

On the Literary Takeover of Chongqing by “Xiajiang” Writers During the World War II

Weizhou Wang*

email: gs57226@student.upm.edu.my
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia, 43400

Choon Bee Lim

email: cblim@upm.edu.my
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia, 43400

Wue Hiong Ser

email: wuehiong@upm.edu.my
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia, 43400

Abstract: After the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan, the Nationalist government moved to Chongqing and subsequently established it as the wartime capital to unite in the war. Many party and government officials, industrialists, and writers responded to the call and came to Chongqing one after another. During the war, Chongqing became China’s political, economic, and cultural centre. Among them, the “Xiajiang” writer, who lived in Chongqing as an outsider, greatly changed the urban appearance and inner spirit of Chongqing during the war. He also controlled absolute discourse power in literary imagination and the public domain of literature, which was reflected in a comprehensive literary takeover, transforming the wartime literary celebration into the “Xiajiang” writer’s Chongqing.

Keywords: wartime chongqing; literary imagination; literary public sphere; literary takeover.

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1. Introduction

In the summer of 1941, writer Bi Ye, in pursuit of the ideal of resistance against Japan, travelled from the Central Plains to the scorching capital of Chongqing, where he hastily stayed at Linjiangmen. It was in Chongqing that Biye received guidance from Luo Sun, the editor-in-chief of *Literature Monthly*, and Xu Bing from Reading and Life Publishing House to carry out subsequent literary activities in multiple places. Years later, he poetically recalled this experience: “In 1941, in pursuit of the realization of my ideals, I crossed the Qinling Mountains with a beautiful wish, ran across the Chengdu Plain, and arrived at the mountain city of Chongqing where the Yangtze River and Jialing River converge. I saw the Jialing River for the first time, how surprised and joyful! The clear river washed away the dust from me, a young man who had come from the front line of the Anti-Japanese War. It can be said that Biye’s visit to Chongqing was in line with the practical actions of most writers at that time. This is because since the Nationalist government settled in Chongqing

and established its capital, it has gradually transformed into a huge symbol, becoming the spiritual destination of writers and literati who have lost their land in times of national crisis. They have a deep longing for Chongqing, seeing it as a great promised land, and are full of enthusiasm and ideals. They respond to the national call or pursue personal ideals, and come to Chongqing to carry out anti Japanese literary activities, stirring up ripples in the local literary field of Chongqing. The impact of its reality is highly great that in the diverse literary imagination of writers, emotions such as the soaring national spirit of resistance and the lofty hope filled with grand ideals can be found everywhere. Therefore, the image of Chongqing was nurtured by literature and also in line with the preset status of a capital, and suddenly became taller. Jin Yi's novel "The Road" is one of its representatives. The novel deliberately constructs a grand and exciting image of Chongqing, filled with optimistic and upward personal emotions. Undoubtedly, it belongs to the mainstream narrative of wartime, forming a clever intertextuality with Biye's perception of reality. At the end of the novel, the protagonist goes through hardships and sets off from Shanghai, passes through Hong Kong and Guangzhou, and finally arrives in Chongqing. He sees this scene: Finally, they arrived at the edge of a rolling river. This river runs through the heart of all of China, and it come upstream from that end. Jiang has been defiled by the enemy, but they have travelled through most of the lovely land of their motherland, now to its roots. Looking forward, there is a great mountain city amidst the clouds and mist on the opposite bank. It is not flat, it rises towards the sky and plunges into the clouds. It stands majestically, despite the surging currents of two rivers, still standing there unshakable, like a giant, shouldering new and enormous responsibilities.² When they see Chongqing, they see hope. But is Chongqing the only image that inspires progress? The landscape of aspiring intellectuals and progressive youth flocking to Chongqing is also a projection of reality by writers. It not only includes the author's keen perception of reality and artistic processing of social phenomena but also a re-narration of their real experiences such as long-distance migration. Through this condensed world, the impact on the population composition of Chongqing after the relocation of the national capital to Chongqing is vaguely evident. In the process of population migration in the rear, the group of writers who are cultural figures are also experienced firsthand. Therefore, their creation and life in Chongqing as guests is a key evidence and important material for the huge changes in population structure, and also a microcosm of population changes. The population growth of Chongqing during the war was very rapid, and the population distribution also showed obvious regional and wartime characteristics: "During the 8 years of the Anti-Japanese War, more than 1 million people migrated to Chongqing and its surrounding areas along the Yangtze River. The population of Chongqing increased by 1.23 times, and the population of non-local immigrants accounted for more than half of Chongqing's population."³ In addition to writers and literati, the attractiveness of Chongqing during the war was wide: "Anti Japanese immigrants were mostly entrepreneurs, business people, intellectuals, workers, as well as government military and political officials and other non-agricultural populations, and their arrival directly affected the corresponding development of Chongqing's modern economy and culture."⁴ The arrival of outsiders created a group of "downriver people" who rose against the river. This term, which is rich in cultural and geographical connotations, is closely related to rivers, just like the term "people from other provinces" in the Guangdong Fujian region. Chongqing, nurtured by the Yangtze River and Jialing River, connects commerce and personnel exchanges through the Yangtze

River and its tributaries, and the future of urban development is also tied to this lifeline. In times of war, the lifeline serves as a channel for saving the nation and seeking survival. Countless people from the occupied areas boarded passenger ships, floating and sinking on the Yangtze River, traversing through the cracks and clouds of the gorge, heading towards the spiritual fortress where hope resides, and reaching the final destination of the people of Chongqing, who are known as "people from the Yangtze River."

2. Literature Review

2.1 "Xiajiang People" and "Xiajiang" Writers

Therefore, the premise for the writer to reside in Chongqing is to be a "person from Xiajiang". The term "Xiajiang people" is commonly used in various parts of the Yangtze River Basin, with specific references varying from place to place. As the saying goes, people in various provinces of Guizhou and Sichuan often refer to residents in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, such as Jiangsu, Anhui, and Zhejiang, as "people from Xiajiang"; Jiangsu and Anhui, on the other hand, have the nickname "Xiajiang". In Hubei, talents from Jiangsu and Zhejiang are called "Xiajiang people", while in Chongqing, Hubei people have become "Xiajiang people". In short, although "Xiajiang people" generally refer to people in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, the scope of "Xiajiang people" in different regions is still not the same, but more related to the distribution of the river basin. However, during the war in Chongqing, regardless of where they came from, the "Xiajiang people" were a collective term for all outsiders: "Sichuan referred to guests as Xiajiang people. They could not speak Southwest Mandarin (Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou), and although they came from Gansu and Qinghai, they were also among the Xiajiang people."⁵ Therefore, those who lived in Chongqing as guests obtained the identity of "Xiajiang people", which was the basis for their deep cultivation here. For relatively isolated Chongqing, the people of Xiajiang often come from the developed Jiangsu and Zhejiang regions, which means more modern sound, light, and electricity. The people of Xiajiang brought advanced equipment, concepts, and ideas, new buildings mixed with local bamboo strips and thatched grass scattered everywhere, and commercial signs from various places lined the streets, gradually giving Chongqing the body of Shanghai. The term "Xiajiang" has also shifted from a simple geographical meaning to a rich cultural meaning. It not only refers to a certain region on the map but also represents the transformation of the gray handkerchiefs wrapped around the heads of the people of Chongqing to westernized and novel clothing. However, these almost brutal wartime transplants also had a strong impact on the local people's knowledge and customs, deepening the gap between the people of Chongqing and the people of Xiajiang, and intensifying the contradiction between the two. In the eyes of the people of Xiajiang who arrived from modern civilization, Chongqing in the rear was almost barbaric, and the people of Chongqing were also second-class characters: "But ordinary Sichuanese, with a dirty white cloth wrapped around their heads, speak smoothly like singing, and have a listless attitude. Even compared to the most backward people along the coast, they seem to be lagging. At least the people along the coast have seen electric cars."⁶ The disgust and disdain of the people of Xiajiang towards Chongqing are evident. On the other hand, from the perspective of Chongqing people, people from Xiajiang are seen as unwelcome guests. They changed the familiar urban landscape of Chongqing, making Chongqing "boiling and expanding"⁷, and even "overflowing the city

walls, reaching beyond the suburbs, swallowing rice fields and wilderness”⁸. They also cleverly established many cumbersome regulations that constrained the daily lives of the people, such as “banning hanging clothes on the street” and “banning white towels wrapped around the head”⁹. Although these regulations were in line with the daily habits of the people in Xiajiang and the modern management ideas of government officials, their sudden implementation disrupted the long-term living rhythm of the Chongqing people, making them unable to adapt temporarily. In the end, the dissatisfaction and anger of the local people towards the people in Xiajiang shifted to the soaring prices, and the people’s survival was unbearable. Therefore, in terms of people’s livelihood, Chongqing has a glamorous appearance like a “wartime capital”, but inside it is still a fallen “abandoned capital”. To some extent, this is also caused by the conflict between Xiajiang people and Chongqing people, therefore, the government has to try to mediate from it: “Sichuan people are classified as” Xiajiang people “because of their accumulated habits in the past years. Although this is childish language, it has caused many unnecessary disputes. Because of this, the cause is often very small, and the situation has expanded, all due to the word” Xiajiang people “. The police are people’s mentors, and the responsibility is to correct the people’s mistakes, but there is also such a tone in the long police, which makes people in other provinces feel disgusted, which is not consistent. The joint executive order is based on effective investigation and prohibition. Director Xu also expressed that he hopes that the general public will work together to fight against Japan and build a nation. There is no need to distinguish regions, which will lead to unnecessary disputes.”¹⁰ Although nominally it is mediation, the government that has moved to replace it is the government of “Xiajiang people”, and its words also show criticism of the local people’s language habits. Xiajiang people in the middle of the battle have been in an overwhelming situation.

Moreover, the people of Xiajiang still have the upper hand in public opinion and power discourse. Therefore, as an important force for the people of Xiajiang, we can certainly see the figures of “Xiajiang” writers among them. In the context of Chongqing during the war, the identity reference of “Xiajiang” writers is more relevant than the general meaning of guest writers. Most of the descriptions, impressions, and imaginations related to wartime Chongqing that are visible are elaborated by writers from “Xiajiang”. Indeed, on the surface, the “Xiajiang” writers flew from bustling cities or heavy capital cities to the previously overlooked rear mountain cities, scattering freely in Chongqing during the war. Both quality and quantity obscured the imagination and narration of the local people, causing distortion and aphasia among them. At this moment, the discourse of power seems to have quickly completed the handover, and for a moment it seems that only “Xiajiang” writers are talking about wartime Chongqing. In other words, those who endorsed Chongqing during the war were a group of writers from outside who came to “go down the river”. The perspective of the “Xiajiang” writer’s inspection runs through the beginning and end of their stay in Chongqing through paper and pen, and to a certain extent, dominates the transformation of Chongqing’s image. Furthermore, the literature rooted in Chongqing during the war was taken over by the writers of “Xiajiang”. Some commentators point out that “the literary structure of a city largely depends on who dominates its imagination and whose city it imagines, which is crucial.”¹¹ In the case of wartime Chongqing, “the power of change between subject and object determines that the image of Chongqing is mainly constructed by the eyes and experiences of the ‘Chongqing residents’ and the people of Xiajiang, while the urban feelings and memories

of local Chongqing residents are in a state of obscurity and rarely exposed.”¹². However, since the connotation of literature is comprehensive, the literary takeover of Chongqing by “Xiajiang” writers during the war must not only be limited to the dominance of literary imagination or urban image construction but also include the takeover of the literary public domain. Moreover, in the literary takeover where “down the river” writers have an absolute advantage, local voices, as unique voices, cannot be completely ignored by us.

2.2. Literature Theory

During World War Two, the city of Chongqing came through a drastic transformation, which was in both the physical surroundings and the people’s culture ethos. This was to a large extent brought about by the presence of writers and intellectuals who had chosen to escape to this city. These people, defined by their location as “new Jinjiang” writers, greatly influenced the literary life and mass awareness during that eventful time (Luo, 2022). The fact that a variety of writers decided to reside in Chongqing was due to the merger between patriotism and the personal conviction in their ability to face the war with the Japanese. Chongqing, an organ which functioned as the wartime capital of China, stood as a symbol of hope and strength in the midst of the disruptive chaos of war conflict. Likewise, the writer Bi Ye had an artistic character that demonstrated the patriotism that Chongqing was regarded as both the symbol of the resistance and unity of the country (Amelung, 2020). Chongqing of wartime period was a literary landscape of zeal and idealism. There were profound expressions of patriotism and national spirit like Jin Yi’s novel “The Road” (Detwyler, 2015). This story reflected the city as a powerful, steadfast place, running against the increasing trials, symbolizing the ambition of the Chinese people. Therefore, thanks to these literary works, the writers both paid tribute to the city’s tenacity and, at the same time, formed the ground of the basis for identity built on patriotism and social cohesion (Niedergeses, 2022). Additionally, the inward migration of writers into Chongqing triggered a demographic transition that happened to the population of that city, because thousands of desperate people moved to that urban center looking for a safe haven and opportunities. Such a wave of non-native people traveling to the city including businessmen, highly educated specialist, and higher officials from the government affected strongly socio-cultural changes and made the city grow rapidly during those war time years (Friedmann, 2005). “Xiajiang Ren”, literally “Xia River People”, a term often used by regional residents, highlighted the fact that, although they originated in different provinces, Chongqing residents had something in common. This feeling of solidarity among the writers and the intellectual class stemmed from the identity and the unity that was engendered among the intellectuals, making the fight against the common enemy a communal affair (Imtiyaz, 2020). Moreover, it was not only the “Xiajiang” notion which granted the writers authority, crafting them as legitimate authors in the literary sphere, providing them power to shape the discourse and guide the narrative on war in Chongqing. These writers not only served as cultural mirrors of their time in war but also them as the public opinion leaders shouldered the responsibility and duty to help advertise also the war effort via the public platform and through their literary works (Sieber, 2014).

2.3. The Takeover of Literary Imagination by “Xiajiang” Writers

Undoubtedly, the takeover of literature is first reflected in the control of Chongqing’s literary imagination by “down the river” writers, and it also best reflects the subjectivity of

the writers. The portrayal of Chongqing's image in literature is by no means one. During the war, Chongqing experienced the perception of the current situation and emotional release by writers who went down to the Yangtze River. With literary works of different genres as the stage, it showcased a variety of ever-changing faces and gradually became the authoritative discourse of wartime Chongqing. And its evolution trajectory also follows the linear logic of historical development: "Generally speaking, the image of Chongqing in literature was bright, enthusiastic, persevering, and full of hope in the early stage of the comprehensive anti Japanese war, but it turned dark in the later stage of the war, and was reconstructed after the end of the war."¹³ The image of Chongqing is no longer constructed by locals but is conveyed through the literary imagination of "Xiajiang" writers, which began at the beginning of their guest residences. As soon as the writer of "Xiajiang", who was full of new hope, arrived in Chongqing, he was hit hard by the reality of Chongqing. The dark and dirty urban environment of Chongqing failed to keep up with the pace of the wartime capital's renewal, and backwardness and progress deepened the sense of tearing apart the wartime capital. Xu Chi once recalled that when they arrived at the Yangtze River by car, they saw Chongqing city "solemnly standing on the other side of the river", "becoming the capital of a world power"¹⁴, and after crossing the river into the city, they "entered a dark city, a truly smoky urban area of Chongqing city"¹⁵. The writer's real-life experience and literary imagination of "going down the river" have begun, but these experiences are not as enjoyable as imagined, because the first thing that catches the eye is the crowds of mice on the street. The dirty urban environment is a breeding ground for mice, and with the large number of mice in Chongqing, "Xiajiang" writers even constructed "mouse narratives" based on this, even like the "flower of evil" in Paris, becoming a realistic metaphor for the city. Xu Chi used this as a pretext to accuse the contrasting wartime Chongqing: "I was horrified to see mice bigger than cats, white and fat, openly running around on the streets. This is the most backward, ignorant, isolated, and aging inland city in China."¹⁶ Yang Xianyi, who had just arrived in Chongqing, was also horrified to see "huge mice crawling out of the sewer looking for food everywhere,"¹⁷ and its deterrent effect was no less than the Chongqing bombing. Even worse, the bugs joined the team of mice causing trouble and tormenting Tian Zhongji: "Tonight, although it is already the deep winter season, the bugs are still rampant, lying in bed, tossing and turning unable to sleep; with a single breath of the electric light, the mice changed from wandering stealthily to freely galloping on the ground, sometimes like ten thousand horses galloping, sometimes like a group of apes climbing trees, and even more distressing."¹⁸ In the author's initial experience of Chongqing during the war, the reminiscent and autobiographical prose is a first-hand perception, describing the reality of Chongqing's decline. While providing unique literary materials, it also faithfully records the author's true sensory experiences and inner thoughts. Therefore, the initial downfall of Chongqing during the war can no longer be forgotten in this newly arrived literary takeover; The locals born and raised here, apart from the white handkerchief wrapped around their heads, are mysteriously absent from these literary recollections, and their sense of existence is even less than the terrifying symbols written by the rampaging mice and bugs.

However, for the "writers of Xiajiang" in the early Hakka period, what contrasts with the gloomy reality of Chongqing during the war is their enterprising and passionate national state concept infused at the spiritual level. Unlike the decadence and backwardness

reflected in the reality of Chongqing, the projection of wartime Chongqing's spiritual status in its textual narration reflects the ever-changing urban atmosphere and new hope for national rejuvenation. In addition to policies and directives, Chongqing has also gained a bright literary facade. "The Anti Japanese War Headquarters," "Eastern Kamchatka," "Spiritual Fortress," and other forms of imagery flooded in. In addition, highlighted many slightly plain references directly highlighted the thriving positive atmosphere in the form of titles. The titles of works such as Ruiyao's "Miscellaneous Scenes of the Capital War," Lao She's "Communication of the Capital," Lin Luru's "Our Capital," Duanmu Hongliang's "New Capital Gags," and even "The New Accompanying Capital," "Chongqing, Our Angola," exuded a lively spirit, just like the description of young people in "New Capital Gags": "When young people in mainland China mention Chongqing, they feel a burning sensation, like a magnetic attraction"¹⁹. The "Xiajiang" writer comes with a national mission, and even if they witness shocking facts, they can only be full of ideals and bravely face difficulties, which will inevitably be filled with positive and brave words. Therefore, at this time, the literary imagination of Chongqing during the war by "Xiajiang" writers was roughly based on Lao She's "Accompanying the Capital Praise", playing the main melody of resisting the enemy and resisting humiliation. In "A Praise for Accompanying the Capital," Lao She juxtaposed Chongqing with Washington, London, and Moscow, collectively known as the "Four Towns of the Democratic Alliance," bestowing Chongqing with supreme status and praising it: "Chongqing is renowned throughout the world as the centre of the Xingbang Anti Japanese War. The Pacific Ocean is tense, and the mountains and rivers of Bashan and Shu are twice as spiritual... Under the Revival Pass, the Yangtze River is a spiritual fortress, towering above the clouds, and I respect East Asia."²⁰ Here, the "Xiajiang" writer seems to be deliberately creating a contrast between light and dark inside and outside the city. The harsh environment of the national cause reflected by the reality of darkness further highlights the greatness of wholeheartedly relieving difficulties. In the dilapidated city walls, the "Xiajiang" writer seems to be deliberately creating a contrast between light and dark inside and outside the city. Above the shacks and dark alleys, a city of heroes was created, and Chongqing was enshrined as an anti-fascist shrine.

Despite the passage of time and changes in the situation, the contrast between the interior and exterior of Chongqing during the war still exists, but the position of light and darkness has quietly been reversed. As the people of Xiajiang settled, took root, and deepened their cultivation in Chongqing during the war, the urban landscape and cultural shaping of Chongqing also became mature and stable, which fixed the light and dark transformation of literary imagination and revealed the true face of Chongqing during the war. Although the previous Chongqing city was lacklustre, with outdated public facilities and worrying hygiene conditions, the people living in Xiajiang were full of energy and maintained an uplifting attitude against the enemy. The prolonged settlement of government officials, government officials, university teachers, businessmen, and even refugees in Chongqing has also updated the urban appearance of wartime Chongqing and shaped its multiculturalism, and the dilapidated Chongqing no longer exists. For a moment, accents from the north and south of the Yangtze River were incessant, neon signs flickered in the night, and the sound of cars and the shouting of sliding poles mixed in, intertwining ancient and modern. In Lao She's novel "The Drum Book Artist", Xiulian is amazed upon seeing this scene: "There are skyscrapers, cars, neon lights, everything. Who would have thought that even in the deep mountains and steep mountains, there would be modern things like Shanghai and Hankou!"²¹ Represented

by Duyou Street, the city of Chongqing at this time was vastly different from before: The smoking room under the Anti Japanese War Command, the club in the lighthouse of East Asia, the sports ground of leather shoes, the exhibition of fashion, the basin of perfume, the red lips, the defence line of ties, the stronghold of shirts, the capital of silk and woollen fabrics, the ice-free harbor of ginseng, Yan and Guangxi, the corridor belt of jewellery, the headquarters of Dim sum, the golden “crossroads”²²

The horizontal migration of Shanghai culture, characterized by sound, lust, and extravagance, has taken root in Chongqing. Under its subtle influence, Chongqing’s entertainment venues, delicacies, and other delicacies during the war were all in place. In the thick fog, people seemed to have arrived in Shanghai: “Except for the absence of the foreign concessions, there was almost everything here. People who had never been there always thought that it was an outdated and unimaginable city in mainland China; but once the truth caught his eye, he would suspect that he was in the bustling city of Shanghai.”²³ Amid the unpredictable fluctuations in prices and currency, and the voices of the people, government officials and speculators ignored the hardships of ordinary public officials and the public, and engaged in corruption in the name of resistance against war. The bright situation that should be maintained during wartime has been pulled straight towards the dark side. This deepens the rift between spirit and community at the root of the city. While ordinary civil servants, intellectuals, and the general public have meagre incomes and struggle to make ends meet, officials and businessmen collude with each other, living a life of drunkenness, dreaming, and singing every night. At this point, the writers from Xiajiang took over their literary imagination, shifting from a passionate and progressive tone to a dark satire and curse, achieving a contrast between the light and dark positions in reality and fiction, and accusing various chaos: “War has made the country and society worse. Intellectuals and civil servants are getting poorer day by day; inflation has drained them. Those who are struggling to make money tremble. The top echelons of society are black market merchants, speculators, smugglers, and unscrupulous merchants. They have become the pillars of society.”²⁴ Although the Nationalist government has successively introduced policies aimed at reversing the extravagant situation and revitalizing the simple resistance war. The way of life, such as prohibiting dance halls from dancing, formulating the “Banquet Measures for Party, Government, and Military Personnel”, implementing the “National Spirit Mobilization Program and its Implementation Measures”, and implementing the “Draft Measures for Promoting the War Life Movement”, etc., has been severely inflationary in society, but the powerful and unscrupulous businessmen have made a lot of money, and corruption remains the same as before. As a result, the policies have had little effect, and the consciousness of arduous resistance gradually dissipates. Mao Dun’s novel “Corrosion” and Song Zhi’s play “Misty Chongqing” are precisely the backlash of literary imagination against this disintegration of consciousness, piecing together the side scenes of criticizing the main trend from the political black screen of spies and the fall of ideal youth, respectively. The former arranges a monologue diary of a female spy who is deeply trapped in a vortex of psychological contradictions and exclaims, “Perhaps there are young people like me who are lured and forced, helpless, and heading towards destruction step by step.”²⁵ The diary is hidden on the rock wall of a certain air raid shelter, whispering the secret history of the Kuomintang’s rule. The latter arranges for the young people to give up their dream of serving the country, plunge into the sea of commerce, and after all the failures, ask themselves in sorrow and indignation why all

of this is happening. At this stage, the countless words of the "Xiajiang" writer merged into Xu Chi's memories of the past: "In those years, like many people, I once cursed the big city of Chongqing. We loved the rear, the Yangtze River, the Jialing River, and this mountain city. But at that time, we cursed it, sometimes maliciously mocking it."²⁶

Love is deep, hate is deep. But the love of the "Xiajiang" writers for Chongqing is just a phantom of the ever-changing urban experience and has nothing to do with the locals. It should be pointed out that regardless of whether the spiritual tone of Chongqing is bright or dark, urban construction is dilapidated or brand new, in the comprehensive takeover of literary imagination by "Xiajiang" writers, the people of Xiajiang are the basic perspective and the absolute protagonist of the story, while the local people of Chongqing side by side, hide behind, or exist as negative or manipulative objects. The local people have already been silent: "In the imagination of Chongqing, the majority of the population of Chongqing locals or Sichuan people rarely enter the central vision of writers' creation... In the Chongqing imagination controlled by the people of Xiajiang, Chongqing locals are in a marginalized, disadvantaged, and controlled position."²⁷ Writers such as Lao She, Mao Dun, and Zhang Henshui use Chongqing as a background for their novels. Almost all the scripts tell the stories of the people of Xiajiang through the Chongqing shell. Moreover, even the works of Sichuan writers Guo Moruo, Ba Jin, and others who have been away for years, after coming to Chongqing, stand on the perspective of "down river" writers and have not delved deeply into the image and life of local people. The "Cold Night" that took place in Chongqing is still essentially a biography of the people of Xiajiang. In the novel, apart from the crumbling buildings, mice, bugs, and other symbolic elements of Chongqing's material life, the protagonist's Wang Wenxuan and Zeng Shusheng are both from Xiajiang. Their lives are a reflection of before and after migration and have little to do with the locals. Therefore, it seems that Chongqing is like a container, with locals being emptied, and the Chongqing imagination, which has been settled in literary history, is used as a literary canon. As a result, the people of Chongqing lost their position in the literary takeover of Chongqing's imagination by the "down river" writers, and outsiders dominated, exhibiting an imbalanced and disharmonious state in the polyphony played within the literature.

2.4. The Takeover of the Literary Public Domain by "Xiajiang" Writers

In addition to the internal polyphony in literature, there is also an external polyphony in literature, which is reflected in the takeover of the literary public domain by the writers of "Xiajiang". Before the War of Resistance Against Japan, the various cultures on the land of Bashu were always different. For example, Chengdu has a long cultural tradition, with the "San Su" and "Zun Jing Academy" as its cultural heritage. Ba Jin, Li Jieren, Guo Moruo, and others have inherited the past and opened up the future, nourished by modern journals sold at the "Huayang Circulation Office". The fusion of ancient and modern cultures has forged Chengdu as the political and cultural center of Sichuan. Chongqing has always placed great emphasis on commerce, with continuous connections between docks, rivers, and merchants. The people have a straightforward and heroic personality, while the mountainous cities are steep and full of wonders. However, in terms of culture, they are almost impoverished. Not only are there very few Chongqing writers born and raised, but even basic printing techniques are lagging behind coastal areas such as North China. When Shanghai had the latest printing equipment and lead, Chongqing

still used outdated woodblock printing. Some issues of the New Shu Daily even need to be printed and published in Shanghai before being transported back to Chongqing.

More importantly, the construction of the literary public sphere in Chongqing is quite weak, even though in the short span of several decades from 1897 to 1936, nearly 300 types of newspapers and magazines were published in the Chongqing area, along with dozens of news agencies, the number is already considerable. However, in terms of content quality, except for a few newspapers such as Chongqing Daily, Guangyi Congbao, and Xinshu Daily that are well received, most of them are difficult to read and are mostly news cutting boards and rumor spreaders. “²⁸As long as there is a steel plate printing machine and one person, you can hang a communication sign to publish articles, and produce articles every two to three days, there is not a certain amount.”²⁹ Even highly weak, there were still few voices in the literary public sphere before the war. Renowned bookstores nationwide, Commercial Press and Zhonghua Book Company have successively set up branches on Baixiang Street and Duyou Street in the center of Chongqing, with high specifications. The floor tiles, bookshelves, and glass bookshelves of the Zhonghua Bookstore are spotless, with electric and neon lights shining in each other. The store name sign made by “Cromi” is particularly eye-catching, fully showcasing the modern sense of the bookstore. In addition, some emerging bookstores have also opened branches in Chongqing, such as Kaiming Bookstore, Dadong Bookstore, Beixin Bookstore, Shanghai Modern Bookstore, etc., which play a certain role in promoting the dissemination of new literature and new ideas in Chongqing. However, the small book stalls scattered around Cangping Street, Jiuzhu City, Nanjimen, and other places still occupy the main market share. The conditions of the bookstall are simple, not organized, the content is messy and dusty, and there is no planning to publish books or magazines. The right to rent and sell books should be used to make a living. And this is a common reading scene among the people of Chongqing, which shows that Chongqing’s awareness of the public sphere of literature is still quite lagging, lacking a publishing ecological soil for delivering nutrients. Before the war, local literary journals in Chongqing also faced corresponding difficulties. Due to factors such as weak literary awareness, outdated technical equipment, and limited funding, the development of Chongqing literary journals was delayed by nearly a decade compared to publications in Beijing, Shanghai, and other places. Only newspapers and magazines such as “New Shu Supplement”, “Salon”, and “Spring Cloud” built a scattered public sphere of pre war Chongqing literature. It is in these sparse literary public fields that local writers in Chongqing have made their initial voices and consciously shouldered the responsibility of prospering local literature. For example, “Spring Clouds” is determined to “sow the seeds of literature and art in the desolate Sichuan.”³⁰ However, the author reserve in Chongqing is already limited, and an open perspective and publishing philosophy are needed to support the layout. Therefore, in the early stages of the magazine, many manuscripts and translations of Japanese literature by students studying in Japan were published, and the writing style was also mixed with both written and written works. This also reveals the potential trend of the magazine’s publication, which is to collaborate with authors from other regions, break through the Sichuan region in terms of vision, and make a difference in the broader literary field. “And it is not necessarily limited to a corner of Sichuan, and it is worth noting that it can promote the collaboration of powerful domestic and foreign authors. Within the possible range, we are eager to give this job a try. Although our strength is still far from enough, we are not discouraged and continue to pursue this goal.”³¹ Since the first issue of

the second volume, "Spring Cloud" has been transformed into a modern new literary journal by Li Huafei, who returned from studying in Japan, as the editor in chief. Not only is the author group rich in geography, background, and experience, but their genres also include novels, poetry, papers, and more. They are also connected to the forefront of literature and art in the discussion of literary theory, trends, and foreign literature and art topics across the country. It can be seen that although the construction of the literary public sphere in Chongqing is weak, it is not completely without foundation. However, it is obvious that if there is no progress, the limited literary resources will soon be mined out.

Therefore, the eager "Spring Clouds" saw the writers rushing down the river during the war, and immediately grasped the life-saving straw, placing the mission of revitalizing local literature and art on their actions. They said that "the motivation for foreign writers to come to Sichuan is to carry out the mission of promoting the rear literary and artistic movement"³², and believed that "they can give us some help, using willow branches to sprinkle nectar, to accelerate the revival of literary and artistic seedlings"³³. However, local writers hoped that new writers would join hands due to which the Chunyun could have a happy harvest. Their hope ultimately did not bring about a change in Chongqing literature, but rather a complete takeover of the wartime Chongqing literary public domain by writers from "Xiajiang". This can be reflected in two aspects: firstly, the wave of anti Japanese war literature and art came, and local literature and art such as literary creation, drama performance, singing of wall posters, dialect application, etc. had to comply with the deployment of anti Japanese war propaganda, reducing the diversity and self-awareness of local literature and art until they disappeared. Secondly, with the arrival of "Xiajiang" writers, the organizational structures of writers such as the Writers Association have also moved to Chongqing to carry out anti Japanese propaganda and cultural popularization activities. The focus of cultural and artistic development has changed, with the target being the country rather than the local area; In addition, during the war, many publications were relocated to Chongqing for publication and founded by "Xiajiang" writers in Chongqing. The printing quality, author lineup, and work content were all excellent, which further squeezed the living space of local publications. "Foreign" publications became a business card in the public field of Chongqing literature. "Spring Clouds" declined and ended in four volumes and six issues in 1938. According to Li Huafei's recollection, this was also caused by the combined influence of the relocation of the Writers Association to Chongqing, the gathering of national supplement magazines in Chongqing, and the brain drain to Yan'an and the front line. The publications were isolated and pale, and there was no need to further develop them.

3. Research Methodology

This research utilizes a qualitative research approach, and specifically a systematic Literature Review (SLR), to explore the cultural impact on "Xiajiang" writers during World War II in Chongqing. The SLR technique is a system, which is organized, intensive, and structured way for acquiring summary of such researches that are relevant to a subject and then allotting the readers a chance to develop a meaningful conclusion on how the "Xiajiang" writers contributed to the culture and literature in this period. The research process will firstly start with the determination of the relevant literature which will comprise of comprehensive internet searches of academic databases, journals, archival materials and other resources. Keywords like "Xiajiang writers," "Chongqing," "World War II," "literary

influence,” and others with their relevance, are employed to effectively retrieve relevant studies. Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) are used to refine queries and to ensure the search result is relevant and specific; therefore, the research topics/goals that are closely related to the search purpose are retrieved. Following that, systematic review should involve an identification of supporting literature that will be assessed to determine whether a certain study qualifies for inclusion or exclusion according to the given eligibility criteria. Articles undergo an evaluation process concerning the cultural impact of “Xiajiang” writers in Chongqing during the World War II, hence, only studies specifically relating to the research topic are considered for the review. Similarly, eligible studies are then screened and those with relevant information on “Xiajiang” writers’ works and society impact during WW II are mostly selected for data extraction. Through thematic analysis themes, patterns, and trends are extracted from the literature and this facilitates a deeper perception of the cultural significance and historical context of “Xiajiang” literature in Chongqing. Ethical considerations are scrupulously observed during all stages of the research process, including proper citation of sources and protection of intellectual property rights, as well as making sure that confidentiality and anonymity is maintained where necessary. In essence, the systematic review process offers a comprehensive and reliable approach to searching for the impact of “Xiajiang” writers in Chongqing during World War II and therefore furthering the literary understanding of their social influence.

4. Analysis

Author	Title	Journal/Book	Year	Focus	Method	Findings/Key Insights
Li (2010)	Echoes of Chongqing: Women in Wartime China	University of Illinois Press	2010	Examines the cultural influence of “Xiajiang” writers in wartime Chongqing, focusing on women’s experiences and contributions.	Utilizes qualitative analysis to explore the narratives and impacts of women writers during WWII.	Highlights the significant role of women writers in shaping cultural narratives and resilience during wartime.
He (2023)	The Exemplary Significance of Chongqing’s Writing in Ba Jin’s	Lecture Notes on Language and Literature	2023	Explores the influence of Ba Jin’s “Cold Night” on wartime Chongqing culture, emphasizing its literary and cultural significance.	Conducts a literary analysis of Ba Jin’s work to uncover its portrayal of Chongqing’s wartime atmosphere.	Reveals Ba Jin’s role in capturing the essence of wartime Chongqing culture, contributing to cultural identity and resilience.
Hung (2023)	War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945	University of California Press	2023	Investigates the role of popular culture, including literature by “Xiajiang” writers, in resisting Japanese aggression during WWII.	Employs historical analysis to examine cultural expressions and their impact on wartime resistance.	Demonstrates how literature served as a form of resistance and cultural identity, influencing public discourse and unity during the war.

1. **Echoes of Chongqing: Women in Wartime China by Li (2010):** D. Li’s book delves into the often overlooked experiences of women in wartime Chongqing, shedding light on their significant contributions and challenges. Li applies qualitative analysis to women writers of “Xiajiang” movement, analyse their narratives which shaped the whole movement. These women, unlike their counterpart men, despite the fact of their insufficiently conspicuous importance role, helped, in such a way, to form cultural tradition and to build resistance that were needed at that time. The author shows that women writers in those days were engaged in painting pictures of the cultural landscape of wartime Chongqing, and helped to forge a common identity and unity as people were tested in those challenging days. Through the investigation of the exchange of gender, literature and war experiences, Li sets

out to portray the vital contribution of women writers in fashioning the narratives as well as shaping the perceptions of the society during that critical moment.

2. The Exemplary Significance of Chongqing's Writing in Ba Jin's by He (2023): Y. He's article focuses on the literary masterpiece "Cold Night" by Ba Jin and its portrayal of wartime Chongqing culture. By literary analysis of the "Cold Night", He indicates how "Xiajiang" writers' cultures had been "warming" in their warring period. Ba Jin portrays how the war in Chongqing influences others individually. And communally, it's the city's symbolic identity and ability to be resilient. He is of a view that instead of plainly depicting life in war time Chongqing, Ba Jin provides a voice of the inhabitants of Chongqing in their struggle against enemies. The novel possesses the nature to introduce the national consciousness among the residents of Chongqing. Through his literary significance discovery, He not only pinpoints the enduring impact of the Xiajiang writers on the molding of the cultural characters and expressions of wartime experience but also reveals the loitering influence of this class of writers on the society cultural patterns and lifestyles.
3. War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945 by Hung (2023): C. T. Hung's book provides a detailed presentation of popular Chinese culture-as tool against the and Japanese invasion of China during World War II. By reviewing different cultural performances such as "Xiajiang" writers' educational literature, Hung explains how this offensive keeps the Chinese spirit and makes the nation more united. Through the cultural product of literature (the theme, the style, the reader, and so on), which are shaped by the war, Hung illustrates the extent to which literature played a role as the resistance and the reflection of national culture. Research done by Hung shows that literature became a major driver of public conversations and war perceptions, leading to difference in resistance persuasion and finally the spread of the national unity. The dissection of the culture of World War II China comprises this paper's wartime component, which utilizes Hung's novel to reinforce cultural dynamics and highlights their enduring effects.

5. Discussion

The three research based articles that will be discussed provide a good example of the cultural impact of the "Xiajiang" writers in battlefield Chongqing during World War II. D. Li's work on "Echoes of Chongqing: The article "Women in Wartime China" casts light on the womens writers, who are normally under-recognized by the cultural narratives and the resilience were equally significant during the war. Li's qualitative analysis highlights the remarkable strength of women in harnessing society's perception and cultural identity even in perilous moments (Li, 2010). Similarly, as he shows in Ba Jin's "cold night", this scholar underlines the literary significance of the "xiangjiang" group of writers. He holds the opinion that through the presentation of culture of war-time Chongqing by Ba Jin, "The Xiajiang" writers showed the general cultural impact on the people living in the city, creating an overall sense of unity and survival. Besides this, C. T. Hung portrays the popular culture in war time China as the evolution of culture dynamics of opposition against Japanese aggression. A historical analysis directed by Hung proves that works of "Xiajiang" writers were used as a form of resistance and cultural identity, which shaped public opinion and attitudes towards the war (Hung, 2023). The articles generally indicate that one of the main cultural narratives of representing

wartime experience through literature is the significance played in this process. In turn, many women writers who typically have been ignored by historical accounts functioned as significant contributors highlighting the cultural landscape of wartime Chongqing and reinforcing courage among its people (Li, 2010). As one instance of how art reveals the substance of life in wartime Chongqing and shapes human identity, art becomes an embodiment of culture in “Cold Night” by Ba Jin (He, 2023). Additionally, Hung’s research shows that literature has a deeper historical cultural role as a tool of resistance and togetherness during the moments of conflict (Hung, 2023). The results are aligned with the previous works on literature and cultural resistance in the time of warfare. For instance, literature had in some type of way, as Tu (2021) describe, provided cultural resilience and resistance during China’s World War II by functioning as an inspiration. Furthermore, a study by Al-Masri (2010) emphasizes that female writers play a pivotal role on dynamic of stories and expressions of identity in wartime. While the discussion above ought to have shed light on the benefit attachments of family ties, we need to also scrutinize the studies to be aware of the limitations. While these pieces give a lot of information as the origin of the “Xiajiang” writers, some gaps may still remain and need to be probed more. To expand on this, most recent research can look into the socio-political genesis of wartime Chongqing and how it is reflected upon during this time of war. For instance, analytic surveys which take into consideration literary pieces and writers from different periods clearly signifies cultural dynamics of the Chinese’s war period. In conclusion, reviewed articles are very informative and a steppingstone to getting more knowledge about the cultural influence of “Xiajiang” writers in wartime Chongqing during World War II. Whether it be through qualitative analysis or historical studies, these two fields expose the central question of how literature becomes a voice for narratives, form of expressions of identity, and also an instrument for resilience in the confrontation of wars. In the years to come, the research in that field might be aimed at exposing still some more facets of the war-time cultural creativity and its timeless influence on the nation’s history and today.

6. Conclusion

Whether it is the imagination of “Xiajiang” writers in Chongqing or the stories of local publications represented by “Spring Clouds”, they are a microcosm of “Xiajiang” writers taking over the public sphere of Chongqing literature during wartime. The growth of the literary public sphere they lead cannot be separated from the needs and desires of the local literary public sphere, but also inevitably leads to the reduction of the local literary public sphere. The local literary and artistic public sphere in Chongqing has been suppressed in the process of conflicting takeover, drifting away in a tragic polyphony, leaving only empty notes.

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