

Policing the Public in the New Capital

[T]he shifting of the capital has brought a wave of new life to the hitherto neglected and backward interior. . . . Chungking may well be regarded as the symbol and focal point of this process by which a nation is seeking, spiritually as well as physically, to re-discover itself.

—KHWAJA AHMAD ABBAS, *AND ONE DID NOT COME BACK!* (1944)

In 1938 Chiang Kai-shek likened the Nationalist Party to the nation's arteries and described members of the Three People's Principles Youth Corps as the "new corpuscles within the arteries."¹ If the nation was a body, during the War of Resistance, Chongqing was its heart. How that heart looked and functioned had direct implications for the Nationalist Party's reputation with both its own citizens and its foreign allies. Home to the Nationalist government in retreat as well as to foreign ambassadors, reporters, and eventually US Army commanders, the wartime capital had special significance as the proving ground of Chinese modernity. If the nation could succeed in "re-discover[ing] itself" both spiritually and physically in Chongqing, then the Nationalist state could prove its geopolitical worth and survive the Japanese invasion.

Precisely because the stakes were so high, throughout its time as wartime capital Chongqing served as a stage upon which male officials of the Nationalist state self-consciously performed their modernity and demonstrated their political sovereignty to both Chinese and foreign audiences. Public health was a crucial component of that modernity. Chiang Kai-shek had spent years achieving his position at the helm of the still-divided Nationalist Party, and had won that power, however tenuous, on the basis of a promise to regain complete sovereignty over China, partly through public health regulation.² On July 7, 1927, one decade to the day prior to the start of the War of Resistance, Chiang declared the following at the convocation ceremony installing the new mayor of the Chinese-ruled section of Shanghai:

All eyes, Chinese and foreign, are focused on the [Chinese-ruled] Shanghai Special Municipality. There simply has to be a successful completion of its construction.

If all is managed according to the way described by the [Premier], then it will be even more perfect than in the foreign concessions. If all of the *public health*, economic, and local educational affairs are handled in a *completely perfect way*, then at that time the *foreigners will not have any way to obstruct the recovery of the concessions*.³

In 1927 all eyes had turned to Shanghai—where in the concession territories foreigners ran their own governments and police forces—and then to the prewar capital of Nanjing, where Nationalist officials first developed urban hygiene regulations.⁴ In 1938 all eyes turned to Chongqing, the city where Chiang's government would either fall or hold its own against the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA). That army belonged to a nation that had occupied part of Chongqing—China's westernmost treaty-port city—from 1901 to 1931.⁵ Policing the public and enforcing hygienic modernity, the Nationalist leadership wagered, would accomplish far more than keeping Chongqing clean; it would also prove it a capital city worthy of a modern, sovereign nation.

Yet Chongqing lay at a physical distance of fifteen hundred miles from Shanghai, and at an apparent temporal distance from “the Paris of the Orient” that manifested itself in out-of-date sartorial fashions and dirt roads filled with rickety rickshaws and carts drawn by mangy steeds. The Chongqing Bureau of Public Health (*Chongqingshi weishengju*) (CBPH), formed in November 1938 to work under the direction of the central government's Executive Yuan in close concert with the Bureau of Police, faced a mandate to clean the capital. A majority of its orders had to do with aesthetics; municipal and central government officials alike treated health officials like urban janitors. CBPH staff accepted these orders because, they reasoned, “picking up old trash piles” would help them “avoid the danger of seasonal diseases” that often hit in the spring and summer: cholera and smallpox.⁶ Their intimate knowledge of the city's health challenges rendered health officials willing to cooperate with state mandates, despite the fact that central state officials provided paltry support; Chiang Kai-shek delivered orders to Minister of Health Jin Baoshan through an intermediary, and never once granted Jin a personal audience.⁷ Trained in elite medical colleges in China and abroad, health officials began their work in a city where most of the residents drank water pulled straight from the river by shoulder-pole carriers; no municipal trash collection occurred; Japanese planes regularly dropped bombs on residences, schools, and hospitals; no quarantine service monitored the voluminous river traffic; and both endemic and epidemic diseases routinely claimed victims.⁸

While disease microbes have a concrete reality, they also trigger behavioral responses that are highly dependent on culture. Gender—the culturally determined aspect of biological sex—had special consequence in Chinese health politics. All of the leaders who employed the disciplinary power of the state to institute public health reforms in Sichuan were men—from Yang Sen, Zhou Shanpei, and Yang Wei in the late Qing, to Lu Zuofu and Liu Xiang in the early Republic, to Chen Zhiqian,

Yan Fuqing, Mei Yilin, and Jin Baoshan in the war years. As representatives of the state, whether consciously or not, these men contributed to a larger program for attaining modernity that included not only public hygiene, but also developing advanced weaponry and creating “a disciplined, martial citizenry.”⁹ Their work reinforced male priorities within the realm of the state. They accepted the assertion that achieving a cleaner city required enforcing hygiene regulations, which in turn required disciplining the populace. They therefore passed health regulations that empowered other men who worked as police officers, military police, soldiers, and *baojia* neighborhood association heads to enforce people’s compliance with medical mandates. For example, the 1943 public health calendar created by the National Institute of Health (NIH) included this phrase on its page for June: “Cholera is a contagious disease that runs rampant [*changjue*]; it is imperative to mobilize the local troops immediately for earnest and strident prevention.”¹⁰ Men with political control granted other men control over people’s bodies, all in the name of preventing disease. While tactics such as compulsory vaccination did save lives, the direct value of many other health regulations was much less evident.

Male health officials employed the language and logic of class to enforce the new hygienic order. With few exceptions, the elite possessed the right to control other bodies, while the poor possessed only the right to *be* controlled—or, as stories in this chapter show, to resist. Chiang Kai-shek and Song Meiling expressed the intersection between class politics and health politics most clearly in their signature program, the New Life Movement (*Xin shenghuo yundong*) (NLM). First launched in 1934 and continued in wartime Chongqing, the NLM charged health officials with enforcing regulations that often facilitated the universalizing of middle-class aesthetics through compulsion, rather than addressing the real health needs of the poor.¹¹ Nonetheless, as health workers sought to protect people’s lives by touching and controlling their bodies, their small actions had great consequences for a state that predicated its sovereignty on its ability to enforce hygienic standards.

The work of protecting the national body therefore unfolded on two fronts during the war—one intimate and one public, both political. State health officials aimed to protect individual bodies from disease, but central government officials wished to use health regulations to solidify the relationship between civilians and the state and thereby assert political sovereignty in Sichuan (i.e., draw it into the national body). Many Chongqing residents felt the presence of the central government in their city most consistently and forcefully through the activities of the Bureau of Public Health. Following orders from the Executive Yuan, health officials directed and regulated people’s most quotidian practices, such as where they relieved their bladders and placed their garbage, and what kinds of food and drink they could buy on the street. New rules entered parts of life theretofore subject only to social convention—including when to bury loved ones, when to gather in large crowds at public theaters, and where to give birth. This formulated a relationship between

the people of Chongqing and the Nationalist state characterized by disciplinary power and resistance thereto. Health officials severed the centuries-old relationship between town and country through the night soil trade, robbing thousands of their employment, and ironically leaving the capital mired in filth. They employed police enforcement in the hope of making health regulations become new dictates of public movement and daily habit.

The War of Resistance marked a new stage in the process of imprinting individual bodies with national concerns, and gender determined how this process unfolded. An investigation of public health practices in the Nationalist state's wartime capital illustrates not only how the war affected civilian life, but also how the principles of hygienic modernity spread throughout the country and contributed to its formation as a modern nation-state. All of this occurred in a unique urban space nestled between the mountains and rivers of Sichuan Province.

SIGHTS AND SMELLS OF WARTIME CHONGQING

The story begins in a striking yet somewhat inelegant city in the heart of the southwestern province of Sichuan. Most people arrived in Chongqing by boat to witness a forest of bamboo pilings supporting the city's famous *diaojiolou* ("hanging foot buildings") that crowded the muddy riverbank. (See fig. 2.) Reluctantly shifting their eyes from this arresting sight, they gazed up a long column of steep steps, worn smooth with the ages, snaking up from the riverside mud to a careworn city shrouded in mountain mist. Visitors with some pocket change saved themselves the sweaty toil and hired porters to carry them up these steps in palanquins, a luxury they especially enjoyed in the summertime, when the heat reached near lethal temperatures, flies and mosquitoes gathered in swarms, and noisome offal gushed from gutters at the porters' feet. One Canadian missionary described Chongqing as "a city of steps and swear-words."¹²

The wharf equipped with this majestic yet irksome entryway lay at the confluence of the mighty Yangzi and one of its largest tributaries, the Jialing River. This metropolis, hewn from limestone, experienced dizzying change and explosive growth as the wartime capital. To most refugees arriving from points east on the Yangzi (which earned them the name *xiajiangren*, "downriver people"), the city looked like a muddy backwater where gauche locals dressed in traditional-style long gowns, ate intolerably spicy food, and spoke in strange accents with mixed-up tones. Accustomed to the cosmopolitan cities of the coast, they felt that their new home "did not even look like a city, much less a national capital."¹³ For their part, the locals often resented *xiajiangren* and their haughty manners, and chided their inability to cope with the delicious local chili peppers and Sichuan peppercorns.

Visitors and sojourners remembered Chongqing by both its sights and its infamous smells. In the early 1930s people described it as "notoriously dirty,



FIGURE 2. A delivery of cotton bales to Chongqing's river port, showing the famous riverside *diaojiaolou*, or "hanging foot buildings." January 15, 1944. Chinese Official Ministry of Information photograph, ID 440116045, Associated Press. No. 3615A, New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection. U.S. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-131087.

overcrowded, and opium-ridden," with "deplorable" public health—and a surfeit of "prostitutes, singing beggars, and ordinary beggars," known locally as the "three plenties" (*san duo*).¹⁴ This reputation followed Chongqing into the war, when it attracted visitors from all over China as well as the world. One downriver immigrant, writing under a pseudonym, recalled of her first arrival in 1942, "[S]emi-liquid black filth drained along open ditches on either side of the road. Huge dump heaps spread down the cliff; dogs and beggar children dug in the refuse."¹⁵ The American Martha Gellhorn, also in Chongqing in 1942, found the lepers "impossible to bear," and bemoaned the general "lack of sanitation."¹⁶ Foreign war correspondents Theodore White and Annalee Jacoby wrote that "[s]ewage piled up in the gutters and smelled; mosquitoes bred in the stagnant pools of water . . . and malaria flourished. Dysentery grew worse; so did cholera, rashes, and a repulsive assortment of internal parasites. The smallest sore festered and persisted."¹⁷ In his

poem “Lyric to Spring,” US General Joseph W. Stilwell, stationed in Chongqing from March 1942 to October 1944, likened his temporary home to an “odorous sewer” smelling of “flowers and birds, with a sprinkling of turds,” and wrote, “[T]he garbage is rich, as it rots in the ditch, / And the honey-carts scatter pollution.” His short, six-stanza poem contained seven synonyms for excrement.¹⁸

Yet Chongqing underwent a dramatic transformation as wartime capital; it gave safe harbor to a blend of people from every part of China, and some began to find it quite pleasant. It became a city where local women copied the dress of stylish downriver ladies, roadside shacks served Shanghai snacks, and financiers parlayed foreign currencies into staggering personal fortunes.¹⁹ In the late 1930s, American traveler Graham Peck described Chongqing as “full of a traffic that was almost Occidental in quality and speed,” and when Captain de Muerville arrived in the early 1940s to command the French flotilla on the Yangzi, he mentioned that “the city roads are clean and paved.”²⁰ In late 1941, when British Army Captain Freddie Guest escaped from a Japanese POW camp and arrived in the wartime capital on foot, he remarked, “[N]o one took the slightest interest or showed surprise as I walked among them. One could immediately feel the international, cosmopolitan atmosphere of any big city in the world.”²¹ As the primary site where the nation began “to re-discover itself,” Chongqing took on a newly hygienic mien, and presented a more modern face to the world.

A closer look reveals cracks in this facade. Many of the attempts to clean up the city failed—one disastrously so—and residents successfully resisted the health regulations that they disliked. Anecdotal accounts cannot confirm whether Chongqing was clean and cosmopolitan or grimy and gauche, but they do suggest that it was a city of contrasts whose geography reflected a clear social hierarchy. The most elite section lay outside city limits to the north, in the model factory town Beibei, which Lu Zuofu (1893–1952), magnate of the Minsheng Shipping Company, founded in 1927 to serve as an idyllic residence for his employees. Home to the Western China Academy of Sciences and harbor for elite universities during the war, Beibei was a haven of intellectual and political freedom. This made it the choice destination for famous actors and actresses, as well as other notables such as literary scholar Liang Shi-chiu (1903–87) and authors Lao She (1899–1966) and Lin Yutang (1895–1976).²² Within Chongqing, foreigners lived across from the main city on the southern banks of the Yangzi, where they had tennis courts, pool tables, and a library. (See fig. 3.) Warlords traveled through town in limousines and lived in sprawling villas on its edges, one reputedly home to a glassed-in tennis court.²³ Meanwhile, disheveled and hungry beggars mingled with the working poor in the Lower City, the portion nearest the riverbanks where destitute people constructed makeshift homes—known colloquially as War of Resistance shacks (*Kangzhan peng*)—that were annually swept away in torrential rains, sometimes taking their occupants with them.²⁴ If they survived these floods, fires ignited by



FIGURE 3. Map of Chongqing from 1917 showing the main city on the isthmus, with the northern and southern riverbanks flanking its sides. By the 1930s, those areas would become home to the more elite residences. Drawn by Fu Chung-Chii. Map 62089(1). The British Library.

incendiary bombs could consume thousands of the shacks in an instant; in April and May 1938, riverside residents suffered flood and fire back-to-back, leaving thirty thousand people homeless and more than one hundred dead.²⁵

As wartime capital, Chongqing suffered more air raids than any other city in China, and was in fact the most bombed capital in the world.²⁶ The Japanese employed a terror bombing campaign in an effort to weaken Chinese resolve and force capitulation after Chiang Kai-shek's retreat to Sichuan signaled a shift to a multifront war of attrition.²⁷ Chongqing's "rain of terror" began with two calamitous attacks on May 3 and 4, 1939. These "strategic bombs," deliberately aimed at civilian targets in the heart of the city, destroyed the National Health Administration (NHA) offices, and Minister of Health Yan Fuqing barely escaped with his life.²⁸ Minister Yan and other health officials immediately gathered to draw up a comprehensive air raid relief plan. This included a map of all the city's hospitals and clinics, a list of the number of wounded that each unit could accept, and the order in which nurses would evacuate the wounded to hospitals in the outskirts whenever possible. Their meeting began on May 3 and adjourned on May 12.²⁹

Beginning before city leaders had time to prepare, the shower of bombs on those two days alone killed 3,991 people, wounded 2,323, and destroyed 4,871 homes.³⁰ Chongqing did not have London's luck; whereas the British government enjoyed a full year of planning between the war's beginning in Europe in September 1939 and the beginning of the Blitz in September 1940, the Chinese government was taken by surprise. China first shocked the world in August 1937, when news coverage of Japan's brutal air strikes on the civilians of Shanghai served as a ghastly harbinger of other nations' coming fate.³¹ The May 1939 attacks on Chongqing began just seven months after the fall of the first provisional capital, Wuhan, and while government officials and thousands of refugees were still moving into their second wartime stronghold.

After this tragic lesson, Chongqing followed a strange rhythm for the duration of the war. Throughout the fall, winter, and spring the city was packed with both locals and temporary residents from all over the nation. Then when the radiant summer sun blazed long enough to burn through the omnipresent fog and lay the skies bare to Japanese bombers, the city exhaled its crowds and thousands scattered to surrounding villages, seeking safety in densely foliated mountains and quiet hamlets. In order to reduce losses in property and lives, all organs of the municipal government and many social organizations urged people to leave the city, and thousands who had the means to obey did so.³² The normally bustling city fell quiet. The poorest residents could afford neither to leave nor to pay for medical care, paying instead with their lives.

Chongqing air raids were so frequent and so closely linked to weather patterns that they became their own season, subjecting civilians to the gloomy boredom of dank air raid shelters, and health workers to the frenetic exertion of treating the unlucky victims in endless hours tainted with the stench of blood. People suffering from shrapnel wounds, severe burns, and limbs lacerated by falling debris crowded into local hospitals, where health workers placed sickbeds in hallways, foyers, and supply rooms in order to accommodate the maximum number of patients. The loss of a single hospital in the bombing season could set the region's medical staff behind for months. Disease prevention and air raid defense kept CBPH staff so busy throughout the summer that they neglected routine duties.³³ This comes as no surprise given the intensity of the air raid season. In the single month of June 1940—during the peak of terror bombings—a total of 1,515 Japanese planes attacked Chongqing on twelve out of thirty days, destroying over one thousand buildings and homes, and wounding or killing over eight hundred people.³⁴ The bombs frequently left Chongqing looking like a skeleton of its former self. (See fig. 4.)

Air raids posed a serious physical threat to Chongqing residents, not least because Japanese pilots deliberately targeted hospitals.³⁵ Raids frequently occurred on clear nights because even when city officials enforced complete blackout,



FIGURE 4. A lone man, observing the destruction of Chongqing, perches atop the home he is planning to rebuild. LOT 11511-7, WAAMD #131, U.S. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

moonlight reflecting off Chongqing's rivers betrayed the city's precise location to Japanese pilots. (See fig. 5.) Some people began to suffer from nightmares, insomnia, and debilitating anxiety, and local health clinics hired mental health specialists. Yet most people showed a certain amount of resolve and did their best to accommodate the "new normal." When an air raid alarm sounded at mealtime, many people finished eating before heading to the nearest shelter.³⁶ Despite their horrific intensity, the raids failed to produce their desired outcomes: to cripple the Chinese economy and demoralize the people. In fact, Japanese bombing of China, American bombing of Japan, and Allied bombing of Europe alike all failed to achieve these goals, leading to a serious reconsideration of the value of air strikes in warfare.³⁷ Unfortunately, this meeting of the minds occurred only after the war, in the midst of the dusty rubble that had once formed majestic cities. By that time Chongqing topped a list of hundreds of destroyed cities around the world. From February 18, 1938, through August 23, 1943, when the ferocity of the Pacific War diverted the Japanese Army and finally granted Chongqing a respite, a total of 9,513 Japanese planes dropped 21,593 bombs on the city on 218 separate occasions, killing 11,889 and wounding 14,100 civilians.³⁸

While in other belligerent nations air raids fundamentally altered the structure of governance and jump-started the creation of welfare states, in China this

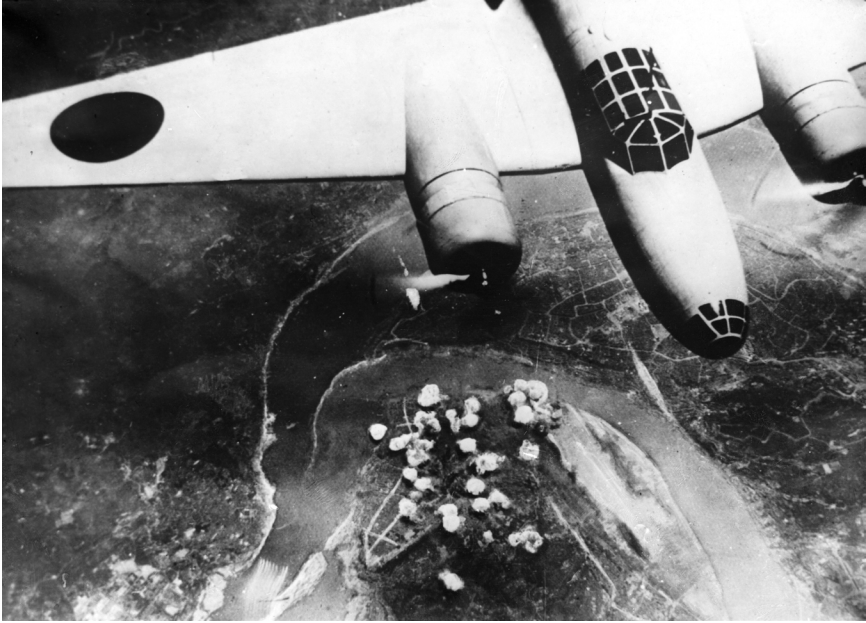


FIGURE 5. A Japanese bomber looms over Chongqing on September 14, 1940, guiding itself to the triangular isthmus formed by the meeting of the Yangzi and Jialing Rivers. Photograph by Hulton Deutsch, Corbis Historical Collection, Getty Images. Acme Newspictures, New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection. U.S. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-131086.

process was muted by three openly reported tragedies in the wartime capital.³⁹ On these occasions the air raid shelters became death traps: June 11, 1939; August 13, 1940; and June 5, 1941. Death tolls ranged from eight to four hundred in the August 1940 incident, and untold hundreds—some say thousands—in the June 1941 “18 Steps” incident (named after the location of the shelter’s main entrance).⁴⁰ In all three cases the victims died not from enemy bombs, but from asphyxiation in overcrowded shelters. Sadder still, the lack of air was a result of human error. A newspaper reporter wrote of the June 1939 event, “[T]he military police posted at the entryway did not let the sufferers leave, even opening fire and killing people.” Not having learned their lesson yet, in August 1940 when people once more tried to leave the shelter for a bit of air during an hours-long air raid, police officers and medical relief personnel stationed at the site “blocked their passage, creating conflict, so people [panicked and] trampled on each other, killing many.” These people ran out of air because, although electric fans had been installed in the shelter for better air circulation—authorities *had* learned this lesson—they were

all still: the electricity company had shut off power in that area for maintenance but failed to report the scheduled outage.⁴¹ State officials' response included a detailed report from a seven-person investigative committee and the discharge of Liu Qiying from his position as air raid defense minister, but none of this took place until after the *third* tragedy, in June 1941.⁴² The lethally disciplinary response to civilians' demands for air, as well as the belated and punitive means of "solving" the problem, both indicate the Nationalist state's general attitude toward governing civil society: control through didactic militarism, best embodied in the NLM.

THE NEW LIFE MOVEMENT AND MIDDLE-CLASS AESTHETICS IN NATIONALIST CHINA

Faced with the challenge of defending the nation from their new residence in Sichuan while under constant siege, Nationalist Party leaders resorted to their strongest ideological tool: the New Life Movement. Chiang Kai-shek inaugurated the NLM in Jiangxi Province in February 1934, in the midst of his campaign to "exterminate" the Communist "bandits" whose stronghold lay in that province (the famed Jiangxi Soviet). The Communists utilized literacy programs and public health education to fight rural poverty and attract villagers to communism. At the same time, Christian leftists in the Rural Reconstruction movement conducted similar programs in rural China to fight poverty and alleviate suffering, though often with different politics.⁴³ Once the war began, circumstances forced both the Nationalist and Communist parties to demand even more from their civilian base. Accordingly, party leaders on both sides entered a new kind of political competition, striving to offer more and better services to the people as a means of demonstrating the usefulness of their respective politics and states.⁴⁴ To counter the work of his political adversaries, Chiang created the NLM to increase the visibility of and loyalty to the Nationalist Party.

Chiang envisioned the NLM as a unified social movement based on the philosophies that had long constituted the twin principles of Chinese statecraft: militarism and Confucian moralism. Its foundation in moral pedagogy marked the NLM as a movement of its time. An integral part of China's grappling with modernity, conversations on morality knew no political bounds. Even the radical May Fourth movement included the lesser-known "moral revolution," with "Miss Moral" serving as its poster child.⁴⁵ In the early 1900s, prominent anarchists and other leftists established morality societies requiring members to abstain from visiting prostitutes, gambling, smoking, drinking alcohol, and eating meat. In the case of radical feminist Qiu Jin (1875–1907), the "will to self-extinction" marked her as a consummate anarchist so morally committed to her cause that it superseded her ego.⁴⁶ In this sense the Nationalist officials' obsession with morality placed them squarely within the trends of modern Chinese intellectual and social

life, and the NLM was “a modern response to a modern problem.”⁴⁷ While right-wing Nationalists certainly did espouse the most conservative version of feminine morality—and reviled Communists in part for their more-radical gender politics⁴⁸—even the most progressive organizations and individuals asked women to make sacrifices on behalf of a larger, male-led collective, be it the nuclear family, the nation-state, the international proletariat, or a political party. The NLM succeeded in part because intellectuals also supported its primary goals. Long after the sea changes of late-nineteenth-century political culture and the abolition of the civil service examination system in 1905, the Confucian belief in “public morality” (*gongde*) as the bedrock of a strong nation persisted.⁴⁹

As the guiding light for the Nationalist social agenda, the NLM also had a distinct class politics that posited middle-class behavior as the standard of modernity, and all other modes of being as deviant and inferior. Layered on top of, and affirming, the class dynamic was a gender politics that Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and First Lady Song Meiling epitomized in their division of state labors. Briefly stated, Chiang championed the masculine approach that emphasized military discipline and national defense, while Song led the feminine approach that emphasized social services and moral suasion. In actual practice, Chiang wrote the orders to the National Health Administration, but delegated to his wife the real public health work of meeting with health officials, accepting overseas medical donations, visiting wounded soldiers in hospital, talking with soldiers’ mothers, and courting support for orphans—all of which she performed in elegant dress, with extensive media coverage.⁵⁰ Each side needed the other in order to function, and the cultivation of political loyalty lay at the heart of their movement, serving as ballast for the centripetal force that kept the two in a harmonious spin, like figure skaters on ice.

Both leaders played their respective roles well. For Chiang Kai-shek militarism was not merely an ideal but a way of life. In his inaugural NLM speech, delivered on February 19, 1934, Chiang claimed that foreigners’ strength derived from their “proper way of life,” and the “instillation of discipline” would ensure that China could follow the examples of Germany and Japan—two countries from which the Generalissimo had received some of his own military training, and which he continued to admire even when they became his adversaries. Chiang imagined this discipline to come from improving one’s personal hygiene and eating habits, instituting a regimented schedule, keeping one’s living environment spick-and-span, and abstaining from all drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.⁵¹ As a self-professed Christian and military man, Chiang ruled his own life in this manner, rising at the crack of dawn every morning, wearing a starched military uniform and polished leather shoes whenever he appeared in public, performing calisthenics to keep his body trim, and reading the works of Confucian philosophers to guide his moral compass.

Chiang expressed faith that Chinese people could discipline themselves into the “proper way of life” that he believed foreigners already inhabited, but the way he framed the goals of the NLM suggests that he allowed foreign eyes to direct the gaze of his state toward its offending subjects. In the prewar capital of Nanjing, as well as in wartime Chongqing, Western attitudes toward prostitutes and beggars as vectors of disease and troublesome vagrants who willfully eluded state power influenced the Nationalists’ drive to get such people off the capital’s streets and out of the foreigners’ line of vision.⁵² In Chongqing, the Bureau of Police worked alongside NLM activists in projects that targeted shantytown residents, beggars, vagrants, prostitutes, and street-side peddlers alike for removal from the city. This squared Chiang’s state with a political tradition in China; the Qing (1644–1911), Nationalist (1927–49), and Communist (1949–) states all treat(ed) poor people like criminals “guilty of indigence.”⁵³

Police officers played a dominant role because what Chiang Kai-shek understood as self-discipline could not be enacted upon an entire population without recruiting biopower—state mechanisms used to police bodies, such as rigidly enforced public health regulations, and disciplinary measures that defined and restricted how the modern body could look and act.⁵⁴ In Chongqing this manifested itself in an obsession with “municipal appearance” (*shirong*), to which health officials also adhered. Their reports repeatedly denigrated poor people’s residences as “ugly alleys and disgustingly dirty, unkempt areas.” They also created a demonstration residence at the National Institute of Health and other promotional materials that held a middle-class home as the standard and demarcated poor living quarters as outside the pale of civilization.⁵⁵ In January 1943, this sentiment became law when a new municipal regulation outlawed the construction of the so-called War of Resistance shacks (*Kangzhan peng*) due to their obstruction of traffic, shopkeepers’ rights, and “municipal appearance.” The law displaced an estimated ten thousand people who lived in such makeshift homes built by war refugees, primarily on the riverbanks.⁵⁶

Two women who attempted to live in these shacks described how this law affected them. Wang Shufen and Li Shuhua, poor peasants born near Chongqing in 1920 and 1913, respectively, experienced Nationalist government officials as adversaries. From their perspective, not only did the government fail to provide relief to the capital’s poorest residents; it also refused to let them construct the only homes within their means. Li Shuhua and her husband joined with other poor families in a group of “guerrilla residents” who stayed in their makeshift bamboo shelters only until an official discovered them, then moved along quickly to avoid punishment. In the early war years, Li and her husband moved at least fifty times in an ongoing effort to dodge state officials. Wang Shufen had much less luck at avoiding reprimand; security police regularly beat her with leather belts and called her a “stupid woman,” but she overcame her fear and “cursed

them,” addressing them as “you bastards!”⁵⁷ In their oral history interviews, both women gave voice to the implicit war on the poor within the government’s urban aesthetic. The focus on municipal appearance, and dedication to middle-class values as a universal standard, taught state officials to treat poor people as dangers to the social order rather than individuals in need of care, and inspired both overt and covert resistance.

Emphasis on appearance increased dramatically after November 1943, when Chiang Kai-shek designated Chongqing a “demonstration district” (*shifanqu*) for the New Life Movement, stating, “Cleanliness and hygiene shall be the most emphasized elements.”⁵⁸ This new plan included dozens of municipal mandates that ostensibly related to public health but evinced greater concern for how the city looked. Recognizing that implementation would require a great deal of force, Chiang linked his new health policies to the larger goal of disciplining the people. He drew a decisive link between public health and personal hygiene practices on one side and maintaining social order through building national and racial strength on the other. The Generalissimo charged the Chongqing Bureau of Police and the Chongqing Military Police with enforcement and sent a flurry of orders to the Bureau of Public Health.

Now that they lived in a demonstration district of the NLM, people in Chongqing were not allowed to sell tea, snacks, or towels in any public establishments, lest these items end up on the ground and create a mess. Nor could they relieve themselves outside at will (*renyi daxiaobian*). People in military uniform could not accept a ride in a rickshaw, and no rickshaw drivers could operate within city limits, since they tainted the city with an overly rustic air (though two photographs dated January 1944 show rickshaws in the center of town, displaying the chinks in Chiang’s armor).⁵⁹ It is worth noting that Wang Shufen’s husband pulled a rickshaw, and they needed his income desperately.⁶⁰ The national flag was to hang only at regulation height lest it obstruct pedestrians’ passage, allowing the heads of passersby to stain the sacred national symbol. The regulations held the “ugly alleys” and the “disgustingly dirty areas of poor residents” to the same cleanliness standards as the city’s main thoroughfares and required that local police or *baojia* heads assign their residents, on a rotating basis, to clean the public toilets each morning and night and regularly sweep the streets. Horse cart drivers had to keep their carts clean and their horses healthy and strong. Chiang tasked the mayor with serving as his eyes and ears, betraying a lack of trust in local health officials and police. At least once a week, the mayor toured the city with the directors of each respective bureau, paying special attention to those “disgustingly dirty” areas where poor people lived and ensuring that everyone obeyed the regulations.⁶¹

Chiang’s decision to make Chongqing a New Life Movement demonstration district in 1943 undoubtedly related to the fact that the city had become command

center of the Pacific Theater of World War II, and both the US and British militaries—Chiang's key allies—stationed top personnel there. The wartime capital also swarmed with foreign reporters who frequently dispatched stinging criticisms of the Nationalist state or army, which Chiang always took as a barb. Government officials policed the poor and took out the trash in order to present themselves as rightful rulers of a nation at war to an army of skeptical onlookers.

And yet, as Li Shuhua's crafty evasion and Wang Shufen's brazen retorts demonstrate, enforcement alone cannot guarantee compliance. People also have to police themselves and must therefore internalize the desirability of certain behaviors and the repugnancy of others. Michel Foucault theorized that the stage of convincing people to police their own behavior occurs when, through stringent and consistent application of law, biopower accumulates to the point that it instills "governmentality"—his word to describe the mentality of a citizen who has developed an internal self-control mechanism to police him- or herself well before active state interference.⁶² In this way, biopower has a positive charge: regular exercise of overt discipline encourages people to police themselves, so as to avoid direct confrontation with agents of the state. In other words, biopower re-creates itself inside the bodies and minds of the people, thereby saving state actors time and effort.⁶³ An overwhelming body of evidence suggests that biopower failed to reproduce itself in the wartime capital. Male state officials who interpreted the lifestyles of the poor as a character flaw rather than as a result of poverty itself wasted their time policing people who consistently resisted to the best of their ability. The poor shouldered the heaviest burden of the war effort but lived a skeletal existence, crushed between their own government's demands and an invader's dreams of conquest.

CLEANING THE CAPITAL: THE WORK OF THE CHONGQING BUREAU OF PUBLIC HEALTH

When the Chongqing Bureau of Public Health opened in November 1938, its staff faced a seemingly impossible agenda: to ensure a high standard of cleanliness in one of the country's most crowded cities—one to which new refugees arrived on a regular basis, where little public health work had previously taken place, and where enemy planes regularly terrorized the population. With four hundred thousand yuan in seed funding from the central government, the new bureau supported the already established Municipal Hospital and its new branches, as well as the new Sanitation Team and Lead Cleanliness Team, two health offices, four Maternal and Child Health clinics, the Infectious Disease Hospital, the Opium Addicts' Treatment Hospital, and a health laboratory.⁶⁴ Although financial shortfalls frequently interrupted construction, by May 1944 Chongqing had twenty-one hospitals and numerous clinics, almost all of them new or newly expanded.⁶⁵

CBPH Director Mei Yilin (1896–1955), a trusted appointee of then Minister of Health Yan Fuqing, typified the May Fourth generation of highly educated men and women who came of age in the first two decades of the twentieth century and displayed a commitment to leveraging their privilege for the greater social good.⁶⁶ The eighth child of ten in a prosperous scholar-gentry family claiming heritage with Ming dynasty founders, Mei was born in Tianjin in 1896 and belonged to the first generation of gentry to be educated at top-tier, modernized, Western schools. He attended Nankai Middle School in Tianjin (graduating in 1916, one year ahead of close family friend Zhou Enlai), Qinghua University in Beijing (class of 1920; his elder brother Mei Yiqi later served as its president), the University of Chicago (PhD in Medicine, 1925), and Johns Hopkins University (PhD in Public Health, 1926). After completing his two doctoral degrees, Mei researched tropical diseases at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine through 1927. Upon his return to China, Mei worked at the Central Field Health Station, directed the Nanjing Bureau of Public Health, and rose to the position of vice commissioner and then commissioner of the Army Medical Administration (*Junyishu*) (AMA) before the war started.⁶⁷

A family portrait taken on the occasion of his mother's seventieth birthday shows Mei Yilin as the sole brother wearing a western suit rather than a traditional long gown, and his wife, Jiang Lan (a nurse at the Peking Union Medical College Hospital), as the sole woman of all the daughters and daughters-in-law to sport glasses, pearl earrings, and a jaunty smile. While all members of the Mei family's younger generation were "new men" and "new women," this young couple appears distinctly self-confident. The differences in their attire and bodily stance illustrate an important point about public health workers in Nationalist China: they joined a new profession that marked them as innovators, possessed with the passion and conviction that they could make China anew by making the country stronger, individual by individual. A rhetoric that permeated wartime culture and eclipsed personal goals for the sake of the collective informed their professional lives—the rhetoric of hygienic modernity, which infused even the most mundane acts of personal hygiene with patriotic importance.⁶⁸ Mei Yilin and Jiang Lan also fit the profile of the quintessential refugee intellectual: a highly educated and upper-class transplant from another part of China, where people spoke a different dialect, ate different food, and followed different customs from the people of Sichuan. Such people obtained at least a portion of their education abroad—many spoke fluent English, German, or Japanese—and their experiences overseas made them even more culturally distinct from the majority of their compatriots.

As director of the CBPH, Mei Yilin worked within a structure that set him apart. China's modern public health had its roots in an event that defined the state and public as adversaries: a pneumonic plague epidemic that struck Manchuria at the tail end of the Qing dynasty (1910–11). The Cambridge-trained Malaysian

Chinese physician Dr. Wu Lien-teh (1879–1960) successfully controlled the epidemic that killed an estimated sixty thousand people, but only by employing an unprecedented degree of coercion. He enforced *cordons sanitaires*, removed people from travelers' inns for baths and weeklong quarantines, confiscated and burned the effects of sick residents, and implemented compulsory cremation of the plague dead (which so contradicted usual practice that it required an imperial edict to enforce). This manner of disease control "polarized the dichotomy between the state medical elites and the general public. For the sake of containing the plague, state bureaucrats and medical officers were forced to treat the Chinese people as ignorant, unreasonable, and even immoral . . . [they] felt obligated to put into practice policies that even they regarded as brutal and extreme."⁶⁹

This adversarial relationship between educated men who desired to protect people's lives and the people they served was not only a tragedy. It was also a tremendous victory for state power. Because the epidemic occurred in a world in which "only western medicine counted,"⁷⁰ Dr. Wu's successful control of the world's first known epidemic of *pneumonic* plague, with a pathology distinct from that of bubonic plague and completely misunderstood at the time, also "allowed China for the first time to face the world as a country performing cutting-edge scientific research" when it hosted the International Plague Conference in April 1911. This in turn secured Qing power over the contested region of Manchuria, where both Russia and Japan controlled the railroads and jockeyed for power, and set the state on a determined course toward biomedicine.⁷¹ The imperative that the Chinese state control disease with force in order to win geopolitical respect established a definitive connection between public health—care for the people's lives—and the disciplinary power of what I term the masculinist state, concerned first and foremost with its political sovereignty.

This same dynamic—securing sovereignty through health regulation—defined the conditions in Chongqing. In the wartime capital the masculinist state exclusively employed men in positions of high authority, prioritized political jurisdiction, used its resources to discipline people into "proper" behavior, and collected information as a means of control. In its first full month of operation in December 1938, the CBPH conducted a comprehensive survey of all medical professionals in the city, including physicians of Chinese medicine and biomedicine, pharmacists, and midwives. The local survey complemented a national one performed in 1937 but included much more detail, including name, age, sex, hometown, education, clinic location and hours of operation, starting date of practice, and medical license number for those already registered.⁷² This information gave health officials the means to oversee all medical professionals in the city and force them to register with the government. They also demanded that doctors and nurses perform free labor—such as conducting emergency rescue work or serving on seasonal vaccination teams—and threatened to revoke the licenses of those who refused to

serve.⁷³ Physicians of Chinese medicine must have felt threatened indeed, because in 1929 opponents of Chinese medicine who worked in the Ministry of Health (*Weisheng bu*) had deliberately used revocation of professional licensing in an attempt to push such practitioners out of the field entirely (though they succeeded only in spurring organized resistance).⁷⁴

Results of the medical personnel survey, published in February 1939, reported 310 physicians of Chinese medicine, 122 physicians of scientific biomedicine, 58 midwives, 12 pharmacists, and 8 herbalists practicing in Chongqing.⁷⁵ The survey shows clearly that migration into Chongqing after the October 1938 fall of Wuhan, the first provisional capital, precipitated a dramatic change in the wartime capital's medical marketplace. Over one-third of Chongqing's biomedicine physicians (44 of 122) arrived between October 1937 and December 1938, peaking in the four months around Wuhan's fall. On the other hand, just 39 percent of the biomedicine physicians, and fully 76 percent of Chinese-medicine physicians, were Sichuan locals. The balance of power had shifted, but Chinese-medicine physicians still constituted the majority and had the most powerful local networks. However, they now outnumbered biomedical physicians roughly two and a half to one rather than four to one.

Chongqing health officials continued to survey the city, illustrating their "passion for facts" and commitment to data as a new form of incontrovertible truth, which itself signaled an ontological shift from late-imperial understandings of reality.⁷⁶ The central bureau in charge of health wanted to centralize information. In the same month of December 1938, CBPH staff also completed a school health survey that the municipal education bureau distributed to all schools, and launched a citywide health program for schoolchildren. They also formed the Chongqing Municipal Rescue Team (*Chongqingshi jiuhu dui*) for air raid relief, consisting of one lead team and eight branch teams to be assigned to the city's clinics and hospitals; conducted a factory health survey and distributed it to all factories in the city, many of them newly arrived; surveyed the city's public toilets and planned to build ninety-eight new ones; surveyed the condition of residents' drinking water; made plans for trash incineration and night-soil processing; and requested six hundred vials of cowpox from the NHA to institute the first smallpox vaccination campaign.⁷⁷

CBPH staff employed two strategies to maintain a productive working relationship with central government authorities: utilizing politically savvy language to describe their work, and prioritizing projects that simultaneously satisfied their own agenda and that of Nationalist officials. Ever cognizant of the need to court state support, CBPH staff cleverly employed central government language in their reports, framing everything from aseptic midwifery to staving off disease in the language of "strengthening the race and building the nation" (*qiangzu jianguo*) and "increasing the power of resistance and nation building"

(*zengqiang kangjian lilian*).⁷⁸ Projects such as trash collection and rat control simultaneously slowed the spread of disease and improved the city's looks, allowing health officials to balance central government priorities (hygienic aesthetics) with their own (lowering disease morbidity and mortality).

Nonetheless, records suggest that as the war progressed, maintaining people's health needs at the core of CBPH work became increasingly difficult. State authorities fixated on rapid results and forced health officials to cooperate with multiple entities that used disciplinary power to win compliance through force rather than by persuasion. This was abundantly clear during epidemics. Very few threats to public health worried state officials as much as did infectious diseases. The Ministry of Health, precursor to the NHA, identified nine legally notifiable contagious diseases in 1930: typhoid, typhus, dysentery, smallpox, plague, cholera, diphtheria, cerebral meningitis, and scarlet fever. In the same month that the war began, the NHA published a pamphlet stating that infectious disease caused forty-two of every one hundred deaths each year.⁷⁹ Moreover, throughout the war no effective treatment or vaccine existed for three of the nine notifiable diseases: typhus, plague, and scarlet fever. (Vaccines or serum shots did exist for typhoid, smallpox, cholera, cerebral meningitis, and diphtheria.) The CBPH conducted mass vaccination campaigns every spring and autumn for both smallpox and cholera/typhoid (the latter diseases often prevented through the administration of a combined vaccine), beginning with an inaugural smallpox vaccination campaign in December 1938, with vaccine from the NHA and staff from the various health clinics, the Municipal Hospital, Bureau of Police, and the Household Registration Police (*kouji jing*) providing free inoculations.⁸⁰

The first instance of vaccinations by force occurred when a cholera epidemic began unseasonably early in 1939—arriving on the heels of the city's horrendous May air raids—and had already claimed nearly twenty lives before the CBPH could enact the plan it had drawn up for summertime cholera prevention. Once the bureau confirmed that the cholera vibrio had caused these deaths, the Chongqing Garrison headquarters decided to implement compulsory vaccinations (*qiangpo zhushu*) across the board. The Bureaus of Public Health and Police composed teams of vaccinators who went door-to-door giving mandatory shots to all residents.⁸¹

Compulsory vaccinations constituted only one arm of state intervention, and most activities entailed politely asking for cooperation rather than violently demanding it. Health officials assembled forty vaccination teams that administered shots at wharfs, bus stations, teahouses, refugee asylums, and densely inhabited neighborhoods. They delivered free vaccines to all public and private hospitals, medical clinics, and social organizations throughout the city. (Bureau personnel went to the latter sites to administer the shots.) The AMA vaccinated all troops stationed in the city, while police inspected all food, drink, and fruit stands to

ensure that they installed fly screens and did not serve any cold foods or drinks or cut-open melons. Meanwhile, the CBPH informed the public about cholera prevention via leaflets, posters, radio and newspaper announcements, public speeches, and lantern shows. To provide treatment to cholera victims, the municipal government hastily set up a makeshift hospital that opened its doors on May 25 inside the Liziba Beggar Asylum.⁸²

Extant records do not indicate how many people the bureau managed to inoculate against or otherwise treat for cholera, but the 1939 epidemic demonstrated that cholera could come well before summer. The following year, the CBPH had vaccinated over 10,000 people by the end of May (and over 150,000 by the end of September). This method proved effective: in 1940 both the CBPH and the NHA reported victory in controlling cholera, with not a single case over the entire year.⁸³ However, a sharp gender disparity in recorded vaccinations provides good reason to doubt these claims; unless women possessed natural immunity or suffered less exposure to cholera, campaigns in which more than four times as many men as women received vaccines could not possibly have eradicated the disease entirely.⁸⁴

In 1941, health officials vaccinated over 150,000 people against cholera and reported only seven cases of the disease.⁸⁵ In 1943, the next year for which records exist, the CBPH vaccinated over 200,000 residents against cholera and reported no epidemic.⁸⁶ Financial shortfalls resulting from severe inflation hampered the vaccination campaign of 1944, and the CBPH inoculated a grand total of only 125,753 people—a far cry from the original goal of 600,000.⁸⁷ Still, these vaccinations averted disaster. In July 1944, the CBPH received word that cholera was spreading in Henan Province as well as in one of Sichuan's neighboring provinces, Yunnan. By early October, fifty-six cases had been reported in Guiyang, capital of neighboring Guizhou Province. People in Chongqing grew alarmed, and a story spread that two bank employees had contracted cholera and died, but the CBPH investigation proved it to be a false rumor.⁸⁸ Eventually cholera did arrive in Chongqing, killing one Trauma Hospital patient in early November, and several people in the Jiangbei district by midmonth, at which point the CBPH sent personnel out to disinfect the area and vaccinate nearby residents by force.⁸⁹ No total annual death toll was reported for cholera, but this handful of cases and the bureau's response suggest that they managed to keep it to a minimum. Not so in 1945. That year, the CBPH reported nearly three thousand cases of cholera and created seventeen mobile medical teams, each with a vaccinator and a police officer, to enforce compulsory vaccinations throughout the city and its suburbs. Despite these thorough control efforts, the dreaded disease returned in 1946.⁹⁰ None of this work could have been accomplished without the labor of vaccinators—often women, whose work is described in the next chapter—and male law-enforcement officers.

GENDARMES OF GERMS: "CRIMES AGAINST HYGIENE" AND ENFORCING HYGIENIC MODERNITY

The ubiquity of male police officers, *baojia* neighborhood association heads, and sanitation men on the streets of Chongqing illustrated Nationalist officials' desire to perfect the art of policing the public in their wartime capital. While the process of hygienic discipline began under foreign rule in treaty-port cities such as Tianjin and Shanghai, in wartime Chongqing, Chinese policed fellow Chinese to demonstrate their control over one another and independence from foreigners. Having risen to dominate the Nationalist Party during China's hypercolonial period and regained control over tariffs in 1930, Chiang Kai-shek assumed that containing Chongqing's filth and policing its bodies would demonstrate his political mastery at once to Japanese invaders, Communist adversaries, and foreign diplomats. Beginning in prewar Nanjing and Shanghai, the Nationalist government's obsession with making "useful" and "productive" citizens out of gamblers, beggars, adulterers, indigents, and people deemed "unclean" crafted an indelible link between the concept of modernity and specific types of behavior.⁹¹

Men so frequently enforced hygienic regulations that their work constituted a central aspect of the masculinist state. Nationalist state officials granted social space and political power to male groups, chief among them the military but also paramilitary groups—the Three People's Principles Youth Corps and military police—as well as the civilian police and quasi state bodies. Men in these groups possessed disciplinary power over the bodies of their fellow citizens.⁹² At the same time, multiple levels of coercion undergirded the masculinist state, complicating the role of individual men therein. Despite their status as local working-class men, Chongqing police officers possessed a statist mentality; they identified with the state's desire to control people and willingly served as enforcers of state law. Yet it is impossible to know whether any policemen may have wished to resist state decree, for their jobs came with a mandate, and had they refused to enforce regulations they would have lost their source of employment in a time of hunger and privation. They therefore also belonged to the controlled; they enforced compliance with the state among the poorer of their brethren lest they too plummet to the even lower—and hungrier—class.

Science provided the logic for the masculinist state. As the international scientific community began to embrace germ theory in the late nineteenth century, awareness of bacteria and its ease of travel through large populations transformed disease from "a private misfortune [to] an offense to public order" and justified treating a sick person like a criminal to be reported, disinfected, and isolated from the healthy.⁹³ Though bacteriology initially served to justify states' attempts to control their citizenries during disease outbreaks, as the push for modernization increased, scientific proof of contagion justified state control of daily life even in

times of health. While many people assume that the aim of scientific medicine is to find cures for sick individuals, “[i]n fact, its role in the modern era . . . has been to safeguard the collective national health.”⁹⁴ Therefore, the pursuit of aggressive health policies both for and against the populace accords with the foundational philosophy of state-directed public health. Hygienic discourses hold physical coercion at their core; they invite the state into people’s personal lives and “locat[e] the body of the modern at the intersection of the public and the private,” making individual bodies “subject to negotiations with the state.”⁹⁵

Science and the modern state developed in tandem, each reinforcing the other, and male mastery of the unruly public made wartime Chongqing look like any other city in the world. “Hygiene police” were a quotidian phenomenon in many countries from the late eighteenth through mid-twentieth centuries. In an era of frequent disease epidemics, police officers had the power to enforce *cordons sanitaires*, isolate the sick, inspect private homes, seize personal goods, and, once vaccinations were available, deliver them by force. In both Italy and France medical officers with emergency powers intervened in disease outbreaks as early as the late fifteenth century, but the precise idea of “medical police” dates to 1764, when Austrian physician Wolfgang Thomas Rau first used the phrase.⁹⁶ Implemented first in the Prussian empire, medical police also operated from the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries in the United States, England, Austria, Italy, and France, where in 1802 the Paris police prefect established the Health Council (Conseil de Salubrité).⁹⁷ In 1893, medical police began to shape public health in Japan, where the Meiji government, following the French model, transferred public health administration to the Board of Police.⁹⁸ In China, medical police had by the late nineteenth century established themselves in key cities, including Chengdu and Chongqing, following the Franco-Japanese model of urban law enforcement.⁹⁹

The Chinese state also called upon heads of *baojia* neighborhood associations—divisions of a hundred households—to operate as informal police. The Nationalist state had adapted the imperial-era *baojia* system in the early 1930s to increase public security and mutual surveillance within communities. Originally designed to facilitate census taking, self-defense, law enforcement, and tax collection, during the war the *baojia* system was used by the state to improve social cohesion and enforce the military draft. As home to the wartime capital, Sichuan had the most intensive *baojia* recruitment, and eventually housed nearly one-fifth of the entire country’s population incorporated into the *baojia* system.¹⁰⁰ In the Republican era members of the *baojia* elected their heads, who would serve on a rotational basis and held the responsibility to collect taxes, decide which men to draft into the military, lead community fund-raising drives for refugee relief and war bonds, mediate disputes, report potential disease outbreaks, and spread Nationalist Party propaganda in their communities.¹⁰¹

Baojia heads in wartime Chongqing, occupied Beijing, and colonial Taiwan all played key roles in public health work. They occupied the lowest rung in the state

medicine system and served as local representatives of state authority, augmenting the perception of public health as yet another manifestation of the state's disciplinary control over the populace. They reported outbreaks of epidemics to the local authorities, conducted physical checkups of their residents, and served as a reserve labor force for the CBPH, which asked local *baojia* heads to: assign their members to rotational lavatory cleaning duty, ensure compliance with all health regulations, examine local food and drink stalls, facilitate trash collection, assist with seasonal vaccination campaigns, and participate in health exhibitions. During most of these activities *baojia* heads accompanied district police constables in an ingenious combination of the two parties' effort and local knowledge.¹⁰² In other words, *baojia* heads worked as policemen, draft officials, tax collectors, firefighters, community judges, neighborhood watchmen, and health workers—all on behalf of a state that paid them nothing.

Although upon its opening the CBPH had dissolved the Police Bureau's health department to reduce administrative redundancies, the labor of police officers and *baojia* neighborhood association heads extended the power of the short-staffed bureau into people's homes and onto their bodies. Serving as the eyes and ears of the CBPH, they performed much of the physical labor required to enforce its regulations and police the daily lives of Chongqing residents. Health officials wrote the laws in their offices, while disciplinarians working the beat actualized them. The creation of compulsory cleanliness occurred in thousands of interactions between representatives of the state—sanitation men, vaccinators, police officers, *baojia* heads—and local residents. Perhaps inevitably, people resisted such control of their bodily functions and consumption habits.

No category of crime in wartime Chongqing revealed the punitive and disciplinary logic of the masculinist state more clearly than "crimes against hygiene" (*fanghai weisheng an*). In 1941, six such cases went all the way to the court, including that of one man who was tried for "relieving himself at will" on the street.¹⁰³ The cash-strapped state cared so much about public urination that it devoted precious funds to penalize it in a court of law. The punitive state defined the boundaries of proper behavior so tightly that many people committed "crimes against hygiene" simply by going about their daily business. Yang Xuegao, a forty-three-year-old chicken farmer from Sichuan's Anyue County, paid the handsome fine of 420 yuan for placing his chicken's excrement at his doorway, thereby spreading a noxious smell around the neighborhood and "obstructing public health."¹⁰⁴ In October 1942, police fined Long Jiugao between ten and thirty yuan (the precise amount was not specified) for letting his pigs roam free to eat—a common practice at that time—and thereby harming public health since the pigs pooped as they roamed.¹⁰⁵ In March 1944, police fined fourteen-year-old He Bingzhang thirty-five yuan for throwing dirty water onto the street.¹⁰⁶ In June 1944, district police confiscated a sugarcane press from thirty-five-year-old Mrs. Yu Liang from Hechuan County. Claiming that her equipment was so filthy that it constituted a danger to

public health, the police officers impounded the machine and made Yu write and sign a statement that she would abandon her *métier*.¹⁰⁷ On September 25, 1944, police officer Cai Zhixian discovered that the twenty-year-old restaurateur Chen Guowen, of Wan County in Sichuan, had failed to place screen lids (*shazhao*) over the food in his establishment, and also sold illicit pork despite a ban on this product. Both Chen and his chef paid a fifty-yuan fine and were required to put another five hundred yuan into a public savings account.¹⁰⁸

One case illustrates two police officers' adherence to the logic of the masculinist state. On March 10, 1944, Li Dianju, an eighty-eight-year-old restaurateur from Shandong, "relieved himself at will right at the police post, then did not submit to the regulations outlawing [such behavior], but rather cursed at the police officers." The authors of this report, officers Chen Yingming and Xu Lin, asserted that Li "not only obstructed public health, but also *insulted national policemen* [*guojing*]," and asked that their chief officer "deal with him severely."¹⁰⁹ Their bureau chief fined Li Dianju thirty-five yuan—far less than what beat cops Chen and Xu believed fitting. But the true source of the officers' ire demonstrates the significance of the ideological connection between personal hygiene and the national community in wartime Chinese society. Li, perhaps oblivious of the fact that two years prior a Chongqing man had been tried in court for the same offense, or that two decades prior a Chengdu man had likewise been arrested for the same act, refused to accept the policemen's rebuke of his behavior, and rebuked them in turn.¹¹⁰ In other words, he rejected the association between his bodily habits and his respect for social order and national sovereignty—the very concept that formed the foundation of the Nationalist state's public health administration.¹¹¹ The behavior of officers Chen Yingming and Xu Lin, who called themselves *national* policemen and took personal offense at Li's resistance, demonstrates that they approached their job with this concept in mind, and believed themselves responsible for ensuring that people living in their jurisdiction behaved according to the principles of the Sanitation Nation.

Cases of "crimes against hygiene" continued to pile up in Chongqing's district police offices in the postwar years.¹¹² They reveal an obsession on the part of police officers and health officials with the filth and stench of excrement, both human and animal. The ongoing accumulation of the same genre of complaints betrays a certain level of inadequacy on the part of local police, who failed to achieve full compliance with public health regulations despite years of effort. The police cannot take all the blame, however; the fluidity of Chongqing's population, the newness of knowledge about disease transmission, and the attitude of resistance, so clearly demonstrated in the behavior of Li Dianju, all contributed to this phenomenon. Yet the long criminal record indicates a certain failure in the logic of the punitive masculinist state, which tended to foster its nemesis—sustained resistance—rather than compliance.

The obsession with excrement produced an undesired outcome that most clearly illustrates the pitfalls of the masculinist state. Health officials' attempts to transform the city's night soil business ended in tragicomedy. Following municipal orders, CBPH staff ignored the local Night Soil Porters' Guild and instituted their own collection system with covered buckets to prevent stench and accidental spillage of the human waste.¹¹³ In response, fifteen members of the guild went above local authorities and sent a beautifully crafted petition written in perfect calligraphy to the governor of Sichuan (at the time Chiang Kai-shek himself), claiming that they had registered their guild with the state and therefore had a legally protected right to their *métier*. Demanding that their collection rights be returned to them, the petition's signatories used the language of the state to make their case, claiming in one instance, "[W]e have undergone training with the Public Security Bureau several times, and like police officers at all times and places we urge people to pay close attention to cleanliness and hygiene." Representing twenty thousand now unemployed porters, the petitioners ended with a veiled threat that "we cannot die peacefully with this grudge in our hearts."¹¹⁴

This petition became a dead letter within the official channels, and ultimately the city lay drowning in its own excrement. Some of the night soil porters may have become water carriers; air raids destroyed most of Chongqing's plumbing, and in 1940, the year of the petition, city officials counted eight hundred water porters, all men.¹¹⁵ Others may have delivered on their threat and harassed CBPH collectors until they no longer felt safe entering neighborhoods to clean the public latrines. Still others may have applied for the CBPH jobs and then, as an act of resistance, refused to perform them. Whatever their form of resistance, it succeeded; the bureau's night soil collection system began to break down immediately, and by 1943 the contents of most of Chongqing's public toilets flowed out into the streets for lack of cleaning.¹¹⁶ Government officials, myopically focused on a particular interpretation of hygienic modernity, had forced their own public health personnel to replace a functional system with a dysfunctional one, thereby creating a health hazard. In the battle of wills with the populace, the disciplinary state had lost again.

Health officials in wartime Chongqing, caught in the crossfire between government mandates and popular resistance, devoted an inordinate amount of time to custodial duties. They heeded requests to clear specific piles of unsightly trash outside the British Embassy (illustrating the power of foreign eyes to direct the attention of the Chinese state) and shielded the chief of police from Chiang Kai-shek's wrath by devoting special attention to the sidewalk directly facing central government offices.¹¹⁷ They sent the local police constable to make daily inspections of an area in Xiaolongkan (now a region of the Shapingba district) where people allegedly burned large trash piles by the roadside, thus emitting a "nostril-stinging stench" (*chouqi hengbi*).¹¹⁸ They designed a regulation trash can, square

and with a slanted lid, emblazoned—in black—with the phrases “Pay Attention to Cleanliness” (*zhuyi qingjie*) and “Do Not Toss [Garbage] outside the Bin” (*wu dao kouwai*).¹¹⁹ In August 1939, they passed regulations requiring all residents and shopkeepers in the city limits to sweep up their trash daily. They divided the city into six districts, each with a cleaning corps (*qingjie zongdui*), itself divided into groups of fifteen to twenty-five sanitation men who swept the streets in their beat twice each day and rang a specific bell to alert residents to bring out their refuse for free collection. They mandated that trash be transported in wooden boats down the Yangzi to the bottom of an empty mine or to a low-lying marshland.¹²⁰ The cleanliness regulations and CBPH work reports created an impression of a tidy city humming with the daily perambulations of a sanitation brigade.

Yet one need not look too hard to notice cracks and fissures in this orderly image. The very same regulations contained provisions that illustrated city officials’ a priori expectations of passive noncompliance and active resistance, while other documents confirm people’s resistance. Health officials instructed residents and shopkeepers not to accumulate garbage, throw it around their premises, or discard trash in gutters or on riverbanks. They particularly beseeched residents not to throw fruit peels, vegetable detritus, and rotten food items onto the street. Beat cops who discovered anyone violating the new trash regulations could fine offenders one to five yuan, and detain repeat offenders for up to five days.¹²¹ Despite all the best efforts of CBPH staff—who transported nearly one million tons of trash down the Yangzi in 1940 and again in 1941¹²²—documentation of refuse spilling over hygienic bounds piled up in the CBPH office as quickly as trash piled up on the city streets. The bureau’s sanitation men, no match for the sheer volume of waste, had to enroll police officers as fellow urban janitors; beat cops placed rubbish bins in strategic sites throughout the city and instructed citizens to use them, while sanitation men swept up the piles that resulted from people’s persistent habit of tossing trash on the street and deposited them neatly into the regulation trash cans.¹²³ Police constable Guo Zhaoxi reported that soldiers gathered in the capital for training formed a trash pile “as tall as a mountain,” and refused to listen to the police officers’ requests that they observe directives.¹²⁴ That a man charged with enforcing the cleanliness regulations pled inadequacy to his superiors demonstrates the severity of the problem.

Training the residents of a city that had never had centrally organized trash collection to understand the need for such services, and acclimating them to using these services, proved to be an uphill battle. As the capital’s population swelled with immigrants from virtually every province and social stratum, the Bureaus of Public Health and Police could no longer stem the tide of ever increasing and always unruly trash. Eventually the Bureau of Public Works, Civilian Militia Corps, Chongqing municipal government, and even military police got involved in the task. Even then, some locals did not know that their municipal government now

had a trash-collection system. Li Shuhua washed people's clothing and collected trash for businesses during the war. Li reminisced, "Back then, Chongqing did not have any public sanitary service to take care of trash for private businesses. They had to hire people to carry their garbage in bamboo baskets to be dumped outside the city. During the 1930s and 1940s, Wang Jiapo, a hilly area outside the city proper, was where garbage and the bodies of dead people were dumped."¹²⁵

Li Shuhua did not know that Chongqing had a garbage-collection system because in actual operation, each party simply transferred the dirty duty down the social hierarchy until the onerous task lay on the shoulders of a woman like herself who could not refuse to handle refuse. Those with the power to determine cleanliness regulations never had to touch filth. Municipal officials ordered health officials, who ordered police officers, who ordered *baojia* neighborhood association heads to order the people to do the work themselves, without compensation.¹²⁶ In turn-of-the-century Tianjin, health officials had hired coolie laborers to transport trash.¹²⁷ In wartime Chongqing, after skyrocketing costs and chronic lack of personnel thwarted their first, earnest efforts to employ a veritable army of sanitation men to scour the city clean, officials merely demanded that *baojia* heads force all the residents to do the work for free. By early 1944, the CBPH could not even afford to purchase proper equipment for the job; its plans to purchase six new wooden boats for transporting trash and night soil down the river never materialized, thwarted by the prohibitive price of 650,000 yuan.¹²⁸ Hundreds of pages of work reports for 1944 mention garbage collection only once, as a step on the way toward building new plumbing lines for the municipal water service.¹²⁹ Trash piles and the citizens who made them won. State officials had given up on trash collection in the New Life Movement Demonstration District.

Other failures stemmed from wartime realities rather than officials' incompetence. In an effort to control malaria, the CBPH ordered people weekly to empty the large water jugs that they kept at their doorways in order to combat fires ignited by incendiary bombs—a regular occurrence during air raid season. These barrels of standing water, health officials argued, became mosquito breeding grounds perched at the very doorways of businesses and residences throughout the city.¹³⁰ This was certainly the case, yet emptying these barrels every single week would have required refilling them with water drawn from the river and then carried up hundreds of steps, or paying someone else an exorbitant fee to do this task, since the price of two buckets of water carried by shoulder pole immediately skyrocketed as soon as air raids and their resultant fires began.¹³¹ And Chongqing may not have been any worse off if people refused to undergo this strain; in such a mountainous city with unpaved side streets, most dumped water would simply have turned the streets into a muddy mess before pooling down below, effectively moving the mosquito breeding pond to someone else's doorstep rather than removing it.

The water barrel ordinance followed the typical chain of command, instructive in and of itself. The Chongqing municipal government wrote the order (likely in response to a request from the Executive Yuan, though this time the record made no mention of it), asked the Bureau of Police to transmit it to the people via the *baojia* heads, then charged leaders of the CBPH cleaning team with the task of inspecting the water jugs—to ensure that they had in fact been emptied—throughout the city every three days.¹³² Though it passed through multiple layers of bureaucracy, the actual order to the people came from their own neighbors—heads of the *baojia* neighborhood watch system—and low-level personnel within the CBPH enforced it. Thus, commoners experienced state health orders through people of more or less the same social status as themselves, who nonetheless carried a state mandate granting them power over their social peers. Given this situation, one can easily imagine scenarios between the two parties including everything from passive resistance and private resentments to outright shouting matches like that of Li Dianju with officers Chen and Xu.

CONCLUSION

A fascinating play unfolded on the stage of wartime Chongqing. A chain of command cascaded like a waterfall from central government officials down to *baojia* heads of neighborhood associations, while resistance rushed up like a geyser and created a documentary record of “hygiene criminals.” These two forces intersected in the making of modern, hygienic citizens—a project that largely failed in the wartime capital because the logic of the masculinist state bred defiance rather than compliance. Many people disliked the imposition of a standard of cleanliness that only partly concerned their physical health and more directly concerned the Nationalist Party’s political health. Their resistance ultimately left the showcase capital mired in filth; the Generalissimo’s New Life Movement Demonstration District demonstrated nothing so much as the failures of the masculinist state to mandate hygienic behavior. Its health regulations proved to be paper tigers, notable more for the fact that so many people ignored them than for any dramatic change they instigated. Large portions of the health system functioned outside the state’s grasp; despite a regulation mandating that all health personnel register for a government license, in 1944 fully half of the staff at the Chongqing Municipal Hospital—the city’s largest hospital directly under CBPH administration—possessed no medical license whatsoever.¹³³ Ironically, the state had little control even over its NLM staff. When one foreign gentleman met a pretty Chinese lady and invited her to a restaurant, she arrived accompanied by a Chinese man who proceeded to proffer her sexual services in the manner of a pimp. Deeply offended, the foreigner made to leave, whereupon the Chinese men hollered after him, “You don’t like her? If you want a nicer one I

can help you. You can easily get ahold of me—I work at the New Life Movement Headquarters!”¹³⁴

The dysfunction began with an overly dictatorial relationship between the central government and health officials. Although Chiang Kai-shek certainly cared about health principles and wanted results—as made manifestly evident in the multiple public health orders he authored each day—he placed far greater priority on his other duties. Minister of Health Jin Baoshan had to interpret every one of the Generalissimo’s orders through intermediaries. CBPH Director Mei Yilin also encountered difficulties. Although he identified with the elite class and believed that instituting hygienic modernity required disciplining the bodies of the poor, as an educated health professional who cared about improving people’s lives he chafed at the reduction of all health concerns into aesthetic showmanship. His resistance to this mode of public health prompted the NHA to cease paying his salary in January 1942, forcing the municipal bureau to assume the cost. He resigned that December, and Wang Zuxiang assumed the CBPH directorship in September 1943, stayed in this post through the end of the war, and ultimately followed the Nationalists to Taiwan.¹³⁵

One key to understanding the New Life Movement and disciplinary public health comes from the study of Chinese death ritual—specifically, the distinction between orthodoxy (uniform belief) and orthopraxy (uniform practice). James Watson asserted that “the integration of Chinese culture was only possible because the state enforced orthopraxy and did not try to instill uniform beliefs among its citizens.”¹³⁶ Evelyn Rawski posited that this dynamic held because Chinese rulers believed that adhering to prescribed behavior would in fact instill the prescribed thought; “proper action (behavior, or ritual) was an approved means of inculcating desired beliefs or values.”¹³⁷ As long as people performed the requisite funerary rituals, prescribed by Confucian tradition and clearly explained in lineage manuals and ritual texts, they could adhere to a variety of beliefs about the rituals. This allowed religious and ethnic diversity to flourish within a unified empire. The design of the NLM suggests that Nationalist officials followed this logic, believing that inculcating certain behaviors would result in desired affects. Records from wartime Chongqing show that this logic failed them.

This is not just a story of failure, however. The government’s retreat to Sichuan initiated a westward expansion of state health administration and brought profound transformation to the southwest. An admirable amount of public health work took place in a location previously out of reach of the Nationalist government: Chongqing, the bustling commercial center of Sichuan Province, previously the territory of Liu Xiang and other warlords. The Chongqing Bureau of Public Health existed only because of the city’s designation as wartime capital. Likewise, the Chongqing branch of the Chinese Red Cross, first established in 1920 but dissolved soon thereafter due to lack of funds, was reestablished in November

1937 after having received an influx of cash when the city became the wartime capital.¹³⁸ The availability of funds from foreign charities allowed the CBPH and other health agencies partially to escape the privations of war and continue functioning, even as runaway inflation crippled the economy. This influx of donations, coupled with a diverse population of refugees and international sojourners, transformed Chongqing from a remote city in the hinterland into the heart of a cosmopolitan nation, a nation in which Sichuan—and the greater southwest—was an integral part.

Seen from this perspective, this is the story of Chongqing's growing pains. As it became a capital city of over a million people whose residents included high-status foreign diplomats, journalists, and military officials, Chongqing had to look a certain way, and this required that its people behave a certain way. The large town that had been seamlessly connected to its rural borderlands—with a smooth exchange of night soil for food, and pigs roaming freely on its streets—gave way to a cosmopolitan city whose streets were regularly cleaned and packed with police. These men, charged with disciplining the populace into the proper behavior, came face-to-face with people's insistence that they wished to continue living as they had done prior to the war, regardless of their city's changed status.

Gender analysis helps to clarify the apparent contradiction between health officials' failures in Chongqing and the successful expansion of state power across the southwest. Male state officials self-consciously accepted Chiang Kai-shek's militaristic style of governance in order to construct themselves as modern men. The targets of their reforms—garbage, beggars, mendicant *médecins*, cramped and muddy alleyways—manifested an unruly and “feminine” city with its overflowing piles of loose refuse, excessive tolerance toward vagrants and quacks, and secret doorways tucked behind yin shadows. Wartime health officials replaced these elements with their “masculine” counterparts of the Nationalist nation: tightly closed lids on hard-edged metal trash cans, zero tolerance for those who did not support themselves with “legitimate” employment within the orthodox economy, and wide, paved streets whose surfaces lay exposed to yang sunlight. An all-male force of uniform-clad policemen and *baojia* heads enforced the new order.¹³⁹ Just as in treaty-port Tianjin, in wartime Chongqing hygienic modernity did not naturally occur, but had to be “maintained through vigilant policing.”¹⁴⁰ A select group of men used the power of the state to forcibly remove the city's shadowy, feminine elements in order to declare it hygienically modern and capable of representing a legitimate political party of men in charge of a sovereign nation. Men who worked on behalf of the state brusquely pushed aside the suffering poor—refugees living in “War of Resistance shacks,” or beggars eking out a subsistence living—to protect the nation's reputation.

While their work of cleaning the capital largely failed, male public health officials succeeded in establishing new institutions and setting the parameters in

which women worked. Lacking any claim to full political power, women freely assumed roles that allowed them to claim social power by caring for the needs of civilians and soldiers. Working as nurses, midwives, doctors, and volunteers, women and girls provided lifesaving services for otherwise neglected people across the country. Because they often labored under the aegis of the state, they represented it but worked in an entirely different fashion—one that cemented the affectionate bonds of citizenship and knit together the national community. The rest of this book tells this remarkable story.