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Uncle Tom and China: A Racial Mobility in Twentieth Century

Abstract: This paper analyzes the changes in Chinese national spirit driven by Uncle Tom in different periods of the 20th century by examining the racial mobility of Uncle Tom's artistic products in China. Uncle Tom was an important carrier of the spirit of national struggle in nineteenth-century China; in the 1930s, the cartoon version of Uncle Tom penned by Mexican artists became part of the spirit of the Chinese revolution; and in the 1960s, Uncle Tom became a banner for building the spirit of solidarity and cooperation between China and Third World countries. In a social period of changing connotations of Chinese nationalism, Uncle Tom attached to novels, plays, comics, and other artifacts to achieve a unique cultural fluidity, in which we trace the story of *Uncle Tom's cabin* from the United States to Mexico to China. Throughout this process, Uncle Tom has been a Chinese global story with racial trappings.

1. Introduction

Examining China from a worldwide viewpoint reveals how cross-border cultures may serve as a spiritual foundation in molding a nation and how this historical context can play a crucial role in uniting marginalized ethnic groups. China and Mexico epitomize the convergence of strong national identities.

China and Mexico both have a past marked by challenges and the emergence of a strong sense of national identity. In the 19th century, Mexico was invaded by the United States, France, and other countries.¹ This led to the devastation of the country, which sparked a revival of the Mexican national spirit. This national spirit greatly resonated with African-American artist Elizabeth Catlett. Her deep sense of dislocation in the United States is occasionally triggered by the history of her enslaved Black ancestors. She rediscovered her lost cultural identity in Mexico, where she felt a strong sense of cultural connection and unity with the marginalized population. She has devoted her life to advocating for the Black and Mexican communities.² Miguel Covarrubias also supported her in incorporating China into this worldwide network of nationalism. Miguel Covarrubias illustrated the cartoon "Young China Boiling" on the cover of *Le Petit Parisien* in 1931 to express his backing for China's anti-Japanese revolutionary spirit.³ This Mexican artist effectively portrayed the qualities of China's national spirit through his artwork. Xie Bingying, a Chinese woman, is depicted carrying the Chinese

¹ Howard Cline, *The United States and Mexico* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), 1-113.

² Nicole Gilpin Hood, "Theme and Form: The Image of Woman in the Art of Elizabeth Catlett" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2001), 1-193.

³ Paul Bevan, "The Impact of the Work of Miguel Covarrubias on the Artists of Shanghai," *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 42, no. 116 (2020): 17-49.

revolutionary flag and a gun, appearing to utter China's battle of resistance revolutionary slogan, urging all Chinese to rise up and defend the motherland. The Chinese nation's spirit has left a strong impression on readers worldwide due to the powerful depiction of the revolution. An African American advocates for Mexico, while a Mexican advocates for China. Both oppressed groups, with a deep understanding, unite in reviving their national spirit. This collaboration leads to the emergence of a global narrative of national resistance, driven by the promotion of their people's spirit. I will concentrate on the Chinese national struggle as depicted by Mexican artists.

When recounting China's national struggle, it is crucial to remember the two significant cultural mediums that embody the national spirit and essence of the Chinese national spirit. Drama, novels, and comics are the primary cultural mediums that embody the Chinese national spirit,⁴ which ultimately encompasses the spirit of national struggle, revolution, and solidarity. When cultural items from two different countries were introduced to China, the Chinese national spirit absorbed the spiritual essence of downtrodden peoples worldwide.

In 1901, the translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* into Chinese by Lin Shu marked the introduction of the story depicting the challenges faced by African Americans to China.⁵ Westerners saw Uncle Tom as the epitome of a pious Christian radiating with virtue. Uncle Tom embodies obedience, loyalty, and piety, yet Westerners perceive him as a

⁴ Godwin C, Chu, *Popular Media in China: Shaping New Cultural Patterns* (Hawaii: University Press of Hawaii, 1978), 1-120.

⁵ Tao Jie, "Uncle Tom's Cabin: The First American Novel Translated into Chinese," *Prospects* 18 (1993): 517-534.

feeble individual confined by racism.⁶ However, the Chinese view Uncle Tom as a warrior who guides his people in their fight. His story motivated numerous Chinese individuals who were disheartened by the Chinese side's loss in the Sino-Japanese War. Following its publication in China, the book gained immense popularity, making it scarce to obtain a copy. Uncle Tom, an enslaved Black man, is now seen as a symbol of the Chinese nation's fighting spirit rather than a submissive slave in Western culture. Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias created a cartoon adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was published in the Republican weekly *West Wind Supplement* during the 1930s. The cartoon depicted Uncle Tom's past in a more vivid manner, dramatized his story to emphasize its allegorical nature, and inspired China in fostering the spirit of national revolution. During the 1960s, China aligned itself with the global anti-colonialist movement, fostering a sense of worldwide national solidarity. China incorporated these three elements into its national ethos, integrating Uncle Tom's story into China's national identity and its worldwide outreach efforts, portraying a universal tale of national solidarity where China aligned with marginalized communities.

Uncle Tom's story in China symbolizes the nation's significant historical fight and demonstrates how international collaboration among anti-oppressive forces has been achieved via culture and spirituality. Uncle Tom's presence in China offers an opportunity to examine the evolving meanings of Chinese national spirituality as influenced by Uncle Tom's cultural adaptability in the country. It illustrates how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in China reflects the broader narrative of how Chinese national spirituality

⁶ Barbara Hochman, "Uncle Tom's Cabin in the National Era: An Essay in Generic Norms and the Contexts of Reading," *Book History* 7, no. 1 (2004): 143-169.

has been transformed by racial movement. In addition to this, through Uncle Tom we see at a deeper level how the connotations of racism and nationalism in China have changed throughout the period. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was initially viewed as a Christian figure in the West, later as a symbol of national struggle by Chinese intellectuals, then as a revolutionary during the War of Resistance against Japan, and finally as a diplomat in China's efforts for international collaboration. Uncle Tom in China does not belong to the United States, does not belong to Mexico, he is a Chinese story in racial garb with Chinese national spirit.

2. The Spirit of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* going to China

Uncle Tom's Cabin served as the abolitionists' call to fight for freedom and equal human rights for African Americans.⁷ Uncle Tom symbolized the African American struggle, which impacted and motivated the transformation of the Chinese national ethos. Lin Shu introduced *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to China and during the translation process, his national identity was infused into Uncle Tom.⁸ When Uncle Tom was adapted into Chinese theatrical productions, the patriotic and nationalistic essence of the Chinese performers was conveyed more explicitly to the Chinese audience through Uncle Tom, who embodied the spirit of the Chinese national struggle, initiating his story in China.

⁷ Ari Kelman, "Black Lives Mattered: The Diverse and Inclusive Story of Abolition, in which African American Men and Women were Crucial Agents of Reform," *Times Literary Supplement* 5932, (2016): 3-5.

⁸ Margaret John Baker, *Translated Images of the Foreign in the Early Works of Lin Shu (1852-1924) and Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973): Accommodation and Appropriation* (Michigan: University of Michigan, 1997), 1-24.

China's national crises in the 19th century pales in comparison to the more terrible and deadly history of enslaved Black people. Slavery was a necessary component of colonialism and imperial expansion, enabling the accumulation of money in the West through the exploitation of Black people and other populations.⁹ The rapid growth of cotton farming led to a rising need for slaves in the southern United States.¹⁰ Consequently, a significant number of African individuals were regularly transported to the south through the slave trade to work primarily in cotton fields. These individuals were stripped of their human rights and classified as slaves, contributing to the perpetuation of colonialism which had devastating effects on the African population. When abolitionists revealed the suffering of Black people, they found a way to fight for freedom. In 1852, American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe published "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*", injecting a spirit of national struggle into the Black people. The novel depicted the hardships of Black people and the oppression by slave masters, intensifying the conflict between the North and the South. The tension between the North and the South was heightened partly due to President Abraham Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862 and meeting with Mrs. Stowe the same year, where he directly credited her with initiating the war.¹¹ The Black man's battle was deemed successful with the passing of the Act, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* marked the beginning of the African-American national spirit following Black freedom. The spirit served as a

⁹ Samir Amin, "Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa: Historical Origin," *Journal of Peace Research* 9, no. 2 (1972): 105-119.

¹⁰ Gene Dattel, *Cotton and Race in the Making of America: The Human Costs of Economic Power* (Government Institutes, 2009), 163-184.

¹¹ Daniel Vollaro, "Lincoln, Stowe, and the 'Little Woman/Great War' Story: The Making, and Breaking, of a Great American Anecdote," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 30, no. 1 (2009): 18-34.

blueprint for revitalizing the Chinese national ethos at a period of imperialist aggression, contrasting the pain experienced by the Chinese with that of Black people.

In the nineteenth century, Chinese nationalism was racial nationalism, and this propelled China into the world's anti-colonialist camp. Chinese aspirants believed that the decadence and incompetence of the Qing government led to the downfall of late Qing China, and anti-dynastic revolutionaries seized on the notion of Manchu differences to delineate the battle lines between the imperial elites and their themes, which they viewed as equating Manchu rule with racial struggle.¹² Thus they mixed state and nation and regarded the Manchu ruling class as colonizers, and Sun Yat-sen equated the Manchus with Western colonizers; Chinese nationalism at that time was essentially anti-Manchuism, that is, a racial nationalism. Getting rid of colonization also meant an antimanchurian race, which was highly consistent with the anti-colonial theme of the times.¹³ Therefore, whether it is the Black people or China, they were victims of 19th-century Western imperial expansion, primitive accumulation of capital, and colonial plunder. This power and oppression have led colonial and semi-colonial people to reshape their national culture and spirit through anti-colonialism. Uncle Tom, as a prominent figure in anti-colonialism, has become a global symbol of resistance against colonialism. Uncle Tom, as depicted by Miguel Covarrubias, has evolved from a story of Black people's recovery to symbolize global anti-colonialism. The comic book "*Uncle*

¹² Mullaney Thomas, *Coming to Terms with the Nation : Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 18-41.

¹³ Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002), 190-195.

Tom's Cabin" now embodies the spirit of American Black people's struggle for freedom, as well as the vision of Mexican independence and emancipation. American Black people's fight for freedom and Mexican national independence and liberation are both reflected in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* comics. Uncle Tom serves as a significant intermediary linking China to the anti-colonial world when this spirit is present in China.

Uncle Tom's culture served as a significant inspiration for revitalizing the Chinese national struggle. Uncle Tom is not a special being, and it is a necessity that Chinese intellectuals choose him. Because the suffering that Uncle Tom represented was brought together with China. When Africa was introduced to China by missionaries, it was described as an ignorant and backward place where "the hinterland was sealed off from the rest of the world and produced enslaved black people", and the word "perdition" was closely associated with the black people. When the discourse came to China, the horrific fate of "Africa" became another mirror of China's potential modern destiny, and the "darkness" of Africa carried contemporary significance, which is why the Chinese chose Uncle Tom.¹⁴ During the late 19th century, as China faced oppression and exploitation by Western powers, many Chinese youth dedicated themselves to finding a solution to protect their nation from Western influence. They used plays and novels, which were prevalent forms of culture and entertainment in China, to inspire and influence the population. Drama and books were prevalent and impactful cultural and recreational mediums in China during that era, exerting significant social influence.¹⁵ Thus, the

¹⁴ Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002), 170-175.

¹⁵ Sang weizhi, *Politics and Culture of the Late Qing Dynasty* (Beijing: China Social Science Press, 1996), 213-252.

drama reform movement during the late Qing Dynasty assigned drama a political duty that was unavoidable. Liang Qichao once stated that in order to enhance governance, we must initiate a revolution in novels, and to shape new individuals, we must begin with new books.¹⁶ His definition of novels here encompasses plays as well. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared at this time, Lin Shu does not understand English, it is through Wei Yi's dictation record and become, the two in the summer of Hangzhou QiuYi Academy lasted sixty-six days to complete, Lin Shu has repeatedly expressed its translation of the purpose of the book: "I worked with Wei Yi to translate this book not to win tears from readers, but to use the story of the enslaved people as a reminder to the Chinese people of China's current moment of national peril."¹⁷ He was to use *Uncle Tom's* story to raise the spirit of national struggle among the general public. After the book was published in 1905, it caused a sensation in the country, and Li Shutong and others who were studying in Japan at that time responded to the domestic call for awakening the national consciousness, and performed a two-day *Uncle Tom's Cabin* drama in Tokyo, Japan, in June 1907, which aroused favorable comments from the Tokyo theater community.¹⁸ In 1908, the Chunyang Society heeded Li Shutong's plea and organized a public performance in Shanghai. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was adapted from a Chinese novel to the theater stage. This allowed illiterate individuals to grasp the awakening of national spirit through the influential power of theater. The theater, being more impactful and expressive than the

¹⁶ Liang Qichao, "On the Relationship Between Fiction and Group Governance," *New Novel* 1, no. 1 (November 1902): 13-15.

¹⁷ Cai dengshan, *Emotions and Gap Ends: Revisiting the Characters of the Late Qing Dynasty* (Beijing: Beijing Press, 2019), 1-45.

¹⁸ Walter Meserve, and Meserve Ruth, "Uncle Tom's Cabin and Modern Chinese Drama," *Modern Drama* 17, no. 1 (1974): 57-66.

novel, directly conveyed the national spirit through Uncle Tom's story to a broader audience. Chinese intellectuals utilized Uncle Tom in both theater and novel formats to stimulate national consciousness in China, emphasizing the aspiration for national independence and the drive to revive the core of national resistance during that era.

Uncle Tom's Cabin introduced the concept of national resistance to China, a society characterized by semi-colonial and semi-feudal conditions. Uncle Tom's story is seen as a significant triumph for the global anti-colonial movement and culture. Due to Western aggressiveness in the late 19th century, the Chinese people suffered under colonial oppression, leading China to join the anti-colonial movement. Colonialism disrupted the national consciousness, introducing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to China. This led to Chinese people viewing Uncle Tom as a symbol for promoting China's national spirit. During the late Qing Dynasty, China became a platform for spreading black racial discourse, conveying messages of national unity and inspiring Chinese people in the 19th century to redefine their own national struggles. Uncle Tom became a symbol of Black people in China, reflecting Black American culture and serving as a gateway for future international collaboration with the black community.

Once Uncle Tom steps off the stage from the Chinese play and walks with the Chinese, racial concepts come to the forefront of the Chinese mind. This stems from China's deep-rooted sense of racial superiority, in the Chinese people's inherent concept, in addition to their own people, other foreign peoples are called "barbarians", Black people are even more due to the influence of racial theories in China is considered to be the "other". After this, Qing Chinese memories of blacks began with Xu Jishe's 1848 translation of *Yinghuan Zhilue*, a Western-influenced account of Africa as a chaotic

continent inhabited by savages of the black race.¹⁹ After the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, the concept of race in China had developed into a coexistence of “modern social Darwinism” and “traditional ethnocentrism”.²⁰ Yan Fu translated Darwin's theory of evolution into Chinese in 1897, in which he showed serious racial bias, he focused entirely on the theory of struggle for survival, described evolution as an eternal struggle between groups, transformed individual competition into racial struggle, he even regarded the ability to colonize as a manifestation of the “superiority or inferiority of the human race”! He even saw the ability to colonize as a sign of “racial superiority”. Therefore, Black people became the inferior race in the eyes of the Chinese, and whites became the most honored race. For example, Kang Youwei in his *Datong Shu*, he was extremely mean to the description of the Black people: "However, the body of the Black people, fishy cannot be smelled. Therefore, in the era of the Cosmos, white and yellow people, talent and shape, not far from each other, can be equal. The shape of the Black man is also, iron face, silver teeth, slanting jaws like a pig, look straight as a cow, full of chest hair, hands and feet deep black, stupid as swine, look at the fear."²¹ He even thought that the ideal society should eliminate the Black people, so that this group will disappear from the world forever: "The Black people have too evil a temperament, or have a disease."²² Discriminatory racism stems from Chinese scholars' misinterpretation of the concept of survival of the fittest, so Kang Youwei advocated the promotion of

¹⁹ Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 180-195.

²⁰ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 91.

²¹ Kang youwei, *Datong Shu* (Beijing: Antiquarian Press, 1956), 118-122.

²² Kang youwei, *Datong Shu* (Beijing: Antiquarian Press, 1956), 122.

assimilation to achieve racial homogeneity, and he translated cultural assimilation into the imagery of physical integration.²³ This kind of consciousness was also prevalent and spread in the magazines of the late Qing Dynasty. The discriminatory racisms stemmed from a misreading of the concept of survival of the fittest by Chinese academics. Chinese scholars' misinterpretation of the theory of evolution in the early twentieth century led to the reinforcement of racial concepts. This resulted in Chinese publications containing ridiculous articles advising on how to change Black people's skin color to white and how to criticize Black individuals. In 1911, the *Oriental Magazine* published an article titled "The Method of Turning the Black Man into a White Man," detailing the process of transforming Black individuals into white to achieve racial transgression.²⁴ In 1923, the *Student Magazine* published "How the Devil Created the Black Man," explaining how the Devil created Black people in a violent and arbitrary manner, suggesting that their existence was a mistake from the beginning and that the world could not accept Black individuals.²⁵ There is no place in the world for Black individuals. In the 1927 newspaper "*Little Children*", the depiction of a Black person likened them to animals like rabbits and lions, with the artist highlighting their skin color in contrast to the environment.²⁶ Due to the dissemination of this erroneous racial belief, the Chinese perceived Westerners as white and superior, leading them to enthusiastically embrace

²³ Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 80-95.

²⁴ "The Method of Turning the Black Man into a White Man," *Oriental Magazine*, 1909, 53-54.

²⁵ Chen zhaoying, "How the Devil Created the Black Man," *Oriental Magazine*, October 10, 1923, 136.

²⁶ Wu taixuan, "A Clever Black People," *Little Children*, May 9, 1927, 9-12.

Western ideas such as literature, philosophy, military, and politics, while showing disdain and mockery towards Black people.

Racial theory was a fictitious program created by late Qing academics to boost self-confidence and promote a grand plan for racial rejuvenation. It was also a radical method used to manipulate Chinese national self-esteem during times of war failures. But if you think outside the box of these scholars, the Chinese people do not always perceive Black people as an inferior race subject to discrimination. The story of Black people serves as a significant illustration for fostering racial unity in China. When examining China's historical interactions with Africans, it is evident that the Chinese held a favorable view of many positive attributes possessed by Africans. Portuguese settlers transported many enslaved Black people to China in the 16th century, who then became integral members of the Portuguese army. The Belgian missionary Rougemont gives a more detailed account. "The bravest of these soldiers in battle were the Cafres (roughly the Bantu people of South Africa). They fled from their Portuguese and Spanish masters at the invitation of Nicolau (Zheng Zhilong's baptized Christian name), who offered them a great deal of money and promises."²⁷ Ming History recorded that the enslaved Black people jumped into the water does not sink, walking on the surface of the sea like flat ground.²⁸ At that time, Chinese people's initial perception of black individuals is that they are courageous, skilled in combat, and committed to their responsibilities. The Ming Dynasty's *"Images of the Eastern Barbarians"* documented that they married Chinese

²⁷ Gao huashi, *A Study of the Changshu Account Book and Devotional Notes of Jesuit Rougemont in the Early Qing Dynasty* (Zhengzhou: Elephant Press, 2007), 210-241.

²⁸ "Ming History," Xuge, accessed April 25, 2024, <https://www.xuges.com/ls/mingshi/2039.htm>.

women, their offspring had dark skin.²⁹ Furthermore, both the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the Qing government utilized Black people as the primary component of their forces. Early 20th-century media coverage often emphasized the hardships faced by Black people, suggesting that their experiences contributed to national cohesion. One writer stated that the Chinese are worse than Black people because, unlike Africans who were still fighting for independence, the Chinese were not.³⁰ Emotional stigma can be transformed into a powerful spiritual force that inspires patriotism, enhances internal unity, encourages national duty, and boosts racial self-confidence. Therefore, not only can the emergence of the Uncle Tom story during China's national crisis help to address the incorrect racial attitudes toward Black people in Chinese culture, but it can also unify all Chinese people into a pattern of racial solidarity, and the story provides the ground for the reshaping of Chinese nationalism. In China, Covarrubias's Uncle Tom comics influenced China's development of a distinctive comic art style, and the Mexican artist is credited with introducing a fresh portrayal of African Americans. Covarrubias' Uncle Tom comics influenced China to develop a distinct style of comic art, and the Mexican artist transformed the derogatory portrayal of Black people by introducing a new black character. *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* anti-colonial spirit significantly inspired spiritual optimism in China throughout the 1920s. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Chinese introduced a new era in China.

²⁹ Tang Kaijian, "The Earliest Extant Information on the Image of Europeans in China - The Image of Eastern Barbarians," *Journal of the Palace Museum* 1, (2001): 1-7.

³⁰ "Mourning the Death of our Compatriots," *Oriental Magazine*, December 12, 1902, 88.

3. From Chinese Uncle Tom to Mexican Black people

Chinese views on Black people have not garnered significant social awareness in China due to limited interaction with Black individuals. However, focusing on Miguel Covarrubias, the Mexican cartoonist behind *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Mexico has a racial history intertwined with Black people.

Mexico's recollection of Black individuals from the past is faint and eerie. Black people are an integral component of Mexican society, but Mexico attempted to eliminate their existence throughout the country's early history. Due to the Spanish colonization of Mexico in the 16th century and the high mortality rate of indigenous Mexicans due to disease, a significant number of Black enslaved people were brought into Mexico in enormous quantities, surpassing the local Indian population. During Diaz's rule in 1876, Mexico adopted scientific racism influenced by social Darwinism, promoting the idea that white people were progressive while Black people were seen as hindering Mexico's progress.³¹ Mexican intellectuals later challenged this Eurocentric scientific racism and proposed a new ethnic policy, which elevated the mestizo race as the representative of Mexican national identity. However, this marginalized the Black population in Mexico, disregarding their presence and denying their contribution to the mestizo nation, ultimately making them invisible. In the 1920s, Mexican nationalists and artists overcame racial intolerance and prejudice, making blackness a significant historical influence for Mexico's retroactive nationalism. Mexico became a hub for historical research that explored the development of ancient African cultures and racial perspectives, with the

³¹ Xie Guobin, "Mexico's Ethnic Policy," *Taiwan International Studies* 14, no. 2 (2018): 29-49.

belief that the visibility of Black bodies could contribute to Mexican national unity.³² This view integrated Black people into Mexican racial culture, including the work of Miguel Covarrubias, who used the visualization of Black people as a foundation for his creations.³³ The visualization of the Black man became the breeding ground for his new work, and the Black man's past in Mexico became the inspiration for his art. As the concept of race moves from China to Mexico, the Black man is influencing Mexico through assimilation. Mexico is exploring the history of the Black man, which coincides with the emergence of a new Black spirit among African Americans.

4. From Black people in Mexico to Harlem culture in the U.S.

Miguel Covarrubias moved from Mexico to Harlem in the 1920s, where he introduced the influence of Mexico's Black History Renaissance to the African-American art scene in New York. He reimagined Uncle Tom as a new comic book character infused with elements of Mexico's Black History.

Racial tension set the stage for the Harlem Renaissance, with the “New Negro” being a central figure in this cultural movement. In 1920, racial harassment led African Americans to seek a new identity in American society, prompting a cultural revival known as the Harlem Renaissance in Harlem, New York. Alain LeRoy Locke compiled

³² Herman Bennett, *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009), 1-70.

³³ Theodore Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico: Race and Nation after the Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 222-266.

and published "*The New Negro: An Interpretation*" in 1925, providing crucial details for representing the New spirit globally.³⁴

Miguel Covarrubias revitalized the portrayal of Black individuals during the Harlem Renaissance by blending Mexican Black culture and contemporary influences to create "a New Negro" character with a story rooted in the Olmec civilization. The Olmec civilization emerged in Mesoamerica around 1200 B.C. The center of this civilization later shifted closer to the Gulf of Mexico.³⁵



Figure 1: Olmec Head No. 1 from San Lorenzo,
October 8, 2014

Source: Mesoamerican (CC BY-SA 4.0)

The most notable artifact discovered from this civilization is the Olmec head in Villahermosa (see Figure 1). This head is distinguished by its broad nose and thick lips, which Miguel Covarrubias considered to be the most distinctive features of the Olmec people. Miguel Covarrubias characterizes the Olmec as having a head resembling that of

³⁴ Stephanie Leigh Batiste, "Interview with Jeffrey Conrad Stewart, author of *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke*," *The Black Scholar* 50, no. 1 (2020): 10-36.

³⁵ Betty Meggers, "The Origins of Olmec Civilization," *Science* 309, no. 5734 (2005): 556-559.

a Black man with a flat nose and thick lips. However, his interpretation has sparked controversy due to the lack of concrete evidence establishing a direct connection between Black people and the Olmec civilization. Some critics suggest that Covarrubias may be exploring the complex interplay between culture, race, and human anatomy.³⁶ When examining the images of the New Black Man he produced, characterized by thick lips and flat noses as seen in the numerous images from "*Negro Drawing*" in 1927, one of the primary motivations behind his creation of the New Black Man was to satirize the notion that the Olmec people were the ancestors of enslaved Black people, and to persuade the public to embrace his perspective. His caricatures of the New Black image gained worldwide popularity and contributed to a greater appreciation for racial unity after the revolution. By emphasizing that the Black people were integral to the Mexican race, he helped strengthen the bond between Mexico and the Black community.³⁷ His opinions have impeded Mexico's exploration of the historical roots of enslaved Black people, overshadowed curiosity in Mexican archeology, and promoted a clichéd image of the original Black man with "full lips and a broad nose". Covarrubias undeniably revitalized the reinvention of the "New Negro spirit". He highlighted the transformation in the portrayal of African Americans in a *Vanity Fair* headline, stating that "The New Negro" has moved away from the stereotypical picture of a banjo-playing, field-shouting individual from the cotton plantations.³⁸ This new Black Man is as genuine as someone

³⁶ Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico: Race and Nation after the Revolution*, 257.

³⁷ Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico: Race and Nation after the Revolution*, 240-267.

³⁸ Masuoka Susan Naomi, *Crossing Borders: Miguel Covarrubias and the Re-presentation of the Other*. (California: University of California Press, 1996), 1-90.

living next door. He highlighted racism and the rich culture of Black people, promoting a new group of Black people and white art celebrities inside the modernism movement. He depicted and personified the physical form and unique characteristics of the Black people in the prevailing visual representation. The white man no longer viewed the Black people as a laborer in the cotton fields, but as a city resident with a strong sense of fashion,



Figure 2 Black People in suits gracefully playing the cornet in New York, the United States, in February 1936.

Source: Vanity Fair Magazine.

intelligence, and artistic ability (see Figure 2). Black people migrated from ancient times to Mexico and had a vital role in shaping Harlem's culture in New York. African Americans evolved into a middle class that shared a love for the arts with white individuals. Furthermore, the New spirit inspired the African American community, and recollections of their African heritage were preserved inside them. Harlem artists understood that creating art was not just a way to reconnect with ancient African art but also a significant factor in reshaping the world. The representation of the new Black identity has allowed African Americans to break free from stereotypical perceptions,

fostering a sense of pride and connection to the rich culture and art of African traditions. The dispersed Black community has come together due to the spirit of Harlem.

As the New Black man stands in Harlem, New York, the spirit of Harlem passes back to Uncle Tom, and the new Uncle Tom undergoes a rebirth; he is no longer the obsequious Black man on the cotton plantation, but the New Black Man with the new spirit.

5. From New Uncle Tom to revolutionary China

In the 1930s, nationalism became a cultural discourse and political field in China, and the connotations of nationalism in China transitioned from anti-Manchurian nationalism to the globalization of revolutionary cultural thought, a period in which the reading of the nation was based on a narrow, statist, and purposivist view that was cultural and essentialist.³⁹

When Uncle Tom, with his new Black people's spirit, entered China, he became an important part of the story of the Chinese revolution, because he carried the nationalist imagination of the Chinese revolutionaries. Uncle Tom was used by the Communist Party as an important art carrier to inspire the revolutionary spirit during this period, and later on Uncle Tom entered the Chinese press in the form of cartoons, which had a non-negligible influence on the Chinese revolutionary art. Uncle Tom infiltrated into the Chinese revolutionary cartoon works through the art of cartooning, and it was the shadow of Uncle Tom that was behind the cartoons that carried a distinctive revolutionary spirit,

³⁹ Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002), 170-175.

and in contrast to the Uncle Tom in the novels and dramas, Uncle Tom in the revolutionary period enters into the spirit of the Chinese revolution by indirectly influencing Chinese cartoon art, rather than directly presenting the form of Uncle Tom's story, Uncle Tom realizes the spiritual flow from the end of the Qing Dynasty to the revolutionary period in China through the flow of the Chinese revolutionary cartoonist's pen.

Currently in China, the Black man is still perceived as resembling Uncle Tom, but his resilient spirit is being emphasized once more and is being integrated into China's revolution, aligning closely with the essence of China's revolutionary spirit. And this is also related to the shift in racial attitudes of the Chinese Communist Party. In order to win over the masses of people dissatisfied with Chiang Kai-shek's government, the Communists supported ethnic pluralism in China, and the political recognition that diversity was essential to national legitimacy and anti-colonial resistance, and that recognition of particularity was the path to a new unity, was ultimately fully integrated into their vision of a socialist China.⁴⁰ Therefore, the Communist Party of China (CPC) considered Black people as potential partners for international collaboration and promoted Uncle Tom as a source of inspiration for the Chinese revolution. During the first Congress of Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers in Ruijin in the winter of 1931, Hudi, Qian Zhuangfei, Li Bozhao, and others wrote and performed based on Enslaved Black People Appealing to Heaven. These dramas received unanimous praise from the

⁴⁰ Mullaney Thomas, *Coming to Terms with the Nation : Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 18-41.

delegates. The delegates accepted them favorably.⁴¹ Uncle Tom was used by the Red Army as an artistic gift to give spiritual encouragement to the soldiers after the victory in the war, so Uncle Tom itself was given the revolutionary spirit of the times by the Communist Party of China.

Once Uncle Tom took off his uniform and entered the art world, his New Black Spirit became an important guide for Chinese revolutionary art. The new Uncle Tom infused Chinese revolutionary cartoons with a sustained artistic vitality, making them pioneers in publicizing the revolutionary spirit of the new era.

During the War of Resistance against Japan, manga was regarded as the vanguard of the pen and pencil resistance⁴². Cartoons were not only simple to comprehend and captivating but also a crucial method of revealing the harsh treatment of the people by the Japanese army. During the 1930s, a robust anti-Japanese cartoon movement began in the Chinese creative community. Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias, known for pioneering the new black image, traveled to China in 1930 and 1933. The creation of "Young China is Boiling" followed his initial visit. In addition, in the 1930s, he shifted from black art to political themes, and in 1931 he created "The impossible Interviews", a column that pretended to be a meeting between political figures and artists from various countries, and from then on *Vanity Fair* frequently used political figures on its covers such as Herbert Hoover (see Figure 3). Covarrubias realized the fusion of politics and art, as well as the inheritance of the spirit of Harlem, and his art style was in line with the artistic

⁴¹ Chen Baichen, *History of Modern Chinese Drama from 1899 to 1949* (Beijing: China Drama Press, 2008), 56-73

⁴² Zhang, Xiaoxi and Li Chaoyang, "Cartoons and Anti-War Mobilization in the New China Newspaper," *Guangxi Social Science* 2, no. 5 (2017): 177-121.

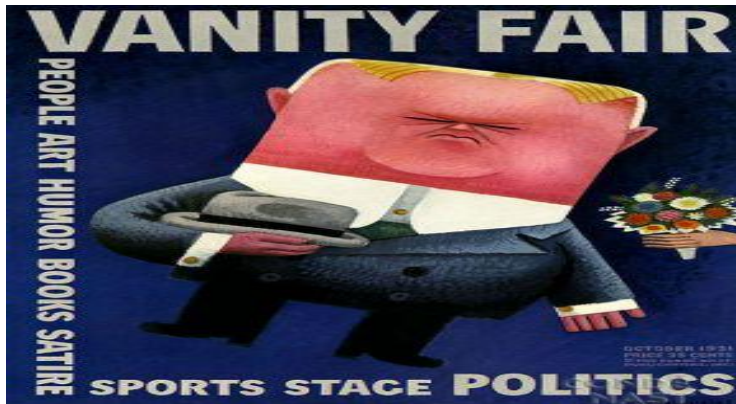


Figure 3 Flowers for President Herbert Hoover, the United States, in October 1931.

Source: Vanity Fair

development of China at that time. Covarrubias' second visit had a significant impact on

the evolution of Chinese comic art. The comic not only revitalized Chinese cartooning but also inspired Chinese artists with innovative ideas for creating China's national revolutionary spirit. Furthermore, a large number of cartoonists emerged in China under his influence.⁴³ His visit was a sensation in Shanghai, where he was received by famous figures in the city's literary and artistic circles, such as Lin Yutang, Ye Qianyu, Zhang Guangyu, Ding Cong, Mei Lanfang and so on. Among them, Ye Qianyu and Zhang Guangyu were both pioneers of modern Chinese comics. Ye Qianyu was influenced by Covarrubias to record his life through sketches, and later published "Shanyu Sketches". Ye Qianyu later wrote in his autobiography, "Influenced by him, I also picked up a sketchbook and drew sketches in life This was an important shift in my engagement

⁴³ Cai Jingran, "Zhang Guangyu's Political Satire Comics: Examples from Ten Days of Talk," *Parliamentary Artists* 23 (2014): 39-61.

in art."⁴⁴ In addition to this, Zhang Guangyu's painting style also took an important turn because of Covarrubias. His artistic technique is reminiscent to Covarrubias, particularly in his playful approach and caricatures of political figures, which appear to be directly influenced by Covarrubias' work. In 1932, the drawings he produced for Time Comics, titled "If Encounters," featuring Chiang Kai-shek, Mussolini, Cai Tingkai, and Zhang Xueliang, were inspired by The Impossible Interviews column from 1931. When examining the artworks produced by both individuals, it is easy to identify shared characteristics. Both writers portrayed these political characters in identical shapes and colors. In 1932, Zhang Guangyu created caricatures of political people with text, showing his clear inspiration from Covarrubias. While studying under Covarrubias, Zhang Guangyu integrated his ideas on Chinese folk art with his unique style of straightforward, clear, and characteristic folk paintings. Furthermore, he utilized caricatures to convey political messages. Caricatures evolved from mere entertainment to a significant tool for satirizing current events and conveying political messages, serving as a crucial platform for spreading revolutionary information.

Zhang Guangyu, a trailblazer in Chinese revolutionary cartoons, expressed his patriotic ideals through his cartoon work. Zhang Guangyu's Decameron, developed in 1933, features characters predominantly shown with geometric shapes that carry significant political symbolism. These characters reflect his profound discontent with the Nationalist Party's conduct during the wartime era, a sentiment he expressed through his cartoons. In "Fly Removal (see Figure 4)," the artist portrays a plump figure that is humorously

⁴⁴ Ye Qianyu, *Recounting the vicissitudes of life: Memoirs of Ye Qianyu* (Beijing: Qunyan Publishing House, 1992), 1-530.

altered and mocked by striking a fly. This image is the same as the Herbert Hoover designed by Covarrubias.

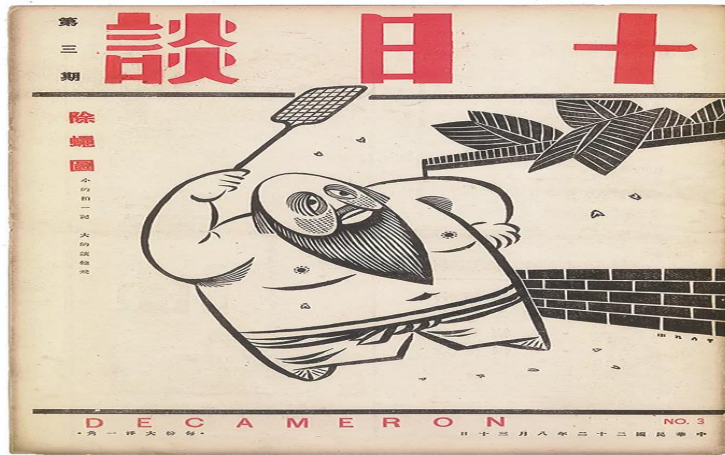


Figure 4 Fly Removal Tale, China, in August 1933.

Source: Shiritan Magazine Cover

Furthermore, he encircled the image with the phrase: "Swat the small one, let the big one fly". The cartoon critiques Yu Youren, who was the director of the KMT Procuratorate at the time, for not taking action against the corruption in the Wang Jingwei regime. The caricature is characterized by strong political traits, geometric shapes, generalization, rounded features, and comedy. It features smooth lines and sculptural firmness, resembling Covarrubias's caricature art style, which incorporates a unique Harlem style into Chinese caricature art. Zhang Guangyu's cartooning style influenced Chinese cartoonists like Ding Cong during that period, leading to an increased focus on the political role of cartoons. This resulted in cartoons becoming a primary tool for spreading political information in China at that time. Most importantly, Zhang Guangyu's realistic and combative cartoon style gained widespread popularity in 1930s China due to its ability to criticize social issues, expose chaos, and enlighten the culturally impoverished

population. His satirical political cartoons helped enhance the masses' sense of justice and responsibility, playing a crucial role in promoting national revival and saving the country.

As a carrier of comics, magazines played an important role in spreading the revolutionary spirit of the anti-Japanese nation. In the late 1930s, the magazine industry in Shanghai saw substantial expansion following the Japanese conquest of the French and public concessions and the withdrawal of the Chinese forces, known as the “period of island literature.”⁴⁵ Newspapers and periodicals were used by many political groups to spread propaganda. Zhang Guangyu founded *Time Cartoon* in 1934 to create anti-Japanese propaganda and reveal Japanese atrocities. Ye Qianyu established *Shanghai Cartoon* in 1936 to illustrate artists' perspectives on political events and social circumstances. *WestWind Supplement* was founded in Shanghai in the same year.⁴⁶ Lin Yutang, the consultant editor of this magazine, strived to uphold a liberal stance by refraining from engaging in political matters. Yet, during this distinctive period, the newspaper was unable to entirely avoid political issues. The animation sector was the initial one to respond in aiding the nation. The anti-Japanese conflict in 1937 led to the creation of the "Shanghai Cartoon Industry Salvation Association". Cartoonists are anti-Japanese soldiers, and comics are a gun to reshape the revolutionary spirit of the Chinese nation.

By the time the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* comics illustrations created by Covarrubias made their way onto the battlefields of China's anti-Japanese war, comics had become an

⁴⁵ Shanghai Institute of Literature, *Memoirs of Shanghai island Literature* (Shanghai: China Social Science Press, 1984), 1-56.

⁴⁶ "Shanghai Manhua, the Neo-Sensationist School of Literature, and Scenes of Urban Life," MCLC Resource Center, accessed March 20, 2024, <http://u.osu.edu/mclc/online-series/shanghai-manhua/>.

important element in shaping the spirit of the Chinese national revolution. Inspired by the fervour of art to save the nation, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* comic illustrations became an important metaphor for the spirit of the Chinese revolution. One of the top-selling magazines of the time, *West Wind Supplement*, alerted the world by reprinting a new version of the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* comic strip, and Miguel Covarrubias' new illustration appeared in *West Wind Supplement* XII of 1939 in an article titled, "The enslaved Black People's Hijacking". The editor references the suffering of war in China by publishing new images by the Mexican artist to show the new spirit of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, sparking a feeling of national revolutionary spirit in China.

The Chinese people saw in Uncle Tom the shadow of the national revolutionary spirit. As the Chinese sense of self-importance, so prevalent in their contact with foreigners, was easily reversed and an inferiority complex erupted, some Chinese writers lamented that "Chinese are worse than Black people".⁴⁷ When Covarrubias's Uncle Tom is featured in the *West Wind Supplement* magazine, it will powerfully portray the historical struggles of Black people battling for themselves to the Chinese audience, sparking a sense of racial self-confidence through Uncle Tom's story. Covarrubias's Uncle Tom is with a distinctive Olmec coloring, so his Uncle Tom has typical thick lips, high cheekbones, flat nose, and other prominent features (see Figure 5). In addition, Uncle Tom closes his eyes and crosses his arms in a devotional gesture, symbolizing a potential strength in resistance. This gesture shows the power of "faith" in Uncle Tom, and for the Chinese, it is a sense of racial pride and national conviction in believing that they are not

⁴⁷ Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 140-150.

weaker than any other nation, and this power is part of the revolutionary spirit of the Chinese nation. In Illustration 7 (see Figure 6), he is kneeling on both knees with his hands upraised, calling out to the heavens for something, which means that the power of prayer has been re-emphasized, that is to say, the meaning of wanting to ask for independence, freedom and liberation has been further strengthened, and this strengthening has weakened the sense of racial discrimination of the West in the hearts of the Chinese, and some scholars have even threatened to say that the Chinese are not weaker than any other nation, and that we don't need too much of an inferiority complex, and that we shouldn't belittle our creativity.⁴⁸ Uncle Tom has raised the racial confidence of the Chinese people. In Illustration 12 (see Figure 7), even though Uncle Tom is brutally whipped, his head keeps rising to prove that he will not give up and will be resolute in his sense of racial pride. When the figurative suffering is concretely expressed through the cartoon, it represents the spiritual needs of the disadvantaged races who are being bullied and who yearn for freedom and liberation, and a sense of racial pride is kindled in his body, and the Black people is the vanguard of the struggle against the white man's history in the present moment.⁴⁹ He is an example of the Chinese rekindling the positive racial attitudes that are so much a part of the spirit of the Chinese revolution,

⁴⁸ Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 145-161.

⁴⁹ Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 140-150.

and Covarrubias gives Uncle Tom an upward mobility that unites the Chinese and creates the cohesive spirit of the Chinese national revolution, and he serves as a role model for the Chinese in rekindling their own racial self-confidence.

6. New China entering the family of unity of the world's oppressed peoples



Figure 5-7: Uncle Tom's Cabin Illustrations 1, 7, 12, China, 1939.

Source: Westwind Supplement

After the 1940s, when the Chinese Communist Party came to power, nationalism switched again from a revolutionary narrative to a centrally significant one of solidarity and cooperation in the Third World. Chinese nationalist sentiment is based on a strong sense of race. Nationalism in the Chinese mind crossed over from its own stripping to the international, seeking a discourse of cooperation, and the Chinese active exploration of nationalism really opened up the space of the global imagination.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002), 270-275.

When Uncle Tom broke away from the Chinese anti-Japanese comics and jumped to the diplomatic table of the new China's founding, he shifted from the world of revolutionary art and culture of Chinese comics to the world stage of China's foreign co-operation. Uncle Tom's life was once again ignited, but this time Uncle Tom was a symbol of a third world country and a witness to the story of China's journey to the international arena. For after the 1940s, when the new China was founded, China was desperate to seek international solidarity and co-operation with other countries, and the Third World countries became the springboard for China's foreign co-operation. In contrast to the Uncle Tom in the cartoon, this Uncle Tom became an important connecting point for the Chinese Communist Party in its direct dealings with the black community, and he became the flag for China's move into third world countries. Because at the moment he is no longer a reference to racial self-confidence in China. As the idea of race was abandoned when the Chinese Communist Party came to power, it began to utilize a common racial identity to create the idea of solidarity with Black people.⁵¹

Artists act as a pioneering force for friendship and co-operation between China and third world countries and groups. Paul Robeson, a prominent African American musician involved in the Harlem movement, introduced the Chinese revolutionary song *Qi Lai* at Lewisohn Stadium in West Harlem on the eve of the founding of New China. He also recorded the song in 1941 and pledged all proceeds to China's national liberation

⁵¹ Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 170-183.

movement.⁵² Following the Communist Party of China's rise to power in 1949, Covarrubias played a key role in fostering amicable ties between China and Mexico. He strongly supported Chinese communism and painted a portrait of Mao Zedong in the 1950s, which had a lasting impact on China and Mexico due to his unwavering loyalty to Chinese communism.⁵³ Mao is depicted with numerous red flags symbolizing China's vitality and national spirit. His eyes reflect a positive outlook, idealism, and patriotism of the era, portraying him as a solemn, resolute, and courageous figure. Dr Elie Gothari, a Mexican philosopher, recalled that Covarrubias "was actively involved in organisations that promoted cultural relations between East and West. He wanted Mexicans to know about Chinese theatre, opera, painting, literature and music" Above all, he wanted to share his profound knowledge and humanism and his understanding of China."⁵⁴ In 1953, he became the inaugural president of the Association of Friends of China (AFOC), and he has had a long-standing relationship with China, and his niece, Lia Elena, remembers receiving significant amounts of printed materials, magazines, and books from China for Covarrubias multiple times. Covarrubias is an important figure in China's opening up of the circle of friends of the third world countries, China's spirit of national unity condensed, Mexico and China leaned together, the voices of the third world countries continued to gather, and the world's national unity became a kind of consensus among the

⁵² Kai Hang Cheang, "Performativity in Black Internationalist Poetics as Exemplified in Robeson and Hughes," *Journal of Comparative Poetics* 39, (2019): 149-168.

⁵³ "Portrait of Mao Tse-tung," Artnet, accessed April 5, 2024, https://www.artnet.com/artists/miguel-covarrubias/portrait-of-mao-tse-tung-zCJvyf_psa5ZIFxD1KqZsw2.

⁵⁴ Adriana Williams, "Miguel Covarrubias Captures the Celebrity Culture," *Américas* 59, no.4 (2007): 38-43.

third world countries.⁵⁵ But in this story, Uncle Tom cannot move in China without the power of intellectuals. They endowed Uncle Tom's cultural products, such as plays, novels and comics, with the national concepts of a particular period. They contributed to Uncle Tom's spiritual mobility in China at different times. Bilingual intellectuals in China were able to extract models of the nation, national attributes and nationalism from Western knowledge and the messy experience of Euro-American history.⁵⁶ This is why Uncle Tom can have different spiritual connotations in China at different times. Intellectuals have always been the tangible hands driving the spiritual changes of Uncle Tom, they use Uncle Tom as the carrier of their nationalism and spirituality, and place China in the midst of a constantly recurring theme, that is, the interlude-like and contradictory self-identification of China with the "oppressed nation", and the changes of spirituality carried by Uncle Tom. The change in the spirit carried by Uncle Tom is a sideways reflection of the Chinese intellectuals' obsession with the issue of nationalism.⁵⁷ Uncle Tom fulfills the intellectual imagination of Chinese nationalism at different times.

As non-White people, they also stood up in the wave of the world's national liberation movement and went to China, becoming an important part of China's world spirit of national unity.

⁵⁵ Paul Bevan, "The Impact of the Work of Miguel Covarrubias on the Artists of Shanghai," *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 42, no. 116 (2020): 17-49.

⁵⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 2011), 131-145.

⁵⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 271.

In the late 1950s, African Americans initiated a militant Black Power Movement in the United States.⁵⁸ Many African Americans identified with China due to shared experiences of oppression from alien dominance and colonial imperialism, making it easy to connect with them. The Black people viewed China as a model for Third World revolution and Mao Zedong Thought as a guiding principle for their actions. Upon gaining power, the Chinese Communist Party promoted global revolution and provided substantial material and moral aid to global oppressed liberation movements.⁵⁹ Given this context, it was inevitable that Chinese power and the Black People would join forces. Regular cross-border exchanges started occurring between Black political radicals in the United States and China, as both groups had a common goal of equality, freedom, and progress. In 1959, Du Bois, a prominent figure in the Black Movement, visited China, showcasing the growing collaboration among Third World countries.⁶⁰ China also reacted favorably to the messages of solidarity conveyed by the Black people. After 1960, China redirected its diplomatic efforts towards Third World countries following a decline in relations with the Soviet Union.⁶¹ China actively sought solidarity with oppressed nations and peoples on a global scale. In 1962, the famous Chinese screenwriter Ouyang Yuqian adapted *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in response to the national liberation of the African people, in order to show solidarity with the Black people's strong struggle and

⁵⁸ John McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies: An Essay in African American Political Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 1-64.

⁵⁹ Robin DG Kelley, and Esch Betsy, "Black like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution," *Souls: Critical Journal of Black Politics & Culture* 1, no. 4 (1999): 6-41.

⁶⁰ Robeson Taj Frazier, *The East is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2015), 121-134.

⁶¹ William Kirby, "The Internationalization of China: Foreign Relations at Home and Abroad in the Republican Era," *The China Quarterly* 150, (1997): 433-458.

indomitable resistance under the oppression of the imperialists.⁶² Ouyang Yuqian's 1962 re-adaptation of the novel transformed *Uncle Tom's Cabin* from a mere comic strip reflecting the Chinese Revolution and the War of Resistance against Japan into a significant cultural symbol of interracial collaboration between Chinese and African Americans.⁶³ It also served as a representation of China's support for the Black national liberation movement and a critique of the oppressive and hegemonic influence of imperialist nations. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* symbolizes the spirit of friendship and cooperation between China and the world in the modern era.

Comparing the black solidarity with China in the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* comic strip pictures of the 1930s to that of the 1950s and 1960s reveals significant differences.

Black people had a significant role in China's success in the Anti-Japanese War and the development of the Chinese national revolutionary spirit through their contributions to art. China and African Americans were connected through cartooning and folklore exchanges, exemplified by Covarrubias's visits to China. However, the interactions were primarily driven by African Americans, with China showing little initiative. China did not actively seek support from Third World countries during the Anti-Japanese War. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, China engaged in formal diplomatic efforts to build cooperation with Third World countries and Black groups to enhance its international standing and

⁶² Xiaomei Chen, *Acting the Right Part: Political Theater and Popular Drama in Contemporary China* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 335-425.

⁶³ Wang Nan, "Ouyang Yuqian Reviews the Plays of Uncle Tom's Cabin," *Shen Zhou* 75, no. 5 (2007): 27-31.

influence, aiming to regain its permanent seat in the United Nations.⁶⁴ China aimed to reclaim its rightful position as a permanent member of the United Nations. Western countries, led by the United States, hindered this effort, while African countries provided significant support. In 1971, China regained its permanent seat in the United Nations, with one-third of the votes coming from African countries. Mao Zedong acknowledged that it was the African countries that carried China into the United Nations.⁶⁵ China's support for the Third World International was driven by its pursuit of its own objectives. The Chinese Communist Party offered intellectual inspiration to Black individuals struggling for civil rights, encouraging them to pursue independence and freedom. The China-Africa collaboration in the 1920s and 1960s was a merging of anti-colonial sentiments, serving as a catalyst for justice that brought together non-White people. When we are grounded in the zeitgeist of the 1960s, we see that China became an important member of the world's anti-colonial world, that China could not rise without the support of third world countries and Black groups, and China also made its own contribution to the equal solidarity of Black people. China and Black people stand together in greater solidarity, and together China and Black people have written a global historical story of resistance to colonization and oppression.

7. Conclusion

When *Uncle Tom's Cabin* first arrived in China, it was viewed as an American novel depicting African American history, not as a component of Chinese culture. Upon Uncle

⁶⁴ Robert Rotberg, *China into Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2009), 69-90.

⁶⁵ David Shinn, "China-Africa Ties in Historical Context," *China-Africa and an Economic Transformation* 1, (2019): 61-83.

Tom's arrival in China during a period of significant social change and the urgent requirement for reform strategies, he served as a vehicle for cultural redemption. World literature influenced China's social reform, with Uncle Tom symbolizing the Chinese people's depiction of national spirit. The story was transposed from the American plantation to China, resulting in a distinct worldwide story in China due to the altered spiritual implications of the Chinese age.

As the pain and struggle carried by the book was in line with the emotional tone of China's national peril at that time, it laid a good foundation for its dissemination in China. At the start of the 20th century, Chinese scholars incorporated their cultural beliefs into the translation of Uncle Tom. The tale of Black people in Uncle Tom became a significant cultural tool for intellectuals to highlight national issues, with Uncle Tom symbolizing the spirit of national resistance. During the 1930s, Covarrubias had a significant impact on China's revolutionary comic art style. Chinese comics had a distinct revolutionary nature, and Uncle Tom comics, influenced by the new spirit, were uniquely appealing to the Chinese audience. As a result, Uncle Tom became a symbol of the spirit of national revolution in China. During the 1960s, Black groups in the United States aimed to achieve civil rights and gain support globally. Positive diplomatic gestures connected China and the Black community in a shared fight for unity. Behind these stories, Uncle Tom has been witnessing the changing connotations of the times of nationalism and racism in China, where the Chinese national spirit is the concrete expression of nationalism, and where China has used racism as an important driver to push forward the connotations of the Chinese nation, and where Uncle Tom, as a representative of racism, has witnessed the flow of cultural interactions between race and

nationalism in twentieth-century China. Uncle Tom symbolized international solidarity against colonial oppression, fostering a spirit of global national unity. Uncle Tom tells the Chinese story of reshaping China's national spirit and the global story of leading China into the world. Observing Uncle Tom's hands joined and eyes closed tightly, I sense a vision of China's future through his prayers.

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