

**“To Read Too Many Books
is Harmful” (Mao Zedong)
Books as Objects of Veneration,
Subjects of Destruction**

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“To Read Too Many Books is Harmful” (Mao Zedong) Books as Objects of Veneration, Subjects of Destruction

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Through all of its long history, the Chinese political system used the arts to propagate correct behaviour and thought. Literature, poetry, painting, stage plays, songs and other artistic expressions were produced to entertain, but they also were given an important didactic function: they had to educate the people in what was considered right and wrong at any time. As long as the State provided examples of correct behaviour, this automatically would make the people believe what was considered proper to believe.

Once the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949, propaganda art continued to be one of the major means to provide examples of correct behaviour. But it also gave a concrete expression to the many different policies and the many different visions of the future the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had. In a country with as many illiterates as China had in the 1940s and 1950s, this method of visualising abstract ideas and in this way educating the people worked especially well. Propaganda posters were cheaply and easily produced and became one of the most favoured vehicles for political communication. Because they were widely available, they could be seen everywhere. And they were an excellent way to brighten up the otherwise drab places where the people lived. They penetrated every level of society: multicoloured posters could be found in offices and factories, but in houses and dormitories as well. Most people liked the posters for their composition and visual contents, and did not pay too much attention to the slogans that might be printed underneath. This caused the political message of the posters to be passed on in an almost subconscious manner.

The most talented artists were employed to visualize the political trends of the moment in the most detailed way. Many of them had been designers before the PRC was founded, and they were quickly hired by the various government and party organizations that were responsible for propaganda posters. These designers were, after all, very able to visualize a product in a commercially attractive way. Their posters had to portray the future in the present, not only showing life 'as it really is', but also 'as it ought to be'. Propaganda became a type of faction, mixing 'fact' and 'fiction,' which stressed only the positive and papered over anything negative.

The CCP also sought inspiration in the Soviet Union for the development of modern visual propaganda. Mao and other leaders were convinced that Socialist Realism, as it had been practised in the Soviet Union since the 1930s, was the best tool to develop new forms of art. It provided a realistic view of life, represented in the rosy colors of optimism, although largely seen through an urban lens. Socialist Realism focussed on industrial plants, blast furnaces, power stations, construction sites and people at work. In the period 1949-1957, many Chinese painters studied Socialist Realism in Soviet art academies; others were educated by Soviet professors who came to teach in Chinese institutions. But in the late 1950s, things changed dramatically. Mao expressed his dissatisfaction with the dominant artistic style, indicating that he found it too gloomy. He insisted that Soviet Socialist Realism should be replaced by a 'fusion of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism'. Art should "convey the most romantic and glamorous views of the motherland; social, economic and political triumphs; the strength, courage, and resourcefulness of the people; and the wisdom of their leaders." In reality, propaganda art had to become more intrinsically Chinese.

The years of the great mass movements such as the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) saw the climax in propaganda art production. The posters reached the peak of artistic expression, both in form and contents. In particular during the Cultural Revolution, politics took precedence. Chairman Mao Zedong, as the Great Teacher, the Great Leader, the Great Helmsman, and the Supreme Commander, became the only permissible subject of the era. His countenance beamed down from the many huge billboards located along the streets and avenues in China's urban areas. His portrait decorated steam engines and harbor cranes. Photographs showing his face were placed in the fields. The people themselves pinned Mao badges in varying sizes to their chests. The quotations from his writings, urging people to behave and think in a way he approved of, were often compared to a magical or supernatural weapon (a 'demon-exposing mirror'), a 'spiritual atom bomb' or even a 'beacon light'. The *Red Book* containing Mao's quotes was distributed in millions and millions of copies; these quotes were studied, chanted, sung, and used as magic spells. Intellectuals, leaders and artists were persecuted, and schools and universities were closed to give students the opportunity to follow Mao's calls for continuous revolution by becoming Red Guards. Waves of criticism engulfed the country, and practically every official was accused. By 1968, this struggle had escalated into a veritable civil war. The country and the economy were in a shambles. Life in China in those years was definitely unpleasant, but none of this can be seen in the propaganda of the period.

The decline in poster propaganda started in the early 1980s. Under Deng Xiaoping, who succeeded Hua Guofeng who succeeded Mao at the helm of the PRC, the economic rehabilitation of China became the CCP's main consideration. Moreover, China opened itself to the West. Now, posters had to be designed to create public support for the new policies that made up the reform package. This had enormous consequences for propaganda. The themes became less heroic and militant, and more impressionistic, while bold colours were replaced with more subdued ones. The people did no longer have to struggle against class enemies, but were urged to adopt more cultured and educated lifestyles. Design techniques borrowed from Western advertising were employed again frequently.

The posters exhibited here focus on these changing attitudes of the CCP towards books, book knowledge and learning in general. They also show how the artistic styles employed in propaganda design developed through the decades. Where the new leaders still took great pride in their cultural achievements and the successful struggle against illiteracy in the early 1950s, this changed into suspicion of bookishness in the early 1960s. The Cultural Revolution that followed became widely known for its savage destruction of historical and intellectual artefacts. At the same time, many of the young people who for whatever reason were not involved in the iconoclasm that gripped China often found time and opportunity to read precisely the publications that were widely condemned and destroyed as "sugar-coated bullets of the bourgeoisie", exerting their pernicious influence on the revolutionary pureness Chinese society was striving for. Once life seemed to have returned to relative normalcy in the early 1980s and the PRC embarked on its second – economic – revolution, the status of books, knowledge and learning was restored.

It is obvious that where Mao's continuous efforts at mobilization in the name of the revolution would have been unthinkable without posters, the second revolution that was engineered by Deng could do well without them. Not surprisingly, the images from the 1990s and beyond lack the vitality and urgency that marked those from the preceding periods. Reading too many books is not necessarily harmful, as Mao remarked, but it makes for uninspiring propaganda.

Exhibits:

1.

Designer unknown

Wenhua shiye – Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sannianlaide weida chengjiu

Cultural undertakings – The great accomplishments of three years People's Republic of China
Huadong renmin meishu chubanshe (Shanghai), October 1952, 2nd edition, print no. 18,
circulation 30,000

Text reads:

News publication: In 1951, 69,600,000 volumes of new and reprinted books were published, an increase of 147% compared with 1950. In 1952, more than 88 million volumes will be realized. Nationwide, 776 types of newspapers are published, with an average print run of 8 million sheets. Nationwide, there are 3500 radio broadcasting relay stations, and 2000 cable relay stations.

Movies: In 1951, more than 259 million people in the whole country went to the movies, and in the first half of this year, the number has already reached more than 213 million people (including cinema goers and those serviced by movie projection teams), an increase of 181% compared with the same period last year. The number of libraries, clubs and cultural centres also has greatly increased.

2.

Yu Yunjie

Bangzhu mama xue wenhua

Helping mama study culture

Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, April 1956, print no. R8081.0934, circulation 68,000

The poster, designed in the Soviet-inspired Socialist Realist style, shows a young peasant girl helping her mother with learning how to read and write (and thereby acquire culture).

3.

Zhu Peilin

Baba, zheige zi shi zheiyang xiede

Daddy, this is how you write this character

Xin meishu chubanshe (Shanghai), November 1954, 2nd edition, print no. 5431

This image is designed in a style reminiscent of the calendar posters that were so popular in the urban and rural areas from the 1920s onward. The poster contains many layers of meaning: the material wellbeing of the peasantry, the abundance of life in the countryside, the (successful) struggle against illiteracy, etc. Note how learning how to read and write is clearly linked to familiarizing the people with new policies, in this case the policy of mutual cooperation that was spread in the rural areas. Mutual cooperation (*huzhu hezuo*) are the characters the father is writing in the soil.

4.

Lin Longhua

Yue xue xinli yue liang tang

The more we study what's in our hearts, the brighter the hall gets
Liaoning meishu chubanshe, November 1964, print no. T8117.891

A familiar theme in propaganda posters: communal study. The style of the design is a good example of the revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism that was advocated in the second half of the 1950s. This scene is situated in the countryside of North-China (indicated by the *kang*, the raised heated platform). Representatives of all generations of a model unit (indicated by the red banners on the wall) are gathered to read political treatises and newspapers. The portrait of Mao hanging on the wall indicates that we are in the middle of the Socialist Education Movement, which was organized by Mao to inoculate the peasantry against the sugar-coated bullets of capitalism to which they fell victim under the more pragmatic economic policies under Liu Shaoqi after the famines that followed the Great Leap Forward. We see the trappings of the good life under socialism: electric lightning, a telephone, a radio, etc. But there's also room to play (a football) and opportunities for culture (the *erhu* hanging on the wall).

5 & 6.

Zhao Kunhan

Dadui tushushi

The production brigade's reading room

Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, September 1974, print no. 8094.328

Zhao Kunhan

Dadui tushushi (Xuan zi Huxian nongmin huazhan)

The production brigade's reading room (Selected from the Huxian peasant painting exhibition)

Shanghai renmin chubanshe, January 1975, 3rd edition, print no. 8171.829

These two posters embroider on the same theme as the previous one, but times have clearly changed. It is the Cultural Revolution, and propaganda does its utmost to portray China as an agrarian Utopia, although the images clearly show that progress has arrived in the rural areas, as can be seen from, a.o., the radio receiver on the wall. The works of amateur artists among workers and peasants were given nation-wide attention and support. These amateurs were promoted as representatives of the innate creative genius of the masses, as living proof that everyone could and should practice art. Among the best known were the peasant painters from Huxian, Shaanxi Province. Although touted as amateurs, it was later admitted that the peasant painters had received extensive professional help and assistance, often provided by the same professional artists who were no longer allowed to work themselves. The Huxian painters' highly political paintings provided idyllic slices of the good life in the rural areas, and were peopled with happy and enthusiastic peasants engaged in agriculture, political meetings and study sessions.

But these two posters show something else as well: How an image can be changed and/or altered to suit changing political demands, or changes in the message that needs to be propagated. Comparing these two posters is almost like a game of 'spot-the-ten-differences'!

7.

Xiao Zhenya, Liu Enbin

Jieguo zhanbi zhandou daodi

Take over the brush of polemics, struggle to the end

Renmin meishu chubanshe, June 1975, print no. 8027.6075

No matter how many books had been destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, no matter how much learning had been derided and how many intellectuals had been prosecuted, the Communist Party remained convinced of the mobilizational effects and effectiveness of literacy.

Some intellectuals, in particular Lu Xun (hovering in the background in a characteristic pose), continued to be held up as an inspiration for young people.

The Chinese text in the background is a famous couplet from a poem by Lu Xun (“Self-Mockery”, 1932), in his calligraphy. It reads “Coolly I face a thousand pointing fingers, Then bow to be an infant’s willing ox” (Translation Bill Jenner, 1982). In his Closing Remarks at the 1942 Yan’an Forum on Literature and Arts, where guidelines for artistic production were set that basically are still in force, Mao said that Lu’s couplet should become the motto of the CCP. In his analysis, the ‘thousand men’ were the enemy, and the ‘infant’ stood for the proletariat and the masses of the people, for which the CCP should wear itself out in its service with no release until death.

Lu Xun (pen name of Zhou Shuren, 1881-1936) played a seminal role in the world of Chinese literature and arts in the first decades of the 20th century. He was trained in the Jiangnan Naval Academy and the Sendai Medical School (Japan). Upon his return to China in 1909, he taught science in school, and later served as an official in the Ministry of Education. In 1918, he joined the May Fourth (New Culture) Movement by having his “Diary of a Madman” (*Kuangren riji*) published in *New Youth Magazine* (*Xin qingnian*). Both the style and the contents of this story had great influence on other May Fourth writers. Lu continued to publish short stories (“The True Story of Ah Q”, the impressive “Medicine”, and “Kong Yiji”), prose poetry and *zawen* (miscellaneous essays). These earned him the reputation of being a shrewd and incisive observer and commentator of the times. Lu did not limit himself to creating literature that reflected his increasingly radical ideas about Chinese society. Inspired by European woodcut artists like Käthe Kollwitz, he introduced techniques and socially relevant subject matter to likeminded young artists in China. This in turn would have an important influence on the propaganda posters produced later under the CCP. In short, Lu Xun became a radical, while maintaining his independence from both the Nationalists and the Communist Parties. Nonetheless, Mao Zedong canonized Lu Xun as the intellectual forefather of the Revolution, as a trailblazer in the early struggles of the CCP. Although not a Party member, he has been considered a true Marxist-Leninist. Since 1949, Lu’s name and his writings have been frequently used in the various struggles against enemies of various colors.

8.

Revolutionary Committee of the Tianjin Industrial Exhibition Hall

Rang zhexue bian wei qunzhong shoulide jianrui wuqi

Turn philosophy into a sharp weapon in the hands of the masses

Tianjin renmin meishu chubanshe, February 1971, print no. 8073.10101

The power of the word, and in particular Mao Zedong’s words, is clearly illustrated in this impressive design. The nuclear mushroom cloud can indicate two things: Mao Zedong Thought is like a spiritual atom bomb, as the slogan went, or, thanks to Mao Zedong Thought, China has been able to develop its own nuclear device. It’s not all destruction: in the left background we can see the famous Yangzi bridge at Nanjing, touted as one of the great accomplishments of the Cultural Revolution.

9.

Designer unknown

Gaoju Mao Zedong sixiang weida hongqi - chedi za lan fangeming xiuzheng zhuyi wenyi luxian

Hold high the great red banner of Mao Zedong Thought – thoroughly smash the rotting counterrevolutionary revisionist line in literature and the arts

Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, April 1967, print no. T8081.9989

‘Monsters and Demons’ (*niugui sheshen*) was the term used to vilify specialists, scholars and authority figures during the Cultural Revolution. After the publication of the editorial “Sweep Away All Monsters and Demons” in *People’s Daily* on 1 June 1966, and after it was rebroadcast and reprinted, Red Guards started a huge purge that swept the country, ‘dragging out’ and prosecuting all those ostensibly fitting the description. *Niugui sheshen* (cow monsters and snake demons) was the most recurrent supernatural metaphor used during the Cultural Revolution. It was rooted in Buddhist demonology, and an especially potent weapon to demonize one’s opponents. All ‘evil spirits’ could be identified and combated with the ‘demon-exposing mirror’ (*zhaoyao jing*) of Mao Zedong Thought, which in this poster is conveniently held up.

Not only people were identified as monsters, all publications that were seen as old and feudal and therefore opposing Mao or his policies were classified as poisonous weeds and destroyed. That left China with one author: Mao.

10.

Designer unknown

Zai douzheng zhong chengzhang

Growing up in the midst of struggle

Publisher unknown, date of publication unknown (early 1970s), print no. unknown (imprint removed!)

The destruction of undesirable thought and publication was taught to one and all. The poster shows the determination and fanaticism with which children re-enact an event in which somebody is called to account for spreading counterrevolutionary publications, scattered on the floor. Judging by the looks of the two grown-ups, this is clearly no laughing matter. The slogan on the wall reads “Struggle to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat!”

11.

Literacy Office of the Political Work Group of the Revolutionary Committee of Shanxi Province collective work

Dazhai honghua biandi kai

The red flower of Dazhai blossoms everywhere

Shanxi renmin chubanshe, early 1970s, print no. 8088.564

As the Cultural Revolution unfurled, only one person and one type of publications became acceptable: Mao and his writings. Their influence went beyond nuclear arms and Yangzi bridges: rural model communes such as Dazhai (in Shanxi) and industrial models like Daqing (in Heilongjiang) could only exist because they were inspired by Mao Thought and Mao actively supported them.

12.

Revolutionary Committee of the Sichuan Art Academy

Zhishi qingnian dao nongcun qu, jieshou pinxiazhong nongde zaijiaoyu!

Educated youth must go to the countryside to receive re-education from the Poor and Lower-Middle peasants!

Sichuan renmin chubanshe, April 1969, print no. 69032

From December 1968 onward, millions of urban youth (secondary school graduates and students) were sent “up to the mountains and down to the villages” (*shangshan xiaxiang*), i.e.

to rural villages and to frontier settlements. There, they had to strike root, in order to be reeducated by the Poor and Lower-Middle peasants, the lowest classes in China. The main reason behind this relocation program was to bring the Red Guards under control and to halt the intense factional struggle and civil strife. With the schools still closed, the government did not know what to do with the millions of urban young. One way to solve the problem was to send the students away to the rural areas. Judging from the many posters that were dedicated to *shangshan xiexiang*, the youngsters all enjoyed the wholesome life in the countryside, and thrived under the stern but correct ideological guidance provided by the peasants. All this should transform them into “new-style, cultured peasants”. The young intellectuals were also seen as conveyor belts for technology transfer, as bringers of new knowledge to the rural areas. The slogan in the background reads “Always follow the course of cooperation with workers-soldiers-peasants”.

13 & 14.

Liu Aimin

Song shu dao shanqu

Bringing books to the mountain areas

Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, September 1974, print no. 8094.315

Shao Hua, Shao Qinglin

Mumin aidu Ma Lie shu

Herdspeople love to read books by Marx and Lenin

Renmin meishu chubanshe, June 1976, print no. 8027.6304

The idea that the Poor and Lower-Middle peasants were the fount of revolutionary knowledge and theory, the true and only teachers of urban educated youth, was amply illustrated by endless amounts of posters of them welcoming the arrival of new political publications. They did not hesitate to spend their hard-earned income on these booklets. Obviously, the successive campaigns to combat illiteracy that we’ve seen earlier had been a success, to the extent that even the members of the proletariat had become skilful Marxist-Leninist theoreticians. The slogan in the bookstore – in Chinese and Mongolian – reads “Read and study conscientiously and get a good grasp of Marxism”

15 & 16.

Liu Zhide

Lao shuji (Xuan zi Huxian nongmin huazhan)

Old party secretary (Selected from the Huxian peasant painting exhibition)

Shanghai renmin chubanshe, January 1975, 4th edition, print no. 8171.890, circulation 1,340,000

Designer unknown

Ba diandaode lishi zai diandao guolai

Set the record of history straight

Tianjin renmin meishu chubanshe, July 1975, print no. 8073.10165

‘Safe’ books devoted to Mao Zedong Thought and subjects related to the Maoist interpretation of reality not only served as ‘guides’ for the great masses of the people, but also were essential reading material for leaders at every level. Ranging from party secretaries in the rural areas to factory foremen heading the *Pi Lin pi Kong* campaign (Criticize Lin [Biao], criticize Confucius), the official version of events as it was handed down had to be scrutinized, studied and applied in practice.

17 – 20

Designer unknown

Shenye bu mian

Awake in the middle of the night

Publisher unknown, early 1970s, print no. unknown

Geng Yuemin

Yin ren ru sheng

Lead people to victory

Jilin renmin chubanshe, June 1975, 2nd edition, print no. 8091.658

Wang Baogui

Zai kao yici (Yangliuqing nianhua)

Let's do another test (Yangliuqing New Year print)

Tianjin Yangliuqing huadian, September 1978, print no. 8174.102

Qian Yunxuan

Haohao xuexi, tiantian xiangshang

Study hard, make progress every day

Tianjin renmin meishu chubanshe, September 1978, 2nd edition, print no. 8073.20354

As the 1970s progressed, books increasingly were used to acquire differing types of information, although the orthodoxy of the written word remained. Political study during the night used to be popular and gave people the opportunity to earn praise and certificates, as in No. 17. This gave way to children reading cartoons and illustrated booklets about martyrs for the Communist cause. This in turn gave way to books that merely contained depoliticized or book knowledge.

21 & 22.

Mao Wenbiao

Yiwan renminde gongtong xinyuan – Relie huanhu <Mao Zedong xuanji > diwu juan chuban

The shared wish of one billion people – Warmly welcome the publication of the fifth volume of Selected Works of Mao Zedong

Renmin meishu chubanshe, March 1977, print no. 8027.6557

Wu Zhefu, Li Mubai

Pandaole

What I longed for has arrived

Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, April 1978, print no. 8081.11137

In this atmosphere of apparent relaxation, China's star author would make one last come-back. And the cruel thing was: Mao did not even *write* his latest and last blockbuster! Within a month after his death, the Central Committee of the CCP decided that work was to start in preparation of the publication of new, additional volumes of the *Selected Works* of Mao Zedong. Although Mao already had ordered preparations for the publication of the fifth and even sixth volumes of selections from his *Thought* in the late 1960s, this activity had been brought to a stand-still as a result of the fierce and destructive factional struggles in the Cultural Revolution. Nonetheless, the work as published basically followed the structure laid out in the late 1960s. The *Volume V* that was published in April 1977 showed that Mao's writings would continue to serve as useful ideological precepts and that Mao as the founding father of the Chinese Revolution could not be assailed. His more pragmatic decisions and writings were highlighted, whereas his radical ideas that had proven disastrous (Great Leap Forward, Cultural Revolution) were downplayed as much

as possible. The 500-page *Volume V*, heralded as China's major literary event of 1977, brought the date of Mao's writings closer to the present: it contained a selection of essays written in the period 1949-1957, i.e., from the founding of the PRC to the end of the Hundred Flowers Movement. The new writings rehabilitated many of the functionaries who had fallen victim of the Cultural Revolution and the preface, moreover, singled out the radicals around Jiang Qing for persecution by presenting them as 'ultra-leftists', who in reality were 'right-wing' revisionists. The publication was a resounding success. According to incomplete statistics, more than 28 million copies had been distributed by the end of April 1977.

23.

Chen Beixin, Huang Naiyuan, Qin Dajian, Liu Wenxi

Ni ban shi, wo fang xin

With you in charge, I'm at ease

Shanghai renmin chubanshe, April 1977, print no. 7171.965

All this only had been possible because power had shifted. Mao was dead and no longer in command, and neither were his policies. Instead, a relatively young and inexperienced leader took over: Hua Guofeng. Hua was able to produce something of a 'testament' in Mao's handwriting. This testament consisted of three notes that Mao had written in late April 1976, the most famous one being, "With you in charge, I'm at ease" (*Ni ban shi, wo fang xin*). Once Mao died, a struggle broke out between Hua and Mao's widow, Jiang Qing, over the contents of Mao's 'Last Will'. Jiang forged another Mao note and with this forgery in hand, she announced publicly that she and her followers were Mao's true successors. Jiang's hopes were dashed when various old Party cadres and Army men assisted Hua in arresting her and the Gang of Four. Given the heat with which Mao's succession was contested, it should be no surprise that the official version, the scene in which Mao handed over his testament to Hua, situated in Mao's office-cum-library, was replayed endlessly – but with minor variations – in propaganda posters. This official view of events moreover gave the people the opportunity to see that Mao's reading matter had not been limited to the narrow scope of publications that the masses had to make do with.

24 & 25.

Zhou Ruizhuang

Zuo yige nengwen nengwude xinxing laodongzhe – laodong renmin zhishihua

Create a new type of worker capable both in culture and struggle – Intellectualize the working people

Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, February 1965, 2nd edition, print no. T8081.9256

Zhou Yizhu

Zhigong shouze – Si, nuli xuexi, tigao zhengzhi, wenhua, keji, yewu shuiping

Regulations for staff and workers – Four: Exert oneself in study; raise the level of politics, culture, science and technology, and professional work

Renmin meishu chubanshe, January 1983, print no. 8027.8503

The change in intellectual atmosphere that occurred after Mao's death created a desire to become more professional. This change probably is best illustrated by a comparison of the two posters above. To name but one element, the trope of struggle still very much present in the 1965 poster was traded in for the officially supported endeavour to professionalize in 1983. Study no longer was seen as something to be done between shifts, but as an activity all by itself.

26.

Sha De'an, Li Yang

Aiguo shouxian yao zhiguo – zhi zhi yu shen, ai zhi yu qie

To love the country one must first know its history – the deeper the knowledge, the more eager the love

Zhejiang renmin meishu chubanshe, January 1984, print no. 8156.456

This changed atmosphere also saw a downplaying of the eminence of politics. In an attempt to provide the people with an alternative for the stale slogans that had dominated popular discourse, in an attempt to provide the people with an alternative for the somewhat discredited Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought of the past, nationalism – or patriotism – was now very much stressed. The title of the book that rises out of a background of images of past revolutionary struggle reads *Modern and Contemporary History of China*.

27 & 28.

Peng Zhaomin

Pinxue jianyou

Good character and scholarship

Chongqing chubanshe, June 1984, print no. 8114.209

Zhang Anpu

Shuji shi zhishide chuanguhu – Qingnian pengyoumen, re'ai shuji ba

Books are a window on knowledge – Young friends, enthusiastically love books!

Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, March 1984, print no. 8081.13950

Under these conditions, learning, scholarship and books were rehabilitated. As we can see in No. 27, books again were given as rewards, for example for studying the model behavior of Lei Feng, for being a good member of the Communist Youth League, for helping the elderly. But the covers of the books testify to contents that are no longer politically correct, but aimed at improving one's self. In short, the printed word is no longer seen as potentially suspect, fraught with political heresy, but a true window on knowledge.

29.

Huang Hong'en

Aixin xiangei shehui

Love society with all your heart

Kexue chubanshe, October 1996, ISBN 7-03-001305-0/G.83

In the 1990s, books were completely rehabilitated. In fact, in this poster book knowledge is equated explicitly with the contribution of youngsters to society.

30

Designer unknown

Re'ai laoshi

Love the teacher

Publisher unknown, ca. 1994, print no. unknown



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Organized by and in the Libraries of the Sinological Institute, Leiden University

Opening hours: Monday and Tuesday 09:00-19:00; Wednesday-Friday 09:00-17:00

Concept: Hanno Lecher

Curated by Stefan Landsberger

All the posters exhibited are part of the IISH Stefan R. Landsberger Collection.

More samples of and information about Chinese propaganda posters – including biographies of many of the artists and designers – can be found at

www.iisg.nl/~landsberger

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