese Maritime Customs Service (IMS). Until the Second Sino-Japanese War, some senior postal officers working for the CPS were still foreign nationals. In addition to the Western colonialist and imperialist background in the institution of the CPS, foreigners' contributions are generally recognised in previous studies in both Chinese and English-language scholarship. The fact that a national service accommodated foreign officials seems to hide a variation in China's own national narrative of modernisation. This research, therefore, attempts to explore the roles and positions of these foreigners and suggests that the transnational element in the management of the institution played a crucial role in maintaining the cohesion and coherence of the service as a relatively independent and neutral operation in this rather fragmented state.

Although the postal service was largely maintained, the wars and conflicts were not without impact on the service and people's communication. Hence, evaluating the influence of wars on communication is another important aspect discussed in the thesis. The postal statistics show that not only could the CPS maintain its service throughout this period, but in fact continued to expand, and more people relied on its service. This suggests that once the civil or international wars started to impact the postal service, those people who used the postal system would be implicated to varying degrees, e.g. through wartime mail censorship or simply through the disruption of delivery routes. In terms of the privacy of correspondence, this implies that state power could invade ordinary people's private lives through the postal service.

Overall, the core concern of this thesis is to explore the impact of the conflicts and wars of the early twentieth century on the CPS as a developing state-run means of communication in China. How could postal communication be maintained by only one national postal service while the state was divided into several mutually hostile regimes? Why did the system survive until the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War, but did not eventually make it through the Chinese Civil War and the end of the Nationalist regime on the mainland in 1949? Considering these questions, this thesis attempts to provide a reappraisal of the modernisation concept of postal communications and argues that the modernity of the postal service and communication was shaped by the complicated interactions between the state and society in Republican China.

2. A National Postal Service and the Concept of Sovereignty

From the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, China went through multiple transformations. In terms of transportation and communication, there is rich research on the

topics of the modernity of technological innovations and services like railways, steamships, and telegraphy.¹¹ These modern forms of communication were introduced and constructed by the Qing government during the Self-strengthening Reforms, often referred to as *zhiqiang yundong* 自強運動 (Self-strengthening Movement), between 1861 and 1896. However, the reform of the postal service seems to be excluded from the discussion of the Self-strengthening Reforms and simultaneously less frequently discussed in the same context. The CPS can be regarded as a part of the Qing Empire's institutional transformations, which also included other new government institutions such as the Zongli yamen 總理衙門 (the Foreign Office) and the IMS, while it contributed to the development of modern means of transport, including motor vehicles, steamers, and then air transport as this thesis will cover in later chapters.

Nevertheless, one could argue that the transformation of China's postal communication was a key part of China's institutional transition into the 'modern' world. It has to do with how the modern postal system was transplanted from the West and adapted to China's society, and even replaced the original system. In the late nineteenth century, it can be imagined that there were many differences between Chinese and Western postal services, while for the Chinese, the most significant difference seemed to be whether the service was run by the state. The centralised and state-run 'modern type' of postal service was developed based on the royal postal services in European countries from the fifteenth century. Monarchs appointed postmasters or families to operate postal services for the monarchy as well as

¹¹ This was one of the main concerns of historians when China's modernisation studies flourished during the 1960s and 1970s. Some influential examples include Lǚ Shiqiang 呂實強, *Zhongguo zaoqi de lunchuan jingying* (The Steamship Enterprise in Modern China) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1962); Li Guoqi 李國祈, *Zhongguo zaoqi de tielu jingying* (The Railway Enterprise in Modern China) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1961); Gu Weiyang 古偉瀛, *Zhongguo zaoqi de dianbao jingying* (The Telegraph Enterprise in Modern China) (Taipei: MA diss., National Taiwan University, 1973).

private individuals (by permission and for fixed postage).¹² In the UK, the main change emerged at the time of the Industrial Revolution. In the early nineteenth century, education spread to the lower social classes, and the progress in printing technology caused the publication market to expand and increased postal service needs. In addition, business development demanded a safe, speedy, and cheap postal service. In 1839, the situation led to a significant postal reform that was designed by Sir Rowland Hill (1795–1879). The invention of postage stamps could be regarded as the most impressive of Hill’s reforms. Beyond the stamps, Hill introduced a cheap and uniform postage rate in order to increase the volume of mail. He supposed that if the postage per letter was only one penny and paid in advance, more people would use the postal service and thus, its profits could be expected to increase dramatically. As a result, the reform proposal was passed by the British Parliament, and the first postage stamp, the ‘Penny Black,’ was born. Although the expected increase in revenue did not materialise immediately, the volume of mail increased significantly. This new system was introduced in many European and American countries in the following years.¹³ After that, the modern or Western meaning of a postal system implied a state-owned enterprise pattern, which was generally operated by the government, the issuing of postage stamps for advance payment, and the adoption of uniform postage. Thus, the reform redefined the state as an active and central player in the operation of the postal service.¹⁴

Before this kind of national post office was established in China, the country’s postal service consisted of two separate parts. One was the *yizhan* 驛站 (Imperial Courier System), which administratively belonged to the *bingbu* 兵部 (Ministry of War) of the Qing Empire and

¹² Howard Robinson, *The British Post Office: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 3–6.

¹³ Robinson, *The British Post Office*, 244–247, 258–320; David M. Henkin, *The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 30–31.

¹⁴ Henkin, *The Postal Age*, 185, footnote 52.

was for official use only.¹⁵ In *Da Qing huidian* 大清會典 (Administration Law of the Great Qing), *youzheng* 郵政, literally ‘postal administration,’ refers to the Imperial Courier system;¹⁶ the same word but with a different meaning as *youzheng* was used for the national postal service after the 1890s. The other type of postal service was *minxinju*,¹⁷ located in cities and villages and operated by private firms or merchants for the general population. It is hard to verify the origin of *minxinju*. Without strong evidence, some speculate that the system started during the Yongle era (1402–1424) of the Ming Dynasty.¹⁸ Chang Liangren, writing in the early twentieth century, argued that it flourished during the Daoguang era (1820–1850) of the Qing, was headquartered in Ningbo, and mostly run by Ningbo merchants. After the opening of the treaty ports in the late Xianfeng era, Shanghai became the new centre of *minxinju*.¹⁹ Weipin Tsai suggests that historically speaking, *minxinju*, as a specialised industry, should be traced to no earlier than the nineteenth century, as there is no clear evidence of its origins.²⁰ What can be ascertained is that by the mid-nineteenth century, the *minxinju* delivered mail to destinations across the country as well as to Southeast Asia, which had large communities of overseas Chinese immigrants since the late Qing.²¹

At the end of the nineteenth century, a Western-style postal service was introduced to China, initiating a significant transformation: a centralised and monopolised national service

¹⁵ Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhanshi* (The Development History of Chinese Post) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1994), 197–208.

¹⁶ *Qin ding da Qing huidian* (Imperial Administration Law of the Great Qing) (1764, in *Siku Quanshu*, reprint: Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983–), vol. 66, 3–9.

¹⁷ The Imperial/Chinese Customs Service generally translated *minxinju* to ‘native postal agencies’ or ‘native postal honggs,’ see for example, *China: Imperial Maritime Customs—Decennial Reports, 1892–1901* (Shanghai: Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 1904), vol. 2, 26, 79.

¹⁸ Peng Yingtien, *Minxinju fazhan shi*, 37.

¹⁹ Zhang Liangren 張樑任, *Zhongguo youzheng* (Chinese Postal Services) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936), 11–12.

²⁰ Zhang Xiaogang 張曉綱, ‘Minxinju qi yuan zhi zheng, Suzhou minxinju yantao hui ceji,’ *Jiyou bolan* 2015:3 (March 2015): 30–32.

²¹ Research on *Minxinju*, see Peng Yingtien, *Minxinju fazhan shi*.

attempted to replace the various mail delivery systems.²² Many believe that the introduction of the *xifa* 西法 (Western methods) of delivering a postal service can be traced back to Sir Robert Hart, the second Inspector-General of the IMS, in 1861.²³ Despite of disapproval from the Qing court, after consultation with Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823–1901), the Viceroy of Zhili and Beiyang Trade Minister 直隸總督兼北洋大臣, an experimental postal delivery was organised by Hart's IMS in 1878. A series of postage stamps, imitating the Western model, with the Chinese characters for *Da Qing youzhengju* 大清郵政局 (Post Office of the Great Qing) and the English letters 'CHINA' were issued for this new type of postal service.²⁴ Although this experiment had not been formally approved by the imperial court, over the following eighteen years the *Haiguan bosida* [transliteration of 'post'] *shuxinguan* 海關撥駟達書信館 (Customs Post Office) gradually expanded its business to Customs houses in the treaty ports until 1896, when the national Post Office was eventually founded with imperial approval. The main purpose of this special service trial of the IMS was to prepare for a truly national postal service that Hart hoped someday the Qing court would officially approve.²⁵

The discussion establishing a national postal service took a very long time, during which the Customs Post Office's reach was limited to the treaty ports. Chinese reformers and

²² Chen Ling-chieh, 'Qingmo haiguan yu Da-Qing Youzheng de jianli 1878–1911' (Chinese Maritime Customs Service and the Establishment of Chinese Imperial Post in Late Qing, 1878–1911) (MA diss., National Tsing Hua University, 2013).

²³ Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhanshi*, 210–212. In fact, this is based on Hart's own words in a document from 1896, when the national Post Office was established. There is, however, no evidence of his key role in Chinese documents. See Robert Hart, 'Circulars No. 706 (Second Series),' 9 April 1896, in *Documents Illustrative of the Origin, Development, and Activities of the Chinese Customs Service. Volume II: Inspector General's Circulars, 1893 to 1910* (Shanghai: Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 1938), 42.

²⁴ *Zhongguo youpiao mulu* (Postage Stamps Category, Republic of China) (Taipei: Jiaotongbu youzhengzongju, 1996), 1.

²⁵ Hart, 'Circulars No. 89,' 'Circulars No. 90,' 22 December 1879, in *Volume I: Inspector General's Circulars, 1861 to 1892*, 401–404; 'Hart to Henry Kopsch, No. 706,' 17 March, 1886, in *Zhongguo jindai jingji shiliao congkan bianji weiyuanhui*, ed., *Zhongguo haiguan yu youzheng* (The Chinese Maritime Customs and Postal Service) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 46.

the government advocated to *yiyi zhiyi* 以夷制夷 (to introduce Western technology and systems to control the barbarians) after the defeat in the Second Opium War in 1860. In this context, the postal reform could be regarded as part of the larger project to use ‘Western methods’ to save the nation. However, introducing the Western postal system had never been the priority of the Self-strengthening Reforms officially supported by the government at that time. The Reforms focused more on Western military technology rather than institutions. In terms of communication technologies, telegraphy attracted the Qing government’s attention and was developed quickly because of its military application. Moreover, the adoption of the Western postal institution model meant that a nationalised service would enter the market and create a conflict of interest with *minxinju*. These private postal agencies had operated efficiently and reliably for a long time. They had set up a far-reaching postal network based on the cooperation of a large number of individual companies. One of the key tenets of Chinese political thought worked against the establishment of a monopolistic national postal service, namely that *bu duo xiaomin zhi li* 不奪小民之利 (the ruler should not compete with the people to take over their humble profit from small business).²⁶

The crucial factor for the Qing government to establish a national postal service was the issue of foreign post offices in China. Chinese reformers, such as Zheng Guanying 鄭觀應 (1842–1922), had called for the adoption of the Western postal system before the proposal was officially accepted. Zheng’s argument did not focus on any perceived superiority of the Western system over Chinese systems. Instead, he expressed the demand as a means to ‘save

²⁶ ‘Memorial of Zongli Geguo Shiwu Yamen, 20 March, 1896,’ in *Jiaotongshi: youzheng pian* (Communication History: Postal Service) (Shanghai: Jiaotong tiedao bu jiaotongshi bianzuan weiyuanhui, 1930), vol. 1, 14. Chen Ling-chieh, ‘Duo xiaomin zhi li? Lun minxinju yu haiguan jianban Daqing youzheng de jing he guanxi’ (Seizing People’s Interests? Competition and Cooperation between Private Postal Agencies and the Imperial Post Office in the Late Qing Era), *Xinshixue* 33:2 (June 2022): 63–131.

the country' with a nationalist motivation. This was based on the fact that since the end of the First Opium War in 1842, many foreign countries had founded branches of their own national post offices in the Chinese treaty ports.²⁷ These foreign postal offices, known as *keyou* 客郵 (literately 'guest's postal services'), were initially created by foreign merchants and diplomatic missions for their own communication needs. With the repeated setbacks in China's foreign relations, the existence and the profit of foreign post offices on Chinese soil were questioned. Having China's own national post office was considered a case of reclaiming the nation's *liquan* 利權 (sovereign economic rights), which China should take back under its own control, in particular, because it seemed to be a profitable enterprise.²⁸ It implies that the crux of the proposal of the postal reform was not the people's convenience, but national interests, especially those had been taken by foreigners.

The crucial event that changed the attitude of the Qing court was China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895. After the war and the negotiation of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, a heavy atmosphere of *jiuquo* 救國 (saving the country) deeply influenced the Qing court and its officials. In March 1896, the emperor finally approved the Viceroy of Huguang Zhang Zhidong's 張之洞 request to establish the national post office to *wanhui liquan* 挽回利權 (take back the national economic rights), and the *Da Qing youzheng* 大清郵政 (Imperial Postal Service of the Great Qing, IPS) was officially opened.²⁹ However, as a

²⁷ Zheng Guanying, 'Lun youzheng, sheng,' 'Lun youzheng xia' (A Discussion of Postal Service 1 & 2), in Xia Dongyuan, ed., *Zheng Guanying ji* (Collected Works of Zheng Guanying) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1982), vol. 1, 669–675.

²⁸ The recovery of China's 'Right of interests' was one of the key terms in Chinese documents on reforms in the late nineteenth century. For one of the examples, see 'Memorial of Zongli Geguo Shiwu Yamen, 20 March, 1896,' 1896, 14. This memorial was a crucial report for the emperor to consider approval the proposal for a national postal service. Thus, the writers referred to several officials' and scholars' opinions and reviewed its long-time discussion and preparation. This memorial was ultimately approved by the emperor.

²⁹ Zhang Zhidong, '請辦郵政片,' 1895.12.27, *Zhang Zhidong quanji* (The Complete Works of Zhang Zhidong) (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1998), vol. 2, 1058; Robert Hart, 'Circulars No. 706 (Second Series),'

condition for establishing the national postal service, the Qing court requested that the *minxinju* must be allowed to continue their business and cooperate with the Post Office.³⁰ Hence, after the Post Office was established, the original and the new systems not only competed and cooperated with each other but also converged with each other to some extent, even though the Post Office attempted — unsuccessfully — to completely replace the *minxinju*. It was not until the 1930s that the government listed it as an illegal industry and forcibly banned it.³¹

Previously, scholars focused on how a ‘modern’ postal system developed and replaced Chinese ‘traditional’ systems. However, the transformation of China’s postal service was a complicated process of nationalisation. The continued existence of the *minxinju* was not the only issue. Several other issues also persisted after the IPS was established, especially the presence of foreign post offices and of those foreigners who worked for the IPS and its successor CPS. Foreign post offices did not withdraw as expected. Only the Shanghai Local Post Office, run by the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC), was transformed into the IPS in 1898.³² The foreign staff was another issue for the IPS/CPS as a ‘national service.’ The IPS/CPS had many foreign employees, who were originally hired by the IMS as higher-rank officers in managerial positions. In the first fifteen years, the IPS was a department of the IMS, and Robert Hart was appointed to be the Inspector-General of Customs and Post.³³ Just shortly before Hart’s death on 20 September 1911,³⁴ on 28 May 1911, the IPS had become formally

42.

³⁰ Chen Ling-chieh, ‘Bu duo xiaomin zhi li’.

³¹ Chia-hua Chu, *China’s Postal and Other Communications Services* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1937), 47–48.

³² Hosea Ballou Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, vol. 3, 61.

³³ ‘Memorial of Zongli Geguo Shiwu Yamen, 20 March, 1896,’ 14. The Post Office’s organisation and personnel lists before 1911, see *China Imperial Maritime Customs. Service List 新關題名錄* (Shanghai: Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 1896–1911, collected by SOAS Library).

³⁴ ‘Circulars No. 1844 (Second Series),’ 26 September 1911, in *Volume III: Inspector General’s Circulars, 1911 to*

independent from the IMS and had been moved under the Ministry of Communications (MOC, *youchuanbu* 郵傳部). However, foreign employees continued holding higher-level positions in the Post Office.³⁵ The Revolution of 1911 occurred suddenly in October, and the Republic of China replaced the Qing Empire in 1912. Thus, the foreign-managed postal service was fully inherited by the Republican government. The only difference probably was its official title, which was changed from the Imperial Post Office to the Chinese Post Office or Chunghwa Post (中華郵政). New foreign staff was recruited in the following years, while a large number of Chinese employees entered the service for lower-level positions. As a result, a series of postal labour protest movements demanding to ‘recover postal sovereignty’ (收回郵權運動) were organised in the 1920s. The privileges and number of foreign staff were subsequently reduced. Nevertheless, some of them were retained and were still working for the Post Office during the Second World War.³⁶

The idea of a national postal service to ‘take back the national economic rights’ was developed during the struggle for China’s place in the new system of international relations and understanding of modern state *zhuquan* 主權 (sovereignty) after the two Opium Wars. Many studies have explored the entry and development of the concept of sovereignty in China. Maria Adele Carrai, for instance, argues that the concept of sovereignty was introduced to China with international law as part of a new world order in the late nineteenth century. The concept and its development show that China strove to become a ‘modern’ state and join international organisations in order to consolidate its sovereign rights and fight for

1923, 36–37.

³⁵ *Jiaotongshi: youzheng pian*, vol. 1, 23. ‘Circulars No. 1802 (Second Series),’ 30 May 1911; ‘Circulars No. 1809 (Second Series),’ 15 June 1911, in *Volume III: Inspector General’s Circulars, 1911 to 1923*, 16–29.

³⁶ Zhang Yi, *Zhonghua youzheng shi* (The Postal History of China) (Taipei: Dongda chubanshe, 1996), 309–310, 324–331; Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhanshi*, 414–419.

internationally equal status. She suggests that the Republican period was ‘a key for developing China’s vision of sovereignty and its international orchestration’.³⁷ The national postal service for China was not just an internal affair but also closely related to the autonomy and authority of the nation. Furthermore, it was also related to how China joined the international postal network composed of every country’s national postal service. Postal autonomy was, therefore, extended to the concept of sovereignty, which was often evoked during the Republican era and was repeatedly mentioned by former postal staff in their memoirs.³⁸ The operation of the postal service not only became a matter of the maintenance of national sovereignty and dignity, especially in the historical context of the setbacks in China’s international relations, but also was crucial for China’s active participation in the international society.

Nevertheless, while proclaiming postal sovereignty during the Republican era, China’s political situation was highly unstable in terms of domestic politics and foreign relations. Its central government was weak, and the country was periodically divided into several regimes. Maintaining a national postal service as a unified state agency and protecting its autonomy extended the concept of sovereignty and was a great challenge. It is surprising that the service functioned well under such unfavourable circumstances. Some diaries and oral history records show that people were able to communicate with each other during wars, even if they were separated in hostile countries and regimes.³⁹

Based on these observations, this thesis makes two main points. First, I suggest that

³⁷ Maria Adele Carrai, *Sovereignty in China: A Genealogy of a Concept since 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), esp. 109–151.

³⁸ This idea can often be seen in the publications by scholars and former CPS employees, for example, Guo Tingyi, Shen Yunlong, and Lin Quan, *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu* (The Reminiscences of Mr Liu Ch’enghan) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1997), 34–35.

³⁹ For example, Feng Zikai, *Jiaoshi riji* (Teaching Diary) (Hong Kong: n. d.). For the records of oral history, see Luo Jiurong, You Jianming, and Ju Haiyuan, *Fenghuo suiyuexia de Zhongguo funü fangwen jilu* (20th-century Wartime Experiences of Chinese Women) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 2004).

the internationalised personnel of the CPS allowed the service to maintain its operations flexibly and neutrally. Its foreign management has been understood as a special personnel system inherited from its founder, the IMS, while foreign employees' power was significantly reduced, especially after the Guomindang 國民黨 (Nationalist Party) took control of the country in 1928. Despite the original influence of Western powers on Chinese politics, those foreigners were conducive to the survival of the postal service as a relatively independent operation in the divided Chinese state. They played a key role in not only maintaining postal operations and helping the service survive successive wars and conflicts, but also in preserving one postal system under different regimes rather than letting it fall apart, and thus to some extent, helped to meet China's expectations of postal sovereignty. In some cases, foreign staff were also taken advantage of by successive Chinese central governments to influence postal communication in hostile regimes and in the international community when the country was involved in conflicts and wars. One of the examples in the following discussion is the CPS under the command of the Chongqing Nationalist government operating in a territory controlled by Wang Jingwei's regime. This intriguing situation is significant because it provides an angle to observe that the 'national' service went beyond the boundaries of regimes and even 'countries' to some extent.

The second point is that successive Chinese governments in the Republican era understood the meaning and need to maintain a national postal service. Realistically, the control of the postal service meant the control of communications and information flow. This was crucial during wartime, more so than at any other time. But beyond that, I argue the crux is that the modern postal institution was not only a state-run enterprise but also an international collaboration. The maintenance of the postal service was a way of demonstrating the functioning of a modern sovereign state. Even if the country was in chaos,

it still shared the responsibility for international postal transport as part of a shared world order to maintain international postal routes as much as possible without interruption.

However, the maintenance of the CPS eventually fell apart during the Nationalist-Communist Civil War. Because of the improvement of China's international status and the successful abolition of unequal treaties after the Second World War, foreign employees were all dismissed. The CPS was fully controlled by the Chinese Nationalist government but lacked intermediaries who were able to step into the roles previously held by foreign employees. Meanwhile, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was more ambitious than any previous regime in establishing a rule over the entire country and, in addition, establishing a dramatically different sovereign state, which followed Marxism-Leninism. As it will be discussed in later chapters, a neutralised national postal service no longer existed. After the Guomindang government fled to Taiwan, and two Chinas, the Republic of China (ROC) and the People's Republic of China (PRC), emerged, which meant interrupted postal communications for more than thirty years until the late 1980s.

3. Literature Review

Beyond the Narrative of Modernisation

Modernisation theory was an important driver in dissecting Chinese history since the Opium War in US scholarship. It was developed after the Second World War in response to the needs of the US in the Cold War conditions.⁴⁰ Against such a background, the theory also played an important role in the writing of China's postal history over the past few decades. It seems that the 'new' postal service as a 'modern' system developed in the West and transferred to China

⁴⁰ Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 58.

in the late nineteenth century has always been inseparable from the discourse of China's modernisation. This narrative of modernisation can be traced back to H. B. Morse's (1855–1934) work on China's international relations, published in the early twentieth century. Although the term *modernisation* had not yet been formed, Morse identified the key role of Robert Hart and the IMS contribution that assisted China in the establishment of its own national postal service. He suggested that there were 'three elements in opposition' to the proposal of the national postal service: the government courier system supported by Chinese 'officialdom,' the letter hongs (*minxinju*), and foreign post offices.⁴¹ The three elements became the main themes for scholars studying postal modernisation in China, defined by the degree to which these three obstacles could be overcome. Later, researchers followed Morse's interpretation and continued to depict the struggle between the national postal service and those three 'oppositions' and linked it to the modernisation narrative of Chinese history.

Ying-Wan Cheng (1916–2011) was the first scholar who conducted pioneering research on China's modernisation of postal communication in English scholarship. Her work argues that the Chinese postal reform was a process of modernisation, but it was delayed due to internal and external factors in the late nineteenth century.⁴² She defines postal modernisation in so far as it was first, 'a civilizing agent in the flow of knowledge and ideas and news and commodities;' second, a public service under government monopoly; and third, it implemented low, uniform, and prepaid postage rates with a postage stamp system and ensured efficient shipping and delivery, making the service accessible to all.⁴³ The definition

⁴¹ Hosea Ballou Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910–1918), vol. 3, 61–71.

⁴² Ying-wan Cheng, *Postal Communication in China and Its Modernization 1860–1896* (Cambridge, Mass.: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1970). This book was rewritten and published based on Cheng's PhD dissertation, 'Modernization of the Chinese postal service (1860–1896),' which was completed at Radcliffe College in 1960.

⁴³ Cheng, *Postal Communication in China*, 2.

of an efficient ‘modern’ postal service follows the British postal reform model in 1840 and created criteria for assessing whether China’s postal communication was ‘modernised’ and echoes Morse’s ‘three elements of opposition’ to discuss the ‘problem’ of the modernisation in the late Qing.⁴⁴ She furthermore suggested that China experienced a ‘retardation’ of postal modernisation not only because of the three elements of opposition, as Morse had suggested, but also due to the weak leadership of the Qing government to carry out the necessary reforms.⁴⁵ Although Cheng’s work is insightful in the field of the postal history of China, its view of modernisation wears a lens of Eurocentrism and uncritically regards the postal reforms in the West as progress. Her argument rests on the dichotomies of tradition–modernity and Chinese–Western, and implies a negative view of what was regarded as ‘traditional’ systems. Ultimately, Cheng links China’s postal transformation to the discourse of becoming a modern state in the late nineteenth century and suggests that the intention of Hart’s national postal reform proposal was to help China form a ‘modern nation’ with modern international relations.⁴⁶

In Chinese-language academic writings, scholars’ concerns reflect the expectations of ‘modernisation’ of their own nation and society in the past, present and even future. Xu Xuexia and Peng Yingtien made similar arguments claiming the continuing existence of ‘traditional’ *minxinju* and foreign post offices harmed national interests and impeded the progress of postal modernisation in China in the early 1990s.⁴⁷ In the recent decade, some

⁴⁴ Cheng, *Postal Communication in China*, 5–7, 95.

⁴⁵ Cheng, *Postal Communication in China*, 105.

⁴⁶ Cheng, *Postal Communication in China*, 5.

⁴⁷ Xu Xuexia, *Jindai Zhongguo de youzheng, 1896–1928* (The Postal Service in Modern China, 1896–1928) (Taipei: Sili Dongwu daxue xueshu zhuzuo jiangzhu weiyuanhui, 1992). Peng Yingtien, *Minxinju fazhan shi: Zhongguo de minjian tongxun shiye* (The Development History of Private Postal Service: The Non-governmental Communication Industry) (Taipei: Zhongguo wenhua daxue chubanshe, 1992).

Chinese scholars still follow this mainstream argument to tell the story.⁴⁸

In addition, the CPS and its successors themselves were also involved in the construction of the modernisation narrative. As early as the 1920s, the CPS had begun to write its own narrative, which became historical materials for later researchers.⁴⁹ During the Cold War, the two Chinas, the ROC and the PRC, competed for the Chinese state legitimacy and modernisation discourses, including postal transformation. Some current and former Chinese postal employees were encouraged to participate in collecting historical resources and editing publications on postal history.⁵⁰ Pan An-sheng 潘安生 (pen name, Yan Xing 晏星), former Director of the Postal Museum in Taipei, is one representative scholar in Taiwan.⁵¹ Another case in China is Qiu Runxi 仇潤喜, former Postmaster of Tianjin.⁵² Although these scholars and postal staff created the narratives of modernisation based on either the Nationalist or Communist political ideologies, they shared the same sense of identity of the CPS as a key of postal modernisation of China. They followed Morse's discourse and inherited the IMS and CPS's narrative to demonstrate a clearly linear modernisation process, of which China's postal

⁴⁸ For example, Liu Wenpeng, *Qingdai yichuan ji qi yu jiangyu xingcheng guanxi zhi yanjiu* (The Relationship between the Courier System and the Evolution of the Frontier in the Qing Dynasty) (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2004). Zhang Qinglin, 'Queli xin zhidu: wan Qing xinshi youzheng zai yanjiu' (Establishing a New Institution: Further Study of the Imperial Post Office) (M. A. thesis, Xiamen University, 2014).

⁴⁹ H. Kirkhope, "The Chinese Post Office: Historical Survey of the Quarter Century (1896–1921)", Documents Illustrative of the Origin, Development, and Activities of the Chinese Customs Service, Vol. VII: Despatches, Letters, Memoranda, etc. Index (Shanghai: Statistical Department of Inspectorate General of Customs, 1940), 276–294. The document was also published in Report on the Working of the Chinese Post office (abbr. Annual Report) 1921, 3–13.

⁵⁰ For example, Taiwan's Directorate General Office established the Postal Museum in 1965. Liu Chenghan, former Deputy Director-General of Posts, recalled the preparatory process and the aims of the Museum for collecting and studying historical postal records. He also recalled that the CPS in Taiwan started editing and publishing CPS's chronology (*Youzheng dashiji* 郵政大事記) in order to celebrate 'the seventieth anniversary of the Post' in 1966. The calculation started from the opening of the Imperial Chinese national postal service in 1896. See Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 670–673.

⁵¹ Pan's most important work is Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng*. He just published his memoir; see Pan Ansheng and Yu Yanling, *Zhi you chuan ming: Yiwei youjie qilao de huiyi* (Transmitting Orders through the Post: A Memoir of a Senior Postal Employee) (Hsinchu: Guoli Yangming jiaotong daxue chuban she, 2022).

⁵² Qiu Runxi 仇潤喜, ed., *Tianjin youzheng shiliao* (The Historical Sources of Postal Service in Tianjin), 4 vols. (Beijing: Beijing hangkong xueyuan, 1988). Qiu Runxi and Yen Wenqi, *Tianjin de youyi yu youzheng* (The Imperial Courier System and the Postal Service in Tianjin) (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chuban she, 2004).

transformation was an important part. The monopolisation and nationalisation of the postal service were necessary for a modern state; they equalled progress.⁵³ Moreover, there seems to be a scholarly consensus that a unified national postal service, free from external interference, was the right path for China to become a modern — sovereign — nation.

However, the historical record shows that the meaning of ‘unification’ is questionable. China’s national postal service was a new service for the Chinese people and was introduced to the country under the complicated conditions of foreign relations’ setbacks. At the initial stage, its operation was considerably flexible in order to expand its business, and that included cooperation with the *keyou* as well as *minxinju* in the handling of international and inland mail.⁵⁴ More importantly, Republican China was a country that continued to experience political instability and remained in a state of war without achieving any real ‘unification’. Yet the postal service seemed to be working under unified management. This thesis will cover how to understand this contradiction.

Previous scholars’ interest in the concept of modernisation reflects the atmosphere of the times in the late twentieth century. Whether arguing why China’s postal modernisation was delayed or how China’s postal service has progressed and modernised, these discussions presuppose a modern model based on European, or more precisely, British, postal development. One reason may be that the resources they accessed were created by the IMS and its foreign personnel, such as Hart and Morse, associated with this institution. Another

⁵³ This discourse also can be seen in many publications issued by the postal authority in Taiwan. For example, in 1956, in order to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary, which was counted from the establishment of the IPS in 1896, Taiwan’s CPS issued a celebratory publication of collected works. An essay written by He Zongyan 何縱炎, Director-General of the CPS, claims that a state monopolistic postal service is an inevitable development in a modern state. See He Zongyan and Wang Kaijie, eds., *Youzheng liushi zhounian jinian kan* (Commemorate Issue for the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Postal Service) (1956; Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1982 reprinted), 1–3.

⁵⁴ *Annual Report*, 1917, 12–13.

reason is that academically, historians used to study Chinese history following the 'modernisation' paradigm based on Western development, with the Fairbank school's influential approach of 'Western impact and Chinese response' playing a significant role. Postal historians developed the classic Fairbank question 'why did China not respond to foreign encroachments earlier and more vigorously?' to become 'why was China's postal modernisation retardational?'. Following Paul A. Cohen, who in the 1980s questioned the 'China's response' approach as simplifying the complexity of Chinese history and further historiographical developments since then,⁵⁵ it makes more sense to assume that behind the 'three oppositions' are various complex situations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that need to be understood better and not easily be dismissed as merely the cause of the delay of China's postal modernisation.

In response to the problems of China's modernisation and to revise the opposition between modernity and tradition, some scholars put forward to define the difference between 'modernisation' and 'modernity.' Wu Jen-shu points out that the scholars of Chinese history seem to be aware of the modernisation theory's bias as 'Westernisation,' so that more and more studies adopt the term 'modernity' to avoid teleologist and linear progressive views. Despite the inconclusive definition of modernity in scholarship, he suggests that modernity can be understood as the self-adjustment made by the civilisation itself to adapt to the internal and external changes of the times.⁵⁶ Thoralf Klein has also observed a shift in the popular use of the term modernity in Asian and African history scholarship after the 1990s.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Cohen, *Discovering History in China*, 11, 15.

⁵⁶ Wu Renshu (Wu Jen-shu), 'Cong chenshi kan Zhongguo de xiandai xing' (Exploring China's Modernity from the City), in We Renshu et al., ed., *Cong chenshi kan Zhongguo de xiandai xing* (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 2000), ii–v.

⁵⁷ Thoralf Klein, 'How Modern was Chinese Modernity: Exploring Tensions of a Contested Master Narrative,' *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* 2:3 (2014): 275–301.

However, modernity and modernisation theory do not seem to be completely separated, at least in recent English writing on Chinese history.⁵⁸ Another issue is that the studies on plural ‘modernities’ in China’s past are still more or less caught in the dilemma of the binary tradition–modernity. Klein points out precisely that ‘if there are phenomena that can be described as modern, there must be others that are not.’⁵⁹ How to deal with the relations between the concept of ‘modernity’ and its ‘other’ as a contrast? Klein indicates two solutions: continuity and religion.⁶⁰ The former is close to the idea of modernity of postal communication discussed in this thesis as an exploration of the continuities of the postal service in wartime China and the connections to the development inside and outside the postal system.

Moreover, Ambrose King (Jin Yaoji) 金耀基 critiques that the discussions on modernity have rarely got rid of the Western paradigm so far. He refers to Francis Fukuyama and other scholars and suggests an ‘alternative’ and diverse modernity in East Asia to modify the simplistic ‘Western’ model in the context of globalisation.⁶¹ Although his agenda seems to echo the PRC government’s discourse of ‘Chinese characteristics’ (中國特色), and he is also a proponent of China’s modernisation, the concept of globalisation in the modern world inspired my discussion on China’s postal development with a globalised communication, which can be a key to observe the maintenance of postal services in wartime. It is unavoidably true that the national postal system that operated in China was originally from the West and

⁵⁸ For instance, Kate Merkel-Hess discusses the modernisation of the countryside in China and adopts the term *modernisation* but redefines the focus to be ‘more personal, independent, and contingent’ in order to discuss China’s modernity in rural areas. See Kate Merkel-Hess, *The Rural Modern: Reconstructing the Self and State in Republican China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), esp. 18–19.

⁵⁹ Klein, ‘How Modern was Chinese Modernity,’ 280.

⁶⁰ Klein, ‘How Modern was Chinese Modernity,’ 280–283.

⁶¹ Jin Yaoji, *Zhongguo de xiandai zhuanxiang* (The Modern Turn of China) (Hong Kong: Niujin daxue chubanshe, 2004), 178–184.

used to be a national agency with foreign management. However, the transnational aspect of postal communication in the modern world should be considered. The following chapters will demonstrate that China's postal service was not only a national communication agency within the country, but also linked the entire global communication network, which involved the interests of China as a sovereign state, the international postal transit, and the communication needs of all human beings.

Lane Harris's dissertation 'The Post Office and State Formation in Modern China, 1896–1949' is the most recent and insightful scholarship in this field. Although it is also built on Ying-Wan Cheng's contributions and focuses on the modernity of China's postal service, as the use of the term 'modern China' in the title suggests, it breaks through the delay of Chinese postal modernisation argument and pushes it one step further in the sense of the state's modernity. Harris borrows the idea from the Neo-statist school and re-explores the multiple roles and contributions of the Chinese Post Office and the Chinese Customs Service to China's transformation into a modern nation-state; in his words, 'how state-institutions like the Post Office can work toward actualising the state'.⁶² He argues that the Post Office was a 'longevous bureaucracy' which survived from the late Qing to the PRC. Even though this national service may have invaded the private sphere of the public in China, it had overall positive effects, which ensured people's right to correspondence and availability of financial services, which eased the negative impact of capitalism.⁶³ The main argument is that the Post Office as a national, administrative, independent and highly centralised agency demonstrated the existence of 'stateness,' an 'impersonal centralising modern state'.⁶⁴ In addition, Harris shares

⁶² Lane J. Harris, 'The Post Office and State Formation in Modern China, 1896–1949' (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012), 19.

⁶³ Harris, 'The Post Office and State Formation,' esp. 221–223.

⁶⁴ Harris, 'The Post Office and State Formation,' 19–20.

a similar paradigm, as far as the meaning of modernity and the significance of foreign staff is concerned, with the Chinese Maritime Customs Service (CMS), the IMS's successor, research by Hans van de Ven and Chihyun Chang. They examine the loyalty of the foreign Customs staff, observing that they followed the government's policies and supported China's standpoint, even when the Nationalist government reduced their power and stopped recruiting foreign staff in 1928.⁶⁵ Overall, Harris's scholarship almost covers every angle of the CPS between the late Qing and the Republican era. In such a broad but 'state'-centric research, it seems to be overly focused on the upper echelons of the service and somewhat ignores the communication functions of the postal institution and the participation of users — the people.

Weipin Tsai has also contributed to the scholarship of China's postal history. She re-examines the initial motivation and challenges of the postal experiment in the Chinese Maritime Customs, as well as the interaction between the Post Office and Chinese officials. Regarding *minxinju*, she indicates that the development of IPS was based on cooperation with *minxinju*. She argues for a relation of 'coexistence' between the two systems, especially the increase in the number of *minxinju* in Chongqing and Chengdu after the IPS was established. She also points out that the national postal service was a useful institution for the Qing government to establish its sovereignty over the frontiers such as with Outer Mongolia and Xinjiang.⁶⁶ Her research escapes the framework of modernisation discourse and notes the role

⁶⁵ Hans van de Ven, *Breaking with the Past: The Maritime Customs Service and the Global Origins of Modernity in China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Chihyun Chang, *Government, Imperialism and Nationalism in China: The Maritime Customs Service and Its Chinese Staff* (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁶⁶ Weipin Tsai, 'The Qing Empire's Last Flowering: The Expansion of China's Post Office at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,' *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 3 (2015): 895–930; 'Breaking the Ice: The Establishment of Overland Winter Postal Routes in the late Qing China,' *Modern Asian Studies* 47, no. 6 (2013): 1749–1781; 'The Establishment of the Great Qing Imperial Post Office in Kulun, and the Origin of the Postal Routes in Outer Mongolia,' *Youshi yanjiu* 33 (2016): 54–63; 'Yi Chongqing he Chengdu laikan Daqing youzhengju he minxinju zai Qingmo de gong sheng' (Coexistence of the Imperial Post Office and Private Letter Hongs in Late Qing Chongqing and Chengdu), *Youshi yanjiu* 37 (2020): 34–47.

of the Post Office as the agent of the modern state. It is worth extending this discussion of the situation in the late Qing to include how the CPS, as a state-owned enterprise, dealt with other sovereign states in the Republican era.

These recent studies have demonstrated that postal communication as a subject of historical research can be moved beyond the ‘modernisation’ discourse to explore more complex circumstances than a linear process based on the modernisation narrative of Chinese postal history suggests. Nevertheless, as far as the interactions between state and society, the change of social networks, and wartime postal services are concerned, there is still room for discussion on how to bring these together into the discussion of the modern state. To borrow Bruno Latour’s words from his famous work *We Have Never Been Modern*, China’s National Postal Service never seemed to be as ‘modern’ as expected, but the system could still work well throughout the Republican era — his work would indeed suggest that the concept is futile. Latour creatively adopted the term ‘Constitution’ as a comparison of modernity to critique the division regulated by the constitution between nature and the human society in the modern world that overlooks ‘hybrids’ in this divide.⁶⁷ Although the argument is still problematic, and the concept of the Constitution seems to be quite Eurocentric, too, it provides a clue to rethink China’s postal modernisation and modernity. If the modernity of postal communication and postal services have been constitutional under the definition provided by previous scholarship, this research will look at those ‘hybrids’ which might not fit such definitions but still existed in ‘modern’ China.

Overall, past studies implied a normative and universal modern postal system as a

⁶⁷ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 13–48.

necessity for China and emphasised the legitimacy of state ownership and monopoly. I am not to deny the existence of the modern or to be anti-modern, nor is Latour. Rather, as historical research, this thesis illustrates how complicated the 'modern' postal system worked in Republican China and did not comfortably fit the 'modern' definition suggested by postal historians. It is necessary to combine the challenges facing China itself and the changing external environment during the Republican era for the discussion. This research focuses on wars and conflicts, mainly due to the chaotic situation of the Republic of China, which seems to make neither postal modernisation nor modernity, so naturally 'modern' as previous scholars have defined. As it will show, the complex situation and people's urgent need for communication during times of war broke down the binary opposition between the modern and non-modern and blurred the line between the Western and the Chinese.

Foreign Power and Imperialism

The issue of imperialism and the influence of foreign powers are related to the development of China's postal services in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It encompasses two characteristics of the national postal service related to this research. One is *keyou*, foreign postal offices. Another is foreign postal employees in China's postal services. Foreign postal services were established in China after the First Opium War in order to satisfy foreign residents' postal needs when there was no such postal service in China. Foreign post offices continued to exist for a long time, even after the IPS and its successor CPS had been opened to the public. In terms of foreign postal staff, as mentioned above, the IPS and CPS were run by foreigners and recruited foreign employees to higher-ranked positions until 1928.

Some studies, especially in the Chinese-language scholarship, mainly engage with the nationalist ideologies against the oppression of imperialism as Chinese people's collective

memory and stress the ‘modern’ principle, according to which one country should have only one centralised and autonomous national postal service. In this sense, foreign postal services in China are considered as foreign seizures of China’s postal *liquan* and the consequence of foreign powers’ imperialist invasion of China throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Such discussions are even more prominent when mentioning Japan’s aggression in Manchuria and the subsequent Anti-Japanese War. The establishment of postal services in the Japanese-occupied areas and in Manchukuo are often categorised as an imperialist invasion.⁶⁸ For a very long time, the mainstream PRC scholarship adopted Marxism-Leninism theory to critique China’s ‘semi-colonial and semi-feudal’ status that allowed ‘foreign powers’ to invade China’s postal authority.⁶⁹

Although the reflection on imperialism could be a useful entry point to understand the overall situation throughout the late Qing and the Republican era, these studies are also full of contradictions about imperialism and foreign powers. They often agree with the concept of the ‘modern’ postal system and its state monopolistic business model, which originated in the West. In this sense, *minxinju* was deemed to violate the value of the country’s unity and modernisation, so it should be eliminated. Meanwhile, foreign postal staff’s contributions are positively recognised, especially in terms of a unified and centralised national postal service of the Chinese state against foreign postal services’ aggression, even though the presence of Westerners in charge of the main positions in China’s national postal service can be

⁶⁸ Xu Xuexia, *Jindai Zhongguo de youzheng*; Peng Yingtien, *Lieqiang qin-Hua youquan shi* (The History of the Great Powers Invaded the Authority of the Chinese Postal Service) (Taipei: Zhongguo wenhua xueyuan chubanshe, 1979); Youdian shi bianjishi, ed., *Zhongguo jindai youdian shi* (The History of Posts and Telecommunications in Modern China) (Beijing: Renmin youdian chubanshe, 1984), 126–131, 182–196; Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhanshi*, 299–318.

⁶⁹ *Youdian shi bianjishi*, ed., *Zhongguo jindai youdian shi*, 30, 89–96. Although the book is a reading material published for postal and telecommunication workers, it generally follows the rules of academic writing and can be regarded as an official narrative that was approved by the PRC’s postal authority in the early 1980s.

understood as the consequence of imperialism in the nineteenth century. In the 1990s, Huang Fucai 黃福才 realised that postal development in modern China should be regarded as a complicated historical issue. He suggests that the IPS was in the dominant position in the competition with *minxinju* and attempted to control and squeeze into the *minxinju*'s space. However, the IPS was managed by the CMS, which had been invaded by 'foreign aggressive forces,' while *minxinju* were 'narrow-minded small producers,' which sought nothing but profit and were without a nationwide 'unified' management. He implied that the 'foreign-controlled' postal service of China still played a role in facilitating the 'unification' of the national postal service.⁷⁰ Huang is partially right in that it is hard to interpret the development of postal service in China in the context of one theory; but on the other hand, his argument shows that Chinese scholars' faith in statism exceeds their critique of the imperialist nature of the Post Office's institution and personnel as they study this history. In addition, the CPS was not always controlled by foreigners and foreign powers. Foreign management was weakened by the Nationalist government in 1927, which will be discussed in later chapters.

In terms of the foreign staff system, the CMS provides a reference case to consider imperialist and colonialist issues in the CPS. When scholars discuss Robert Hart and the foreign personnel in the CMS, they consider the CPS to be homologous with the CMS and never forget to mention Hart's ambitions and contributions to establishing China's national post office. The CMS was a centralised and efficient tariff institution managed by foreign staff between the late Qing and Republican era. Its foreign employees and transnational management have been extensively discussed in various ways. In Jürgen Osterhammel's theoretical framework of

⁷⁰ Huang Fucai, 'Shilun jindai haiguan youzheng yu minxinju de guanxi' (The Relationship between Modern Chinese Maritime Customs Postal Service and Native Postal Services), *Zhongguo shehui jingji shiyanjiu* 1996 no. 3 (Autumn 1996): 74–82.

imperialism and 'informal empire' in modern China, the CMS is one of the 'de facto foreign-controlled' agencies.⁷¹ Robert Bickers emphasises British influences when he suggests that the CMS was part of the 'British informal empire' in the 'formal' Chinese state before the rise of the Guomindang to power in the late 1920s.⁷² Chihyun Chang uses the notion of 'indirect control through delegation' rather than an evaluation through an imperialist and nationalist lens to analyse the model of administration of the Customs service. In his analysis, the Customs and its foreign staff played an important role in China's transformation into a modern nation-state, despite the foreign elements of the service.⁷³ This last aspect is also recognised in Hans van de Ven's research. He focuses on the ways in which the CMS's operations contributed to the stabilisation of Chinese state finances and the establishment of a modern trade administration. It also supported China's participation in the international community as a sovereign nation-state. He implies that imperialist critiques of the CMS's role may overlook not only change over time, but also that it had a variety of functions and operated independently, despite the employment of foreign staff.⁷⁴ With the context of the rise of nationalism and anti-imperialism in the Republican era, the Guomindang government reduced the foreign influence in the postal service, as it did in the CMS. Chang and van de Ven's arguments and approaches should be considered in a re-evaluation of the question of imperialism in the study of the postal service in Republican China. In fact, the decline of foreign management in the CPS happened in the same context. There is no point denying that

⁷¹ Jürgen Osterhammel, 'Semi-Colonialism and Informal Empire in Twentieth-Century China: Towards a Framework of Analysis,' in *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen et al. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 290–314.

⁷² Robert Bickers, "'Good Work for China in every possible direction": The Foreign Inspectorate of the Chinese Maritime Customs 1854–1950,' in *Twentieth-Century Colonialism and China: Localities, the Everyday, and the World*, ed. Bryna Goodman and David S G Goodman (London: Routledge, 2012), 25–36.

⁷³ Chang, *Government, Imperialism and Nationalism in China*, 16–17, 183–190.

⁷⁴ van de Ven, *Breaking with the Past*.

its initial development has to be traced back to the history of Western imperialism in China. Beyond imperialism and nationalism, however, modern postal communication functioned as a transnational mechanism. Its nature was to operate across countries' borders, although, in many places, state sovereignty is also demonstrated by means of postage stamps and postmarks that shuttle between nations. In times of conflict and when state borders were disputed and ambiguous, especially during wars, the role of foreign postal staff is, therefore, worth exploring.

Julia Strauss's research on the Chinese Salt Administration, another example of an 'informal empire' with foreign management in modern China, according to Osterhammel, provides a different angle for looking at state-building. She studies institution-building under the Nationalist government and indicates that the Nationalist government's central administration was operating successfully while the state was actually weak. Its operations also relied on the support of foreign staff.⁷⁵ Similarly, the CPS used to be run by foreigners under what one could describe as a form of foreign management. However, the difference was that postal communication was a public service concerning everyone's connection with society and the outside world. In addition, the Nationalist government was more likely to successfully control the postal service than other institutions, such as the CMS and the Salt Administration, after 1927, including ceasing recruitment of new foreign staff and establishing Chinese-led management. The implications of the relations between foreign employees, the Chinese government, and the people's postal demands will be discussed in this thesis, especially during periods of political instability.

⁷⁵ Julia Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Polities: State Building in Republican China, 1927–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Apart from other similar or homologous institutions, Harris uses the terms ‘global design,’ ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘international bureaucrats’ to describe the CPS organisation and its foreign employees. He insightfully points out that the most significant difference between the CPS and the CMS was the quantity. There were significantly fewer foreign employees in the Post Office than in the Customs. 1925 was the year with the largest number of foreign postal staff, at merely 131, compared to thousands of foreign staff in the Customs. They were appointed to the highest positions of the Post Office as the elite executive leadership.⁷⁶ The foreign postal personnel assisted the Chinese government to ‘make China a secure and equal partner’ in the international society rather than controlling China’s postal service by means of Western imperialism, although the idea of the world order, the nation-state, and the practical administrative management they pursued in China were Western paradigms.⁷⁷ In short, they worked for China and ran the postal service in a Western style and practical way they believed that China should follow.

The CPS’s management and institution could be beneficial to China without being seen as under imperialist influence, but the long-term advantages of foreign leadership with Western organisation culture caused dissatisfaction among Chinese employees. For instance, Chen Jiying 陳紀滢 (1908–1997) was an entry-level postal worker in Harbin in the 1920s. He experienced disparate treatment and the CPS’s culture, where English was the main language, which initially made him uncomfortable as a Chinese worker in a Chinese-owned post office. He recalled that even higher-level Chinese staff were using code-mixing of daily language and jargon — Chinese with some English vocabulary — to show off their superiority.⁷⁸ The special,

⁷⁶ Harris, ‘The Post Office and State Formation,’ 21.

⁷⁷ Harris, ‘The Post Office and State Formation,’ 24–25.

⁷⁸ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo* (My Career Life of Postal Staff and Journalist) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1988), 8–21.

even discriminatory, working culture suggests that the foreign management and Western influence did not seem to be fully rationalised as the Chinese postal staff were, in fact, still sensitive to the inequality implied by the system.

The Postal Service during Times of War

Wartime is the main variable in investigating China's postal communication in this thesis. The scholarship on the political chaos and war during the Republican era mostly focuses on Sino-Japanese relations from the Mukden Incident of 1931 and the subsequent Second Sino-Japanese War between 1937 and 1945. There is a large number of works on politics, diplomacy, society, and culture during this period, but less attention is paid to postal services and communication. Historians access the letters and correspondence records of wartime as common primary sources while ignoring the mechanism of communications. It seems as if letters and messages were sent naturally in historians' writing.

In Taiwanese scholarship, there is some MA and PhD research on the wartime CPS, in particular the negotiation of postal services between Japanese-occupied areas and the territory under Nationalist rule.⁷⁹ Peng Yingtien explored the diplomatic negotiations with Manchukuo over the recovery of postal communications and the issue of competition and 'invasion' of the foreign postal agencies from an anti-imperialist perspective.⁸⁰ Cai Xingtao and He Huiqing analysed the negotiation process itself, especially the Nationalist government's agony within a dilemma of recognising Manchukuo as an independent state and the result of

⁷⁹ Peng Yingtien, *Lieqiang qin-Hua youquan shi*, 187–318. Cai Xingtao, 'Shenyang shibian hou (1931–1935) de dongbei youzheng' (The Postal Service in Northeast China after the Mukden Incident, 1931–1935) (M. A. thesis, College of Chinese Culture, 1973); He Huiqing, '1934 nian Hua-Man tongyou zhi tanpan' (The Sino-Manchurian Negotiation of Postal Communication in 1934) (PhD diss., National Taiwan University, 2000). Liao Dexiu, 'Kangzhan shiqi Guomin zhengfu de youzheng shiye' (The Postal Enterprise of Nationalist Government during the Anti-Japanese War) (M. A. thesis, National Chengchi University, 1992).

⁸⁰ Peng Yingtien, *Lieqiang qin-Hua youquan shi*, 187–318.

the compromise. Interestingly, He conducted the research in the late 1980s and early 1990s when China and Taiwan gradually resumed communications after China's Economic Reform and Taiwan's lifting of martial law. His research also echoed the new development of the post-Cold War drawing on historical experience to propose a prospect for the resumption of postal transit between the two sides.⁸¹ Liao Dexiu (Liao Te-hsiu) investigated the development of the army and public postal service activities in the rear areas during the Second Sino-Japanese War. He also dealt with the maintenance and interruption of communications between the rear areas and the occupied areas such as Shanghai, Guangzhou, and north China.⁸² Although these works have made some contributions to the scholarship of wartime postal institutions and mail delivery, they were produced with limited research in the 1970s to the early 1990s at the time when archival sources were still difficult to be accessed. Due to the political situation and source limitations, they often show a bias towards the ideology of the Guomintang and rarely explore the complexities and compromises of postal communication. Their discussions of institution-building and politics are largely based on the Guomintang government's official records and share a similar historical view as that created by the Guomintang itself.

In her book *The Chinese People at War*, Diana Lary notes briefly that the postal service during the Second Sino-Japanese War continued to operate for the public, despite the dangers and difficulties, while she also indicates that many people still suffered from the long-term interruption of communications that made it difficult to know about their families' safety.⁸³

⁸¹ Cai Xingtao, 'Shenyang shibian hou (1931–1935) de dongbei youzheng;' He Huiqing, '1934 nian Hua-man tongyou zhi tanpan'.

⁸² Liao Dexiu, 'Kangzhan shiqi Guomin zhengfu de youzheng shiye'.

⁸³ Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 104–106.

Although she might underestimate the accessibility of postal services, she certainly implies that there is room to further explore to what extent the postal service was maintained and how important postal communication was for the people during times of conflict and war.

Building on these works and new archives, diaries, and personal letters that have become accessible since, postal communication during war and conflicts is still a topic worth exploring. In order to maintain the postal service for multiple reasons, including people's communication needs, the state's responsibility of international postal transit and the dignity of the country, the adjustment, flexibility, and compromise of postal operations in wartime China will be presented in later chapters.

4. Sources, Approaches, and Structure

The history of postal services in China has been discovered in a myriad of official documents and archives. However, personal records have rarely been used. Newspapers and magazines still need to be further explored. This research combines newspapers, personal materials, and archives to reconstruct not only the history of postal communication, but also the voice of the people in early twentieth-century China. These sources are collected around the world in several languages. Considering language expertise and time constraints, this research primarily focuses on those collected in the UK, China, Taiwan, and Japan.

For the transnational personnel of the CPS and the place of origin of the modern postal service, this research locates and identifies relevant records in the UK. I have accessed the National Archives, the Postal Museum's archives, and the SOAS Library Special Collections that hold official documents and personal collections, such as *Annual Reports*, *Postal Guides*, and other material related to the operation of wartime postal communication, the Chinese Post

Office, and the British Post Office in China.

The official archives of the CPS are mainly stored in Taiwan and China. In Taiwan, parts of the former Directorate General of Posts' (郵政總局) archives (from 1881) are collected in the National Archives Administration (國家發展委員會檔案管理局). They were brought to Taiwan when the ROC government was defeated in the Civil War in 1949.⁸⁴ The Academia Historica (國史館) and the Archives of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica (中央研究院近代史研究所檔案館) preserve parts of the Nationalist government's archives in particular communication and foreign records, which include postal documents, legislation, regulations, orders, and international postal service negotiations. Although most postal historians and international relations scholars in Taiwan have accessed these collections and contributed to our understanding of this field, there are still many unutilised records that can be further explored and some postal issues in wartime can be clarified. These include questions of postal censorship, how it is to be understood and how it emerged through the 'national' postal service in China, especially starting from WWI as this thesis would like to suggest, what the foreign postal employees' role was when China became involved in wars and conflicts, and how the different Chinese governments negotiated the postal services with 'enemies' during and after wars.

To answer the above questions, more sources need to be accessed than only those in Taiwan. Thus, the postal service records of the Republican era collected in the PRC also have been consulted. Most of them are now kept in the Second Historical Archives of China (中國第二歷史檔案館). Shanghai was the centre of postal transportation at that time, so the postal

⁸⁴ For the description of postal archives moving to Taiwan in 1949, see Zhang Yi, *Zhonghua youzheng shi*, 483.

records held in the Shanghai Municipal Archives (上海市檔案館) were also required for this project. In addition, because of the Sino-Japanese relations and the conflict in Manchuria during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, my research also involves Japan's archives, especially the collections in the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, National Archives (アジア歴史資料センター国立公文書館), the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (外交史料館), and the Tōyō Bunko 東洋文庫 (Oriental Library).

Secondly, private records are important materials which were rarely included in previous studies, while the wartime experience of postal communication is an important part of this research. This relies on oral history records, personal letters, memoirs, and diaries. The Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica at Taipei, has contributed to preserving the oral history of modern China and Taiwan for decades. The reminiscences of Liu Chenghan 劉承漢 (1901–1992), former Deputy Director-General of Posts, entirely record his personal experiences and viewpoints about the development of the postal service as well as postal censorship.⁸⁵ *20th Century Wartime Experiences of Chinese Women: A Oral History* mentions how people attempted to communicate with family and friends even at the risk of their life during wartime.⁸⁶ In *The Diaries of Wunsz King, 1931–1952*, Ambassador Jin Wensi (Wunsz King) 金問泗 recorded every letter and telegram he received and sent to and from Europe and China during WWII and the Chinese Civil War.⁸⁷ Chen Kewen (Chen Kai-wen) 陳克文, a Guomindang official also wrote down his war experiences and communications in great detail while he moved with the Nationalist government.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*.

⁸⁶ Luo Jiurong, You Jianming, and Ju Haiyuan, *Fenghuo suiyue xia de Zhongguo funü*.

⁸⁷ Li Chang ed., *The Diaries of Wunsz King, 1931–1952*, 2 vols. (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 2016).

⁸⁸ Chen Fangzheng 陳方正, ed., *Chen Kewen riji 1937–1952 陳克文日記* (The Diaries of Chen Kai-wen), 2 vols.

Apart from the accounts of high-ranking senior officials, to understand war experiences and postal services, we also need to pay attention to the voices of people from the middle and lower classes. For instance, in his memoirs, Chen Jiying, a postal employee and journalist, not only recorded the postal service in Manchuria before and after the Mukden Incident, but also witnessed horrible war experiences in the rear area during WWII as well as the course of the Chinese Civil War. As a part-time journalist, he tried to evade Japanese control in Manchuria to investigate and report the situation in Manchukuo. Although his words are full of strong patriotism and Nationalist ideology, his narrative nonetheless helps us understand the mode of postal operations in the war, and the functioning of wartime personal correspondence and press publishing.⁸⁹

The newspapers and periodicals of the Republican era are abundant and have been used for various studies. However, they are still rarely incorporated into explorations of the history of postal communication. This thesis, on the other hand, specifically uses several newspapers collected in the aforementioned archives and institutes. It must be emphasised that in the later stage of this research, the world has been facing the most challenging pandemic of this century. Thanks to online databases that become more accessible during this difficult time, enabling scholars conduct their research despite travel restrictions. Thus, I was able to access the 'Late Qing and Republican-Era Chinese Newspapers' database created by Global Press Archive to search for wartime postal communications from the Republican era.⁹⁰ Articles and reports in newspapers demonstrate how severely wars affected postal communication and allow to explore why and how people cared about the needs of postal

(Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 2012).

⁸⁹ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*.

⁹⁰ Global Press Archive, 'Late Qing and Republican-Era Chinese Newspapers,' <https://gpa.eastview.com/crl/lqrcn/>, accessed 15 May 2020.

services. These sources can help us to understand the actual situation that people faced on the ground, as distinct from the perspective of the authorities and politics that has dominated the literature so far. Finally, mail items and postage stamps themselves are important materials considered in this research.

The thesis consists of six chapters: Chapter 1 focuses on the effects of WWI on the postal service and explores the first state-organised nationwide postal censorship in China. The war had far-reaching effects on China, both in terms of the subsequent development of the internal political situation and international relations. One area where the war did have a significant effect was Sino-European postal communication, as this could be the first time that mail was subjected to censorship in China. This chapter is based on the Diplomatic Archives at the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica and archival collections of the SOAS Library to discuss how a system of nationwide postal censorship was established in China and how it impacted the public during the war. It argues that WWI was a crucial moment for the Chinese government to establish a comprehensive and nationwide system of postal censorship. It suggests that this form of censorship during and after WWI reflects the Chinese government regarding it as a strategy to prevent information leakage and a useful tool of domestic policy and diplomacy.

Chapter 2, based on archival research conducted at the National Archives of the UK in London, the Shanghai Municipal Archives, and the Second Historical Archives of China in Nanjing, explores the impact of Civil War during the warlord era on the operations of the CPS and how postal communications were maintained by one national postal service, while the state was divided into several mutually hostile regimes. It examines how the foreign staff system allowed the CPS to maintain a relatively 'neutral' political position, which enabled it to

mediate between warlords, local authorities, and foreign powers. However, at the same time, those local authorities attempted to intrude into the service's operations by censoring mail and taking over the postal funds, even appropriating postal revenue.

Chapter 3 aims to explore how the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, which began with the Mukden Incident, challenged the CPS and China's postal communications and why it caused a crisis in the international postal transport between Asia and Europe via Manchuria. Analysing Chen Jiying's memoirs and Japanese and Chinese newspaper reports, the chapter compares official records on both sides and argues that the Chinese government regarded the postal service as a useful means to arouse international attention to Japan's invasion while maintaining an international postal service was the priority for the international community. The Chinese government's compromise and the international intervention show that despite conventionally only having one national postal authority in one country, providing efficient postal services and sharing the responsibility to maintain the international postal service even between hostile regimes were significant features of 'modern' postal communication.

Many consider that the Second Sino-Japanese War was the most severe tragedy in twentieth-century China. Observing the maintenance of postal services and people's communication during this period can help us to understand how modern postal communications operated beyond the 'state.' Thus, chapter 4 discusses the postal service itself and intends to answer the core question of how it was possible for people to still access the postal services and contact their friends and families between different regimes during WWII. It examines how the Nationalists strengthened control over the CPS under its nation-building efforts while the internal and external challenges forced it to continue to rely, to some extent, on foreigners and the legacy of foreign management in local branches of the Post

Office. It argues that the CPS, in fact, operated as an independent regulatory agency, which effectively maintained postal communications in China across the different regimes without interruption. Meanwhile, the Nationalist government shared the responsibilities of international postal transit as a modern sovereign state with regimes controlling other parts of the country, including the Communist-controlled areas. This was the price for maintaining the national postal service as a part of Nationalist nation-building.

After the CPS and the Chinese people had endured the hardship of WWII, the Nationalist-Communist Civil War followed. It greatly affected postal communication in China. Chapter 5 focuses on the Chinese mainland to explain postal resumption after the end of WWII and during the Civil War. It finds that, by comparison, people suffered more from postal interruptions during the Civil War than during WWII. Although the CPS strove to maintain postal transportation, it had lost the neutral position between the two warring parties. The fact that it was a part of the Nationalist nation-building effort since the late 1920s eventually made it impossible for the postal service to escape the political conflict between the Nationalists and the Communists. Ultimately, it was the civilians who were affected most by the postal interruption, far beyond the immediate years of the Civil War. Communication between the citizens of the two Chinas ceased completely from the 1950s to the 1980s.

Chapter 6 discusses the post-war takeover process of postal services in areas previously controlled by Japan under the volatile post-war conditions and takes Taiwan, the former Japanese colony, as a case study. It argues that although a national postal service was supposed to be a centralised institution, the post-war political arrangement in Taiwan gave the 'national' and 'state-owned' postal service more flexibility to operate as a kind of localised institution. It was able to operate relatively unaffected by the Civil War. It also seemed to

provide space for the CPS and future reconstruction on the island based on the Japanese colonial heritage and the CPS's own legacies.

Chapter 1: Connecting to the International Society: Censorship and the Postal Service in China during World War One

The establishment of the national postal service in China was not just the first reform of postal communication since the late Qing, but also a way to connect with international society. In 1914, China became a member state of the UPU and operated its postal service under the regulations of international law. Xu Fengyuan suggested regarding the IPS's and its successor CPS's efforts to join the UPU as a case study to examine China's participation in the international community in the early twentieth century,¹ yet postal operations are generally ignored in the studies of China's diplomatic progress. If joining the UPU was an opportunity for China's entry into the world, a modern postal system could be the key to opening the door. This chapter investigates how the ensuing First World War challenged the 'young and still developing'² service in terms of international cooperation and how the war impacted the service and the people who relied on it for communication.

With the Beiyang government's declaration of war on Germany and Austria-Hungary on 14 August 1917,³ China officially participated in the First World War.⁴ This war had far-reaching effects on China, both in terms of the subsequent development of the internal political situation and her international relations. With regard to international history, Xu Guoqi argues that after the debacle of the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, WWI was a critical

¹ Xu Fengyuan, 'Zhongguo guojihua de licheng: yi Qingmo Minchu canyu Wanguo youzheng lianmeng wei li' (The Progress of Chinese Internationalisation: A Case of Participating in the Universal Postal Union during the Late Qing and Early Republican Era), *Zhongxing shixue* 11 (2005): 1–22.

² *Annual Report* 1911, 1.

³ In this thesis the Beijing government, also known as the Beiyang government 北洋政府, refers to the internationally recognised central government of the Republic of China in Beijing between 1912 and 1928.

⁴ Guo Tingyi, *Zhonghua minguo shishi rizhi* (The Republic of China Historical Diary) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1979), vol. 1, 323.

moment when China strove to participate in the affairs of the international community and become recognised as an equal in ‘the family of nations.’ However, in his words, this is ‘an unwritten chapter in world history’.⁵ This may be because China did not send military forces to Europe and elsewhere, and its active participation was shorter than that of other Allied countries. Nonetheless, as scholars point out, thousands of Chinese labourers were sent to Europe to support the war effort from 1916, even though at the time, China had not yet declared war.⁶

Even though Xu’s point about the significance of WWI for China’s ‘internationalisation’ is well taken, the immediate impact of China’s entry into the war is rarely discussed. Therefore, it seems that ordinary people in China might not have suffered or else been influenced by the war. However, one area where the war did have a significant effect was Sino-European civil communication through the postal service. This chapter will show that this probably was the first time that postal communication was subjected to state censorship.

Earlier than that, as Lane Harris points out, the Qing government first requested Robert Hart, the Inspector-General of the Chinese Customs and Posts, in 1901 to operate postal censorship for suppression of dissent in newspapers and stop them from being spread by mail. Even though Hart refused at first, the government nonetheless forcibly organised censorship. It was even more institutionalised after the new Police Bureau 巡警部 and the Press Law of Great Qing 印刷物專律 were introduced in China in 1905 and 1906, respectively.

⁵ See Xu Guoqi, *China and the Great War: China’s Pursuit of a New National Identity and Internationalization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3–6.

⁶ See Chen Sanjing, *Huagong yu Ouzhan* (Chinese Labour and WWI) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1986); Xu Guoqi, ‘Yizhanqijian Zhongguo de “yi gong dai bing” canzhan yanjiu’ (‘Laborers as Soldiers’: China’s Contribution to the First World War), *Ershiyi shiji* 62 (2000.12): 53–62; Xu Guoqi, *China and the Great War*, 114–126; Gregory James, *The Chinese Labour Corps (1916–1920)* (Hong Kong: Bayview Educational Ltd., 2013).

Harris provides an overview of ‘heavy and sporadic’ censorship, which was initially adopted to maintain public order in China during the first half of the twentieth century, especially targeting seditious speech in the public sphere.⁷ However, Harris’s discussion ultimately focuses on censorship of press products, not letters, prior to the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. The essential difference between private letter censorship and censorship of periodicals distributed by mail is the impact such censorship has on people’s privacy. Thus, postal censorship in China is deserving of further exploration.

In fact, postal censorship was not to exert domestic social control in the first instance but mainly a strategy to prevent intelligence leaks. During WWI, combatant states usually applied it to their soldiers’ letters.⁸ Even the Chinese Labour Corps’ letters from Europe to China, for example, were most likely to be censored.⁹ However, Chinese governmental documents show that the civil postal service was also involved in wartime censorship, especially concerning international mail. How was postal censorship established and how did it impact the public during the war? This chapter will focus on the effects of WWI on the postal service and discuss the first state-organised nationwide postal censorship in China.

I will suggest that WWI was a crucial moment for the Chinese government in establishing a comprehensive and nationwide system of postal censorship. It was not only a policy of the central government for war purposes but also a service that was requested by China’s allies and enemies. This form of censorship was related to both public communication and China’s international relations. In addition to preventing information leakage during the

⁷ Harris, ‘The Post Office and State Formation in Modern China,’ 273–327.

⁸ See Eberhard Demm, ‘Censorship,’ in *1914–1918-online*, ed. by Ute Daniel et al. (Issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, 2015), accessed 1 January 2017, <http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/censorship>; Rosie Kennedy, *The Children’s War: Britain, 1914–1918* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 26.

⁹ James, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, 382.

war, postal censorship was a useful tool in domestic policy and international diplomacy used by the Chinese government.

1. The Beginnings of Censorship

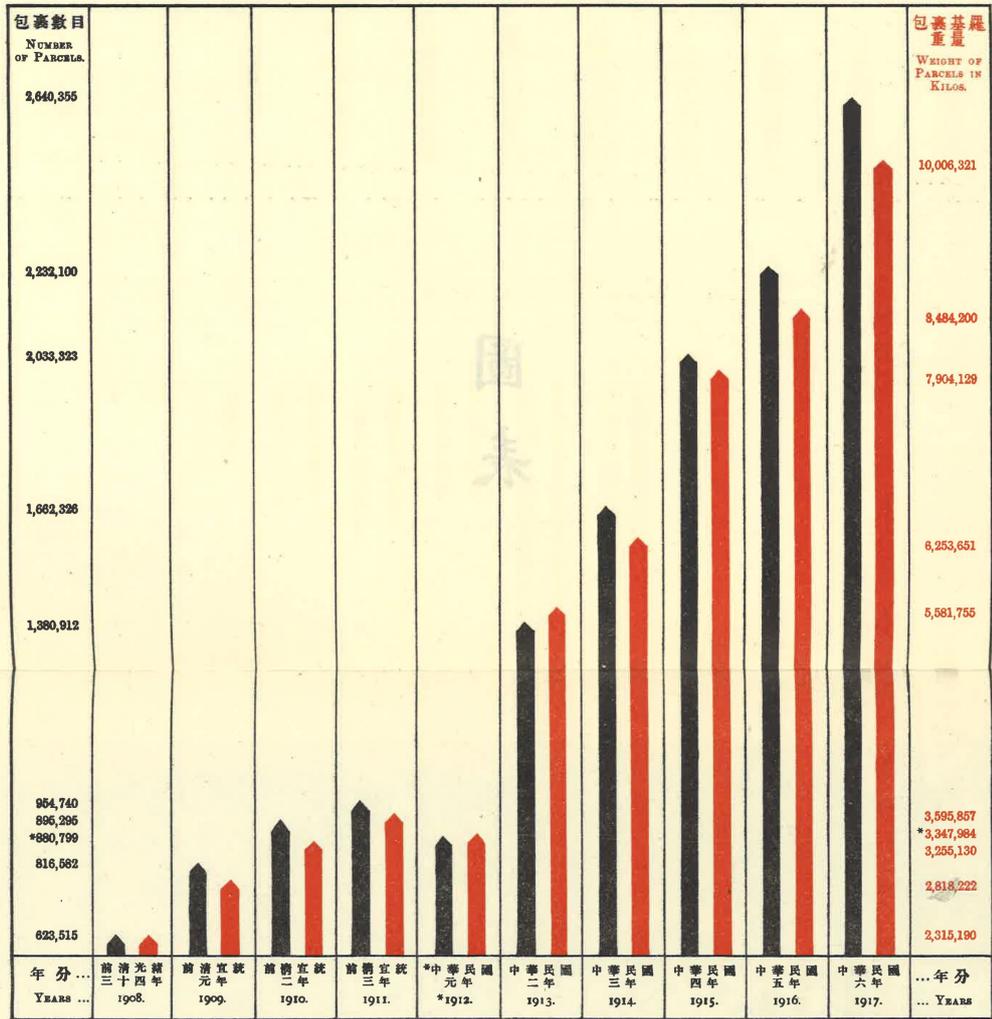
Background

In the early twentieth century, the Post Office in China was a new national service established in 1896, emulating the Western model. After the 1911 Revolution, the CPS of the Republic of China peacefully continued the operations of the former Imperial Post Office's operations and even inherited its management system populated by foreign staff. During the Republican era, the inland delivery and the service map of the CPS were expanding and growing. According to the CPS's annual reports, the number of Post Office branches continued to increase, and increasingly more letters, parcels, as well as newspapers were delivered by the Post Office (see Figures 1 and 2). This suggests that ever more Chinese people used its services for communication and this national institution seems to have been flourishing and growing during the 1910s.

包裹營業數目暨重量之圖表

(自前清光緒三十四年起至中華民國六年止)

DIAGRAM SHOWING VOLUME OF PARCEL TRADE DURING THE YEARS 1908-1917.



* 中華民國元年數目應係十箇半月之數
* The figures for 1912 cover only 10½ months.

Figure 1.1 Volume of parcels dealt with by the CPS during the years 1908 to 1917.

Source: Annual Report 1917, 'Diagrams'.

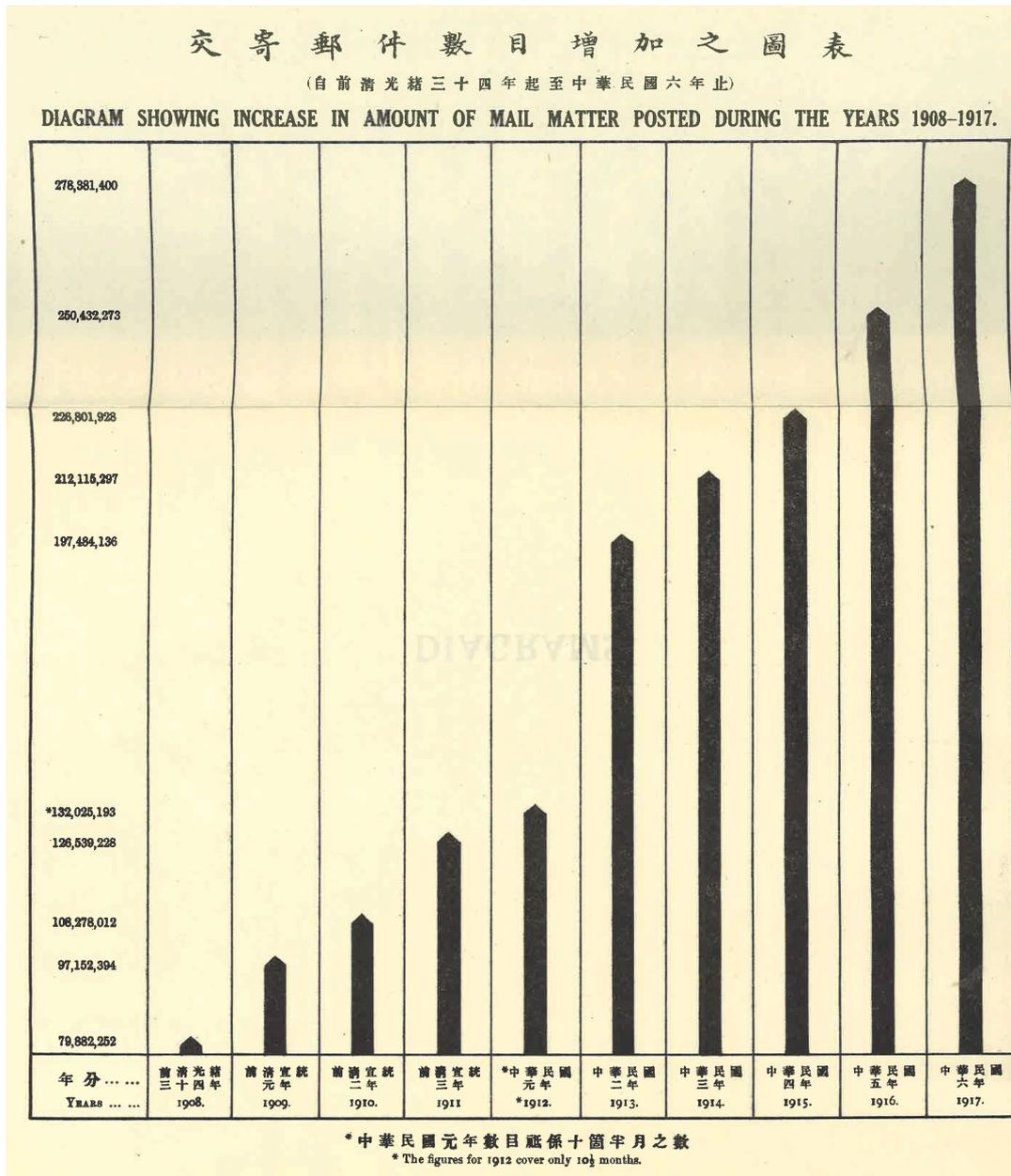


Figure 1.2 Amount of mail matter dealt with by the CPS during the years 1908 to 1917. Sources: *Annual Report 1917*, 'Diagrams'.

However, it cannot be ignored that in the 1910s, the Republic of China was not a unified country as the former Qing dynasty had been. Her political situation was generally unstable, especially after the Second Revolution in 1913. President Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916) controlled the central government, the so-called Beiyang government, in Beijing and tried to establish a centralised political authority, whereas Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) led the

Chinese Revolutionary Party 中華革命黨 to resist Yuan's power expansion. Although the Second Revolution failed, the military force became a weapon used by both the central and the provincial authorities in political disputes.¹⁰ Warlords, different political factions, and independent local power-holders controlled various regions. After Yuan suddenly died in 1916, provincial authorities became even more independent until Chiang Kai-shek established a new central government in Nanjing in 1928. Despite the fragmented state of China, the Chinese national postal service remained unified. The headquarters of this highly centralised state-owned enterprise were located in Beijing, and before 1928 the Postmaster-General took orders from the Beijing government without any hesitation. Although its operation was extremely disturbed by internal conflicts, it expanded to almost all of China's territory, including the warlords-controlled areas, in the 1910s.¹¹

When the Beijing government announced the severance of diplomatic relations with Germany and Austria-Hungary in March 1917 and then officially declared its entry into WWI in August of the same year, this announcement immediately affected the CPS operations, as friends and partners became enemies. The *Annual Report* from 1917 indicates three main effects of WWI. Firstly, all German and Austro-Hungarian employees of the CPS became 'enemies' and 'were consequently notified that their connection with the [Postal] Administration was severed forthwith.' In addition, some employees were recruited for military service in the war. Similar to the administration system of the CMS, the management was largely staffed with foreigners, and a staff shortage was an obvious consequence of the

¹⁰ For the issue of the centralisation of Yuan's power versus provincialism and the causes and effects of the Second Revolution, see Edward A. McCord, *The Power of the Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Warlordism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 161–204.

¹¹ The expansion, operation situation, statistics, and the branch offices' list of the Chinese Post Office can be seen in its annual reports, for example, *Annual Report on the Chinese Post Office 1916*, 4–43.

war for the CPS.¹²

The second consequence of the war was the impact on international mail exchange and routes. The CPS stopped the Sino-German mail exchange and cooperation with the German Post Offices, which were generally established in the German Concessions in China. Likewise, the United States closed the postal routes to Germany and its allies after the declaration of war. The parcel service to Europe was especially obstructed. This is because the war called for emergency shipping, and the British colonial postal services, such as Hong Kong and India, suspended parcel delivery over their routes. Many restrictions and prohibitions for parcels were also applied between belligerent countries.¹³

The third effect of the war was that 'with a view to protecting the [Chinese] State as much as possible against the activities of enemy residents, censorship of mail matter was instituted by the Chinese Government.'¹⁴ This shows that the CPS could not challenge government demands for censorship; it had to comply with the requirements of the declaration of war. Most importantly, it was the first time, at least based on the CPS's records, that the Chinese central government organised postal censorship of private letters on a nationwide scale.

Postal censorship at the central government level in China had started and had been institutionalised before WWI. As Harris pointed out, it can be traced back to the last years of the Qing dynasty. In fact, after the establishment of the Republic, postal censorship was only institutionalised because of the political situation in the early Republican era, when Yuan's government ordered a series of censorship regulations and mail prohibitions to target his

¹² *Annual Report 1917*, 2, 13.

¹³ *Annual Report 1917*, 12–13.

¹⁴ *Annual Report 1917*, 2.

political opponents.¹⁵ Moreover, the 1912 Martial Law 戒嚴法 gave local authorities a legal basis and under martial law they had the power to impose postal censorship.¹⁶ There are several news reports in the *Shanghai Daily (Shenbao 申報)* indicating that military and administrative bureaucracies, whether at the central or local levels, often interfered with the work of local branches of the Postal Office and requested to inspect mail targeting opponents during political disputes, wars, and conflicts under martial law. For example, in October 1915, when Hubei was under martial law, the police department received instructions to send officers to post offices to examine the mail.¹⁷

However, regardless of their nationality, the private mail of ordinary people was generally not involved and hardly directly affected by censorship. One of the reasons was the censorship targeting predominantly the members of ‘the rebel party,’ referring to the Chinese Revolutionary Party, such as their leaders Sun Yat-sen and Lin Sen 林森 (1868–1943), and publications defaming the government and inciting subversion of the country.¹⁸ Another reason was that by far not all mail was processed by the CPS. Several countries had established their own national post offices in China and served both Chinese and foreigners. The Shanghai International Settlement also ran a postal service. According to a 1913 report, foreign post offices were not regulated by martial law and their mail was excluded from the examination.¹⁹ This likely was due to the conditions of extraterritoriality, suggesting that broader censorship

¹⁵ Harris, ‘The Post Office and State Formation in Modern China,’ 280–282.

¹⁶ ‘Jieyanfa caoan’ 戒嚴法草案 (Draft Martial Law), *Shenbao*, 5 December 1912, 1; ‘Zhuan dian’ 專電 (Special Dispatch), *Shenbao*, 28 September 1913, 2.

¹⁷ ‘Hubei jinri zhi fangwu’ 湖北近日之防務 (Recent Defence in Hubei), *Shenbao*, 31 October 1915, 7; ‘Tongchi yanfang dangren’ 通飭嚴防黨人 (Order to be on Guard against the Revolutionary Party), *Shenbao*, 14 November 1915, 7.

¹⁸ ‘Chajin dihui zhengfu zhi baozhi’ 查禁詆毀政府之報紙 (Newspapers that Slander the Government are Prohibited), *Shenbao*, 30 April 1915, 10.

¹⁹ ‘Zhuan dian,’ *Shenbao*, 28 September 1913, 2.

was not feasible. More importantly, as Harris's work implies, censorship in China was still hardly institutionalised and in its infancy during Yuan's presidency. This reflects a reality where the government was still exploring ways to use this postal institution as a means to monitor society. As the later discussion will show, WWI inadvertently stimulated the development of more systematic postal censorship in China. In addition, although a centralised and nominally state-owned postal service was regarded as an important step in China's modernisation process, a 'modernised' postal service seemed to mean that the state could monitor private communications in the name of public security.

The other important aspect that pertains to issues of postal censorship was the international context in which the development of the Chinese postal service from the late Qing to the early Republican era happened. One background of China participating in WWI was, as Xu Guoqi points out, that since the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Chinese elites had attempted to put forward a new concept of the world based on a 'nationalist internationalism' with the aim of saving the nation. He argues the rise of nationalism in China was a part of China's internationalisation and a result of the Western military and economic invasion in the late nineteenth century. Xu quotes Rebecca Karl's discussion of nationalism as the Chinese people's 'redefinition of themselves and of the world.'²⁰ He suggests that in the early stage of nationalism in China, nationalism and internationalism were 'two sides of the same coin'. Specifically, Liang Qichao's idea of a 'new citizen' 新民 proposed the Chinese should also be a member of the world. The nationalist internationalism then gradually, rather than suddenly, influenced the Republican government's foreign policies. As Yuan Shikai claimed in 1913, a

²⁰ Rebecca K. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 201.

new republic of China would 'join the family of nations.'²¹ The process of China joining the UPU provides a similar but different example. The Qing court first asked to join the UPU just after the Post Office opened in 1896. The government even appointed representatives to the UPU Congress to be observers twice in Washington DC in 1897 and in Rome in 1906, and ultimately joined the UPU in 1914.²² This indicates that the Chinese government understood the importance of international participation and acted to join relevant international bodies very early. Modern forms of national postal service led to a new order of international communication. This provided a link for China to participate in international affairs, through which China could enact its ideals of internationalism. As the following discussion will show, postal censorship was not merely an internal strategy but related to international relations, especially during WWI.

The Japanese Challenge

Although China was not involved in WWI when it broke out in 1914, the new international situation affected China and her international postal communication as well. Unlike China, Japan immediately entered the war in August 1914, and its army occupied the German-leased territory of Jiaozhou-Qingdao, the Kiautschou Bay concession in Shandong, together with British forces in November 1914. This caused the relations between China and Japan to drop to a low point. The Japanese government further issued the infamous Twenty-one Demands (Taika nijūikkajō yōkyū 对華 21 ヶ条要求) to China in February 1915. It asked the Chinese government to hand over all the German rights and influence in China and attempted to obtain interests in every aspect of China. This eventually led to severe tensions between these

²¹ Xu, *China and the Great War*, 57–64.

²² On the process of China entering the UPU, see Xu Fengyuan, 'Zhongguo guojihua de lichen,' 4–7.

two countries.²³ As a result, some local provincial-level governments sought to prevent Japan's further expansionism and raised awareness of suspected Japanese intentions. One of the strategies was organising mail censorship at the provincial level, as the following two cases show.

The first case of attempted censorship happened in Shandong in December 1915. The Governor of Shandong (山東巡按使), Cai Rukai 蔡儒楷 (1869–1923), requested permission to censor mail in the province just after Yuan Shikai had proclaimed himself emperor. He proposed checking any suspicious mail from abroad or from foreign post offices in China, regardless of whether recipients were foreigners or Chinese. He asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) to relay this censorship measure to foreign diplomatic missions.²⁴ Although he did not indicate his primary purpose, he was likely aiming at Japan. He also employed other strategies to counter Japanese intentions after Japan's occupation of German territories in his province.²⁵ While it remains difficult to locate any final decision from the central government, the MOFA disagreed with his request to censor foreign recipients' mail. The MOFA refused his request to censor foreign recipients' mail because it did not recognise Shandong as an alert area and considered that this censorship might have enraged foreign missions without justifiable cause.²⁶

²³ Guo Tingyi, *Zhonghua minguo shishi rizhi*, vol. 1, 154–168; Ian Nish, 'An Overview of Relations Between China and Japan, 1895–1945', in *China and Japan: History, Trends, and Prospects*, ed. Christopher Howe (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1996), 28–29; John D. Meehan, 'From Alliance to Conference: the British Empire, Japan and Pacific Multilateralism, 1911–1921', in *The Decade of the Great War: Japan and the Wider World in the 1910s*, ed. Tosh Minohara et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 50–52.

²⁴ 'Shandong jiancha youjianshi chaohan qinghefuyou' 山東檢查郵件事抄函請核復由 (A Copy of the Request for Postal Censorship in Shandong), 1915.12.14, 03-02-087-01-003, Institute of Modern History (MHAS), Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan 中央研究院近代史研究所檔案館.

²⁵ Cai Rukai had prevented Japan's expansion in Shandong even before the war via means such as his advocacy for the development of Longkou port. See Zhang Yufa, *Zhongguo xiandaihua de quyu yanjiu: Shandong sheng, 1860–1916* (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1982), 257.

²⁶ 'Fa Tongshuai banshichu gonghan' 發統率辦事處公函 (Official Letter to Commander-in-Chief Office), 15 December 1915, 03-02-087-01-004, MHAS.

Another case that preceded China's declaration of war happened in Harbin, Jilin province, in April 1916. According to Fu Qiang 傅彊, the Commissioner of Foreign Affairs for Jilin (外交部特派吉林交涉員),²⁷ the Jilin provincial government followed the order of the office of the Commander-in-Chief (統率辦事處) of the central government to implement postal censorship and appoint censors to post offices. However, the censor in the Harbin Post Office only picked the letters addressed to Japanese residents in Beijing and ignored the Post Office clerks' advice that foreign mail should not be examined. Because the censor did not make any concessions, the Post Office asked Commissioner Fu to break this deadlock. Fu then reported to the MOFA and requested a copy of the UPU Convention for reference.²⁸ After the MOFA sought the opinion of the MOC, they replied to Fu that the President had already issued a set of Regulations for Censorship of sedition mail items (檢查扣留煽亂郵件章程) the previous year,²⁹ which included an article stipulating that foreign mail should not be inspected; if this type of mail was suspicious, censors should cable the Directorate General of Posts for instructions.³⁰ In other words, the censor did not comply or was unfamiliar with national regulations in this case, while the postal staff was likely to know the regulations.

These cases illustrate that the censorship orders from Beijing were not originally targeting Japan and other foreign countries. Instead, its objects were 'internal rebels,' such as

²⁷ Offices of the Commissioner of Foreign Affairs (交涉員公署) were bureaucratic institutions established in every treaty port by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), active from 1912 to 1929. The Commissioners represented the government in dealing with foreign affairs at the local level and answered to the MOFA. On the MOFA's institutional transformation in the Beiyang period, see Tang Qihua, 'Beijing zhengfu waijiao xingzheng jigou de yanbian' (The Changes of Diplomatic Administration of the Beijing Government), MHAS, accessed 8 January 2017, <http://archives.sinica.edu.tw/wp-content/uploads/8-1-1-2.pdf>.

²⁸ 'Wairen xinjian yingfou jianyan qingchaheshizun you' 外人信件應否檢驗請查核示遵由 (Please Advise whether Foreigners' Letter Should Be Censored), 19 April 1916, 03-02-087-01-005, MHAS.

²⁹ The document cited here does not include all eight articles of this regulation, but it does note that Yuan issued these regulations in 1915.

³⁰ 'Shou Jiaotongbu zi' 收交通部咨 (Received from the Communications Ministry) and 'Fa Jilin jiaosheyuan chi' 發吉林交涉員飭 (Sent to the Commissioner of Foreign Affairs for Jilin), 24–27 April 1916, 03-02-087-01-007 and 008, MHAS.

the National Protection Army (護國軍) and the Chinese Revolutionary Party that had launched the Anti-monarchical War across the country since Yuan prepared to be emperor at the end of 1915. The Beijing government noticed that ‘the members of the Revolutionary Party spread rumours everywhere. They created secret codes to communicate by wire and distributed publications in order to incite people’. The pro-Yuan local military and police authorities were asked to search for and ban such materials and ordered the MOC to come forward to ‘find ways’ to restrain their spread.³¹ For example, in April 1916, the press reported that the Hankow Police had installed special letterboxes on the main roads to collect those ‘seditious’ letters, although there is no further information about how the letterboxes worked.³²

Even though Japan was not the censorship target, the actual practices at the local level indicated otherwise. This must be seen in the context of the volatile state of Sino-Japanese relations at the time. After the Shandong Problem and the Twenty-one Demands, Chinese people and local governments both exhibited anti-Japanese sentiment.³³ In terms of location, Shandong and Jilin were on the frontlines of the emerging conflict between China and Japan. Thus, while censorship could have been a strategy devised by the central government to counter domestic ‘rebellions,’ these local governments followed the orders from Beijing but refocused them, targeting Japan. Otherwise, the Beijing government itself generally avoided interfering with foreign mail at this stage, as these two cases show.

³¹ ‘Chajin dangren hutong xiaoxi’ 查禁黨人互通消息 (Search for Ban the Party Members to Intercommunicate), *Shenbao*, 8 January 1916, 10.

³² ‘Hubei zhi junshi xiaoxi’ 湖北之軍事消息 (Hubei Military News), *Shenbao*, 2 April 1916, 6.

³³ For example, anti-Japanese rallies were held in Hankou after the publication of the Twenty-one Demands, see *Zhong-Ri guanxi shiliao: Ouzhan yu Shandong wenti (1914–1916)* (A Compilation of the Historical Resources of the Sino-Japanese Relations: WWI and Shandong Problem), vol. 2 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1974), 856. ‘Wuhan guanting yanjin pai-Ri judong’ 武漢官廳嚴禁排日舉動 (The Wuhan Authority Bans Anti-Japanese Behaviour), *Shenbao*, 11 April 1915, 6.

In addition, the Beijing government administration system and postal censorship were not highly institutionalised in the early Republican era. Although the Regulation for Censorship of Seditious Publications had been issued, both local and central government officials and censors were not familiar with the rules, with the exception of MOC and postal staff. This important document affecting the international postal service had not been released to local authorities but could be known to local postal employees, as Commissioner Fu's attempt to seek solutions from the UPU Convention in order to reduce the possibility of international disputes suggests. It reflects the channels of communication between the central government and local authorities were not effective in the early Republican era. As it will be mentioned in chapter 2, the Post Office, as a highly centralised institution, had much better channels which could be used by the Beijing government against its political opponents. Nonetheless, Fu would have been disappointed if he had received the UPU Convention. The Convention contained no articles that could have regulated international mail censorship in 1916.³⁴

More importantly, the Post Office was not empowered to handle postal censorship, although its staff may have been more familiar with postal rules and operations than other local officials. Censorship was generally carried out by the police and local military and political authorities. The *Annual Report* of the CPS indicates that the unstable situation in 1916 caused 'disastrous consequences,' including 'a strict censorship' in many areas.³⁵ The Post Office's task was to process mail efficiently, so they did not welcome censorship, which affected the postal operations. However, under the circumstances of political pressure, they were forced to work in conjunction with local authorities. Interestingly, despite unclear

³⁴ The UPU Convention of Rome was agreed upon in 1906 and replaced by the Convention of Madrid in 1920, see Universal Postal Union, *Convention of Rome* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1907); Universal Postal Union, *Convention of Madrid* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922).

³⁵ *Annual Report 1916*, 1.

accountability within the administration for postal censorship, the final responsibility was shifted back to the MOC, the supervisor of the CPS. The later discussion will further explore the changes in the CPS's roles after China joined WWI.

2. The Institutionalisation of Censorship of Foreign Mail Items during the War

After China had declared war on Germany and Austria on 14 August 1917, censorship of foreign letters was unavoidable. Hence, a nationwide regime of postal censorship was instantly established. The implementation of postal censorship was ordered by the MOC, while the Directorate General of Posts in Beijing was requested to approve and implement the order. According to *Shenbao*, on 25 August, the Directorate General of Posts issued a postal circular of the MOC with Regulations for Postal Censorship to subordinate post offices. The Regulations stipulated that, firstly, all the mail exchanged between Chinese and enemy nationals and all other foreigners was to be examined as long as it was delivered by the CPS, with the exception of Chinese government communications and official documents sent by diplomatic missions. Secondly, the Regulations specified that censorship offices were to be set up in Post Offices in all important locations and commercial ports, and the provincial authorities were to appoint censors. Thirdly, it was required that the process of censorship should be rapid and maintain the secrecy of correspondence. Once a letter passed the examination, it should be stamped for confirmation and then for delivery.³⁶

There was a gap between planning and execution in that the regulations could not

³⁶ 'Jiancha youjian zhi banfa' 檢查郵件之辦法 (Postal Censorship Regulations), *Shenbao*, 26 August 1917, 10. *Annual Report 1917*, 2.

reach the local areas that were not controlled by Beijing. Even in pro-Beijing areas, the lack of preparation and experience, combined with the vagueness of the Regulations, immediately created many problems. According to the Regulations, all letters had to be censored. In addition to mail, telegrams were also censored in some areas. In Shanghai, the local authority organised censorship of telegrams in foreign languages and appointed censors to join telegram offices.³⁷ However, as opposed to telegrams, censorship of letters had still not been carried out in Shanghai by September 1917. This was because Shanghai had the largest volume of mail passing through its post offices in the country. Combined with the complicated censorship procedures, this made it difficult to process all the letters that should have been examined under the Regulations. Thus, the Shanghai Military Commander (淞滬護軍使), responsible for appointing censors in accordance with the Regulations, reported the situation in Shanghai to the MOC and proposed a flexible solution. Namely, the Commander suggested that censorship should only focus on German and Austrian mail items and should carefully process the letters sent by or to 'enemy' nationals.³⁸

Despite diplomatic immunity, postal censorship, in practice, could not absolutely ensure the exclusion of diplomatic mail and the treatment of personal letters from and to diplomatic missions immediately became a problem. On 30 August, Yang Zengxin 楊增新 (1864–1928), governor of Xinjiang, sent a telegram to Beijing because the Regulations confused him. He could not distinguish between private and diplomatic mail if they were sent from individuals from Allied and neutral nations to their diplomatic missions in China.³⁹ The

³⁷ 'Jiancha youjian zhi banfa,' *Shenbao*, 29 August 1917, 10. *Annual Report 1916*, 10. 'Jiancha youjian zhi banfa,' *Shenbao*, 25 August 1917, 10. *Annual Report 1916*, 10.

³⁸ 'Jiancha youjian zhi banfa,' *Shenbao*, 8 September 1917, 10.

³⁹ 'Jiancha youdian an' 檢查郵電案 (The Case of Postal and Telegraph Censorship), 30 August–3 September 1917, 03-02-088-01-010, 011, 012, MHAS.

vague definitions in the new Regulations also made it difficult to identify the sender's nationality. The Regulations did not mention whether to treat mail as private or diplomatic if sent from non-enemy individuals to diplomatic missions. In fact, Yang's situation was more complex in so far as Xinjiang bordered Russia and was close to several conflict participants and their spheres of influence, including Britain, Russia, Turkey, and Germany. Even before the Regulations were issued, Yang had been implementing censorship over foreign mail in an attempt to gather useful information for Beijing in the wake of the Russian February Revolution, as he was concerned about potential repercussions in Xinjiang.⁴⁰ The new Regulations appeared to be hindering his mission instead. He could not censor all foreign mail, especially those private letters appearing to be diplomatic documents. Nonetheless, the MOC clearly responded that letters written by foreigners to diplomatic missions did not have to be examined.⁴¹

Meanwhile, some German and Austrian nationals were found to be using diplomatic channels of neutral countries to send their letters. A. H. Hyland, the Postal Commissioner for Zhili 直隸, reported that a man named Fr. Siebert claimed to be the representative of 'the Delegate for Tianjin of the Royal Netherlands in China.' Siebert sent a letter in English to Hyland that claimed:

Letters addressed to German subjects in Peking and stamped on the backside with the official seal of the Dutch representative for German (and Austrian) interests in Tientsin – Delegate for Tientsin of Royal Netherlands Legation in China – never are delivered to the

⁴⁰ 'Zhi Tacheng daoyin dian' 致塔城道尹電 (A Telegram Sent to the Chief of Tacheng Circuit) 1917.7.15, in *Zhong-E guanxi shiliao: Xinjiang bianfang (1917-1919)* (A Compilation of the Historical Resources of the Sino-Russian Relations: Frontier Defence in Xinjiang) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1961), 108–109.

⁴¹ 'Zhaochao zhi Dihua Yang shengzhang dian' 照鈔致迪化楊省長電 (A Record of a Telegram Sent to Governor Yang in Dihua), 1 September 1917, 03-02-088-01-015, MHAS.

addresses by the Peking Post Office.⁴²

He stressed that the actions taken by the Peking Post Office were ‘absolutely illegal’ and argued that this type of letters should have the same diplomatic immunity as regular diplomatic documents and not have been censored or delayed.⁴³

Intriguingly, Siebert was originally not a Dutch diplomat but a former German vice-consul in Tianjin. Before he moved to Tianjin, he was an interpreter in the German Consulate in Fengtian and was appointed to be acting consul briefly in 1912.⁴⁴ After China broke diplomatic ties with Germany, he changed his identity, claiming to be a ‘the Delegate for Tientsin of the Royal Netherlands Legation.’ According to the Chinese government documents, Siebert was a Dutch official who ‘interfered in local affairs’ (干預地方事務), which led to the discontent of the local authorities.⁴⁵ As Hyland mentioned in his report, this Dutch Delegate stayed in the former Consulate of Germany in Tianjin.⁴⁶ This may suggest that former German consular officers continued to serve German citizens, also to help them send their mail even after the breakdown of diplomatic relations. It is difficult to exclude the possibility that at least former German and Austrian diplomats could escape the postal censorship of ‘enemies’ correspondence under the Dutch protective umbrella, as Siebert’s query implies.

⁴² For the original context of the letter from Siebert to Hyland, 1917.8.27, see the attachment in ‘Jiancha youjian shi chaosong Zhili youwuchang yu Xibeite wanglai hanjian you’ 檢查郵件事抄送直隸郵務長與西貝特往來函件由 (A Copy of Letters from the Postal Commissioner of Zhili and Siebert on Postal Censorship), 10 September 1917, 03-02-087-02-019, MHAS. In addition, although Siebert’s name was translated to *Xibeite* 西貝特 in this document, he was generally referred to as *Xiguxian* (希古賢) in other documents.

⁴³ ‘Jiancha youjian shi chaosong Zhili youwuchang yu Xibeite wanglai hanjian you,’ 10 September 1917, 03-02-087-02-019, MHAS

⁴⁴ ‘Benguo zhu Fengtian lingshi qingjia huiguo you tongyiguan daili xichizhizhao’ 本國駐奉天領事請假回國由通譯官代理希飭知照 (The Consul’s Leave of Absence to Return Home and Acting Consulate by Interpreter), 10 April 1912, 03-09-001-01-001, MHAS.

⁴⁵ ‘Liu Jin De-Ao ren Xiguxian deng bude ganshe gongshi’ 留津德奧人希古賢等不得干涉公事 (Siebert, German-Austrian Citizen Staying in Tianjin Must not Interfere in Official Affairs), 12 September 1917, 03-36-048-01-031, MHAS.

⁴⁶ ‘Jiancha youjian shi,’ 10 September 1917.

In fact, this Dutch Delegate for Tientsin almost simultaneously protested to Huang Rongliang 黃榮良 (1876–?), China's Tianjin Commissioner of Foreign Affairs, against censorship of diplomatic letters. Huang reported to Beijing that the vagueness of the Regulations was the reason that led to the controversy. The censors believed that every enemy resident's mail should be examined, so Siebert was no exception, especially since he was a 'famous enemy-state national' (知名敵國人) in the local area.⁴⁷

This incident raised a tricky issue which was not clearly addressed in the Regulations: should censors open and examine letters sent from foreign missions to enemy nationals? On the one hand, the Regulations specified the exemption of official documents, as well as for foreign letters with seals of diplomatic missions. On the other hand, it also requested that censors must examine enemy citizens' mail. Censors were faced with the dilemma of having to respect diplomatic immunity that might be trumped by the need to examine the correspondence of the enemy nationals. Although the Beijing government found that enemy nationals could use diplomatic channels to escape censorship, in the case of Siebert, they realised the Regulations could not effectively solve the controversy.⁴⁸ Significantly, the Dutch Embassy played a special role in this affair. In fact, not only the former German legation but the Austrian legation guard, too, was incorporated into the Dutch legation guard. A document shows that the Dutch guard claimed that they were authorised to receive the Austrian guard's mail items.⁴⁹ Because the Netherlands were a neutral state, it could help German and Austrian

⁴⁷ 'Shi ling geguan jijiao diren hanjian yingfou jiancha qing heshi zunban you' 使領各館寄交敵人函件應否檢查請核示遵辦由 (Please Advise whether to Examine Letters Sent from Embassies and Consulates to Enemy Nationals), 22 September 1917, 03-02-087-04-005, MHAS.

⁴⁸ 'Heguo zhujinweiyuan jifa xinjian yingfou jiancha xiheban jianfu you' 和國駐津委員寄發信件應否檢查希核辦見復由 (Please Advise whether to Examine Letters Sent by the Dutch Consulate's Staff in Tianjin), 17 September 1917, 03-02-087-04-001, MHAS.

⁴⁹ 'Hebing xiang youju suoxinjian shi chaoyi gai guan weidui yuanhan songqingcha you' 和兵向郵局索信件事抄譯該館衛隊原函送請查照由 (A Translated Copy from Dutch Consulate Guards about Dutch Soldiers Forcing

nationals to exploit such loopholes in the Regulations and attempted to do everything possible to protect the interests of Germany and Austria. This may be because the Netherlands' diplomatic policy was to balance both sides of the belligerents.⁵⁰ Perhaps people as private individuals who were suddenly considered enemies, such as overseas German and Austrian citizens, were relatively vulnerable in China after China had declared war on their countries and joined the Allied Powers.

At the same time, the Beijing government was cautious in their avoidance of any international trouble, even though they took a firm stand against 'enemies,' in this context, meaning that letters from and to Germans and Austrians should be censored.⁵¹ As to the problem of enemy mail with the Dutch seal, the MOFA consulted the Interior, Communications, and War Ministries to solve this dispute. The MOC, for example, understood that this was not only related to postal censorship but to diplomacy and local security.⁵² The Ministry of the Interior (MOI) was of the opinion that mail with the official seal of diplomatic missions could be honoured, because the martial law was not declared in every local area, especially Beijing and Tientsin, where the Dutch missions were located; thus, the government had no legal basis for inspecting these letters.⁵³ This reflects that the martial law was the only

the Post Office to Return Letters), 25 August 1917, 03-02-087-02-008, MHAS.

⁵⁰ For research on the policy of neutrality and historical background of the Netherlands in the First World War, see Maartje M. Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral: The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914–1918* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) and Susanne Wolf, *Guarded Neutrality: Diplomacy and Internment in the Netherlands during the First World War* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), esp. 1–34. Abbenhuis also discusses the long-term formation of Dutch neutrality before the war; on this, see Maartje M. Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals: Great Power Politics 1815–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁵¹ 'Heguo zhu Jin weiyuan yu geling tongyi daiyu' 和國駐津委員與各領同一待遇 (The Dutch Consulate's Staff in Tianjin is Treated the Same as Other Consulate's), 17 September 1917, 03-02-087-04-002, MHAS. 'Youjian mianyan zhi banfa' 郵件免驗之辦法 (Postal Censorship Exemption), *Shenbao*, 22 September 1916, 10.

⁵² 'Shiguan geguan jijiao diren hanjian yingfou jiancha shi xiyu Neiwubu shangding banfa jianfu you' 使館各館寄交敵人函件應否檢查事希與內務部商定辦法見復由 (Please Discuss the Solution with the Ministry of Internal Affairs for Postal Censorship on Letters Sent from Embassies and Consulates to Enemy Nationals), 2 October 1917, 03-02-087-04-007, MHAS.

⁵³ 'Jiancha shiguan geguan yu diguo renmin wanglai youjian shi' 檢查使館各館與敵國人民往來郵件事 (Inspecting Embassies and Consulates' Letters with Enemy Nationals), 3 November 1917, 03-02-087-04-010,

legal basis for local postal censorship at that time. If there was no declaration of martial law, any censorship would lack legality. Meanwhile, the Ministry of War (MOW) consulted the British Minister, Sir John Newell Jordan (1852–1925). He conveyed to every foreign minister that none of the diplomatic missions' official and private mail matters should be examined.⁵⁴ According to the archival record, the government ultimately seemed to recognise that all mail items of diplomatic missions, regardless of the addressee, were exempted from censorship. It was not just due to the objections expressed by foreign ministers, but also, as the MOW pointed out, other foreign post offices in China could be equally used to evade censorship.⁵⁵ As far as the Beijing government was concerned, foreigners seemed to have many ways to circumvent censorship of correspondence, and it was implied that the government should cease struggling with this issue and cause dissatisfaction from diplomatic missions. More importantly, while these cases imply that the Beiyang government was not familiar with the international convention of diplomatic immunity, postal communication and communication privacy did matter to foreigners affected by the war.

Subsequent developments show that the Chinese government suffered from the consequence of complexity of the situation and the deficiencies of the Regulations that caused a diplomatic dispute. Given those ongoing issues, the government revised the censorship regulations and issued a more detailed version, the Censorship Regulations for Foreign Mail (檢查洋文郵件辦法). It was drafted by the Post Office then presented for the MOC and the MOFA in November 1917. After consulting with relevant departments, it was

MHAS.

⁵⁴ 'Miancha geguan youjian shi' 免查各館郵件事 (Postal Censorship Exemption for Consulates), 14 November 1917, 03-02-087-04-013, MHAS.

⁵⁵ 'Miancha geguan youjian shi,' 14 November 1917, 03-02-087-04-013, MHAS.

released to every province by the Foreign Ministry.⁵⁶

This additional Regulation was more specific, providing guidelines for possibilities that the censors had experienced since the war declaration. It recognised two main types of mail items, mail received and mail sent. It advised that all mail received should be passed to censors at the Post Offices. Chinese and Allied nationals' letters were exempted and prioritised for delivery without opening and censorship as long as there was no reason to detain them. Mail received by neutral nationals was of second priority but had to go through the censorship process. Mail to enemy nationals should be the last priority and must be censored. Sending mail, however, basically required no censorship. As for the mail sent, only if letters were addressed to enemy nationals in inland areas without a censor station, and mail items addressed to people in neutral countries had to be examined before dispatch.⁵⁷ Mail to enemy nationals in areas with a censor station would be examined locally. The Regulation did not mention any diplomatic exceptions, but all foreign mail was equally subject to censorship if it was sent by or to enemy people, regardless of who sent or received it. The significant evidence is that Dutch Minister Willem Jacob Oudendijk (1874–1953) protested against censorship in October 1919. His note informs that any letter, whether diplomatic mail or not, that was sent by or to German citizens was examined, even after the end of the war.⁵⁸

Even though this was the policy and measures of censorship issued by the Beijing government, it does not mean that it was implemented uniformly across China since, at the

⁵⁶ 'Chaosong yangwen youjian jianming banfa you' 抄送洋文郵件簡明辦法由 (A Copy of Simplified Postal Regulations for Foreign-language Letters), 19 November 1917, 03-02-087-04-014, MHAS.

⁵⁷ 'Chaosong yangwen youjian jianming banfa you' 抄送洋文郵件簡明辦法由 (A Copy of the Simplified Version of the Regulations for Foreign-language Mail), 19 November 1917, 03-02-087-04-014, MHAS.

⁵⁸ 'Heguan zhu Jin weiyuan jiwang tachu Deguoren zhi xinjian ying zhuyu bushixing jiancha you' 和館駐津委員寄往他處德國人之信件應准予不施行檢查由 (Letters from the Dutch Consulate's Staff in Tianjin to German Nationals Shall not Be Censored), 25 October 1919, 03-02-089-03-010, MHAS.

time, it was divided into several relatively independent regimes that did not, with few exceptions, answer to Beijing. According to the *Annual Report* of the CPS, many local conflicts and plundering bandits seriously affected and even interrupted the Post Office's operations. Essential services such as delivering mail items could not be guaranteed, and even less so the systematic implementation of a censorship system.⁵⁹

Moreover, some Beijing-controlled areas could not implement the censorship of mail in foreign languages because they did not have enough staff to examine all foreign letters. In October 1917, the Counsellor of the British Embassy conveyed the British Minister's message requesting the Chinese government to imprison or surveil three Germans under suspicion. They were a German-language teacher and her assistant from the Preparatory School of Henan for Study Abroad in Europe and the US (河南留歐美預備學校), M. Netz and H. Linzmeyer; another one was a former staff at the Chinese Maritime Customs. Because of their strange behaviour, The British Minister suspected they were Germans who were dangerous, especially fearing their influence on young Chinese students. He required the government to take them into custody or put them under surveillance because there was no postal censor with German-language training available. As a result, although it was found eventually that they did not collude with the German government, they were secretly tracked by the local authorities.⁶⁰

In short, the censorship regulations, as implemented after China's declaration of war in August 1917, had some impact on the operation of the postal service and its usage by the

⁵⁹ *Annual Report, 1916–1918*.

⁶⁰ 'Hangao weixian diqiao mingzi' 函告危險敵僑名字 (An announcement of the Names of Dangerous Enemy Nationals), 16 October 1917, 03-36-047-01-056, MHAS. 'Kaifeng liuxue oumei yubeixuexiao jiaoyuan Deren erming yi chi jingchating jiaoyi jiandu' 開封留學歐美預備學校教員德人二名已飭警察廳加意監督 (The Police Has Been Ordered to Pay Attention to and Put Two German Teachers from the Preparatory School of Henan for Study Abroad in Europe and the US Under Surveillance), 8 November 1917, 03-36-047-01-060, MHAS.

public, especially foreign-language mail matters. However, overall, its implementation must be seen as inefficient at best. Nonetheless, the implementation of postal censorship by the Beijing government can be regarded as the beginning of the institutionalisation of censorship in response to an international war, as opposed to merely exerting internal social control. In addition, during this initial process, it appears that the central government attempted to join the international community and carefully amended the Regulation to avoid arousing controversy, regardless of the complexity of conditions in local areas. The following section will move on to the negotiations of the Sino-German postal delivery and discuss postal censorship as a solution for the resumption of postal communication.

3. Censorship as a Solution for the Discontinued Sino-German Postal Service

Negotiation

The previous section illustrates that postal communication was extremely obstructed for German citizens living in China during WWI, except for some, such as former diplomatic personnel, with access to the diplomatic service of another country. In fact, for expats generally, it would be more challenging to communicate with their families and friends in their home countries by postal service during the war.

For foreigners not involved with the diplomatic missions, direct postal communication between China and Germany was almost entirely interrupted. Before the war, Germans could still use the German post offices opened in China to send mail. However, they were all closed on 25 April 1917, one month after the termination of Sino-German diplomatic relations.⁶¹ As

⁶¹ *Annual Report 1917*, 12.

an intermediary diplomat of a neutral country, the Dutch Minister in China, Frans Beelaerts van Blokland (1872–1956), stressed that German and Chinese people were worried about their family and friends living in hostile countries because of prolonged postal service interruptions.⁶² The inconvenience of the suspended communication impacted indeed not only German people in China but also Chinese in Germany, especially Chinese students. In December 1918, although the war was over, the Chinese Minister to Denmark, Yan Huiqing (Wei-ching Williams Yen) 顏惠慶 (1877–1950), reported to Beijing that the postal service between China and Germany was still defunct. Many Chinese students in Germany were extremely anxious as they had been unable to receive correspondence from China for over a year, despite having tried everything possible to obtain their letters. Their mail, however, had all been transferred to Denmark and retained in the Chinese Embassy there. A medical student, Chen Yucang 陳雨蒼 (1889–1947), who was a member of the Diligent Work–Frugal Study Movement and became a famous medic after he graduated,⁶³ requested his mail from the German Foreign Ministry. Other students tried to inquire at the Danish Embassy in Berlin about postal transit. Minister Yen was informed of this situation via the Danish diplomatic channels, so he once tried to reversely use the diplomatic route to deliver the students' letters to Berlin. However, it did not work, and the letters were eventually sent back to Yen's office.⁶⁴ In sum, the war and the Sino-German hostile relations eventually caused the international postal communications breakdown and affected civilian life on both sides.

⁶² 'Shou He Beishi zhaohui' 收和貝使照會 (A Démarche Issued by the Dutch Minister, Van Blokland), 5 August 1918, 03-02-088-02-007, MHAS.

⁶³ About Chen Yucang, see Li Zhende, 'Taiwan shengliweishengjiaoyu zhong di xing, shengzhi, yu xingbie (1945–1968)' (Sex and Reproduction in "Physiology and Hygiene" Textbooks of Post-War Taiwan), *Jindai Zhongguo funüshi yanjiu* 22 (2013): 73.

⁶⁴ 'Shou Danshiguan han' 收丹使館函 (A Letter Sent from the Danish Embassy), 9 December 1918, 03-02-088-02-014, MHAS.

Interestingly, postal censorship could be a solution to resume postal communication. If both hostile sides had accepted the postal resumption agreement based on that letters would be examined by the other side and handed over to a third party for transit, it would have helped restore civilian postal communication during the difficult time of the war. In fact, it was requested by the German government through third parties, Denmark and the Netherlands. Even though the possibility of strategic considerations cannot be excluded, their main purpose was to recover a basic postal service for civilians living in enemy countries.

These special negotiations of the international postal service started in May 1917, which was just about two months after China cut off diplomatic relations with Germany. Because postal and telegram communications between the two countries were likely to stop immediately,⁶⁵ the negotiations relied on Denmark as the third-party diplomatic channel. It seems that the Chinese government wanted to ensure that Chinese overseas in Germany could continue sending mail to China. The German government answered that once Chinese overseas' unsealed letters passed censorship in Germany, they could be transferred through the German-Danish diplomatic channel to Denmark, where the Chinese Embassy was located. However, Germany also requested a reciprocal condition allowing German overseas who stayed in China to send letters via the Dutch Embassy in Beijing.⁶⁶ Yen conveyed the German request to Beijing and received approval which included a proviso that the Chinese government would examine German letters before delivery to the Dutch Embassy.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ After China broke off its relations with Germany in 1917, the Chinese Minister to Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, Wei-ching Yen, moved the Embassy from Germany to Denmark and changed his title to the Minister to Sweden and Denmark. See 'Yen Hui-ching,' in *Renming quanwei jiansuo xitong* 人名權威檢索系統 (The Database of Historical Figures), distributed by MHAS, accessed 13 June 2021, <http://archdtsu.mh.sinica.edu.tw/imhkmc/imhkm?00033910000901010000000000100A0000003E000000000^3>.

⁶⁶ 'Shou zhu Dan Yangongshi dian' 收駐丹顏公使電 (A Telegram Received from Minister Yen in Denmark), 2 June 1917, 03-02-088-02-001, MHAS.

⁶⁷ 'Shou zhu Dan Yangongshi dian,' 8 June 1917, 03-02-088-02-002, MHAS.

This proposal was eventually approved by both sides no later than the end of July 1917. However, the postal exchange and transit only was focused on overseas' mail dispatch, excluding receiving. Therefore, at the end of July, the German government continued to request a solution that German nationals in China could receive mail from Germany via the Dutch diplomatic channel if it passed China's censorship. Likewise, Chinese overseas in Germany could receive letters from China via the Danish Embassy in Germany with German censorship before delivery.⁶⁸ This time, Beijing did not reply immediately.

Although there is no clear evidence to explain why Beijing paused the negotiations for over two months, China's unstable domestic politics may help explain this situation as the Beijing government was involved in a series of political struggles at that time. President Li Yuanhong 黎元洪 (1864–1928) disagreed with Prime Minister Duan Qirui 段祺瑞 (1865–1936) about severing diplomatic relations with Germany. Even though the dispute was eventually solved through the mediation of Vice-president Feng Guozhang 馮國璋 (1858–1919), Li and Duan still argued over participating in the war. This caused a serious crisis ending with Li dismissing Duan on 23 May 1917, and eight local military governors declaring independence from Beijing to support Duan. Li, therefore, called warlord Zhang Xun 張勳 (1854–1923) for mediation while he dissolved parliament on 13 June. These events took place only a few days after Minister Yen received the last message from Beijing regarding the postal negotiations. As a famous consequence, Zhang came to Beijing, but instead of mediating, launched the Manchu Restoration on 1 July 1917.⁶⁹ Even though the Restoration only lasted twelve days,

⁶⁸ 'Shou zhu Dan Yangongshi dian,' 6 August 1917, 03-02-088-02-003, MHAS; 'Shou zhu Dan Yangongshi dian,' 20 October 1918, 03-02-088-02-004, MHAS.

⁶⁹ Guo Tingyi, *Zhonghua minguo shishi rizhi*, vol. 1, 287–288, 296–311; Xu Guoqi, *China and the Great War*, 212–219.

political turbulence seemed to obstruct Beijing from operating its foreign affairs effectively.

Until 23 October 1917, after asking for instructions twice, Minister Yen finally received Beijing's reply to Germany's last proposal, but the answer was negative. Beijing considered the German government complicated leaving the country for Chinese diplomats and students after China had declared war. As a result, the Chinese side refused to further negotiate the issue of the Sino-German wartime postal services before Chinese students could leave freely.⁷⁰ The Sino-German postal service and censorship issue remained unresolved as there was no further answer from the Chinese government for the next ten months.

The German government asked Beijing again — conveyed through the Danish and Dutch governments — about their proposal regarding the exchange of mail in August 1918.⁷¹ Beijing responded that

'after careful consideration, we [the Ministry of Foreign Affairs] recognise that although the proposed measure seems to be equal and appropriate, it would not tally with the facts in practical operation.'

本部詳細審察，表面上似甚平允，但按諸實際恐不盡然。

Nevertheless, they only recognised the previous agreement specifying that both sides' overseas nationals could send, but not receive, mail that would undergo censorship and be delivered via third countries.⁷²

This provisional measure of international postal censorship and transit was only 'one-

⁷⁰ 'Fa zhu Dan Yangongshi dian' 發駐丹顏公使電 (A Telegram Sent to Minister Yen in Denmark), 23 October 1917, 03-02-088-02-005, MHAS.

⁷¹ 'Shou zhu Dan Yangongshi dian,' 3 August 1918, 03-02-088-02-006, MHAS. 'Shou He Beishi zhaohui,' 5 August 1918, 03-02-088-02-007, MHAS.

⁷² 'Fa He Beishi zhaohui' 發和貝使照會 (A Démarche Sent to the Dutch Minister, Van Blokland), 13 August 1918, 03-02-088-02-011, MHAS.

way.’ Even after the war, Beijing still did not accept Berlin’s new proposal. Despite no clear explanation from Beijing, the diplomatic archives imply, on the one hand, that China may have been bound by its allies’ wishes. On the other hand, the Chinese government also looked for its own favourable position. For instance, British Minister Sir Jordan sent a *note verbale* to express his protest when British censors found that a mailbag addressed to the Chinese Minister in Denmark included ‘enemies’ private letters.’ It proved that the German expats in China had entrusted the Chinese diplomatic missions to transfer mail to Germany.⁷³ Thus, the Chinese MOFA immediately issued a circular that enemy nationals were not allowed to use Chinese diplomatic mail channels to send letters.⁷⁴ This case demonstrates that the UK played a certain role in the implementation of postal censorship in China. It also shows Beijing’s dilemma between adjusting the treatment towards Germany, its former ally, and maintaining its friendship with war allies. Most importantly, it seems that China strove to establish itself as an equal party in international affairs and, therefore, tried to avoid unnecessary disputes. Simultaneously, its bureaucracy might not yet have recognised the country’s new position and the overall newly-changed international situation after the declaration of war.

Even though WWI ended on 11 November 1918, the postal issue had not been solved. After the negotiations with the Dutch Minister as an intermediary, an agreement was finally reached at the end of 1918. It was still just a one-way measure that only aimed to support Chinese and German overseas sending letters rather than receiving them from their home countries. Postal censorship and transition finally started on 17 December, when the war had been over for one month. However, there is no evidence to substantiate that this postal

⁷³ ‘Shou Yingguan jielüe’ 收英館節略 (A Note Verbale Received from the British Embassy), 15 October 1918.10.15, 03-02-088-02-012, MHAS.

⁷⁴ ‘Fa zhuwai gegong shigong han’ 發駐外各公使公函 (An Official Letter Sent to All Ministers Stationed Abroad), 17 October 1918, 03-02-088-02-013, MHAS.

agreement was made owing to the Armistice. In fact, the documents show that the Chinese government continued regarding Germany as an 'enemy.' Nevertheless, it seemed that censorship eventually made the sending of mail possible under limited conditions.

The Process of Postal Censorship

The starting point of the negotiations between China and Germany was the need to secure a civil postal service during wartime instead of the initial aim to control sensitive information. As mentioned above, the MOFA was in charge of the negotiations, which were ultimately resolved by respecting diplomatic immunity. However, the practical operation of this postal censorship was a cooperative task that involved different government departments. Not surprisingly, the Post Office played the most crucial role in receiving, dispatching, and delivering mail as its regular operation within China. The censors were appointed by the local police office. The censorship process was a cooperation between the Post Office and the police department as well as the local and central authorities.

According to the agreement between the Dutch Minister and the Chinese MOFA, the Dutch Embassy would collect German private letters and send them to the Chinese MOFA every Tuesday. They were to be accompanied by a *note verbale* clearly stating the number of letters and an attached mail list. After undergoing the censorship process conducted by Chinese officials, the correspondence would be sealed up in an envelope, stamped, and sent back to the embassy with a list of letters that had been retained.⁷⁵ Finally, the embassy would send the envelopes through the diplomatic channel.⁷⁶ This means that the letters that had

⁷⁵ 'Fa zhu Dan gongshi han' 發駐丹公使函 (A Letter Sent to Minister in Denmark), 20 December 1918, 03-02-088-02-019, MHAS.

⁷⁶ 'Shou Heshiguan jielüe' 收和使館節略 (A Note Verbale Received from the Dutch Embassy), 26 December 1918, 03-02-088-02-022, MHAS.

passed censorship would be regarded as diplomatic documents, collected into the diplomatic bags, and thus, protected by diplomatic immunity.

However, problems immediately emerged; one was the question of who would be responsible for the implementation of censorship. The MOFA made the agreement, but they did not have the police power to be in charge of censorship.⁷⁷ Another problem was that there was little time to prepare and organise censorship. The agreement was confirmed by the MOFA on 16 December 1918, and the Dutch announced that they would start this process on 24 December. This means the Chinese side had only one week to prepare.⁷⁸

As the previous discussion highlighted, postal censorship was originally handled by the local authorities before the declaration of WWI. It was adopted as a political strategy to control local stability in the early years of the Chinese Republic. Local authorities and warlords could order postal and telegram censorship when they declared the state of Martial Law. Thus, local police and military forces were generally in charge of censorship.

After the war declaration, postal censorship became a multi-department enterprise, and various authorities became involved in establishing censorship, which was mainly conducted on foreign mail items. In the previous cases, we could see that the MOFA was responsible for negotiations with foreign missions, the Post Office and the MOC were responsible for mail transportation and the implementation of censorship regulations, and the MOW was in charge of practical operations of censorship coordinating with local force authorities. However, for the agreement with the Dutch Minister, the MOFA did not know

⁷⁷ 'Fa Neiwu, Jiaotongbu zi' 發內務、交通部咨 (Official Communication with the Interior and Communication Ministries), 19 December 1918, 03-02-088-02-018, MHAS.

⁷⁸ 'Fa He Beishi zhaohui,' 16 December 1918, 03-02-088-02-016, MHAS. 'Fa zhu Dan Yengongshi gonghan' 發駐丹顏公使公函 (An Official Letter Sent to Minister Yen in Demark), 20 December 1918, 03-02-088-02-19, MHAS.

which department should bear the responsibility for it and have the authority to implement this special task despite previous experiences of domestic censorship, including foreign-language letters.⁷⁹

In order to fulfil the agreement to organise censorship, the MOFA asked other bureaus for assistance. On the one hand, the MOI thought that martial law could be applicable so the MOW would be in charge. They suggested that the overseas German mail could be sent for examination in a temporary censor station in the Police Bureau of the Capital City (京師警察廳). This station was commissioned by the MOW and founded according to the Censorship Regulation for Foreign Language Mail.⁸⁰ On the other hand, the Police Bureau suggested that an Inspection Office (檢查處) at the Qianmen Post Office (前門郵政局) was competent and more efficient. This, however, was a cross-departmental office whose censors were appointed by the MOC in cooperation with the police department and carried out their work in the Post Office.⁸¹ We can conclude that various bureaus were involved and separately directed postal censorship during the war, even though the government had issued the Regulations and attempted to organise a coherent process. Thanks to the Police Bureau, they designed a sort of simplified form of duplicate receipt in place of the complicated exchanges of official documents and assigned this task to the Inspection Office at the Qianmen Post Office. The plan was then accepted by the MOFA.⁸² Moreover, in order to be more efficient, they asked the MOC to appoint one more censor proficient in German to the Inspection Office.⁸³

⁷⁹ 'Fa Neiwu, Jiaotongbu zi,' 19 December 1918. 'Fa Jingshi jingchating gonghan' 發京師警察廳公函 (An Official Letter Sent to the Capital Police Bureau), 26 December 1918, 03-02-088-02-023, MHAS.

⁸⁰ 'Shou Neiwubu gonghan' 收內務部公函 (An Official Letter Received from the Ministry of Interior), 21 December 1918, 03-02-088-02-020, MHAS.

⁸¹ 'Shou Jingshi jingchating gonghan' 收京師警察廳公函 (An Official Letter Received from the Capital Police Bureau), 30 December 1918, 03-02-088-02-025, MHAS.

⁸² 'Fa Jingshi jingchating gonghan,' 31 December 1918, 03-02-088-02-028, MHAS.

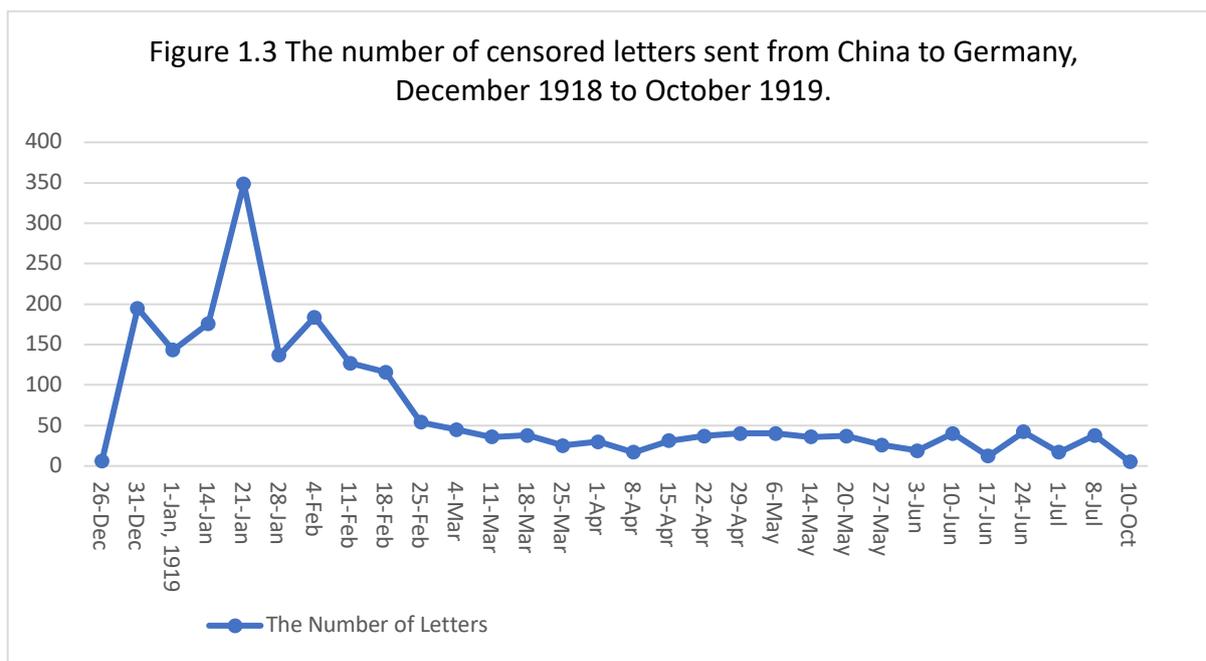
⁸³ 'Shou Jingshi jingchating gonghan,' 30 December 1918, 03-02-088-02-025, MHAS.

Even though the Dutch Embassy had claimed that the special postal service and censorship would start on 24 December, the first round of this task finally began on 31 December 1918. The censorship process essentially meant that the Chinese MOFA would receive mail from the Dutch Embassy and then forward it to censors of the Inspection Office. After examination, the censors picked out suspicious letters and returned letters that passed the inspection with a list that showed the number of letters kept and passed and a summary of the letters' contents. Subsequently, the mail was sealed in an envelope by the MOFA and returned to the Dutch Embassy with the list. The envelopes, which encased German letters, were finally dispatched in diplomatic bags by international postal transportation.⁸⁴

Figure 1.3 presents the number of censored German letters that passed through the special postal process per week. The data is from December 1918, and the last record is from 10 October 1919. The number of letters increased dramatically in the first month, but it subsided immediately in the second month — the graph peaks on 21 January with about 350 letters. The letters that emerge in large numbers at the beginning may reflect that German mail had been on hold and was not dispatched to Germany for a long time as the Chinese-German mail exchange had ceased since diplomatic relations broke off in March 1917.⁸⁵ Once the postal service resumed and the censorship arrangement was put in place, the situation stabilised. It is approximately less than fifty letters per week after February 1919 that were detained, and there are no exact records between 8 July and 10 October.

⁸⁴ Almost every time the process was conducted, letters and receipts were recorded and documented in the archives of the Beiyang Foreign Ministry; see MHAS, 03-02-088-02-026 to 126.

⁸⁵ *Annual Report 1917*, 12.



The number of letters, especially in the first month, shows how the war impacted the civil postal service catering to a group of foreign nationals living in China and why the German government was pressured to seek a solution for mail transportation. At least 2,098 German letters were dispatched through the postal service during the period covered in Figure 1.3. However, the operation is likely to have been limited to Beijing and Tianjin, and it is difficult to draw any conclusions about other areas of China. We still do not know the arrangements for correspondence of overseas Chinese in Germany due to the limitations of the sources available. The extant information only indicates that Dutch Minister Beelaerts van Blokland replied in the affirmative, stating that he would immediately urge his government to implement equal treatment for overseas Chinese in Germany.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, as the Dutch Minister said, expats on both sides certainly worried about the safety of their families after China severed the relations with Germany and their lost the postal connection,⁸⁷ even though

⁸⁶ 'Fa He Beishi zhaohui,' 16 December 1918, 03-02-088-02-016, MHAS. 'Shou He Beishi zhaohui,' 24 December 1918, 03-02-088-02-021, MHAS.

⁸⁷ 'Shou He Beishi zhaohui,' 5 August 1918, 03-02-088-02-007, MHAS.

they might have been a relatively small group of customers who used the postal service.

In Pursuit of Equality in the Post-war Period

Although the Armistice was agreed on 11 November 1918 and the Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919, postal censorship of domestic and international correspondence continued after the war. This problematic phenomenon was undoubtedly affected by the post-war situation related to the Chinese government's search for international relationships built on equality.

In July 1919, the MOC asked to recall those censors who were responsible for German letters from the Inspection Station back to their original positions. The rationale was that the war was over, and the Ministry headquarters' heavy workload required more staff to share their responsibility.⁸⁸ The Dutch Embassy also requested the Chinese government to permit the German people to use the postal service as normal.⁸⁹ However, Minister Yen reported that according to the Danish Minister in Berlin, the German government continued censoring Chinese people's letters in order to prevent anyone from transporting property and money out of Germany.⁹⁰ This could have been Germany's immediate response to the predicament of the Treaty of Versailles signed in June, or simply an excuse to control information. Nevertheless, the actions of the Chinese side show that the Chinese government sought reciprocity in international postal service and censorship as well as diplomatic relations. In fact, as a member of the Allied Powers, China took an important step toward becoming

⁸⁸ 'Shou Jingshi jingchating gonghan,' 14 July 1919, 03-02-088-02-107, MHAS. 'Jiancha Dewen youjian benbu yin shiwu yinfan weineng jixu pai yuan xiangban you' 檢查德文郵件本部因事務殷繁未能繼續派員襄辦由 (Our Department Is Unable to Send Staff to Assist in Examining German Letters due to Busy Schedule), 29 July 1919, 03-02-089-03-002, MHAS.

⁸⁹ 'Fa Heguan han' 發和館函 (A Letter Sent to the Dutch Embassy), 1 September 1919, 03-02-088-02-119, MHAS.

⁹⁰ 'Fa zhu Dan Yangongshi dian,' 5 August 1919, 03-02-088-02-114, MHAS. 'Shou zhu Dan Yangongshi dian,' 27 August 1919, 03-02-088-02-118, MHAS.

involved in the international community during the war, and the Chinese government appeared to seek an equal status rather than fall back to the discriminatory experiences of the late 19th century. As a result of the cabinet meeting in Beijing, the State Council decided that German and Austrian letters and parcels, which included only private belongings, were permitted to be sent by post as usual. However, they refused the request to cancel censorship for German letters until the German government equally withdrew their policy of examining Chinese letters.⁹¹

4. Conclusion: The Continuation of Censorship after the War

Despite the fact the war has ended, the postal censorship in China continued, neither for German residents in China nor for other foreigners and Chinese citizens. On 22 September 1919, British Minister Sir Jordan informed the Chinese government that the UK had ceased civil censorship from the beginning of July, except for the letters to and from some areas that were still involved in military actions. He asked China to adopt a similar termination of censorship.⁹² The Chinese government refused, citing that China still needed to prevent the spread of internal and foreign ‘radicalism’ (*guojizhuyi chuanbo* 過激主義傳播) which might impact public security.⁹³ Meanwhile, the Dutch Minister also protested that their official letters to German residents were opened by Chinese censors.⁹⁴

⁹¹ ‘De Ao qiaomin siren wupin zhun qi you youju jidi you’ 德奧僑民私人物品准其由郵局寄遞由 (German and Austrian Overseas [Nationals] are Allowed to Send Their Personal Items by the Post Office), 1 October 1919, MHAS, 03-02-089-03-004, MHAS.

⁹² ‘A note sent by the British Minister,’ 22 July 1919, 03-02-016-02-003, MHAS.

⁹³ ‘Jiancha youdian yi an zi jing yijue yishi zou nan quxiao...’ 檢查郵電一案茲經議決一時驟難取消 (The Postal and Telegram Censorship is Difficult to Cancel for the Time Being), 11 October 1919, 03-02-016-02-006, MHAS; ‘Ying Zhushi jiancha youdian banfa ying zhaojiu banli you’ 英朱使檢查郵電辦法應照舊辦理由 (British Minister Jordan Suggests that the Postal and Telegram Censorship Shall be Implemented as Usual), 16 October 1919, 03-02-016-02-007, MHAS.

⁹⁴ ‘Qing zhuan chi jianchayuan wu zai chaiyan zhu Jin He weiyuan hanjian you’ 請轉飭檢查員勿再拆驗駐津和委員函件由 (Please Forward to Ask Censors to not Open and Examine the Dutch Consulate Staff’s Letters), 11

After Sir Jordan complained again in late 1919, the Chinese cabinet decided to cancel foreigners' mail censorship, except for German, Austrian, and non-governmental employees of Russia.⁹⁵ This decision, however, did not include China's ongoing domestic postal censorship; its validity for foreign exemption was also questionable. Even still in 1921, Dutch Minister Oudendijk frequently encountered the same issue, where their official letters to German residents were being opened and censored in Tianjin, and a letter addressed to the Dutch Embassy was opened by the Xinjiang government despite diplomatic immunity.⁹⁶

Postal censorship during and after WWI overall reflects that not only did the Chinese government regard it as a strategy to prevent information leakage during the war, but it was a useful tool of domestic policy and diplomacy. As Xu Guoqi has argued, China aimed to participate in the international society. The postal censorship negotiations, decisions, and practical operations in the early Republican era have to be seen in this context of China seeking to become a modern nation-state and be recognised as equal among the community of nations. The Chinese government made efforts to work with the Allies to avoid international controversy and grant foreign missions' requests, while paying attention to equality, dignity, and state sovereignty in its international relations. This 'equal' treatment was even adopted in the negotiations of postal censorship as a solution for recovering the Sino-German civil postal service.

October 1919, 03-02-089-03-007, MHAS.

⁹⁵ 'Jiancha handian shi chaosong huiwu Yingshi wenda xihefu you' 檢查函電事抄送會晤英使問答希核復由 (A Copy of the Meeting Minutes of Q&A with the British Minister on the Postal and Telegram Censorship), 21 October 1919, 03-02-016-02-008, MHAS. 'Ying Zhushi wairen handian jiancha shi zhun Neiwubu suo cheng ge jie handa chazhao you' 英朱使外人函電檢查事准內務部所稱各節函達查照由 (A Letter by British Minister Jordan on the Censorship of Foreign Letters and Telegrams), 4 December 1919, 03-02-016-02-011, MHAS.

⁹⁶ 'Qing zhuan chi jianchayuan wu zai chaiyan zhu Jin He weiyuan hanjian you,' 11 October 1919, 03-02-089-03-007, MHAS; 'Qing zhuan chi jianchayuan sihou duiyu shiling ge guan xin jian wu yu chaiyan you' 請轉飭檢查員嗣後對於使領各館信件勿予拆驗由 (Please Forward to Ask Censors not to Open and Examine Letters Sent by Embassies and Consulates), 3 December 1921, 03-02-089-04-004, MHAS.

For the Chinese government, WWI inadvertently provided an opportunity to centralise and institutionalise postal censorship. It was built upon initiatives put in place by local authorities since the announcement of the 1912 martial law when Yuan Shikai attempted to attack his political opponents using the censorship apparatus.⁹⁷ During this process of institutionalisation, the domestic problems of the early Republican era became apparent. Beijing was not a sufficiently powerful central government, and tensions often emerged between local and central authorities, as well as between 'rebel' factions and the pro-Beijing local governments. In other words, the Republic of China had never been a unified country. This was still the case by the late 1910s. Consequently, the domestic situation was chaotic, increasing the complexity of the implementation of postal censorship. Although Beijing tried to establish a centrally controlled censorship system, the local authorities could still use it in various ways.

In addition, the government had insufficient experience and lacked the power to organise a cross-departmental and nationwide censorship system, as necessitated by the decision to join the war. Nevertheless, Beijing still made an effort towards the institutionalisation of postal censorship. It revised the Regulations for Postal Censorship many times, adapting them to their practical experiences, and in the process, dealing with ensuing problems, especially issues arising from diplomatic challenges to the system. It also established a simplified process of inspection for increased efficiency.

WWI had an immense influence on the postal service of China, and postal censorship ultimately impacted the efficiency of the postal service. Meanwhile, the Beiyang government

⁹⁷ Harris, 'The Post Office and State Formation in Modern China,' 280–282.

was regarded as a weak central government,⁹⁸ but the case of postal censorship demonstrates that it was able to exercise governmental power through the CPS as a centralised national institution. Postal censorship became a method of implementing the central government's will in local areas and interfering with the privacy of people's communications. To a certain extent, this was a manifestation of a modern state and the modernity of postal communication. However, the lack of privacy was probably not the most serious problem for ordinary people at this moment. Instead, they felt anxious when unable to freely contact their families and friends far away, especially in the 'enemy' countries. Thus, Chinese or German citizens alike sought alternative ways of communication. As mentioned above, both Chinese and German people contacted foreign missions requesting deliveries of their mail through diplomatic channels.

As a result of the censorship institutionalisation during WWI and the post-war period, the state, to a certain extent, had an adverse impact on civil communication in the long term. In later chapters, I will further explore how postal communication was involved in state control, which intervened with private correspondence in wartime China. Before that, the next chapter will first discuss how the CPS was able to survive the domestic conflicts during the warlord era.

⁹⁸ Scholars have pointed out that, although the Beiyang government was politically weak, it made great achievements in the international relationship, especially the case of the Treaty of Versailles and the Washington Naval Conference after World War One. See Xavier Paulès and David Serfass, 'Questioning the Teleology of the Central State in Republican China', *Twentieth-Century China* 47:1 (July 2022): 3-4; Tang Qihua, *Balihehui yu Zhongguo waijiao* (Paris Peace Conference and China diplomacy) (Beijing: Shehukexue wenxian chubanshe, 2014), 378-379; Tang Qihua, 'Beiyang waijiao yu "Fan'ersai-Huashengdun tixi"' (Beiyang diplomacy and the Versailles-Washington system), in *Beiyang shiqi de Zhongguo waijiao* (The diplomacy of China during the Beiyang era), ed. Jin Guangyao and Wang Jianlang (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2006), 47-80.

Chapter 2: A National Postal Service in a Divided Country: Postal Communication in Warlord China, 1916–1928

Apart from the international conflicts and the First World War, the CPS encountered other internal difficulties during the first two decades of the Republican era. The warlord era began after President Yuan Shikai's death in June 1916,¹ as there was no contender powerful enough to inherit his position of the military leader in the central government and unite all the warlords.² The Civil War began in 1917, with what is known as the Constitutional Protection War, then developed to become tangled warfare and a large-scale political mess until 1928, when the Nationalist Party nominally gained control over other warlord regimes after the Northern Expedition.

The destruction of the Chinese state, economy, and society in the warlord period was persistent and severe, and scholars have discussed its impact from different perspectives. Hsu-Sheng Ch'i's pioneer work in the 1970s demonstrated the politics in Warlord China. Driven by the narrative portraying Guomindang as the victor, he suggested that previous studies on the warlord era lacked a comprehensive understanding and were biased in favour of the south at that time. He studied the internal organisations, financial resources, and external influences

¹ The term *junfa* 軍閥 (warlord) is controversial as a description of the military leaders in the early Republican era. *Junfa* was a new word in 1920s' China and was first used by Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879–1942) in 1918. The word, as Waldron suggests, was borrowed from the West but transplanted to China as a description of China's situation in the 1910s and 20s. See Arthur Waldron, 'The Warlord: Twentieth-Century Chinese Understandings of Violence, Militarism, and Imperialism,' *The American Historical Review* vol. 96, no. 4 (Oct 1991): 1073–1100. The chapter does not engage in this debate but adopts the term to refer to local military commanders with a degree of autonomy from the central government in Republican China.

² Hsu-sheng Ch'i, *Warlord Politics in China 1916–1928* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1976), 10–18. In addition, Edward McCord suggests that Yuan's self-proclamation as an emperor was the turning point of the rise of China's warlords. It not only ended the centralisation of the Republic under Yuan's rule but also addressed the political issues with military force again. See McCord, *The Power of the Gun*, 203–244.

of warlord regimes. He noticed that militarists' policies were chaotic and financial resources were needed. As a result, they would seek a way to consolidate power either politically or militarily.³ One example that will be discussed in this chapter, inspired Ch'i's idea, is the intervention of warlords in the postal service. Meanwhile, Ch'i suggested that the unification ideology influenced warlords' actions to allow the central government to function in Beijing.⁴ However, this does not seem to explain why some services, including the CPS as the only national postal service, could work nationwide and even survive warlord politics. Later, scholars continued to focus on the political aspect of warlords in China but turned to look at the local level. For instance, Edward A. McCord's research on the Hubei and Hunan regimes suggests that the warlords' autonomy was not absolute. Their military rule was still based on the political systems and legitimacy of the Republic, and their authority was theoretically granted by the Beijing central government, despite war and conflicts. They also relied on local civil administration to practice their autonomy.⁵ Although the centralised nature and the foreign staff system of the Post Office were different from local civil administration, the discussion provides an insightful idea to understand the complicated relations between warlord rule and other national and local systems.

As McCord's recent reflection, previous research on warlordism in Republican China mostly focused on politics. He echoed Diana Lary's research on soldiers' life and turned to the actual impact of the wars on the people during this chaotic period. He further explored the study on military atrocities and crimes, with their serious impact on Chinese society, including transportation systems and public services, under warlordism.⁶ This provides an approach to

³ Ch'i, *Warlord Politics in China*, 150–178.

⁴ Ch'i, *Warlord Politics in China*, 190–195, 206.

⁵ McCord, *The Power of the Gun*, 268–269.

⁶ Edward A. McCord, 'Military Atrocities in Warlord China,' in *Civil–Military Relations in Chinese History from*

reconsider the impact of war on the postal service, which combined transportation and public services, during the warlord era. In fact, as this chapter will show, the CPS seems to have continued providing its services as a unified Chinese but foreign-managed institution headquartered in Beijing throughout this period despite the adverse conditions of political and military conflicts.

This chapter analyses the postal and telecommunication documents in the Second Historical Archives to explore the impact of the civil wars during the warlord era on the operation of the CPS. I discuss how postal communication could be maintained by only one national postal service while the state was essentially divided into several mutually hostile regimes. How important was the fact that it was relatively neutral and managed by foreign staff, and why did the foreign staff system eventually affect the conceptualisation of running a national postal service as an extension of national sovereignty?

1. Damage to the CPS during the Civil Wars

The effects of warlordism in China were extensive. The CPS, as a centralised public service, was hardly unaffected. 1918 was a particularly difficult year for the CPS. Its *Annual Report* for that year stated:

The unkindness of civil war pressed heavily on the country during the year... affecting every branch of public enterprise. The strain upon the Post Office has been great. While the country was being wasted by civil strife and by the evil activities of hordes of bandits, the Post Office yet again proved its ability to

Ancient China to the Communist Takeover, ed. Kai Filipiak (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2015), 210–237. Diana Lary, *Warlord Soldiers: Chinese Common Soldiers 1911–1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; 2010).

*adapt itself to the most unpromising circumstances and to emerge intact and in good running order.*⁷

It underlines the war's severe impact on the postal service. At that time, China was involved in the Constitutional Protection War 護法戰爭 (*hufa zhanzheng*, 1917–1922). Sun Yat-sen organised the Military Government of the Republic of China in Guangzhou against the Beijing government controlled, among others, by the Anhui-clique leader Duan Qirui 段祺瑞 (1865–1936). In 1918, the development of the war became even more complicated because the southern factions split, and Sun resigned and left Guangzhou.⁸

On the other hand, the *Annual Report* seems to show that the CPS was still optimistic about its overall operations and suggests that the service was still working well. In 1918, the CPS had a total of 9,367 post offices and agencies (*youzheng daibansou* 郵政代辦所) in twenty-one postal districts of the country. It processed thousands of letters, parcels, and money orders, and its revenue increased by almost one million Chinese dollars to 8.5 million Chinese dollars compared to 1916. The amount of annual surplus was 1.4 million dollars in 1917. In fact, the CPS had been reporting losses since it had been established on the foundations of its predecessor, the IPS, until 1915.⁹

Nevertheless, looking at the details of each postal district across the country, the damage to the postal service caused by the war still cannot be completely ignored. The following sections will take the year 1918 as an example to discuss the impact and losses resulting from political unrest and wars on the postal service in this period.

⁷ *Annual Report 1918*, 1.

⁸ For the situation and development of the war, see McCord, *Power of the Gun*, 253–264.

⁹ *Annual Report 1916*, 3; *Annual Report 1918*, 10.

Interruption of Postal Operations

According to the CPS's own testimony, the postal service was negatively affected in many ways during the warlord era. The impact of warlordism could involve the direct threat of violence and atrocities, but sometimes it could be indirect, and the interruption of postal routes was the most frequently recorded effect.

In 1918, postal transport mainly relied on courier lines, about 449 thousand *li* (里).¹⁰ Meanwhile, along the main rivers and coastal areas, there were 69.8 thousand *li* of steamer and boat routes. In major towns and cities that were already connected by railways, mail could be transported by Tsin-Pu 津浦 (Tianjin–Pukou, Nanjing) and Kin–Han 京漢 (Beijing–Hankou) railways for free but by only a total of twenty thousand *li*. These routes were fraught with crises and could be interrupted by military operations, bandits, and unrest.¹¹ In order to deal with the interruption, CPS had to depend on the French, Japanese, American, and British gunboats to carry mail for free.¹²

The war in 1918 was mainly concentrated in Hunan, Guangdong, and Sichuan Postal Districts. In Sichuan, for example, military operations interrupted all postal routes which connected Sichuan to the coast for two months. At that time, there were two main routes connecting Sichuan: one was by river shipping, and another was by KinHan Railway. Mail could be transmitted by native boats, contract steamers, and CPS's own postal boat fleet of the Ichang (Yichang) Wanhsien (Wanxian)–Chunking (Chongqing) line. Meanwhile, heavy mail could be conveyed by railways to Hankou and then forwarded by other transport means.¹³ In

¹⁰ According to the CPS, 1 mile = 3 *li*. See *Annual Report 1918*, 8.

¹¹ *Annual Report 1918*, 8–9.

¹² *Annual Report 1918*, 8–9.

¹³ *Annual Report, 1918*, 8–9.

addition to postal delivery, all other private means of transport, such as pack animals, boats, and porters were called up for the war.¹⁴ It meant that internal and external postal communication in Sichuan was challenging and the inland and river transport routes, which connected the south to the north of China in some provinces, were also temporarily interrupted. A report from Guizhou pointed out that the traffic heading to the province along the Yangtze River was not very smooth.¹⁵ In Hunan, one of the worst-affected war zones, the Yuezhou (Yuchow 岳州) Post Office was ‘absolutely cut off from all direct communication with Hankow [Hankou].’¹⁶ Similarly, the post offices in non-war zones, like Jiangxi, closed some courier lines to the combat zones.¹⁷

Not only the war but also poor public security increased the risks of postal operations. In the Guangxi Post Office, for example, most of the soldiers were sent to Guangdong and Hunan, and, in consequence, public security was poorly maintained, and crime increased.¹⁸ However, local militaries did not always have a negative image, at least in the context of the postal service. A warlord’s army could play the role of police to maintain local stability and combat bandits in some areas of China, and the postal service also relied on their protection.¹⁹ When local military authorities moved troops out for engagements, the situation would create a security vacuum in the areas where they had been originally stationed. As a result, many postal districts, not only in the southern areas but also in the northern provinces, such as Shanxi and Shandong, suffered from the attacks of highwaymen and robbers who took

¹⁴ *Annual Report, 1918*, 19.

¹⁵ *Annual Report, 1918*, 26.

¹⁶ *Annual Report, 1918*, 20.

¹⁷ *Annual Report, 1918*, 20.

¹⁸ *Annual Report, 1918*, 19, 24–25.

¹⁹ As Huang Shaohong 黃紹泓 (1895–1965), a Guangxi warlord, mentioned in his memoirs. See Huang Shaohong, *Wushi huiyi* (Memories at Fifty) (Hangzhou: Fengyun chubanshe, 1945), 39–41.

advantage of the timing to loot post offices, agencies, and box offices. (Box offices were the smallest postal stations placed small shops in towns and rural villages, which assisted with deliveries.)²⁰

In order to control military intelligence and information, local authorities often adopted strict postal censorship under martial law.²¹ As mentioned in the previous chapter, it could make postal operations more difficult since mail delivery could be delayed. The local branches of the Post Office could not refuse military authorities' demand for postal censorship, so the overall mail processing speed was affected.

Furthermore, the war also triggered a shortage of labour in postal services in some places: 'Nearly all the available labourers have been recruited as soldiers.' A report from Guangxi indicated that this 'has occasioned very great difficulty in finding men to fill the post of courier.'²² The war was perhaps not the only factor contributing to the CPS's labour shortage. It should be mentioned that natural disasters such as earthquakes, pandemics, floods, and famines also added to the complexity of the situation and created difficulties for the postal service at that time. As the *Annual Reports* show, the most common natural disaster probably was flooding, which could directly interrupt postal routes. In addition, famines were often accompanied by floods or droughts, affecting local security and causing an increase in the numbers of bandits that could indirectly affect postal operations. For the CPS, the more impactful and direct natural disasters in 1918 were the plague in the north and the influenza pandemic. The CPS's staff, especially foreign employees, were just about to be discharged from military and returned to work after WWI, but it was facing the new challenge created by

²⁰ *Annual Report, 1918*, 8, 19, 24–25.

²¹ *Annual Report, 1918*, 16.

²² *Annual Report, 1918*, 24–25.

the pandemic. The CPS report said that due to the infection of plague and the flu in postal employees, postal operations were more difficult to carry out in some areas, including those that had been impacted by wars and political unrest. Ten postal districts reported that a large number of postal carriers and clerks had become infected and died, especially carriers travelling across different areas in Zhili, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Gansu, Xinjiang, Hubei, Shanghai, Anhui, Zhejiang, and Yunnan.²³ For the records of natural and military disasters affecting the postal service in 1918 can be seen in Table 2.1.

	Military operations	Martial law, censorship, and political unrest	Bandits	Plague	Influenza	Famine	Flood	Earthquake
Chihli (Zhili)	X (move armies by railways)		X (from Shandong)	X	X		X	
Shansi (Shanxi)		X		X				
Honan (Henan)		X	X				X	
Shensi (Shaanxi)		X	X					
Kansu (Gansu)			X		X			
Sinkiang (Xinjiang)					X			
Manchuria		X	X					
Shantung (Shandong)			X					
Szechwan (Sichuan)	X	X	X					
Hupeh (Hubei)	X		X		X		X	
Hunan	X	X	X					
Kiangsi (Jiangxi)	X (mild)							
Kiangsu (Jiangsu)		X	X					
Shanghai					X			
Anhwei (Anhui)		X	X	X	X		X	
Chekiang (Zhejiang)			X	X	X			
Fukien (Fujian)	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Kwangtung (Guangdong)	X	X	X				X	X

²³ *Annual Report, 1918*, 15–25.

Kwangsi (Guangxi)	X (workers recruited as soldiers for the war in Guangdong)	X	X				X	
Yunnan			X		X	X	X	
Kweichow (Guizhou)			X					

Table 2.1: Man-made and natural disasters in each Postal District mentioned in the 1918 Annual Report.

Postal Office Branch Damages

McCord has mentioned that military disasters (*bingzai* 兵災) and bandit disasters (*feizai* 匪災) were two significant man-made disasters during the warlord era. The suffix *zai* 災 (disaster) indicates that the threats of violence and atrocities of warlordism scared the people in local communities in equal measure as natural disasters.²⁴ The Post Office opened not only in metropolises but also in small rural villages that were not immune to *bingzai* and *feizai*. Several documented cases show the local post offices were affected by the activities of armies and local robbers. In 1918, for example, the Post Offices in Guangdong, the base of the Guangzhou military government led by Sun, were seriously damaged. Soldiers invaded the Post Office building to steal or rob parcels and cash. During the two-month siege of Leizhou (Luichow 雷州), the Post Office was shelled, and the staff evacuated to neighbouring villages.²⁵ The situation became more uncertain while the conflict was spreading to other southern areas. On 30 November 1919, the Hankow Post Office reported that a branch had been robbed by thirty soldiers. The vault was forced open, and money was stolen.²⁶

Some damage was indirect but still affected postal operations. At the beginning of the

²⁴ McCord, 'Military Atrocities in Warlord China,' 211.

²⁵ *Annual Report, 1918*, 24.

²⁶ Postmaster-General Destelan H. Picard's letter to the Communication Ministry on the Constitutional Protection War in Sichuan, No. 32, 1 December 1918, 137(2)243, *The Second Historical Archives of China* (SHAC).

war in September 1917, the Anhui Postal Commissioner reported that there was a group of renegade soldiers, originally subordinated to the Anwu Army 安武軍 and under Beijing's command, who plundered shops in the inner and outer Anqing city between the darkness of the night and the early morning on 2 September 1917. Even though this was not a direct attack, postal staff could hear gunshots around the Post Office and felt the tension in the streets. During that frightening night, because the city gates were closed, mail had to be abseiled down the city wall for delivery.²⁷ These cases indicate that regardless of which faction was controlling the area, local Post Office branches were often affected by the lack of discipline in armies.

Injury and Death of Postal Workers and Staff

The unfavourable conditions described above meant that many lower-level postal carriers were working across high-risk areas. Their lives were imperilled by not only military actions but also undisciplined soldiers and bandits (*tufei* 土匪); this term was cited in the postal reports.²⁸ Several cases of attacks on the postal staff were reported to the General Post Office and included in the 1918 *Annual Report*. In Guangxi, there were fifty-three cases of robbery in which postal carriers lost mail and personal belongings, such as clothes, bedding, and money. In some cases, higher-ranking staff would also encounter issues: 'Inspectors sent to investigate the cause of the disruption were arrested by soldiers of one or another party, accused of being spies and led blindfolded into their camps.' They were released afterwards, 'after due inquiry.'²⁹ Some postal inspectors in Guangdong escaped from 'brigands and pirates'

²⁷ Picard's letter to Deputy Minister Ye regarding local military intelligence, No. 675, 7 September 1917, 137(2)619, SHAC.

²⁸ See *Annual Report, 1918*, 25.

²⁹ *Annual Report, 1918*, 9.

and 'on several occasions were fired on by soldiers.'³⁰

The most serious but nonetheless common situation reported was postal carriers, who were lower-ranking Chinese postal employees, murdered or wounded by robbers or soldiers on the delivery routes. In 1918, the Guangxi Postal District lost seven carriers, three dead and four wounded, in robberies.³¹ In Hunan, a Liling 醴陵 postman was shot dead when he attempted to rescue the Postmaster, who had been taken by soldiers.³² The Yunnan Post Office reported that three postal carriers were killed and many were injured.³³ In Fujian, one postal carrier was murdered by robbers.³⁴ Apart from the regular staff, two Chinese postal agents in Guangdong were murdered and two were kidnapped for ransom in the same year.³⁵ Such tragic cases were, in fact, frequently mentioned in the postal districts in southern China.

Not surprisingly, the distinction between bandits, robbers, and soldiers in the postal reports was blurred, and their identities could be interchangeable. Diana Lary noticed that during the warlord era, there were instances of soldiers hurting the people just as much as bandits. She also mentioned the famous military commander Lu Ronting (1859–1928) as an example of a 'bandit-turned-warlord.'³⁶ It is indeed difficult to distinguish bandits and soldiers in the postal reports. The damage records were created by the CPS, which was subordinated to Beijing, the country's legitimate central government at that time. The biased position of the CPS is evident in the accounts where they referred to Southerners as 'robbers,' in the same tone as the Beiyang government. Therefore, it is still unclear whether the bandits or the

³⁰ *Annual Report, 1918*, 24.

³¹ *Annual Report, 1918*, 24.

³² *Annual Report, 1918*, 20.

³³ *Annual Report, 1918*, 25.

³⁴ *Annual Report, 1918*, 23.

³⁵ *Annual Report, 1918*, 24.

³⁶ Lary, *Warlord Soldiers*, 59–60.

soldiers caused the casualties. In terms of the overall domestic situation, not only military engagement itself but also the negative effects of the war, including the deteriorating public safety, made postal operations highly risky.

However, even under such difficult, varying, and unfavourable conditions, the postal service maintained its operations. A significant contributing factor could be the foreign staff management of the CPS, which will be discussed in the next section.

2. Foreign Staff and the Beijing Government

The Legacy of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service

Although China was divided into several regimes and embroiled in wars, which made the overall situation difficult for the CPS operations, the CPS was still the only national postal service running throughout the warlord era. It seemed undisrupted and undivided, and no other postal services were established by 'rebel' regimes. More importantly, the CPS generally worked independently and steadily grew its business even during the chaotic period. At that time, the CPS was a nominal government department, and its foreign staff remained loyal to the Beijing government. In terms of financial resources, the postal service was originally supported by the Maritime Customs between 1896 and 1911. After their separation in 1911, the CPS became self-financed, which was a crucial factor in making it relatively independent from the unstable politics.³⁷ Despite arousing controversy over unequal pay and foreign

³⁷ The IPS was initially established and managed by the IMS between 1896 and 1911. During that time, it reported an operating deficit but was funded by the CMS. According to Weiping Tsai's study, the Qing government approved supporting the IPS directly from six Customs' revenue as an advance of funds from 1904. After the IPS and IMS's separation in 1911, the IPS (succeeded by CPS) needed to pay the IMS (succeeded by CMS) back the principal and interest, a total of 2,063,151.86 Haikwan tael (海關兩) in instalments for five years. However, the CPS did not pay off the debt on time until 1925. See Tsai Weiping, 'Daqing youzheng yu Haiguan fenjia beihou de buwei renzhi: de Boli he Angelian de Xinhai zhizheng' (The Unknown Story behind the Separation of the IPS and IMS: The 1911 Dispute between A. Théophile Piry and Francis Aglen), *Youshi yanjiu* 34 (2017): 68–77. Also see *Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju*, ed., *Youzhen Dashiji*, vol. 1:1, 87–88.

interference in China's postal revenue in the early Republican era, which will be discussed later, its foreign staff played a crucial role in maintaining the stability of postal communications.

In this, it can be compared to the CMS, which also attempted to juggle its position between the Beiyang government and the 'rebel' regimes to ensure its operations across China. This similarity is also reflected in the foreign staff system that the CPS inherited from the CMS, which initially managed it from 1896 to 28 May 1911.³⁸ The CMS relied on a large number of foreign staff members to operate and manage its 'cosmopolitan' or 'internationalised' service between 1859 and 1950.³⁹ In addition, the CMS was a long-lived organisation that existed from the late Qing era to the end of the Republican era. It survived the changing regimes and made every effort to maintain its service during the north-south divide period and the Second Sino-Japanese War (1927–1945).⁴⁰

The CPS was also run by foreign staff, even after the separation from the CMS in 1911; nevertheless, there are some differences between these two services. Firstly, the relations and interactions with the local Chinese society of these two departments were different. The customs service was mainly a tax authority for international trade with merchants and trading companies in trade ports, although it had significant power to manage a large part of the fiscal revenue of China and was involved in other affairs as well in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The postal service, however, was the concern of everyone who used it for communication, and its branch offices were deeply established in local communities. In 1916,

³⁸ Guo Tingyi, *Zhonghua minguo shishi rizhi*, vol. 2, 1389.

³⁹ Hans van de Ven, *Breaking with the Past: The Maritime Customs Service and the Global Origins of Modernity in China*, 92–94. H.B. Morse is likely the first scholar to write about the CMS's cosmopolitan personnel system. See Hosea Ballou Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, vol. 2, 140–141.

⁴⁰ On the survival of the Chinese Customs Service, see Chihyun Chang, *Government, Imperialism and Nationalism in China*, 43–61, 121–142.

there were a total of 1,616 post offices at different administrative levels located in twenty-one postal districts in China.⁴¹ This then increased to 1,932 offices in twenty-two districts in 1919,⁴² and 2,509 offices in twenty-four districts in 1925.⁴³ Despite local differences in growth and decline, these increasing numbers indicate a massive expansion of the CPS between 1916 and 1925. After that, because of the Northern Expedition, the CPS was 'passing through a more difficult period than has been experienced at any time,' which caused a significant decrease in branch numbers from 2,562 to 2,407 between 1926 and 1928, temporarily reversing previous developments.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the overall growth of the CPS map suggests that those 2.5 thousand post offices were not only widely distributed but also more closely integrated into local society than the CMS offices which were limited to the main trading port cities. When the central government was weakened and unstable, the Post Office was probably the only centralised institution that effectively functioned within warlord-controlled regions across the country.

The second difference is the foreign staff situation. During the Republican era, the CMS retained an operational framework that was highly reliant on foreign staff and even expanded their power and functions, which helped the government collect more tariffs. The Republican government inherited heavy reparations from international conflicts and treaties of the Imperial Era for the payment of which the CMS served as a guarantee. Therefore, the CMS became a powerful state taxation authority, and its staff was responsible for assisting the Chinese government in solving financial problems.⁴⁵

⁴¹ *Annual Report, 1916.*

⁴² *Annual Report, 1919.*

⁴³ *Annual Report, 1925.*

⁴⁴ *Annual Report, 1926, 1, 35. Annual Report, 1927, 41. Annual Report, 1928, 33.*

⁴⁵ van de Ven, *Breaking with the Past*, 9–11.

It cannot be ignored that the CMS struggled with the Guomindang government over the issue of autonomy under the rise of nationalism and anti-imperialism, from the late 1920s after Guomindang speedily won the Northern Expedition. Then, the management and dominance of foreign staff in the CMS were challenged. However, the weakened central government in Nanjing compromised over the use of foreign staff in return for the financial contribution to an efficient customs service.⁴⁶ The foreign staff system continued to work well for the Chinese government even during the Second World War that will be discussed in later chapters.

In the case of the CPS, in contrast, while the service was expanding, not only the number of foreign staff but also their influence and authority had been gradually reduced even before Guomindang took control. Although foreign staff also occupied senior positions in the Post Office, they were far fewer in number than foreign staff in the CMS. Meanwhile, it relied heavily on lower-rank Chinese staff to handle a wide range of administrative and labour tasks throughout the country. According to the *Annual Reports*, before Guomindang took control of the CPS, the peak number of foreign employees in the Post Office was only 122 in 1923 and 1925, while more than 34,000 Chinese staff supported the service in 1923 and 36,756 in 1925 (Table 2.2).⁴⁷ By contrast, there were 1,291 foreign staff and only 6,735 Chinese staff in the Customs in 1923.⁴⁸

Year	Foreign staff	Chinese staff	Notes
1916	Unknown	24,967	According to the <i>Annual Report, 1917</i> .
1917	101 (0.39%)	25,867 (99.61%)	Some foreign staff were recruited or dismissed due to WWI.
1918	107 (0.41%)	26,933 (99.59%)	

⁴⁶ van de Ven, *Breaking with the Past*, 9–11.

⁴⁷ *Annual Report 1917 to 1928*. 1917 was the first time to separately list the number of Chinese and foreign employees in the *Annual Report*.

⁴⁸ *China Maritime Customs Service List, 1923* (Shanghai: Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 1923), v.

1919	111 (0.39%)	28,298 (99.61%)	
1920	114 (0.37%)	30,424 (99.63%)	
1921	115 (0.36%)	31,843 (99.64%)	
1922	113 (0.35%)	32,573 (99.65%)	
1923	122 (0.35%)	34,363 (99.65%)	
1924	121 (0.34%)	35,590 (99.66%)	
1925	122 (0.33%)	36,756 (99.67%)	
1926	120 (0.31%)	38,513 (99.69%)	The Northern Expedition war
1927	101 (0.26%)	38,128 (99.74%)	
1928	73 (0.19%)	37,390 (99.81%)	Guomindang entirely controlled the CPS.

Table 2.2: The foreign and Chinese staff in the CPS between 1916 and 1928. Source: *Annual Reports*.

In addition, the transformation of CPS's leadership was also different from the CMS. The Postmaster-General (an equivalent of a postal chief executive officer), or *zongban* (Tsongpan) 總辦, can be used as an example. This highest position of the CPS was not only held by the French, but also interfered with by the French Embassy in China, which had to be consulted before each *zongban* appointment before 1928. It was caused by the diplomatic competition between France and Britain in the context of the rise of new imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In 1898, two years after the IPS (the CPS after 1912) was established, French Minister Stephen Pichon (1857–1933) proposed to the Zongli yamen of the Qing government (later MOFA in 1901) that the position of the foreign chief administrator in the postal service should be held by the French once the service became independent from the IMS (the CMS after 1912) and under a minister taking full responsibility. In reply, the Zongli yamen affirmed that the Qing government welcomed the proposal in order to maintain the Sino-French friendship.⁴⁹ However, the postal service was officially established and managed by the IMS, which was run by Robert Hart and represented British

⁴⁹ Zongli Yamen's démarche to the French Minister, 16 October 1898, 02-02-012-01-003, MHAC.

interests. The IMS management was not changed, but the French Minister repeated his request continuously between 1898 and 1911.⁵⁰

It seems that the Qing government accepted the arrangement proposed by the French Minister afterwards because it could balance the British-French competition of interests in China. In 1911, after the separation of the Customs and Postal Services, the Qing court ultimately appointed Theophile Piry (1850–1918), a Frenchman and former staff member of the IMS who had served as postal *zongban* under the Customs since November 1901,⁵¹ to be *zongban* (Postmaster-General) in the new institutional structure of the Post Office. According to the prior agreement, the Qing government issued a *démarche* to inform the French Embassy of the new arrangement and emphasised that Piry was qualified for the position due to his work experience in the Customs since 1873 and concurrent responsibilities for the Postal Service since 1896. Despite Piry's French nationality, Pierre De Margerie (1861–1942), the French Minister, was initially unsatisfied and even returned the *démarche* because the Qing appointment of Piry was not consulted with the French Minister in advance.⁵² A revised *démarche* solved this diplomatic trouble, and Piry's appointment was finally approved by the French Minister; however, it shows that France actively interfered with the *zongban* appointment and implies that France competed with the British power in China. Afterwards, not only was the position of *zongban* held by the French, but also the Chinese government had to consult the French Minister. This arrangement continued into the Republic of China after 1912. The appointment of Piry's successor, H. Picard-Destelan, followed this procedure

⁵⁰ MOFA to the Ministry of Posts and Communications (MOPC), 20 May 1911, 02-02-009-10-001, MHAC.

⁵¹ *China Imperial Maritime Customs Service List 1910*, 180.

⁵² French Minister's *démarche* to Chinese MOFA, 31 May 1911, 02-02-012-02-002, MHAC. MOFA's *démarche* to French Minister, 12 June 1911, 02-02-012-02-005, MHAC. MOFA letter to MOPC, 15 July 1911, 02-02-012-02-006, MHAC.

as acting *zongban* in 1915 and formal *zongban* in 1917.⁵³

Nevertheless, foreign interference in the *zongban* appointment at the CPS saw a dramatic change in the title of the position when Piry left office in 1915. Before 1915, the Qing and Republican governments appointed a Chinese official to be the Director-General of Posts in name only. The CPS management was held by Postmaster-General Piry. The position had been, since 1911, an equivalent of a chief executive officer in command of the service and making policy decisions, given the CPS's independence from the CMS. When Piry took a leave of absence for health reasons in 1915, the Beiyang government seized the chance to degrade the title in English. Piry's successor, French national H. Picard-Destelan (1878–1971) was appointed as Associate Director-General rather than Acting Postmaster-General as Piry's original title read, while the Chinese title *zongban* was kept.⁵⁴

On 1 April 1917, Piry officially retired from the CPS, but Picard-Destelan was not promoted from the Associate Director-General position. Instead, his new title even went down to co-director-General (in English), while a Chinese staff member Wong Wenwei (Homer W. W. Wong) 王文蔚 (1881–?) was appointed to be Deputy Director-General in English and *huiban* (hui-pan) 會辦 in Chinese. Above the postal leadership, a Director-General was concurrently occupied by the Vice-Minister of Communications Ye Gongchuo (Yeh Kung-Ch'o) 葉恭綽 (1881–1968).⁵⁵ This could be a sign that the Beiyang government was trying to assert control of the postal service and strengthen Chinese-staff influence, though it had limited effect.

⁵³ For H. Picard-Destelan appointment and promotion in 1915 and 1917, see 03-02-23-05 and 03-02-23-06, MHAC.

⁵⁴ *Annual Report 1915*, 1.

⁵⁵ *Annual Report 1917*, 1.

In 1928, Guomindang took over control of the whole CPS and downgraded the title of *zongban* to *huiban*, under a Director-General held by the Chinese. The Nationalists believed that the original title 'not only was the appellation incorrect but also the authority and responsibility were not well defined.'⁵⁶ From *zong* 總 (general) to *hui* 會 (associate), the importance of the highest rank of foreign staff was significantly diminished. Moreover, no more than one month after the Beiyang government fell, Picard-Destelan was asked to move the CPS's headquarters from Beijing to Shanghai.⁵⁷ After the move, Picard-Destelan immediately took a leave of absence and then retired. His position was abolished by the new Nanjing government. Meanwhile, in line with Guomindang nationalisation policies, foreign staff recruitment was also permanently suspended.⁵⁸ The power of postal personnel management was, therefore, almost completely controlled by the Chinese government. Since then, foreign postal employees could remain in their jobs in the Post Office, but their number decreased rapidly. Despite no recruitment of new foreign staff after 1928, a few foreigners remained in the CPS until the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War and played an important role during the war, which will be discussed in the later chapters.

Foreigners and Their Loyalty

Regardless of the government's attempts to limit the influence of foreign staff in the management of the postal service, it seems that, by and large, those staff were loyal to the Beijing government before 1928 and adapted to the regime change thereafter. This can be seen especially in the CPS's confidential reports to Beijing during the warlord era. The CPS

⁵⁶ *Annual Report 1928*, 2. For the evolution of the *zongban* title in English and Chinese and its demotion in the official Chinese hierarchy, also see Zhang Yi, *Zhonghua youzheng shi*, 323–329.

⁵⁷ Because Nanjing had no capacity to accommodate the entire institution, the CPS was first relocated to Shanghai instead of the new capital Nanjing.

⁵⁸ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 55.

often assisted Beijing in monitoring its political opponents and the political and military development in local areas.

According to the CPS records, the service and its foreign staff played a critical role during the warlord era. H. Picard-Destelan frequently reported to the Communication Ministry of Beijing through the CPS's and the Beiyang bureaucracy's own channels when warlords were at war with each other after Yuan Shikai's death. The content of the reports was not only concerning war-inflicted damages in local Post offices but also the intelligence on local military operations, preparations, and battlefield updates.⁵⁹ The earliest extant report was sent between 21 April and 2 May 1917 and stated that the Sichuan Post Office at Chengdu reported that there was a conflict between the Sichuan and Yunnan warlords. The Sichuan military leader Liu Cunhou 劉存厚 (1885–1960) challenged the leadership of Sichuan province under Sichuan military governor Luo Peijin 羅佩金 (1878–1922) and Sichuan governor Dai Kan 戴戡 (1880–1917). In addition, the Jiangsu Postal Commissioner tracked Anhui military governor Zhang Xun's 張勳 (1854–1923) whereabouts when Zheng departed for Beijing on 7 June 1917, just before the short-lived Manchu Restoration.⁶⁰

The covert surveillance operations against Sun Yat-sen and the revolutionaries were even more pronounced. After the Restoration, the CPS continued collecting intelligence, while China was immediately involved in another crisis, the Constitutional Protection War. Because Premier Duan Qirui did not recognise the Provisional Constitution of the Republic of China and the old parliament, Sun Yat-sen established a new government in Guangzhou to resist the Duan Qirui's government in Beijing. The War caused a political and military crisis that involved

⁵⁹ Picard-Destelan's Letters to the Ministry of Communication (MOC), 137(2)243, SHAC; Picard-Destelan's Letters to Deputy Minister Ye, 137(2)619, SHAC.

⁶⁰ Picard-Destelan's Letters to Deputy Minister Ye, 21 April to 8 June 1917, 137(2)619, SHAC.

many warlords in a series of tangled conflicts. The CPS's function as an intelligence agency seemed significant for Beijing.

During this period of disturbance, local post offices were affected to varying degrees. According to intelligence reports from *zongban* Picard-Destelan to Director-General Ye Gongchuo, the local government in Ningbo organised postal censorship in July, the target of which was Sun,⁶¹ and the Anhui Postal Commissioner reported privately that mail delivery was impacted by renegade soldiers from Beijing who were plundering shops in the city.⁶²

Furthermore, Picard-Destelan and the CPS also reported detailed military and political intelligence to the Beijing government between 1917 to 1922. With respect to the actions of political leaders, a letter from Picard-Destelan to Ye at the beginning of the crisis shows that the CPS collected local military information and political leaders' intentions as well. They helped the cabinet led by Premier Duan Qirui (the Anhui clique) to detect political opponents, such as Acting President Feng Guozhang's 馮國璋 (1869–1919; the Zhili clique) attitude towards the situation and Guangzhou leader Sun Yat-sen's inciting the navy.⁶³ Moreover, because of the military operations in Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou, the branches of the Post Office in these provinces also provided information about the war and the local situation.⁶⁴

This kind of information transmitted via a wide range of media, such as telegrams, private letters, and confidential official reports, was generally sent from local areas to the Directorate General of Posts (DG), where it was consolidated and forwarded to the Communication Ministry, Beijing. There are two meaningful issues here. Firstly, they show that

⁶¹ Picard-Destelan's Letter to Deputy Minister Ye, no. 639, 19 July 1917, SHAC 137(2)619, SHAC.

⁶² Picard-Destelan's Letter to Deputy Minister Ye, no. 675, 7 September 1917, 137(2)619, SHAC.

⁶³ Picard-Destelan's Letter to Deputy Minister Ye, no. 639, 19 July 1917, SHAC 137(2)619, SHAC.

⁶⁴ They are recorded in the file of Picard-Destelan's letters to the MOC, 137(2)243, SHAC.

the Beiyang government did not control local military operations and political development definitely, even if some warlords had close relations with Beijing during this turbulent period. Information transfer seemed to have been a problem in this situation and Beijing needed to look for an alternative communication method. The CPS could provide a reliable service to Beijing, adding to their sources of information.

Secondly, the CPS had its own channels of communication from local areas to the *zongban*, which supported this centralised institution and made sure the service could be efficiently controlled and operated by one authority. Looking at the CPS archives, these channels functioned throughout almost every war and conflict in the Republican era, maintaining a postal service even when the country was involved in wars and divided into different regimes. It helped the DG to manage local branches and respond to local political situations in regard to postal operations. All these functions could be attributed to its operation independent from the Chinese bureaucracy. Like the CMS, not only did it have foreign staff, but also its official language was English, even if there were a large number of lower-rank employees who were Chinese.⁶⁵ It could be regarded as a kind of colonial situation at least in practice, but scholars may coin it an ‘informal empire’ or ‘indirect control through delegation’.⁶⁶ Chen Jiying joined the Jihei (Ki-Hei) 吉黑 (Jilin-Heilongjiang) Head Office at Harbin to be a sorter in 1927. He witnessed the superiority of senior foreign staff over Chinese staff and the foreign language, English, was used as the official language in the Post Office. As a Chinese, he described his initial discomfort when he could not fully understand postal terminology in English, which was commonly used throughout the entire CPS, including

⁶⁵ Chen Jiying, *Wode youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 4–14.

⁶⁶ Osterhammel, ‘Semi-Colonialism and Informal Empire in Twentieth-Century China,’ 290–314. Robert Bickers, ‘Good Work for China in Every Possible Direction,’ 25–36. Chang, *Government, Imperialism and Nationalism in China*, 183–190.

conversations at work. Even Chinese senior staff showed a superior attitude that they spoke jargon by mixing the Chinese and English languages:⁶⁷

No! No! Ni de Yingwen yiding considerably perfect, ni bu zidao, zanmen P.O. de documents doushi English de, Commissioner shi foreigner, we must speak in English more than in Chinese.

(No! No! Your English ability must be considerably perfect. You do not know that our Post Office's documents are all written in English, and the Postal Commissioner is a foreigner. We must speak in English more than in Chinese.)

Although Chen's record should be understood in the context of the rise of national sentiment after the May Thirtieth Movement in 1925,⁶⁸ it shows that the CPS was run by a special closed system of foreign management, which had its own rules, communication channels, and working language distinguishing it from Chinese society and political authorities.

Although the CPS was operated relatively independently, it was a national public service, which was nominally under the Communication Ministry of Beijing's supervision during the warlord era, and it was deeply rooted in the local areas, even the frontline of the war. Beijing could make use of postal channels to obtain intelligence on local military operations, while the local branches of the Post Office acted as an intelligence agency, collecting and recording the information that Beijing was interested in.

Although the foreign staff and the CPS collected intelligence for the Beiyang government, the information originally written in English shows that the government's

⁶⁷ Chen Jiyang, *Wode youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 18.

⁶⁸ Chen Jiyang, *Wode youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 4.

confidential communication was essentially controlled by foreigners. During the process of report producing and delivery, the foreign staff still had the agency to decide on information selection and translation. More importantly, these reports were delivered by local branches of the CPS to *zongban* before being submitted to the government. *Zongban* had the power to compile information and report it to the government in his name. This reproduction process can be identified not only by *zongban's* name as the report creator but also by some mistranslation. Some local military leaders' names in these reports are incorrect in Chinese or indicated in transliteration. For example, Luo Peijin 羅佩金 (1878–1922), the Military Governor of Sichuan, was recorded as Luo Xing 羅興.⁶⁹ This could suggest that the Chinese translators did not know who Luo Peijin was, and illustrates that Beijing did not receive original and accurate information.

In addition, the CPS and its foreign staff had a great sense of purpose and they were determined to protect the dignity and integrity of the service. They had a strong professional ethos in regard to the CPS, under its centralised management, and a desire to keep it in good condition for mail delivery. Consequently, in order to protect the service, foreign staff worked with Beijing to ensure that the service not to be affected by political instability in the country. The following discussion will show how they managed to hold a neutral position to maintain mail delivery.

3. Warlord Interference in the Post Office

The CPS was often threatened by local authorities and military leaders during the warlord era, but it managed to maintain a relatively neutral status in order to maintain the service. Its staff

⁶⁹ Directorate General of Posts (DG) to MOC, 21 April 1917, 137(2)621, SHAC.

strived as much as possible to ensure that the service did not suffer from interference. Nonetheless, the CPS went through a constant struggle against China's warlordism. It became a target not because the warlords were attempting to institute a new, more controllable service to replace it, but because the CPS seemed to handle large sums of money that they were interested in taking over or forcing loans from. The competition between military commanders led to a situation that highlighted the distinctive role of the CPS in early Republican China.

Based on the CPS internal documents, the following discussion focuses on how commanders implanted themselves into the CPS in local branches and how foreign postal staff stood as the first line of negotiations protecting the integrity of this 'national' postal service in the divided country.

Zhang Zuolin and Seeking Postal Surplus

1922 was a crucial year for General Zhang Zuolin (Chang Tso-lin) 張作霖 (1875–1928), the warlord of Manchuria and the Fengtian clique (奉系) leader. Despite his increasing power in the Beijing government, he lost the First Zhili-Fengtian War in early May 1922.⁷⁰ He was defeated by the Zhili clique (直系), led by Wu Peifu 吳佩孚 (1874–1939), and his titles and ranks were removed by President Xu Shichang 徐世昌 (1855–1939). In response, Zhang declared independence on behalf of the Three North-Eastern Provinces and did not recognise Beijing's orders.⁷¹ The intriguing tension between Zhang Zuolin and Beijing was also reflected in Zhang's attempt to take over the Post Office in Manchuria.

⁷⁰ Ronald Suleski, *Civil Government in Warlord China: Tradition, Modernization and Manchuria* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 57–66.

⁷¹ Suleski, *Civil Government in Warlord China*, 66; Guo Tingyi, *Zhonghua minguo shishi rizhi*, vol. 1, 640.

On 15 May 1922, Zhang Zuolin sent Tong Zhaoyuan 佟兆元 (1881–1948), the Acting Foreign Affairs Commissioner of Fengtian, with a letter to the Postal Administration Office of South Manchuria (南滿郵務管理局). In the letter, Zhang claimed that the Beijing government had not been able to exercise authority under Wu Peifu's 'forced control.' Because the CPS maintained its centralised and comprehensive management by being institutionally subordinate to Beijing's Ministry of Communication at that time, he demanded that all postal service revenue except monthly expenses in the Three North-Eastern Provinces must be sent to Fengtian rather than to Beijing. Otherwise, he threatened to regularly interfere with the operation of the service.⁷²

The crisis was very likely to be a follow-up of Zhang Zuolin's defeat in the First Zhili-Fentian War in 1922. He took his revenge on the Beijing government, which was influenced by the Zhili clique after the Zhili-Fentian conflict. Although to the CPS the request was unreasonable and unacceptable, it implies that the Post Office in Manchuria held a considerable amount of funds, which attracted Zhang's attention.

In response to this naïve impulse, N. J. Blix, the Postal Commissioner of Southern Manchuria, immediately sent an urgent telegram reporting the situation to the DG in Beijing. He then explained to Zhang (through Tong) that the money the Post Office held was reserved for postal money order exchanges and to pay for international transits,⁷³ especially as Manchuria was connected to the main international postal route via the Trans-Siberian Railway. Manchuria's postal service was merely a subordinate postal district of the entire national postal service, and its revenue was managed and distributed by the DG for postal

⁷² DG Letter to the Communication Ministry (MOC), no. 133, 17 May 1922, 137(2)632, SHAC.

⁷³ Southern Manchuria Post Office Letter to Zhang Zuolin, 17 May 1922, 137(2)632, SHAC.

maintenance throughout the country. The carrying amount of local postal offices Zhang had seen did not equal the actual total surplus of the entire service. At the end of the letter, Blix intentionally stressed that other warlord regimes who also had declared themselves independent recognised the CPS and never interfered with it either in terms of finance or other affairs.⁷⁴

Operating a functional national postal service in China was not just about the postal communication itself, but it was often seen as signifying the capability of a sovereign state and as related to China's international relations. In the case of Manchuria, Postal Commissioner Blix believed that 'if the Province government interferes with the operating and managing of the Service,' he said, 'it will not only strongly influence China's reputation as a member of the international community but may also lead to conflict with other countries whose mail is dealt with by the CPS.'⁷⁵ He suggested that if Zhang successfully had taken over the Post Office in Manchuria and China had lost its monopoly in postal service, China's international status would have been harmed.

This notion needs to be explored in the context of China's postal history. China had been striving to join the UPU since the IPS was established in 1896. Although China was welcomed to become a member to enhance the efficiency of international postal transit, it was delayed until 1914, after the fall of the Qing. Some believe that Robert Hart attempted to prevent his power, representing British interests, from being replaced by French influence, and that this led to his deliberate delaying submission of the UPU application.⁷⁶ However, the facts may seem more complicated than Hart and the British Empire's interests. The Qing

⁷⁴ Southern Manchuria Post Office Letter to Zhang Zuolin, 17 May 1922, 137(2)632, SHAC.

⁷⁵ DG Letter to the Communication Ministry (MOC), no. 133, 17 May 1922, 137(2)632, SHAC.

⁷⁶ Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhanshi*, 406.

government and Robert Hart considered that the IPS had not matured enough to be separated from the CMS. The IPS did not control the entire postal operations in China, including the *minxinju*, foreign post offices, and the sovereignty in Mongolia and Tibet still had a strong influence.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the position of the Qing court was on *minxinju*'s side to allow their business to remain as usual.⁷⁸ Also, the IPS's scale was still in development and continued relying on the financial support of the IMS, with the Qing government unable to allocate additional funds. In addition, the foreign post office issue, regarded as a crucial factor in the postal authority, had not yet been unified and centralised in China.⁷⁹ In terms of external factors, the political instability caused by the sudden collapse of the Empire in late 1911 also influenced the progress of membership application, even though the Postal Service had indeed separated from the CMS only a few months earlier.

China finally entered the UPU on 1 March 1914 and expected to solve the issue of foreign post offices. Its symbolic significance is that the UPU was the first international organisation that China participated in, and this meant China could eventually have an equal status in the international community as other sovereign states in the West had had since the late nineteenth century. This was, of course, a hard-earned recognition and an important moment of progress for the CPS. However, foreign post offices within China did not yet begin to withdraw after China had become a UPU member. This issue involved international economic and political interests, more than merely communication convenience.⁸⁰ For instance, the Japanese government required that the South Manchuria Railway and Japanese steamers must only ship Japanese mail. The CPS had to transfer mail via Japan's Post Office in

⁷⁷ Xu Fengyuan, 'Zhongguo guojihua de licheng,' 4–9.

⁷⁸ Chen Ling-chieh, 'Bu duo xiaomin zhi li?'

⁷⁹ Chen Ling-chieh, 'Bu duo xiaomin zhi li?,' 7.

⁸⁰ Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhanshi*, 302–310.

China instead of directedly exchanging mail, in accordance with the UPU Convention.⁸¹ Thus, Japan was able to interfere with the South Manchuria postal services and ensure the confidentiality of its correspondence, whereas China not only lost executive postal rights in its own country, but also could not effectively levy a parcel tax and inspect suspected cases of smuggling.

Nevertheless, WWI created an opportunity to solve the problem of foreign post offices. The closing of the German Post Office followed the severance of Sino-German diplomatic relations in 1917.⁸² Similarly, the Russian Post Office was taken over by the CPS in 1918, after Sino-Russian relations were interrupted through the October Revolution in the preceding year.⁸³ Most importantly, in February 1922, the Beiyang government also successfully made an agreement with other countries concerning the withdrawal of foreign post offices at the Washington Naval Conference. All foreign post offices were to withdraw no later than 1 January 1923.⁸⁴ Scholars have discussed the diplomatic achievements of the Beiyang government on the Shandong Problem and the Open Door Policy in the Nine Countries Treaty to ensure China's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the Washington Conference⁸⁵ However, the issue of foreign post offices was also resolved at that time. As a result, at the end of December 1922, the UK, the US, and France closed their post offices; Japan closed almost all their post offices, except those along the South Manchuria Railway lines.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 39.

⁸² *Annual Report, 1917*, 12–13

⁸³ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 41.

⁸⁴ 'A Resolution regarding Foreign Postal Agencies in China,' *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference on the Limitation of Armament in the Discussions of Pacific and Far Eastern Questions*, 10 December 1921, 03-39-032-05-001, MHAC. The meeting minutes of the sub-committee on foreign post offices in China in the Washington Conference, see CAB 30/19, the National Archives UK (TNA).

⁸⁵ Tang Qihua, 'Beiyang waijiao yu "Fan'ersai-Huashengdun tixi"', 47–80; Bruce A. Elleman, *International Competition in China, 1899-1991: The Rise, Fall, and Restoration of the Open Door Policy* (London: Routledge, 2015), 73-86.

⁸⁶ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 43.

Compared with the achievements at the Washington Conference, the domestic situation was chaotic during the warlord era. Zhang Zuolin, with his ambitions regarding postal surplus in Manchuria, retaliated against the Beijing government in May 1922, just after the Washington Conference in February of the same year, but before the deadline for foreign post office withdrawal by the end of that year. Blix had reasons satisfactory for convincing Zhang that provincial government interference in the postal service would be an excuse for foreign countries to refuse compliance with the withdrawal of their post offices.⁸⁷

Blix likely recognised Zhang Zuolin's weak point, given that military commanders often relied on support and funding from foreign powers. As Hsu-Sheng Ch'i points out, foreign countries played an important role in the warlord era. They supplied more sophisticated arms than Chinese domestic production and were sources of considerable funds for both the Beijing central government and warlord regimes.⁸⁸ This could explain why Blix and the CPS attempted to raise the issue of a serious impact on China's international reputation, which had a bearing on individual warlord regimes' interests.

Zhang Zuolin did not immediately change his mind. A few days later, on 19 May 1922, Tong Zhaoyuan saw Blix again, reiterating Zhang's request. Because Zhang had been removed from his position in the Three North-Eastern Provinces, he believed that if there was any blame expressed by foreign countries, only President Xu in Beijing should be condemned. Tong also claimed that Manchuria was already under martial law, so the Post Office must obey the superior official's order.⁸⁹ As mentioned in the last chapter, the only way that local authorities could intervene in the Post Office was postal censorship under martial law. Beyond that,

⁸⁷ Southern Manchuria Post Office Letter to Zhang Zuolin, 17 May 1922, 137(2)632, SHAC.

⁸⁸ Ch'i, *Warlord Politics in China 1916–1928*, 122, 156–160.

⁸⁹ DG letter to MOC, no. 181, 20 June 1922, 137(2)632, SHAC.

however, the CPS still operated independently without interference.

Blix again stressed the influence of foreign powers on the CPS. He mentioned that diplomatic missions had been concerned about whether Zhang had interfered with the postal service.⁹⁰ This implies that Blix used his own status as a foreigner in China's public service to warn Zhang. In addition, as chapter 3 will discuss, the fastest international postal route between Asia and Europe was via railways in Manchuria connecting to the Trans-Siberian Railway. The event would not only affect the business of the CPS as a state monopolistic enterprise, but also was likely to impact international mail transit. Regardless of the authenticity of the diplomatic concerns, Blix put pressure on Zhang in regard to foreign countries' interests.

Meanwhile, Blix also threatened that the Three North-Eastern Provinces would need to bear the financial burden of the postal service and take the risk of the isolation caused by the potential interruption of postal communication. Due to the possible financial crisis of the CPS in Manchuria, the DG issued a clear instruction to the Post Office of South Manchuria that the money orders in Manchuria must immediately stop if Zhang continued his demands.⁹¹ It implied that the CPS would cut off the ties with Manchuria to prevent financial losses. Therefore, Blix also emphasised the seriousness of isolation, not only in terms of the mail communication but also the financial support from the CPS headquarters in Beijing for postal operations in Manchuria; otherwise, the provincial treasury would have to be responsible for funding the maintenance of the postal service.⁹² The statement reveals the centralised management and financial distribution of the CPS and suggests that provincial authorities

⁹⁰ DG letter to MOC, no. 181, 20 June 1922, 137(2)632, SHAC.

⁹¹ DG Letter to MOC, no. 133, 17 May 1922, 137(2)632, SHAC.

⁹² DG Letter to MOC, no. 181, 20 June 1922, 137(2)632, SHAC.

could not afford to fund postal services.

Although there is no clear evidence to show that either the Ministry of Communication or the DG gave any substantial support to the local post offices, the threat of cutting off the financial support was likely to exert its effects. Both the indirect international pressure and the unexpected potential cost finally led Zhang Zuolin to give up. On 30 May 1922, Tong Zhaoyuan sent Blix a letter which read: 'If you only use the surplus to maintain the postal service and never deliver to Beijing to support Wu, General Zhang will not interfere with the operation and hopes that your office can open as usual.'⁹³ The crisis was resolved, while the Communication Ministry commended the CPS's crisis management and reaffirmed its position that the local authorities' interference with the postal service must not occur.⁹⁴

This successful experience ultimately became a guideline for postal staff in dealing with similar interferences and disputes during the warlord era. In February 1926, Zhang Zongchang 張宗昌 (1881–1932), the Fengtian clique leader and the Military Governor of Shandong,⁹⁵ demanded 400 thousand Chinese dollars from the Shandong Post Office for urgent military needs.⁹⁶ Accordingly, the DG referred the Shandong Postal Administration to the previous case and stated that they must not break the rules for him.⁹⁷

The two cases show that the CPS had a special status and financial self-sufficiency that helped the system to survive the disturbances created by the warlords, while its centralised administration had only one DG, which was practically affiliated with the Beijing government. The management inherited the foreign personnel system from the Chinese Maritime Customs.

⁹³ Tong to Blix Letter, 31 May 1922, 137(2)632, SHAC.

⁹⁴ MOC to DG Order, no. 1698, 22 June 1922, 137(2)632, SHAC.

⁹⁵ John Benjamin Powell, *Who's Who in China* (Shanghai: The China Weekly Review, 1931, fourth edition), 31–32.

⁹⁶ Zhang Zongchang to the Shandong Postal Administration Order, no. 174, 17 January 1926, 137(2)632, SHAC.

⁹⁷ MOC to DG Order, no. 44[?], 5 February 1926, 137(2)632, SHAC.

Under the system, the CPS had a certain degree of neutrality and operated relatively independently, which was attributed to the foreigners' privileges and financial independence at that time. The foreign staff seemingly were more persuasive in the dispute with the local regimes on the grounds of potential international interventions. This was related to the reality that Chinese politicians and military leaders had higher considerations for foreign powers. They also understood the importance of seeking a way to join the international community, which was linked not least through the international postal system via every country's national postal service, thus making the postal system one of the most influential international institutions. Meanwhile, these military commanders and politicians also feared offending foreign powers, which seems to prove the particularity of the CPS as a foreign-influenced (but simultaneously) 'national' institution in China. Nevertheless, under the chaotic conditions of the warlord era, the CPS coped with the crisis using its privileges resulting from the employment of foreigners, too.

This was an example of crisis management by foreign postal employees dealing with the circumstances created by working under local military leaders who refused to obey Beijing's rules. The next section will discuss a situation in which a local regime was an ally of the central government.

Yuan Zuming Forced to Borrow Postal Funds

Unlike the retaliation against the Beijing government by Zhang Zuolin, the situation could have become tricky if local militarists and Beijing were in the same camp. For instance, it became complicated when local military authorities, while belonging to the same clique and supporting Beijing, needed considerable funds for resource allocation, executive maintenance,

war expenditure, bribes, or simply to accumulate wealth⁹⁸ and were, therefore, interested in the money owned by local branches of the Post Office.

General Yuan Zuming (Yüan Tsu-ming) 袁祖銘 (1889–1927) was a local military commander in the Sichuan–Guizhou area who had turned to support the Beijing government in 1920. He was given the rank of Commander-in-Chief of the Battle-front for the Relief of Sichuan (援川前敵總司令) by Wu Peifu in 1923.⁹⁹ On 10 February 1924, he directly telegraphed to Wu and the central government, including the President, the Premier, and the Minister of Communications, to ask for money from the Eastern Sichuan Postal Administration (東川郵務管理局) as a loan in support of the urgent need for military operations in Sichuan. He claimed that his army was suffering from hunger while the Post Office seemed to hold over a hundred thousand Chinese dollars to be delivered to Beijing.¹⁰⁰

Initially, Yuan's request was hastily approved by the central government because the DG of the CPS received an instruction issued by the President's Military Office for the Dongchuan Office to contribute all of their funds to Yuan's army.¹⁰¹ However, the DG strongly opposed the decision and eventually refused to obey the order to reallocate funds. The DG claimed that the postal surplus was only enough to cover daily expenses, and the reserve money was prepared for money order and remittance services. Its objection was based on the ground that the postal service was related to the public interest, especially since many soldiers who were commanded by Yuan relied on it for transferring their pay home. The DG worried that if it was compromised, the CPS would be unable to prevent other opposition cliques from

⁹⁸ Ch'i, *Warlord Politics in China 1916–1928*, 150.

⁹⁹ Guo Tingyi, *Zhonghua minguo shishi rizhi*, vol. 1, 745. Powell, *Who's Who in China*, 963–964.

¹⁰⁰ Yuan to President, Prime Minister, and Luoyang xunyueshi 洛陽巡閱使 (Wu Peifu) Telegram, 10 February 1924, 137(2)632, SHAC.

¹⁰¹ MOC to DG Order, no. 328, 27 February 1924, 137(2)632, SHAC.

requesting the same financial aid. Before Yuan's demand, the CPS had adopted a firm position of refusal when the Guangzhou Guomindang government, the camp hostile to Beijing, claimed the management rights of the local Post Office. The DG believed this was the reason why the postal service could be free from local authority interference.¹⁰² It implied that the operation of the CPS was established upon its relatively neutral and independent position.

This significant case illustrates the special relationship between the CPS, Beijing, and local political and military authorities during the warlord era. There are no further records that would allow us to know what the consequences of Yuan Zuming's loan request were; however, the CPS once again defended its independent status and neutral position by protecting postal funds. Although the Post Office was a nominal bureau and enterprise in the Beijing government, it did not absolutely follow Beijing's instructions, while Beijing did not have sufficient power to effectively control either local situations or government bureaus, including the postal service. It was also difficult for other local authorities to control the service. The Post Office thus was a unique public service in the early years of the Republic of China.

Tang Jiyao Blackmailing the Post Office

The worst situation for the CPS was being blackmailed by warlords. Despite respect for the postal service in local areas, money in the post offices was still a potentially attractive spoil. Tang Jiyu 唐繼虞, the Guizhou Military Governor(貴州軍務督辦) and brother of a Yunnan clique warlord Tang Jiyao 唐繼堯 (1883–1927),¹⁰³ forced the Guizhou Post Office to surrender to him 36,500 Chinese dollars as a loan in October 1924. Tang Jiyu claimed that this was part

¹⁰² DG to MOC Letter, no. 66, 3 March 1924, 137(2)632, SHAC.

¹⁰³ Gaimushō Jōhōbu, *Gendai Shinajin meikan* (Name Directory of the Contemporary Chinese) (Tokyo: Tōa dōbunkai chōsa hensanbu, 1928), 82.

of an agreement in which the province government rented a building to the Post Office against a mortgage, and the postal service would be protected by the government in return.¹⁰⁴ However, the DG did not recognise the agreement and believed the Post Office was forced to hand over the money. The DG sent a telegram to Tang explaining that the expenditure of the postal service in Guizhou exceeded its income and even needed funds from other postal districts to cover its expenses. It asked Tang to repay the money to the Post Office. If not, the postal service would be suspended in Guizhou.¹⁰⁵

The DG did not lie to Tang. The Guizhou Postal District was one of the most difficult-to-manage areas of the postal service during the warlord era. Guizhou's geographical and political conditions made it an area competed for by surrounding warlords. Different forces were fighting here and taking over the power one after another. Yuan Zuming was one local warlord who was born and raised in Guizhou. He drove away the Guizhou Commander-in-chief of Sun Yat-sen's Guangzhou government and appointed himself Guizhou governor in August 1922. Only after a few months, in March 1923, he was expelled by the Tang brothers, but resumed control over Guizhou again, supported by Wu Peifu, in early 1925.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the *Annual Reports* show that the Guizhou Postal District suffered from negative growth since 1922 and the effects of war since 1923, although its revenue slightly increased in 1924.¹⁰⁷

At the same time, the Tang brothers were involved in warlord struggles in south-west China. They coordinated with Sun Yat-sen and Guomindang, in opposition to Beijing, so the Post Office's request to reclaim funds did not pass through the Beijing government. The

¹⁰⁴ MOC to DC Order, no. 332, 16 December 1924, Attached Tang Jiyu to MOC Telegram, 10 December 1924, 137(2)632, SHAC.

¹⁰⁵ DG to Tang Jiyu Telegram, 19 December 1924, 137(2)632, SHAC.

¹⁰⁶ Gaimu-shō Jōhō-bu, *Gendai Shinajin meikan*, 732.

¹⁰⁷ *Annual Report, 1922*, 68. *Annual Report, 1923*, 82. *Annual Report, 1924*, 31.

reclaiming statement was made directly by the CPS rather than by Beijing's Minister of Communications, and consequently, it was difficult to make it mandatory to return the money. In addition, the continuous military operations in south-west China increased the difficulty of the negotiations.¹⁰⁸ Until March 1927, the Guizhou Postal Commissioner F. Poletti continued to negotiate with Tang Jiyao, who lost control as a result of a coup d'état in Yunnan, while his brother, Tang Jiyu, was also expelled from Yunnan by his subordinates in February 1927.¹⁰⁹ As Tang Jiyao only returned ten thousand dollars to the Post Office,¹¹⁰ Poletti turned to the new Guizhou military governor for the rest of the arrears,¹¹¹ but the new governor refused to recognise the debt and the money was never recovered. In the end, the DG requested the Communication Ministry to approve the cancellation of the arrears of 26,500 dollars.¹¹²

Warlords frequently intervened in Post Office affairs in many ways and for different purposes in the early Republican era. The pro-Beijing camp was even more likely to challenge the Post Office. Such crises often threatened the operations of the postal service as a public institution. However, overall, the CPS had been able to preserve its status as a neutral bureau, aiming to maintain its service and negotiate with local military authorities. The CPS foreign staff operated the service outside the Chinese bureaucracy and negotiated with the local authorities. The central government in Beijing did influence the CPS to some extent, while in the practical operation of the service, its neutrality made it more flexible to manage the crisis without Beijing's support.

¹⁰⁸ *Annual Report, 1924*, 31; *Annual Report, 1925*, 29–30.

¹⁰⁹ Guo Tingyi, *Zhonghua minguo shishi rizi*, vol. 2, 141; *Tan Yankai's Diary*, 21 February 1927, manuscript: <http://mhdb.mh.sinica.edu.tw/diary/image.php?book=tyk&page=TAN27150>, accessed 11 July 2018.

¹¹⁰ DG to MOC Letter, no. 77, 8 March 1927, 137(2)632, SHAC.

¹¹¹ The report created in March 1927 did not indicate who was the new Military Governor. In fact, the military leader of Guizhou frequently changed due to wars and political unrest. After Tang Jiyu, there were three Military Governor in the position between 1926 and 1927: Yuan Zuming, Wang Tianpei 王天培 (1888–1927), and Zhou Xicheng 周西成 (1893–1929).

¹¹² DG to MOC Letter, no. 91, 24 March 1927, 137(2)632, SHAC.

4. 'Reclaiming Postal Sovereignty'

The turning point for the CPS occurred when the Guomintang army gradually achieved the goals of the Northern Expedition between 1926 and 1928. A stronger regime and new political developments attracted the CPS's attention, keenly trying to prevent the loss of its autonomy. As a result, tensions between the CPS and the Guomintang government dramatically increased.

According to Harris's findings, both Guomintang and Communist agents successfully instigated local postal labour movements to challenge the authority of the CPS's local foreign management during the Northern Expedition. Although Chinese postal unions demanded fair treatment, 'most of the agitation was political rather than economic in nature.'¹¹³ The Guomintang regime had every intention to take over the postal service, similarly to warlord factions, when they successfully occupied southern areas, such as Fujian, Jiangxi, and Hubei, in 1927. Meanwhile, the rumour that Guomintang wanted to control the postal service was not only believed by the foreign staff of the CPS but also shared by the CMS' foreign staff. On 14 January 1927, the Postal Commissioner of Fuzhou received a reliable message stating that Guomintang was secretly discussing how to take over the CPS in the areas they controlled.¹¹⁴

In addition, the local Guomintang authorities often interfered with the postal service and made things difficult for postal staff. In this regard, when Guomintang relocated its headquarters from Guangzhou to Wuhan in early 1927, the DG ordered the Postal Commissioner of Wuhan to ask the son of Sun Yat-sen, Sun Ke 孫科 (1891–1973), and Chen Youren (Eugene Chen) 陳友仁 (1878–1944), the Nationalist Foreign Minister, for help to

¹¹³ Harris, 'The Post Office and State Formation in Modern China,' 64.

¹¹⁴ DG Report to MOC, no. 21, 26 January 1927, 137(2)632, SHAC.

maintain the independent operation of the postal service; the DG hoped they could ask their Fujian authority not to interfere with the Post Office. Meanwhile, the CPS also sought help from the military leader of Guomindang, Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975), when Chiang temporarily retired to his hometown of Xikou, to restrict Fujian's interference in the postal service.¹¹⁵ The strategy suggests that the DG was conscious of the split in Guomindang between Wang Jingwei (1883–1944) in Wuhan and Chiang Kai-shek in Nanjing and sought a solution approaching both sides.¹¹⁶ On 20 September 1927, just after Wuhan and Nanjing Nationalists reconciled, Nanjing's MOC demanded a loan from the Jiangsu Postal Administration from the postal surplus income to relieve the financial stress.¹¹⁷ The DG used similar language as in previous responses to warlords to warn the Nationalists that the local post offices may stop its services if it was interfered,¹¹⁸ yet this plan of action did not seem to work as it did hitherto. Thus, the Post Office came under an increasing amount of pressure from the new regime.

As the Guomindang's influence was on the rise, the staff of the CPS also quickly responded to subsequent changes. There were two main factors that had an impact on the development of the CPS. One characterised by the labour movement and the rise of the left wing was the newly established National Postal Union, which attracted Chinese postal staff to join. The members of the Union committee launched fifty demands that requested pay and treatment equal to those of foreign staff in the CPS.¹¹⁹ Although the issue was related to the rise of nationalism, this also implies that the development of the Union soured the long-term

¹¹⁵ DG Report to MOC, no. 22, 26 January 1927, 137(2)632, SHAC.

¹¹⁶ For the discussion on the political struggles and competition within the Guomindang during the Northern Expedition, see Lloyd E. Eastman, 'Nationalist China during the Nanking decade, 1927-1937,' in *The Nationalist Era in China*, ed. Lloyd E. Eastman et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 2–3.

¹¹⁷ DG Report to MOC, 20 September 1927, 137(2)632, SHAC.

¹¹⁸ DG Report to MOC, no. 22, 26 January 1927, 137(2)632, SHAC.

¹¹⁹ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 53–54.

relationship between Chinese and foreign staff.

The other factor was the establishment of the National Postal Conference held by the Nationalist government in February 1927, which created a new mode of managing the postal service. The CPS immediately sent a high-ranking French officer, Henri Victor Poullain, Chief of the International Department, to Wuhan for further investigation.¹²⁰ The CPS expected the Nationalist government to follow the conventions of postal operation as per the tacit understanding between successive Chinese governments and the Post and maintain the privileged position of foreign to manage the service. However, the CPS did not stop the Nationalist government from creating a new Director-General of Posts in the south. On 12 February 1927, the Hubei Postal Commissioner reported that a new chief of the postal service in the south was appointed and all postal commissioners who managed local postal districts in the Guomintang-ruled areas were to be reappointed by the Communication Ministry of the Nationalist government.¹²¹

The attitude of the CPS was intriguing. They avoided a dispute but wanted to maintain the management of the institution as a centralised and unified system controlled by a foreign *zongban* independent from the Chinese bureaucracy. The DG responded to Guomintang that the CPS accepted the demand for appointment because every Postal Commissioner was directly appointed by the *zongban* rather than the Communication Minister of Beijing, in accordance with the regulations of the CPS. The DG proposed a solution in which the DG was to provide a commissioner candidate list in advance, on the basis of which Guomintang would then issue the appointment. However, the DG stressed that there should be no interference

¹²⁰ DG Report to MOC, no. 37, 5 February 1927; no. 106, 13 April 1927, 137(2)632, SHAC.

¹²¹ DG Report to MOC, no. 46, 15 February 1927, 137(2)632, SHAC.

from postal management and 'all Postal Commissioners are still directly under the DG and *zongban*.'¹²² The DG believed that this was the only way to ensure the service. It was a similar process to the appointment convention of the Inspector-General of the CMS and the *zongban* of the CPS, and it reflects the CPS's expectations for Guomindang to be like preceding Chinese authorities allowing a relatively independent national postal service since the late nineteenth century.

Nonetheless, the DG may have seemed overly optimistic. The Guangzhou Nationalist government eventually reappointed foreign staff as postal commissioners in their controlled provinces, including Jiangxi, Guangdong, Hunan, Fujian, and Hubei, on 7 March 1927.¹²³ Although the commissioners were still in the original positions, the appointments demonstrate that Guomindang fulfilled its intention and forced local postal authorities to compromise. A few days later, the Hunan Postal Commissioner in Changsha was dismissed, while a new commissioner was directly appointed by the Nationalist government. Only the Chief Accountant of the Hunan Post Office was retained as the new commissioner's consultant.¹²⁴ The event attracted the attention of foreign-language newspapers. For instance, *The North-China Herald* reported that the foreign postal commissioner of French nationality was dismissed, and Chinese staff all resigned on 11 March 1927. It quoted Reuter's source that 'the postal situation in Changsha is getting worse,' and the Postal Union demonstrated calling for 'Communist reorganisation.'¹²⁵ This was in the period when labour and peasant movements were flourishing. Liu Chenghan, a pro-Guomindang senior Chinese postal officer,

¹²² DG Report to MOC, no. 46, 15 February 1927, 137(2)632, SHAC.

¹²³ 'Dangzhengfu yaowen' 黨政府要聞 (The Nationalist Government News), *Shenbao*, 8 March 1927.

¹²⁴ DG Report to MOC, no. 83, 16 March 1927; no. 100, 2 April 1927, 137(2)632, SHAC.

¹²⁵ 'Changsha Postal Commissioner Dismissed,' 'Union Demanding Communist Reorganisation,' *The North-China Herald*, issue 3110, 19 March 1927, 447.

also witnessed this series of events and blamed it on the CCP's support, as it coincided with the Nationalist-Communist split.¹²⁶ Despite Liu's pro-Guomintang stance, his recollection can be understood in the context of the disputes between two parties that led to a split in postal movements. In the hub of the CPS, Shanghai, two main postal unions, the Shanghai Postal Union (上海郵務工會) and the Shanghai Postal Employee Union (上海郵務職工會), were completely at odds over the Shanghai postal strike in October 1928, after Guomintang took control of the CPS. The Shanghai Postal Employee Union was the pro-Guomintang government union, while the Shanghai Postal Union's actions and ideas were closer to the Communists', which in Liu's words, they were 'incited' by the CCP.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, in the earliest days, the two parties were initially converging on the issue of nationalism and anti-imperialism and shared the same ideology against foreign powers in the CPS. Guomintang intended to weaken foreign influences in the postal service and that was also in line with the demands of the CCP. In fact, Hunan Postal Commissioner Charles Marie Rene Aubin de Jaurias, a French national, and the foreign management had been the target of the Postal Union's resistance in Changsha since January 1927. In *Shenbao*, Commissioner Jaurias was described as a pedantic and domineering supervisor.¹²⁸ Furthermore, he was accused of deliberately detaining postage stamps and money orders, thereby disrupting postal operations.¹²⁹

So far, with the reintegration of Guomintang and the progress of the Northern

¹²⁶ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 57–65.

¹²⁷ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 57–65.

¹²⁸ Postal Commissioner Charles Marie Rene Aubin de Jaurias's name in Chinese is Rao Lüe 饒略, and can be seen in the reports of *Shenbao*. He came to China in 1908 and originally worked for the IMS. See 'Jaurias, Charles Marie Rene Aubin de,' in Archives, Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, *Database of Names in Modern China*, <http://archdtsu.mh.sinica.edu.tw/imhkmc/imhkm?008937A8000602010000000000100A00000003E000000000^3>, accessed 17 January 2023.

¹²⁹ 'Xiangsheng youwu gongchao kuoda' 湘省郵務工潮擴大 (The Expansion of Postal Labour Movement in Hunan), *Shenbao*, 7 January 1927, 9.

Expedition, it was very clear that Guomindang had the ambition to exclude foreign powers from the postal service management. Moreover, the rise of nationalism and xenophobic sentiments also challenged the existence of the foreign staff system in the CPS. Not only the Postal Union and left-wing members but also right-wing Chinese staff organised strikes against foreign leadership.¹³⁰ As Harris suggests, these postal labour protests against the CPS's foreign management were organised and instigated by the Nationalists' and Communists' United Front with political agenda in the south to 'weaken' the foreign management of individual commissioners.¹³¹ However, the Wuhan Nationalists broke with the Communists mid-July 1927 and later reunited with the Nanjing Nationalists. The results of postal labour movements eventually converged with Guomindang's success. The overall situation was very unfavourable for foreign staff. The neutral position and independent operation changed with the rise of both Guomindang and Nationalist sentiment. Foreign staff led a nationwide communication service that seemed to have rapidly lost institutional legitimacy. Nevertheless, the archives clearly show that before the collapse of the Beiyang government, the CPS was still reporting to Beijing. All reports of the service, including the Post Office's situation in the south, were sent out to the DG in Beijing and then reported to Beijing's MOC. On the other hand, foreign postal commissioners in the southern areas accepted the Guomindang's reappointment, even if they were forced to do so. Guomindang eventually demonstrated its new leadership and authority using the political ritual of appointment, which revealed its intention to create a new Chinese-dominated 'national' postal service.

After the Nationalist government was established in Nanjing, the new Chinese central

¹³⁰ *Kangri zhanzheng yiqian Shanghai youzheng zhigong de douzheng qingkuang* (The Struggles of Shanghai Postal Staff before the Anti-Japanese War) (Unpublished, Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, 1954); Chen Jiying, *Wode youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 4–5.

¹³¹ Harris, 'The Post Office and State Formation in Modern China,' 64–65.

government speedily took over the postal service. Foreigners no longer had an advantage over Chinese staff, and no more foreign staff were recruited into the CPS after 1928. Those foreign staff who had already been employed could serve until retirement.¹³²

This series of activities to weaken foreign power in the CPS, known as the movement of reclaiming postal power (*shouhui youquan yundong* 收回郵權運動), is regarded as a crucial achievement in China's postal history and was repeatedly recounted by Chinese postal employees in both Nationalist and Communist camps.¹³³ It symbolises China completing one of the goals of establishing a national postal service to 'take back control' over those areas that had been hitherto controlled by foreign powers.

Liu Chenghan, as a senior postal staff and expert in postal regulations, was possibly the first scholar who interpreted the idea *youquan* 郵權 as synonymous with *zhuquan* 主權 (sovereignty). The word *quan* 權 in *youquan* translates as power, authority, right, or prerogative, but initially was not understood in the context of *zhuquan*. Even though *zhuquan*, as a related concept, appears in the earlier documents, there is no clear correspondence between *youquan* and *zhuquan*. Liu explained that 'a foreign government [France] to require another country to employ its nationals is obviously a violation of sovereignty.'¹³⁴ He also believed that the Chinese postal staff's protest against the foreign staff system was caused by the Northern Expedition's climate and 'the understanding of the importance of sovereignty.'¹³⁵ He even further elaborated this idea of postal sovereignty in his book

¹³² Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 55.

¹³³ For example, Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 51–56; Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhanshi*, 414–416; Zhang Yi, *Zhonghua youzheng shi*, 326–331; *You dian shi bianjishi*, ed., *Zhongguo jindai you dian shi*, 160–166.

¹³⁴ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 46.

¹³⁵ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 53.

published in the 1980s about the Postal Act of the Republic of China.¹³⁶ It is understandable that the management of national postal service as an extension of the concept of sovereignty is a retrospective interpretation of this movement rather than the contemporary conceptualisation. In fact, paradoxically, the former Chinese postal staff, including Liu, still recognise foreign employees' contribution to maintaining the 'unified' CPS in the Republican era.¹³⁷ After the movement receded, a few foreigners, including Postal Commissioner F. Poletti, remained in the CPS and played roles in postal services in subsequent historical events that will be discussed in the following chapters.

5. Conclusion

After the Republic of China was established, China continued to be politically unstable, and warfare occurred intermittently. Civil wars and conflicts, directly and indirectly, disrupted postal communication and the operations of the CPS. In the meantime, the CPS became situated in an intriguing position during the warlord era. It answered to the Beiyang central government in Beijing, followed Beijing's orders, and provided it with local intelligence from its subordinate postal commissioners in the regions. However, facing the turbulent political situation and powerful local military forces, the postal service, on the other hand, worked as a relatively independent public body interacting with different factions from local communities to the central government through the foreign management system. It allowed the CPS to maintain a relatively neutral political position, which enabled it to mediate between warlords, local authorities, and foreign powers. In this context, the overall development and operation of the CPS were significant. Even though local authorities and warlords attempted

¹³⁶ Liu Chenghan, *Youzhengfa yuanli* (Principles of the Postal Act) (Taipei: Sanmin Shuju, 1985), chap. 1.

¹³⁷ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 56.

to intrude into the service's operations by censoring postal communications and appropriating postal revenue, the CPS's neutral position helped it resist interference, keep its autonomy, and operate outside state control.

Although China was divided and controlled by several military commanders at the provincial level in the early Republican era, its national postal service continued to be operated under centralised management within the unified institution illustrating the contradiction of a unified service in a divided country. The influence of foreign powers on the CPS since the late Qing is undeniable. However, the international nature of the modern postal system, plus China's emerging foreign relations and international status, meant that the service itself was more than an internal Chinese affair. The foreign management of the CPS ensured that it could operate postal service independently and internationally. More importantly, a united postal service run by foreigners contributed to preventing interferences from provincial authorities and foreign post offices, the latter of which had been established in China since the mid-nineteenth century. As a symbol of a sovereign state, a 'national' postal service, even if it was managed by foreign staff, helped China as a whole to become part of international postal communication without potential limitations imposed by the division in the country.

Guomindang's rapid success in the Northern Expedition, paired with the rise of nationalist sentiment, fundamentally changed the balance between the neutral postal system and Chinese authorities. However, the new central government in Nanjing was indeed different from the preceding Beijing government. It was established as a relatively unified regime, in line with the management needs of the national postal service. As a result, the power of foreign postal staff was significantly reduced, the CPS's management lost its

neutrality, and the Post Office seemed to have become one of the Nationalist government departments. But on the other hand, the Chinese government established practical control over its own national postal service. The foreign staff system indirectly contributed to this movement, as their presence and privileged position aroused Chinese staff's nationalist sentiment following the wave of nationalist and labour movements in 1920s' China. These events eventually conceptualised the idea of running a national postal service as an extension of state sovereignty.

Not all foreign staff were expelled. The removal of the Postal Commissioner of Hunan was an exception. Still, the presence of foreign staff afforded some flexibility in the operations of the CPS during the ensuing political disputes and wars. The following chapters will explore how foreign employees, who remained in the CPS, were able to support the Chinese government and postal communication again during the dispute over Manchuria and the Second Sino-Japanese War.

Chapter 3: Crossing Borders: The Crisis of International Postal Communication in Manchuria, 1931–1935

After the Nationalist government had gained control of the CPS in 1928, the CPS's management changed significantly. Since the establishment of the national postal service, the Chinese had finally taken the lead of the postal administration into their own hands. Although it seemed to symbolise that the Chinese finally succeeded regaining their postal authority during the wave of nationalism in the 1920s, Japan's rapidly increasing influence in Manchuria posed a challenge to China's model national postal service.

Manchuria was involved in several international and domestic conflicts and wars in the early twentieth century. The region was not only the base of the Fengtian clique but also a sphere of influence of Russia and Japan, which were controlling the northern and southern Manchurian railways, respectively.¹ Chinese domestic shipping from China proper to Manchuria and international mail carried between Asia and Europe both relied on this route before airmail became popular.²

As the previous chapter argued, the CPS was able to operate its business as a relatively neutral agency in Manchuria, despite Zhang Zuolin's attempts to intervene. However, the Mukden Incident, which served as a pretext for the Japanese Army's invasion in September 1931, and the ensuing Manchurian crisis had a more severe impact on the CPS than previous

¹ Many scholars reviewed the historical background of Manchuria as a border area where the interests of different ethnicities and states intersected, especially Japan and Russia's interests, before the Mukden Incident or so-called the Manchurian Incident in 1931. For example, see Sandra Wilson, *The Manchurian Crisis and Japanese Society, 1931-1933* (London: Routledge, 2002), 1526; Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield), 47–51.

² Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhanshi*, 424–425.

conflicts. Manchukuo was established under Japan's control after the Incident in March 1932. The new regime controlled the Manchurian postal service, including its facilities and employees.³ This was the first time that the CPS faced the challenge of foreign military action and occupation during the Republican era. Unlike the neutral but centralised operation of the CPS during the warlord era, what the CPS faced after the Mukden Incident was a dispute involving Chinese sovereignty.

As a result, the Nationalist Nanjing government withdrew all CPS employees from Manchuria, and a blockade of postal transport followed. The blockade led to a profound crisis of international postal services between Asia and Europe via Manchuria, which eventually became an international issue and aroused the concern of the League of Nations. Internally, this was the first time that the integrity of the CPS as a centralised and relatively independent state agency was violated. A substantial part of its business was separated from the CPS and came under Japanese control.

This chapter explores how important Manchuria was for international postal transit, why the Mukden Incident eventually caused a crisis of international postal transport, and how postal national economic rights (*liquan*) were transformed into the concept of the authority of postal administration (*youquan*) related to sovereignty (*zhuquan*). In this chapter, I will first review Manchuria as a significant postal transport hub connecting Asia and Europe by transnational railways. Second, I will analyse the Chinese government's decision of the blockade and its unexpected consequences for the international community. The third part of the chapter will focus on the Nanjing government's compromise to resume postal

³ *Manshū teikoku yūsei sōkyoku* (General Post Office of Manchukuo), *Manshū teikoku yūsei jigyō gaiyō* (The Overview of Postal Service of Manchukuo) (Shinkyō: Manshū teishin kyōkai, 1942), esp. ch. 1.

communication in 1935 and the meaning of a 'national' postal service during the early twentieth century. I will also argue that the Manchurian crisis was a crucial event that clearly formed China's idea of postal administration as an extension of or even equivalent of national sovereignty. At the same time, China's strategy and compromise illustrate that its modern postal system was contrary to the absolute monopoly and the concept of complete and exclusive sovereignty imagined by the Chinese officials. Instead, even in conditions of war and conflict, the maintenance of international postal transport was more important for the international community than the interests of a single country.

1. Manchuria before the Mukden Incident

Japanese Postal Boxes and Post Offices in Changchun

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Russia and Japan competed over Manchuria as their sphere of influence. This was reflected in the operation of railways and postal agencies. Russia and Japan controlled the northern and southern Manchurian railways, respectively, which played a crucial role in mail transportation: not only Chinese domestic shipping from the inland to Manchuria, but also international mail between Asia and Europe was carried through Manchuria. Along the railways, Japanese and Russian post offices were also located in the main cities of Manchuria.

Postal services in Manchuria reflected the complexity of the political and social environment. As Japan claimed its rights to the South Manchuria Railway (SMR) Zone, it continued to operate its Post Offices there. In his memoirs, Chen Jiying, a CPS employee and part-time journalist based in Harbin between 1926 and 1932, described what he witnessed when he first visited Changchun on postal business in early 1927:

On my second day in Changchun, on my way back from work, I took a turn on a street and suddenly discovered a red post box over there. I was stunned because I only knew the green Chinese post boxes and had never seen a red one. When I approached it and had a look, I realised that it was a Japanese post box because the words 日本郵便 Nihon yubin [Japan Post] were written on it. Not far away, I also saw a Japanese post office. I was irritated immediately and felt rather disturbed.⁴

In addition, the Postal Commissioner of the Ki-Hei (Jihei) District was a foreigner, which also complicated the situation. Although the Nationalist government had taken over the CPS from foreign *zongban* after 1928, the positions of some foreign postal officers remained the status quo in the service, including in Manchuria. There were seventy-three foreign employees in the CPS at the end of 1928, a number reduced to fifty-one in 1931, the year of the Mukden Incident.⁵ He recalled:

it was a humiliation that China's postal service was controlled by foreign officers, that foreign concessions within China's borders were another humiliation, and that the fact that their post offices were privately established in the concessions was yet another humiliation!⁶

These words revealed a strong pro-Chinese sentiment because when he was writing, between 1942 and 1943, the Second Sino-Japanese War had painfully impacted his postal

⁴ Chen Jiying, *Wode youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 33.

⁵ According to *Annual Reports*, the foreign staff in 1928 included nineteen Commissioners, ten Deputy Commissioners, forty-two *yu-wu-yüan*, one Service Buildings Surveyor, and one Manager of Printing Department. At the end of 1931, there were fourteen Commissioners, ten Deputy Commissioners, twenty-six *yu-wu-yüan*, and one Service Buildings Surveyor. See *Annual Report, 1928*, 20; *Annual Report, 1931*, 18.

⁶ Chen Jiying, *Wode youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 33.

career life. He left Harbin for Shanghai in 1932 as one of the withdrew postal employees, transferred to Hankou in 1935, and then, after the outbreak of war, evacuated to Chongqing in 1937.⁷ However, his vivid description captures the complicated situation and expressed his feeling as a Chinese staff of the CPS in Manchuria.

Manchuria was a difficult region for postal services in China, as Chen Jiying's record shows. It retained a relatively independent status under warlord Zhang Zuolin in the early Republican era. In terms of location, Manchuria was bordered by Korea, which became a colony of the Japanese Empire in 1910, and Russia, which had been competing for influence in the region with Japan since the late nineteenth century. The complicated international relationships also affected the difficulty of operating postal services in this area.

Japan's challenge to the Manchurian postal administration can be traced back to the first decade of the twentieth century. Japan established its post offices along the SMR after the Russo-Japanese war of 1905. In 1908, Japan further claimed its postal rights in perpetuity along the railway from Beijing to Newchwang (Niuzhuang) 牛莊 (the location was actually in Yingkou 營口) and between Japanese post offices and other railways in Manchuria. Japan asked the CPS to pay for Chinese mail shipped via Manchuria by UPU international transit rates, despite the fact that the railway was operated on Chinese territory. In addition, Japan also strived for the navigation rights of mail steamers on inland Manchurian waters and wanted to charge shipping fees for Chinese mail transports.⁸ Although the Chinese government rejected these requests, according to the British Foreign Office's handbook of Manchuria, which was issued at the end of the Versailles Peace Conference in early 1920, both

⁷ Chen Jiying, *Wode youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, i-ii, 206–207, 345–355.

⁸ *No. 69 Manchuria* (London: HM Stationery Office, 1920), 37.

Japan and Russia still operated their post offices in Manchuria at that time.⁹ In 1921, there were thirty-five Japanese post offices in the SMR Zone (Minami Manshū Tetsudō Fuzokuchi 南滿州鐵道附屬地).¹⁰ Russia also owned post offices along the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER), known as the North Manchuria Railway, from Changchun to the Chinese–Russian border. After the Revolution in 1917, Russia was embroiled in its own civil war until 1922. The Beiyang government took the opportunity to reclaim the postal administration power in September 1920. It successfully took over Russian post offices on the grounds that the Russian diplomats in China were no longer representing the Russian government. Although Russia kept the CER, its post offices there were finally closed in February 1921.¹¹ Since the CER played an important role in the land transportation between Asia and Europe, the CPS still had to pass through the Russian-controlled CER to transport international mail (see Figure 3.1).

⁹ *No. 69 Manchuria*, 37.

¹⁰ They are Dalian (大連), Lushun (旅順), Liushutun (柳樹屯), Jinzhou (金州), Pulandian (普蘭店), Piziwo (貔子窩), Wafangdian (瓦房店), Xiongyuecheng (熊岳城), Kaiping (開平), Dashiqiao (大石橋), Niuzhuang (牛莊), Haicheng (海城), Anshan (鞍山), Lishan (立山), Liaoyang (遼陽), Yantai (煙台), Sujiaton (蘇家屯), Xinminfu (新民府), Fengtian (奉天), Tieling (鐵嶺), Kaiyuan (開源), Changtu (昌圖), Sipingjie (四平街), Guongzhuling (公主嶺), Fanjiatun (范家屯), Changchun (長春), Harbin (哈爾濱), Fushun (撫順), Benxihu (本溪湖), Qiaotou (橋頭), Lianshan (連山), Jiguanshan (鷄冠山), Fenghuangcheng (鳳凰城), Anyuan (安源), Dadonggou (大東溝). See 'Geguo zai Hua youdianju zhi xiangshu' 各國在華郵電局之詳數 (Number of Foreign Post Offices in China), *Shenbao*, 12 December 1921, 7.

¹¹ *Jiaotongshi: youzheng pian*, vol. 4, 1329–1331. 'Zhongdonglu Eyou zhi zhijie' 中東路俄郵之枝節 (Issues of Russian Post offices in the Chinese Eastern Railway), *Shenbao*, 11 March 1921, 7.

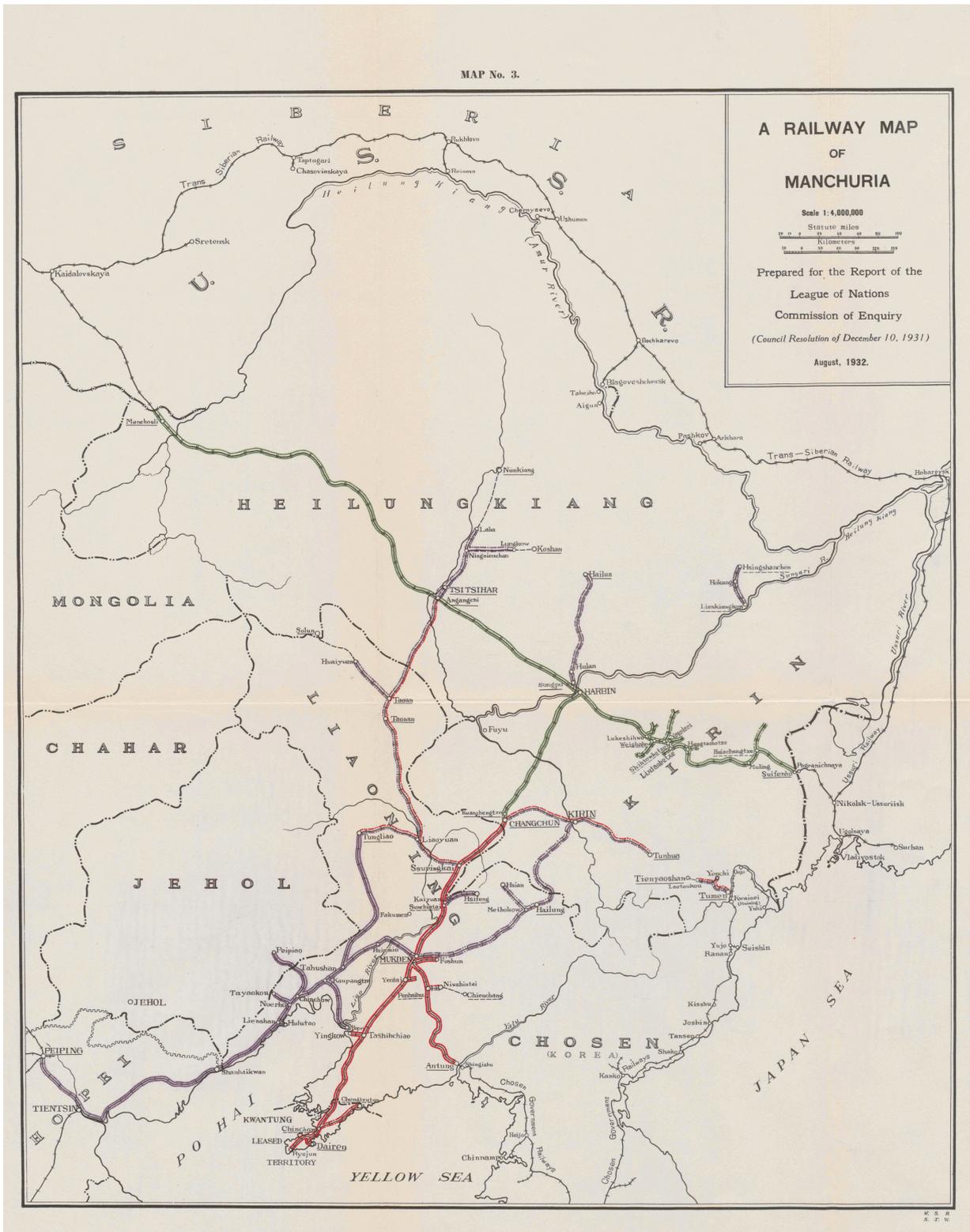


Figure 3.1: A Railway Map of Manchuria, 1932. The green main line is the CER; the red main line is the SMR. Source: <https://kjc-sv013.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de/gpos/manchuria-1931-32>, accessed 27 August 2021.

Further to the takeover of the Russian post offices, a resolution to withdraw foreign post offices was made at the Washington Naval Conference between 1921 and 1922. However, the agreement ultimately did not include Japan's post offices in the SMR Zone. It was a highly controversial issue throughout the 1920s, which can be traced not only through both sides' official documents but also through the follow-up reports in newspapers such as *Shenbao*. During the Washington negotiations, the Beiyang government proposed the withdrawal of foreign postal and telegram offices. It believed that the CPS had been developing well and was able to deal with international postal services, so there was no reason for the presence of foreign postal agencies in China.¹² At the same time, Japan claimed its rights in the SMR Zone and insisted against withdrawing its post offices.¹³ At the negotiation table on 26 November 1921, the four powers — the British Empire, US, the Japanese Empire, and France — and China's representatives agreed to abandon the foreign postal agencies in China. The deadline was no later than 1 January 1923 with the conditions that a) 'an efficient Chinese postal service is maintained' and b) that there was 'no change in the present postal administration, or in the status of the foreign Co-Director-General.' Japan's representative Masanao Hanihara 埴原正直 (1876–1934) raised his concerns about the resolution not mentioning the exclusion of postal agencies in leased territories. He requested that both leased territories and railway zones should not be included in order 'to avoid misunderstanding in the future.' Although other members, especially China, disagreed with the decision to treat railway zones in the same way as leased territories, Hanihara emphasised that Japan had inherited the legislation, including taxation, police, and postal administration, from Russia under a previous conclusion

¹² 'Hehui zhong zhi Zhongguo xiwang tiaojian (2)' 和會中之中國希望條件(二) (China's Expectations for the Paris Peace Conference), *Shenbao*, 8 December 1919, 6.

¹³ 'Guanyu Ying-Ri tongmeng zhi yulun yishu' 關於英日同盟之輿論一束 (Public Opinions on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance), *Shenbao*, 10 July 1921, 22.

in the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905. The dispute seemed to have reached a deadlock, so the British representative Auckland Geddes (1879–1954) suggested adding the words ‘save or except in leased territories or as otherwise specifically provided by treaty’ to avoid directly using the word ‘railway,’ which were thus adopted in the treaty.¹⁴

Japan’s refusal to close its post offices in Manchuria was a significant issue. The controversy continued and reached its peak when the Chinese-Japanese Postal Meeting (中日郵政會議/日支郵便會議) was held in late 1922. The meeting mainly aimed to negotiate further the resolution of withdrawing Japan’s post offices in China, which caught the attention of newspapers on both sides. On 19 July 1922, a month before the actual meeting, the *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* (東京朝日新聞) reported that the Japanese government had already appointed the negotiation committee members and announced their objectives were the process of the withdrawal of Japanese post offices from fourteen port cities. It emphasised that the exclusion of those in leased territories and the SMR Zone were based on the Washington Naval Conference.¹⁵ Three days later, *Shenbao* reported the same information from Japan, but claimed that the Japanese government had released the member lists without waiting for China’s reply to the meeting request.¹⁶ The meeting started on 18 August 1922;¹⁷ however, Japan and China continued sparing over Japan’s post offices in the SMR Zone. Japan once again argued that her postal service in the SMR Zone was sanctioned by international treaties, including the Washington Naval Treaty, while China held a different opinion based on

¹⁴ CAB 30/19, TNA UK.

¹⁵ ‘Zai Shi Nihon yūbinkyoku teppai kōshō no hōshin’ 在支日本郵便局撤廢交渉の方針 (The Policy for the Abolition of Japan Post in China), *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, morning, 19 July 1922, 2.

¹⁶ ‘Ribei niding Zhong-Ri youzheng tiaoyue’ 日本擬訂中日郵政條約 (Japan Draws the Postal Treaty between China and Japan), 22 July 1922, *Shenbao*, 6.

¹⁷ ‘Nisshi yūbin kyōtei’ 日支郵便協定, *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, evening, 18 August 1922, 1; ‘Zhong-Ri youzheng huiyi yi kaimu’ 中日郵政會議已開幕 (The Opening of the Chinese-Japanese Postal Meeting), *Shenbao*, 24 August 1922, 7.

the understanding that the SMR Zone was not covered by the exception of 'leased territories did not cover the SMR Zone or as otherwise specifically provided by the treaty'.¹⁸ After two and a half months, in early November 1922, they ultimately reached a token consensus by shelving the dispute, skipping the SMR issue, and leave it to be solved by diplomacy in the future. Japan's post offices in the SMR Zone were to be maintained for the time being. Thus, it was headlined 'our country defeated in the Chinese-Japanese Postal Meeting' in *Shenbao* to express the public's dissatisfaction with the result.¹⁹ The agreement was signed on 8 December 1922, and its articles avoided including the issue only agreeing that mail conveyed by one side's Post Office 'by means of the railways of the other shall be consigned to or received from the said railways through the intermediary of the post offices or the postal officers on the trains according to mutual local arrangements.'²⁰ Japan planned to close all its post offices in Manchuria before the end of 1922, except in the SMR Zone and the Kwantung Leased Territory.²¹

In the eyes not only of Chinese newspapers at that time but also later scholars and, as in the case of Chen Jiying, this dispute was evidence of Japan's encroachment on China's power of postal administration (*youquan*).²² Once again, the modern postal service stood for

¹⁸ 'Shina gensei Nisshi yūbin kaigi no anshō Mantetsu fuzokuchi no yūbinkyoku mondai' 支那現勢 日支郵便會議の暗礁 滿鐵附屬地の郵便局問題 (China's Current Situation; the Chinese-Japanese Postal Meeting Stumbled; the Issue of Post Offices in the South Manchuria Railway Zone), *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, evening, 23 Oct 1922, 1; 'Ribei reng fandui chefei Nanmanlu youju' 日本仍反對撤廢南滿路郵局 (Japan Still Opposes the Abolition of the South Manchuria Railway Post Offices), *Shenbao*, 30 October 1922, 6.

¹⁹ 'Zhong-Ri youzheng huiyi woguo yi shibai' 中日郵政會議我國已失敗 (Our Country Defeated in the Chinese-Japanese Postal Meeting), *Shenbao*, 8 November 1922, 6.

²⁰ 'Article III,' Agreement Concerning the Exchange of Correspondence between the Republic of China and the Empire of Japan, 8 December 1922, 03-33-167-03-001, MHAC.

²¹ 'Zong Ri youzheng' 中日郵政協約已簽字, *Shenbao*, 9 December 1922, 7. The final agreement was divided into four agreements, including the Agreement Concerning the Exchange of Correspondence, the Agreement Concerning the Exchange of Insured Letters and Boxes, the Agreement Concerning Money Order, and the Agreement Concerning Postal Parcels. See, 03-33-167-03-001, 03-33-167-05-001, 03-33-167-07-001, 03-33-167-08-001, MHAC.

²² Peng Yingtien, *Lieqiang qin-Hua youquan shi*, 161–180.

much more than delivering letters and parcels. At the very beginning, the initial purpose of the Qing government's decision to introduce a national postal system in 1896 along Western lines was to expel *keyou*, foreign post offices. It was meant to be a move to 'reclaim national rights and privileges' (挽回利權).²³ This concept was gradually integrated with the understanding of modern state sovereignty, *zhuquan*, on China's path towards a modern state in the early twentieth century. According to the declaration made by China's delegation to the Washington Conference, foreign post offices 'violated the integrity of China's territories and administration',²⁴ which shows that *youquan* was regarded as related to state sovereignty that the Chinese government must defend.

On the other hand, Japan believed that previously signed international treaties gave them the right to operate post offices in China. The argument was also based on the sovereignty of concessions and international law. At that time, the concept of unequal treaties had not yet been created,²⁵ and territories leased out based on mutually agreed treaties were widely recognised in the international society. Although Chinese government argued that

²³ *Jiaotongshi: youzheng pian*, vol. 1, 12–14; Zhang Zhidong, 'Qingban youzheng pian,' 1058.

²⁴ 'Shi Zhaoji xuanyan' 施肇基宣言 (Shi Zhaoji's Declaration), in *Jiaotongshi: youzheng pian*, vol. 4, 1334. Chinese diplomat Shi Zhaoji (1877–1958) is also known as Alfred Sao-ke Sze.

²⁵ Many scholars have discussed the development of the 'unequal treaties' concept. They generally agree that the term *bupingdeng tiaoyue* (unequal treaties) in Chinese text came from Sun Yat-sen and was formed by Guomindang to advocate Chinese nationalism and China's humiliation since the late Qing. Historian Dong Wang suggests that the first time Sun used the term was from Hu Hanmin's (1879–1936) recollection that Sun told the Nationalist party members about his position on the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. However, Sun publicly used the term in the first Nationalist Congress in January 1924 and included it in the Congress's Declaration. Qi-hua Tang believes that the concept was gradually formed from the Twenty-one Demands in 1915 and commonly used after the May Fourth Movement in 1919. Scholars may believe the concept of *bupingdeng tiaoyue* is originally from China and East Asian countries. However, legal scholar Hungdah Chiu (1936–2011) clearly pointed out from international law that the concept of unequal treaties was put forward by Hugo Grotius in his book *On the Law of War and Peace*, while he also recognised the term in Chinese was created and advocated by Guomindang. 'Unequal treaties' signed under force were still valid under the principle of international law before the Kellogg–Briand Pact in 1928. See Dong Wang, 'The Discourse of Unequal Treaties in Modern China,' *Pacific Affairs* 16:3 (Fall 2003): 406–407. Tang Qihua, *Bei 'feichu bupingdeng tiaoyue' zhebi de Beiyang xiuyue shi 1912–1928* (Out of the Shadow of the 'Abrogation of Unequal Treaties' Treaty Revision Campaign of the Beiyang Government) (Beijing: Shehuikexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010), 4–8. Chiu Hungdah, *Guanyu Zhongguo lingtu de guojifa wenti lunji* (A Collection of Essays on the Issues of Chinese Territories and International Law) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 2004), 210–220.

there was no specific mention of the postal services in the Treaty of Portsmouth, the accomplished fact was that Japan had obtained the railway concession, including administration and property rights in the SMR Zone from Russia in 1905.²⁶ The Chinese government could only question if the definition of concession applied to postal services along the SMR Zone, which was 680.5 miles (1,095 km) long in 1920 and included territory of about 96–105 square miles (250–272 square km),²⁷ but had no legal basis to claim taking back any right in leased territories under the international climate at that time.

Furthermore, while Japan's ambitions for imperialist expansion in China could not be denied, there were other concerns for Japan to maintain her postal service in the SMR Zone, too. In Japanese view, Japan's post offices theoretically provided services for Japanese people as did all other foreign post offices. In order to accommodate their people's postal needs, the Japanese government actively attempted to establish an agreement with China as soon as possible.²⁸ The sentiment behind this was strong, as shows a confidential report sent from the Japanese Embassy by Japanese Minister Yoshizawa Kenkichi 芳沢 謙吉 (1874–1965) to Tokyo. According to this report, Japanese expatriates in China continued to oppose the abolition of Japan's post offices when the Chinese government once again demanded Japan to close its postal service in Manchuria on 27 August 1925, as stipulated in the Washington Treaty. Therefore, Yoshizawa cited this as an excuse to refuse the demand.²⁹ Intriguingly, in the same

²⁶ No. 69 *Manchuria*, 19–20.

²⁷ No. 69 *Manchuria*, 32–33. Scholars calculated the SMR Zone areas differently; see, for instance, Alvin D. Coox, *Nomonhan: Japan Against Russia, 1939* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1985), vol. 1, 2; Y. Tak Matsusaka, 'Japan's South Manchuria Railway Company in Northeast China 1906–34,' in *Manchurian Railways and the Opening of China: An international history*, eds. Bruce A. Elleman and Stephen Kotkin (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2001), 40; Y. Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904–1932* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 5.

²⁸ 'Zhong-Ri youzheng huiyi woguo yi shibai,' 6.

²⁹ 'Mantetsu fuzoku chitai-nai ni okeru Nihon yūbinkyoku teppai ni kanshi Shina seifu yori rai shou no ken' 滿鐵付屬地帯内ニ於ケル日本郵便局撤廢ニ關シ支那政府ヨリ來照ノ件 (Démarche from the Chinese government regarding the abolition of the Japanese Post Office in the South Manchuria Railway Zone),

report, the Japanese Embassy intended to manipulate public opinion using the Eastern News Agency (*Tōhō tsūshin* 東方通信), a Japanese news agency in China, to convey that the Chinese government's action in 1925 was caused by the political struggle between Chinese warlords Feng Yuxiang and Zhang Zuolin.³⁰ This suggests that the Japanese people's postal demand may be the result of public opinion manipulation as an excuse for the negotiations. Nevertheless, it also implies that the postal controversy in Manchuria was highly complicated, and China's domestic political issues might have been hidden under fighting against encroachments from outside. The issues raised by China were not always based on safeguarding the integrity of sovereignty, while Japan was not exclusively concerned with the postal need of its people.

China's attempts to reclaim its *youquan* in its territories were not entirely successful, as Japan's post offices remained in Manchuria along the SMR after the negotiations.³¹ The Japanese Post Offices in Manchuria were managed by the Kwantung Army in Dalian. The two, Chinese and Japanese, 'national' postal services continued to exist simultaneously in Manchuria before the establishment of Manchukuo in 1932. Returning to the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, this is the reason why Chen Jiying saw a Japanese postal box and Post Office when he travelled to Changchun in 1927. Beyond that, Japan officially withdrew all of its other post offices in China's treaty ports, such as Newchwang and Shanghai, following the conclusion in Washington.³²

Later, the CPS staff and Chinese scholars further conceptualised the idea of *youquan*

3.6.10.59, Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (DAJ).

³⁰ 'Mantetsu fuzoku chitai-nai ni okeru Nihon yūbinkyoku teppai ni kanshi Shina seifu yori rai shou no ken', 3.6.10.59, DAJ.

³¹ 'Mantetsu fuzoku chitai-nai ni okeru Nihon yūbinkyoku teppai ni kanshi Shina seifu yori rai shou no ken', 3.6.10.59, DAJ.

³² John Mosher, *Japanese Post Offices in China and Manchuria* (Lawrence, Mass.: Quarterman Publications, 1978), 80.

when reviewing this history after the 1950s. Liu Chenghan may be the first one to argue that *youquan* should be understood as ‘postal sovereignty’ because a national postal service is a state monopoly within the territory of the state and should be only operated by the government of that country. The international postal transit network is also based on the respect of territorial waters, airspace, and the means of transport between sovereign states.³³ However, *youquan*, as the de-facto concept of sovereignty, was not absolute, nor even directly adopted from the West. Instead, it gradually formed with the development of China’s foreign relations in the 1920s when China’s representatives came to the negotiating table with other countries for the withdrawal of foreign post offices in Chinese territory.

Cooperation between International Postal Services

The importance of Manchuria to postal services before the Mukden Incident was also reflected in international cooperation. Although the two sides seemed to be hostile in Manchuria, it did not mean that there was no postal cooperation between Japan and China. Before the Mukden Incident, the two countries’ international mail exchange was operated within Manchuria. Chen Jiyong recalled that there was a Japanese Post Office near a Chinese Post Office in Toudaogou (頭道溝), the location of Changchun station, and every day a Japanese postal carrier came to the Chinese Post Office with a big mailbag of Japanese letters. The carrier paid postage according to Chinese postal rates and then stuck Chinese stamps on every letter next to the Japanese ones, before the charge was eventually submitted to the CPS for delivery. Chen Jiyong believed that Japan’s postal service was unprofitable overall because

³³ Liu Chenghan mentioned this idea several times, including in his oral history interviewed in 1967 (published in 1997); see Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 33–56. He first clearly argued this idea in his work on the Republic of China’s postal service law, published in 1977. It was later widely accepted by the former CPS staff and researchers in Taiwan. See Liu Chenghan, *Youzhengfa yuanli*, 55–58; Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhanshi*, 309; and Peng Yingtien, *Lieqiang qin-Hua youquan shi*, 135.

the Chinese postage still needed to be paid. He accused Japan of doing this just for propaganda so that addressees could identify Japan's stamps with postmarks, representing its influence in Manchuria.³⁴ Stamps and postmarks, as the most distinctive feature of the modern postal system, symbolised the identification of a postal service with state sovereignty to a certain extent. On the other hand, the record shows that the Japanese post offices cooperated with the CPS through the international mail exchange. Otherwise, their mail would not be able to depart from Manchuria.

Chen Jiyong's narrative only presents a personal perspective of the Sino-Japanese cooperation model influenced by nationalist sentiment in the context of Japan's invasion. In fact, the cooperation was likely to be based on international postal agreements. According to the Sino-Japanese postal agreements of 1922, the two countries not only continued previous relations but further strengthened the mechanism in mail exchange. Both sides established exchange post offices to share the responsibility to transfer mail and parcels for each other via the fastest transport means, including railways and steamers.³⁵ As Japan controlled the SMR Zone and claimed it was a Japanese Concession, the operating procedure of mail exchange between China and Japan in Manchuria was trickier than at other borders. What Chen Jiyong saw might be evidence of how it worked as the Changchun Japanese Post Office was in the station areas of the SMR Zone. Although it seemed counterintuitive, international mail exchange and cooperation between the two national post services happened within Manchuria, rather than in border areas. Those mail items from the Japanese Post Office Chen saw were probably destined for inner Chinese territories.

³⁴ Chen Jiyong, *Wode youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 33–34.

³⁵ For the four postal agreements between China and Japan, see 03-33-167-03-001, 03-33-167-05-001, 03-33-167-07-001, 03-33-167-08-001, MHAC.

In addition to the cooperation with Japan, the CPS in Manchuria played a crucial role in international postal services because of railway connections to Europe via the Trans-Siberian Railway (TSR). The Harbin Post Office was the Head Office of the Ki-Hei District and one of the exchange offices in charge of international mail service by rail transport. Before the Mukden Incident, Manchuria was divided into two postal districts — Ki-Hei and Liaoning, formerly Fengtien District (奉天) until 1927.³⁶ The Ki-Hei District covered Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces, including a part of what is today Inner Mongolia.³⁷ It was located not only in a border area but also had a long international railroad that connected China with Russia and Europe. This increased the Ki-Hei District's and the Harbin Post Office's importance as a transport hub of international postal services. When Chen Jiying just joined the Harbin Post Office as a sorter in 1926, he needed to identify different place names on envelopes in foreign handwriting for sorting and listing because these mail items came from European and East Asian countries and were redirected in Harbin to reach their final destinations.³⁸

Since the Ki-Hei District was located on the Sino-Russian border, Chen Jiying also recorded the process of international mail transport by rail and exchange at the border. In April 1930, he was transferred to be a mail train director (行動郵局). At that time, there were three postal routes of railway transport in Manchuria: Harbin to Changchun, Harbin to Suifenhe (綏芬河), and Harbin to Manzhouli (滿洲里). Four groups of postal staff were responsible for each route, and each group was composed of two staff, one director, and one

³⁶ See *Annual Report, 1927*, and *Annual Report, 1928*. After the success of the Northern Expedition, the name Fengtien was switched to Liaoning. Although there is no further explanation of the name change in the *Annual Report*, Liaoning first appears in the Report of 1928, and may be related to the new government in Nanjing. Chen Jiying also mentioned a short history of the CPS's administration in Manchuria; see Chen Jiying, *Wode youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 7–8.

³⁷ The boundary of Ki-Hei Postal District, see *Zhonghua youzheng yutu: lian ming ge sheng youzheng jusuo ji ge yulu* (Nanjing: Jiaotongbu youzheng zongju, 1933), EFAtlas D87 /41664, SOAS.

³⁸ Chen Jiying, *Wode youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 19–20.

postman. Chen Jiying was responsible for the route between Harbin and Manzhouli, where the international mail exchanges were processed. According to his account, the mail train was exciting and responsible work on the long journey. Due to time constraints, the escort staff had to trust their colleagues and the CPS's precise operating procedure. According to Chen, the CPS had a strict verification system to require every staff to be fast and precise under the foreign staff management. Even though he unabashedly expressed his nationalist dissatisfaction with foreign postal supervision in the office, he still supported the system managed by foreigners and was proud of his postal work.³⁹

International postal transit between Harbin and Manzhouli was a long and cold journey. It took four days to go back and forth. On the first day, the train departed at 4.30 pm with mailbags to Europe from Harbin and arrived in Manzhouli at 4 pm on the second day. The CPS's staff stayed in Manzhouli overnight on the mail coach until the early morning on the third day. Mailbags from Europe and Russia were uploaded after the next train arrived. The train left Manzhouli at 5.40 am and finally arrived in Harbin on the fourth day. During the long journey, the task of the postal staff on board was to look after the mail cargo and supervise uploading and unloading as the train stopped at the main stations along the route. They also ran a moving Post Office on board for passengers wishing to send mail. This was hard work because only two staff took turns to work the night shift and worked in the cold climate on board regardless of their postal rank. The staff needed to take care of their own needs on the train, including making a fire against the freezing climate in north Manchuria.

The importance of this rail route was not just a mail transit route between two countries; rather it was a main route for global postal communication. Manzhouli was a small

³⁹ Chen Jiying, *Wode youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 97–101.

border town located at the end of the CER connecting with the TSR. Each train carried over a hundred mailbags from Harbin to Manzhouli and then to Europe via the TSR. On the return route, another batch of mailbags from all over Europe was received and sorted by the CPS and transferred to East Asian, Southeast Asian and Oceanian countries.⁴⁰ It demonstrates in detail the importance of Manchuria in international postal communications. More importantly, it also illustrates how international postal transit worked as a result of international cooperation and how China, as a sovereign state, shared the responsibility and participated in the international community. As will be discussed later, these circumstances caused the Mukden Incident impact not only China's sovereignty and *youquan*, but also the entire international postal operation.

2. The Mukden Incident and Postal Censorship

The Mukden Incident happened on the night of 18 September 1931, as the Japanese Army speedily occupied Shenyang and further took control of all areas of Manchuria. These developments had severe implications for the CPS, as they changed the Sino-Japanese postal cooperation, and eventually caused the CPS to lose Manchuria, and even the international mail transport between Europe and Asia was also suspended.

F. Poletti, Postal Commissioner of Liaoning, who led the service in South Manchuria, immediately dealt with the emergency on the night of the Incident. In his report to the DG, he described initially hearing explosion noises and thinking these were probably a Japanese military exercise — until he could hear the rumble of gunfire. Then, he rushed back to the office at once to take charge of the crisis. At 2.45 am on 18 September, about twenty Japanese

⁴⁰ For Chen Jiying's recollections on the mail train service, see Chen Jiying, *Wode youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 97–113.

soldiers carrying loaded guns with mounted bayonets broke into the Liaoning Post Office. They snatched a new Chevrolet postal lorry and some postal bikes while wounding a postal gatekeeper. Many other soldiers had been spying on the postal operation through the door throughout the night. The Incident increased the pressure and sense of panic among the postal staff. Poletti strived to reassure his colleagues and stabilise the service.⁴¹

After the shocking night, the Japanese Army did not expeditiously take over the Post Office, but the service was affected. Strict postal censorship was adopted, and censors were appointed to post offices in Japanese-controlled areas. Despite being under the Japanese Army's control, the postal service in Manchuria was still operated by the Nanjing government until July next year.

During this period, the CPS's foreign senior staff played a significant role in maintaining the service. Although the number of foreign staff greatly reduced after Guomindang took over the CPS, some postal districts in Manchuria, including Liaoning and Ki-Hei Postal Districts, were still led by remaining senior foreign officers as postal commissioners.⁴²

Like the CPS's foreign staff who provided information to the Beiyang government during the warlord era, the confidential documents show that Poletti frequently reported to the Nanjing government about the development of the Incident triggered by Japan and the impact on postal operations. Their loyalty and contribution to the CPS in Manchuria during the difficult time were positively recognised by the CPS after the Incident as they were awarded the commendation of the postal medal praising their leadership and loyalty in

⁴¹ Liaoning Postal Commissioner F. Poletti Semi-official Correspondence, no. 197, 19 September 1921, A31500000H/0020/0801060020/00257, National Archives Administration, Taiwan (NAA).

⁴² Liaoning Postal Commissioner F. Poletti and Ki-Hei Postal Commissioner F. L. Smith, British nationality. See Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 131.

Manchuria.⁴³ Intriguingly, Poletti's report shows he was not situated in an awkward position between the Nanjing government and the Japanese Army; on the contrary, he was in a favourable position to maintain the postal service because of his Italian nationality, making it easier for him to have room for manoeuvre. In fact, on the second day of the Incident, Poletti went to see the Consul-General of Japan and the Postmaster of Japan's Post Office in the SMR Zone to make sure the postal service could continue. Simultaneously, according to the CPS's archives, he was still following the DG's instructions from Nanjing and regularly submitted confidential reports on the situation of the postal service and Japan's activities in south Manchuria.⁴⁴ The postal operation was temporarily interrupted after the Incident, but not for too long. The DG attributed this to Commissioner Poletti and his foreign postal employee status, helping the service to operate largely without interruption under Japan's threat.⁴⁵

The story of the postal service's maintenance and Poletti's conscientious discharge of duty for ten months after the Incident was repeatedly narrated by former postal staff, even though those staff did not personally experience the Incident in Manchuria. For instance, Liu Chenghan recalled the story in his reminiscences, but he was working at the DG in Shanghai rather than Manchuria as a postal clerk at that time.⁴⁶ Pan Ansheng (pen name Yan Xing) also dedicated a chapter to Poletti's contribution during the Incident in his memoirs.⁴⁷ These

⁴³ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 137; DG Official Letter to MOC, No. 431, 26 September 1932, A31500000H/0021/0801060020/00159, NAA.

⁴⁴ Liaoning Postal Commissioner F. Poletti Semi-official Correspondence, no. 197, 19 September 1921, A31500000H/0020/0801060020/00257, NAA.

⁴⁵ 'Dongbei youzheng tongxing' 東北郵政通行 (Northeast Postal Transport), *Shenbao*, 29 October 1931, 10; Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 137.

⁴⁶ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 131–139. The original source seems to come from Poletti's confidential reports to the DG, see A31500000H/0020/0801060020/00257, 00278, 00279, 00280, NAA.

⁴⁷ Pan Ansheng and Yu Yanling, *Zhi you chuan ming: Yiwei youjie qilao de huiyi* (Transmitting Orders through the Post: A Memoir of a Senior Postal Employee) (Hsinchu: Guoli Yangming jiaotong daxue chuban she, 2022), 62–68.

accounts demonstrate that the experience of the Manchuria postal service after the Mukden Incident became a harrowing collective memory for postal employees. Moreover, the foreign staff system once again helped the service to carry on in Manchuria, although it was ultimately suspended in July 1932 — the founding of Manchukuo.

By contrast, Chen Jiying witnessed and experienced the Incident in Harbin, Manchuria, as a middle-rank Chinese postal clerk and a part-time *Dagongbao* journalist covering politics and current affairs in the north-east. Although he was also far away from Liaoning where the Incident occurred, his memoirs more realistically record the change in the CPS in north Manchuria, where the situation was slightly different from the south. According to him, Harbin had not initially been impacted by the war until 5 February 1932, when the Japanese Army finally occupied Harbin and extended control over all of Manchuria. Unlike the intensive engagement and panic atmosphere in the south, there was no large-scale campaign and fierce battle in the north after September 1931. After the Incident, Chen Jiying continued to go to work as usual. He observed that people were even tired of the war developments and ‘welcomed the Japanese marching north for a temporary result [of ceasefire].’ On 4 February, the Lunar New Year’s Eve, the Japanese Army were so close to Nangang that the combat could have been seen from the window of the Nangang Post Office. It was not long before the gunfire ceased at about five pm on the same day and Japanese troops entered Harbin without fierce resistance.⁴⁸

Despite the situation in Harbin seeming calm after the occupation, the Japanese started to monitor the postal operations. The state of Manchukuo was founded in March 1932, just after one month of the occupation of Harbin. In early April 1932, the Head Post Office of

⁴⁸ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 147–153

the Ki-Hei Postal District received an official letter in which the Police Bureau of Harbin demanded postal censorship in the Post Office. Although the postal authority did not direct the censoring process, the Post Office still needed to cooperate, even if reluctantly, with the police. It meant that the postal service had to increase its workload and adjust to censorship tasks. The Nangang Post Office accommodated four censors — two Chinese policemen and two high-ranking Japanese officers — and assigned them an office for the censorship work. The space in the postal bag section, which Chen Jiying led, was selected. One postal worker also helped censors collect mail items, and other departments, such as the registered mail and the parcel sections, provided any suspicious mail that censors could have wanted to investigate further. However, the postal service still assumed the responsibility of mail delivery and storage if any registered mail or parcel was lost due to the process of censorship. The postal bag section, therefore, was in charge of the additional work for recording detained mail and informing their senders.⁴⁹

Censorship was supposed to be a useful strategy of governments to restrict the dissemination of anti-government sentiments during war or in turmoil.⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, the aim was to block all negative messages about Japan spreading from and in Manchuria, which were regarded as an intention to incite rebellions. However, the effect of postal censorship carried out by the police was questionable given the popularisation of the postal service in the early twentieth century. The sheer amount of postal traffic was far more than the censors were able to deal with. In the fiscal year of 1931/1932,⁵¹ more than 42 million mail items and over 500 thousand parcels were posted via the Post Office in the Ki-Hei District. The amount

⁴⁹ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 161–164.

⁵⁰ Sandra Wilson has discussed censorship of the media in Mainland Japan after the Mukden Incident. See Wilson, *The Manchurian Crisis and Japanese Society*, 30–41.

⁵¹ 1 July 1931 to 30 June 1932.

of mail was the eighth in twenty-three districts of the country, and the number of parcels ranked fourth.⁵² It means that it was practically impossible to examine all mail and parcels with only four censors, so random sampling and selective examination were inevitably adopted.

In order to examine the massive number of mail items, the censors concentrated on a few categories, as Chen Jiying pointed out. They first focused on the Harbin–Changchun railway line letters, followed by the Beijing–Tianjin areas, and then the Nanjing–Shanghai areas, where the Nationalist government’s main base was. In addition to letters, bulk mail, especially newspapers, was also included in censorship. The censors, therefore, also inspected the information from newspapers published in Beijing and Tianjin. It was not only because newspapers from these two places were more prevalent in Harbin, especially *Dagongbao* from Tianjin,⁵³ but also because the authorities expected that messages hostile to the new government of Manchukuo would spread from outside Manchuria.

Nonetheless, it was still difficult to process all selected mail, let alone newspapers and periodicals. The censors initially trusted postal staff who worked with them, whereas postal staff privately took a negative attitude. Chen Jiying recalled that postal staff and the Chinese censors tried to delay the examination speed by deliberately giving regular mail rather than suspicious correspondence to the Japanese censors. Chen Jiying even instructed one of the workers not to hand over every bundle of newspaper bulk mail and only perfunctorily pick up a couple of copies instead. In this way, the rest of the newspapers could still be sent uncensored. Plus, the censors needed to check and sign to take on responsibility for every

⁵² 42,110,500 items of mail (including letters, newspapers, articles, and postcards) and 561,000 parcels. *Annual Report, 1931/1932*, 24–25

⁵³ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 163.

detained registered mail. As a result, the censors were exhausted, and their work was delayed. The Japanese censorship did not seem to work effectively. Many Harbin citizens were still able to read anti-Japanese newspapers from north China until June 1932.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the Japanese censorship included newspapers, which suggests that the freedom of the press became restricted since Manchuria had come under the Japanese Army's control so the circulation of messages, both incoming and outgoing, and press was affected. Some journalists and correspondents of nationwide newspapers were under threat of arrest after the Incident. Chen Jiying was asked by Hu Lin 胡霖 (1889–1949), one of the *Dagongbao* founders, to serve as a secret Harbin correspondent for *Dagongbao* in March 1932 because his postal position would create a good cover. The work was highly risky and relied on both parts, correspondent and the newspaper, being discreet. He succeeded in sending out his news releases, avoiding censorship, and even keeping it hidden from colleagues by various means, such as secretly placing his letters into the mail sorting shelf to Tianjin in the receiving and dispatching office, sending updates as registered mail or addressing envelopes in English to pose as foreign sender. The addressee he used was not the real locations of the newspaper office. From April to August 1932, all Harbin news items in *Dagongbao* were written by Chen Jiying, according to his own account.⁵⁵ Looking through news reports on Manchuria in *Dagongbao* during this time, there are indeed many articles with the by-line citing a Harbin special correspondent (哈爾濱特約通訊).

However, other newspapers also had undercover correspondents and Chen Jiying certainly was not the only *Dagongbao* correspondent in Harbin. For instance, *Shenbao*, the

⁵⁴ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 163.

⁵⁵ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 156–160.

most influential Chinese newspaper in Shanghai, relied on news agencies, especially Reuters and special telegram dispatches (*zhuandian* 專電) from Harbin. Similarly, there are several news reports from news agencies and *zhuandian* in *Dagongbao*. It suggests that telecommunication had not yet been controlled by the Japanese or impacted by censorship. According to *Shenbao*'s report on 4 August 1932, Zhong E 鍾鏢 (1890–?), Director-General of telecommunications of the Nationalist government,⁵⁶ confirmed that the Japanese had not taken control of some of telegraph stations in Harbin and other places in Heilongjiang. These stations had been operating independently from the central government since Zhang Zuolin's rule. After the Incident, they became the only few stations through which one could communicate with the Nationalist-controlled areas for professional purposes.⁵⁷

Furthermore, compared to other news articles, Chen Jiying was more like an editorial columnist writing down his testimony rather than reporting the news of north Manchuria. In 'A Heart-breaking Record along the Songhua Riverside' (松濱痛心錄), for example, he attempted to express his sorrow and anger about the Japanese oppression of Chinese people in Harbin. He also criticised Chinese people who worked with Japanese; he considered them to be traitors (*hanjian* 漢奸) in the article, 'A Modern Puppet in Harbin' (哈埠的摩登傀儡).⁵⁸ It can be imagined that these articles' political stance would not be allowed by the censorship authority without doubt, explaining the caution and secrecy of his collaboration with

⁵⁶ Zhong E was a telecommunications technocrat. After receiving a Master of Electrical Engineering from the University of Wisconsin, he worked for China's MOC as director of the telephone exchange office in Tianjin and Beijing and acting director of international telecommunications before he became director-general. See Chen Hwei Shing ed., *Dong Hao Yun riji 1948–1982* (C.Y. Tung Diary) (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2004), vol. 1, 229.

⁵⁷ 'Dianzhengsizhang Zhong E zuowan jinjing xushang yingfu dongbei dianzheng banfa' 電政司長鍾鏢昨晚晉京續商應付東北電政辦法 (Director-General of Telecommunications Zhong E arrived in Nanjing Yesterday Night to Deal with Northeast Telecommunications), *Shenbao*, 4 August 1932, 13.

⁵⁸ 'Songbin tongxin lu' 松濱痛心錄 (A Heart-breaking Record along the Songhua Riverside), *Dagongbao*, Tianjin, 29 May 1932, 4. 'Habu de modeng kuilei' 哈埠的摩登傀儡 (A Modern Puppet in Harbin), *Dagongbao*, Tianjin, 3 June 1932, 4.

Dagongbao.

Scholars have discussed the complexity of *hanjian* or collaborators issues in China during the Second World War.⁵⁹ Lo Jiu-jung suggested that survival was the primary reason why people chose to collaborate with the enemy, especially the ordinary people who had not have many alternatives.⁶⁰ Interestingly, the postal service, censorship, and Chen Jiying's editorials reflected the complex and diverse situation of collaboration in different ways. Chen Jiying detested collaborators who were mainly social elites, while in his memoirs, he believed two Chinese police censors who 'had great righteousness, did not collaborate with the Japanese under the table, [so] they were truly Chinese people (中國人的本色).'⁶¹ Whether the two Chinese censors' really worked against Japanese superiors or they were double-faced, it can be seen that Chen Jiying was precisely situated in a significant space in Harbin. From his position, he observed the different approaches of Chinese people who worked with the Japanese and evaluated them as patriots or *hanjian* based on his own nationalist judgement. Meanwhile, the postal service was sandwiched between the Japanese and the Chinese Nationalist government. It had to collaborate with the new regime in order to carry on the postal business in Manchuria and secure the entire international rail postal transit. Even though Chen Jiying intended to express his patriotism and secretly write for *Dagongbao* as a

⁵⁹ The mainstream of historical research in the PRC may still focus on traitor critique, while others, especially in the West, have attempted to explore collaborators from perspectives of economics, politics, society, and individual/collective actions. For example, Timothy Brook discussed collaboration in the context of global histories of anticolonialism and colonial nationalism. See Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007). Lo Jiu-jung discussed recent research on collaborators in wartime China and analysed various goals of collaboration by different groups of people and individuals' stories, especially involving gender perspectives. See Lo Jiu-jung, *Tade shenpan 她的審判：近代中國國族與性別意義下的忠奸之辨* (Her Trials: Contextualising Loyalty and Disloyalty in Modern China from the Gendered Nationalist Perspective) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 2013).

⁶⁰ Jiu-jung Lo, 'Survival as Justification for Collaboration, 1937–1945,' in *Chinese Collaboration with Japan, 1932–1945: The Limits of Accommodation*, eds. by David P. Barrett and Larry N. Shyu (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 116–132.

⁶¹ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 163–164.

proud postal employee, it was likely difficult for him to continue working for the postal service and completely separate himself from this collaboration structure within the Post Office. As the previous chapter discussed, the fundamental factor was the CPS's a unique loyalty only to the postal service (rather than allegiance to a state or a government) since it was established and managed by foreign staff. Postal staff were motivated by the honour to maintain the service even if they needed to make concessions by working with the enemy. More importantly, after China joined the UPU and became part of the network of international postal transport, it was responsible for the global postal service. As previously mentioned, the cross-border rail transport in Manchuria played an essential role in international mail transit connecting East Asia and Europe. In this sense, postal employees' patriotic motivations should have been kept personal and secondary. Their collaboration with the Japanese illustrates that they were dedicated to maintaining the postal service.

Moreover, Chen Jiying showed a sense of accomplishment in the successful defence against postal censorship in his memoirs and described himself as a 'patriot beside the enemy' (在敵人身邊愛國) and 'serving [my] country secretly' (秘密報國). On the other hand, the patriotic story seems to be written in the context of nationalist sentiment in the wartime and post-war period. As can be seen from his description, postal censorship still had sufficient deterrent effects, limiting the freedom of the press and communication. People were aware of postal censorship, and newspaper hawkers gradually withdrew from selling newspapers on the streets. The censors were likely to notice postal staff's deception, so they began collecting and examining items in person rather than depending on the postal workers.⁶² Despite that, it was still hard to process every suspicious item of mail due to the high volume of mail and parcels

⁶² Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 163–164.

passing through the Nangang Post Office, the headquarters of Ki-Hei Postal District.

Regardless of the efficiency of postal censorship in Manchuria, Chen Jiying's case shows tension between the censors and postal staff, who respectively represented the Manchukuo controlled by the Japanese Army and the CPS loyal to Nationalist China. Postal censorship interfered with postal operations, while the postal service was also situated in an unprecedentedly awkward position. Compared with the CPS in South Manchuria at the same time, in Harbin, the postal service attempted to cooperate with the new authority. The strategy was stemmed from the survival experience from the warlord era aiming to decrease the impact on its business and independent position. However, in contrast to the warlord era when the CPS played a relatively neutral role stuck between warlords due to the foreign management system in the 1910s and 1920s, the Nationalist government took over the administration of the CPS and gave Chinese staff more power after the Northern Expedition. Although two postal districts in Manchuria were still led by foreign postal commissioners, Chen Jiying's case in the Nangang Post Office indicates that Chinese middle-rank staff like him had a certain agency to find room for manoeuvre against the censors. More importantly, Warlord China was still nominally one nation-state, for which the CPS as an institution provided a national service, while Manchuria under Japanese rule was a new state, even though a puppet state, which fundamentally changed its political status. Manchukuo, having become a separate 'state,' significantly reduced the room for the CPS to operate. This would eventually cause for the Nanjing government to withdraw the CPS from Manchuria, which will be explored in the next section.

3. The CPS Withdrawn from Manchuria

The CPS staff in Manchuria did not need to be trapped in the dilemma of potential

collaboration as *hanjian* for too long. On 23 July 1932, the MOC in Nanjing finally decided to withdraw all postal staff and their families from Manchuria.⁶³ It was a large-scale operation for the CPS, which signified that the Nanjing government ultimately gave up the last pretence of maintaining sovereignty of the postal service in Manchuria. After the order of retreat arrived in the two postal districts in Manchuria, thousands of postal employees were mobilised to leave their workplaces. They were ordered to cross the Great Wall and head south with their families.

The Nanjing government claimed the main reason for the withdrawal was that the Japanese Army and the ‘fake regime’ (*weizhengquan* 偽政權), the Manchukuo government, had attempted to seize the postal service after the Mukden Incident. Huang Shaohong 黃紹竑 (1895–1966),⁶⁴ Acting Minister of Communication of the Nanjing government, condemned the Japanese Army for interfering with the postal service management, threatening postal leaders, and killing and arresting staff. He claimed that after the establishment of Manchukuo, more and more postal funds and property were confiscated by the Japanese, so the service was almost unsustainable. Even worse, the CPS was asked to issue Manchukuo’s postage stamps to replace the CPS’s stamps, which was considered a humiliation to the Chinese government.⁶⁵

The Nanjing government tried to convince the Chinese people and the CPS’s staff in Manchuria that the withdrawal was a strategy to blockade Manchuria’s postal communication.

⁶³ ‘Jiaotongbu fengsuo dongbei youwu xuanyan’ 交通部封鎖東北郵務宣言 (Ministry of Communication’s Declaration on the Blockade of Manchurian Postal Service by the Ministry of Transport), *Shenbao*, 26 July 1932, 3. The declaration was officially issued on 23 July 1932.

⁶⁴ Huang Shaohong was originally a warlord of the Guangxi Clique. He joined Chiang Kai-shek’s camp in 1932, where he held many important positions, such as Minister of Interior, Governor of Zhejiang, Governor of Hubei, and Minister of Communications. After 1949, he joined the Chinese Communist Party. He committed suicide during the Cultural Revolution. For his memoirs and biography, see Huang Shaohong, *Wushi huiyi*.

⁶⁵ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 141–142.

According to Huang Shaohong's declaration, the target of the blockade was the international postal exchange, and he believed that the responsibility for postal obstruction would lie with Japan instead of China.⁶⁶ It was not based on a naïve belief that the withdrawal would paralyse the postal service in Manchuria. In fact, Japan was very likely to have sufficient ability to take over Manchuria's postal service given its postal reform experiences since the Meiji Restoration as well as using its own post offices in the SMR Zone.⁶⁷ Rather, the Nationalist government hoped to use the action as a last resort to attract international attention and support for its lost sovereignty in Manchuria. However, this does not seem to have been the original plan.

The Nanjing government originally did not intend to withdraw postal staff and block Manchuria's postal communication. The CPS sought every possibility to keep its position in Manchuria, just as it survived during the warlord era. With the establishment of Manchukuo, however, the DG was no longer able to resist the pressure, particularly from postal employees of Manchuria.⁶⁸ The National Postal Union and the Shanghai Postal Union came together against the DG and censured it for attempting to negotiate and make concessions with the enemy. Complicating the situation even more, one of the unions' targets was the opposition to foreign higher-rank staff. Based on nationalist sentiment, the voice of the dissatisfied combined with the anger against Japan's invasion and against what was seen as collaboration of higher-rank postal staff, so the DG found itself increasingly caught in a predicament as the situation continued heating up. Even though confidential postal documents afterwards proved the innocence of foreign staff like Poletti,⁶⁹ the tensions between Chinese and foreign

⁶⁶ 'Jiaotongbu fengsuo dongbei youwu xuanyan,' *Shenbao*, 26 July 1932, 3.

⁶⁷ Patricia L. Maclachlan, *The People's Post Office: The History and Politics of the Japanese Postal System, 1871–2010* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Centre, 2011), 21–67.

⁶⁸ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 140.

⁶⁹ For Poletti's confidential reports to Nanjing on the development in Manchuria, the negotiation with the Japanese authority and Nanjing's countermeasures, see 020-010106-0023, Academia Historica (AH), Taiwan; A315000000H/0020/0801060020/00257, 00274, 00278, 00280, NAA.

staff became embroiled with the wave of ‘the loss of rights and the nation’s humiliation’ (*sangquan ruquo* 喪權辱國) sentiment, only strengthening the nationalist standpoint, eventually made it impossible to keep the CPS in Manchuria.⁷⁰

Why did the DG not withdraw the postal service immediately but endure such internal and external humiliation to be accused of collaboration and having to abide by the censorship? How important was it for the service to stay in enemy-occupied areas? In April 1932, Qian Chunqi 錢春祺, the Director-General, clarified the DG’s position and guaranteed that the two foreign Postal Commissioners of Manchuria were not collaborators. Meanwhile, he announced that the DG would take further action if the situation worsened and the service was threatened with violence. The DG believed that the maintenance of the CPS in Manchuria was symbolically important because the Chinese government still legally held the sovereign rights to run the national postal service.⁷¹ In addition, through its presence in Manchuria, the CPS could provide valuable intelligence to Nanjing from the front lines or even from behind the enemy lines. After the Japanese Army occupied Manchuria, Poletti not only continued reporting the postal affairs in Liaoning to the DG but also provided intelligence from the front.⁷² As previously discussed, because the post offices were everywhere and generally managed by foreign staff, who could avoid getting involved in the local disputes and surveillance, the CPS often played the role of an intelligence agency in wars and conflicts working for central governments.

Two months later, in June 1932, Reuters sources reported that the CPS would suspend

⁷⁰ ‘Youzheng zongju wei yu weiguo tuoxia’ 郵政總局未與偽國妥洽 (The DG Has Not Yet Negotiated with the Manchurian Regime), *Shenbao*, 19 April 1932, 1.

⁷¹ ‘Youzheng zongju wei yu weiguo tuoxia,’ *Shenbao*, 19 April 1932, 1.

⁷² 020-010106-0023, AH; A315000000H/0020/0801060020/00257, 00274, 00278, 00280, NAA.

its service in Manchuria soon because the Manchukuo government had demanded the Post Office to replace the Republic of China's calendar era *Zhonghua minguo* (中華民國) with the Manchukuo Emperor Puyi's calendar era name *Datong* (大同) on the postmark.⁷³ Meanwhile, on 28 June, *The North-China Herald* reported that Manchukuo intended to seize the postal service. In an interview with Chu Chang-sing, the Acting Director-General of Posts, Chu told the reporter that 'the Chinese government will close down all post offices in the Three Eastern Provinces, in which event Manchukuo authorities will be held responsible for the financial loss to China,' if Manchukuo continues the threat to the postal service.⁷⁴ The *Datong* postmark issue seems to have stepped on the bottom line of the Nanjing government to safeguard the sovereignty of Manchuria. In order to maintain the dignity of the country, the postal withdrawal from Manchuria became imperative to act. At the same time, the CPS in Manchuria had indeed already begun preparing for the worst, including negotiations with Japan's postal director to guarantee the safe withdrawal and transfer of postal funds, documents, and property across the Great Wall into Inner China.⁷⁵ In addition, according to Japan's *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* newspaper, the intention of the CPS's withdrawal was in retaliation for Manchukuo taking over the Chinese Maritime Customs, which were also managed by foreign staff.⁷⁶ Dictated by the sense of national dignity and the practical inability to control the postal service in Manchuria, the CPS's withdrawal seemed imperative.

The instruction of withdrawal was issued by the Minister of Communications in late July 1932. This significant project meant the relocation of thousands of people from

⁷³ 'Dongsansheng youzheng huojian tingban' 東三省郵政或將停辦 (Postal Service in Three Eastern Provinces May Be Suspended), *Shenbao*, 15 June 1932, 6.

⁷⁴ 'Postal Service in Manchuria,' *The North-China Herald*, 1932.6.28, p. 483

⁷⁵ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 140–143.

⁷⁶ 'Zen Man no yūbinkyoku fūsa meirei' 全滿の郵便局封鎖命令 (Order to Block Manchurian Post Offices), *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, 29 June 1932, evening, 1.

Manchuria to the Nationalist areas. Chen Jiying believed that there were six to seven thousand postal employees in two postal districts in Manchuria,⁷⁷ whereas according to Liu Chenghan's survey, the CPS had 3,063 employees there. By December 1932, 2,585 staff left Manchuria and moved to Guannei 關內 (the south of the Great Wall), while 208 remained to run the postal service in some areas, still taking orders from Nanjing. The CPS kept eighteen Post Offices in the areas controlled by pro-Nanjing armies, including Ma Zhanshan 馬占山 (1885–1950) and the Self-defence Army 自衛軍 led by Ding Chao 丁超 (1883–1950?) and Li Du 李杜 (1880–1956).⁷⁸ Only forty-four employees transferred to work for the Manchukuo Post Office, and fifty-seven employees' whereabouts were unknown.⁷⁹ Liu's survey should be more credible than Chen Jiying's estimation, as it matched the actual total number of employees from the *Annual Report, 1931*. Until June 1931, just before the Incident, the CPS had 38,425 employees distributed in twenty-three postal districts in China. It can be speculated that the number of Manchuria employees was unlikely to be six to seven thousand, almost one-sixth of the overall number nationwide.⁸⁰ In short, most staff (about 2.5 thousand postal employees plus their families, so about ten thousand people) chose to leave and moved to the south.

Although the project seems to have been planned for a while by higher-level officials of the CPS, it was not a straightforward task for the CPS authority and every postal employee involved. All staff with families, regardless of their rank, were included in the project. Many of

⁷⁷ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 168.

⁷⁸ The eighteen offices are Tangyuan (湯原), Yilan (依蘭), Jiamusi (佳木斯), Huachuan (樺川), Fujin (富錦), Tongjiang (同江), Suibin (綏濱), Luobei (蘿北), Foshan (佛山), Wuyun (烏雲), Xunhe (遜河), Sunwu (孫吳), Aihun (愛琿), Huma (呼瑪), Oupu (鷗浦), Mohe (漠河), Qiqian (奇乾), and Shiwei (室韋). They were supervised by the Shanghai Postal District, and Chen Jiying was in charge of their affairs. Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 181–182.

⁷⁹ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 146. The CPS had a register that lists those who remained in Manchuria or whose whereabouts were unknown; see A315000000H/0020/0801060020/00159, NAA.

⁸⁰ *Annual Report, 1931*, 18.

them were lower-rank runners (*t'ingch'ai* 聽差) and miscellaneous employees.⁸¹ Meanwhile, the Manchukuo government was unwilling to allow postal staff to leave and obstructed the withdrawal. In addition to Poletti, who negotiated with the Japanese Army in South Manchuria, British F. L. Smith, the Postal Commissioner of Ki-Hei, asked the British Consul-General of Harbin for mediation between the CPS, the Manchukuo Post Office, and the Japanese authorities. After negotiations, the Japanese Army eventually issued passports and allowed postal staff to leave, as well as ensured their safe travel.⁸²

Many of the records written later show the determination and patriotism of postal employees. However, these workers' dispersion and uncertainty were concealed in nationalist narratives, especially since many of them had been settled down in Manchuria for a long time, even generations.⁸³ Their actions were not simply acts of patriotism but of their and their families' survival. Chen Jiying mentions that the DG highlighted three optional postal districts, Shanghai, Hebei, and Beiping, that could accommodate more employees than other areas. Postal staff could either register one option for relocation or choose to remain. In addition, regarding the result of the negotiations, every staff was interviewed by Manchukuo officials in Harbin's famous hotel Madie'er 馬迭爾 (Modern; in Russian — *модерн*) to declare the intention to leave or stay. Chen Jiying longed for Shanghai for better professional development opportunities, while his brother Chen Jizhi 陳紀治 selected the Hebei District because the workplace in Tianjin would be close to home.⁸⁴

In addition to leaving the hometown, travelling was another challenge, especially for

⁸¹ *T'ingch'ai* and *miscellaneous employee* were official English titles of the CPS's lower rank employees. The usage can be found in the *Annual Reports*. See, *Annual Report, 1933*, 16. For the report on the arrangement of lower rank employees from Manchuria to north China, see 137(1)1070, SHAC.

⁸² Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 145–146.

⁸³ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 146–147.

⁸⁴ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 169.

those staff who had to move with the entire family. Despite the CPS reimbursing travel expenses, it was still not straightforward to relocate every employee. Chen Jiying recorded his experiences in his memoirs, travelling with his wife and three children, with four willow suitcases and two canvas bags from Harbin to Shanghai. He first took a train along the CER and spent five hours in Changchun after arriving there in late August 1932. On the train, he saw many colleagues with families, but each of them had heavy expressions and faced an unknowable future. Subsequently, he spent another five hours on a train to Dalian operated by the SM. Afterwards, he had to stay in Dalian for one night and transfer to a Japanese steamer, Dalian Maru 大連丸, which was the only option to reach Shanghai even though he felt humiliated to board a Japanese-operated ship on the afternoon of the second day. At that time, Dalian-Tianjin and Dalian-Shanghai lines were all operated by Japan's shipping companies. Dalian Maru to Shanghai set sail at about 4–5 pm and stopped at Qingdao at midday on the third day. All passengers had a break of half a day and departed again at midnight. They finally arrived in Shanghai in the afternoon on the fourth day. Despite the unknown situation and the sadness of leaving home, Chen Jiying and colleagues had the rare opportunity to visit Dalian and Qingdao with families, which was especially pleasant given that these cities were lively and modern in their imaginations. However, Chen Jiying needed to take care of his children all the time, whether in the third-class cabin or on the streets. His eldest daughter once got lost in Dalian because of the adults' carelessness.⁸⁵

There could have been thousands of individual stories of refugees, but few were recorded, and Chen Jiying was relatively lucky. Although he did not have any prerogative as a senior postal employee during the withdrawal operation, he experienced better economic

⁸⁵ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 168–175.

conditions and job positions than others. At that time, he had been promoted to mid-rank staff of the CPS as a *yuwusheng* (郵務生) and managed the postal bag section when he left Manchuria. He directly reported to the Shanghai Postal District and did not worry about the possibility of transferring somewhere else again.⁸⁶ By contrast, lower-rank staff not only suffered more during relocation but also their voices were rarely heard. According to the report of F. A. Nixon, Postal Commissioner of Beiping, before 16 August 1932, 361 employees from Manchuria had arrived in Beiping and reported to the Beiping Postal District Office. Hundred-ten of them were *t'ingch'ai* and miscellaneous employees who came from the Ki-Hei District. They initially arrived in Tianjin but were transferred again by the Hebei Postal Administration Office. Even though Tianjin was likely to have been their preferred location, according to the Hebei Postal Commissioner, by the beginning of August, the Hebei Postal Administration was no longer able to accept a large number of redundant employees and even arranged food and accommodation for those who suddenly flocked to Tianjin.⁸⁷ Many employees chose Beiping, but instead, they would be further sent to the Shanxi, Henan, Hubei, and Hunan Postal Districts. Therefore, fifty-nine of those 110 Ki-Hei employees were selected to be sent to Henan because they had no family.⁸⁸ This indicates that even if they had three choices: Hebei, Shanghai, and Beiping, lower-rank employees could have been moved again depending on their ranks and family status. The relocation was extremely stressful and uncertain for postal staff and the CPS itself.

The withdrawal project was executed from late July 1932 until the end of the year;

⁸⁶ *Yuwusheng* (郵務生) was an official-rank title of the CPS both in English and Chinese, translated to junior postal officer. The next rank was *yuwuyuan* (郵務員) — senior postal officer.

⁸⁷ 'Ancha jiangnan kunnan' 安插漸感困難 (It Is Gradually Becoming Difficult to Reassign Postal Employees), *Shenbao*, 3 August 1932, 4.

⁸⁸ F. A. Nixon Report to the DG, 17 August 1932, 137(1)1070, SHAC.

thousands of postal employees and families left. Therefore, the last and largest permanent national agency of the Nanjing government completely withdrew from Manchuria. While the Nanjing government might have shown its determination to 'blockade Manchuria's postal service' (封鎖東北郵務), it also seemed to have given up one of the connections with the world the postal service offered: the authority over international/intercontinental railway postal transports, which predictably created problems for the Eurasian connections.

4. Recovery of Postal Transport

The postal withdrawal from Manchuria was designed to arouse international attention to Japan's invasion. It is worth mentioning that the Lytton Commission of the League of Nations (LN) was investigating the Mukden Incident in China in parallel. Although there is no direct evidence to show the correlation between the LN Commission and the withdrawal project,⁸⁹ both the Nanjing government and public opinion seemed to have hoped for international intervention at that time.⁹⁰ However, while the postal 'blockade' of Manchuria indeed had an impact on international postal transport, the result was less than satisfactory to Nanjing.

The CPS promptly informed the UPU of the decision almost at the same time as the Nanjing government announced the withdrawal of Manchuria's postal service. It accused Manchukuo of having established another national postal service, which split the unified postal service of China and obstructed the CPS's operation in Manchuria. Consequently, all

⁸⁹ The Lytton Commission's report only mentions the overview and development of the postal administration in Manchuria between the Mukden Incident and the CPS's withdrawal. See League of Nations, *The Report of the Commission of Enquiry of the League of Nations into the Sino-Japanese Dispute 1932* (n.p.: 1932, the Japanese government's copy, D327.51 89710, SOAS Library), 214–215.

⁹⁰ Chen Jiying was wrong when he wrote that the CPS in Manchuria received the withdrawal order at the same time as the Lytton Commission left China in August 1932. The fact is that the Commission members left China on 5 September 1932, while the withdrawal action had been occurring for more than a month. See Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 168. 'Lidun yixing zuochen fan Ou' 李頓一行昨晨返歐 (Lytton Commission Returned to Europe Yesterday Morning), *Shenbao*, 6 September 1932, 13.

international mail and parcels via China to and from Europe and America were suspended from being transmitted by the TSR. The alternative routes were sea transportation via the Suez Canal or via the Pacific Ocean. In addition, the CPS asked the UPU to pass the declaration to member countries and requested the non-recognition of Manchukuo postage stamps.⁹¹

The influence of the postal blockade on the international postal service was immediate. *The North-China Daily News* reported that mailing to Europe by sea was expected to take eight to nine days longer than the original train journey of three weeks.⁹² The blockade also resulted in the establishment of private postal companies, which were organised by foreigners seeking an alternative way to address their correspondence needs. In Shanghai, there was an advertisement for a mail delivery service to Manchuria in a Russian newspaper. Afterwards, the Shanghai Customs found that a Russian passenger brought 180 mail items on a foreign steamer from Shanghai to Newchwang.⁹³

Japanese expatriates also established their own post offices in Qingdao and Tianjin to communicate with Manchuria just after the blockade in late July of 1932.⁹⁴ The postal service was organised by the Association of Japanese Residents (*Kyoryūmin-dan* 居留民團), a Japanese Concession's administrative body.⁹⁵ The Association collected Japanese residents' mail with postage and then forwarded it on board steamers of Dairen Kisen K.K. 大連汽船株式會社, a Japanese shipping company managed by the SMR, to Dalian. Japanese stamps were

⁹¹ 'Youzheng zongju zhi Guoji youshu dian' 郵政總局致國際郵署電 (The DG's Telegram to UPU), *Shenbao*, 26 July 1932, 3. The telegram draft to UPU, 020-010106-0023, AH.

⁹² 'Dongbei youzheng fengsuohou Wanguo youlian yeyi tongzhi geguo' 東北郵政封鎖後萬國郵聯業已通知各國' (UPU Has Informed All Countries of the Postal Blockade of Manchuria), *Shenbao*, 26 July 1932, 13.

⁹³ 'Eren sidai youjian wang weiguo' 俄人私帶郵件往偽國 (Russians Illegally Bring Mail Items to Manchuria) *Shenbao*, 30 September 1932, 15.

⁹⁴ 'Riqiao she youbiansuo' 日僑設郵便所 (Japanese Expatriates Set up a Post Office), *Shenbao*, 4 August 1932, 4; '日本於北平各地私辦郵政侵害我國郵權', 020-010106-0018, AH.

⁹⁵ Research on the Japanese Residents' Association, see Joshua Fogel, "'Shanghai-Japan': The Japanese Residents' Association of Shanghai," *Between China and Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 337–368.

stuck there and sent to Manchuria.⁹⁶ Other cities and ports where Japanese people lived also established similar postal services.⁹⁷ In order to investigate the issue, the Qingdao Post Office sent postal employees pretending to be customers to post mail. They reported that the Association seemed only to accept mail addressed to Japanese recipients and did not sell stamps.⁹⁸ However, the CPS soon found that Japanese postage stamps were sold on Japanese steamers to passengers wishing to send letters to Manchuria while travelling.⁹⁹ In another report, the Association was found to have provided registered mail services in Tianjin (Figure 3.2).¹⁰⁰

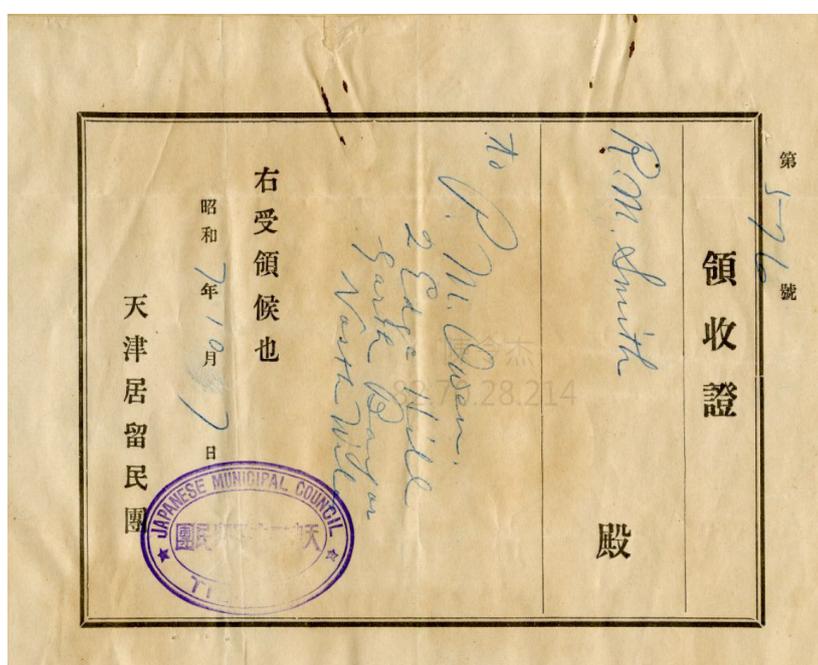


Figure 3.2: A Japanese registered mail receipt issued by the Tianjin Japanese Residents' Association on 7 October 1932. It was part of the 'evidence' collected by the CPS to prove that the Association had 'illegally' set up a registered mail service. Source: 020-010106-0018, AH.

⁹⁶ Qingdao City Mayor to Premier Telegram, 27 July 1932, 020-010106-0018, AH.

⁹⁷ Démarche Draft to Japanese Chargé d'affaires, 3 August 1932, 020-010106-0018, AH.

⁹⁸ The Qingdao Post Office Report to Shandong Postal Administration, no. 1585/1906, 26 July 1932, 020-010106-0018, AH.

⁹⁹ MOC to MOFA Confidential Letter, no. 872, 30 September 1932, 020-010106-0018, AH.

¹⁰⁰ MOC to MOFA Confidential Letter, no. 78, 14 October 1932, 020-010106-0018, AH.

From the Chinese government's perspective, these loopholes were caused by the effects of the Sino-Japanese disputes and the postal blockade. The Chinese government repeatedly protested through diplomatic channels to the Japanese Embassy, claiming that Japan's postal services had violated China's sovereignty of postal administration, but these efforts were hopeless.¹⁰¹ At the end of 1932, the Hebei Postal Administration reported that they had observed that the Tianjin Japanese Residents' Association collected mail and put them in a large envelope with China's stamps addressed to Dalian Japan's Post Office via the Chinese Post Office. The mail was usually sent to the Chinese Post Office based on Dairen Kisen K.K.'s steamers departure time and presumed to be forwarded to Manchuria (Figure 3.3).¹⁰² At that time, Dairen Kisen K.K. was the only company which ran a route between Tianjin and Dalian. In April 1934, there were still reports that the Dairen Kisen K.K. secretly transported mail and parcels between Qingdao and Dalian.¹⁰³ These cases show that the blockade did not cover absolutely every corner of China, even if the Chinese government repeatedly claimed that it had national 'sovereignty' over postal administration in Chinese territories. When postal services involved foreign affairs, especially sensitive Sino-Japanese relations, the issue could become more complicated. More importantly, interregional and even international postal communication had become an indispensable part of people's daily life at that time, and postal demand was not easy to be blocked entirely. A route was impassable, but alternative routes were found.

¹⁰¹ Démarche Draft to Japanese Chargé d'affaires, 4 August 1932; to Japanese Embassy, 23 August 1932; to Japanese Minister, 20 October 1932, 020-010106-0018, AH.

¹⁰² MOC to MOFA Confidential Letter, no. 75, 24 January 1933, 020-010106-0018, AH.

¹⁰³ 'Qingshi Dalian qichuan huishe mimi shoufa Dongbei youjian' 青市大連汽船會社秘密收發東北郵件 (Dairen Kisen K.K. Secretly Transports Mail to and from the Northeast in Qingdao), *Shenbao*, 4 April 1934, 8.

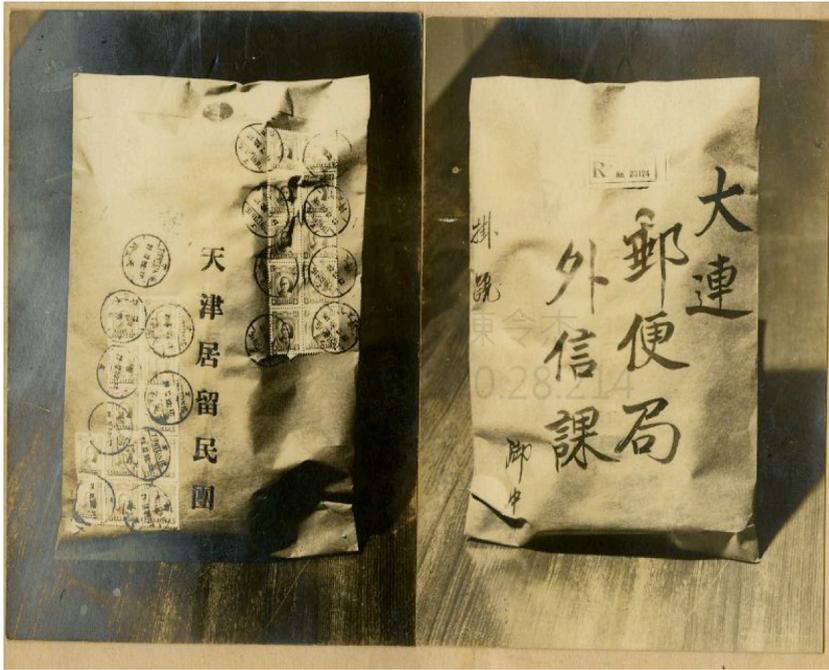


Figure 3.3: The Tianjin Japanese Residents' Association's collected mail sent to the Dalian Japanese Post Office via the Chinese Postal Service in December 1932. Source: 020-010106-0018, AH.

In addition to international postal delivery, the CPS postal connection between Nationalist China and Manchuria after the postal withdrawal was, however, not completely interrupted. As previously mentioned, the CPS retained some post offices situated in the Nationalist-controlled areas in Manchuria. For instance, sending mail to and from the SMR Zone was never included from the postal ban of the Nanjing government. Although Nanjing did not recognise Manchukuo, it retained diplomatic relations with Japan and still recognised the 1922 Sino-Japanese postal agreements, which established the postal exchange procedures between the two countries and shelved the issue of Japan's post offices in the SMR Zone.¹⁰⁴ As a result, the international mail exchange between the CPS and Japan's Post

¹⁰⁴ 'Nanmanqu youdi zishi jiwei fengsuo' 南滿區郵遞自始即未封鎖 (Postal Services in South Manchuria Have Not Been Blocked since the Beginning), *Shenbao*, 11 August 1932, 8.

Offices in the SMR Zone continued to work based on the agreements. According to *Shenbao*, the blockade strategy was confusing and caused the CPS trouble. On 1 September 1932, a news report quoted the Shanghai Post Office's explanation of the 'change' of the policy to a limited delivery in the SMR Zone. The Post Office claimed that it was misunderstood and clarified its blockade policy had not changed. It reiterated that postal services between the SMR Zone and several delivery areas controlled by the Nationalist government in Manchuria remained. However, if the mail was initially sent from the SMR Zone or Manchukuo, insufficient postage and a fine would be applied. If its envelope had Manchukuo's postage stamps and postmarks with the era name of the Manchukuo Emperor, a warning to disregard these 'fake' national symbols would be added.¹⁰⁵

Nonetheless, the blockade still impacted international postal communication via the TSR across Eurasia, which aroused concern in other affected countries. Although the LN and most countries did not recognise Manchukuo as a legal sovereign state and Japan withdrew from the LN as a response to international sanctions on 27 March 1933,¹⁰⁶ it did not effectively obstruct these countries from transiting their mail via Manchukuo connecting the TSR, which was the fastest route at that time. The British Empire was one of those countries because it needed the route to connect with its Asian colonies. Therefore, the problem was that Manchukuo asked Britain to pay postage at the rate of the UPU Conventions, but how an

¹⁰⁵ 'Biangeng Dongbei youjian jidifa' 變更東北郵件寄遞法 (Amendment of Northeast Postal Regulations), *Shenbao*, 1932.9.1, p.15; 'Dongbei youjian jidi banfa bingwei biangeng' 東北郵件寄遞辦法並未變更 (Northeast Postal Regulations Have Not Changed), *Shenbao*, 3 September 1932, 14.

¹⁰⁶ For the English version of the declaration of Japan's withdrawal from the LN, see 'Tsūkoku bun'an 通告文案' (The Draft of Declaration), attached in *The Report of the Commission of Enquiry of the League of Nations*, D327.51 89710, SOAS Library. 'Kokusai renmei dattai shōsho' 國際聯盟脫退詔書 (Rescript on Japan Withdrawal from the League of Nations), *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, 28 March 1933, evening, 1. 'Guolian xuanshi buchengren weizuzhi' 國聯宣示不承認偽組織 (League of Nations Announces Not to Recognise the Manchurian Regime), *Shenbao*, 11 November 1933, 6.

unrecognised country could charge postage by the UPU regulations remained unclear.¹⁰⁷ Although the Nanjing government wanted to obstruct Manchukuo's postal service entirely and sought alternative solutions for Asia-Europe postal transport, it understood that railway transport was unreplaceable. In March 1934, Zhu Jiahua 朱家驊 (1893–1963), the Minister of Communications of China, reported that European countries did not follow the rules of the UPU to suspend mail transport via Manchuria to Asia because every country's postal service had the right to select the most effective route. On the other hand, the CPS had set alternative solutions by shipping, but they were more time consuming and caused complaints. The MOC proposed to rebuild the Zhangjiakou-Ulaanbaatar vehicle transport route connecting the TSR just at the beginning of the withdrawal, but the proposal would involve negotiations with the Soviet Union, and the Nanjing government also had no budget. Next, an air transport line from Shanghai to Xinjiang to connect to the TSR was proposed. Although the negotiation with the Soviet Union was completed, Xinjiang was involved in turbulence. Meanwhile, trans-continental Asia-Europe air transport was too expensive. This made it unaffordable for ordinary people who depended on much cheaper mail postage. In addition, foreign residents and foreign chambers of commerce in Shanghai petitioned the Nanjing government to recover the postal transport with Manchuria since the blockade completely affected the communications their livelihoods depended on.¹⁰⁸ In these circumstances, the Nanjing government did not have too many choices. Therefore, it had to partially compromise and set a bottom line: Manchukuo could not be recognised as a country by the LN, but other countries transporting mail related to public demand through Manchukuo might be tolerated.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ The British government's letters to the LN about the postage issue and correspondence with Manchukuo and the Chinese diplomatic mission's reports and telegraphs, see 020-010106-004, AH.

¹⁰⁸ Zhu Jiahua's report, 1934.3.27, see Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 177–178.

¹⁰⁹ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 171–182. FO 676/138, TNA.

The LN investigation was concluded in May 1934. Manchukuo was not allowed to apply the UPU conventions; however, in order to address the resumption of international postal transit through Manchuria, every national postal service became regarded as a non-governmental organisation to avoid the dispute of 'postal sovereignty.' The LN investigation allowed organisation-to-organisation relations instead of state-to-state or government-to-government relations so that the LN member countries' Post Offices could have relations with Manchukuo's Post Office for the purpose of international postal transport and exchange.¹¹⁰ This solution looks like it contradicted the meaning of 'national' postal services. However, it precisely illustrates the modernity of the postal service did not only focus on the state's monopoly and the exclusivity of 'postal sovereignty' that every Chinese government claimed to protect. It was a global network connecting and involving all national postal agencies to ensure unimpeded and efficient postal service for everyone globally. Even though in legal terms it was murky, maintaining the international postal service smoothly and accessibly had a priority, and was the responsibility and concern of all countries.

Not only international postal transport but also the Nanjing government ultimately compromised to recover postal communication from the beginning of 1935. In fact, China's Minister Zhu Jiahua admitted that it would have been extremely difficult to ban 'mail smuggling' if the blockade continued.¹¹¹ Whether foreign residents or local people, they found ways to break through the postal blockade. More serious was the CPS's loss in revenue under such circumstances. In addition, the war was continuing in north China after the

¹¹⁰ Before the conclusion, V. K. Wellington Koo 顧維鈞 (1888–1985), the Representative of the Chinese Mission to LN, had telegraphed the draft to Nanjing in advance. See Dr Koo to Waichiaopu Nanking telegraph no. 3, 14 May 1934, 020-010106-0004, AH. 'Guolian guwenhui jue ding Weiman youyun san yuanze' 國聯顧問會決定偽滿郵運三原則 (Advisory Committee of the League of Nations Decides on the Three Principles of Manchukuo Postal Transportation), *Shenbao*, 18 May 1934, 3.

¹¹¹ Zhu Jiahua's report, 1934.3.27, 177–178.

Incident, and the Japanese Army had demanded that one of the conditions for a ceasefire was the recovery of postal communications — a demand first voiced in November 1933.¹¹² The pressure on the Nanjing government was getting heavier. By 1934, the LN conclusion confirmed that Manchukuo could not operate a national postal service as a member state of the UPU, but it allowed individual countries to make an agreement with Manchukuo's postal authority for international postal services. It opened doors for the Nanjing government to seek feasible solutions.

The negotiations between the CPS and the Japanese Army started on 29 September 1934 and led to an understanding on 14 December 1934. According to the final conclusion, both sides established exchange agencies in Shanhaiguan and Gubeikou 古北口. Because the Chinese government insisted on not recognising Manchukuo, Manchukuo had to issue special types of postage stamps which could not show postmark of Manzhouguo 滿洲國 and Manzhou 滿洲 for mail sent to Nanjing-controlled areas. Whether in Chinese characters or Western languages, Manchukuo's postmarks must have used the Western calendar and avoided showing Manchukuo's era name. The Tianjin, Beiping, Jinan, Qingdao, and Shanghai Post Offices of the CPS were in charge of checking the marks and erasing any unaccepted stamps and postmarks. Apart from that, transport by railway and postal delivery could resume as before the blockade.¹¹³ The crisis of the postal blockade ultimately ended, and postal transport with Manchuria reopened on 10 January 1935.¹¹⁴

¹¹² 'Gangcun feidi Ping Huabei waijiao kaizhan' 岡村飛抵平華北外交開展 (Okamura Yasuji Arrived in Beiping, North China's Diplomacy Began), *Shenbao*, 7 November 1933, 3.

¹¹³ For the negotiation and the agreements, see 020-010106-0005, AH. Also see Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 165–168. 'Dongbei tongyou xieding neirong yaodian' 東北通郵協定內容要點 (Summary of the Agreement of Northeast Postal Communication), *Shenbao*, 1 January 1935, 17.

¹¹⁴ 'Quanguo youju jinriqi shouji Dongbei youjian' 全國郵局今日起收寄東北郵件 (All Post Offices across the Country Start Accepting and Sending Mail from Northeast Today), *Shenbao*, 10 January 1935, 10. 'Guan neiwai youdi huifu' 關內外郵遞恢復 (Resumption of Postal Transport between Inside and Outside of Shanhaiguan),

From the perspective of the CPS, as Liu Chenghan claimed, the postal resumption negotiations were forced by the Japanese Army. He believed that it was the consequence of the successful postal blockade, which isolated Manchuria and reduced its importance as a transport hub. The Japanese Army's intention was to re-establish Manchuria's unique status as the 'new country' (Manchukuo) and help Manchukuo to become recognised by the international postal exchange.¹¹⁵ It could be true that Manchukuo urgently needed international recognition, but the Japanese Army's ambition was not enough to clarify why the Nanjing government agreed to sit at the table for negotiation. As discussed earlier, the fact is that the blockade did not entirely isolate Manchukuo. The solution was a compromise that Nanjing had to make.

Yu Xianglin 余翔麟, the principal negotiator of the CPS and the Postal Commissioner of Shanxi, summed up the postal recovery result accurately:

the postal recovery of Manchuria is purely for people's interests. After the Northeast Incident [Mukden Incident], postal delivery crossing the Great Wall was blocked; our compatriots [tongbao 同胞] outside of the Great Wall were situated in an isolated region and could not communicate with families and friends inside the Great Wall. In addition, merchants in the north-east were engaged in financial transactions, all transferred by the Post Office. They felt not only inconvenienced but also lost vast sums after the blockade. Therefore, considering the situation and conditions, [we] had to recover the [service] for the nation's economy and the welfare of the people I participated in [the

Shenbao, 11 January 1935, 3.

¹¹⁵ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 149–150.

negotiations], so I am deeply aware that this is only for the convenience of the people without other intentions.¹¹⁶

The 'intention' seems to refer to the recognition of Manchukuo, which the Nanjing government avoided mentioning as much as possible. Nonetheless, it once again showed that the public had been deeply invested in the postal institution, regarded as an efficient national service, connected internationally. The blockade was indeed a political strategy against Japan's invasion and Manchukuo's establishment. However, it was temporary and difficult to maintain because it conflicted with the meaning of the 'national' postal service, which was supposed to be a convenient, reliable, and efficient state-owned enterprise. Thus, the state might have protected its territorial integrity and national prestige, yet the blockade eventually affected people accustomed to the state-guaranteed postal service.

5. Conclusion

The Mukden Incident and the subsequent establishment of Manchukuo led to a profound crisis of postal services with an impact on China and international postal communication. The chapter reviewed the unique circumstances of Manchuria as an important postal transit hub and main railway route between Asia and Europe and illustrated the complexity of the transnational socio-political situation in Manchuria, which made the postal and transport crisis even more dramatic after the Incident.

At the very beginning, the Japanese Army did not immediately take control of the postal service in Manchuria. The CPS initially attempted to control the service with a neutral

¹¹⁶ 'Chuguan youjian rizeng. Yu Xianglin tan tongyou yiyi' 出關郵件日增 余翔麟談通郵意義 (Increasing Number of Mail Sent to Manchuria; Yu Xianglin Talks about the Meaning of Postal Communication), *Shenbao*, 13 January 1935, 3.

postal system managed by foreign postal commissioners as it did during the warlord era. However, the situation was different from the 1920s, as the north-east was practically controlled by a foreign country, and it no longer belonged to the same country, even in the name, after Manchukuo was established. The CPS had little room to continue its business under the name of one nation postal service.

Nevertheless, Nanjing's decision of the postal withdrawal and blockade was made not only due to no more space for the CPS but also as a strategy to increase international attention. It eventually became an international issue, with the foreign countries' concern for global mail transport, while for the Nanjing government, the postal service became an example par excellence for its view of Manchukuo as a 'fake regime' that invaded China's sovereignty. The pressure of international postal transportation meant that the government had to compromise. Meanwhile, the need for postal communication between both sides of the Great Wall also pressed the Nanjing government to respond to postal resumption petitions and various types of postal smuggling. The Nanjing government's final compromise shows that although the national postal service was an important state monopoly and supposed to be 'one country, one system' since the late nineteenth century, the priority of a modern national postal service was to provide efficient communication services and share the responsibility to ensure the functioning of the international postal network.

In the dispute, China ended up losing its postal administration in Manchuria, but on the other hand, the event strengthened China's sense of *youquan* and further conceptualised it as postal sovereignty instead of merely 'administration'. This could be seen in the series of countermeasures taken by the Nanjing government. Intriguingly, the development was not quite in line with Guomindang's original nationalist policy of excluding foreign management

of the CPS. The foreign staff, who were originally regarded as infringing on China's *youquan*, became loyalists who helped China protect *youquan* in the CPS's narrative. Foreign staff's role would be more significant during the Second Sino-Japanese War, as discussed in the next chapters.

Chapter 4: The Chinese Postal Service in the Second Sino-Japanese War: Maintenance and ‘Collaboration’

The Second Sino-Japanese War between 1937 and 1945 was the most severe challenge to the CPS ever since its establishment in 1896. The War started with the Lugou Bridge Incident on 7 July 1937, also known as the Double-seven Incident, and ended with Japan’s unconditional surrender in August 1945. The war had a comprehensive impact on many aspects of life in China, including postal communication.

Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that the CPS was still able to maintain its service even across different regimes and war zones during this difficult time. For instance, Feng Zikai 豐子愷 (1898–1975), a cartoonist and writer, frequently used the postal service to maintain his social network within the Chinese circle of literature and art and published his works in Shanghai when he evacuated to Guangxi at the beginning of the war. He recorded his correspondence in a diary. One of the diary entries described 5 March 1939, when leaving Liangjiang for Yishan, he first went to the city centre of Guilin for a transfer, where he stopped by a Post Office on the way to collect two letters. One was sent by his painting student Bao Huihe 鮑慧和 who informed him of his arrival in Guilin; another was sent by Feng’s friend Xia Mianzun 夏丐尊 (1886–1946) from Shanghai, who forwarded a letter by Hong Yi’s 弘一 (the Dharma name of Li Shutong 李叔同, 1880–1942) from Zhangzhou.¹ Although the diary was probably written with the intention to publish, it reveals how Feng used the postal service to maintain his social network. In the meantime, his famous illustration of Lu Xun’s novel,

¹ Feng Zikai, *Jiaoshi riji*, 95.

Manhua Ah-Q Zhengzhuan 漫畫阿 Q 正傳 (The True Story of Ah Q)² was redrawn during his evacuation and published by the Kaiming Book Company 開明書局 in Shanghai in 1939.³ The entire process of sending his work for publication relied on the postal service.

People's experiences with communication might have varied during wartime, but they all relied heavily on postal communications, especially when separated from relatives and friends. At the beginning of the war, Du Runping, for example, a secondary-school student in Zhutang 祝塘, Jiangyin 江陰, escaped from her hometown with her family to Changsha. In 1938, her family moved back to Zhutang, then occupied by Japan, while she stayed alone in Hunan as a military nurse, and later moved to Guiyang to finish her secondary education in 1939.⁴ She was separated from her family throughout the war but maintained regular correspondence. She received her father's letters from her Japanese-occupied hometown almost every week.⁵ In addition, her father used to enclose five cents, the cost of an ordinary domestic letter,⁶ or one dollar postage stamp in the letter to show his love in the form of this small sponsorship and the expectation of her reply.⁷ Although her letters were often opened either for censorship or theft,⁸ her wartime correspondence confirmed the postal service worked between Guizhou, controlled by the Nationalist government, and the Japanese-

² This is an illustrated version of Lu Xun's (1881–1936) novella published in the 1920s. For an English translation, see Xianyi Yang and Gladys Yang, trans., *The True Story of Ah Q* (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 2002).

³ Feng Zikai, *Manhua Ah-Q Zhengzhuan* 漫畫阿 Q 正傳 (The True Story of Ah Q) (Shanghai: Kaiming Shuju, 1939, collected by National Central Library of Taiwan, NCL-002855503), preface Feng Zikai, *Jiaoshi riji*, 106. Feng Zikai, *Jiaoshi riji*, 115, 129.

⁴ Wang Zhenghua, 'Guanshan wanli qing: jiashu zhong di zhanshi shenghuo, 1937–1945' (Far Apart but Closer Hearts: Life during the War in Family Letters), *Guoshiguan xueshu jikan* 17 (September 2008), 91.

⁵ 15 March 1939, *Du Runping zhanshi riji 1939* (Wartime Dairies of Du Runping) (Taipei: Kaiyuan shuju, 2020), 17.

⁶ Chunghwa Post Co., Ltd. *Stamp Treasure*.

https://www.post.gov.tw/post/internet/W_stamphouse/index.jsp?ID=2803&type=2804&file_name=A025&stamp_cat_standard=%&stamp_subcat_name=%&stamp_year=1918v1937&keyword=%, accessed 11 August 2021.

⁷ 26 April and 17 July 1939, *Du Runping zhanshi riji 1939*, 31–32, 64.

⁸ 3 November 1939, *Du Runping zhanshi riji 1939*, 121.

occupied Jiangyin. Meanwhile, the postage stamps, as one of the most significant symbols of the 'national' post service, could be used between the Japanese-occupied areas and the Chinese areas (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1: The five-cents stamp issued by the CPS in 1939 for an ordinary domestic letter. Source: 'Def 027 Dr. Sun Yat-sen Issue, 2nd Hongkong Chung Hwa Print (1939),' Chunghwa Post Co., Ltd, Stamps Treasure, accessed 11 August 2021 https://www.post.gov.tw/post/internet/W_stamphouse/index_en.jsp?ID=2807&type=2808&file_name=A027&stamp_cat_standard=%&stamp_subcat_name=%&stamp_year=1938v1957&keyword=%.

The above cases raise questions about the conditions that made it possible for postal communication to be available despite the challenges of the Sino-Japanese War. Why and how was the CPS able to maintain its business and help the Chinese people and foreign residents to keep in communication with separated relatives and friends? What was the significance of the postal service to China during the war? How and why it functioned beyond the boundaries of hostile regimes? I will first review the immediate effects of the outbreak of the war on the CPS and how it responded to it based on the information from the CPS's records. Second, in order to continue the service in the Japanese-occupied areas, the CPS reorganised its structure and redeployed foreign staff to lead the most difficult postal districts. I will look at

the case of the Shanghai Post Office, which was assigned as a representative office of the DG of the CPS in Shanghai when the Nationalist government moved to Chongqing and the DG relocated to Kunming after the war broke out, and discuss how it directed the postal service in the middle and lower Yangtze River regions while collaborating with the regimes supporting the Japanese occupation. Third, I will attempt to demonstrate how the CPS continued its collaborative relations with Wang Jingwei's regime after it was established in 1940 and why this changed after 1942.

The operation of the postal service in wartime was rather complicated. It involved hidden collaborations, compromises, and the calculations of the foreign/enemy relations behind the accessible postal communication. Although the Nationalist government strengthened its control over the CPS and reduced foreign employees' influence from 1927 onwards, it reused higher-rank foreign, and even Japanese, staff to help this complex wartime operation going and deal with complex affairs after the Sino-Japanese War began. In addition, it eventually used the Shanghai Post Office's location and extraterritorial status to play a significant role in maintaining the links between the occupied areas and the rear areas. I will suggest that, in fact, the CPS operated as an independent agency, which effectively maintained postal communications in China — across the different regimes — almost without interruption during the war.

1. Challenges to the Postal Service at the Beginning of the War

'A Glorious Chapter of the History of Chinese Post Office'⁹

For the CPS, the 1937–1938 period was not easy due to the beginning of the war; according

⁹ *Annual Report, 1937–1938*, 2.

to the *Annual Report, 1937–1938*:

In the wake of the Lukowkiao Incident (the Lugou Bridge Incident, also the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in the Western world), hostilities took place in Woosung and Shanghai, and gradually extended to Chahar, Suiyuan, Shansi (Shanxi), Shantung (Shandong), Kiangsu (Jiangsu), Chekiang (Zhejiang), Honan, and Anhwei (Anhui), and, in the 27th Fiscal Year, to Hupeh (Hubei), Kwangtung (Guangdong), Kiangsi (Jiangxi), Fukien (Fujian), and North Hunan.¹⁰

The excerpt shows that the war speedily spread to most areas of China, and ‘the tide of war had serious repercussions upon the Service;’ the war also caused a reduction in its revenues and shrinkage of its market.¹¹

The centre of China’s postal transport was Shanghai, where the highest volume of mail in the country was handled.¹² Although the initial battles took place in northern China, just after the Incident on 7 July 1937, the transport between Shanghai and Beiping, formerly Beijing before the establishment of the new capital Nanjing in 1927, was suspended. Many flights and trains were cancelled or were only able to approach Tianjin. The CPS’s Shanghai Post Office, however, continued to operate and could receive mail, including express mail and airmail, while it was expected that mail to Beiping would be delayed due to the suspension of air traffic.¹³ In addition, the increasing risk of aerial transport also affected the international airmail service, especially that from Shanghai to New York, which led to customer

¹⁰ *Annual Report, 1937–1938*, 1.

¹¹ *Annual Report, 1937–1938*, 1.

¹² *Annual Report, 1937–1938*, Appendix D. to Appendix K., 26–41.

¹³ ‘Hu-Ping jiaotong zhanzhi Tianjin’ 滬平交通暫止天津 (The Destination from Shanghai to Beiping is Changed to Tianjin), *Shenbao*, 13 July 1937, 13.

complaints.¹⁴ In order to avoid military operations and Japan's forced postal censorship in Hebei, the delivery route had to take a detour, which affected the CPS's operation and efficiency in the north.¹⁵ By the end of July, Shanghai's *Shenbao* predicted that the postal transport from Shanghai to Beiping and Tianjin was likely to be interrupted if the situation became worse.¹⁶

After a military engagement in north China, some post offices in the occupied areas were taken over by Japan. In order to maintain the service, the CPS learnt from previous experiences during the warlord era. Its foreign staff were strategically sent to the war zone so as to show the neutral status of the postal service and keep the institution functioning in the occupied areas. On 24 July 1937, a British postal staff was appointed to be the Hebei Postal Commissioner in Tianjin. His main task was to negotiate with the Japanese Army so that the Japanese would not interfere with the postal business.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Japanese Army still broke into the Tianjin Post Office on 30 July, which was followed by an interruption of the postal routes. Mail items sent from other places by rail were all delivered to neighbouring towns.¹⁸ Subsequently, the Hebei Postal Administration was taken over by the Japanese Army, and many branch offices had to suspend their business. It was said that the Japanese Army forced postal staff to open the treasury, and some mail items were opened and/or destroyed. The operation of the postal service in Hebei, especially in Tianjin, was extremely challenged.¹⁹

¹⁴ 'Air Mail Delays,' *The North-China Herald*, 21 July 1937, 85.

¹⁵ 'Zhaochang toudi' 照常投遞 (Delivery as Usual), *Shenbao*, 22 July 1937, 5; W. Lewisohn, 'Japanese to Establish Independent Hopei,' *The North-China Herald*, 28 July 1937, 136.

¹⁶ 'Jiaotong zhongduan yiban' 交通中斷一斑 (Interruption of Transport), *Shenbao*, 31 July 1937, 11.

¹⁷ 'Jin youjuchang' 津郵局長 (Tianjin Postal Master), *Shenbao*, 25 July 1937, 4.

¹⁸ 'Jin youju zao Rijun pohuai' 津郵局遭日軍破壞 (Japanese Army Damaged the Tianjin Post Office), *Shenbao*, 25 July 1937, 15.

¹⁹ 'Ji youwuju reng beizhan' 冀郵務局仍被佔 (Hebei Post Office Still Occupied), *Shenbao*, 3 August 1937, 3. 'Tianjin' 天津 (Tianjin), *Shenbao*, 10 August 1937, 3.

On 13 August, Shanghai then became Japan's next military target, and north Shanghai and Hongkou 虹口 became involved in the engagement. Many postal branches there had to be closed and evacuated, and postal delivery routes had to be changed to avoid going through the war zones. Basic postal service was still maintained in some areas, and in the International Settlement, outside the war zone.²⁰

These sudden military assaults, and later the inevitable war, severely affected the revenue receipts of the CPS. In fact, the CPS had experienced declining revenues due to the withdrawal from Manchuria after 1932 and the blockade of postal transport with Manchuria until 1935. After the postal resumption, its operation and revenue both quickly recovered. However, the Second Sino-Japanese War again had a serious impact on the CPS from 1937 onwards. According to *the Annual Report, 1937–1938*, although the CPS made efforts to reduce expenditure and introduce a retrenchment policy, 'the Service could not escape the pinch of this adversity because transportation charges for mail throughout the country increased very considerably, as did the cost of postal supplies.'²¹

In addition, according to the CPS's internal statistics, it lost 35 million dollars' worth of assets, including buildings, equipment, postal vehicles, postage stamps, and operating losses in the war zones, and unexpected expenditures caused by casualties and death pensions, as well as air defence facilities.²² The CPS's total receipts in the fiscal year 1936, before the war, were 49.6 million Chinese dollars, in comparison with 37 million in 1937 — Its income shrank significantly by twenty-five per cent.²³

²⁰ 'Chetui zhanqu youju' 撤退戰區郵局 (Post Offices in War Zones Retreat), *Shenbao*, 15 August 1937, 6.

²¹ *Annual Report, 1937–1938*, 1.

²² 137(1)5775, SHAC.

²³ *Annual Report, 1937–1938*, 1.

The most serious impact on the CPS was related to the safety of its employees. According to a CPS internal document, 151 postal employees died between July 1937 and June 1938, including eighteen mid- to high-ranking staff. Most of the cases were related to lower-ranking workers who were killed by shelling, air raids, and attacks from hostile forces while on duty. The CPS listed 139 cases of ‘heroic deeds’ of wounded and killed employees who were on duty during the first year of the war. Eighteen of them were staff in the Nanjing Post Office who were killed when the Japanese Army progressed to Nanjing, the Chinese capital, in December 1937. On this sad list, most victims were very low-level workers, such as carriers, coolies, gate guards (*menyi* 門役), drivers, and even temporary coolies. Many of them stayed in the Post Offices overnight in order to guard the postal buildings, property, and mail when the city was attacked.

In addition to Nanjing, many other cases occurred in every corner of the war zone. On 5 December 1937, Deng Zhangchun 鄧長春, a boatman in the Anhui Postal District, was killed by shelling as he carried mail from the Wuhu Post Office to a ship belonging to the Teh Hu Steamship Company 德和輪船公司.²⁴ On 4 July 1939, Hua Kesheng 華克繩, a post carrier in the Jiangxi Postal District who was escorting mail on a train, was wounded as a result of an air raid when he tried to save postal bags. Higher-ranking staff were no exception. Deng Hongsheng 鄧鴻生, the Postmaster of Huaiyin 淮陰, retreated to a rural area but was wounded by the Japanese police when he was asked to reopen the Post Office. An air raid destroyed the Pengze (彭澤) Post Office and injured the Postmaster as he was making efforts to save postal funds from the resulting rubble heap.²⁵

²⁴ For the history of the Hu Steamship, see <https://industrialhistoryhk.org/teh-hu-steamship-德和輪船公司/>, accessed 15 August 2019.

²⁵ 137(1)5775, SHAC.

This damage report was drafted in handwriting after two years of the war, and it was saved in an internal CPS file during wartime. The CPS attempted to review their serious losses while emphasising that its employees did not give up on carrying out the service in occupied areas and also actively expanding its business to support the south-western area of the Chinese home front. The list of victims and their stories — mostly just one sentence per person in a CPS's internal document — seems to be unknown to the public, and it has never been mentioned in any of the CPS's publications. In their *Annual Report*, their contribution during the first two years of the war is only mentioned in a general way: 'they stayed at their posts in many dangerous spots and conducted their duties loyally and energetically, in spite of the threats to their safety and the hardship confronting them.'²⁶ However, this implies that, when we look at postal communication in wartime, these priceless losses of life were one of the reasons why the postal service could have been maintained.

Maintenance

Despite the challenges outlined above, the postal service continued operating during this critical period. According to the CPS's records, it maintained the day-to-day service and the whole system, and its employees also showed their willpower to keep up the service. As in the case of the Huaiyin Postmaster, Deng Hongsheng, mentioned above, the Post Office was relocated to a rural area, and he set up a temporary office in a temple called Guanghuisi 廣慧寺²⁷ to keep the service going. When a town or city centre became occupied in the military campaign, the Post Office was evacuated to neighbouring villages and carried on its business. The Post Office might have moved back once the campaign was over when the area was safe,

²⁶ *Annual Report, 1937–1938*, 1.

²⁷ *Annual Report, 1937–1938*, 1

and the residents returned home.

The *Annual Report* also mentioned that the postal establishments in the war zones 'did their utmost to carry on until the local situation rendered this impossible.' The CPS's local offices were open to the very last minute until they were closed or retreated to safer areas.²⁸ This operational policy was likely the main reason why hundreds of postal employees died and were wounded during the war. The CPS also admitted that many of them were killed when it was too late to escape, and they insisted on staying until the end. For those who had been evacuated, as soon as the situation improved and people returned to their hometowns, the Post Offices were moved back and resumed their business, even if the war continued.²⁹

The Post Offices were always on the front line and moved back and forth between evacuation and relocation. They were prepared to resume operations or to move at any time, especially in guerrilla warfare areas:

Where war operations caused inland offices to lose connexion [connection] with their Controlling Offices, they were either transferred to the control of the Head Office of a neighbouring District or were subordinated to a specially created contributing centre, conveniently situated, which supplied them with stamps and funds.³⁰

Keeping the service functioning was the highest-priority task for the CPS, even though the war destroyed it ruthlessly. The CPS also made efforts to develop alternative postal routes, whether these were for domestic or international postal communication. The network of

²⁸ *Annual Report, 1937–1938, 1.*

²⁹ *Annual Report, 1937–1938, 1*

³⁰ *Annual Report, 1937–1938, 1*

postal communications was essentially based on the thorough arrangement of transport, which included land, water, and air routes. In local inland areas, postal employees were sent to search for new land routes and organise postal transport on foot (*hanban* 旱班) in order to replace the original lines that had been interrupted and avoid the war zones by any possible transport means.³¹ In addition, new overland and waterway transport routes were established, so for any route that was interrupted, mail could be transited by alternative ways.³²

It is worth noting that the CPS not only resumed its service in the Nationalist-controlled areas but was also likely to re-establish its offices in hostile places. After two years of war, Beiping, Tianjin, Shanxi, Shandong, Jiangsu, Anhui, Henan, Jiangxi and Hubei had been occupied by Japan, but the CPS was able to resume its Post Offices' services in some locations in these areas.³³ These efforts reflect an example of collaboration and that despite the occupation, the Japanese authorities lacked resources to establish a civil communication service. The public postal communication needs were not a priority for the occupiers, so the original postal system, the CPS, could resume regular service.

The CPS claimed that the crucial reason for resuming the service in the Japanese-occupied areas was to protect the 'interests of the public — both Chinese and foreign.'³⁴ A CPS internal document more clearly points out that the service was needed by both refugees who had moved back and friendly foreigners to contact their home countries.³⁵ The CPS seemed to feel conscientious about protecting its reputation in the international community. This was related to the background of the CPS's development, which has been discussed in

³¹ 137(1)5775, SHAC.

³² *Annual Report, 1937–1938*, 1–2.

³³ 137(1)5775, SHAC.

³⁴ *Annual Report, 1937–1938*, 1–2.

³⁵ 137(1)5775, SHAC.

previous chapters.

Moreover, the CPS saw itself as a 'national' postal service, which still served the recognised Chinese government, the Nationalist government, while the government also relied on the postal network, which was linked with a vast war zone, in order to keep up the circulation of intelligence. The CPS expanded its business in south-west China, to where the Nationalist government and a large number of refugees had moved. It was a development project that was used to strengthen the Chinese home front in the south-west. The number of postal delivery routes, postal branch offices, agencies, and postboxes increased rapidly in the south-west.³⁶ *Kuaiyou daidian* 快郵代電 (an express letter replacing the telegraph) became a common type of official document, and these can often be seen in archives relating to the war period. This dedicated service, which was for official use only and operated throughout those areas that had no telegraph services, was faster than mere telegraphic transmission. The CPS also arranged many secret routes which both crossed and connected with the occupied areas. According to Chen Jiyin, who moved to Chongqing and was in charge of the CPS's Confidential Mail Department (Yaomizu 要密組) at that time, the CPS installed several secret lines by using mountain roads and small trails to avoid the enemy and contact the occupied areas. Their role was particularly crucial for transmitting confidential information, or the so-called *yaomijian* 要密件 (secret items). Along these lines, the postal carriers needed to be disguised as ordinary people, and they took advantage of dark nights or early mornings in order to transmit the post. With the change in military operations, their routes could be adjusted at any time.³⁷ This service appeared to be entirely separate from the ordinary postal

³⁶ 137(1)5775, SHAC.

³⁷ Chen Jiyin, *Wode youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 356–357, 426–430.

service. However, it relied on each of the Post Offices being a delivery station and acting as a hub in order to retain security and efficiency. The significance of postal maintenance thus had a more practical function in wartime than merely serving the Chinese public, as well as foreigners.

2. The CPS's Headquarters in Kunming and the Lone Islet, Shanghai

After the Japanese occupied Shanghai, except for the Concessions, in November 1937, the city continued to function as the CPS's most important hub, regardless of how the war developed. Although neighbouring areas fell to Japan and its supporting regimes, the Shanghai Post Office (formally the Postal Administration of Shanghai) was controlled by the Nationalist government between 1937 and 1943. It played an extremely special role in ensuring that the service did not stop.

Wartime Shanghai has been widely studied,³⁸ especially the status of the International Settlement and the French Concession during wartime as a *gudao* 孤島 (lone islet), which

³⁸ Scholars studied *gudao* Shanghai from many different angles and topics. In *Wartime Shanghai*, edited by Wen-hsin Yeh, scholars not only review the complex political and social conditions in *gudao*, but also explore how different groups of people, including Westerners, Chinese, and Japanese, struggled to survive the war living in Shanghai. They noticed that for the purpose of survival, resistance and collaboration often coexisted; see Wen-hsin Yeh, ed., *Wartime Shanghai* (London: Routledge, 1998). Christian Henriot and Sun Huimin focused on the lives of refugees, who were originally residents but flocked to the International Settlement and the French Concession for asylum in order to escape the war. Henriot explored how people lived in refugee camps and left when the war eased up, while Sun applied geoinformation technology to analyse Chinese refugees' migration and the following housing crisis in Shanghai. Both of them mentioned that Shanghai was a special metropolis with unique living conditions and 'neutral' status to accommodate refugees, while refugees' different socioeconomic statuses affected their varying wartime experiences and living conditions. See Christian Henriot, 'Shanghai and the Experience of War: The Fate of Refugees,' *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 5:2 (2006): 215–245, and Sun Huimin, 'Kangzhan shiqi Shanghai de renkou qianxi yu zhufang weiji (Wartime Migration and Housing Crisis in Shanghai, 1937–1945),' *Xinshixue* 27:1 (March 2016): 57–120. Wen-hsin Yeh detailed *gudao* Shanghai and focused on the Sincere Department Store to discuss its workers' lives and the booming economy of wartime. See Wen-hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China 1843–1949* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 152–184. In addition, Isabella Jackson's work on colonialism and the Shanghai Municipal Council of the International Settlement focuses on the Council's role in maintaining social security and welfare and the struggle between the Japanese during wartime, see Isabella Jackson, *Shaping Modern Shanghai: Colonialism in China's Global City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), esp. 153–162.

made Shanghai a very special non-war zone and a protected area for refugees during between 1937 and 1943. The special status of the city ended in 1943, as the International Settlement became occupied by the Japanese in December 1941, while the French Concession came under Vichy France's control until being handed over to Wang Jingwei's government in 1943.³⁹ In the research on *gudao* Shanghai, postal communication is hardly mentioned.

Shanghai had been an important location for the CPS's business before the war. It was not only the domestic mail centre that processed the largest amount of mail in the country but was also a hub for international postal transit. Meanwhile, the international mail service was one of the main functions of a national post office, and foreign residents in China were important CPS customers. Because of the war, the postal service catering to those foreigners who stayed in China and lived in Shanghai was also affected. This was an impact of the war different from that on the CPS's domestic services, as can be seen in the Shanghai International Settlement and the French Concession's documents.

The CPS established good cooperation with the SMC of the International Settlement. The SMC valued its residents' rights in relation to postal services. As Isabella Jackson described, the SMC was led by the highest-ranking people of influential foreign firms with financial backgrounds and connections in Shanghai.⁴⁰ The transnational nature of colonialism, in Jackson's words,⁴¹ was manifested in the leadership of the SMC and the maintenance of the interests of those prominent figures living and doing business in Shanghai. This background

³⁹ For *gudao*'s English translation and definition, see Wen-hsin Yeh, 'prologue: Shanghai besieged, 1937–45', in *Wartime Shanghai*, 2–5. For the end of the International Settlement and British influences in Shanghai, see Robert Bickers, 'Settlers and Diplomats: The End of British Hegemony in the International Settlement, 1937–1945', in *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai under Japanese Occupation*, ed. Christian Henriot and Wen-hsin Yeh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 229–256; for the French Concession during the war and its end, see Christine Cornet, 'The Bumpy End of the French Concession and French Influence in Shanghai, 1937–1946', in *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun*, 257–276.

⁴⁰ Jackson, *Shaping Modern Shanghai*, 62–63.

⁴¹ Jackson, *Shaping Modern Shanghai*, 62–63.

made the convenience of postal communication a priority of the SMC.



Figure 4.2: Postage stamps issued by the Local Post of the SMC (上海工部局書信館), 1893–1896. Source: Sun Shaoying, ed., *Dalong youpiao yu Qingdai youshi* (The Large Dragon Stamps and the Postal History of the Qing Dynasty) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1989), 46.

The postal cooperation between the SMC and the CPS can be traced back to the very beginning of the IPS, the CPS’s predecessor. Before the IPS was opened in Shanghai in 1897, the SMC had issued its own postal stamps and established its own Post Office, called the Local Post (Shanghai gongbu shuxinguan 上海工部書信館), to deal with residents’ communication needs (Figure 4.2). Due to the establishment of the IPS as a state-owned monopoly, several steam-navigation companies, e.g. the China Merchants 招商局 and Jardine Matheson, informed the SMC that they were unable to carry the Local Post’s mail after the Chinese New Year on 2 February 1897.⁴² The SMC finally decided to hand over the Local Post business to

⁴² ‘Municipal Local Post Office Transfer to the Chinese Imperial Post Office 1897,’ SMA, U1-5-107, 1–4.

the IPS. This came into effect on 1 October 1897.⁴³

The Shanghai Post Office of the CPS was operated by and served foreign residents in the International Settlement. In 1924, a bright new building of the Shanghai District Head Office was completed on the north bank of Suzhou Creek, right next to the Sichuan Road Bridge, where it was located inside the Settlement, and it still stands there as a postal museum today (Figure 4.3).⁴⁴



Figure 4.3: Shanghai Head Post Office building in 1924 (top) and 2018 (bottom). Source: *Annual Report, 1924*, collected by SOAS Library; and author's photography taken on 11 March 2018.

⁴³ 'Municipal Local Post Office Transfer to the Chinese Imperial Post Office 1897,' SMA, U1-5-107, 32.

⁴⁴ *Annual Report, 1924*, 7

The location of the Head Office illustrates that not only were these foreign residents' potential major clients who needed and were familiar with the service for commercial and personal purposes, but also that the CPS's business relied on the SMC's protection in Shanghai in order to avoid the effects of the domestic turmoil. When the 1932 Shanghai War (the January 28th Incident) broke out just a few months after the Mukden Incident, the Japanese military advanced into Shanghai and attempted to occupy the Head Office building as their headquarters.⁴⁵ The postal services had to temporarily adjust their operation in Shanghai; however, the SMC sent the Shanghai Volunteer Corps (*wanguo shangtuan* 萬國商團, literally: the international commerce corps) to protect the area around the Head Office in order to ensure both the postal employees' safety and the undisturbed operation of the service.⁴⁶ As Jackson suggests, the SMC maintained its neutral stance, while the Volunteer Corps defended the Settlement's territories. Meanwhile, the SMC helped to supply food and fuel for the residents in the Settlement during the 1932 Shanghai War. Although Jackson believed that neutrality seems to be controversial and has had limited effects,⁴⁷ the protection of the Volunteer Corps of the postal service shows that postal communication and its services were regarded as being a vital necessity for foreign residents in Shanghai. Compared to the Japanese influence on the Settlement, the CPS became a rare case of a Chinese government-owned enterprise protected by the SMC in order to ensure its residents' fundamental rights and interests of postal communication.

The SMC also ensured that the postal service was not interrupted in the International Settlement in order to protect the communication rights of its residents. In May 1932, the two

⁴⁵ 'Youzhengju zuori zhaochang ba gong' 郵政局昨日照常辦公 (The Post Office Opened, as Usual, Yesterday), *Shenbao*, 31 January 1932, 6.

⁴⁶ 'Nuli huifu jiaotong' 努力恢復交通 (Making an Effort to Resume Transport), *Shenbao*, 2 February 1932, 4

⁴⁷ Jackson, *Shaping Modern Shanghai*, 156–157.

main postal unions in Shanghai launched a strike against the operating loss and the balancing budget policy that were proposed by the Nationalist MOC.⁴⁸ Foreign companies and the SMC learnt of the postal staff's intention to organise such a strike in advance, so they immediately prepared to respond if the postal service were to be suspended in Shanghai.⁴⁹ The SMC organised an emergency postal service for foreign residents: it set up an office in the SMC Administration Building, recruited postal service volunteers, including members of the British Army Postal Service and the Boy Scouts, and even introduced a coupon system to replace postage stamps to avoid 'international complications.' The strike started on the evening of Sunday, 22 May 1932, and the alternative post office opened on 24 May.⁵⁰

The records show that this was not the first time that the SMC had organised an emergency postal service. The 1932 emergency postal service was led by E. S. Wilkinson, who was the temporary Postmaster and had previous experience with emergency service in 1927 when postal employees went on strike in February and March to support Guomindang's Northern Expedition.⁵¹ Meanwhile, its operation was also based on the system that had been established in 1927 to ensure mail delivery from Shanghai to other foreign ports.⁵² Although the strike lasted only a few days, the emergency service illustrates that the SMC had the experience and capacity to immediately respond to issues relating to postal interruption in

⁴⁸ 'Gonggu youji juti fangan zhi liyou' 鞏固郵基具體方案之理由 (Reasons for the Execution Plan to Consolidate the Postal Foundation), *Shenbao*, 6 May 1932, 8–9; 'Youzi xin banfa liuyue yiri shixing' 郵資新辦法六月一日施行 (Implementing New Postage Rates on 1 June), *Shenbao*, 10 May 1932, 5; 'Quanguo yougong qunqi jiu you' 全國郵工群起救郵 (All Postal Workers Save the Postal Service Together), *Shenbao*, 6 May 1932, 12; 'Yougong jinchen dabagong' 郵工今晨大罷工 (Postal Workers on Strike This Morning), *Shenbao*, 22 May 1932, 2–4.

⁴⁹ Letter from Thomson and Co. and SMC Secretary's Reply, 19 May 1932, U1-14-6601, SMA.

⁵⁰ Municipal Notification No. 4237, 27 May 1932; 'Emergency Postal Service,' *Municipal Gazette*, 10 June 1932, U1-14-6601, SMA.

⁵¹ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashij*, vol. 1:1, 177; *Annual Report, 1927*, 33.

⁵² Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashij*, vol. 1:1, 177; *Annual Report, 1927*, 33. E. S. Wilkinson's full name is likely Edward Sheldon Wilkinson (1883–1950) who published a book, *Shanghai Birds. A Study of Bird Life in Shanghai and the Surrounding Districts* (Shanghai: North-China Daily News & Herald Limited, 1929).

the Settlement. For the SMC, maintaining residents' postal needs was vital.

Shanghai's unique location and the foreign interests behind the city contributed to the retention of the CPS in Shanghai and the maintenance of its operations during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Even though the Nationalist government moved to Chongqing and the CPS DG relocated in Kunming, the Shanghai Head Post Office of the CPS still stood in the same place and served as a special wartime department. In March 1938, the DG appointed French A. M. Chapelain (Zhapeilin 乍配林 in Chinese; ?–1943), the Shanghai Postal Commissioner, as Inspector-General of the United Districts of Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui (滬蘇浙皖聯區總視察) to lead the four postal districts.⁵³ The Shanghai Post Office was reorganised as the Directorate General Office in Shanghai (DG-Shanghai; *youzheng zongju zhu Hu banshichu* 郵政總局駐滬辦事處) on 8 February 1939, which gave it more flexibility and the full authority to deal with postal affairs in the Japanese-occupied areas. The DG-Shanghai's name, therefore, appears frequently in the archives.⁵⁴ Chapelain was then appointed as the Acting Director of DG-Shanghai, which means that this position was a temporary arrangement for wartime only. The DG-Shanghai expanded Chapelain's authority so that he was fully in charge of postal management in the Yangtze regions and the Japanese-occupied areas in the south of the Yangtze River. He was enabled to deal with urgent affairs without reporting to the DG.⁵⁵ This reflects a quick change in the situation in the Yangtze regions between 1937 and 1939. The CPS's foreign employees were put into an important position again to ensure that the CPS kept its business in Shanghai and the neighbouring occupied areas. Meanwhile, the Shanghai Post

⁵³ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashij*, vol. 1:1, 289.

⁵⁴ SMA collected relevant archives between the Shanghai Post Office and the City Government in the War and *Youzheng zongju zhu Hu banshichu* was used as a formal title. For example, R1-3-964, SMA.

⁵⁵ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashij*, vol. 1:1, 300.

Office could be protected by the SMC in terms of its location and its foreign customers.

Shanghai was not the only case where the CPS's operations were maintained in Japanese-occupied areas. At the beginning of the war, the MOC issued a policy to maintain the service in the Japanese-occupied areas in order to 'safeguard the sovereignty of the national postal service.'⁵⁶ Under this principle, the CPS adopted two strategies. One was that at least CPS's twenty-two local Head Post Offices, formerly Postal District Administrations (*youzhen guanliju* 郵政管理局), which were the highest-level regional branches and mostly located in provincial capitals, would remain.⁵⁷ Unlike the previous experience in Manchuria, the local head offices made efforts to maintain the service in their districts and did not withdraw, in as much as this was possible. These head offices, with their main staff, remained in their original premises in order to lead districts until they were no longer safe. Even if a head office became part of a war zone or fell to the enemy, it was temporarily moved to another safe place to be able to continue its business.

Another strategy was that those head offices that were on the front line were led by foreign staff, whereas at the early stage of the war, the MOC established a type of dual-core mode of postal management. Although foreign employees were no longer recruited and were not appointed to the highest management posts as *zongban*, since Guomindang took control of it in 1928, a few higher-rank foreign employees remained in the CPS. They became helpful staff after the war broke out. According to a confidential report from Minister of Communications Chang Kia-ngau (Zhang Jia'ao) 張嘉璈 (1889–1979) to Chiang Kai-shek, Chang admitted that the purpose of appointing foreign staff as postal leadership and

⁵⁶ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashij*, vol. 1:1, 291.

⁵⁷ According to the *Annual Report, 1937–1938*, the CPS held twenty-two of twenty-four Postal Districts. The lost two were the Ki-Hei and Liaoning Districts, which had been controlled by the Japanese and Manchukuo since the CPS withdrawal from Manchuria in 1932.

promoting them to the most important posts in the Japanese-occupied areas was to prevent the Japanese from interfering with postal operations.⁵⁸ Yan Xing, a former higher-rank postal officer and postal historian, suggests that the CPS intentionally appointed foreign staff as postal commissioners in those postal districts that had been occupied by Japanese because the CPS believed that the Japanese 'did not dare to offend Westerners' before the Pacific War. In such a situation, foreign postal staff had the advantage that they were able to seek help for negotiations from their home countries' diplomats stationed in China.⁵⁹ However, if the Japanese authorities were afraid of offending foreigners, they would not have occupied the northern part (the north bank of the Suzhou Creek) of the International Settlement in 1937. Another factor might have been that the Japanese military authorities did not intend to bear the responsibility of supporting the costs of postal operations in the early stage of the occupation. Foreign management of the postal service just filled the need, and its neutrality was acceptable to the Japanese.

An example can be seen in the Anhui Postal District Administration. Before Japan's invasion, its Head Post Office was originally located in Anqing 安慶, the provincial capital of Anhui. The war was expected to affect the city in June 1938, so most of the employees of the Anhui Post Office moved out to Susong 宿松, a small neighbouring town, in advance. Meanwhile, the Audit Section Director (計核股股長) of the Anhui Post Office, Maurice Charles Ernest Christian Fischer, a Swiss national, led a small number of postal staff who

⁵⁸ A report summary from Chang Kia-ngau to Chiang Kai-shek, 24 August 1938, 002000001890A, AH. However, the report also showed that the MOC still attached great importance to the overall postal arrangement during wartime. The report suggested Chang Kia-ngau should not have been promoted as Deputy Director-General of the CPS because his post as Inspector-General of the United Districts of Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui was high enough to lead the postal service in Shanghai and his seniority level was still lower than that of the postal commissioners in other occupied areas of North China.

⁵⁹ Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhan shi*, 439.

remained and maintained the service in Anqing. On 12 June 1938, because of Japan's advance on Anqing from the Yangtze River, Fischer and his colleagues retreated to Jiujiang, Jiangxi. On 18 July, the Anhui Postal Administration was finally moved to Shanghai, where a temporary office was established in the Shanghai Head Post Office. However, due to transport conditions in the refuge process, a large number of postal funds, postage stamps, and other valuable property was left in the office vault in Anqing. At the end of the year, the Anhui postal staff returned to Anqing with a Japanese employee of the Shanghai Post Office. They found that both the vault and the property had been damaged by Japanese soldiers. After negotiations, which perhaps also relied on foreign staff, the Post Office was able to recover some cash, postage stamps, and postcards.⁶⁰ Anhui's case demonstrates how the CPS embodied the wartime policy of maintaining the service and its foreign staff, even including those who were Japanese, who once again played a significant role.

However, Shanghai was still a unique case, acting as the DG authority, which frequently interacted with other regimes and nations, whether these were allies or enemies. In fact, the Anhui Postal District was supervised by the Shanghai Postal Commissioner, Chapelain, as the Inspector-General of four postal districts, including Anhui, under the wartime arrangement. In addition, the Shanghai Post Office was used as a refuge by other postal districts, for instance, when the Anhui Post Office was evacuated there in order to establish a temporary office. The Jiangsu Postal Administration, led by Postal Commissioner W. W. Ritchie (British nationality), moved out of Nanjing and into Shanghai in times of crisis just before the fall of Nanjing in December 1937.⁶¹ The Shanghai Post Office provided safe and reliable protection

⁶⁰ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashiji*, vol.1:1, 292–293.

⁶¹ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashiji*, vol.1:1, 284.

accommodating other postal districts' administrations.

Nevertheless, these temporary offices eventually had to resume their places *in situ*, according to the policy that had been issued by the MOC. Despite the occupation by Japan, the Anhui Postal Administration moved back to Anqing on 27 February 1939,⁶² and the Jiangsu Administration returned to Nanjing on 28 March 1938.⁶³ In the meantime, some areas were still involved in military operations, and several CPS branches and a number of postal employees were working in high-risk circumstances. Even if the International Settlement was a relatively safe area in Shanghai, the rest of the Shanghai Postal District was occupied by Japan after the Battle of Shanghai in November 1937. As a result, the Post Offices became the subjects of the most peculiar scenarios: its subordinate offices, which were stationed and operated in the Japanese-controlled regions, still followed the orders from the Nationalist government in Chongqing–Kunming. As in the case of Anhui, the CPS could return to the Post Office building in order to account for losses and could even claim back a part of its property. This suggests that at the beginning of the war, the CPS was able to establish a certain relationship with the Japanese through foreign management, which once again played this role in the war, while Japan acquiesced to the CPS's authority and seemed to regard it as being a separate government department of Chongqing.

Shanghai played the part of an acting headquarters for the national postal service in the geographical Jiangnan area. In order to operate the service more efficiently, the Shanghai Post Office was allowed to be relatively independent but continued to have a connection with Chongqing. This special design, which fitted in with local conditions in wartime, enabled it to

⁶² Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashiji*, vol.1:1, 300.

⁶³ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashiji*, vol.1:1, 289.

conduct postal communication across war zones, but also created the possibility and need for collaboration between the Chinese Nationalists, the Japanese and its supporting regimes, which will be discussed later.

The special wartime arrangements of the postal service eventually made both hostile sides tolerate postal communication that was maintained by one national postal system, the CPS. On the Chinese side, the maintenance principle of the postal service in Japanese-occupied areas was proposed by the MOC and approved by the Military Affairs Commission. The MOC claimed that the CPS was a public service serving ‘public and international interests,’ rather than ‘politics and national defence,’ while the maintenance was acceptable in the Japanese-occupied areas if it met the condition of ‘safeguarding national postal sovereignty.’⁶⁴ To a certain extent, it cannot be ruled out that the CPS had to establish relations with Japan. However, the experience of the Manchuria postal withdrawal in 1932 seemed to offer a lesson to the Nationalists that they should not easily give up their ‘national postal sovereignty.’ Moreover, different from what the MOC initially claimed that it was not ‘politics and national defence’ consideration, the postal service was indeed needed by Chongqing in order to establish a communication network, which could go deep into Japanese-occupied areas and collect information, as the CPS had in the past. It was also a symbol of Chinese sovereignty existence, and the CPS represented a unified national postal service that still worked in the country. This was its crucial significance for the Chongqing government as a form of sovereignty through which to participate in the UPU and even in the international community.

On the Japanese side, the capability to transplant the Japanese postal system into the occupied areas was limited. The fact was that Japan did not meet its expectations of the war

⁶⁴ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashiji*, vol.1:1, 291.

to swiftly conquer China.⁶⁵ It generally controlled the main urban areas on the East coast and on the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River. However, the Japanese- and the Chinese-controlled areas in these territories were mixed together. It caused that inland postal transport to cross the lines of the different fronts, which did not make it easy for the postal services to be connected, especially in the occupied areas. Although the Japanese military had immediately established a battlefield postal service (*yasen yūbin* 野戦郵便) at the war's beginning,⁶⁶ it was only for the military use, as is the case with many other military postal services in wartime. With the advance of the war, local civilian institutions had to be incorporated under Japanese control since this was more economical than establishing a new postal system to replace the CPS entirely. Timothy Brook discussed the costs of occupation for the Japanese after the conquest of China. An essential condition from which the occupier may reap benefits from their occupation is that arising from 'some degree of modernisation of the occupied,' including 'industrialisation and an efficient transportation and communication infrastructure.' The fact that China's communication systems were 'too weak to make coercion efficient,' impacted Japan's profits from the occupation.⁶⁷ Although Brook focuses on the Japanese taking control of local public utilities and industries, there is no evidence to show that the postal service was Japan's target in order to raise money, at least during the period prior to the War. However, this was not because the CPS was 'too weak' or unprofitable — it was actually generating profit, as the *Annual Reports* show, but the Japanese might have

⁶⁵ Refers to the Japanese Army's optimism that Chiang Kai-shek would be forced to negotiate to end the fighting within three months. Sarah C. M. Paine further analyses the reasons why it did not happen and how the Japanese misjudged the situation, including Japan's success devoured their economic resources in terms of trade stagnation during the war and China's nationalism. See Sarah C. M. Paine, *The Wars for Asia, 1911–1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 125–138.

⁶⁶ A document shows that a list of supplies with a budget estimate for the field postal service was produced just after the Lugou Bridge Incident, see 'Yasen yūbin zairyō nikansuru ken' 野戦郵便材料に関する件 (The supplies of the field postal service), C01005607800, Japan Center for Asian Historical Records.

⁶⁷ Brook, *Collaboration*, 122–123.

regarded the postal service as a part of the social services, which had contributed to Japan's economy and society since the Meiji period.⁶⁸ As the occupier, the Japanese did not care about the occupied population's well-being, but they did care about intelligence and postal communication. They only needed to control the information, which could have been accomplished with postal censorship, rather than to take over or replace the institution of the CPS, which had been heavily involved in transnational operations, and interfering with them would have aroused international disputes. In fact, the post office branches in the occupied areas, including Shanghai, had Japanese censors stationed in them. According to the Shanghai French Concession's archives, foreign missions in Shanghai and the Conseil D'Administration Municipale de la Concession Française (the Municipal Administrative Council of the French Concession) were deeply concerned about Japan's postal censorship after the Battle of Shanghai. In August 1938, the import of foreign magazines, such as *Reader's Digest*, was banned and detained by the Japanese censors. Despite foreign missions' diplomatic protests, the Japanese side did not yield.⁶⁹

The Japanese censorship may reflect the position of the Shanghai Head Post Office sandwiched between the occupier, the occupied, the foreigners and the Nationalists, despite the supervision of the Nationalist MOC. However, the fact is that the wartime arrangement worked. The DG-Shanghai was given relative autonomy and was able to manage the service in the Shanghai Postal District and the neighbouring areas. (The Shanghai Postal District Administration Office was the internal name, while the DG-Shanghai was used externally and was accepted by the Japanese authorities and their supporting regimes.)

⁶⁸ Maclachlan, *The People's Post Office*, 60–61.

⁶⁹ U38-2-1477, U38-2-1305, SMA.

3. 'Collaboration'

The CPS maintained postal communication for Chinese people, which was the most incredible phenomenon relating to the postal service in wartime China. As the beginning of this chapter showed, Feng Zikai was able to contact friends and publishers in Shanghai frequently, and Du Runping, in the Nationalist-controlled area, communicated by post with her father who stayed in the Japanese-occupied hometown. This might have been thanks to the special arrangements put in place by the CPS during the war. However, if the DG-Shanghai had not cooperated, or even 'collaborated,' with the Japanese and their supported puppet regimes, it would have been difficult to carry out the business of the postal service.

Regarding the term 'fake regimes' (*weizhengquan* 偽政權), generally adopted by the Chinese people in relation to Japan's puppet regimes, scholars have mainly focused on Wang Jingwei's regime in Nanjing.⁷⁰ Wang Jingwei and his regime during the Second World War is considered a highly controversial and disgraceful part of their history for the Chinese in contemporary China.⁷¹ Wang chose to leave Chongqing in December 1938 and on 10 March 1940, established another 'Nationalist government' of the Republic of China as a puppet state under Japanese control in Nanjing. In the PRC, Wang, his associates, and supporters are still regarded as *hanjian* (which means 'traitors to the Han Chinese') and his Nanjing government as *weizhengquan*, implying it was a puppet state. In recent years, scholars outside the Chinese mainland have attempted to discuss the nature of this 'collaboration' and of the Wang

⁷⁰ For example, in the 1970s, John Boyle focused on Wang Jingwei to study the discourse of collaboration and the term 'puppet regime' and compare it with other puppet regimes in China during the war. See John Hunter Boyle, *China and Japan at War 1937–1945: The Politics of Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972).

⁷¹ This can be seen in Lo Jiu-jung's review on the studies of Wang Jingwei and the collaboration, Lo Jiu-jung, *Ta de shenpan*, vi-xi.

regime's agency and diversity more, while the mainstream scholarship in China is still generally based on nationalism and the distinction between loyalty (*zhong* 忠) and *betrayal* (*jian* 奸). Nevertheless, some Chinese scholars may be influenced by researchers outside China and may realise the complicated situation relating to collaboration in wartime through accessing new sources and exploring different perspectives, especially those on Wang's authority and his significant role in Sino-Japanese relations.⁷²

In contrast to the current perspectives in China, Timothy Brook re-evaluated the meaning of collaboration in wartime China and explored how it was conducted in practice by the local Chinese elites, the Japanese Army, and the Japanese civil officers. He studied several cases of collaboration in areas of Jiangsu before 1940, rather than focusing on those during Wang Jingwei's Nanjing Nationalist government after 1940, and he discussed the complicated local situation that resulted in the formation of collaborations among both the Japanese and Chinese. He suggested that 'collaboration is never simple relations,' which 'happened when individual people in real places were forced to deal with each other.' In fact, collaboration and resistance actually coexisted when we look at these cases' details.⁷³ Brook provided a different angle on the collaboration and proposed that continuous but diverse collaboration between locals and the Japanese started after the Japanese invaded China. Similarly, this also happened during the earlier Manchurian occupation in the 1930s. For instance, as cited in chapter 3, Chen Jiying recalled that after the occupation of Manchuria, two Chinese police censors at the Harbin Post Office were Japanese collaborators but secretly resisted Japan's censorship.⁷⁴

⁷² Jie Liu, 'Wang Jingwen and the "Nationalist Government": Between Collaboration and Resistance,' in Daqing Yang et al., *Toward A History Beyond Borders: Contentious Issues in Sino-Japanese Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012), 205–239. For the discussion on *zhong* and *jian*, see Lo Jiu-jung, *Ta de shenpan*, i–xix.

⁷³ Brook, *Collaboration*, 26–31, 159.

⁷⁴ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 163–164.

Moreover, Lo's study indicated the complexity of the choices relating to collaboration and political loyalty in wartime, which are absolutely not considered in the sense of collective memories and of China's nationalist narratives using the *zhong-jian* morally charged judgement but are instead based on personal multi-level motivations and actions in their specific circumstances.⁷⁵ However, collaboration or disloyalty may happen under a different scenario in the postal services, one which was not just an individual action, but that was related to an entire government organisation. Based on these discussions, how can we understand the CPS's role and collaboration, especially that of the DG-Shanghai?

After the Battle of Shanghai, Shanghai was occupied by the Japanese, except for the International Settlement and the French Concession. The municipal government was reorganised several times but remained under Japan's control. Just after the occupation, a special city government, called the Dadao government 大道政府 (the Great Way Municipal Government), was established on 5 December 1937. This was the beginning of the Chinese elites' 'collaboration' with the Japanese and Japan's 'pacification' of Shanghai.⁷⁶ The Dadao Government existed for only a few months and was then replaced by a new municipal government, the Supervision Shanghai Municipal Office (SMO) 督辦上海市政公署, which came under the jurisdiction of Japan's puppet regime, the Weixin government 維新政府 (Reformed government), on 28 April 1938.⁷⁷ However, DG-Shanghai's archive shows that the Post Office referred to it Dadao until the Shanghai city authority was merged with Wang Jingwei's regime in March 1940.⁷⁸ This also shows that under the unrest political situation, the Post Office gave into the confusion about the name of the regimes supported by Japan.

⁷⁵ Lo Jiu-jung, *Ta de shenpan*, 319–321.

⁷⁶ Brook, *Collaboration*, 160.

⁷⁷ Brook, *Collaboration*, 188.

⁷⁸ DG-Shanghai to SMO 15, August 1938, R1-2-1342, SMA.

However, observing the records of official correspondence, this did not affect the Post Office's contacts with these regimes. Timothy Brook discussed the Dadao government and the local rivalries after the Japanese occupied Shanghai,⁷⁹ yet the interesting reality, which is rarely mentioned, was that the Shanghai Post Office, as a Nationalist department located in the International Settlement, simultaneously had close relations with these puppet regimes in Shanghai from late 1937 until 1942.

The operation of the postal service was based on close relations with successive Shanghai municipal authorities. Archives show that they maintained formal official communication for postal and other related business in Shanghai. Meanwhile, the records even imply that the CPS's Japanese employees were likely to act as intermediaries, whether this arrangement was intentional or not. In August 1938, because some of the branches of the Post Office located in Pudong, in Shanghai's suburbia, had been closed since the war, the Shanghai Post Office asked the municipal government, referred to as the SMO after April 1938, for permission to reopen six branches: Zhoupu 周浦, Chuansha 川沙, Nanhui 南匯, Qingcungang 青村港, Datuan 大團, and Xinchang 新場. The official letter sent from the Post Office was signed by Kinshiro Kin'ichirō 金指 謹一郎, whose name suggests his Japanese nationality, but there is no more information about his title and position on the document.⁸⁰

Kinshiro was, in fact, a Deputy Postal Commissioner for Shanghai and worked for the CPS rather than for the Japanese Army. His role illustrates how the CPS worked in Shanghai during wartime. Although he was mentioned in many sources, his name appears in a few reports on the postal service recorded in *Shenbao* during the war. According to a report in

⁷⁹ Brook, *Collaboration*, 159–196. This chapter is also published as an article, 'The Great Way Government of Shanghai,' in *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun*, 157–186.

⁸⁰ Brook, *Collaboration*, 159–196.

Shenbao on 9 September 1937, the earliest one to mention him, he was ordered to assist postal operations in Hongkou 虹口. During the Shanghai Battle, the Japanese Army declared martial law in Hongkou and enforced travel bans. As a result, postal employees could not reach the Post Office, and the service was interrupted. In order to continue the service and avoid troubles with the Japanese Army, Kinshiro was assigned to preside over the Hongkou Post Office. His duty was not only to attend to the Hongkou office but also to assist in taking mailed letters back to the Shanghai Head Office every day for further transit.⁸¹

Japanese employees' roles in the Shanghai Post Office were likely to be a part of a thoughtful arrangement but also caused Shanghai's public opinion to suspect that the Post Office's services were influenced by the Japanese. On 24 October 1938, *Shenbao* conveyed that the Shanghai Post Office had had at least three additional Japanese higher-rank staff allocated in order to assist with the service in Shanghai. Plus, the Japanese authorities sent censors to the Post Office; a *Shenbao* reporter believed that the Shanghai Post Office was actually controlled by the Japanese despite postal operations being conducted as usual.⁸² However, this might not have been the case. In addition to Kinshiro, the other two were Fuke Yutaka 福家 豊, who was sent from the Hankou Post Office, and Okada Tokiichirō 岡田 時一,⁸³ who had originally served in the Shanghai Post Office for many years, and who had been retired for four years at that time.⁸⁴ These three Japanese all were the CPS's employees at that time, while there is no positive evidence showing Japan's intervention in relation to postal

⁸¹ 'Banli Hongkou zhanqu youwu' 辦理虹口戰區郵務 (Operating Postal Service in Hongkou War Zone), *Shenbao*, 9 September 1937, 6.

⁸² 'Youwu guanliju jiapai Riji youyuan' 郵務管理局加派日籍郵員 (Postal Administration Appoints Additional Japanese Postal Staff), *Shenbao*, 24 October 1938, 12.

⁸³ During the 1932 Postal Strike, Okada was sent to a branch in Shanghai to manage local postal operations. See 'Yougong bagong disiri zhuangkuang' 郵工罷工第四日狀況 (The Situation of the Postal Strike on the Fourth Day), *Shenbao*, 26 May 1932, 4.

⁸⁴ 'Youwu guanliju jiapai Riji youyuan,' *Shenbao*, 24 October 1938, 12.

personnel.

These personnel arrangements were directly adjusted by the CPS and the DG-Shanghai in order to deal with the political changes resulting from the war. A Chongqing government diplomatic document proves these Japanese postal employees' identities. In January 1942, the government issued the Governing Act of Enemy Aliens 敵國人民處理條例, which stipulated the dismissal and concentrated detainment of enemy citizens after Japan's declaration of war on Germany and Italy in December 1941. The document shows that the DG reported to the MOC six Italian and Japanese employees who had served in the CPS in April 1942, including F. Poletti, who became Beiping Postal Commissioner after the withdrawal from Manchuria. It can be found that Kinshiro, the Shanghai Postal Commissioner, and Fuke, the Deputy Commissioner, are also listed on this document. There is another Japanese, named Okada, who was the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Shanghai, but his first name is Hirokuni 博邦, which does not match Okada Tokiichirō, mentioned above. However, when comparing the sources, the two do seem to be the same person. The DG claimed:

They are now staying and working in occupied areas. They have been serving in the Post Office for between nineteen and forty years and remained loyal [to the Service and the Chinese government]. After the Mukden Incident, [they] have been highly competent in managing [the Service] under local special circumstances, and in maintaining the unification of the postal service. They are needed to continue working [for the Service].⁸⁵

The lists were then approved by the MOC and forwarded to other ministries to ensure that

⁸⁵ The Ministry of the Interior's letter to the MOFA with the attachment of a joint letter draft to the MOC, 5 June 1942, 020-010118-0002, AH.

these people would not be affected according to the Act, but the CPS was required to be responsible for monitoring.⁸⁶ This may explain the fact that these Japanese employees were indeed trusted by the CPS and the Chongqing government, despite the hostile relations between China and Japan.

These arrangements, made to enable Japanese employees to help the CPS, were very effective. On 15 August 1938, Kinshiro sent the SMO a letter to ask for the reopening of Post Offices in Pudong. The SMO replied within five days with the approval of the reopening of two post offices in Chuansha and Zhoupu since ‘the political situation was quiet and peaceful’ there.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the SMO ordered Chuansha and Zhoupu’s local councils to assist postal employees in returning from the Shanghai Post Office. As for the rest of the councils, the SMO also requested that they investigate the local circumstances for the resumption of postal services.⁸⁸ Kinshiro was also responsible for negotiation with the Japanese authorities at any time in relation to the postal service. After the Shanghai Battle in 1937, the Japanese Army took control of Hongkou, excluding the Shanghai Head Post Office building. While the Chinese people were restricted from visiting the area unless they had permits, they could freely access the postal building by the side entrance on North Suzhou Road. However, on 24 February 1940, the building was suddenly zoned into the area of Hongkou, which was on alert, by the Japanese Army without advance notice. The Japanese Army installed barbed wire in order to close North Suzhou Road near the Running Water Bridge (Zhilaishui Bridge 自來水橋) and blocked the way to the postal building (Figures 4.4 and 4.5). Not only was it difficult for people

⁸⁶ The Ministry of the Interior’s letter to the MOFA with the attachment of a joint letter draft to the MOC, 5 June 1942, 020-010118-0002, AH.

⁸⁷ Shanghai Postal Administration letter to SMO, no. 2987, 15 August 1938; Shanghai Municipal Office letter draft, no. 38, 20 August 1938, R1-2-1342, SMA.

⁸⁸ SMO order no. 559, August 1938, SMA R1-2-1342. Chuansha Council letter to SMO, 30 August 1938, R1-2-1362, SMA.

and postal employees to access the Post Office, but they were also checked by the Japanese Army upon entrance. Kinshiro was, therefore, sent by Chapelain to negotiate a resolution of the situation with the Japanese authorities.⁸⁹

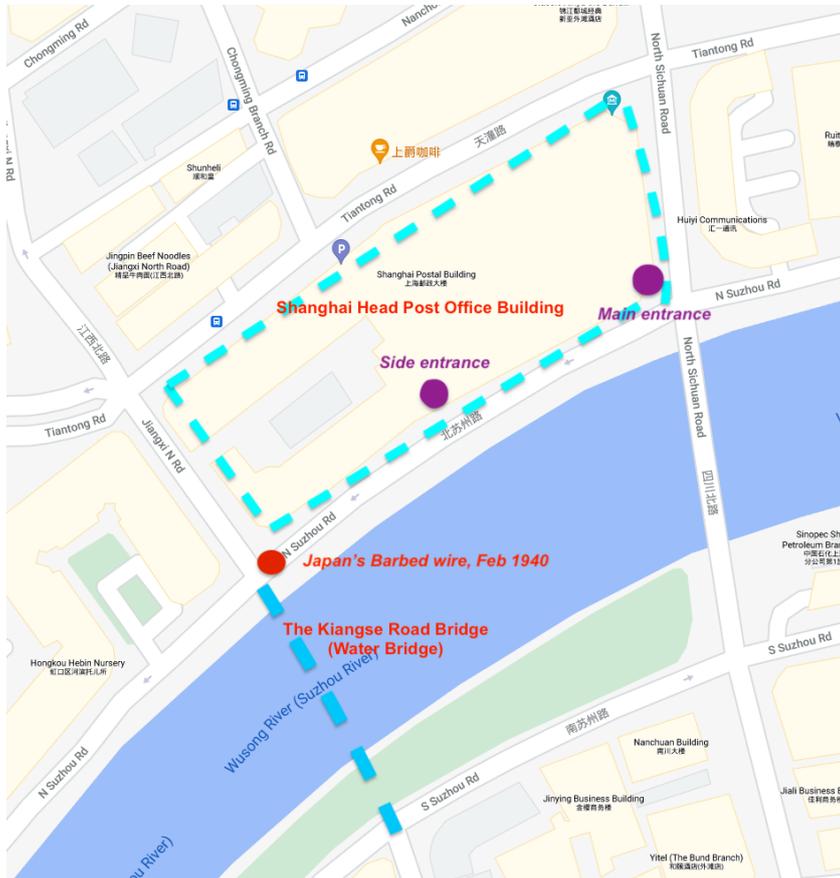


Figure 4.4: The location of the Japanese barbed wire fence (teal) and the Shanghai Head Post Office in February 1940 (with entrances marked in purple). Since the Shanghai Battle in 1937, the Japanese Army had controlled Hongkou, the Northern area of the Wusong River, which was a part of the International Settlement. Base map: Google Maps, accessed 30 August 2021.

⁸⁹ 'Bei quanru jingjiequ' 被圈入警戒區 (Placed into the Alert Area), *Shenbao*, 27 February 1940, 9.



Figure 4.5: A photo of the Kiangse/Jiangxi Road Bridge, also named the Running Water Bridge (Zhilashui Bridge 自來水橋), c. the 1910s. Source: 'The Kiangse Road Bridge over Soochow Creek,' Virtual Shanghai Project, accessed 30 August 2021, https://www.virtualshanghai.net/Asset/Preview/dbImage_ID-99_No-1.jpeg.

According to a news report from March 1939, the CPS's Japanese employees had an effect on the resumption of the postal service in guerrilla areas of Shanghai. In comparison, sixty-five Chinese staff were, however, transferred to the Home Front in Yunnan, Guizhou, and Guangxi in March 1939.⁹⁰ The CPS's intention was clear: foreigners, even those from 'enemy' nations, were useful in dealing with the hot-potato postal service in Shanghai, while the CPS could keep its business in the occupied areas as a 'national' but stagnated independent, service.

Not only in Shanghai but also in neighbouring regions, these Japanese employees were also given the task of negotiating with the Japanese authorities. As previously discussed, the

⁹⁰ 'Zishen youwuyuan jijiang waidiao' 資深郵務員即將外調 (Senior Postal Employees are Transferring to Other Areas), *Shenbao*, 7 March 1939, 9.

Shanghai Post Office was empowered to manage four postal districts under the special wartime circumstances and sent a Japanese member of staff to assist the Anhui Post Office in recovering the postal service, as well as to negotiate with the Japanese authorities in relation to postal losses and damages. A *Shenbao* report from 12 January 1939 (and the CPS's record) shows that two Japanese employees departed from Shanghai to Anqing to prepare for the resumption of Anhui's postal service. It also specifically indicates that they were Fuke and Okada. However, *Shenbao* drew a clear distinction between enemies and friends and stood its ground against the Japanese in wartime. Its two subtitles of the report 'Japanese Side Proposing to Recover Postal Service in Anhui' (日方籌復皖郵) and 'The Post Office's Difficult Circumstances' (郵局處境困難) refer to the involvement of Japanese employees and their initiative.⁹¹ *Shenbao* had a different view that shows tension between Shanghai residents and the Japanese people in wartime, even though these Japanese postal employees worked for the CPS. However, this implies that such Japanese staff were valued by the CPS, which intentionally kept them in Post Offices that had frequent contact with Japanese authorities under wartime conditions. Appointing Japanese staff might not only have gained the Japanese occupiers' trust, but also, such staff had a relatively powerful position in negotiating with the occupier regimes.

In addition to the foreign management of the CPS, again, the national postal service was involved in international affairs. Every regime was very likely to realise that the CPS was a complex state-owned enterprise and not easy to take over. On 28 March 1938, the Reformed government was installed in Nanjing, and Shanghai was included in this new governance and

⁹¹ 'Huifu Wanqu youwu' 恢復皖區郵務 (Resumption of the Postal Service in Anhui), *Shenbao*, 12 January 1939, 10.

became the temporary political centre due to chaotic situation in Nanjing.⁹² On 17 August 1938, the Reformed government's MOC ordered the SMO by the MOI⁹³ not to make things difficult for the operation of the Post Office:

The postal service is the only national transportation of convenient services for people, and it is related to international community, which is extremely important. Its strict institution and integrated system are an urgent priority. Since the Battle of Shanghai, the postal service has had to be suspended in some [areas] of each war zone, while it has operated as usual in some other areas. Many regions have been gradually calmed and the postal service in some important areas in the occupied areas of adjacent provinces, such as Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui provinces, have been selected for recovery. According to the investigation of the local situation at that time, [the recovery of the postal service's needs] to find or repair buildings, to dispatch employees, and to deliver essentials and needs. The most complicated and difficult affair is to contact local military authorities and discuss the need to issue postal employees' and postmen's passes. If the procedure is not undertaken, the postal service will not achieve the purpose of operating as usual. Hence, you should immediately allow local branches of the Post Office to carry out, with special convenience, if they consider that there are obstacles, the resumption

⁹² In Brook's book, there is a typographical error stating that the instalment ceremony of the Reformed government was on 30 March 1938. By contrast, according to *Shenbao (Hong Kong)* it took place on 28 March. See Brook, *Collaboration*, 154; 'Dijun jianshixia Huazhong weizuzhi chengli' 敵軍監視下華中偽組織成立 (The Establishment of the Fake Regime of Central China under the Enemy's Supervision), *Shenbao (Hong Kong)*, 29 March 1938, 2.

⁹³ According to Republican China's rules, local administrations were subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior. Other central ministries had no rights to directly contact and order local governments but could ask the Ministry of the Interior to forward its request as an order.

*of the service, and to ask local administrations for help.*⁹⁴

In this statement, the Reformed government, and perhaps supervising Japanese authority, accurately realised that the ‘international link’ was one of the main features of the postal service. It acknowledged that postal maintenance was crucial, despite the fact that the Chongqing government had its management in hand. Moreover, although not specifically mentioned in the text, those Japanese employees were the most likely to contribute to negotiations with the Reformed government and to manage the resumption, especially in the two cases above, which occurred at about the same time in Anhui and afterwards in Pudong.

The main purpose of using Japanese postal staff was that it was expedient to continue the postal service in occupied areas. However, this did not mean that the CPS, and the DG-Shanghai, would not have paid the price accordingly. The Shanghai Post Office coordinated closely with the Japanese Army and its puppet regimes. Postal censorship was organised immediately following Japan’s occupation, as previously mentioned. Although it was overpowered by the Japanese Army, the Post Office could not avoid such collaboration. Whether it was compelled to do so or not, in March 1938, news reports revealed that Japanese censors, who were probably sent by the Japanese Army, were accompanied by Fuke to see Chapelain in the Shanghai Head Post Office and began their work.⁹⁵ The DG-Shanghai was unlikely to refuse the censorship operation. Even though the office building was in the International Settlement, the service did cover all of Shanghai and was also connected with other areas of the country, whether it could be called ‘one’ entirety or not.

In addition, with the establishment of the Reformed government, the five-coloured

⁹⁴ The Reformed Government’s MOI’s letter to the SMO, 17 August 1938, R1-2-1293, SMA.

⁹⁵ ‘Hu di shixing jiancha youjian’ 滬敵實行檢查郵件 (Enemy Operating Postal Censorship in Shanghai), *Shenbao* (Hankou), 6 March 1938, 1.

flag, the old national flag of the Republic of China before 1928, was introduced to replace the national flag after 1928.⁹⁶ As a body affiliated with the CPS, the Shanghai Post Office was questioned by the SMO regarding the flag they used. This would not have been a problem in the International Settlement, where the Head Office was located,⁹⁷ but for those branches outside the Settlement, it was very likely to become awkward. In December 1928, the Shanghai Special Municipal Government (上海特別市政府, SSMG), which was renamed from SMO in October, demanded that all branches of the Post Office raise the five-coloured flag and adopt the new national emblem from 4 December. In a letter to the SSMG, Fu Xiaolan 傅筱庵 (1872–1940), Mayor of Shanghai under the Reformed government, ordered local councils and the Police Bureau to investigate the efficient execution of flag replacement in Post Offices and its agencies (*daibansuo* 代辦所) and to supervise them in implementing the requirement.⁹⁸ The document does not include the Post Office's reply, but a police follow-up report to the SSMG, which was written by Lu Ying 盧英 (1894–1950), the Commissioner of the Shanghai Police Bureau, on 30 December, shows that the order had been conveyed to subordinate police stations and executed locally. Some areas, however, were still involved in the war. Thus, the Police Bureau added an amendment, as an exception, that 'in terms of inland post offices' circumstances in banditry areas,' which referred to Chuansha and Zhoupu in this context, 'flying the national flag is permitted to be postponed.'⁹⁹ The 'banditry' was

⁹⁶ 'Dijun jianshixia Huazhong weizuzhi chengli,' *Shenbao* (Hong Kong), 29 March 1938, 2.

⁹⁷ People waved the national flag of *Qingtian bairi mandihong* 青天白日滿地紅 (blue sky, white sun and red-filled earth) to commemorate Sun Yat-sen's birthday and to support the Chongqing Government in the International Settlement and the French Concession. See, 'Zuo jinian Zongli danchen shimin bei ji xingfen' 昨紀念總理誕辰市民倍極興奮 (Commemorating the Birthday of Sun Yat-sen Yesterday, Citizens Were Excited), *Shenbao*, 13 November 1939, 9.

⁹⁸ West Shanghai Home Affairs Department's (滬西區政務署), letter to SSMG, 3 December 1938, R18-1-702-12, SMA.

⁹⁹ The Police Department letter to SSMG, 30 December 1938, R1-2-1342, SMA.

most likely caused by the Loyal Patriotic Army (*zhongyi jiuguo jun* 忠義救國軍), a Nationalist-organised guerrilla force, led by Dai Li 戴笠 (1897–1946), Head of Chongqing's Intelligence Agency. It continued the combat with the Japanese Army, especially in the Pudong area, in December 1938.¹⁰⁰ In fact, the Post Office had not reopened in these areas since the Shanghai Battle of 1937, and now it was involved in the ensuing warfare. The police report was, therefore, more focused on the petition for a need for local postal service rather than on the flag change. It was reported that the DG-Shanghai instructed local Post Offices for the original national flag to be primary; otherwise, the Postal Flag must fly together with the five-coloured flag in order to demonstrate the independence of the Postal Service.¹⁰¹ Although this shows the flexibility and autonomy of DG-Shanghai in negotiating such issues in occupied areas, it still had to compromise on secondary issues and collaborated with Japanese-supported regimes. The priority was always the smooth operation of the postal service.

The Shanghai Post Office retained most of its autonomy before 1942, while the situation was changing and becoming more serious over time. In order to carry on with the service, a further compromise was unavoidable. In January 1940, it released a new rule, coming into force on 15 January, that allowed purchases of postage stamps with Japanese banknotes and military currency in the occupied areas of the Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui Postal Districts under the DG-Shanghai's leadership. The printing and use of banknotes and military currency symbolise further Japanese control over the financial market in Shanghai and central China, although it might also be understood as the result of the

¹⁰⁰ 'Zhoupu yidai zuo chen jizhan' 周浦一帶昨晨激戰 (A battle in the Zhoupu Area Yesterday Morning), *Shenbao*, 15 December 1938, 9. For research on the Loyal Patriotic Army, see Chen Jinjin, 'Daili yu Zhongyi jiuguojun' (Dai Li and the Loyal Patriotic Army), *Guoshiguan guankan* 33 (September 2012): 89–118.

¹⁰¹ 'Lunxianqu youwu baochi duli jing shen' 淪陷區郵務 保持獨立精神 (The Postal Service Remains Independent in Occupied Sreas), *Shenbao*, 10 January 1939, 10.

increasing number of Japanese soldiers and other Japanese citizens who had moved to China and who needed the various postal services. However, the new policy triggered controversy and increased a sense of nationalism in Chinese society.

The announcement was reported in *Shenbao* on 11 January 1940, titled 'Japanese Banknotes and Japanese Military Notes are *Unexpectedly Able to Pay for Postage Stamps*,' showing that public opinion was against the new regulations.¹⁰² The report claimed that the new regulations had drawn Shanghai residents' attention to the question as to whether Postal Commissioner Chapelain and Deputy Commissioner Kinshiro acted on their own to negotiate with the 'fake government' under the pressure of the Japanese and without the authorisation of the DG of CPS in Kunming. *Shenbao* believed that the acceptance of the regulations was suspicious because it promoted the Japanese currency, which should be instead resisted.¹⁰³

However, *The North-China Herald* had different information. It noticed the Chinese press's opposition, writing that 'the Chinese press has voiced disapproval of the new regulations enforced by the Shanghai Post Office' and 'asserting that this has not been approved by the General Post Office in Kunming.' However, the new regulations were the 'result of the negotiation between the foreign commissioner here and the Japanese officials of the Shanghai Post Office.'¹⁰⁴ The Japanese postal employees' role was intriguing, illustrating their connection with Japanese occupiers.

¹⁰² 'Richao yu Rijunyongpiao jing ke goumai you piao' 日鈔與日軍用票竟可購買郵票 (Japanese Banknotes and Japanese Military Notes Unexpectedly Able to Pay for Postage Stamps), *Shenbao*, 11 January 1940, 9; 'Richao de gou youpiao bingwei chengzhun zongju' 日鈔得購郵票 並未呈准總局 (The Acceptance of Japanese Banknotes to Buy Stamps Was Not Reported to and Approved by the DG), *Shenbao*, 12 January 1940, 8.

¹⁰³ 'Richao yu Rijunyongpiao jing ke goumai you piao,' *Shenbao*, 11 January 1940, 9; 'Richao de gou youpiao bingwei chengzhun zongju,' *Shenbao*, 12 January 1940, 8; 'Richao zhongou youpiao Huyouju jingshixing' 日鈔准購郵票滬郵局竟實行 (Shanghai Post Office Surprisingly Accepts Japanese Banknotes To Pay for Stamps), *Shenbao*, 15 January 1940, 9.

¹⁰⁴ 'Post Office Accepts Japanese Money,' *The North-China Herald*, 17 January 1940, 94.

Meanwhile, *The North-China Herald's* tone also differed from that of *Shenbao*. It did not seem to be dissatisfied with the result and even emphasised that 'it applies to occupied districts only.'¹⁰⁵ This suggests that it was the result of negotiation carried out by Chapelain, a trusted foreign commissioner of the CPS, and that was very likely to be acceptable for foreigners. Foreigners, especially Europeans and Americans, maintained a certain degree of relationship with the occupiers and retained a neutral position in the war before the Pacific War, even though the situation was becoming worse. In fact, non-Japanese foreigners, particularly Westerners, and their organisations in China generally had room to play a certain role between the Chinese and the Japanese. For instance, Brooks discussed the role of the International Committee, which was organised by Westerners who had stayed in Nanjing after Japan's occupation. Its members recorded the violence of the Japanese Army in the war in Nanjing and helped Chinese people to take refuge in the Safety Zone. The Westerners in the Committee were well organised and gained the Chinese people's trust, which, in fact, threatened Japan's legitimacy when creating a new order in Nanjing under anti-imperialist ideology. Brooks suggested that the members of the International Committee, however, did not intend to obstruct the Japanese Army's operations, and its victory in Nanjing actually played a role which 'eased the transition from Nationalist to Japanese rule.'¹⁰⁶ Similarly, *The North-China Herald* as a foreign newspaper shows that foreigners in Shanghai were not concerned with the Japanese intervention, but cared more about the maintenance of postal services. However, the difference was that the Shanghai Post Office was, both theoretically and practically, a Chinese one; more explicitly, it was the postal service of the Nationalist government in Chongqing, a national postal service, although it was managed by foreign staff,

¹⁰⁵ 'Post Office Accepts Japanese Money,' *The North-China Herald*, 17 January 1940, 94.

¹⁰⁶ Brook, *Collaboration*, 128–132.

including Japanese.

Only the foreign press mentioned the main reason why the Shanghai Post Office and its branches in occupied areas began to accept Japan's currency. This shows that the policy was probably not just based on the occupier's political considerations. 'Acceptance of the Japanese money was chiefly promoted by the increase in postage charges for air mail destined for Japan,' *The North-China Herald* reported.¹⁰⁷ The cost of sending a letter to Japan by air had risen from thirty-five to forty-four cents of Chinese currency *fabī* 法幣 (fiat). Both the Chinese and foreign press reported that the Shanghai Post Office had announced a new exchange rate of 1.25 units of Chinese currency to one Japanese yen and a new airmail postage charge, but *The North-China Herald* further pointed out that 'Chinese currency is counted at a lower rate when purchasing postage stamps.'¹⁰⁸ This echoes the rise in inflation in China starting in 1940,¹⁰⁹ which was perhaps important for the Shanghai Post Office that took austerity measures to reduce their exchange losses.

Japan's aggression against Chinese finances was even more worrying, and this apparently aroused indignation in both the Chinese press and Chinese society by comparison to the foreign press's reaction. On the second day after the effective date, in Shanghai, 'all the public thoroughly understand the cardinal principles. No Japanese money nor any military notes used in the post office can be found;' *Shenbao* quoted a source claiming that 'the public

¹⁰⁷ 'Post Office Accepts Japanese Money,' *The North-China Herald*, 17 January 1940, 94.

¹⁰⁸ 'Post Office Accepts Japanese Money,' *The North-China Herald*, 17 January 1940, 94.

¹⁰⁹ Chang Kia-ngau's work is the earliest study on the inflation of wartime China. He analysed the delay of China's wartime inflation. See Chang Kia-ngau (Governor of the Central Bank of the Republic of China, 1947–48), *The Inflationary Spiral: The Experience in China, 1939–1950* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Technology Press of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1958), 27–33. Frederic Wakeman, Jr. studied Shanghai smuggling in wartime and noticed that the energy shortage caused by Japan's expropriation of coal was the main reason for soaring prices, declining manufacturing capacity, and led to unemployment after 1940. See Frederic Wakeman, Jr., 'Shanghai Smuggling,' in *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun*, 122–124.

refuse to use Japanese notes.¹¹⁰ Two months later, *Shenbao* had follow-up reports to show that there were absolutely no Chinese people who wanted to use the Japanese money and military notes in the French Concession, the International Settlement, and the occupied areas of Shanghai. Only a few people bought postage stamps using the Japanese military notes over there, while the Post Office in the Concessions did not accept them.¹¹¹ In fact, *The North-China Herald* reported that 'new military notes brokers have appeared near the Szechuen Road (Sichuan Road) Bridge (near the Shanghai Head Post Office), asking people to have their Chinese currency changed into Japanese military notes.'¹¹² Regardless of this circulation of Japanese banknotes and military notes, it should be noted that Japanese currency and military notes were likely to be accepted only in Japanese-occupied areas, such as Hongkou, at that time. The Post Office still maintained its autonomy in the foreign Concessions but had to compromise with the Japanese elsewhere. Meanwhile, the Chinese press's expectation that the DG of the CPS in Kunming would have refused the DG-Shanghai's agreement with the Japanese failed. No evidence shows that the DG took any action based on the issue. As mentioned previously, Chapelain, as the leader of the DG-Shanghai, was given permission to deal directly with postal affairs in the occupied areas.

4. Wang Jingwei

The occupied-Shanghai regime quickly changed. It was eventually merged with Wang Jingwei's government, which was officially founded on 31 March 1940 in Nanjing, while the

¹¹⁰ 'Youju shoushou Richao dengyu juwen' 郵局收受日鈔等於具文 (Japanese Banknotes Accepted by the Post Office Become Dead Notes), *Shenbao*, 16 January 1940, 8.

¹¹¹ 'Liang zujie nei ge youju jushou Rijunyongpiao' 兩租界內各郵局拒收日軍用票 (The Post Offices in Two Concessions Refuse to Accept Japanese Military Notes), *Shenbao*, 18 March 1940, 7; 'Zujie youju dui Rijunpiao qijin weijieshou' 租借郵局對日軍票迄今未接受 (Japanese Military Notes Still Not Accepted by the Post Offices in Concessions), *Shenbao*, 24 March 1940, 9.

¹¹² 'Post Office Accepts Japanese Money,' *The North-China Herald*, 17 January 1940, 94.

CPS continued its work in Shanghai and other occupied areas as a result of its relatively independent status. Nonetheless, Wang's Nanjing government had more control over the state's characteristics, through its centralised government, than the previous regimes that had governed Shanghai, even though it was controlled, or at least strongly influenced, by the Japanese authorities. The circumstances were more likely to gradually challenge the 'national position' of the CPS, which remained in occupied areas despite its wartime arrangements. The fact was that the CPS kept its operations during Wang's regime for over three years, until June 1943, when Chapelain was forced to step down and hand over the DG-Shanghai.¹¹³

Between 1940 and 1943, the CPS followed the previous principles that had been issued at the beginning of the war in order to continue its service for the public under Wang's regime. Wang's Nanjing government also acknowledged the postal service's special status in China. According to an Annexe to the Cabinet Meeting Minutes of Wang's Executive Yuan 行政院, on 25 June 1940, Wang Jingwei's government realised that the Post Office 'on the one hand, operates in our government's territories, but, on the other hand, it is still controlled by the hostile government,' which referred to Chongqing, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government. The Propaganda Ministry suggested that the Post Office might be regarded as a tool for implementing government policies, but it was still aware of the Post Office's position, which 'was not supposed to be involved in political disputes, as a public utility.' The document shows that Wang Jingwei's government had not yet attempted to take over the Post Office at that time, regardless of the reason. Nevertheless, it had drawn up a plan to take advantage of this arrangement, especially postal and press censorship, as well as interference in the personnel administration. The Propaganda Ministry attempted to demand that the Post Office

¹¹³ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 367.

accept its conditions in exchange for permitting operations in Wang-controlled areas.¹¹⁴ Although it seems no different from previous experiences, and the CPS kept its institution in Wang's territories, the new regime and the developing war would put even more pressure on the DG-Shanghai, which was still leading the postal service in the occupied areas of central China.

Despite the actions of and the pressure exerted by Wang Jingwei's government, a special relationship in relation to the postal service was formed between two 'Nationalist' governments in Nanjing and Chongqing. This relationship was also reflected in the increase in postage rates during wartime. The domestic postage prices had not been adjusted since 1932, and the international rates — since 1938. As previously discussed, the war caused severe damage and losses to the CPS and a sharp increase in postal operation costs, including critical effects of wartime inflation. According to the DG-Shanghai's request to Wang Jingwei government, although the CPS relied on revenue from the Shanghai and Zhejiang Postal Districts, it was still hard to subsidise other Postal Districts' losses.¹¹⁵ In response to this situation, the CPS repeatedly increased postage rates. Intriguingly, the documents show that the policy decision was processed in both Nationalist governments. The DG-Shanghai asked Wang Jingwei's government for its approval of postage cost adjustments after Chongqing's approval. The earliest record of the CPS proposing to raise postage prices in the name of the DG-Shanghai is in the Minutes of Wang Jingwei's Cabinet Meeting from 11 June 1940.¹¹⁶ From 1940 to 1942, domestic postage prices were adjusted dramatically. The first rate (第一資) was

¹¹⁴ The Annexe to the 13th Meeting Minutes of the Executive Yuan, 25 June 1940, Zhongguo dier lishi dang'anguan, ed., *Wang weizhengfu xingzhengyuan huiyijiru* (Meeting Minutes of Wang Jingwei's Executive Yuan) (Beijing: Dangan chubanshe, 1992), vol. 3, 112–114.

¹¹⁵ The 11th Meeting Minutes of Wang Jingwei's Executive Yuan, 11 June 1940, *Wang weizhengfu Xingzhengyuan huiyi jiru*, vol. 3, 26.

¹¹⁶ The 11th Meeting Minutes of Wang Jingwei's Executive Yuan, 11 June 1940, *Wang weizhengfu Xingzhengyuan huiyi jiru*, vol. 3, 3–35.

applied to domestic standard letters delivered within the same postal district and weighing under twenty grams; for example, if such a letter cost two cents in 1938, it was separately approved to be doubled to four cents in September 1940 and doubled again to eight cents in November 1940. The second rate (第二資) for letters sent between different postal districts experienced an even greater increase. The rate was five cents in 1938, eight cents in September 1940 and then rose again to fifteen cents in November 1941. After only a month, in December 1941, a new price of sixteen cents was approved by the Wang's government, and this took effect in January 1942.¹¹⁷

In December 1941, the postage increase was not only caused by inflation and the Chinese currency's wartime devaluation but also was affected by the lack of uniform postage rates. The postal service was quite complicated at that time when it was still maintained as a cross-regime national institution. Despite political disputes, the CPS attempted to unify the postage of 'the country' in practice under three main regimes after 1940, including that of Wang Jingwei's in central China, the North China Political Council 華北政務委員會, which was nominally merged into Wang Jingwei's government but practically was an independent regime that was controlled by Japan,¹¹⁸ and Nationalist China, including the Communist-controlled areas. These three regimes had three different currencies and exchange rates. In December 1941, postage rates, which increased by one cent, needed to be standardised across the nominal country. At that time, the Nationalist Chinese currency *fabi* was still circulating in

¹¹⁷ The 11th Meeting Minutes of Wang Jingwei's Executive Yuan, 11 June 1940, *Wang weizhengfu Xingzhengyuan huiyi jiru*, vol. 3, 35; 'Guonei youjian zifeibiao ji youzheng chujin zhanxing tiaoli' 國內郵件資費表及郵政儲金暫行條例 (The Table of Domestic Postage Rates and the Provisional Regulations of Postal Savings), January 1942, R50-1-119, SMA.

¹¹⁸ The topic of north China's sovereignty was the main theme of the negotiations between Wang Jingwei and the Japanese Army in Shanghai in December 1939, but the Japanese firmly refused to give Wang any substantial powers in the North China Political Council. For the negotiation and Wang's very limited authority in north China, see Boyle, *China and Japan at War*, 270–272.

most areas of China, while Wang Jingwei established another central bank through which to issue a new fiat currency, called xinfabi 新法幣 (new fiat), compared to Chongqing's jiufabi 舊法幣 (old fiat). The old and new fabi had a one-to-one exchange rate. The north China regime had been issuing Lianyinquan 聯銀券 (the Chinese United Reserve Bank Note) since 1938.¹¹⁹ In 1941, Lianyinquan was 'over twice as valuable as the old and new Chinese currency,' according to the DG-Shanghai's report. In order to unify postage costs, an agreement was made that one Lianyinquan dollar could buy a two-dollar postage stamp. However, the CPS realised that the second-rate mail going across postal districts had increased from eight cents to fifteen cents, and that made postage exchange rates involving Lianyinquan difficult to calculate. Consequently, the DG-Shanghai represented the CPS in order to ask for Wang's government approval to raise the second rate by one cent within a month.¹²⁰

The record implies that the new rates had been approved by the Chongqing government. The DG-Shanghai claimed that it 'received a telegram from the south-west' (西南方面), implying the CPS DG or the Chongqing government, which had adjusted the second rate to sixteen cents in order to maintain uniform postage nationwide. The DG-Shanghai explicitly followed instructions from 'the south-west' and then induced Wang's government to permit the same rate not only to allow uniform postage costs in the country but so as to simplify postal operations. Meanwhile, because Wang's government was, in fact, constrained by Japan, the DG-Shanghai also emphasised that the Japanese had approved the postage increase in advance.¹²¹ This implies that the postage adjustment proposal was not only

¹¹⁹ For the Chinese currencies during the Second Sino-Japanese War, see Lin Meili 林美莉, *Kangzhan shiqi de huobi zhanzheng* (Currency War during the War of Resistance) (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan shifan daxue lishi yanjiusuo, 1996), esp. ch. 4 and 5. For the new fabi reform in the Japanese-occupied areas, also see Wakeman, 'Shanghai Smuggling,' 124–127.

¹²⁰ R50-1-119, SMA.

¹²¹ R50-1-119, SMA.

approved by Chongqing but also consulted with the Japanese. Wang, therefore, had little excuse to refuse the proposal. No matter what the imagined 'country' was at that chaotic moment, maintaining a unified and efficient 'national' postal service was a priority, and there was a consensus of opinion on this within each of the regimes that claimed sovereignty over China.

The DG-Shanghai, as the CPS's representative, played a crucial role in this event. Despite the wartime arrangements, the institution had so far evolved into a nearly depoliticised independent regulatory agency, seemingly a miracle during the war. It was, of course, a position that was developed from previous experiences, especially those difficulties during the warlord era and after the Mukden Incident in Manchuria, but, on the other hand, the CPS faced considerably different challenges in the Second Sino-Japanese War. In addition to war losses, the CPS was more tightly sandwiched between the hostile states, regimes, and even the warring sides. As previously mentioned, the Shanghai Post Office's location in the International Settlement, its foreign staff, including Japanese, and the wartime arrangements helped the CPS to become a protected hub from which to continue mail delivery in the regions of central China and even across hostile regimes. Although the DG-Shanghai still followed instructions from Chongqing and Kunming, where to the CPS DG relocated, its status as an independent regulatory agency gave it more flexibility in dealing with political interference and in providing postal services to the public.

This does not mean that the postal service would not have been affected by any political issues. In fact, its 'national' status and administration were very much involved in politics. As the most prominent and visible symbol of national postal services, postage stamp printing and postmark designing became another notable issue during this period since they

visually demonstrated the issuing country's identity and ideology. In the Republican era, Chinese stamps were inscribed with the official name of the CPS, *Zhonghua minguo youzheng* 中華民國郵政 (the Postal Service of the Republic of China), and some also had 'Republic of China Postage' in English inscribed on them. As for the patterns of postage stamps, the national emblem, the national flag, and Sun Yat-sen's and national martyrs' portraits were common elements. During the war, the CPS rarely issued new designs for stamps but reprinted previous portrait stamps.¹²² Due to the war, the CPS was most likely not capable of commissioning new designs for stamps. Meanwhile, except for Manchuria, most of the regimes claimed that they were the legitimate 'Republic of China' and shared the same national symbols. Those portrait stamps might be the least controversial.

A case worth mentioning is the celebration of the Chinese National Day in 1941. To celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Republic of China, the CPS DG in the south-west entrusted the Postal Supply Department in Shanghai with issuing commemorative stamps, which were a set of ten stamps, on 10 October, the National Day. Due to the war, the CPS did not design new stamps but used those stamps that were in stock and then overprinted them with Chinese characters *Zhonghua minguo chuangli sanshi zhounian jinian* (to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Founding of the Republic of China) and *Sanshi nian shi yue shi ri* (October 10th, 30th Year) (Figure 4.6). These were mainly sold in Shanghai and Nanjing, which were governed by Wang Jingwei,¹²³ and were very much welcomed by the public in Shanghai. Due to the popular demand, the Post Office even had to implement a purchase-restriction

¹²² 'Def 029, Martyrs' Issue, Hongkong Print (1940),' Chunghwa Post Co., https://www.post.gov.tw/post/internet/W_stamphouse/index_en.jsp?ID=2807&file_name=A029, accessed 24 February 2020.

¹²³ 'Commemorative 15, 30th Anniversary of the Founding of the Republic of China Commemorative Issue (1941),' Chunghwa Post Co., accessed 24 February 2020, https://www.post.gov.tw/post/internet/W_stamphouse/index_en.jsp?ID=2807&file_name=B015.

policy.¹²⁴ The issuance of this stamp set illustrates the two Nationalist governments shared not only the same political legacy and national ideology dating back to the 1911 Revolution but also shared the same national postal system and admitted the commemorative stamps to circulate in each other's territories, which also indirectly proves the special neutrality of the CPS during wartime.



Figure 4.6: Commemorative 15, 30th Anniversary of the Founding of the Republic of China Commemorative Issue, 1941. Source: Chunghwa Post Co. https://www.post.gov.tw/post/internet/W_stamphouse/index_en.jsp?ID=2807&file_name=B015, accessed 24 February 2020.

¹²⁴ 'Jinianyoupiao yi nan goude' 紀念郵票已難購得 (The Commemorative-issue Stamps are Difficult to Buy), *Shenbao*, 17 October 1941, 7.

In addition to postage stamps, postmarks were also highly politicised. Although postmark has the practical function of indicating the sending date and the location, various elements, including national symbols, can be added to highlight specific intentions, especially in commemorative postmarks. When Wang Jingwei officially announced that the Chinese government would 'return' to Nanjing, the official capital of China, on 30 March 1940, the DG-Shanghai was asked to issue a controversial commemorative postmark, which was not only for the benefit of philately but also was stamped on envelopes that were sent from Wang-controlled areas in order to celebrate 'the Return to the Capital' (*huandu* 還都). Only Post Offices in the International Settlement and the French Concession could refuse to do so. *Shenbao* criticised the fact that Chapelain and the Shanghai Post Office had been forced to collaborate with Wang Jingwei's government, but a postal employee told the reporter that Chapelain's stooping in order to compromise and not taking a stand on trifles was due to his desire to protect the whole CPS.¹²⁵ Regardless of what the postage stamp and postmarks conveyed, the CPS was undoubtedly involved in the political storm. However, it also shows that the DG-Shanghai could easily operate beyond the 'state' and could ensure its functioning.

The location and the management of the DG-Shanghai gave the CPS such a special status and a seemingly neutral position in tricky circumstances in order to operate the postal service under only one administration. Nevertheless, once this favourable condition disappeared, the CPS did not have any protection to maintain its status in occupied areas.

The turning point was the outbreak of the Pacific War on 7 December 1941. Wang Jingwei's government and the Japanese authorities had long wanted to control postal services,

¹²⁵ 'Jiage "xinzheng quan" youchao lunxianqu jing zhaoban' 加蓋「新政權」郵戳淪陷區竟照辦 ('New regime' postmark was stamped in the enemy-occupied areas), *Shenbao*, 2 April 1940, 7.

and evidence of this can be found, for instance, in their negotiation Minutes in November 1939.¹²⁶ After Japan and Wang's government declared war on the Allied Powers, the International Settlement fell to the Japanese occupation. The Post Office lost the Settlement's protection umbrella. Although the DG-Shanghai still carried on its service there, the pressure on the CPS was growing. The CPS DG and DG-Shanghai started to prepare for the worst.

The wartime postal arrangement lasted for another year until December 1942. Chapelain reported to Chongqing that Wang Jingwei's government had actively intended to interfere with the Shanghai Post Office, and he asked the CPS DG for instructions about how to respond to the changes. Previous experiences of complete withdrawal in Manchuria in 1932 were not applicable because the operation of the postal service had been strictly monitored by Wang's regime and the Japanese. Moreover, in the hope of regaining it in the future and for the sake of many of those people whose relatives and friends were trapped in occupied areas, Chapelain suggested that it might still be possible to open up postal links if the Shanghai Post Office were taken by the enemy.¹²⁷ This followed the policy issued at the beginning of the war, and it had eventually ensured that postal communication was not interrupted in the latter part of the war.

The CPS held on to the occupied areas' postal communication for almost six years. On 18 June 1943, Nanjing announced that Li Haoju 李浩駒 was appointed as the Director of the DG-Shanghai, and Takagi Masamichi 高木 正道 was to be the Deputy Director; Chapelain was

¹²⁶ 'Guanyu Zhong-Ri guojiao tiaozheng yuanze de xieyi huiyijiyao' 關於中日國交調整原則的協議會議紀要 (The Meeting Minutes of the Adjustment Principles of the Chinese-Japanese Diplomatic Relations), November 1939, in Chen Pengren, trans., *Wang Jingwei xiang Ri midang* 汪精衛降日密檔 (*Wang Jingwei's Secret Files*) (Taipei: Lianjing, 1999), 134.

¹²⁷ 'Diwei ladou lunxianqu youzheng duice' 敵偽擄奪淪陷區郵政對策 (Countermeasures against the Enemy and Puppet Regime Seizing the Postal Service in the Occupied Areas), Nationalist MOC, December 1941 to December 1942, A31500000H/0031/0801060020/00261, NAA. Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 362–363.

forced to retire. Chapelain's other title, Postal Commissioner of the Shanghai Postal District Administration, was also discharged. The new Postal Commissioner, Chinese Wang Weisheng 王偉生, was promoted from a position of a postal employee in Shanghai. According to the CPS records, the transfer of the DG-Shanghai's authority followed three days after the announcement. Wang Weisheng finally replaced Chapelain as Commissioner on 28 June 1943.¹²⁸ The complete postal service in the occupied areas of central China was handed over to Wang's government, while most of the postal employees seemed to remain rather than being evacuated to Chongqing-controlled areas. Nevertheless, this kind of collaboration in the postal services laid a foundation. As mentioned, postal communication was not entirely interrupted between the different regimes towards the end of the war, despite significant delays.

5. Conclusion

The Second Sino-Japanese War had a severe impact on both postal personnel and the facilities of the CPS. In a long-term state of war, the CPS, as a national service, almost miraculously continued its services for all people in the war-torn country. The maintenance of the postal service was based on the wartime arrangements of the CPS, which were planned and decided at the beginning of the War. Such arrangements might have been inspired by those experiences that neutralised the institution sufficiently to survive the warlord era and by the lessons from the Manchurian postal withdrawal in 1932. Apart from the order not to withdraw, the wartime arrangements reutilised foreign postal officers to lead the service in the occupied

¹²⁸ 'Youzhengyewu zhongyaorenshi diaodong' 郵政業務重要人事調動 (Postal Leader Transfer), *Shenbao*, 19 June 1943, 2. Wang Weisheng was originally a Postal Assistant; see Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 376.

areas as postal commissioners, with full authority, and without reporting this in advance. It created the CPS, and its leadership was able to remain in the occupied areas and play the role as a 'national' institution.

Nevertheless, in order to operate the service, the CPS maintained a particular relationship with both the Japanese occupiers and their regimes. Meanwhile, CPS's Japanese employees were also appointed to higher positions to assist in negotiations with the occupiers. Although the CPS's documents may prove that these foreign employees, including Japanese ones, kept in touch with Chongqing–Kunming and reported any changes in the situation, practically, they still needed to collaborate with the Japanese authorities and their supporting regimes. In other words, the existence of the CPS in the occupied areas was also a kind of 'collaboration' with the enemy.

Shanghai is a significant example of this postal collaboration between the CPS, the Japanese 'puppet' governments, the Japanese authorities, and the Nationalist government in Chongqing. Shanghai's unique location and foreign Concessions allowed the Shanghai Post Office to play a crucial role in the name of the DG-Shanghai Office in managing the service in the lower Yangtze regions, not only for the Chinese people but also for foreign residents in China during the war. By compromising and collaborating with the 'enemy,' with the permission of Chongqing, the DG-Shanghai was able to ensure that postal communication was unimpeded between hostile regimes.

The depoliticised and relatively neutralised management of the national postal service provides a diverse understanding of the meaning of collaborating with the enemy in wartime China. There were grey areas for 'collaboration' between hostile regimes and institutions as well as individuals involved. To a certain extent, there was a tacit understanding and

acquiescence in the postal operation between the internationally recognised Chinese government in Chongqing and the Japanese-supported governments. Observing the actual operation of the ‘collaboration’ through archival research once again highlights that although the Chinese government’s narratives seemingly saw a ‘modern’ national postal service as an extension or synonym of sovereignty, in practice ‘modern’ postal services transcended national boundaries and sovereignty. Such a feature was particularly evident in wartime China. Moreover, the environment of China during the war and the legacy of the foreign management of the CPS made it possible to provide unified services for the public in a divided and war-torn country. The CPS eventually lost control of the DG-Shanghai in 1943, but the unique relations that had been established through postal services remained. People were still able to communicate with their separated families beyond the boundaries of their particular area.

Finally, it has to be mentioned that the CPS, regardless of collaboration or management, would not have been maintained without the sacrifice and dedication of postal employees in wartime. Chapelain, Shanghai Postal Commissioner, died on 24 September 1943, just three months after DG-Shanghai was taken over by the Japanese and Wang Jingwei’s government. By the time he was forced to retire, he had worked for the CPS for over thirty years.¹²⁹ More importantly, the archives of the CPS illustrate that the maintenance of the postal service in wartime was facilitated by postal employees’ dedication to their duties, sometimes at risk to their lives, especially those lower-rank postal workers.

¹²⁹ ‘Qian Shanghaiyoujuchang Zhapeilin shishi’ 前上海郵局長乍配林逝世 (The Former Postal Commissioner of Shanghai Chapelain Died), *Shenbao*, 28 September 1943, 3.

Chapter 5: Disruption and Resumption: Postal Communication between the Guomindang and CCP-controlled Areas, 1945 to 1949

Having barely survived the Second Sino-Japanese War, the resumption of postal communications soon encountered another challenge during the post-war period. The Chinese Civil War started immediately, which troubled postal communications between the two hostile regimes. The CCP established its own postal service, while the CPS still worked with Guomindang and accepted its legitimacy to manage and supervise national postal communication.

This chapter addresses the dramatic changes in the political situation after the war to examine the competition between the postal operations of the Communists and Guomindang, which, once again, not only challenged the operations of the postal service but also threatened the 'national' status of the CPS. I will explore how the CPS dealt with postal resumption under the complicated post-war circumstances by airmail promotion, how the Nationalist-Communist Civil War once again affected postal deliveries, and why the CPS eventually lost its role in managing the national postal service in China.

Newspapers, as a medium, not only conveyed the news about the availability of the postal service in particular areas and how to access specific postal services, but they also provided a platform for inquiries. Here, I will look at the example of *Huabei ribao* 華北日報 (North China Daily) that ran a special column through which people could interact with the postal authorities called *youzheng wenda* 郵政問答 (Q&A on the Postal Service). From this, we will see how the CPS dealt with postal resumption and interruption in the complex post-war situation, what people cared about most, and how they expressed their anxiety about

postal interruption when the war came again.

1. Postal Resumption and the Boom in Airmail after the Sino-Japanese War

The end of the Second World War was also supposed to be the end of the postal disruption. The people, including postal employees, were pleased to see the light of peace and looked forward to returning to normal life. On 15 August 1945, the Japanese Emperor, Hirohito, officially broadcast his announcement of unconditional surrender demanded by the Allies. The people in Chongqing had learnt of Japan's surrender a few days earlier, as the Japanese government informed the Allies on 10 August. On that evening, Chen Jiying, who had been assigned to the Postal Savings and Transfer Bureau (郵政儲金匯業局) of the CPS in Chongqing, recalled that postal employees were as ecstatic as other people in the city when they heard the news of the surrender. At that time, he was walking on the street after dinner, and it was a big surprise when he was suddenly informed that Japan had decided to surrender. He subsequently ran back to the office to confirm the authenticity of this announcement. As soon as he arrived at the office building, he heard his colleagues yelling from upstairs that the CPS DG had confirmed Japan's surrender. Cheerful postal staff squeezed downstairs, making it impossible for him to go upstairs to his office. Outside the post office, the people set off firecrackers to celebrate the ultimately hard-earned victory, and the city was so crowded as if it was the New Year that night.¹

After the official announcement of Japan's surrender, postal resumption arrangements

¹ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 513–514. According to Chen, this happened on 9 August, which seems to be incorrect as, based on Chen Kewen's dairy and *Shenbao*, the correct date is 10 August. See Chen Kewen, *Chen Kewen riji 1937–1952*, vol. 2, 1000–1001. 'Bocitan xuanyan Ri jieshou jingguo' 波次坦宣言日接受經過 (The Process of Japan's Acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration), *Shenbao*, 16 August 1945, 1.

seemed to be in order. On 17 August 1945, information about the resumption of services that appeared in the Chongqing press showed that the CPS had been working with the military from Chongqing and Chengdu to get mail to the main Japanese-occupied cities, such as Nanjing, Shanghai, Beiping, and Tianjin, and airmail to Shanghai was restored immediately.² On 21 August, postal employees in Shanghai also took the initiative to contact Chongqing. They expressed their welcome for the DG's leadership and requested a copy of the postage and personnel regulations in the Nationalist and formerly occupied areas so that the national postal service could be uniform throughout the country as soon as possible.³ In Guangzhou, the Postmaster, Li Yishen 黎儀燊, who used to play a crucial role in the maintenance of south-east China's domestic and international postal service during the war,⁴ took over the Japanese postal service in Guangzhouwan. This was previously controlled by the French since it has been a French Concession since the late Qing period before the area was occupied by the Japanese military. It now became a branch of the CPS for the first time.⁵

International postal services also gradually recovered, but it was slower than that domestic mail transit. In October 1945, the US Postal Service began accepting mail to China,⁶ while some other shorter international transport routes were reconstructed later. The Hong Kong-Shanghai line, for instance, started to deliver postcards and registered mail on 30 November 1945.⁷ The information appeared in the *North-China Daily News*, an English-

² 'Youzheng fuyuan' 郵政復員 (Postal Resumption), *Dagong wanbao* (大公晚報), 17 August 1945, 1.

³ 'Jing Hu jijiang tong you' 京滬即將通郵 (Nanjing and Shanghai will Open up Postal Services Soon), *Dagong wanbao*, 25 August 1945, 1.

⁴ He Jie 何傑, 'Kangzhan shiqi Guangzhouwan zhi Suixi guoji you lu' 抗戰時期廣州灣至遂溪國際郵路 (International Postal Route from Port Bayard to Suixi during the Anti-Japanese War), *Youshi yanjiu* 34 (July 2017): 132–143.

⁵ 'Youju zhaodai jizhe' 郵局招待記者 (The Post Office's Reception for Reporters), *Zhongshan ribao* (中山日報), 24 November 1945, 5.

⁶ 'Postal Service to China Resumed,' *North-China Daily News*, 22 October 1945, 4. The information was received from Washington on 20 October.

⁷ 'Registered and Postcard Mail Service between Shanghai and Hongkong Resumed Yesterday,' *North-China*

language newspaper in Shanghai, which shows that this was also related to the complete resumption of global postal shipping and foreigners' expectations and urgent needs. In addition, it shows that the most urgent priority of this postal resumption was the need for domestic post service and its reunification of the postal services.

While the situation became gradually better, the postal resumption still struggled with the impact of the war on transportation. Just after the war, postal staff had been dispatched to areas formerly occupied by Japan to take over the postal service,⁸ but many postal routes and some transportation had not yet been restored, including international postal exchange. *Dongnan ribao* 東南日報 (South-east Daily), a Guomintang publication in the Zhejiang and Fujian areas, had a special column for readers' letters, in which people in Fujian, the original hometown of many expatriate Chinese, queried whether their mail could be sent to South East Asia. In October 1945, a reader named Liu Baogeng was concerned about not being able to communicate with Singapore, while another, Shen Ying, cared about the postal resumption of correspondence with Manila. Although these two places had been taken over by the Allies after the war, their external communications with China seem to have been limited. The local Post Office's response was also published by the newspapers. It explained that the post to Singapore had not been re-established at that moment, but the CPS would seek other routes along which to forward the mail if there were any need. Even though the post to the Philippines was available at that time, the mail had to be redirected through the US postal service.⁹ Although the interaction between the readers and the Post Office was possibly deliberately arranged in order to update the public, the need for postal communication via

Daily News, 1 December 1945, 4.

⁸ 'Jing Hu jijiang tong you,' *Dagong wanbao*, 25 August 1945, 1.

⁹ 'Feilübin youjien huifu shouji' 菲律賓郵件恢復收寄(The Resumption of Mail to the Philippines), *Dongnan ribao*, 17 October 1945, 4.

the newspapers just after the war demonstrates that it was a matter of the people's concern.

In addition, many transport routes had not been entirely reconnected as they were before the war. As the Guangdong Post Office suggested, the postal delay was unavoidable under limited transport conditions. It, however, claimed that it had tried to develop vehicle delivery into inland areas to increase the efficiency of domestic services, while the international routes to Europe and the US had been reconnected by several alternative air routes. For example, differently from the previous practice via Hong Kong, the international airmail was sent to Kolkata by Chongqing and then transferred to Europe and North America by Pan American Airways and British Overseas Airways, respectively.¹⁰

Airmail was a significant trend in postal communication after the war. Not only for international communication but also China's domestic postal routes relied on air transport. Due to the destruction of land infrastructure during the war, air transport immediately became a useful means for postal services, especially considering the time efficiency. The inland airmail service was rapidly established with the assistance of Nationalist military aircraft in early September 1945. The Allies' main air force base in Zhijiang 芷江, Hunan, became the main air transport hub between Chongqing, Nanjing, and Shanghai. The Nationalist army allowed the shipping of five kilograms of airmail per day by its planes between Zhijiang and Nanjing to support postal resumption.¹¹ As civil aviation resumed later, the airmail service was more widely run across the country. The CPS encouraged people to use the airmail service in order to more effectively satisfy the needs of postal communication, especially for commerce and business purposes. At that time, local Post Offices often

¹⁰ 'Guoji youdi shang changtong' 國際郵遞尚暢通 (International Postal Delivery Goes Well), *Zhongshan ribao*, 1 December 1945, 3.

¹¹ 'Zhijing Jing Hu jian ke tong hangyou' 芷江京滬間可通航郵 (Airmail Is Available Between Zhijiang and Nanjing-Shanghai), *Dongnan ribao*, 2 September 1945, 3.

announced airmail collection and dispatch times to the public in newspapers as long as a new air route stayed open. *Jianguo ribao* 建國日報, a post-war local newspaper in Beiping, reported that the Beiping Post Office announced airmail departure times as the China National Aviation Corporation's (CNAC) Shanghai–Beiping route was resumed in November, and it additionally stopped in Tianjin from early December 1945.¹² An airmail service between Beiping and Chongqing became available and covered by three flights a week because the CNAC resumed direct civil air transport between the two cities on 13 December 1945.¹³

With the Post Office's promotion, sending airmail became a popular and accessible option. The Post Office reminded senders to stick sufficient postage stamps on their mail, or else they would be delivered as surface mail.¹⁴ The people would also take the initiative to request that the Post Office release flight information. In January 1946, a letter to a Nanchang local newspaper, *Huaguang ribao* 華光日報, questioned why there were no aircraft flying in the sky every day, but the Post Office were still able to deal with a large amount of airmail in Nanchang. The reader speculated that these items of mail would not have been carried by air but by land transport. He demanded the Post Office explain and announce the flight details to the public.¹⁵ A few days later, the newspaper published the Jiangxi Postal Administration's response stating that the flight shipping information had been posted on the bulletin board of the Post Office. Regarding actual transshipment, it confirmed that Nanchang and Jiujiang had not yet opened for aviation. Instead, airmail was sent to Hankou, Nanjing, or Shanghai for

¹² 'Hu-Ping hangyun' 滬平航郵 (Shanghai-Beiping Airmail), *Jianguo ribao* (Beiping), 20 December 1945, 2.

¹³ 'Youju zhao shou hangkung youjian' 郵局照收航空郵件 (The Post Office Accepts Airmail), *Jianguo ribao*, 16 December 1945, 2.

¹⁴ 'Yao tie zu youpiao' 要貼足郵票 (Adhere Sufficient Postage Stamps), *Minguo ribao*, 30 January 1946, 3.

¹⁵ Minhua 民華, 'Ben shi hangkong youdi xiwang gongbu banqi' 本市航空郵遞希望公布班期 (A Hope to Announce the Flights of Airmail Delivery in This City), *Huaguang ribao* (Nanchang), 23 January 1946, 4.

departures.¹⁶ The interaction between the people and the Post Office in newspapers now shows the demand for postal communications, but the vigorous development of airmail after the War is also visible.

Under the post-war period's limited transport conditions, airmail seemed to be a solution to the unrecovered postal land and water routes and increasing delivery efficiency. In December 1945, the CPS first requested that flights carry surface mail if the room were available.¹⁷ In early 1946, the DG issued a secret order to subordinate Post Offices, which said that, in order to address the delays, express delivery, registered mail, and flat special *pingkuai* (平快) letters and postcards could be dispatched by air between *shoufu* 收復(reconquered) areas and the Chinese home front, even if the mail were not paid for as airmail.¹⁸ At the end of 1946, the DG of the CPS further secretly ordered that all domestic letters, whether air postage had been paid or not, would be shipped by air if this would save more time in delivery.¹⁹ This means that the mail could be delivered by air without prior notice, nor did the Post Office have to collect airmail postage fees. For the airmail service itself, the Communication Ministry also ordered the Post Office to process air letters and postcards unrestrictedly in the early spring of 1946.²⁰ For the postal authority, air freight was a feasible method of dealing with the insurmountable issues of postal transport after the War. Until the end of 1946, the Post Office publicly admitted that the difficulties of land and water transport resumption had often caused postal delays, especially for long-haul destinations. The Post Office was further instructed to unrestrictedly deliver not only air letters and postcards but

¹⁶ 'Jiangxi youzheng guanli ju gonghan, No 65.6, 6 February 1946' 江西郵政管理局公函 (Jiangxi Postal Administration's Official Letter), *Huaguang ribao*, 13 February 1946, 4.

¹⁷ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 434.

¹⁸ Mitongxunling (密通訓令) No. 28, 31, in Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 439.

¹⁹ Mitongxunling No. 90, 92, in Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 460–461.

²⁰ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 443.

also newspapers, publications, and small packages (*xiaobao* 小包), even if the mail were to be only partially transported by air routes. At that time, post from Changshu, for example, to other Chinese cities, such as Beijing, Chongqing, Lanzhou, and Guangzhou, would take one to two weeks to ship. Airmail could drastically reduce shipping time to about two to three days.²¹

The airmail service significantly improved the efficiency of postal communication under limited conditions after the war. This once again shows that the Post Office, as a state-run service, was responsible for ensuring the speed and efficiency with which people communicate with each other. The Post Office thus further contributes to the wide publicity associated with airmail. It produced slide films that were projected in cinemas, print advertisements displayed on the Post Offices' windows or exterior walls, painted the characters *hangkong xin zui xunsu* 航空信最迅速 (airmail is the fastest) on postboxes, broadcast adverts on the radio, and used advertising postmarks on mail.²²

On the other hand, the postal service heavily relied on air transport, which, although it facilitated efficient communications, caused shipping costs to rise. In fact, the CPS had been struggling with financial distress since the war, and the peace did not allow it to revive. The CPS itself suffered financial losses and owed postal employees' salaries from the wartime period. The slow resumption of China's land transport after the war also troubled the postal operation.²³ The CPS heavily relied on government subsidies, while the conflict between Guomindang and the CCP escalated throughout the country (which will be discussed later).

²¹ 'Youju wu xianzhi' 郵局無限制 (The Post Office Does Not Restrict [Airmail]), *Xinshengbao* 新生報 (Changshu), 10 December 1946, 4; Mitongxunling (密通訓令) No. 78, in Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 458.

²² Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 461.

²³ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 438–439.

This not only caused inflation to rise but also increased its operating costs and decreased delivery efficiency. Although the government had raised funds to rebuild every means of transport and communications, including the postal service, they were insufficient to save the postal service from the crisis, not to mention the overall financial difficulties and the resumption of inflation in 1946 that left the government in trouble.²⁴ In fact, the Post Office reported that it lost over ten billion Chinese dollars in one month in September 1946, even after the postage price increase.²⁵ The increased air transport was, therefore, able to improve the postal service's efficiency, while the expenses that this produced, conversely, became another great burden.

The airmail operation depended on coordination with airlines. Based on postal regulations, the national postal service had the right to manage civil transport operators in order to cooperate with them when carrying mail with a freight subsidy. However, the costs of air freight continued to rise after the War due to inflation, while the airmail rates did not follow in adjusting. In October 1945, all types of postage rates were subject to constant increases, except for airmail. The domestic ordinary letter fees increased tenfold, from two to twenty dollars per twenty grams, just a month after the war.²⁶ In contrast, the airmail fees were upheld and did not fluctuate significantly until April 1946.²⁷ Perhaps it was because the volume of airmail had not been initially as large as it became later on. During wartime, access to air transport was limited: some civil aeroplanes were incorporated into the Chinese Army, and some cooperated with the army as military cargo planes that were used to support

²⁴ Chang Kia-ngau, *The Inflationary Spiral*, 69–72. Chang suggested that the end of the war brought a short period of price stability, but a sharp rise in inflation was seen in 1946.

²⁵ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 459.

²⁶ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 427.

²⁷ Liu Chenghan, ed., *Zhongguo youzi kao* 中國郵資考 (Research on Chinese Postage) (Taipei: Jiaotong bu Youzheng zongju, 1947), 190.

military operations. In addition, flights to Chinese coastal areas were almost completely interrupted due to the Japanese occupation in east China, while the fuel supply for international aviation was also scarce. Air cargo capacity was significantly reduced, which meant that delivery of heavy mail, such as publications and parcels, was gradually suspended.²⁸ These led to a reduction in airmail. Nevertheless, a more specific reason might be that a dual adjustment of postage tracks for air and surface delivery was implemented during wartime. The airmail adjustment was based on the increase in air freight rates, while surface postage increases depended on currency devaluation, which was adjusted more frequently.²⁹

The wartime measures could not predict post-war conditions and development. Air freight fees became heavy expenses that still did not reflect the actual costs, and this nearly caused a crisis for airmail. According to the CPS records, from October 1945, the subsidies that the Post Office paid to airlines were almost the same as the airmail rates that it had collected. This did not include other administrative expenses or the fees that the Post Office needed to cover to turn over thirty-five dollars per kilogram of airmail to the MOC until January 1946.³⁰ To make matters worse, the low subsidies influenced airlines' willingness to help carry mail. The two main airlines of China, the Central Air Transport Co. (CATC, 中央航空) and the CNAC, refused to make room for newspapers and small packets in March 1946, when the Chinese government requested unlimited airmail delivery and simultaneously attempted to resume heavier mail's air freight.³¹ This action clamped down on the overly cheap delivery prices and trying to bargain with the postal authorities. As a result, the Post Office had to raise the airmail

²⁸ Liu Chenghan, ed., *Zhongguo youzi kao*, 189.

²⁹ Liu Chenghan, ed., *Zhongguo youzi kao*, 189.

³⁰ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 439.

³¹ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 442–443.

postage rate and make a new agreement for cooperation with the airlines, in exchange for their assistance with airfreight. The airmail prices could no longer withstand the pressure of inflation and the rise in transport costs. The airmail rate was first adjusted in April 1946.³² The new domestic postage rates for airmail increased tenfold, from three to thirty dollars per ten grammes, in addition to the ordinary postage, and that took effect in May 1946.³³ Yet, in 1946 price inflation rose sharply and was nearly out of control.³⁴ The hyperinflation was also immediately reflected in rising postage rates. In November 1946, ordinary letter postage had risen to one hundred Chinese dollars per twenty grams, while airmail charged an additional one thousand dollars.³⁵

Although it seemed that an agreement had been reached, the fact was that the airlines did not initially agree with the MOC's conditions. The post-war inflation had had an impact on commercial air transport in China, while freight demand increased. The two airlines wanted to operate their own parcel business, but this would violate the convention of state-managed postal transit. On 25 June 1946, both sides eventually reached a compromise that the two airlines were allowed to run their own parcel business with the same freight rates in addition to the Post Office's parcel transit. Air parcel delivery, thus, did not resume until 15 July 1946. Nevertheless, the Post Office reluctantly agreed to pay the full gross weight charge, without a discount, in order to send their stocked mail out quickly.³⁶

The increase in airmail fees also aroused dissatisfaction among the people. A reader's letter in *Xinan ribao* 西南日報, a local newspaper in Chongqing, satirised the fare increase as

³² 'Hangkong youjian' 航空郵件 (Airmail), *Xinan ribao*, 22 April 1946, 3.

³³ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 439, 444.

³⁴ Chang Kia-ngau, *The Inflationary Spiral*, 69–72.

³⁵ Liu Chenghan, ed., *Zhongguo youzi kao*, 190, 193.

³⁶ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 448–450.

being ‘indeed a clever strategy (*banfa* 辦法)’. It said that the strategy’s purpose was to reduce the volume of use because the low-priced airmail led to a large amount of usage.³⁷ This might be theoretically reasonable in terms of economics, while the reader implied that the incompetent officials only thought of reducing usage rather than resolving the increase in the airmail demand. This would, therefore, limit membership of the airmail user groups to the rich only. He added, sarcastically, that if a price increase was ‘a clever strategy,’ why not solve the famine that was occurring at that time by raising grain prices, and thus only help to survive those who were officials and the rich?³⁸

Nevertheless, with the rise in airmail need and the improved efficiency of delivery, the airmail service was welcomed by the public, especially for commercial use. The press and the publishing industry, in particular, relied on faster postal communication. In November 1946, publishers in Nanjing and Shanghai even petitioned the Post Office to lift the restrictions on airmail for books and newspapers.³⁹ In addition, when the land transport between the north and the south was still difficult, in early 1946, the airmail service was said to be the only feasible postal transit that was unaffected in northern China.⁴⁰ Airmail was, thus, also a better option improving communication when surface transport was much more difficult under post-war conditions.

³⁷ Lu Rui 魯銳, ‘Guanchang de “banfa”’ 官場的辦法 (The Official Way), *Xi’nan ribao*, 18 April 1946, 4.

³⁸ Lu Rui, ‘Guanchang de “banfa”’, *Xi’nan ribao*, 18 April 1946, 4.

³⁹ Shanghai publishers’ influences and voices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were studied by Fei-Hsien Wang. Wang’s work skips the periods of the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War due to the limited sources. See Fei-Hsien Wang, *Pirates and Publishers: A Social History of Copyright in Modern China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019). Nevertheless, Shanghai publishers had been active in wartime, at least in the context of mail delivery and postage. For example, the Shanghai Booksellers’ Guild actively appealed to the Shanghai Post Office to resume the postal service and petitioned for no additional wartime postage between 1937 and 1939 in order to facilitate the book delivery nationwide, S313-1-201, SMA; the petition during the Civil War, Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 457; Liu Chenghan, ed., *Zhongguo youzi kao*, 190.

⁴⁰ ‘Youju liyong hanban kefu tielu zuai,’ *Huabei ribao*, 20 January 1946, 2.

2. The Challenge of the CCP's Postal Service

The post-war resumption of domestic postal communication was not as easy as planned. The conflict, and ultimately the Civil War between the CCP and the Guomindang, in fact, exacerbated the transport difficulties between the north and south. The CCP contended with the Nationalists for the territories previously occupied by Japan during the war and speedily expanded in north China between 1945 and 1946.⁴¹ Meanwhile, the Soviet Union had entered the war against Japan just a few days before Japan's surrender, and had invaded Manchuria.⁴² This also deepened the complexity of the post-war situation and had a critical impact on the resumption of the postal system as a 'national' service, causing postal disruption in many areas again.

The CCP had already established its own postal service in 1928. It first appeared in CCP-controlled areas in Jiangxi, and it also issued postal stamps in those 'Soviet Zones,' although it was not regarded as being a formal member and partner in the national and international postal organisations (Figure 5.1). At that time, the scope of CCP's postal service was narrow. It was only operated between CCP regions, with no nationwide or worldwide reach. However, according to a CCP stamp catalogue published by the PRC Postal Service in the 1950s, 'the People's Postal Service was not suspended from operation in the liberated areas' even during the Sino-Japanese War.⁴³ Nevertheless, it seems that, in fact, its

⁴¹ The CCP had already begun to contact the Japanese and prepared for receiving Japanese-controlled areas since spring 1945. After the Japanese surrender, the CCP took immediate action in North China. See Hans van de Ven, *China at War: Triumph and Tragedy in the Emergence of the New China 1937–1952* (London: Profile Books, 2017), 209–215. For the CCP's actions and challenge to Guomindang after the Sino-Japanese War, also see Suzanne Pepper, *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945–1949* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 9–16.

⁴² Diana Lary, *China's Civil War: A Social History, 1945–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 24.

⁴³ China Philatelic Company, *Postage Stamps of the People's Republic of China* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1959), 7–8.

continuation in wartime relied on cooperation with the CPS, while the purpose of its establishment was not purely for the public's postal needs.



Figure 5.1: The Red Mail Service's Red postage stamp of Hunan-Jiangxi border provinces (*Xiang Gan biansheng chise youpiao*), 2 cents, 1928. Source: The China Philatelic Company, *Postage Stamps of the People's Republic of China*, 7.

The CCP's postal service in wartime focused more on propaganda than people's communication, according to its internal instructions. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, the CCP established several *kangRi genjudi* 抗日根據地 (Anti-Japanese Base Areas) in the CCP-controlled areas and strongholds across the country. In January 1941, a wartime instruction of the CCP on postal services issued by the CCP's 18th Group Army requested its local post offices in the *kangRi genjudi* to 'respect the [CPS's] postal regulations, administration and work systems, and fully facilitate professional practice and protect [the postal service] well'.⁴⁴ It suggests that this postal service was not capable of replacing the CPS, especially since the latter had a relatively legitimate monopoly of the state. In addition, the CCP recognised that the postal service was 'a national enterprise with an international

⁴⁴ 'Guomin gemingjun de shiba jituanjun guanyu youwu wenti de tongling, 1942.1' 國民革命軍第十八集團軍關於郵務問題的通令 (The 18th Group Army of the National Revolutionary Army's Circular on Postal Issues), *Shandong sheng zhanshi youzheng dang'an shiliao 1942-1946* (Shandong Province Wartime Postal Historical Documents), unpublished, Y12-1-116, SMA, vol. 1, 1-2.

nature,⁴⁵ which implies that the CCP was conscious of the international characteristics of modern postal service.

Later, the CCP's Authority of Shandong *kangRi genjudi* ordered the establishment of a temporary wartime post office and printed a five-star stamp to provide for use between Communist-controlled areas and those areas occupied by Japan for the stay-behind operations, where the CCP secretly operated guerrilla warfare. This wartime post office was first established and based in Qinghe 清河, Shandong, and it was expected to be a provincewide postal service. The CCP claimed that this postal service assisted, instead of obstructing, the CPS, especially those CPS branches that had been controlled by the Japanese.⁴⁶ Still, its main purpose of establishment was not to meet the public's needs but for the spreading of propaganda. The service did not appear to have been very successful. It was only maintained intermittently and often interrupted by Japanese operations. After two years, in 1944, it was integrated into a *sanwei yiti* 三位一體 (trinity) system, bringing transport, postal communication, and newspapers together.⁴⁷ This was expected to be a unified communication institution, which was not only carrying information but, more importantly, sent out the Communist newspapers. A work report in August 1944, reviewed it, stating that it was wrong to spend energy reconnecting interrupted routes, building transport infrastructure, and developing the organisation rather than prioritising its task of delivering

⁴⁵ 'Guomin gemingjun de shiba jituanjun guanyu youwu wenti de tongling, 1942.1,' unpublished, Y12-1-116, SMA, vol. 1, 1–2.

⁴⁶ 'Shandongsheng zhanshi gongzuo tuixing weiyuanhui guanyu jianli zhanshi youju de jue ding 1942.2.7' 山東省戰時工作推行委員會關於建立戰時郵局的決定 (Decision of the Shandong Wartime Executive Committee on the Establishment of Wartime Post Offices), *Shandongsheng zhanshi youzheng dang'an shiliao 1942–1946*, vol. 1, 3–4; 'Shandongsheng jiefangqu jianyou wuzho nian dashi jianbiao' 山東省解放區建郵五週年大事簡表 (Table of the Five-year Postal Service in Shandong Liberated Area), *Shandong sheng zhanshi youzheng dang'an shiliao 1942–1946*, vol. 2, 291–295.

⁴⁷ 'Shandongsheng zhanshi gongzuo tuixing weiyuanhui guanyu jianli zhanshi youju de jue ding 1942.2.7,' *Shandongsheng zhanshi youzheng dang'an shiliao 1942–1946*, vol. 1, 3–4; 'Shandongsheng jiefangqu jianyou wuzho nian dashi jianbiao,' *Shandong sheng zhanshi youzheng dang'an shiliao 1942–1946*, vol. 2, 291–295.

the Party's newspapers.⁴⁸ Although the review used the typical self-criticism (自我批判) rhetoric of the CCP, it shows that this wartime postal service, in the *sanwei yiti* system, was intended for propaganda, and was not mainly to satisfy people's communication needs. There is no clear evidence to confirm how it established the postal connection between the CPS and the Japanese-controlled postal service, nor can we tell whether it had international postal exchanges. However, it was expected to be a useful weapon of propaganda, and it clearly functioned as a communication method between Communist-controlled zones.

After the Japanese surrender in 1945, the CCP's postal service expanded taking advantage of the Chinese Civil War in north China, and it obviously desired to replace the CPS's sphere of influence,⁴⁹ while the CPS was administered by the Nationalists and was recognised by the UPU as the legitimate national postal authority of China. In Manchuria, except for the Soviet Union-occupied areas, the CCP army first established bases in suburbs and secondary towns. By contrast, the Nationalists mainly controlled the cities — a symbolic transfer of sovereignty over Manchuria. As a result, the CPS could only manage its business in the cities. Ceng Yuming 曾玉明, who was the first Director of the DG Office in Shanghai after the war, was appointed a Director of the DG Office in Changchun in November 1945,⁵⁰ but he and other postal staff who were responsible for the takeover work did not arrive until January 1946 with other Nationalist civil and military officials.⁵¹ To make matters worse, after their arrival, the Nationalist government's takeover progress was not going well under the complicated

⁴⁸ 'Liangnianlai Shandong zhanshi youzheng gongzuo zongjieji jinhou renwu' 兩年來山東戰時郵政工作總結及今後任務 (Summary of the Two-year Wartime Postal Operations and Future Tasks), *Shandongsheng zhanshi youzheng dang'an shiliao 194–1946*, vol. 2, 125.

⁴⁹ *Youdian shi banji shi, Zhongguo renmin youdian shi* (The People's History of China's Postal and Telecommunications) (Beijing: Renmin youdian chubanshe, 1984), 212.

⁵⁰ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 432.

⁵¹ 'Guojun luxu kongyun Changchun' 國軍陸續空運長春 (The National Army Continues Air Freight to Changchun), *Shenbao*, 11 January 1946, 1.

situation that pertained in Manchuria. This also affected the progress of the postal takeover. After only three months, the DG Office in Changchun and the other postal staff who had been sent from the south to the Jilin Postal Administration had no choice but to eventually retreat to Shenyang.⁵² The CPS service in Manchuria was, therefore, rather limited.

The complicated situation in Manchuria had a negative impact on the complex currency system for postage calculations and the different authorities who were operating unconnected postal services.⁵³ It also affected the postage stamp issue in Manchuria. At that time, the CPS was not able to rapidly take the postal service in this vast territory over, and the north-south transport had not yet been resumed. The shipping of new postage stamps from the south was delayed, while the postal service had been ordered not to suspend its activities under any circumstances, and hence the CPS allowed Manchukuo stamps to be temporarily used with the overprinting of the Chinese characters for 'the Republic of China.'⁵⁴ As a result, local Post Offices that were located in areas that had not been controlled either by the Communists or the Nationalists issued a large number of overprinted stamps to meet the postal communication needs. The CPS subsequently requested that all overprinted stamps be invalid after 1 April 1946, but the slow recovery of transport resulted in insufficient stamps being shipped from the south and the continuation of the use of overprinted Manchukuo stamps after the deadline. It has been said that eighty per cent of Manchukuo overprinted stamps were unauthorised and counterfeited.⁵⁵ In addition to Manchukuo stamps, the Post Office also authorised the overprinting of *Xian Dongbei tieyong* 限東北貼用 (restricted for

⁵² Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 444. For Guomindang's defeat in Manchuria after the Soviet Union retreated in 1946, see Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 36.

⁵³ Zhonghua renmin gongheguo Chanyexinxibu, ed., *Zhongguo youpiao shi*, vol. 4 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2003), 88–90.

⁵⁴ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 431.

⁵⁵ Zhonghua renmin gongheguo Chanyexinxibu, ed., *Zhongguo youpiao shi*, vol. 4, 93–95.

use in north-eastern provinces) on the stamps that were issued by the previous Japanese-controlled Government Affairs Committee of North China in wartime, and that were then sent to Manchuria in response to urgent demand in February 1946 (Figure 5.2). Due to the decoupling from the Chinese currency, the overprinted stamps also have a different face value, according to the North-Eastern Provinces' Currency (*Dongbei jiusheng liutong quan* 東北九省流通券), which was created as a regional currency in Manchuria to temporarily separate its financial market from that of China proper.⁵⁶ The case of the chaotic situation of stamp issuance shows that the postal service was thrown into confusion in Manchuria.



Figure 5.2: Former Japanese Government Affairs Committee of North China's stamps, with overprinting reading 'Restricted for Use in the North-eastern Provinces, 1946.' Source: https://www.post.gov.tw/post/internet/W_stamphouse/index_en.jsp?ID=2807&file_name=AI01&stamp_cat_standard=Definitive%20Stamps&type=2805, accessed 15 November 2020.

Manchuria may have been the most complicated area in which to operate postal services after the Second Sino-Japanese War. It was the epitome of the ensuing conflicts and competition between the Communists and the Nationalists. The overall postal service had not yet recovered from the Second Sino-Japanese War and postal communications continued to be disrupted between the two hostile regimes. The development of the Chinese Civil War also reflected the postal communication conditions of both sides. In January 1946, the Nationalist

⁵⁶ Zhonghua renmin gongheguo Chanyexinxibu, ed., *Zhongguo youpiao shi*, vol. 4, 96–97. For research on the Northeastern Provinces Currency, see, Chen Changan, *Dongbei liutong quan: Zhanhou quyuxing de huobi cuoshi 1945–1948* (Northeast China Notes: A Post-war Regional Monetary Policy) (Taipei: Guoshiquan, 2014).

MOC admitted that the government had not yet been able to control transport and communications, including postal services, in CCP-occupied areas.⁵⁷ In comparison, the CCP postal service was becoming stronger following the Sino-Japanese War. The CCP actively invested in major road rebuilding, which helped them to further control traffic arteries. In February 1946, the CCP claimed that people were able to communicate between the south and north via postal services in its controlled areas;⁵⁸ and, in April, a CCP newspaper showed that it had established postal routes along the main roads across north China and the west of Manchuria. They were the Hebei–Shanxi Line, which took six days to deliver mail, the Middle Hei–Bei (*Ji-zhong* 冀中) Line, which took fifteen days, the Hebei–Rehe–Liaoning Line — about twelve days, and the Shaanxi–Gansu–Ningxia Line — twenty-six days. In addition, these postal routes were able to connect to other CCP areas in Shandong, Henan, Suiyuan (Inner Mongolia), and central China.⁵⁹ Although the lines connected areas that were mainly located in *bianqu* 邊區 (border zones) and rural suburbs, the CCP had been trying, and, undoubtedly, were developing, a postal system that was independent from the CPS.

The CCP postal service provoked a dispute over whether the CPS's legal status was breached, and the postal communication between the two regimes became a political issue. Due to the development in north China, the CCP had controlled 400 out of 850 offices of the Hebei Postal Administration, which means almost half of the postal business in this province had been taken in April 1946. The CCP asked the CPS Hebei Office to recognise its authority,

⁵⁷ 'Jiaobu fabiao shengli yilai jiaotong yewu shishi qingxing' 交通部發表勝利以來交通業務實施情形 (MOC Published Implementation Status Report Since the Victory), *Shishi xinbao* (時事新報), edition 2, 6 January 1946, 2.

⁵⁸ 'Jiefangqu jiaotong de huifu' 解放區交通的恢復 (Resumption of Transport in Liberated areas), *Jiefang* (解放), 22 February 1946, 2.

⁵⁹ 'Huabei ge jiefangqu tongyou' 華北各解放區通郵 (Postal Communication between Liberated Areas in North China), *Jiefang*, 14 April 1946, 1.

postal stamps, and *weichi xianzhuang* 維持現狀 (maintaining the status quo) so as to ensure postal communication and keep postal staff safe working between the two regimes. This news was published in *Huabei ribao*, one of the main media of Guomindang in Beiping,⁶⁰ and it was entitled ‘CCP Army Breaches Hebei Province’s Postal Service,’ highlighting the CPS’s position and Guomindang’s anger.⁶¹ The CPS was following the Nationalist government’s orders and, theoretically, was the only national postal operator that could legitimately manage and administrate postal service nationwide. It, therefore, blockaded postal communication with the CCP-occupied areas and refused to recognise the CCP’s service and CCP postal stamps. Guomindang condemned the CCP for violating the international standard of postal services.⁶² On the other hand, the CCP blamed the situation on the fact that the Nationalists were not willing to resolve the issues of transportation and communication resumption, in violation of the armistice, but was continuing to run a transport blockade and obstruct postal operations by using postal censorship and placing post employees under arrest.⁶³ As a result, the modern type of national postal service, which was supposed to be an efficient, managed by the state, and subject to international regulations, did not work. There was no postal contact between many areas, and one could have hardly posted mail if it were sent to an address that was located in an area controlled by a rival regime.

This postal dispute during the Nationalist-Communist Civil War was more complicated than the postal disruption during the Sino-Japanese War. The CPS sacrificed its original

⁶⁰ *Huabei ribao* was hosted by the Publicity Department of Guomindang with a wider range of influences; see Duan Meiqiao, *Tou yan she tui xiang: Lun 1946–1948 nianjian Ping Jin diqu ‘xinxiezu’ wenxue sichao* (‘New Writing’ Literary Trends in the Ping-Jin Area, 1946–1948) (Taipei: Xiuwei zixun, 2008), 34.

⁶¹ ‘Gongjun pohuai Jisheng youzheng’ 共軍破壞冀省郵政 (The CCP Army Destroyed the Postal Service in Hebei), *Huabei ribao*, 15 April 1946, 1.

⁶² ‘Gongjun pohuai youzheng zhenxiang’ 共軍破壞郵政真相 (Truth of the CCP Army Destroyed the Postal Service), *Shenbao*, 23 May 1946, 2.

⁶³ Zhang Weileng 張維冷, ‘Shui huifu jiaotong? Shui zu’ai jiaotong?’ 誰恢復交通? 誰阻礙交通? (Who Resumes Transport? Who Obstructs Transport?), *Jiefang*, 27 March 1946, 3.

neutrality to place itself in a detached position, and that severely put national postal communication at risk. The CPS no longer had the licence ensured by foreign management for postal communication to work between different regimes during wars and political conflicts; nor it guaranteed service thanks to its relatively neutral position when the postal service was impacted by the war. As the previous chapter mentioned, after occupation, the Japanese established several puppet regimes in north and central China, which all claimed to be the legitimate 'Republic of China.' At that time, the postal service was able to operate as usual by not only retaining postal employees but also the institutional infrastructure, including postal stamps, which showed designs including the Chinese national symbols and ideology.

However, this was not the case after the war when the CCP tried to totally replace the postal authorities, using completely different institutions and ideology. In short, the CCP's postal service did not want to be another CPS. Instead, it challenged the CPS's authority as a national institution because its attributive 'national' became synonymous with the 'Nationalists' in the post-war situation. Therefore, the CPS had lost its neutrality, and it even dismissed its foreign management, which had helped it through previous crises. In fact, the new postal senior supervisors who were assigned to the formerly Japanese-occupied areas were all Chinese staff,⁶⁴ although there were still some foreign staff who had remained or were reinstated after the war. In July 1946, the Nationalist MOFA approved a reinstatement and retirement pension for Italian postal employees who were dismissed after the declaration of war on Italy.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, China and France signed a new treaty which the French government officially abandoned its interests in China's postal operations after the Second World War, meaning the French no longer claimed the right to intervene in the appointment

⁶⁴ Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhan shi*, 453–454.

⁶⁵ A303000000B/0035/399/0005, NAA.

of *zongban* of the CPS.⁶⁶ This was considered as a significant diplomatic achievement for China and the CPS: the Chinese government, the Nationalist, in particular, was able to ultimately exercise full autonomy, and had the complete dominance to operate the ‘national’ service as in any other sovereign state under the post-war atmosphere of national confidence.⁶⁷ The Nationalists reached the goal that they had been pursuing of strengthening their control over organisations, such as the Salt Administration and the Customs, to which it had management rights shared with foreigners. However, the indirect consequence seemed to count against the CPS after the Civil War broke out. This does not only imply that foreign management could have played the same role between Guomindang and the CCP as they did during previous conflicts but also there was no other intermediary replacing the vacancy that foreigners had filled.

The Nationalists seemed unwilling to compromise with the CCP on postal communication in any way, even though the success of modern postal communication depended on multiple compromises. At least, with previous experiences of postal negotiations in China, as the previous chapters have discussed, the priority for any regime was to ensure a good ‘national’ postal service that could not be unobstructed, despite the terminology of ‘national’ or ‘state-owned’ for the postal service. The fact was that the mode of postal communication had developed in order to become a way for people to communicate across boundaries around the world, including those in Chinese society at that time. The political trouble in relation to the postal service under the Civil War conditions was never just

⁶⁶ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 449; *The Treaty between ROC and France for the Relinquishment of Extraterritorial Rights in China and the Regulation of Related Matters* (Traité Franco-Chinois de renonciation a l'extraterritorialite en Chine et aux droits y relatifs; 中法關於法國放棄在華治外法權及其有關特權條約), signed 28 February 1946, NCL 003905316, esp. Article 9.

⁶⁷ This sentiment can be seen from the CPS's publication and postal staff's recollection. Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 449; Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 50–51.

about the dispute and competition between two parties for power, but it also had a profound impact on the people.

3. People's Voice from the Bottom Up

The postal communication between the Guomindang and CCP areas was not always cut off. In order to resolve postal disruption after the first armistice in early 1946, which was mediated by the US and George C. Marshall (1880-1959),⁶⁸ the CPS DG secretly ordered that the postal service should be resumed in non-conflict areas to facilitate the service to the public in March 1946. According to this order, the Post Office temporarily accepted private and commercial letters sent from the CCP's postal authority but would obliterate the CCP postal stamps that were stuck on the envelopes. The mail would not be charged postage since a fine would be sent to and received from the CCP-controlled areas.⁶⁹

In addition, the CPS authorised local Post Offices to negotiate with the CCP during the armistice. For example, the CCP's Shanxi and Hebei postal authorities sent representatives to Beijing to negotiate with the CPS's Postal Commissioner of Hebei in March 1946.⁷⁰ As a result, the postal service across the areas controlled by the two sides was partially accessible. Several areas of north China allowed both sides' post workers across the border for mail delivery in May 1946. Meanwhile, the Shanghai Post Office also exchanged mail with the CCP in its precinct, where six post offices (Qidong 啟東, Dong'an zhen 東安鎮, Jiulong 久隆, Beixin zhen 北新鎮, Sanyang zhen 三陽鎮, and Qilin zhen 麒麟鎮) were controlled by the CCP.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 31–32.

⁶⁹ Secret circular no. 31 by Postal Commissioner of Hebei, 4 April 1946, *Tianjin youzheng shiliao*, vol. 4, 78.

⁷⁰ 'Zhonggong qu tongyou wenti' 中共區通郵問題 (Issue of Postal Communication with the CCP areas), *Shenbao*, 31 March 1946, 1.

⁷¹ 'Quanguo manbu le yinmai' 全國滿佈了陰霾 (The Country Is in a Haze), *Shenbao*, 18 May 1946, 4; 'Shanghai yu Zhonggong quyu kaishi "jiaohuan xing" tongyou' 上海與中共區域開始「交換性」通郵 (Postal 'Exchange'

These cases of postal resumption immediately raised the issue of whether to recognise the CCP's postage stamps. The Nationalist MOC's order did not allow it, while one of the CCP's north China authority's conditions was that its stamps must be recognised. The CCP even used this to suspend postal exchange.⁷² However, at the same time, the CCP's stamps appeared in Shanghai from the Jiangsu and Anhui CCP areas through the bilateral postal exchange.⁷³ It can be seen that, despite the CPS's guideline, the postal communication varied from place to place, and local postal authorities seemed to be authorised, respectively, to deal with postal resumption and its negotiations. In any case, reliable postal communication between the two sides was still difficult, but not impossible, during this short armistice period. No matter how frustrating the political discord was, both postal organisations tried their best to maintain the postal services connecting to the other within an acceptable scope.

Tongyou

However, the dawn was not as expected. The tensions between Guomindang and the CCP rose speedily, and they developed into an open civil war in June 1946. Since then, postal communication between the two regimes had been totally cut off. The postal service was no longer a stably accessible system for the people, as it was supposed to be. *Tongyou* 通郵, postal communication between any two places, did matter to the public during the Chinese Civil War. With the deadlock of the war, *tongyou* became an increasingly complicated problem and was often reported by the media. Judging from these reports, the disruption of the postal communication between Guomindang and CCP areas was not just a political issue, but the

Has Started between Shanghai and CCP's Areas), *Dagong wanbao*, 21 May 1946, 1.

⁷² Hebei Postal Administration to Beiping Postal Administration, 21 May 1946, *Tianjin youzheng shiliao*, vol. 4, 81–88.

⁷³ 'Quanguo manbu le yinmai,' *Shenbao*, 18 May 1946, 4.

communication system and people's needs were also profoundly affected.

Users' participation was an essential component of effective postal communication since the national postal service had become the main means of communication in Republican China. As repeatedly mentioned above, postal communication concerns all of those people who use and need postal services in the modern world, although it is indeed related to politics and to the power of the state, as well as being extended out to international relations. In September 1946, a complaint letter written by a reader, who lived in Tai county, Jiangsu, to the editor of *Dongnan ribao*, described the postal service thus: 'the postal routes are sometimes open, sometimes not, and many items of mail are put on hold.' He found that these postal issues caused him not to receive the newspaper to which he had been subscribing for a long time.⁷⁴ Although there was no further information indicating why mail delivery was delayed, this shows that the reader did care about the postal service's efficiency, which was getting worse. Meanwhile, it also illustrated that the postal service was involved in media communication in Republican China. Newspapers and periodicals should have been registered at the Post Office, and then they were eligible for special postage rates and delivery by post. Since the postal service had developed to become a reliable and state-owned monopoly at that time, most newspapers were registered with the Post Office, and they printed the certificate number issued by the CPS on their front pages, next to the names of the newspapers. Not just private correspondence but also mass media communication were, therefore, affected by postal disruption or delays (Figure 5.3).

⁷⁴ Bao Tianzheng, 'Youfei jiajia qing xian zhengdun youzheng' 郵費加價請先整頓郵政 (Please Organise the Postal Service prior to Increasing Postage Rates), *Dongnan ribao*, 6 October 1946, 6.



Figure 5.3: A special postage certificate number for registration on *Huabei ribao*, 1949. This shows that the newspaper had been registered with the CPS; the licence number is for Beiping Post Office No. 5.

Postal Service Q&A

It is worth exploring how the postal authority interacted with the public in the media to more efficiently convey postal measures during the Civil War. After the Sino-Japanese War, the CPS seemed to notice that there was a lack of sufficient communication with the public, which might be detrimental to expanding the service and disseminating new information to users. In 1947, the CPS established its Public Service Department (公眾服務課) in Nanjing for nationwide public relations, while subordinated postal district administrations also installed corresponding units. For example, the Beiping Post Office, thus, created a Public Service

Section (公眾服務組) to 'listen to the public's opinions and critiques' and improve the service and relations with the public.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the section mostly focused on communicating and conveying postal information. It cooperated with *Huabei ribao* to establish a weekly column, usually printed on Saturdays, called *youzheng wenda* 郵政問答 (Postal Service Q&A) to cover readers' questions about the post from 26 July 1947.⁷⁶

This was a free service, and readers were allowed to send their inquiries to either the newspaper or the Post Office by Freepost, as long as the envelopes were marked 'youzheng gongshi' 郵政公事 (postal affairs) on the stamp corner.⁷⁷ Although the column was not as regular as had originally been expected, it continued publishing for a total of forty-eight issues, until the end of November 1948, just before the CCP-Guomindang's Pingjin Campaign 平津會戰 (also known as the Battle of Beiping-Tianjin), when the CCP army besieged Beiping and successfully took control of the city in January 1949.⁷⁸ From September 1948, it was expanded to become a bi-weekly special column covering the original Q&A section, as well as philatelic information, postal news, essays, and even opinion survey questionnaires, which readers were asked to complete and send back.

As the Post Office claimed, the establishment of the postal service was for the public.⁷⁹ The column shows that the Post Office tried to put this idea into practice, but it was set up for more than to approach people and provide a space for opinion exchange. The users' and the

⁷⁵ Zhao Rongquan 趙榮琮, 'Youju gongzhong fuwuzu shezhi de jingguo' 郵局公眾服務組設立的經過 (Course of the Establishment of the Public Service Section in the Post Office), *Huabei ribao*, 18 September 1948, 6.

⁷⁶ 'Zhengshe "youzheng wenda" qishi' 增設「郵政問題」啟示 (Announcement of the Establishment of Postal Service Q&A Column), *Huabei ribao*, 21 July 1947, 4. For the first issue of the column, see 'Youzheng wenda,' *Huabei ribao*, 26 July 1947, 4.

⁷⁷ The form of Freepost for postal affairs has been inherited by both China's and Taiwan's postal services today.

⁷⁸ Frank Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945–1957* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 22–23.

⁷⁹ Zhao Rongquan, 'Youju gongzhong fuwuzu shezhi de jingguo,' *Huabei ribao*, 18 September 1948, 6.

postal authority's interactions took place on a platform during the Civil War where the postal service could notify the public of the service update by responding to enquiries but it is also a way for us today to observe the Civil War's intermittent impact on the postal service.

Based on *youzheng wenda*, the readers were much more concerned with the accessibility of postal communication than other issues and topics of the service and philately, particularly between the CCP and Guomindang areas, as the war progressed. The CCP started to expand its influence in Manchuria and north China in the second half of 1947, while Guomindang still controlled most of the Chinese territories.⁸⁰ The development of the campaign affected postal operations throughout the country, and that was also reflected in the readers' queries and the Post Office's responses. For example, on 2 August 1947, a reader's question about dried seafood parcel delivery from Beiping and Tianjin to Xinxiang 新鄉, a town in north Henan, was published in the second issue of *youzheng wenda*. The Post Office only confirmed that the parcel service between Beiping and Xinxiang had been postponed with no further explanation, but also it implied that the Civil War was still affecting the service.⁸¹ Another example — on 23 August, the Post Office responded to a reader's query about whether the airmail service was still available for items sent to Henan's local areas, such as Kaifeng, Yancheng, Zhengzhou, and Bo'ai. The answer was that it could be detoured via Hankou and Xuzhou,⁸² which were still controlled by Guomindang. Although the postal deliveries were maintained between Beiping and the main towns in Henan, the information implies that the transport conditions that connected these areas had not been conducive to the postal service, and that was a concern for their readers.

⁸⁰ Lary, *China's Civil War*, 111.

⁸¹ 'Youzheng wenda,' *Huabei ribao*, 2 August 1947, 4.

⁸² 'Youzheng wenda,' *Huabei ribao*, 23 August 1947, 4.

The column became a channel on which to reveal information about postal delivery and alternative options from Beiping to elsewhere under war circumstances. Although *Huabei xinbao* was Guomindang's newspaper and would avoid news that did not align with the Nationalist stance, the readers' questions and responses on the postal service can be identified as clues to the war's development. In fact, readers' anxieties about postal disruption became more common, and they frequently appeared in the newspaper as the situation deteriorated. In late 1947, not only Henan but also Shandong and Manchuria, which were adjacent to Beiping, were the overlapping areas occupied by the CCP and Guomindang. In the issue from 14 September 1947, a reader asked about the postal service to Gaiping 蓋平 (now Gaizhou 蓋州), a CCP-controlled coastal county near Yingkou in Liaoning, while another reader was concerned about Shenxian 深縣 (now Shenzhou City 深州市), a CCP-controlled rural county in south Hebei. According to the Post Office's responses, only limited services were being provided. Although to some areas, mail needed to travel via city centres which were generally still controlled by the Nationalists, and the cost of this would be a longer shipping time, but ordinary letters were still very likely to be delivered between the Guomindang and the CCP's areas. For example, letters could be sent to Gaiping via Shenyang, to Shenxian via Shijiazhuang, and to Juxian 莒縣, Shandong, via Jinan.⁸³ At least until the end of 1947, people in Beiping were still able to send letters, but deliveries excluded parcels addressed to the most CCP-occupied areas in north China and Manchuria.

However, maintaining the postal service was becoming harder as some areas had been involved in conflicts since early 1948. In fact, in late 1947, the Post Office's column did not disclose the reason for such postal interruptions, but it was obvious that information was

⁸³ 'Youzheng wenda,' *Huabei ribao*, 14 September 1947, 4; 11 October 1947, 5.

selected by the editors to indirectly confirm that the postal service was obstructed due to warfare. With the escalating conflict that was developing in 1948, the editors, however, began to respond to the public without hiding the situation. In early 1948, the word *feiqu* 匪區 (bandit zones) was adopted by the Nationalists and was used by the Post Office to refer to the CCP-occupied areas in their column. The Post Office's responses also directly admitted that the areas that readers asked about had been controlled by the CCP. In January 1948, the column said that there was no postal delivery to *feiqu*, such as Shenxian, due to the interruption of transport.⁸⁴ Compared with previous postal measures that were put in place to maintain the service for ordinary people and for businessmen's letters, at this time all postal services seemed to be suspended to the CCP's areas, even if they were being sent to nearby regions.

The situation rapidly deteriorated in many areas of China throughout 1948. The CPS had to face an increasingly severe challenge to its operations, while people were also becoming aware of the changes. In August, a reader complained that delayed postal delivery often occurred and asked for an explanation and improvement; another asked if it were possible to send mail to *feiqu*. In response to these issues, the Post Office did not deny the reality that all mail to the CCP's areas was unavailable. It admitted that the delay was caused by the rampant 'bandits' (*feiluan* 匪亂) and the spread of the war, which had seriously affected local security and transportation. Most surface transport, including railways, highways, and waterways around Beiping were on the verge of interruption. Air freight capacity was also reduced and crowding out mail carriage.⁸⁵ Behind the terminology of *feiqu* and *feiluan*, the Post Office could not hide the fact that there was postal disruption, while

⁸⁴ 'Youzheng wenda,' *Huabei ribao*, 11 January 1948, 5.

⁸⁵ 'Youzheng wenda,' *Huabei ribao*, 21 August 1948, 6.

these readers' queries show that people were definitely aware of the effects on postal communication across the two regimes.

As a response to the delay, the Post Office could only urge people to pay airmail postage in order to speed up delivery if their correspondence was being sent to areas with interrupted traffic and, in particular, *feiqu*; otherwise, there would have been significant delays in transit.⁸⁶ The CPS used to carry mail by air, whether the sender had paid air postage or not. It was a solution with which to increase delivery efficiency following resumption after the Second World War. In fact, it can be seen that many readers' queries which were published in the Q&A column, are related to information about airmail transport, including airmail routes, transit information, receiving times, flight departure and arrival times, etc. However, until 1948, the airmail service was no longer able to deliver a mail item without additional air postage. The air transport capacity was shrinking, which meant that there was a very tiny amount of room in which to carry mail, while the cost was rapidly increasing. The Post Office shifted its policy to request that the sender must pay the full price of airmail postage. It no longer generously carried all mails by air.⁸⁷ In October 1948, the Post Office even published an essay in the column to advocate the benefits of airmail and to persuade readers to pay airmail postage in order to 'save time,' similarly to the CPS's airmail promotion just after the Sino-Japanese War. In the meantime, it also disclosed that because the war had blocked surface transport in many areas, postal addressees in several neighbouring provinces' capitals or main cities, such as Shenyang, Taiyuan, Jinan, Kaifeng and Zhengzhou, were only accessible by airmail.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ 'Youzheng wenda,' *Huabei ribao*, 21 August 1948, 6.

⁸⁷ 'Youzheng jianxun' 郵政簡訊 (Postal Messages), *Huabei ribao*, 2 October 1948, 6.

⁸⁸ Zhao Rongquan, 'Jieyue shijian liyong hangyou' 節約時間利用航郵 (Using Airmail to Save Time), *Huabei ribao*, 16 October 1948, 6.

People's perspectives, as expressed in the newspaper, not only convey their postal needs but also show how they were caught in the war that had a significant impact on postal communication. One obvious result was releasing military-related information in the postal column, especially since the latter half of 1948. Based on their titles and questions, some readers can be identified as military personnel. Their questions mainly surrounded sending letters home from the front lines, discounted military mail, and postal orders, while their relatives and friends were concerned with how to send letters because the soldiers were highly likely to be shifted rapidly in wartime. When relocated to a new station, a military unit ought to have contacted the local Post Office. The Post Office would then transfer its mail, including any sent from home, to the new site. However, there was no delivery guarantee due to the war. A mail would be returned to its senders if undeliverable. If post workers could not find the sender's address, the mail would be returned to the departure post office to be claimed by the sender.⁸⁹

At that time, the Post Office waived airmail postage for military personnel but not for their relatives. Military personnel's letters needed to be approved by supervisors, and then they would be eligible for airmail with ordinary postage fees. The queries imply that the increase in the number of military personnel resulted in an increased demand of soldiers and their families for postal deliveries, which also reflects the deteriorating situation.

In addition to military personnel, civilians also frequently suffered relocation and even lacked fixed residence. Relocations are common in wartime, while communications could play a crucial role in calming people's minds when they are in turmoil. On 10 July 1948, a reader wrote to the column's editor and described that he had 'just escaped from *feiqu* to Beiping'

⁸⁹ 'Youzheng wenda,' *Huabei ribao*, 21 August 1948, 6; 2 October 1948, 6; 16 October 1948, 6.

and temporarily stayed in a friend's place. He realised that it was difficult to keep in touch with relatives and friends elsewhere because he had not settled down yet and had no mailing address.⁹⁰ In fact, a similar question about changes of address was published as early as August 1947, but it was nothing to do with escaping from the war and unstable residences at that time.⁹¹ Until late 1948, the Post Office began actively advocating *poste restante* in response to the displaced persons with receiving difficulties during the Nationalist-Communist conflict, although this service had been around since the CPS was established. *Cunju houling* 存局候領, *poste restante* in Chinese, means 'kept in the post office and waiting to be collected.' It is still available worldwide today and helps people who are travelling or temporarily have no residential addresses to receive mail.⁹² Originally set up to serve people during their travels, this service provides postal users who have no delivery addresses with the possibility to still receive mail from the Post Office. The sender can specify a Post Office as the receiver's address as long as they include the name of the receiving Post Office with a 'poste restante' note on the envelope.

The advocacy to popularise the use of *poste restante* shows that the Post Office was likely to have noticed that more and more people had the same concern after they moved to the city. For this reason, the Post Office focused on the *poste restante* as the theme in the second issue of the bi-weekly postal special column, issued on 2 October 1948. The editor stated that many people had been evacuated from their hometowns in nearby areas, and even from Manchuria to Beiping, since the war broke out. He announced that the *poste*

⁹⁰ 'Youzheng wenda,' *Huabei ribao*, 10 July 1948, 6.

⁹¹ 'Youzheng wenda,' *Huabei ribao*, 23 August 1947, 4.

⁹² See the website of The Post Office, UK, accessed 1 Aug 2019, <https://www.postoffice.co.uk/mail/poste-restante>.

restante was a service to help those displaced people to easily access postal communication.⁹³ The Beijing Post Office promoting the poste restante was not a unique case in wartime. For instance, after the Blitz during the Second World War, many British people lost their homes and left their original residences. The Royal Mail, therefore, established poste restante counters in post offices in June 1941 to help people collect their mail.⁹⁴ Behind the Beijing Post Office's article on the poste restante, it is implied that the information was in line with the public's urgent needs caused by the development of the Civil War. The war had spread in north China, and people being forced to leave their homes became the norm. This situation increased the postal demand since people urgently relied on the post to communicate with their scattered relatives and friends.

For those residents who remained in their hometowns, the CPS still strove to maintain postal communication. Meanwhile, readers' questions and the Post Office's replies frequently conveyed an extremely tense atmosphere. As mentioned above, Guomindang mainly controlled urban areas, which were generally local transport hubs. Compared to the limitations of land transport, especially across conflict zones, intercity transport was still maintained by air. In May 1948, the CCP army, led by Lin Biao (1907-1971), conducted a prolonged siege to blockade the Guomindang-controlled Changchun. Air freight played an important role for the people in the city during the campaign, which continued for five months until October 1948. In his book, Frank Dikötter reviews these terrible events, showing that the lack of supply in the city during the siege resulted in cases of starvation and desperation: 'others ate insects or leather belts. A few turned to human flesh, sold at \$1.20 a pound on the

⁹³ Zhao Rongquan, 'Chunju houling yu Zhuanyong xinxiang de liyong' 存局候領與專用信箱的利用 (Use of Poste Restante and Post Office Box), *Huabei ribao*, 2 October 1948, 6.

⁹⁴ Duncan Campbell-Smith, *Master of the Post: The Authorized History of the Royal Mail* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 334.

black market.⁹⁵ At that time, 500,000 people were trapped in the city; many of them originally planned to escape to Beiping. The city's supply system was cut off, and it could only rely on the Guomindang's airdrops, but the CCP's anti-aircraft guns reduced their efficiency.⁹⁶ What Dikötter does not mention is that these airdrops, in fact, included mail. In August 1948, a Beiping reader wrote to the Post Office asking whether the postal service was available between Changchun and Beiping, which illustrates that the public in Beiping was already aware of the Siege of Changchun and the shortage of supplies. The Post Office, therefore, confirmed that mail only could be adventurously delivered to Changchun by airdrops and that it was not available in the other way round, due to the airport's difficult conditions. The *avis de réception* service (French for 'postal acknowledgement with receipt'), the so-called *shuang guahao* 雙掛號 (double registration) and officially named *guahao fu huizhi* 掛號附回執, was impossible if one posted mail to Changchun. Due to the very limited airdrop capacity, the Post Office begged the senders to send letters only and not to post any valuables.⁹⁷

While the Post Office was striving to seek solutions in order to meet the public's needs in this unfavourable situation, the city of Beiping also encountered a dramatic crisis, and it became difficult to continue the postal column. As soon as the editor made the announcement on 27 November that the column would not answer questions or publish philatelic news to save space in the newspaper, the column was never published again.⁹⁸ The suspension of the column also indirectly confirmed the increasing gravity of the war. The CCP army advanced to Beiping at the end of 1948, and transport to the city was immediately affected. On 17 December, the newspaper said that the aeroplanes could not land in the city

⁹⁵ Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation*, 6.

⁹⁶ Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation*, 6–7.

⁹⁷ 'Youzheng wenda,' *Huabei ribao*, 28 August 1948, 6.

⁹⁸ 'Youzheng wenda,' *Huabei ribao*, 27 November 1948, 6.

but had dropped a mailbag.⁹⁹ The airmail service seemed to repeat what had happened in Changchun a few months earlier until the CCP army entered Beiping in January 1949. During the Siege of Beiping, perhaps in order to save resources, the publication of *Huabei ribao* was reduced from six to four pages, and only two pages remained by December 1948. The postal column might have been removed to save the limited space available to the newspaper. Nevertheless, it was more likely that the column lost its function of delivering useful postal information to the public and maintaining public relations. Under the urgent circumstances of the siege, the Beiping Post Office itself was experiencing a crisis of postal interruption, and it was hard to continue with the column.

4. A Silver Lining of Resumption: Non-governmental Negotiations

CPS's Loss of Neutrality

As the CCP made crucial progress in the war in north China between late 1948 and early 1949, it controlled most of the areas in the north, and Guomindang retreated to the south of the Yangtze River. The situation's sharp turn led to an unprecedented disruption of postal communication, which left half of the country disconnected from the rest. For the CPS, this was the most significant acid test never been experienced before, even during the Second World War. It could do hardly anything under such tough circumstances.

The CPS had lost its neutral and independent status to address the disruption issue between the CCP and Guomindang areas since the 'national' service was operated as an agency of the Nationalist government. On the other hand, the CCP's postal service had already replaced the CPS's functions in its controlled areas while it was continuing to persuade postal

⁹⁹ 'Ben shi zuo wu feiji qi jiang' 本市昨無飛機起降 (No Flights Landing and Taking off in This City Yesterday), *Huabei ribao*, 8 December 1948, 2.

employees to give up their allegiance to the CPS and join the new postal service, which was later called the People's Postal Service. In 1946, the Nationalist state-building was placed high on the top of the agenda, according to Sun Yat-sen's unfulfilled blueprint and last words,¹⁰⁰ in order to ratify and implement the Constitution of the Republic of China. Although the Nationalist-Communist Civil War broke out in parallel, the Nationalists governed China continuing towards an ideal democratic republic form of a modern state. In this newly adopted Constitution, the administration of postal service was listed as one of the exclusive powers of the central government.¹⁰¹ Compared with the Draft Constitution officially promulgated by the Nationalist government in 1936, there was no article on the power of postal administration.¹⁰² In this context of development, the CPS was operated in much closer alliance with the Nationalists and involved in the Nationalist state-building.

In fact, the CPS had already been affiliated with the Nationalist government since 1927, and its foreign staff's power had later been reduced, as previous chapters have discussed. Nevertheless, the French did not abandon their interests and influences on postal management in China until 1946. Under the post-war circumstances, the new international relations were reconstructed, and the nationalist spirit in China was strengthened. The French Provisional Government's Ambassador, Jacques Meyrier (1892–?) and the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wang Shih-chieh (Wang Shijie) 王世杰 (1891–1981), signed a new agreement titled *Treaty between the ROC and France for the Relinquishment of Extraterritorial Rights in*

¹⁰⁰ As the main ideology of Nationalist China, Sun Yat-sen's 'teaching' and the Three Principles of the People were written in the introduction and the first article of the Constitution. For a copy of the Constitution of the Republic of China, see 002-020400-00010-018, AH; for an English version, see 'Constitution of the Republic of China,' Law & Regulations Database of the Republic of China (Taiwan), Minister of Justice, accessed 26 November 2022, <https://law.moj.gov.tw/ENG/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?pcode=A0000001>.

¹⁰¹ Article 107, Constitution of the Republic of China, 002-020400-00010-018, AH.

¹⁰² For the Draft Constitution 1936, see 002-020200-00032-045, AH.

China and the Regulation of Related Matters on 28 February 1946 in Chongqing.¹⁰³ The agreement, which was effective from the 8 July, included the statement that the French government 'waives the right to claim the appointment of French citizens in the service of the Chinese post'.¹⁰⁴ This progress was regarded as an important step in the development of China's national postal service.¹⁰⁵ The CPS was, therefore, involved in the construction of a discourse on the modern state by the Nationalists after WW2. It became a symbol of China, Nationalist China in this sense, as a modern state, enjoying equal international status and participating in the international community.

The subordinate relationship between the CPS and the Guomindang was also manifested in the patterns and themes of postage stamps, which were completely different from the CCP in ideology. As the last chapter mentioned, although the Japanese established several puppet regimes in their occupied areas, which claimed to be the legitimate government of the Republic of China, the main patterns of postal stamps, such as Sun Yat-sen's and national martyrs' portraits continued to be reprinted and accepted in these regimes, except by Manchukuo's postal service. The use of the same patterns for stamps among the different regimes illustrates that the postal service could work by sharing the same national ideology.

However, this was not the case during the Civil War, as Guomindang and the CCP had completely different ideologies, reflected in their postage stamps. Between 1945 and 1949, the CPS issued several new stamps which followed the Nationalist ideology and their discourse

¹⁰³ *The Treaty between ROC and France for the Relinquishment of Extraterritorial Rights in China and the Regulation of Related Matters*, signed 28 February 1946, NCL 003905316.

¹⁰⁴ Article 9.5: 'Le Gouvernement de la République Française renonce au droit de réclamer la nomination de citoyens français dans le service de la Poste Chinoise,' *The Treaty between ROC and France for the Relinquishment of Extraterritorial Rights in China and the Regulation of Related Matters*.

¹⁰⁵ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, vol.1:2, 449.

of state-building. Chiang Kai-shek's portrait, as the Chair of the State, and the Nationalist emblems most frequently appeared on stamps. The stamps, the Allied Victory Commemorative stamps (October 1945), the Chairman Chiang Kai-shek's Inauguration Commemorative stamps (October 1945), and even Chiang's sixtieth birthday stamps (October 1946) all are dominated by Chiang as the main theme (Figure 5.4). In addition, the CPS issued stamps to celebrate and commemorate the main Nationalist events when the National Assembly opened on 15 November 1946, the Nationalist government official returned to Nanjing on 5 May 1947, and the Constitution became effective on 25 December 1947 (Figure 5.5). These images show that the CPS was deeply involved in the state-building of Nationalist China.



Figure 5.4: (Left to right) The Allied Victory Commemorative stamp, 10 October 1945, the Chairman Chiang Kai-shek's Inauguration Commemorative stamp, 10 October 1945, and Chairman Chiang Kai-shek's Sixtieth Birthday Commemorative stamp, October 1946. Source: https://www.post.gov.tw/post/internet/W_stamphouse, accessed 20 January 2021.



Figure 5.5: (Left to right) The National Assembly Commemorative stamp, 15 November 1946, the Return of National Government to Nanjing Commemorative stamp, 5 May 1947, and the Adoption of Constitution Commemorative stamp, 25 December 1947. Source: https://www.post.gov.tw/post/internet/W_stamphouse, accessed 20 January 2021.

Similarly, the CCP's postage stamps during the Civil War demonstrate Communist propaganda and ideology, as well as the portraits of Mao Zedong (Figure 5.6). The CCP had not had an integrated and centralised national postal institution until the People's Republic was established in late 1949. At that time, each of the CCP's local postal authorities was able to issue postage stamps all with the CCP's unique patterns and themes. In December 1947, the CCP's Northeast China Postal Administration issued a set of stamps to commemorate the Xi'an Incident's anniversary with a slogan: 'Advancing to Nanjing, Catching Chiang Kai-shek Alive' (打到南京去, 活捉蔣介石) (Figure 5.7). It not only adopted the Xi'an Incident to construct both its legitimacy and its discourse of the revolution but also adopted the event to generate a propaganda phrase humiliating the Nationalists and Chiang Kai-shek. The patterns and themes of stamps demonstrate the postal authority's identity, position, and affiliation.



Figure 5.6: Mao Zedong portrait stamps, East China Postal Administration, 1949. Source: personal collection.



Figure 5.7: (Left) 'Advancing to Nanjing, Catching Chiang Kai-shek Alive' (打到南京去, 活捉蔣介石) on the CCP's Xi'an Incident's Eleventh Anniversary Commemorative Stamp, Northeast China Postal Administration, 1947. (Right) The Twenty-eighth Anniversary of the CCP establishment, North China Postal Administration, 1949. Source: The China Philatelic Company, Postage Stamps of the People's Republic of China, 13, 15.

The two hostile camps developed completely divisive discourses of state-building while their postal authorities had already been involved. It can, thus, be understood why the CPS refused to recognise the CCP's stamps. However, and more importantly, it minimised the possibility of cooperation between the two sides for postal communication. This might not have been a significant issue when Guomindang still controlled most of the country, but it was

definitely an issue in early 1949 when the CCP captured the north, and Guomintang dramatically lost the absolute advantage.

Mediation for Resumption of Postal Service

While the north-south postal disruption was worse from late 1948 to early 1949, there seemed to be a silver lining which broke the ice from Shanghai. The event began with public opinion. On 17 January 1949, just after the CCP successfully captured Tianjin, a tabloid, *Tiebao* 鐵報, based in Shanghai, first printed the news that 'a group of people' was preparing a petition asking to restore postal communication. The 'source' claimed that postal communication was an international affair that used to work between Japan's occupied areas and the areas in the Chinese rear during the Sino-Japanese War. It believed that the postal resumption between the CCP and the Guomintang areas was not a hopeless case.¹⁰⁶

The 'group' and the 'source' are highly likely to be the Shanghai City Chamber of Commerce (SCC) 上海市商會 and the Shanghai Postal Union (SPU) 上海郵務工會. On 22 January 1949, several newspapers in Shanghai released the same open telegram that had been sent by the SCC to the Nationalist Ministry of Communication and the Executive Yuan, which called for postal resumption. It stated that when the Nationalist army withdrew from one place, and the postal service stopped there. The postal interruption areas expanded as the Civil War spread, which had an impact on industrial and commercial needs.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Xia Yi 夏裔, 'Guo Gong quyue tongyou tonghang, bufen renshi you ci jianyi' 國共區域通郵通航 部分人士有此建議 (Some People Suggest to Resume Postal Communication and Aviation between Guomintang and CCP Areas), *Tiebao*, 17 January 1949, 1.

¹⁰⁷ 'Shishanghui diancheng Yuan bu suchou cheshouqu tongyou' 市商會電呈院部速籌撤守區通郵 (The SCC's Telegram to Executive Yuan and MOC on Making Plan to Resume Postal Service with the Withdrawal Areas as Soon as Possible), *Shenbao*, 22 January 1949, 4; 'Shishanghui diancheng Yuan bu yu Gongqu huifutongyou' 市商會電呈院部與共區恢復通郵 (The SCC's Telegram to Executive Yuan and MOC on Postal Resumption in the CCP Areas), *Libao* (立報), 22 January 1949, 2; 'Cheshouquyu tongyou' 撤守區域通郵 (Postal Communication with the Withdrawal Areas), *Dongnan ribao*, 22 January 1949, 3.

The SPU followed up on the issue to ask the government to resume the postal service within the CCP's areas. Differently from the SCC, the SPU's argument stood with the people who were suffering the pain of separation from their relatives and friends. It stressed that the freedom of correspondence is protected by international conventions and national constitutions, and the postal service has the duty to work for the people. Before the Civil War, China's postal service never ceased, even during the Second World War. It urged the government to immediately take effective measures and suggested that Qingdao could be a possible mail exchange place to avoid mail crossing the conflict zones inland.¹⁰⁸

Although the two organisations had different interests, their demands were the same and were issued at almost the same time. In fact, the SCC claimed that 'in the past, the military was operating and the decrees were strictly enforced, so we did not dare to petition unrestrictedly; now, the government considers people's difficulties and opens the way to peace'.¹⁰⁹ This implied the event when Chiang Kai-shek stepped down on 21 January 1949, which was the same date as when the SCC's telegram was issued. In the meantime, the media in Shanghai tried hard to sway public opinion towards peace. Not only postal resumption advocates but also other affected groups from different walks of life, such as the senior crew members' joint associations, called for the CCP and Guomindang to resume national water transportation.¹¹⁰ The new development in politics for the public seemed to be an opportunity for peace and hope to return to normal.

Soon afterwards, premier Sun Ke accepted the petition for postal resumption and put

¹⁰⁸ 'Youwugonghui jianyi Guo Gong liangqu tongyou' 郵務工會建議國共兩區通郵 (SPU's Suggestion of Postal Resumption between Guomindang and CCP Areas), *Shenbao*, 23 January 1949, 4.

¹⁰⁹ 'Shishanghui diancheng Yuan Bu suchou cheshouqu tongyou,' *Shenbao*, 22 January 1949, 4.

¹¹⁰ 'Gaoji chuanyuan tuanti tongdian huyu qingzhun guolun liji hangxing quanguo' 高級船員團體通電呼籲請准國輪立即航行全國 (A Circular Telegram of Senior Crew Calls for Approval for Chinese Steamers to Sail across the Country), *Shenbao*, 22 January 1949, 4.

a motion to the cabinet meeting.¹¹¹ After the cabinet approved this, the Shanghai Post Office started actively experimenting with postal transit from Shanghai to the north on 26 January. The next day, a China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC) 中國航空 aeroplane arranged a test flight to Beiping. The Post Office also used the opportunity to widely publicise the use of airmail and hoped that the resumption would be able to expand to other cities in the north via Beiping as a transit hub.¹¹² Intriguingly, *Zhongyang ribao* 中央日報 (The Central Daily News), Guomindang's official organ of media, seemed not to be happy with the development. It said that the CNAC test flight, with 300 kilograms of mail, was unsuccessful. The CCP authority denied the plane's landing request, so the flight turned back to Jinan. It described the resumed postal mission as a 'short-lived flower' and said that it had not been accomplished, although it still mentioned that the Postal Union had tried to contact north China's postal service and claimed that the postal authority was planning to resume the service by maritime transport to Tianjin.¹¹³ By contrast, other local newspapers, such as *Shenbao* and *Suzhou mingbao* 蘇州明報, said that the experiment in postal resumption was satisfactory. The media also released the information that, regarding the success of Shanghai's experiment, the CPS DG had ordered local postal administrations to expediently resume postal transit with the CCP's areas and restore branch Post Offices in local areas if the local situation were secure.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ 'Guo Gongqu tongyou wenti jiangti zhengwuhui taolun' 國共區通郵問題將提政務會討論 (Postal Resumption between Guomindang and CCP Areas Will Be Proposed and Discussed in Executive Yuan's Meeting), *Shenbao*, 23 January 1949, 1.

¹¹² 'Guo Gong liangqu shiban tongyou, Tianjin hangping jinqi shouji' 國共兩區試辦通郵 天津航平今起收寄 (An Experimental Run of Postal Resumption between Guomindang and CCP Areas; Accepting Regular Airmail to Tianjin from Today), *Shenbao*, 28 January 1949, 4.

¹¹³ 'Guo Gong tongyou shangnan shixian' 國共通郵尚難實現 (Still Hard to Implement the Postal Resumption between Guomindang and CCP), *Zhongyang ribao*, 7 February 1949, 3.

¹¹⁴ 'Guo Gong tongyou chengji manyi' 國共通郵成績滿意 (Satisfactory Result of the Postal Resumption between Guomindang and CCP), *Shenbao*, 3 February 1949, 4; 'Guo Gong tongyou,' *Meiri wanbao*, 3 February 1949, 1; 'Guogongqu shiban tongyou chubuchengji shangjia' 初步成績尚佳 (Good Initial Result of the Postal

The discord in the information delivered by the newspapers might have been caused by the different positions for which they stood for. However, another possibility was that the postal resumption was handed over by the central postal administration to the local ones to negotiate with the neighbouring CCP-occupied authorities.¹¹⁵ It was not a nationally consistent action which concerned political issues of a unified 'national' postal service and rights in relation to the international postal connection. Nevertheless, the Jiangsu Postal Administration first contacted the CCP's north Jiangsu authority for postal transit.¹¹⁶ Then the Hankou Postal Administration followed up on the experiment in postal transit and prepared to connect with the CCP's Anhui and Henan areas.¹¹⁷ At that moment, there was much news about local postal resumption in several areas, which were mainly located on the border with the CCP's regions and in port cities that were connected by ships.

Due to the public's expectations of communications and transportation, two peace talks took place in late February 1949. The first one was organised by a delegation of Shanghai transport's industrial leaders, who met the CCP's leaders on 21 February in Beiping. The meeting focused on the resumption of maritime transportation and postal transit. The CCP also appointed the Head of the Tianjin Postal Administration to join the meeting. According to newspaper reports, the meeting seemed to give cause for optimism. The CCP agreed to resume transport between the north and south via Qinhuangdao.¹¹⁸ The CCP, a non-

Resumption between Guomindang and CCP), *Suzhou mingbao*, 7 February 1949, 2.

¹¹⁵ 'Quanmian tongyou xiayue keshixian' 全面通郵下月可實現 (Full Postal Resumption Can be Achieved Next Month), *Nanjing wanbao* (南京晚報), 20 February 1949, 1.

¹¹⁶ 'Jiwang Subei youjian changtong wuzu' 寄往蘇北郵件暢通無阻 (Unobstructed Mail to North Jiangsu), *Dongnan ribao*, 18 February 1949, 3.

¹¹⁷ 'Huazhong shipiyoulu jiangyu Gongqu tongyou' 華中試闢郵路將與共區通郵 (An Experimental Postal Route for Postal Resumption with the CCP's Areas), *Meiri wanbao*, 20 February 1949, 1.

¹¹⁸ 'Nanbei fuhang shangtan rinei zai Ping jinxing' 南北復航商談日內在平進行 (Negotiations on the Resumption of Navigation Taking Place Today in Beiping), *Shenbao*, 23 February 1949, 2; 'Guo Gong youdi quanmian huifu jinqi shouji Huabei xinjian' 國共郵遞全面恢復今起收寄華北信件 (Full Resumption of Postal Transport, Accepting Letters to the North From Today), *Shenbao*, 25 February 1949, 4.

governmental organisation, once again played a role in dealing with the issue without the defeated Guomindang's support.

The second peace talk, on traffic and communications resumption, which was organised by the Nanjing Nationalist government, attracted more public attention. Yan Huiqing, former diplomat and premier, was appointed to lead the delegation to meet the CCP leaders. The main task was to negotiate postal communication. The delegation's actions were supposed to be a secret; they unofficially met Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai in Beiping. According to the information released to the media after the meeting, the delegation seemed to successfully make an agreement with the CCP to establish a postal exchange mechanism. The news was naturally welcomed by the public. The Nationalist newspaper, *Zhongyang ribao*, also used an optimistic headline, which said that 'The North-south Postal Transit Has Been Resolved'.¹¹⁹ Between late February and mid-April, the news often showed positive progress of the public opinion looking forward to full resumption of postal services nationwide. Meanwhile, the local postal administrations continued to exchange mail with the CCP postal services.¹²⁰ The CCP's media also printed the news using a reasonably optimistic tone.¹²¹

However, the situation quickly deteriorated in late April 1949. Everything that had come from the previous efforts was gone. The postal transit and money transfers between the north and south stalled once again. The tone of the media turned pessimistic.¹²² This was a

¹¹⁹ 'Nanbei tongyou wenti jiejie' 南北通郵問題解決 (The North-south Postal Transit Has Been Resolved), *Zhongyang ribao*, 25 February 1949, 3.

¹²⁰ 'Tongyou tonghang jiangyou fazhan' 通郵通航將有發展 (Postal and Aviation Resumption Will Progress), *Dongnan ribao*, 4 March 1949, 1; 'Quanmian tongyou tonghang taolun jishu wenti' 全面通郵通航 討論技術問題 (Full Postal and Aviation Resumption, Discussing Technical Issues), *Suzhou mingbao*, 6 April 1949, 1.

¹²¹ 'Ping Hu tongyou' 平滬通郵 (Beiping-Shanghai Postal Resumption), *Beiping Jiegang bao* (平解放報), 6 April 1949, 1.

¹²² 'Tongyou tonghui zhanxing tingzhi' 通郵通匯暫行停止 (Postal and Remittance Services Suspended), *Libao*, 23 April 1949, 2; 'Tongyou wenti jianqu daizhi jiangla ikeneng you Gang zhuan' 通郵問題漸趨呆滯將來可能由港轉運 (Postal Resumption Gradually Obstructed; Probably Will Be Forwarded via Hong Kong in the Future), *Dagong wanbao*, 25 April 1949, 1.

result of the Beiping Peace Talks breaking down on 20 April as the Guomindang's leaders, including Acting President Li Zhongren (1890–1969), refused to accept the CCP's demand for full surrender. There was no need to mention the story that followed. The CCP's army crossed the Yangtze River the next day and, one by one, swiftly captured Guomindang-controlled cities and towns in the south, including the Nationalist capital Nanjing.¹²³ The postal resumption became unnecessary for the CPS, as the CCP took over those areas' postal facilities, as well as the employees. Instead, the postal service in the Chinese mainland eventually achieved the goal of postal resumption under the CCP's rule after 1949.

5. Conclusion

The Nationalist-Communist Civil War between 1945 and 1949 was the most severe challenge that the CPS had met since it was established in 1896. When the CPS was still recovering from the effects of the Second Sino-Japanese War and finally had a chance to achieve the idea of a centralised national postal service free from foreign interference, it was badly hit by another war.

The impact of the Civil War on the CPS involved not only the practical postal operations but also the status of the institution. The CPS could not survive as it did in previous wars. Due to the post-war circumstances, the CPS had closer relations with the Nationalists and was involved in Guomindang's state-building. As the internationally recognised government of China after the war, the CPS drew close to Guomindang to carry out postal services both internationally and domestically. This was the ultimate realisation of the concept of modern postal service as an extension of sovereignty which China had developed since the

¹²³ For the negotiation between the CCP and Guomindang, and the following operations of the CCP's crossing the Yangtze River, see Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 240–244.

establishment of the IPS in 1896. However, the ensuing Civil War made the CPS lose its privileges and its neutral position. It could not play a role of an independent operator between different regimes as it did in any previous war.

On the other hand, the CCP had developed its postal services, although it was initially not predominantly operated as a public organisation, had a limited range of services, and was not recognised as a national postal service that could function for international postal transport. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, it was merged into a 'trinity' as a transport and communications institution which focused on delivering propaganda and did not challenge the CPS's national postal authority. However, the CCP attempted to establish a new China after 1945, which had a different ideology and designed a completely different regime with new national symbols and institutions. The CCP postal service's goal, thus, became to replace the CPS and rebrand the institution instead of merely taking control of the management of the CPS, as the Guomindang did in 1927.

Nevertheless, the postal service's mission was to cater to Chinese people's postal needs and to ensure the freedom of their correspondence. In this sense, as a case study of the postal column in *Huabei ribao* shows, the CPS tried hard to maintain its operations nationwide, whether it was recovering from the Second World War or making any effort to maintain postal communication during the Civil War. The column was, therefore, a space where to deliver information about the accessibility of postal communication.

After the defeat of Guomindang in the north, the CPS immediately lost the status and operations of a 'national' postal system, and it was hard to deal with the interruption between the north and the south. Non-governmental groups, which represented the public interests and postal needs, played a role in filling the vacancy left by the postal authority and seeking a

solution that would lead to postal resumption. This shows that the Chinese people had been involved in this form of communication since the postal system was introduced and established in the late nineteenth century. It was deeply rooted in social and cultural activities and became an essential need and right in Chinese society.

The year 1949 could be the crucial turning point for every event and individual in the narrative of modern Chinese history. So is for the CPS. After 1949, the CPS split into two: one half inherited the CPS's business on the mainland and was officially appropriated by the People's Postal Service of the new Communist Chinese state; the other — only kept the name: Zhonghua youzheng 中華郵政 (the Chunghwa Post) —and with a few employees, it was reborn in Taiwan.¹²⁴ These two national postal services did not have any direct connection, and many people suffered from the total halt in postal communication between the two Chinas for nearly four decades, until 1989. In addition, the two postal services still share a part of their narrative in relation to tradition, history, and past glory, although they continued to participate in their respective state-building exercises and claimed the orthodox narrative after 1949. The next chapter will discuss how the CPS was reorganised in Taiwan.

¹²⁴ Zhang Yi, *Zhonghua youzheng shi*, 438–484. Chen Jiying also recalled that most postal employees, including himself, who reported to the CPS DG in Taiwan after 1949 were dismissed after reporting. See Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 685.

Chapter 6: Localisation of China's Postal Service in Post-war Taiwan

From 1945 to 1950, the CPS's recovery was not as expected, and, even worse, postal communication was fragile due to dramatic changes in the post-war political circumstances and the Chinese Civil War. As the previous chapter showed, the CPS, on the one hand, restored its operations in areas that had previously been occupied by Japan but, on the other hand, it faced the conflict between the Communists and the Nationalists, which had an extreme effect on postal operations in many local areas.

The post-war circumstances also challenged the CPS as one centralised national agency. As discussed, the CPS was striving to restore postal services as a unified national organisation, while the overall transportation infrastructure had not yet recovered from the Second World War, and the outbreak of the Nationalist-Communist Civil War was imminent. The CPS moved closer to the Nationalists, who nominally led the country. Meanwhile, the rapidly rising CCP developed its own postal services and intended to take over the CPS's post offices; to this end, they recruited the CPS's employees and rapidly expanded postal routes during the Civil War. The complex situation had a profound impact on the recovery of the postal service and initiated another period in which the Chinese people suffered from disconnection.

In this challenging time, however, the CPS expanded its business to Taiwan to take over the postal institution that had been built by the Japanese colonial government in 1895. It was an entirely new postal district, where neither the CPS nor its predecessor, the IPS, had ever operated before Japan's surrender in 1945. But it soon became the only home of the CPS. The Civil War eventually destroyed the CPS in mainland China as the CCP established the People's Postal Service to replace the CPS as China's national postal system after 1949, along with the

fall of the Nationalist government.

As Hsiao-ting Lin suggests, Taiwan ‘accidentally’ became a ‘Nationalist Island state’.¹ The CPS’s exile in Taiwan maybe was accidental, but before that, since 1945, the CPS had treated Taiwan as a special postal district that was different from mainland China. The postal service in Taiwan can be seen as an epitome of postal resumption after the war through which to explore the circumstances that were so unfavourable for the CPS and the chaotic and inconsistent management of the postal service across the country. This chapter will focus on Taiwan to discuss the challenges to the taking over of Taiwan’s postal communications under the conditions of the Chinese Civil War and the complicated situation in post-WW2 Taiwan. It will explore how the CPS managed its service in Taiwan as a new postal district, with its previous Japanese colonial influences, while dealing with the increasingly severe Civil War at the same time. Finally, it will seek to understand to what extent did the Civil War affect postal communication in Taiwan and how did the CPS DG make the decision to move to Taiwan.

I will demonstrate that the dramatic changes in the political situation after the war not only impacted the inland postal communication service but also threatened the ‘national’ status of the CPS. Meanwhile, although the CPS in Taiwan was less affected by the Civil War and the operations were relatively more stable than in other districts, the rise of postal labour movements, combined with the CCP Revolution, played a certain role in challenging the Taiwan Postal District’s leadership. Moreover, the ethnic conflicts and labour movement in the Post Office caused by the unequal treatment between Chinese and Taiwanese employees under the background of the Civil War and Taiwan’s colonisation experiences also increased

¹ Hsiao-ting Lin, *Accidental State: Chiang Kai-shek, the United States, and the Making of Taiwan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016), 55–56.

the overall complexity of the situation.

I will argue that although the localised postal management in post-war Taiwan challenged the CPS's monopoly and centralised management, it eventually helped that Taiwan's postal service was separated from the Chinese mainland and authorised to process international mail exchange in order to ensure the uninterrupted operation of the service. The Taiwan Postal District, therefore, became a relatively stable and safe place to which the DG eventually decided to move in August 1949.

1. *Guangfu and Shoufu*

After Japan's surrender, the CPS proceeded with a plan for postal resumption in order to take over occupied areas' Post Offices and rebuild the service nationwide. The preparation began before the end of the war. On 13 August 1945, two days before Hirohito's official capitulation, the MOC appointed several postal commissioners to prepare for the takeover of the DG-Shanghai and other post offices that were under Japan's and its puppet regimes' control. The CPS issued a series of instructions that were put in place to deal with the previously Japanese-controlled areas, referred to as *guangfuqu* 光復區 (the areas of restitution of sovereignty), including Taiwan and Manchuria, and *shoufuqu* 收復區 (the areas for recovering lost territories) on the Chinese mainland.² The classification, in fact, followed the order by the Supreme National Defence Committee (國防最高委員會), the highest authority of Guomintang, which was led by Chiang Kai-shek during the war. According to Executive Yuan's proposal, Taiwan and Manchuria were initially defined as *lunxianqu* 淪陷區 (the occupied

² Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, 422–423.

areas) in February 1944.³ In August 1944, the Supreme National Defence Committee outlined a nationwide recovery plan to prepare for the possible outcome of the war. It planned to distinguish three types of areas: *guanfuqu*, *shoufuqu*, and *houfangqu* 後方區 (the areas of the home front) in the country, in which to take different recovery measures.⁴

Based on this outline, the CPS took over the previously Japanese-occupied regimes' General Post Offices in Beiping, Nanjing, and Manchuria to become part of the CPS DG temporarily, as representative offices, *youzheng zongju banshichu* 郵政總局辦事處, which were led by local postal commissioners. In addition, as chapter 4 discussed, Shanghai was a crucial hub of the CPS, where the DG-Shanghai office was reinstalled so that it could play the same role as it had before 1943. It temporarily led neighbouring postal districts in occupied areas if they had not reconnected with the DG in Chongqing due to unrecovered infrastructure and other circumstances. Meanwhile, local postal leadership in occupied areas was replaced by the CPS's postal officers, but non-supervisory staff, including Japanese employees, temporarily remained in employment to carry on the service.⁵

The *guangfuqu* and *shoufuqu* were two political terms that illustrate the Nationalist government's position on the developing situations and their expectations of territorial changes after the war. Although there is no clear evidence to prove the decisions leading to the classification, the *guangfu* areas were those territories that the Japanese Empire had

³ Yang Huyuan, 'Guomin zhengfu dui Taiwan de junshi jieshou: Yi Junshi jieshou weiyuanhui wei zhongxin' (The Nationalist Government's Military Takeover of Taiwan: A Case study on the Military Takeover Committee), *Taiwan wenxian* 67:1 (March 2016): 62. 'Lunxianqu diguo zichan chuli banfa' 淪陷區敵國資產處理辦法 (The Regulations for Enemy Property in Occupied Areas), 2 February 1944, 014-070800-0416, AH.

⁴ Chen Cuilian, *Chonggou Ererba: Zhanhou Mei-Zhong tizhi, Zhongguo tongzhi moshi, yu Taiwan* (Reconstruction of the February 28th Incident: The Post-war US-Chinese System, Chinese Domination Mode, and Taiwan) (Taipei: Weicheng chubanshe, 2017), 75. The contents and instructions of the order, see 'Fuyuan jihua gangyao' 復員計畫綱要 (The Outline of Demobilisation Plan), 1 August 1944–19 November 1945, 001-010000-00001, AH.

⁵ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, 422–423.

acquired, regardless of occupation or treaty ceding, before the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. The *shoufu* areas were occupied by Japan during the war between 1937 and 1945. In addition, in terms of geography, the *shoufuqu* were the core areas of China, while the *guangfuqu* were traditionally regarded as being at the periphery and on the frontier since the Qing Empire. It shows that the Nationalist government's understanding of China's regions followed the views of the Qing rulers. Despite the fact that the two terms have the similar meaning of returning territories, *guangfuqu* and *shoufuqu* implied that the Nationalist government acknowledged the difference between Japan's de facto previous dominance before the War and its military occupation in wartime. In this sense, *guangfu* seems to imply a more glorious return than the return to *shoufu*.

Although Taiwan and Manchuria were classified as *guangfuqu*, there were fundamental differences in terms of their postal services under Japanese colonial rule. Manchuria was occupied by Japan between 1931 and 1945, and Manchukuo was a puppet state after 1932. As chapter 3 discussed, the CPS originally had two postal districts, Ki-Hei and Liaoning, in Manchuria before 1932. It withdrew the service and the employees from these two postal districts after Manchukuo demanded that the postal service adopt its national name and national symbols on stamps and postmarks. After the Second Sino-Japanese War, the CPS returned to Manchuria to resume its control and management, which seems understandable for *guangfu*. However, Taiwan, which was also one of the *guangfuqu*, was completely different in terms of the postal takeover. Taiwan was ceded to Japan by the Qing Empire in 1895 when the Western-inspired national postal service had not yet been established in China. Until the end of WWII, Republican China had never ruled the island, and its national postal service, the CPS, had never covered Taiwan's postal administration. Taiwan was brand new in terms of both its politics and postal services. Taiwan's postal service, which

the CPS took over, was established entirely by the Japanese colonial government. The CPS, therefore, adopted different measures for the postal takeover in Taiwan than it had in Manchuria, which will be discussed later.

It is worth noting that scholars have worked on the post-war status of Taiwan and questioned the political terminology of Taiwan's *guangfu* (the retrocession). The meaning of *guangfu* may be more complicated in the context of the post-war situation than in its literal sense. Chen Cuilian suggested that the one-sided declaration of *guangfu* and 'returning to the motherland' was the Nationalist government's propaganda that was used to claim Taiwan's sovereignty, while it ignored the fact that the Allies, the US in particular, cooperated in the military occupation of Taiwan after the War.⁶ Hsiao-ting Lin reviewed the history of the military cooperation between the US and the Nationalist government in the takeover of Taiwan and argued that Taiwan's 'return' to China after the war was a consequence of the development of international politics and the considerations of US and Chinese interests during wartime. Chiang Kai-shek did not publicly (or unofficially) claim that Taiwan was one of the 'lost territories' until the Cairo Conference of 1943.⁷ This was also the background against which the National government formulated the recovery plan in 1944, as previously mentioned. In other words, until the government drafted the post-war recovery plan, Taiwan was not considered a territory that the Chinese government should regain.

The Cairo Declaration was regarded as a significant success for both the Nationalist government and Chiang Kai-shek as it indicated that 'all the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and the Pescadores, shall be restored to the

⁶ Chen Cuilian, *Zhonggou Ererba*, 63–76.

⁷ Lin, *Accidental State*, 16–29.

Republic of China'.⁸ However, Taiwan, as a part of the Pacific Theatre, was one of the Allies' military strategies' targets. Even if the Allies supported Chiang at the Cairo Conference, there were different scenarios for Taiwan's future status devised by the US government before the advancement of the US forces in Okinawa in early 1945. The possibilities included the Allies' military occupation and establishment of a temporary military government in Taiwan by the US forces.⁹

In January 1949, Guomindang lost north China in the Civil War, which caused Chiang Kai-shek to step down. Just before resigning as President of the ROC, Chiang realised that Taiwan was 'just a mandated territory of our country' after the war and Taiwan's legal status and sovereignty were not completely ceded to China before the Sino-Japanese Peace Conference,¹⁰ which was later held in Taipei in 1952.¹¹ In other words, the future status of Taiwan was still uncertain until very late in the Civil War. Nevertheless, the terminology *guangfu* was commonly used by Chinese governments, including CCP and Guomindang, to claim the legitimacy of reclaiming Taiwan after 1945.

Although *guangfu* was, to a certain extent, a political term that was proposed by the Nationalists for the post-war preparation, it does not change the fact that the Nationalist government eventually took control of Taiwan, and the Nationalists acted as de-facto rulers

⁸ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers: Conferences at Cairo and Tehran 1943* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 448, <https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/G5OAT7XT7HRHX84>.

⁹ Department of State, *Conferences at Cairo and Tehran 1943*, 448,

¹⁰ Chiang Kai-shek to Chen Cheng telegram draft, 12 January 1949, 002-070200-00024-058, AH. The document was collected in Academia Historica and was just declassified and opened to consultations in 2017. See Zhong Lihua, 'Guoshiguan jiemi Jiang Jieshi ceng yan, "Taiwan buguo wei woguo yi tuoguan de"' 國史館解密 蔣介石曾言 台灣不過為我國一託管地 (Academia Historica Declassified, Chiang Kai-shek Once Said that Taiwan Was Just a Mandated Territory of Our Country), *Ziyou shibao*, 4 January 2017, A06, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/paper/1068163>.

¹¹ 'Taipei binguan lishi shengdian, Zhong-Ri heyue zuori qianzi' 臺北賓館歷史盛典，中日合約昨日簽字 (The Historic Ceremony in Taipei Guest House, the Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty Signed Yesterday), *Lianhe bao*, 29 April 1952, 1.

accepted by the Allied countries in 1945.¹² The CPS, therefore, had the opportunity to expand its business to the new *guangfu* area, Taiwan, for the first time. The post-war instructions for the postal service show that the CPS not only intended to recover as it had been before the war, but it also expanded to some territories in which it never before had a presence.

The transfer of power in *guangfu* areas was particularly manifested by postage stamps, which were the visible symbol of national sovereignty. However, the issuance of stamps in *guangfu* areas was more chaotic than in *shoufu* areas. According to the original plan, those stamps issued by the former Japanese regimes were no longer allowed to be circulated,¹³ yet, due to the constraints of the immediate post-war situation, the CPS had to compromise on the 'national' dignity on these small prints. As the previous chapter discussed, Sun Yat-sen and the martyrs' portrait stamps were the least controversial, and they could have circulated in both the Chinese home front and the Japanese -supported regimes in the north, east, and central China during wartime. After the war, these regimes were the areas designated as *shoufuqu*, while the CPS had limited the conditions under which to print and ship stamps. Those former regimes' editions of Sun Yat-sen's and the martyrs' portrait stamps were temporarily allowed to be used with fewer problems.¹⁴

However, in Manchuria and Taiwan, two *guangfuqu*, the old stamps with the Manchukuo or the Japanese Empire's markings were not abandoned completely as the situation and transportation conditions were different from *shoufuqu*. Both areas immediately faced a shortage of stamps in the early post-war period due to transportation issues. Consequently, the old stamps issued during the war were still used but with special

¹² Lin, *Accidental State*, 38.

¹³ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, 423.

¹⁴ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzheng Dashiji*, 423.

overprinting. For example, in Manchuria, some former Manchukuo stamps continued to be used with the Chinese characters *Zhonghua minguo* 中華民國 (Republic of China) or *Zhonghua youzheng* 中華郵政 (Chinese Post) overprinting.¹⁵ Similarly, the Post Office in Taiwan continued to sell the Japanese Empire stamps, which were originally printed in Taiwan when the Japanese mainland’s shipments were blocked, with the overprinting characters *Zhonghua minguo Taiwan sheng* 中華民國臺灣省 (Taiwan Province, Republic of China) for temporary use (Figure 6.1).¹⁶ These previous regimes’ stamps remained in circulation, but with modifications to highlight the change in state sovereignty.



Figure 6.1: Taiwan Def 001 Japanese Postage Stamps with Overprinting Reading ‘Taiwan Province—Republic of China’ Temporary Issue, 1945. Source: https://www.post.gov.tw/post/internet/W_stamphouse/index_en.jsp?ID=2807&file_name=AH01, accessed 1 May 2020.

¹⁵ *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo shangyexinxibu, Zhongguo youpiao shi*, vol. 4 (Beijing: Shangwo yinshuguan, 2008), 88–95.

¹⁶ ‘Taiwan Def 001 Japanese Postage Stamps with Overprinting Reading “Taiwan Province—Republic of China” Temporary Issue (1945), Chungghwa Post Co,’ accessed 1 May 2020, https://www.post.gov.tw/post/internet/W_stamphouse/index_en.jsp?ID=2807&file_name=AH01.

The printing and sale of stamps reflected the slow recovery of the CPS in the *guangfu* areas. The old stamps were still circulated for a while. Taiwan's overprinted old stamps lasted almost a year, until October 1946, when the newly printed Chinese stamps arrived.¹⁷ By contrast, the stamp situation in Manchuria was even more complicated. After the war, Guomindang, the CCP, and the Soviet Union competed over control of Manchuria, and they occupied, or so-called *jieshou* 接收 (take over), specific villages, towns, and cities. This caused confusion of various currencies and postages in a country. The CPS could not entirely retake control of postal services in Manchuria. In November and December 1945, the CPS DG adjusted the order that the Manchukuo stamps and former north China stamps with *Zhonghua minguo* overprinted were allowed to be used until the end of March 1946, but the fact is that, due to the continuing shortage of stamps, the Manchukuo stamps were still overprinted and used after that deadline. In May 1946, the Jinzhou and Shenyang postal administrations were still issuing overprinted Manchukuo stamps. While these were the cases that had been reported to the DG or DG's representative offices in Manchuria for approval, some cases were not approved by the postal authority. There were some places which had not yet been taken under the control of either the Nationalists or the Communists and that were not even connected to the national postal networks. Local postal employees in these places would issue their own overprinted Manchukuo stamps, with the characters *Zhonghua minguo* to address people's postal needs before connecting with the CPS. However, according to a philatelist's study, most of the overprinted Manchukuo stamps that could be found later were counterfeit products or had unauthorised overprinting by local postal employees,

¹⁷ See 'Taiwan Def 001 Japanese Postage Stamps with Overprint Reading "Taiwan Province—Republic of China" Temporary Issue (1945),' Chungghwa Post Co, accessed 1 May 2020, https://www.post.gov.tw/post/internet/W_stamphouse/index_en.jsp?ID=2807&file_name=AH01.

collectors, philatelists, and philatelic auction agents. At that turbulent time, collectors were likely able to ask postal employees to overprint their own collections.¹⁸ As the situation developed, the stamp shortage and counterfeiting demonstrate that postal operations in Manchuria were in chaos, and that situation seemed to become worse than during the Second World War. Even though the postal service in Taiwan did not demonstrate such complicated chaos after the war, the continued use of the Japanese Empire's stamps still shows that the taking over of the postal services in the *guangfu* areas was much more complicated and slower than in the *shoufu* areas.

2. The State of Confusion: One Country, Many Systems

Although the post-war recovery outline and the regulations of the postal services were set for the *guangfu* and *shoufu* areas, the overall progress differed from place to place. In fact, it was related not only to the post-war situation but also to the original postal development background of the locality before the War. A 'modern' national postal service was expected to be under centralised and unified management, but the following discussion of the case in post-war Taiwan will offer a different scenario.

Taiwan was a brand-new operating area for the CPS. Its postal infrastructure was built by the Japanese colonial government. Some may argue that Liu Mingchuan 劉銘傳 (1836–1896), the first Governor of Taiwan in the Qing dynasty, between 1884 and 1891, had built a 'modern' postal institution for the island, called the *Taiwan youzheng zongju* 臺灣郵政總局 (General Post Office of Taiwan) before the Japanese arrived.¹⁹ However, Liu more likely only

¹⁸ Zhonghua renmin gongheguo shangyexinxibu, *Zhongguo youpiao shi*, vol. 4, 90–95.

¹⁹ The argument is commonly used in Chinese postal history published in China and Taiwan. For example, Pan Ansheng and Yu Yanling, *Zhi you chuan ming*, 110–114; Yan Xing (Pan Ansheng's pen name), *Zhonghua youzheng fazhanshi*, 223–236; Youdian shi bianjishi, ed. *Zhongguo jindai youdian shi*, 20–23.

borrowed the terms of the Western-style postal service, and what he actually did was to reform the management of the imperial courier system, *yizhan* 驛站, in order to improve delivery efficiency, rather than adopting the measures of a 'modern' national postal service.²⁰ One reason is that it was not a centralised monopoly under the administration of the state. It was a local government reformation which did not even report to the Qing court for approval. Another reason is that its operation did not go beyond the scope of *yizhan*. Its design was based on *yizhan*'s delivery routes, and its carriers were still those soldiers who served in the government-use-only courier system. In fact, *yizhan* was related to military communications and the governance of the Qing Empire's boundaries, while it was seriously corrupt in late Qing Taiwan, and this attracted Liu's attention.²¹

One visible piece of evidence of Liu's reform of *yizhan* is the issuance of 'stamps' (*youpiao* 郵票) (the original idea came from *youfu* 郵符, the certificate of stay and use of imperial courier station facilities, or *huopiao* 火票, literally 'fire ticket', the certificate of urgent official document delivery), with a receipt function through which to record transfer information on mail station by the station (*zhan* 站) (Figures 6.2 and 6.3). Overall, this postal service was far from the national postal service which Robert Hart wanted to develop in China at the time. Liu's reform of the courier system was not maintained after Liu resigned as Governor of Taiwan in 1891.²²

²⁰ Ling-chieh Chen, 'Lun Qingmo Taiwan xinshi youzheng zhi chuangshe' (The Establishment of the Formosa Postal Service in the Late Qing), in *Liangan sandi lishixue yanjiusheng yantaohui lunwenxuanji 2009*, ed. Hu Chunhui et al. (Taipei: Guoli zhenzhi daxue lishixuexi, 2010), 497–516.

²¹ Ling-chieh Chen, 'Lun Qingmo Taiwan xinshi youzheng zhi chuangshe,' 497–516.

²² Ling-chieh Chen, 'Lun Qingmo Taiwan xinshi youzheng zhi chuangshe,' 497–516.



Figure 6.2: The original design for a stamp of the Taiwan General Post Office. Source: The Collections of the National Museum of Taiwan History. Source: <https://collections.nmth.gov.tw/CollectionContent.aspx?a=132&rno=2017.044.0010>, accessed 8 September 2021.



Figure 6.3: *Huopiao* 火票 of the Qing dynasty of the Qianlong period. Source: Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 295654-001.

Four years later, Japan directly extended the Japanese Empire Postal Service into Taiwan, as its colonial rule began in 1895. It was not until the end of WWII, in 1945, that the CPS took over Taiwan's postal service. The new postal district of Taiwan was reorganised after the war but was based on the colonial legacy, inheriting its postal infrastructure, operations, administration, and employees. Differently from China, Japan's postal system had been integrated with telecommunications since *Teishinshō* 逓信省 (the Ministry of Communication) was established in 1885. The system was similar to that of the General Post Office of the UK between the late nineteenth century and the 1980s, which combined postal, telegraph, and telephone services in the Post Office.²³ Colonial Taiwan followed the Japanese system after 1895 to operate both postal and telecommunications services together.

The colonial postal system carried on as a transitional system after the ROC took over Taiwan in 1945. However, the system created a relatively independent administration, as against the long-standing centralised management of the CPS. This was not only because it continued the colonial institution that combined postal and telecommunication services but also retained some postal regulations which were useful, and temporarily irreplaceable, under the special transitional arrangements. These colonial postal regulations were used until October 1946, before it was demanded that they be amended as new regulations.²⁴

In addition, the colonial structure and institution of the postal administration were retained. It caused the new provincial government of Taiwan to be given a certain right to

²³ Maclachlan, *The People's Post Office*, 48–50. The UK's telegraph service was nationalised and merged into the Post Office between 1868 and 1869. See Campbell-Smith, *Masters of the Post*, 178–179.

²⁴ 'Rizhi shidai youdian fagui fei liu biao diansong an' 日治時代郵電法規廢留表電送案 (The Table of Repeal and Retention Postal and Telecommunications Regulations), 24 October 1946, 00307100008006, Taiwan Historica (TH); 'Rizhi shidai faling Youdianguanliju nizhan baoliu zhe qingsu xiuding an' 日治時代法令郵電管理局擬暫保留者請速修訂案 (Amending Temporary Retention of Postal and Telecommunications Regulations), 31 October 1946, 00307100008007, TH.

interfere with postal management. After 1945, the Colonial Communications Department of Transport Bureau (*Kōtsūkyoku Teishinbu* 交通局遞信部) of the Government-General of Taiwan (*Taiwan sōtokufu* 臺灣總督府) was replaced by the Committee for Postal and Telecommunications Administration (CPTA, *Youdian guanli weiyuanhui* 郵電管理委員會). The CPTA was supervised by the Department of Communications of the Taiwan Province Chief Executive Office (臺灣省行政長官公署交通處) instead of the CPS and the Nationalist MOC.²⁵ The postal service in Taiwan was controlled by the provincial government, while other postal districts were directed by the CPS DG. This may be an accidental result of the regime change in post-war Taiwan, but, to a certain extent, it affected the overall operation of the CPS nationwide.

In fact, the post-war measures for Taiwan's postal service were proposed quite early on. After Chiang Kai-shek won the Allies' support to reclaim Taiwan at the Cairo Conference in late November 1943, the Chongqing government established a Taiwan Investigation Committee and appointed Chen Yi 陳儀 (1883–1950) as its Chairman in April 1944 in order to prepare to take over Taiwan after the War, while there were still discussions and considerations in relation to Taiwan's future status among the Allies.²⁶ The committee drafted *The Outline of a Takeover Taiwan Plan* (臺灣接管計畫綱要), which was used to propose a series of measures to comprehensively replace Japan's colonial rule.²⁷ According to the Outline, a provisional administration would be established under a 'unified command to

²⁵ Jiaotongbu Youzheng zongju, ed., *Youzhen Dashiji*, 431.

²⁶ Lin, *Accidental State*, 19–26; 29–34.

²⁷ See Wu Wenxing, 'Zhanhou chunian zai-Tai Riben ren liuyong zhengce chutan' (A Study on the Adoptive Policy of Japanese-in-Taiwan in the Early Stages After World War Two), *Taiwan shida lishi xuebao* 33 (June 2005): 269–285; Chen Chuilian, *Zhonggou Ererba*, 51–54; Yang Huyuan, *Guangfu yu zhanling: Guominzhengfu dui Taiwan de junshi jieshou* (Retrocession and Occupation: the Nationalist Government's Military Takeover of Taiwan) (Taipei: Dulizuoja, 2016), 76–77.

manage all enterprises of transport and communications,' including the postal and telecommunication service,²⁸ rather than there under the direct supervision of the DG of the CPS. The establishment of the CPTA and the measures that followed were precisely those implemented based on the Outline after the War. On 25 October 1945, Chen Yi became the Chief Executive (行政長官) of Taiwan as the head of the new province, and he had more than a provincial governor's political power to control the administration, justice, and the military.

The CPS authority in Taiwan was affected as a result of the relatively localised supervision in Taiwan, which operated against the CPS's centralised management and independent operations from local authorities. The administrative structure gave the Chief Executive of Taiwan total power to take control of previous Japanese government agencies and private companies.²⁹ Although the Head of Taiwan's Communications Department was sent from Nanjing,³⁰ the MOC and the CPS did not direct the postal service or have full power to appoint personnel in practice. The first Chairman of the CPTA was Yan Jiagan (Yen Chia-kan) 嚴家淦 (1905–1993), who simultaneously served as the Head of the Communication Department of Taiwan under Chief Executive Chen's command. A 9 April 1946 personnel order shows that Chief Executive Chen had authority, and he used it, to dismiss Yan's concurrent position in the CPTA, and he appointed a new chairman and other committee members.³¹ This implies that the postal service was not entirely supervised by the CPS, which deviated from

²⁸ 'Taiwan jieguan jihua gangyao' 臺灣接管計畫綱要 (The Outline of Takeover Taiwan Plan), 14 January 1945, 00302900009001, TH.

²⁹ Lin, *Accidental State*, 38–39.

³⁰ According to Li Guoding's (Kwoh-Ting Li) 李國鼎 (1910–2001) reminiscences, Yen Chia-kan was appointed as Head of the Communications Department of Taiwan and went to Taiwan with Chen Yi for the takeover. Liu Sufen, *Li Guoding: Wode Taiwan jingyan* (Taipei: Yuanliu chubangongsi, 2005), 513.

³¹ 'Jiaotongchu youdian guanli weiyuanhui zhurenweiyuan Chen Shounian deng siyuan renmian an' 交通處郵電管理委員會主任委員陳壽年等四員任免案 (The CPTA Chairman Chen Shounian and Members' Appointments and Dismissals), 9 April 1946, 00303234116004, TH.

the established convention of centralised postal management in a country. It, therefore, caused a dispute in relation to management rights between the postal operators and the Chief Executive. As Yan Xing (Pan Ansheng's pen name), who was a CPS official and sent to serve in Taiwan in the autumn 1947,³² argued, this arrangement was advocated by Chief Executive Chen, who wanted to control the postal administration of Taiwan under his command of the provincial government.³³ There is no direct evidence to prove that Chen had the ambition to interfere with postal services, but the postal staff seemed to be discontented with the circumstances of the limited authority of the CPS's leadership in Taiwan.

The leadership of the CPTA was also controversial. Yan Xing believed that it was just a *wuweierzhi* 無為而治 — ruling without taking actions — type of government agency.³⁴ However, it was in charge of replacing colonial *Teishinbu* and taking over all of the post and telegram offices and the property that used to be controlled by the Japanese.³⁵ Needless to say, the position of its chair was initially held by the Head of Communications of Taiwan, and that was the source of the problem. The CPTA interfered with or even replaced the CPS's authority in local areas. Post-war Taiwan's postal service was not led by professional postal officials, nor was it commanded by the CPS DG.

Not only the leadership but retaining the Japanese colonial postal system also caused chaos within the Post Office of Taiwan. Liu Chenghan argued that there were only three changes in the postal service in Taiwan after the War: the name of the post office changed from Japanese to Chinese, the colour of post boxes changed from red to green, and the

³² Pan Ansheng and Yu Yanling, *Zhi you chuan ming*, 138–140, 161–162

³³ Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhan shi*, 471.

³⁴ Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhan shi*, 473.

³⁵ 'Yudian weiyuanhui jieshou Richan qingce chengsong an' 郵電委員會接收日產清冊呈送案 (A List of the Received Japanese Property Created by the CPTA), 21 February 1946, 00326620067013, TH.

overprinted stamps were used, but otherwise, nothing changed. He pointed out that not only were Taiwan's postal and telecommunications services merging into one agency, which was one of the significant differences between post-war Taiwan and China, but also its recruitment, personnel system, and even its pay structure were different.³⁶ At that time, the service relied on some Japanese employees, who were retained for a while until the repatriation started in October 1946.³⁷ Meanwhile, Taiwanese employees who previously worked for the colonial Post Office continued to remain in office, but they worked with new colleagues who were sent from the CPS and the Chinese Telecommunication Administration on the Chinese mainland, which increased the difficulty in integrating and managing, from the CPS officials' perspective. Liu Chenghan ascribed the service's inefficiency and the oversupply of Taiwanese postal employees, which caused a decrease in revenue in the first two years of the post-war period, to the personnel problems left by the Japanese colonial system and the gap between the Japanese system and the Chinese system during the transition period.³⁸ These can be understood as badly adapted responses to when China first took control of Taiwan. It also involved Chinese national sentiment when Chinese officials met different systems and traditions that had been left behind by a former enemy that they had fought against for such a long time. The post-war economic recovery in China, including Taiwan, was even more complicated, as the country immediately became involved in the Civil War. The decline in postal operations volume might have had multiple causes in post-war Taiwan. Nevertheless, Liu's view highlights the confusion caused by unfamiliar systems and inconsistent management, which deviated from the operation principle of the CPS as a national service.

³⁶ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 520.

³⁷ Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhan shi*, 475.

³⁸ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 520–522.

After the MOC repeatedly coordinated with the Taiwan Chief Executive Office, the CPTA was replaced by the Taiwan Postal and Telecommunications Administration on 5 May 1946, the same date on which China's capital city was officially moved back to Nanjing. The MOC of the central government took over the authority for personnel appointments but still maintained the localised structure that combined two communication administrations. The new postal administration seemed to have been directed nominally by the MOC while still keeping its management merged with telecommunications. The new supervisor, the postal and telecommunications commissioner, was the former CPTA Chairman, despite reappointment by the central government.³⁹ The institution was not entirely changed but merely its name. Liu Chenghan believed that it was a result of the MOC's request.⁴⁰ However, the process of the negotiation shows that the Chief Executive of Taiwan indeed had the power against the central government's authority to localise the control of the postal and telecommunications services.

In order to finally connect Taiwan's postal administration with the Chinese mainland, the MOC continued to try to separate the post and the telecommunications after taking back personnel appointment authority. In October 1946, the MOC issued an order to the Directorate General of Telecommunications, rather than to the DG of the CPS, to formulate the names of Branch Post Offices in Taiwan. This was because after the Nationalist government took over Taiwan's postal service, it only switched the original name of *youbinkyoku* 郵便局 (*youbianju*, in Mandarin Chinese) in Japanese kanji to Chinese *youju* 郵局 (post office), with a difference of only one character. However, Japan's *youbinkyoku*

³⁹ 'Jiaotongbu youdianquanliju chengli an' 交通部郵電管理局成立案 (The Establishment of the Postal and Telecommunications Administration of MOC), 5 May 1946, T00301210001008, TH.

⁴⁰ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 520–521.

included postal and telecommunications services, while *youju*, in the Chinese context, only referred to postal agencies and excluded telecommunications. The MOC believed that the names of the institution did not match its actual services and that caused confusion in relation to their management. It actively renamed Taiwan's local Post Offices as *youdianju* 郵電局 (post and telecommunications offices), if a Post Office combined postal and telecommunications services. Otherwise, the name of either *youju* or *dianxinju* 電信局 (telecommunications office) remained if it only provided a single service. For instance, in central Taipei, the post office and telecommunications office buildings had been separated since the Japanese colonial period in order to cope with the greater volume of communications service demand.⁴¹ The formulation of the renaming policy might have solved the problem of how these two institutions should be named in Taipei.

However, as trivial as it sounds, the renaming policy could only influence the names. It did not significantly change the manifold leadership of postal and telecommunication services in Taiwan. The Chief Executive still had the supervisory power to be informed about and even had the authority, as a supervisor, to verify the implementation of the reform.⁴² The tension between the local and central government remained, although the MOC tried to find a way to manage a separate system of postal and telecommunications under the circumstances of the post-war recovery.

The Taiwan Provincial Government led by a civil governor was finally formed to replace the Chief Executive Office in May 1947. This is regarded as a measure that was put in place to deal with the aftermath of the February 28th Incident, the most severe event in post-war

⁴¹ 'Youdianguanliju suoshugeju gengming hebe an' 郵電管理局所屬各局更名核備案 (Renaming Branches of the Taiwan Postal and Telecommunications Administration), 22 November 1946, 00318200013002, TH.

⁴² 'Youdianguanliju suoshugeju gengming hebe an,' 22 November 1946, 00318200013002, TH.

Taiwan, in which the Nationalist military forces suppressed the uprising of the Taiwanese people when the political leadership of Taiwan shifted from the military to a civilian government body.⁴³ However, the localised supervision of the postal and telecommunications service of Taiwan did not end. The administration of the post, merged with that of telecommunications, remained unchanged until April 1949.⁴⁴

In the meantime, because of the increasingly fierce conflict between Guomindang and the CCP, the CPS, which ultimately was an agency of the Guomindang government, had its hands full in facing the crisis on the Chinese mainland. Particularly in 1948, the situation in the Chinese Civil War turned sharply when the Guomindang army suffered several setbacks. The DG of the CPS had to seek relocation only three years after returning to Nanjing. In November, as the Guomindang army was defeated at the Battle of Hsupeng 徐蚌會戰 in the Nationalist narrative, or the Huaihai Campaign 淮海戰役, as it was referred to by the CCP, the DG decided to secretly move out of the capital, Nanjing. According to Liu Chenghan's recollections, in December 1948, he was appointed to lead the South-Eastern Postal Inspection (*xinan youwu shidao tuan* 西南郵務視導團) in Guangzhou, commanding the CPS in Guangdong, Guangxi, Hunan, and Fujian. The South-Eastern Postal Inspection was secretly authorised to take over the DG's power as a backup plan if the capital fell, while the DG's office's official plan was to relocate to Shanghai. These were covert operations which only a few officials knew about in order to avoid causing panic among the postal employees.⁴⁵

On the last day of 1948, the DG office moved to Shanghai, cutting down the number of staff. On 31 January 1949, the Director-General was ordered to flee to Guangzhou with the

⁴³ Lin, *Accidental State*, 54–55.

⁴⁴ Yan Xing, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhan shi*, 480.

⁴⁵ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 513–519.

MOC relocation.⁴⁶ This risky diversification strategy divided the CPS headquarters into two locations. However, the CCP army advanced to Shanghai and took the Shanghai Post Office in May 1949. Guangzhou became the final stronghold of the DG office of the CPS in mainland China.

In contrast, the postal administration in Taiwan was relatively stable and secure. Taiwan remained not only geographically separated from the main battlefield across the Taiwan Strait but also its new civil provincial government's dealings with the situation after the 1947 turmoil seemed to work. Hsiao-ting Lin pointed out that Dr Wei Daoming (Wei Tao-ming) 魏道明 (1899–1978), the new Civil Governor of Taiwan, adopted a free market economic reform through which to privatise government-controlled enterprises as a measure with which to appease the Taiwanese people. In mid-1948, the situation on the island successfully calmed down, especially compared with other places in China. It thus 'accidentally' established a 'Nationalist island state', which became a base for a retreat that could be selected by the Nationalist government.⁴⁷ Compared to Lin's view, the post and telecommunications, and other transport-related enterprises, were not privatised. Their government-owned status was maintained. Although the postal service was still partially supervised by the new provincial government, it benefitted from the relatively stable circumstances to carry on its operations on the island. The localised postal supervision thus seemed to serve as a protection that shielded it from the Civil War and ensured that its communications would be uninterrupted. Although it seemed to challenge the centralised administration as a 'national' postal service, the fact was that the central government itself

⁴⁶ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 517–519.

⁴⁷ Lin, *Accidental State*, 55–56.

had fallen into more severe chaos.

With Guomindang rapidly being defeated by the CCP in mainland China, the CPS lost the majority of the postal districts, but it strengthened its service in Taiwan under the special cooperation structure between the central and local government bodies. Taiwan's overall conditions made it a possible retreat location of exile for the CPS, while its postal system was still incompatible with the CPS and had not yet been prepared for or even been expected to be, their next shelter.

At the most critical moment, the Nationalist MOC was still trying to work on the reorganisation of the postal administration of Taiwan in case of emergency. First, in February 1949, the MOC, which had just retreated to Guangzhou, informed the Taiwan Provincial Government of its decision to implement *fenban heshe* 分辦合設 (working separately in joint offices) policy, which eventually divided Taiwan's postal and communications service into two, the Postal Administration and the Telecommunications Administration. Nevertheless, their convention of joint offices on the island remained. The two systems' employees could continue to work in the same office or act as agents for each other.⁴⁸ At that time, reorganising to achieve a consistent management structure did not seem to be a high priority, especially as the MOC and CPS headquarters had just settled down in Guangzhou and were still involved in the crisis of the Civil War. Rather, cutting costs by reducing employees and downsizing the organisation to cope with the worsening situation was the main purpose.⁴⁹ This new *fenban heshe* policy took effect on 1 April, after the Provincial Government's approval,⁵⁰ which once again demonstrates the special supervision power of the Taiwan Provincial Government over

⁴⁸ The MOC letter telegram on 18 February 1949, 0040124004712001, TH.

⁴⁹ The MOC letter telegram on 18 February 1949, 0040124004712001, TH.

⁵⁰ 'Taiwan youdian gaiwei fenbanheshe dianzhi an' 臺灣郵電改為分辦合設電知案 (Taiwan Postal and Telecommunications Service Separating into Joint Offices), 1 April 1949, 0040124004712005, TH.

the postal service.

Furthermore, the MOC designated the Taiwan Postal Administration to process international mail exchange. Taiwan was an island province outside the mainland, which had no international exchange post offices as transit hubs. All international mail needed to transit via other exchange offices on the Chinese mainland. The unfavourable situation for the CPS became increasingly tense as Guomindang was losing on the battlefields. The Taipei Post Office was, thus, urgently designated to be an international mail exchange office before the CPS finalised the plan to relocate the DG office in exile to Taipei in June 1949. According to Liu Chenghan, this measure was to prevent interruption between Taiwan and the world.⁵¹ He implied that the CPS did care that it could lose its internationally recognised status in the UPU as China's national postal administration if it entirely disconnected from the international postal network. But more importantly, the intention of the CPS to use Taiwan as the best and most likely retreat choice was already clear.

In the meantime, Taiwan's postal service was more likely to be further localised in order to meet urgent demand. Taiwan returned to the military governorship in January 1949 and declared martial law in May 1949, which was implemented for nearly forty years until 1987. The Provincial Government was given more power, which was authorised by Executive Yuan to command all of the central government agencies in Taiwan following the declaration of martial law. As a consequence, the Provincial Government announced that it would take over the Taiwan Postal Administration and the Telecommunications Administration and informed the MOC of this in June 1949.⁵² Liu Chenghan recalled that the Minister of

⁵¹ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 523, 529–531.

⁵² Taiwan Provincial Government telegram draft to the MOC, June 1949, 0042970007924004, TH. The issue date should be 7 June 1949; see the MOC's reply telegram transcript, 0040124004712006, TH.

Communications in Guangzhou initially approved Taiwan Provincial Government's request, while he, who had transferred to the MOC as the Director of the General Affairs Department at that time, opposed the new arrangement under martial law. He believed that it would be inappropriate as a national postal service and was 'unconstitutional'. He was worried that the CPS could be unrecognised by the UPU and would be disconnected from the international postal network if it were localised. Liu said that the Minister finally accepted his suggestion to withdraw the approval and stressed that the Taiwan Provincial Government should only have supervisory power as usual but not include a complete takeover.⁵³

Looking at the original documents, the MOC's official reply to the Taiwan Provincial Government mainly focused on the 'international' recognition and relationship with a 'national' postal service: 'The postal and telecommunications services are national enterprises, which have had a relationship with international conventions and have established unified rules, internationally and domestically.' It asked the Provincial Government to 'notice the original system,' which implies the centralised management of the national postal services, rather than localised control, 'in order to avoid international misunderstandings'.⁵⁴ Although it was slightly different from Liu's recollections, they all emphasised the keyword 'international' to disagree with the local government in a euphemistic manner. The 'international' participation always seems to be a powerful argument against local intervention, which often occurred in the Republican era, as this thesis has mentioned in prior chapters. In this case, it was a practical consideration, as previous experience sought to ensure that China was involved in the international postal networks and kept correspondence flowing. However, more than that, it was also a legitimacy struggle

⁵³ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 524–525.

⁵⁴ The MOC telegram to the Taiwan Provincial Government, transcript, 9 June 1949, 0040124004712006, TH.

between the local authorities and the central government and a fight for the CPS's precarious status as a nationwide service during the most severe crisis of the Nationalist government in the Civil War.

Nonetheless, Liu did not mention that the Taiwan Provincial Government seemed to be adamant in its position. The Provincial Government replied to the MOC that it 'should follow Executive Yuan's order, in which the postal and the telecommunications services of Taiwan would still be commanded and supervised by the Provincial Government'.⁵⁵ Differently in previous cases, the local government did not seem to be interested in taking advantage of the CPS. The Provincial Government was very politely requested to maintain confidential contact and update them on their related business measures.⁵⁶ The problem was that the Civil War had caused so much uncertainty. The CPS and the Telecommunications Service had lost control in most areas of China, except for Taiwan. In the meantime, the CPS DG was preparing to relocate again, and Taiwan had become the first choice instead of following the Nationalist central government to Chongqing before eventually moving to Taipei. The localisation countermeasure of the postal service did not replace the state's role and interference with postal management. Instead, it was meaningful in maintaining Taiwan's postal service, despite the CPS headquarters not performing its duties. In fact, no matter where the CPS DG moved to, it was highly likely to be taken by the 'enemy' at that time.

After moving to Guangzhou, the CPS DG began the plan to evacuate to Taiwan. In June 1949, almost at the same time as the Provincial Government demanded postal administration, the CPS DG relocated again. Most of the postal employees of the DG were ordered to relocate

⁵⁵ The Taiwan Provincial Government telegram to the MOC, 17 June 1949, 0040124004712006, TH.

⁵⁶ The Taiwan Provincial Government letter telegram draft to the Postal and the Communications services, 27 June 1949, 0040124004712006, TH.

to Taipei on 23 August 1949, and all of the postal administrations across the country were ordered to become self-supporting, and their employees were dismissed in September 1949. So far, the CPS had no choice but to abandon its business on the Chinese mainland. On 10 October 1949, as one of the MOC of the Nationalist government's affiliations, the CPS was officially ordered to fully evacuate to Taipei. If Liu's reminiscence is right, only a few hundred of the CPS employees arrived in Taiwan. The Director-General of Posts, Huo Xixiang 霍錫祥 (1894–1980), did not even want to take up office in Taipei and stayed in Hong Kong.⁵⁷ After all, the CPS lost almost all contact with its subordinate postal districts. It claimed that it had relocated to Taiwan, but the reality seems to be that only the name of CPS, some documents,⁵⁸ and a small number of employees were relocated.

3. Unfair Treatment in the Post Office of Taiwan

Between 1945 and 1950, it was also a time when the postal labour movement was flourishing in China. As previously discussed, the Civil War had no direct impact on the postal service in Taiwan. However, the movement did spread to the island and was even more complicated than on the mainland due to ethnic conflicts, known as *shengji chongtu* 省籍衝突 (literally, provincial conflicts; but can be understood as the ethnic conflicts between native Taiwanese and Chinese mainlanders taking place after 1945) in post-war Taiwan. With the Chinese Communist Revolution happening in the background, postal workers also aroused their consciousness against unequal treatment. Many postal employees were members of the postal unions and participated in campaigns and strikes across China.⁵⁹ This was caused

⁵⁷ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 531–535.

⁵⁸ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 531–535.

⁵⁹ In his reminiscences, Liu Chenghan mentioned that he experienced a postal workers' industrial action when he worked in Lanzhou. He claimed he was successful in addressing the union's action, while he also implied

because the postal workers fought for equal treatment of foreign and Chinese employees and of higher-rank staff and lower-paid workers in the 1920s. As chapter 2 mentioned, Guomindang used to be an important supporter of the postal worker movement and shared the same socialist ideology as the Communists in the 1920s. However, the position of Guomindang rapidly changed after it came to power and took control of the CPS in 1928.⁶⁰ During the Chinese Civil War between 1945 and 1949, the labour movement grew quickly along with the Communist Revolution. After the movement spread to Taiwan, the *shengji* conflict made the labour issues even more complicated.

The *shengji chongtu* in Taiwan signifies the long-term ethnic conflict between the native Taiwanese and the Chinese, or, more precisely, the mainlanders (*waishengren* 外省人), who moved from other places in China to Taiwan after 1945.⁶¹ As mentioned above, both Liu and Yan noticed that the confusion in the postal operations in Taiwan was caused by the disorder in the personnel management systems. However, they did not realise that the

that the union was stronger and more aggressive in Nanjing and Shanghai at the time. Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 443–439.

⁶⁰ This change is reflected in the career of Liu Chenghan as a pro-Guomindang's higher-rank postal officer in his stance on the postal labour movements. See Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 51–66.

⁶¹ The causes of *shengji chongtu* were multiple. Most scholars agree that it was caused by the failure of the Guomindang's initial policies and attitudes toward ruling Taiwan under the post-WW2's and the Chinese Civil War's circumstances. Steven Philips suggested that the conflict between mainland Chinese and Taiwanese was related to the Japanese colonial legacy when he focused on the redistribution of former Japanese property after WWII. The Nationalist government confiscated all public and private property of the former colonists, which, coupled with corruption, soon clashed with islanders (native Taiwanese). In addition, the language differences increased the complexity. Taiwanese used different languages from the new Nationalists, while the Nationalists attempted to change Taiwan's official language to standard Mandarin Chinese despite carrying dialect accents from all over Mainland China, and the usage of Japanese among Taiwanese became a political issue. The communication between the Chinese and Taiwanese became a serious issue. Wakabayashi Masahiro also mentioned the issue of language and corruption. Masahiro's discussion on ethnic conflicts in post-war Taiwan went one step further from previous ethnic policies since the Qing China. He suggested that Taiwan is a multi-ethnic society whose formation can be traced back to the Qing Empire's ethnic identities and class differences under Japanese colonial assimilation. The February 28 Incident broke out in 1947 at the peak of the conflict, which caused long-term rift in Taiwan's society. See Steven Philips, 'Between Assimilation and Independence: Taiwanese Political Aspirations under Nationalist Chinese Rule, 1945–1948,' in *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. Murray A. Rubinstein (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 283–285. Wakabayashi Masahiro, *Taiwan no seiji: Chūkaminokoku Taiwan-ka no sengo-shi* (Politics in Taiwan: The Post-war History of the Republic of China's Taiwanisation) (Tōkyō: Tōkyōdaigaku shuppankai, 2009), 27–52.

situation also led to seriously unfair treatment and ethnic discrimination. Taiwanese postal staff shared accounts and memories of fighting against ‘oppression’ that were very different from those of Yan and Liu who were mainlanders situated in the higher ranks of the postal staff.

For instance, Wang Wenqing 王文清 (1927–2019) was a former Taiwanese postal employee at the Taipei Post Office. He joined the Taipei Post Office just after WW2 and experienced the handover process:

When I joined the Post Office [in November 1945], supervisors at all levels above me, who handled [postal] affairs, were either Japanese or Taiwanese. In the following year, Shanghai appointed Xu Gonghe 徐公荷, with a group of people, to take over the Taipei Post Office. These people came to work at 8 am and went off at 5 pm, but they rested on the table reading newspapers and having tea all day long. I never saw them doing anything. They were paid over ten times more than we, Taiwanese. At that time, inflation occurred, so they used sacks to take their salary home, while our pockets were big enough to place our salary in them. [Because] I witnessed their behaviours, I was really dissatisfied [with this].⁶²

Wang’s testimony shows that the Taipei Post Office had not yet been taken over by the Chinese Nationalist government while still retaining the original employees, including Japanese employees, until 1946. However, the conflict also came from this ‘retaining’

⁶² ‘Wang Wen-Ching Oral History Documentary (English version),’ 8:16, National Human Rights Museum, accessed 20 June 29, 2020, https://imedia.culture.tw/channel/nhrm/zh_tw/media/40687. I translated this paragraph from Wang’s original speech in Taiwanese Hokkien, rather than quoting the English subtitles in the film.

measure. ‘How long do we have to be “retained”?’ Wang said. Although the Japanese were repatriated in turn, the Taiwanese were still regarded as *liuyong* 留用 personnel (temporarily retained employees) instead of as permanent personnel, as were those who had been sent from the Chinese mainland after the war. According to Lin Chuankai’s research, Taiwanese staff of the postal and telecommunications service remained in *liuyong* status from the WW2 end until the autumn of 1949. Their salaries were only thirty to forty per cent of full-time positions. Under post-war inflation, they were unable to make a living working solely in the Post Office and had to do odd jobs after work. The salary inequality between Taiwanese and Chinese employees became part of the *shengji* and ethnic oppression.⁶³ Liu Chenghan only critiqued the confused postal management and the chaotic personnel system in post-war Taiwan, but what he did not mention was probably the gap in pay and the ethnic inequality among Chinese mainlanders and Taiwanese, which strongly disappointed Wang Wenqing and other Taiwanese postal staff. As Lin Chuankai’s suggests, this type of management in state-owned enterprises, including the Post Office, can be understood as a neocolonialist governance mode in post-war Taiwan.⁶⁴ This caused great dissatisfaction among Taiwanese postal employees.

Another reason for the conflict was the language barrier. Native postal employees used mainly Japanese as the official language and Taiwanese Hokkien as the spoken language. Taiwanese employees were not able to communicate easily with their new colleagues from mainland China, who spoke Mandarin Chinese and used English as a working language. ‘The language barrier was a big problem. We could not even work together,’ Wang Wenqing said.⁶⁵

⁶³ Lin Chuankai, ‘Zhanhou Taiwan dixiadang de geming douzheng (1945–1955)’ (The Revolutionary Struggles of the Underground Party in Post-war Taiwan) (PhD diss., National Taiwan University, 2018), 296.

⁶⁴ Lin Chuankai, ‘Zhanhou Taiwan dixiadang de geming douzheng,’ 11–12, 296.

⁶⁵ ‘Wang Wen-Ching Oral History Documentary (English version),’ 8:16, National Human Rights Museum.

This was a common but serious issue in post-war Taiwan. As Steven Philips pointed out, Mandarin Chinese, as a new official language in Taiwan, became a symbol of patriotism and an important ability in politics and provincial administrative positions. However, most of the representatives of the Taiwan Provincial Consultative Assembly (*Taiwansheng canyihui* 臺灣省參議會) needed translation in the meetings in 1946. The same was the case even for mainlanders who spoke various dialects originating in China.⁶⁶ As a result of that, the postal union ran a language course and hired Mandarin teachers from the mainland for Taiwanese employees. The two teachers, Ms Ji Meizhen 計梅真 (1915–1950) and Ms Qian Jingzhi 錢靜芝 (1920–1950), were liked and trusted by the employees, despite their mainland origins. They encouraged Taiwanese postal employees to join the Taiwanese Postal Workers' Union (臺灣省郵務工會) and strive for equality and *guiban* 歸班 (returning to a permanent position and working in shifts in line with a regular employee's status). But even after trying hard to learn Mandarin Chinese, the language and cultural barriers were still a problem when the Union sent representatives to attend the 1948 National Postal Union Congress in Shanghai in order to present their petition.⁶⁷

The frustration of petitioning in Shanghai caused the petition's target to shift from the professional authorities to the political authorities, the Taiwan Provincial Government. After the congress of the Taiwanese Postal Union, it is said that about two thousand postal workers staged a protest at the Taiwan governor's office on 26 March 1949. According to Wang Wenqing's recollections, the Taipei Post Office's workers accounted for two to three hundred

⁶⁶ Philips, 'Between Assimilation and Independence,' 285.

⁶⁷ 'Wang Wen-Ching Oral History Documentary (English version),' 8:16; Lu Xiangxian 陸象賢, ed., *Hunxi Taipei: Jinian Taiwan youdian gongren yundong xianqu* (Souls in Taipei: Pioneers of the Postal and Telecommunication Labour Movement in Taiwan) (Taipei: n.a., 2002), 5–9; Lin Chuankai, 'Zhanhou Taiwan dixiadang de geming douzheng,' 317–318.

of them.⁶⁸ Governor Chen Cheng 陳誠 (1898–1965) met the union representatives but did not make any promises. In May 1949, a new solution was proposed: if Taiwanese employees passed an examination, they could be transferred to become permanent employees.⁶⁹

However, the end of the story was a soul-stirring tragedy, which became a significant case of the White Terror in early 1950s Taiwan. The two teachers, Ji Meizhen and Qian Jingzhi, were exposed as secret Communists who had been sent by a CCP branch in Shanghai to develop the organisation in the Post Office of Taiwan.⁷⁰ In March 1950, the Guomintang government arrested postal workers who had actively participated in the movements in a retaliatory fashion and convicted them of the offence of treason without trial. Ji and Qian were executed, and other postal workers, including Wang Wenqing, were sentenced to imprisonment.⁷¹

The situation of the Taiwanese postal employees in the post-war period was rarely mentioned by former CPS higher-rank staff, such as Liu Chenghan and Yan Xing. As Chinese postal employees who experienced the Sino-Japanese War, they tended to focus on the injustice of Japanese colonial rule instead. Liu's oral history record, for example, was the result of an interview in the 1960s, and it was published in the 1990s, and it merely shows that Taiwan postal employees were treated unequally under Japan's rule, and he remained silent about those conflicts after 1945.⁷² This could be because the left-wing movements were political taboos under Guomintang's rule during martial law, which caused Liu to avoid

⁶⁸ 'Wang Wen-Ching Oral History Documentary,' 9:20–10:22.

⁶⁹ Lu Xiangxian, ed., *Hunxi Taibei*, preface i–v, 9–11.

⁷⁰ Lu Xiangxian, ed., *Hunxi Taibei*, preface i–v, 9–11.

⁷¹ The case was conducted without trials; instead, it was decided upon by the military authority. For the verdict, see B3750187701/0039/1571.3/1111/14/001, NAA. For Wang Wenqing's oral records and memoir, see 'Wang Wen-Ching Oral History Documentary (English version),' National Human Rights Museum; Wang Wenqing, 'Shenqie huainian Ji Meizhen laoshi' (In Memory of Ms Ji Meizhen), in *Hunxi Taibei*, 26–38.

⁷² Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 521–522.

mentioning them before the 1990s. Meanwhile, for Liu, the most important memory between 1945 and 1949 was how he and the CPS went through the short resumption after the Sino-Japanese War but immediately had to seek survival during the Chinese Civil War. Similarly, in his memoirs, Yan Xing's (Pan Ansheng) only focused on the contribution of Fu Dewei 傅德衛, the first Postal Commissioner of the Postal Administration of Taiwan, after Taiwan's postal and telecommunications *fenban heshe* on 1 April 1949, who tried hard to negotiate with Governor Chen Cheng to bail out the postal financial crisis and wage arrears. At that time, Yan himself was a senior postal official under Fu's leadership.⁷³ Although they were both dedicated to the CPS as postal staff in the most chaotic and difficult time, neither Liu nor Yan mentioned the conflicts between Taiwanese and Chinese postal staff and the struggles of lower-rank Taiwanese postal staff. In addition to the various narratives from different socioeconomic classes the Post Office workers, the differences between *shengji* may be another reason for the gap when they recalled the event.

Regarding the personnel problems in post-war Taiwan, Liu recounted that those Japanese employees should have been responsible for the chaos after 1945. As he said, the Japanese temporarily retained employees and directly hired a large number of new native employees via private relations with them, without any recruitment assessment, in order to cope with the lack of manpower.⁷⁴ Yan attributes *guiban* to too many Taiwanese postal staff employed during the end of Japan's colonial period (as was Liu's view) and the institutional turbulence of postal transformation after 1945.⁷⁵ This was near when Wang Wenqing and other Taiwanese employees joined the Taipei Post Office and could be the way in which they

⁷³ Pan Ansheng and Yu Yanling, *Zhi you chuan ming*, 161–163.

⁷⁴ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 520.

⁷⁵ Pan Ansheng and Yu Yanling, *Zhi you chuan ming*, 161.

were admitted into the service. However, these comments seemed to reflect their national sentiment and political bias, in which they blamed the Japanese colonial rule for the post-war issues in the postal service. They ignore the shortage of postal employees at the end of WW2 and early post-war period and the inability of the CPS and the Nationalist government to deal with unequal pay issue in Taiwan until May 1949. Moreover, if we consider neocolonialism in post-war Taiwan from a sociological perspective,⁷⁶ it may be said that Liu and Yan believed they were decolonising Taiwan's postal service but, in fact, they unintentionally participated in the Guomintang's neocolonialist governance of Taiwanese employees.

The tragedy of the Taiwan postal workers' movement has multiple causes under the post-war social and political conditions, which remained painful memories. However, no matter how it happened, the CPS seemed to have had no significant role in the event. The object of their resistance was not the postal authority. The workers demonstrated against the Taiwan Provincial Government to fight for equality instead, even though the latter was just a supervisor of the postal service in Taiwan. In addition, the solution to Taiwanese employees' retained status was not proposed by the CPS but by the provincial government. It shows that, at this critical moment, the CPS, which was about to lose control of all of the postal districts in the entire country, could no longer play a role of a centralised agency, while the local authority not only replaced it in managing the service, whether temporarily or permanently, but also, in practice, had the power to deal with the dispute. The localised postal management in Taiwan since WWII ended up accidentally filling the vacuum of power to manage the postal service to a certain extent. This might have been fortunate for the CPS because Taiwan was still controlled by Guomintang. Although there seemed to be a dissonance between the

⁷⁶ Lin Chuankai, 'Zhanhou Taiwan dixiadang de geming douzheng,' 11, 296.

political reality and the ideal in which the postal service was supposed to be managed by a centralised and unified institution, the 'incidentally' localised management of Taiwan's postal service at least ensured that there was a functioning postal administration on the island and could even accommodate the CPS DG in exile.

At the most turbulent time in 1949, there were just hundreds of Chinese postal employees who took refuge and arrived in Taiwan, while only fifteen employees of the DG re-established the office in Taipei in August 1949.⁷⁷ The new office was immediately busy with managing redundancies to dismiss the displaced employees with severance pay, in accordance with Executive Yuan's order that the MOC should discharge the employees if they retreated to other safer areas in order to reduce financial stress after the Civil War.⁷⁸ Chen Jiying was also one of the senior postal employees who reported to Taiwan and was laid off in May 1950.⁷⁹ So far, the Chinese Postal Service was not ended but divided into two: the People's Postal Service took over the service in mainland China and the CPS, also known as Chunghwa Post, continued the name in Taiwan. After the CPS DG retreated to the island with the Nationalist government, Taiwan's short-lived localisation of postal management and administration came to an end. Due to the international status of the Republic of China in Taiwan, in the following decades, Taiwan's CPS maintained China's membership in UPU until 1972, when it was replaced by the PRC's Postal Service. Nevertheless, both Taiwan and China respectively continued to participate in the international postal service, while the postal service between the two Chinas across the Taiwan Strait was almost disconnected. The most serious impact of wars on China's postal communication was nothing more than this long-

⁷⁷ Zhang Yi, *Zhonghua youzheng shi*, 484.

⁷⁸ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 532–535.

⁷⁹ Chen Jiying, *Wo de youyuan yu jizhe shenghuo*, 685.

term postal interruption after the Chinese Civil War and during the Cold War. The issue of postal communication between China and Taiwan was finally resolved in June 1989.⁸⁰

4. Conclusion

The localised administration of the postal service in Taiwan during the Civil War accidentally happened under post-WW2 circumstances. It seemed to help Taiwan's postal service to be maintained after WWII ended. This suggests that the unstable situation gave a 'national' and 'state-owned' postal service more flexibility in relation to its management because the maintenance of postal communication was much more important than the form of its operation. In fact, Taiwan's localised postal service was still supervised by a government body at the provincial level and was not outside the state's control, in some sense. At the height of the Civil War, Taiwan was designated as an international exchange office. These events show that postal communication was not only a state's responsibility for the international postal transit network but also the state's domination in internally influencing the society and in internationally demonstrating its sovereign rights for a 'national' postal service.

More importantly, the restoration and maintenance of the island's postal service after WWII depended on the previous colonist' legacies, whether in terms of the institution or the personnel. China's postal institution was not completely transplanted to Taiwan. Instead, Taiwan's postal services were reconstructed based on the previous Japanese infrastructure. Liu's recollections also indirectly admitted that Taiwan's postal service was carried on in the

⁸⁰ Postal resumption between China and Taiwan initially occurred via the Red Cross in 1988. The two governments finally agreed to officially resume mail exchange in 1989. 'Tongxin bu tongyou 通信不通郵' (Can Post Letters but Not Mail), *Zhongguo shibao*, 12 March 1988, 2. 'Liang'an jianjie tonghua tongyou jinri jiaifang 兩岸間接通話通郵近日開放' (Indirect Telephone and Postal Communication Cross the Strait Will Be Opened Soon), *Zhongguo shibao*, 8 June 1989, 8.

early post-war period and this was due to these 'retained' employees, including those who were Japanese. Nevertheless, with the experience of Japanese colonisation and affected by the failure of Nationalist China's overall takeover policy, the situation at the Post Office of Taiwan was more complicated than officially recorded and narrated by senior officials. The ethnic conflict was due to unequal pay. Whether labour actions or official dispositions, the role of the provincial government was greater than that of the CPS's centralised governance model. When the CPS's centralisation had become relatively weakened, the previous foundation, under new localised supervision, played a certain role in contributing to the stabilisation of the island's postal service. Although the CPS staff from the mainland did not welcome these measures, nor did they want to admit the previous 'enemy's' legacies, it was a functional and mature postal system. When the postal service in China was deeply affected by the Civil War, the operation of Taiwan's postal service could be maintained by its relatively independent and temporarily localised status. Although CPS's staff from China, who mainly left records and created CPS's official narratives, later seemed to have avoided or denied this aspect, the postal service in Taiwan after 1945, thus, was beyond the nation-building, which had deeply influenced the CPS's operation during the Republican era and, in turn, helped the CPS to lay a foundation for the reorganisation/relocation to the island after 1949.

In late 1949, the Civil War caused a radical change in the political situation, and the CPS also ordered its controlled postal districts to self-manage if they became disconnected from the DG's office.⁸¹ Essentially, the CPS lost the authority to manage the whole of China's postal communication. Although it seemed no longer to play the role of a centralised and monopolised postal service throughout China, as the only player in a Guomintang steadily

⁸¹ Guo Tingyi et al., *Liu Chenghan xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 532.

controlled area, Taiwan's postal service was relatively controllable, at least if it was supervised by the Guomindang's local authority. The accidentally localised postal service not only uninterrupted but also laid the foundation on which to provide a stable place for the CPS to be constituted in that name after it retreated to the island in August 1949.

Conclusion

Postal Maintenance during Wars

During the Republican era, China came up against complicated circumstances and tense situations. State power constantly changed, while the country and its people experienced war after war, conflict after conflict, whether domestic or international. Under turmoil, the modern postal system developed into one of the most important means of communication in China. Its national postal service, the CPS, also survived almost all wars and functioned as a centralised and unified public organisation during several war periods.

As stated at the beginning, this thesis tried to answer how the postal system worked and how it was maintained during continuous wars and conflicts in the Republican era. These might be simple questions, but this research has demonstrated that the issues are profoundly entangled with China's society, politics, international relations, and nation-building in the early twentieth century. First, the maintenance of China's national postal service involved the imagination of a modern state for the Chinese since the late nineteenth century. The main theme that drove the idea was national sovereignty. Due to the characteristic of the state-owned monopoly of modern postal service, the successive Chinese governments and regimes identified it as a national interest and prerogative. They believed that a centralised and unified postal administration was an important part of modern national governance. Since the Qing court approved the establishment of the Imperial Postal Service, focusing on 'taking back the national economic rights' (挽回利權) from foreign postal offices which had opened in major Chinese cities, the idea of a national post was gradually combined with China's pursuit of the ideal of modern national sovereignty. The decisions on maintaining the postal service during

wars were partially based on this idea in order to protect the state's interests and demonstrate a normally functioning governance. Although the idea was more related to the autonomy of China's national postal administration, former Chinese postal employees tried to further conceptualise it as 'postal sovereignty,' in other words, as an absolute right of the state, when they reviewed and narrated this history after the 1950s. This discourse highlighted the struggle for national sovereignty in modern China, while it did not fully explain all events, such as the postal blockade in Manchuria between 1932 and 1935.

To interpret the event in Manchuria and later the Sino-Japanese War, it is necessary to also consider internationality and transnationality. As this thesis has demonstrated, the modern postal service was not only an internal affair of a country but also an international mechanism characterised by international cooperation. International postal communication was formed as a transnational institution, UPU, in the late nineteenth century. Although the institution was based on each country's national postal service, they were combined into a global network of communication and, in fact, went beyond the boundaries of regimes and sovereign states. The maintenance of the network became a responsibility shared by all nations. When the CPS joined the UPU in 1914, this was regarded as significant progress in international participation. What is rarely mentioned is that China also had an obligation to follow the international order and bear the responsibility to ensure the maintenance of postal communication domestically and internationally. It was international integration that made it work nationally. In every turbulent period throughout the Republican era as I have discussed, the postal service was always able to work and manage the service between hostile regimes within China and internationally. This was also the most critical factor that prompted the Nationalist government to compromise on the Manchukuo issue in the mid-1930s and to continue to maintain the postal service across the Japanese-occupied areas during the Second

Sino-Japanese War.

In addition, derived from the legacy of the Chinese Maritime Customs before 1911, the separation between the Customs and the Postal Service and the internationalised management of foreign staff also formed a relatively neutral political position for the CPS. It helped the service survive through almost the entire Republican era. During the warlord era, the CPS was operated independently and neutrally, in a sense, at the national level, while regional power-holders generally accepted the special status of the CPS and avoided interfering with postal operations. Even though Guomindang succeeded in controlling the CPS in 1928 and replaced foreign leadership with Chinese postal officers, the Nationalist government still used the remaining foreign staff to lead the postal service in local areas when China had a dispute with Japan in Manchuria in the 1930s and later during the Second Sino-Japanese War. The CPS's neutral position helped the postal operation pull through the turbulent period and fulfil its role of maintaining cross-border postal transport between hostile regimes and their occupied areas. Such measures not only contributed to the maintenance of China's postal communication but also ensured that international postal services were not interrupted during the War.

The final factor determining the postal service in wartime was that the postal service itself was a relied-upon means of communication. Mail correspondence was not fast but was affordable and somehow reliable. With intense military operations, people urgently needed messages and information to report safety and hope for good news from friends and relatives far away. Although postal delivery's delay and suspension in wartime created much anxiety, the postal service was generally accessible. As chapter 5 discussed, postal interruption often aroused users' concern. The affected citizens sent letters to the postal authority or wrote to

the media in hopes of the Post Office finding solutions or providing alternatives. The discussion of the postal Q&A column in *Huabei ribao* during the Chinese Civil War showed that the postal authority tried to have closer relationships with the people to convey useful information about the service. It was a remarkable interaction in which the Post Office improved the effectiveness of the postal operation in wartime by enhancing interaction with users. From the promotion of airmail to the arrangement of special postal routes in the Civil War, the postal authority was eager to meet the public's needs for communication. It interpreted that the maintenance of China's postal communication relied not only on the institution itself but also on the active participation of the users.

'Postal Sovereignty' and the Chinese Nation-building

National postal service as an extension idea of de-facto sovereignty has been frequently mentioned in this thesis. As a 'national' service, its development in China was a response to the pursuit of the ideal of a recognised modern sovereign state. It was combined with the state monopolistic management of the national postal service and developed to embody the concept of 'postal sovereignty'. As chapters 2 and 3 have discussed, 'postal sovereignty' was created by Chinese postal staff after the 1950s to narrate their past and became the discourse of the 'modern' postal system. It emphasises the importance of the centralised and unified administration and national monopoly of the postal service, which reflects China's setbacks in international relations and the entanglement within China in building a 'modern' nation since the late nineteenth century.

As the cases discussed in previous chapters, postal sovereignty had two different meanings: one more precisely referred to the autonomy of postal administration in China. The Qing government expected to drive out foreign post offices in China, so it approved

establishment of this Western-style postal system. The Beiyang government took over the Russian and German post offices on Chinese soil during the First World War and successfully negotiated with foreign powers after the war to withdraw all foreign post offices except for Japan. The Guomindang government supported the Chinese postal labour movement to reduce the superior status of foreign staff in the mid-1920s. Both the Beiyang and Nationalist governments successively reduced foreign staff's power and then replaced their supervisory positions with Chinese employees. The second meaning was the monopolistic authority of postal operations within Chinese territories. After the Japanese Army occupied Manchuria and established the Manchukuo Postal Service, the Nationalist government withdrew postal employees and blockaded the postal contact with Manchuria on the grounds of 'protecting the postal rights' of the country. It shows the exclusivity of a unified national postal service as the idea of national sovereignty.

However, there was a gap between the ideal of 'postal sovereignty' and the reality, especially in a state of war or political unrest. In China's case, its definition was not absolute and could have been changed over time. Although the presence of foreign management seemed to have violated China's national postal autonomy, the successive Chinese governments used foreign postal staff to either spy on political enemies or negotiate with foreign enemies. When the Chinese engaged in nation-building after the Second Sino-Japanese War, those foreign staff who worked for the CPS during wartime were regarded as loyal and reliable civil servants. In addition, the boundaries of 'postal sovereignty' often became blurred during wars and conflicts. The Nationalist government's resumption of the postal exchange with Manchukuo in 1935 and the postal collaboration between hostile regimes during the Second Sino-Japanese War illustrate the flexibility and compromise of 'postal sovereignty' under these turbulent circumstances in order to maintain overall postal

communication.

The national postal service indeed included the practice and the image of a state's sovereignty. The national symbols, including images of national events, portraits of political figures and martyrs, and names of a country or regime, were printed on postage stamps. In the case of China, the calendar era names on postmarks were also regarded as representing the nation and its sovereignty. Therefore, when the Manchukuo Post Office issued stamps and postmarks with its country name, national emblem, and the imperial calendar era, it immediately caused a strong reaction from the Nationalist government. However, the postage stamps functioning in promoting the unified ideology of a country or an empire could not have been occurring earlier than the 1930s. It was not even the core of the development of the national postal system at the beginning. The Chinese government frequently issued postal stamps with the images of national symbols after the late 1920s, but its concern with the issue of sovereignty shown on postage stamps was not earlier than the dispute with Manchukuo in 1932.¹ During the Chinese Civil War, as discussed in chapter 5, the dispute over the images and characters on the stamps of the two sides became more intense.

Some believe that a 'modern' postal service was ideally centralised and managed by a country's central government, while the cases discussed in this thesis show that localisation and self-management often had to be implemented in local postal administrations during and after wars. The CPS was generally supervised by the internationally recognised central government of China, even if it was managed by foreign staff. Not to mention that China

¹ Similarly, as Keith Jeffery has suggested, the British Imperial Postal Service reproduced portraits of the monarchs and royal images on postage stamps in the colonies to unify its subjects as one Empire, but it did not happen earlier than King George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935. Keith Jeffery, 'Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post: Stamps, the Monarchy and the British Empire,' *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34, no. 1 (March 2006): 45–70.

participated in the UPU as a member state, and its CPS played a role in international postal transit. However, as this thesis has emphasised, practically, it did not always work according to the 'modern' ideal of a 'national' postal service, especially during turbulent times. China's postal service was included in the international postal institution, which operated across borders and embodied national sovereignty. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Shanghai Post Office played a relatively independent role as the de-facto DG to lead the service in the Japanese-occupied areas and in Japanese-supported regimes. Even after WW2, Taiwan maintained a relatively localised postal management under the post-war circumstances. It seemed to be against the national postal operation philosophy at that moment and afterwards from senior postal staff's perspectives, but on the other hand, the localised measures accidentally ensured that Taiwan's postal communication was affected by the Chinese Civil War and disconnected from the global postal network.

Postal sovereignty was a concept interweaving multiple Chinese nation-building efforts and the imagination of a modern state. Meanwhile, as Lane Harris implemented the term 'stateness' to review the history of China's national postal service, he suggested that the CPS repeatedly put the modern, unified, and coherent Chinese state into practice.² This thesis has examined wars and conflicts as variations that challenged and even contradicted the idea of a 'national' postal service. Even if the CPS represented the Chinese state in many ways and integrated the country into one institution by means of centralised management, it, in fact, was often operated beyond the state and involved in a bigger and 'modern' international postal system.

The postal interruption between the CCP and Guomindang-controlled areas and then

² Harris, 'The Post Office and State Formation in Modern China, 1896–1949,' esp. 448–449.

the long-time interruption between China and Taiwan after the Chinese Civil War were related to the idea of the state and 'postal sovereignty'. As chapter 5 has discussed, this was caused by not only the post-war circumstances in China but also the different imaginations and ideologies of the state envisioned by the two parties. Meanwhile, the 'national' postal service was run entirely as an agency of the Nationalist government after WW2 as all foreign postal staff were dismissed and the French government officially abandoned its interests in China's postal management. The achievements also involved the national postal service in Guomindang's discourse of nation-building after the war. The CPS, therefore, lost its relatively neutral and independent status between the two hostile parties. It is worth noting that, despite the postal interruption between the two Chinas, the two regimes' national postal services, which both inherited part of the legacy of the original CPS, respectively connected to the international postal network and shared the responsibility of international postal transit after 1949.

Modern Postal System for China

As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, H.B. Morse's legacy and the Fairbank school have driven the research on the history of the modern transformation of the Chinese postal service since the 1970s. Meanwhile, former Chinese postal staff were also involved in creating the narrative of Chinese postal modernisation and in favour of the unification and centralisation of a 'national' postal service in the state. However, this thesis has examined the war and conflict cases in Republican China and shown that if the 'state/nation' is the only main subject of the discussion of Chinese postal history, it would not be able to fully explain how the 'modern' postal institution worked during the turmoil times. Although the state's role and the concept of modern sovereign state were still important to the postal service, there should be

something else to define the modernities of postal communication.

First, the development of the 'modern' national postal system was not a single model. China's case was just one of them, but it demonstrated the changeable and flexible meaning of the 'modern' and 'national' postal system. It was used to be managed by foreign staff and operated neutrally between different regimes on Chinese soil; later, the wartime measures allowed localised management to lead local postal authorities on the front lines; a postal agreement could be made between hostile regimes, and 'collaborating' with the enemies for the postal service was sometimes sanctioned and considered necessary.

Second, despite the 'stateness' of the CPS in China suggested by Harris Lane, the modern postal service was not only a domestic communication service but also involved in the international postal network. The modern postal system united all national postal services to ensure unimpeded postal communications globally. The idea has recurred throughout two world wars, civil wars, and domestic military conflicts that have been discussed in this thesis. Almost all Chinese state's seemingly unwilling compromises and measures in response to wartime were driven by the pressure to maintain the international postal operation.

In addition, in terms of the freedom of communication and correspondence, the role played by the state in the 'modern' postal service was not always positive. Postal censorship was a significant example. Despite the CPS's neutral position, the central government and local authorities were able to demand censorship and appoint censors to control personal correspondence. The situation could be worse if an area was involved in conflicts and war, which gave the government legitimate reasons to limit postal communication freedom by censorship.

Meanwhile, postal communication also drove the widespread dissemination of

newspapers and periodicals. The Post Office offered cheap bulk postage rates, while the press relied on the efficiency of the postal service's delivery. However, publishers needed to register with the Post Office to be eligible for the postage discounts. The government was then able to conduct postal censorship and prevent the circulation of unfavourable information. Nevertheless, the purposes of censorship varied. It was not only for the prevention of information leakage and thought control. This thesis has reviewed postal censorship during the First World War and demonstrated censorship to be a solution to deal with the 'enemy's' needs for postal communication and maintain the service internationally. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, postal censorship was also used as an economic sanction that targeted Japan to restrict people trading Japanese goods and stop the circulation of 'enemy's goods' within the borders. Nowadays, next-stage postal censorship has been developed, in which the PRC government is continuing to impose strict censorship on all types of communications, including the internet and communication software, to control the information flow in Chinese society.

Finally, the heart of the 'modern' postal system should include 'communication' itself. Postal communication has developed as one efficient, reliable, and affordable means of communication, as previous scholars suggested, while users' perspectives and the communication itself could often be overlooked. Previous studies on Chinese postal history could be related to any subject of history but excluding 'communication'. Similarly, scholars of communication history also rarely recognise postal communication as 'communication',³ as if a letter or a printed product somehow naturally appears in front of addressees to read. This thesis has demonstrated that the postal service functioned as a significant medium of

³ For example, Marshall Poe, *A History of Communications: Media and Society from the Evolution of Speech to the Internet* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

communication in early twentieth-century China. The 'modern' postal service was not just an institution but also a carrier and medium to deliver information. The status and accessibility of postal transportation were of great concern, especially when the situation grew grim among the public. This thesis has examined the archival petition letters written during the Pacific War and the readers' letters published in the newspapers, which evidenced the public participation in and dependence on this modern communication system.

In addition to personal communication, the Chinese postal service was involved in the circulation of printed newspapers, periodicals, and other publications during twentieth century. Although it was the way that the state intervened in the freedom of the press and speech, it had been regarded as the most essential and affordable path to post printed matter at that time. As mentioned in chapter 5, publishers and booksellers in Shanghai united and took the lead in urging the government to resume the interrupted postal transport during the Chinese Civil War. In Beijing, the postal authority realised the public's needs and used the media to reduce the distance from the public and improve postal efficiency during difficult times. Both cases show that the national postal service had been successful in gaining insight into the needs of Chinese society.

By the end of the Republican era, the modern postal system had become an important means of communication for the Chinese people. The system had been introduced from the West but grew roots in China. It transformed the way for mailing correspondence, the relationship between the state and the individual, interpersonal interactions, and the accessibility of information and messages. Not only did it carry letters and parcels in the name of 'national service,' but also almost all printed media were disseminated via the post. More importantly, even in times of wars and chaos, it provided a channel for China, as a sovereign

state, and its people to connect with the world. However, eventually this changed people's correspondence habits and created a new relationship between the state and society in postal communication of the republican era. Meanwhile, political conflicts and war strengthened the state power not only to demonstrate China's state sovereignty to the international society, but also to invade the correspondence privacy of the people. Thus this research could not only contribute to a different understanding of China's postal modernity, but also contextualise information control and censorship issues in contemporary China for further research.

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