# MASTERARBEIT

Titel der Masterarbeit

## Political and Ideological Symbolism of Chinese and North Korean Propaganda Paintings

Verfasser

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Angestrebter akademischer Grad

## Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, Mai 2013

*"The empire of the future will be the empire of the mind"*

- Winston S. Churchill

## Acknowledgments

First of all I would like to thank my parents Mag. Ronald and Silvia Stöller and my family for their constant support and trust in the course of my studies. I also want to thank Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Frank for not only giving me the chance to study such an interesting Master degree program, but also kindly supporting me in the course of writing my Master thesis. Moreover, I would like to thank my girlfriend Zhou Yuan and all of my truly invaluable friends, especially my old comrade from the army Michael Kruk, who contributed the IT skills I lacked in the course of creating this research paper. Finally, I also want to thank my good old coffee machine and my notebook, which served me reliably throughout my entire studies and thus are eventually granted the permission to retire.

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# 1. Introduction

From the moment since human beings started creating social communities, soon the question was raised along which guidelines the respective community and its society were supposed to be aligned. In this process, various models contend and try to gain support of the people. But can this process of convincing and persuasion already be labelled propaganda? Of course it is hard to draw a line between the daily used term of persuasion and the rather stern sounding term "propaganda"[1]. These two concepts of taking influence might have different approaches concerning their enforcements. However, both concepts ultimately aim at human nature, especially on human's minds. Whoever wants to disseminate a certain idea among people, first has to understand how these people's minds are working, what their social background is like, what daily problems they have to deal with and what dreams they are chasing after. Especially political propaganda is concerned with the psychology of the masses it is aiming at. Masses are highly emotional and thus easier provoked than rational thinking individuals. Masses are animalistic, they breed prejudices and judge by shallow instead of logical patterns. The emotional patterns of the masses are simplistic, explicit and tend to exaggerate: sympathy becomes worship, antipathy quickly turns into hate. The contests of various ideas on how to form a society soon leads to the evolution of various peer groups with organizations representing and propagating each peer group's demands. This automatically causes the creation of social antagonists with opposed interests, such as farmers and land owners or workers and the bourgeoisie. As a result, these representing organizations in the form of political parties, unions etc. continuously try to take influence on the basic guidelines of a society. Thus, the tools of political persuasion become increasingly important in the process of human history.

From this short excerpt of social and political history we can assume, that every political system is based on a certain ideological framework, which serves as the moral narrative for the respective society. Needless to say, there is a broad bandwidth of political systems, each based on different moral frameworks and ideas, which have been elaborated in a century-long process influenced by various socio-cultural factors. Thus, each political system has its own method of how to propagate

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[1] Actually, the term 'propaganda' itself is not objective, as the propagation and dissemination of one's own ideas is often called information policy or public relations, while people opposed to these ideas would rather label them 'propaganda'.

its moral narrative. Such ideologies usually serve political long-term (e.g. an (un)defined utopian stage of development of human kind) or short-term goals (e.g. as legitimization for political change or as support of political campaigns). In the end, each political system will have to find a solution on how to disseminate and propagate its ideas and values through which communication channels, most prominently concerning public education, the extent of freedom of speech, the media and others.

In this paper I want to focus on art as a tool for disseminating political ideologies in the People's Republic of China (henceforth: China) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (henceforth: North Korea). In the context of art, I will deal with propaganda paintings, which were produced in the era of China under Mao Zedong and North Korea under Kim Il Sung. In both countries, the process of disseminating political ideas through art is accomplished in a similar way through the Four Level Pyramid Model, as discussed in Chapter 2.2.4. The reasons why I am comparing China and North Korea are obvious:

- Both countries have similar political ideologies, based on Marxist-Leninist ideas of the Soviet Union and adopted for respective needs.

- Both countries are geographically located in the same area and were established at about the same time (China: 1949, North Korea: 1948). Thus, they were affected by similar circumstances and forces in the course of history (e.g. foreign occupation), which eventually influenced the latter creation of their respective ideology.

- As outlined in Chapter 2.1.2, both countries share a similar political system with similar role structures.

- In both countries the gaining of power by socialist forces represented a sharp cultural and political shift. The shift of political power was not peaceful in both nations, thus having a revolutionary aspect attached to it and further influencing respective ideologies.

- Both countries adapted the Soviet Union's Marxist-Leninist ideology by developing own Socialist ideologies as a legitimization of political rule.

- In both countries art was politicised in order to reach certain short- and long-term political goals. These political goals were implemented through various political pamphlets and campaigns, each designed very alike concerning themes and organizations of the art scene.

- In both countries respective ideologies eventually lead to the establishment of a personality cult around its political leaders.

In Chapter 2.1 of this paper I will start with a general introduction on the research of political systems in general followed by a categorization of East Asian countries according to their political system. This part of my research will focus especially on various political theories of authoritarian as well as totalitarian political systems and the differences between them. Since none of the analyzed frameworks on authoritarian and totalitarian political systems can serve as an analytical framework for this research paper on its own, I will elaborate certain aspects of each scientific approach. These aspects will later serve as basis for the empirical part of this work in Chapter 3. In their ideological frameworks, both China and North Korea developed guidelines for the instrumentalization of art as well as organizations, which were supposed to ensure the implementation of these guidelines. Thus, prior to the empirical part, I will analyse China's and North Korea's ideological frameworks for the political instrumentalization of art in Chapter 2.2. In the case of China I will examine Mao's 1942 talks at the Yan'an forum of literature and art. In the case of North Korea, it is much harder to find a general statement on art like Mao's Yan'an talks[2]. However, Kim Il Sung has held numerous speeches on the topic of art[3]. Thus, selected speeches from the Kim Il Sung Works will serve as ideological framework for the political instrumentalization in North Korea.

Eventually, I will combine and apply the major findings of Chapter 2.1 and 2.2 in the empirical part of this paper by analyzing several examples of Chinese and North Korean propaganda paintings dealing with central themes of totalitarianism and Soviet style Socialist Realism. The sources of propaganda paintings from both countries are widespread. In order to limit the choice of artworks, I chose one source[4] for each country. All chosen pictures were created during the reign of Mao Zedong and Kim Il Sung. The pictures will be labelled by various categories, which

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[2] Scientists have often referred to the Seed Theory developed by Kim Jong Il (see (1989: 15-26), which he applied especially on the art of film making. However, in fact Kim Jong Il developed the Seed Theory in the late 1980s. In fact, there were several occasions prior to the publishment of the Seed Theory, when Kim Il Sung not only spoke clearly on the subject of art and which role art and artists should hold in the political system of North Korea, but also how art should be organized and ideological thoughts considering art implemented.

[3] The catalogue of Kim Il Sung's Works lists more than 40 entries on the topic of literature and art. See N.N. (1991): 247-251

[4] In the case of China I use Lincoln Cushing's and Ann Tompkins' 2007 catalogue "Chinese Posters, Art from the Great Cultural Revolution". For North Korean pictures I will refer to Peter Noever's (Ed.) "Flowers for Kim Il Sung, Art and Architecture from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", the catalogue of the exhibition on North Korean art at the Vienna MAK museum in 2010.

are the results of the findings in the theoretical part of this paper and are summarized in Chapter 2.5. For each country four representative examples will be examined by means of Panofsky's analyzing model (see Chapter 2.4.1) and will be complemented by similar artworks. Eventually, the findings of the analysis of Chinese and North Korean paintings will be compared and summarized in Chapter 4.

The research questions of this paper are as follows:

- Which concepts of authoritarian and totalitarian research exist and what are their theses? How are these concepts implemented into Chinese and North Korean propaganda paintings? What are the similarities and differences between the two countries art making process?

- How is art instrumentalized in China and North Korea? What is the ideological framework for political artworks and which guidelines do they have to follow? What kind of organizations control and supervise the implementation of these guidelines?

- To what extent is political art in China and North Korea based on Soviet style Socialist realism? Which role did the Chinese or North Korean traditional painting styles play?

I stress the relevance of this research paper by pointing out that political ideologies as well as art have always been a reflection of the respective society in which they were developed. Both, art and political ideologies, illustrate a society's achievements, deficiencies, limitations, problems, possibilities, desires and developments. Art doesn't only reflect its environment, it can also actively shape it through political ideologisation. Art can entertain and teach. In this research paper I argue that any kind of art in China and North Korea is best understood as part of a political programme, which expresses a comprehensive world view and has its own inherent logical system of symbols and narratives[5]. I will show that the artworks of both countries under the reign of Mao Zedong and Kim Il Sung were heavily influenced by the concepts of Soviet style Socialist Realism. Furthermore, I argue that both countries' art scenes were organized along totalitarian patterns.

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[5] In such systems truth based on facts doesn't matter. For instance, after Japanese surrender at the Second World War (WWII) North Korean people were told that Kim Il Sung himself defeated the Japanese. Similar statements occur in China regarding the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The historical validity of these arguments is irrelevant, since the ideological framework, on which these claims are based, doesn't tolerate any other legitimate historical narrative. Compare Bonnell (1997): 19

# 2. Theoretical Framework

Chapter 2 of this research paper draws the theoretical basis for the empirical chapter. It is divided into two parts. The first part will set the political framework of this research paper and is especially concerned with political systems in general (2.1.1) and in East Asia (2.1.2). Consequently I will focus on authoritarian and totalitarian systems in Chapter 2.1.3 as these systems rather apply to the cases of China under Mao and North Korea under Kim Il Sung. Hereby, I will elaborate various aspects of numerous scientific approaches towards authoritarianism and totalitarianism. These aspects will serve as the bullet points of the political part of the theoretical framework for the empirical chapter in this paper. A summary will be given in Chapter 2.1.4.

The second part (Chapter 2.2) of the theoretical framework will serve as the ideological framework of this research paper. After a short section on the definition (Chapter 2.2.1) and effectiveness of political propaganda (Chapter 2.2.2 and 2.2.3) I will deal with China's and North Korea's respective ideologies and their effects on art in Chapter 2.2.4. Hereby, I will apply my self developed Four Level Pyramid Model. Considering China, I will analyze Mao's talk at the Yan'an forum on literature and art, which serves as the main pamphlet regarding the political use of art. In the case of North Korea, I will analyze various speeches and statements of Kim Il Sung concerning the ideologisation of art. A summary in Chapter 2.2.5 will conclude that in both countries art didn't exist for the sake of art itself. Instead, it was assigned a pre-defined role in the extensive hierarchical role network of both countries' political systems. Besides minor short-term goals, art was basically designed to 'serve the masses' and 'help build up a new society'.

The third part (Chapter 2.3) of the ideological framework will deal with Soviet style Socialist Realism and is concerned with its definitions, aesthetics and influence. It will thus serve as the foundation for the optional research question to what extent Chinese and North Korean propaganda paintings were influenced by Soviet style Socialist Realism.

Chapter 2.4 will shortly treat the state of art on the topic of symbolism in Chinese and North Korean propaganda paintings. A final summary in Chapter 2.5 will conclude the theoretical part of this research paper by listing the main political and ideological concepts regarding Chinese and North Korean propaganda paintings.

These concepts will later serve as analyzing categories for the chosen artworks examined in the empirical part of this research paper (Chapter 3).

# 2.1. Political Framework

In order to work out the theoretical foundation for the empirical part, this chapter will deal with political systems in general and in East Asia. A special focus will be laid upon authoritarian and totalitarian systems. In this process I will point out several aspects of various theses on authoritarian and totalitarian systems, which will be summarized at the end of this chapter and serve as the political framework of this research paper.

# 2.1.1. Political Systems in General

There are several definitions of political systems. Max Weber offered a rather dark description of a political system, by defining it as the legitimate monopoly of physical coercion over a given territory or population[6]. The **System Theory**[7], a very basic scientific approach, describes all kind of phenomenons in a society as a system. Every political system is based on an inner interdependence of sub-systems. Simultaneously each system is interacting with its environment. Political systems thus consist of political structures. Trivially speaking, a political system deals with actions of human beings and aims at regulating the guidelines of living together in a local community.

Another approach is Douglass C. North's **Theory of Institutions**[8]. North describes institutions as a society's formal and informal rules designed to control human interactions. However, institutions should not be understood as norms aimed at justifying social order. In fact, they are mechanisms through which social norms and codes of conduct are created and preserved. According to the Theory of Institutions, a political state is an arrangement of interactions between the ruling elite and the citizens. For instance, the state guarantees its citizens security and justice through public revenue, such as taxes etc. Several other authors have similar perceptions of political systems. According to Roy C. Macridis a political regime is best understood as formal and informal rules and institutions, in which political rulers

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[6] See Gerth/ Wright Mills (1946): 78
[7] See Derichs/ Heberer (2003): 1
[8] (1991)

relate themselves to other sectors of society and thus regulate the relations and interactions of different political actors within a political system[9]. Furthermore, Robert M. Fishman stressed the difference between a political regime and a government. He points out[10], that a political regime is usually a more permanent form of political organization than a specific government, but typically also less permanent than the state itself.

Gabriel A. Almond simply described a political system as a set of interacting roles or as a structure of roles[11]. According to him, the concept of roles is better than the concept of institutions, because roles are more inclusive: roles can conclude formal or informal offices, families, electorates, mobs as well as other casual or persistent groupings. Roles are interdependent and a change in any role can affect other roles and thus the system as a whole. For instance, Almond argues that the emergence of pressure groups produced certain changes in party systems and administrative and legislative processes. Thus, when defining various forms of political systems, it is crucial to understand the structure of roles and their interdependence in the respective political system. In this context, the following political systems exist according to Almond[12]:

- Anglo-American political systems
- Pre-industrial political systems
- Continental European political systems
- Totalitarian political systems

Almond created this thesis in the 1950s, thus this list of political systems is obviously outdated and incomplete by today's standards. In this context, Almond's statements (especially the ones referring to certain countries as case study) have to be viewed from a scientific standpoint of the 1950s.

According to Almond, the **Anglo-American political system** is characterized by a homogeneous, pragmatic and secular political culture. By secular, Almond means a multi valued political culture, in which various and potentially opposing political opinions occur, which are propagated by respective pressure groups. The **role structure of** such a system:

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[9] See (1986): 10-11
[10] See „Rethinking State and Regime: Southern Europe's Transition to Democracy", in *World Politics*, Vol. 42 (April 1990): 428
[11] See „Comparative Political Systems", in *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (August 1956): 394
[12] *Ibid.*: 397-407

1) is highly differentiated (various agencies such as political parties, pressure groups, media etc., perform specialized functions within the system. All these agencies are interdependent but autonomous.)
2) is manifest, organized and bureaucratized
3) has a high degree of stability in the functions of roles
4) causes a very likely diffusion of power and influence among the whole political system

Almond continues in his list of political system by describing **pre-industrial political systems**. He first acknowledges that certainly subtypes of this type of system do exist. Generally speaking, pre-industrial political systems are best described as mixed political systems and cultures. This means that such systems often combine European style politics (for instance, including a parliament) and pre-European style politics (such as respective political traditions). In this context, Almond names India as an example. In pre-industrial political systems bureaucracies and armies often dominate the system. The general atmosphere is thus characterized by unpredictability and uncertainty. The role structure of such a system is described as follows:
1) there is a low degree of structural differentiation (political parties are unstable; bureaucratic structure and systems of communications are only partially developed, unless it is left there by former western colonial forces)
2) due to the absence of stable role structures there is a high degree of sustainability of roles (for instance, a mob may emerge as pressure group and take over the centre of policy making stage for a brief time)
3) political roles are mixed (for instance, a western-style parliament might exist, but might not have the same function or power as in western countries due to local political traditions)

Considering **continental European political systems**, Almond names France, Italy or Germany as possible examples for this type of political systems. Such systems are mainly characterized by the fragmentation of political culture. At this point, Almond stresses the importance of not confusing the fragmentation of political culture with mixed political cultures found in pre-industrial political systems. Almond describes the fragmentation of political cultures as follows: in continental European systems significant survivals of older cultures and their political manifestations do exist. Thus, these traditional survivals can be called political sub-cultures (such as, for instance,

the Catholic Ancien Régime areas in France). Major political sub-cultures in continental European political systems contain:

- pre-industrial, primarily Catholic components
- older middle class components
- industrial components

**Role structure** in continental European political systems is described as follows:

1) political roles are embedded in the respective sub-culture and tend to constitute separate sub-systems of roles (for instance, the Catholic sub-culture operates Catholic schools, Catholic trade unions, Catholic parties, a Catholic press etc.)

2) there is a high degree of fragmentation at the level of ideology and political organizations

Eventually, Almond deals with **totalitarian political systems**. He first characterizes them by the absence of voluntary associations. Furthermore, in contrast to continental European systems with an extensive diffusion of information and communication, political communication in totalitarian system is completely controlled and executed from the political centre. Thus, this type of political system has only become possible in recent modern times, since it depends heavily on modern technology of communication and modern types of organization. Almond notes at this point that similar political systems certainly existed in the past. However, according to Almond these systems, which he labels as 'tyrannies', were limited in the effectiveness of their means. Concluding, Almond defines totalitarianism as a tyranny with a rational bureaucracy, controlling a monopoly of modern communication technology and of violence. **Role structure** in totalitarian political systems features the following characteristics:

1) a penetration of all role structures by the state

2) a functional instability of power roles (such as bureaucracy, party, army: a stable delegation of power is prevented, because all roles are continuously penetrated by the state)

3) a predominance of coercive roles (all forms of communication, organization or behaviour become sauturated with a coercive flavour, such as 'loyal' or 'disloyal', according to the respective state ideology)

The penetration of the state into all role structures seems to be an essential concept of totalitarian systems. Several other authors have followed Almond's approach in

this regard. As will be pointed out below, Hannah Arendt stated[13] that the goal of a one party system is not only to seize government administration but, by filling all offices with party members, to achieve a complete fusion of state and party. Thus, the party becomes a kind of propaganda organization for the government. Kim Yung-myung noticed[14] that political elites in one party states usually put great effort into organizing and legitimizing rule by one social force over the other. In comparison with Arendt's claim, they seek to secure political power through creating a dominant party. This happens mostly in early to middle stages of modernization, frequently through revolution[15].

The above statements have given an introductional overview on the topics of political systems in general and especially stressed the importance of roles and their structures in political systems. In doing so, we found, generally speaking, two major types of political systems:

- systems with a secular and highly differentiated role structure, such as:
  - Anglo-American political systems
  - Pre-industrial political systems
  - Continental-European political systems
- systems with a role structure being completely controlled and penetrated by the political centre, such as:
  - Totalitarian political systems

Of course, this list is still not accurate and incomplete. Thus, the following chapters will offer a more detailed classification of political systems.

# 2.1.2. Political Systems in East Asia

So far, we have classified political systems in general. This chapter will focus on political systems in East Asia. As will be shown, the role structure of political systems in East Asia tends to be far less differentiated than, for instance, in Europe or the USA. According to Almond's classification of political systems we would thus have to label these systems as totalitarian. As this chapter will show, such an assumption is clearly inadequate. Thus, a further and more detailed classification of political systems with a special focus on East Asian countries' characteristics will to be given.

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[13] (1958): 419
[14] In "Understanding East Asian Political Systems: Origins, Characteristics and Changes", in *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2003): 61-62
[15] See Huntington in Huntington/ Moore (Ed.) (1970): 11-12

Research on this topic has been extensive and various authors have already investigated into this field. However, most researchers chose a historical approach to describe or characterize East Asian political system of the past and the presence[16]. This might be interesting from a historical point of view. However, in constructing a theoretical framework for this research paper such approaches are little helpful.

Kim Yung-myung delivered [17] a valuable contribution regarding the classification of East Asian political system. First, he highlights two aspects of East Asian political systems, namely a unipolar nature of power and paternalistic power relations. The unipolar nature of power represents the hardware, the institutional side of East Asian political system. On the other side, the paternalistic power represents the software, the cultural side of East Asian political systems. These two aspects continuously affect each other. Since political power in most East Asian nations is concentrated in unitary power centres, Kim thus calls them **unipolar regimes**. The power is concentrated in one centre, but Kim's concept of a power centre is very flexible. According to him a power centre can be a personal ruler, a monolithic party, a coalition of political/ bureaucratic/ economic elites and so on.  Eventually, what all of these forms of power centres have in common is the fact that decision making is left to a very exclusive group of individuals. Consequently, Kim identifies the following types of unipolar regimes in East Asia:

- one party regime
- one man rule or personal regime
- oligarchical unipolar regime

According to Kim, in a **one party regime** one political party, usually with Leninist or quasi-Leninist ideological characteristics, dominates the state and society. He points out, that in the course of time two such party groups have emerged in East Asia, namely the Communists (in China, Vietnam and North Korea) and the Nationalists (in Singapore and Taiwan). He describes present China and present North Korea as a system with a monolithic and all pervasive Communist party and an enforced official Communist ideology. Kim further notices, that Taiwan once also used to possess a similar regime structure, with the Guomindang (GMD) as power centre. However, he argues that the GMD was less pervasive and penetrating than the CCP or the

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[16] Lucian Pye, for instance, emphasized the tradition of a strong state and a weak society. He further argued that East Asian political systems are especially characterized through patriotism, political intolerance and personalism. See Pye, Lucian/ Pye, Mary W. (1985)

[17] In „Understanding East Asian Political Systems: Origins, Characteristics, and Changes", in *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2003): 45-78

Workers' Party of Korea (KWP). Similar tendencies can be observed in the history of Singapore, which Kim calls a now nominally democratic regime. People participate in parliamentary elections, but the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) maintains political majority and citizens rights are heavily circumscribed. Thus, present Singapore has to be considered a one party rule regime.

In a **one man rule or personal regime** power is concentrated in the hands of one strong leader. Kim names North Korea under Kim Il Sung, China under Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, Singapore under Lee Kuan Yew and Taiwan under Chiang Kaishek as typical examples. He also names South Korea in this context. This might be surprising at first sight, but seems clearer when Kim stresses that there is a difference between a one party rule and a personal regime. In doing so, he points out that the main difference between these two models is that one party rules tend to be more institutionalized than a one man rule, which usually doesn't possess an enduring party. Since a one party regime is more institutionalized and stable, a regime change in such a system is much slower, more piecemeal and more controlled than in a rather turbulent and volatile one man regime. As Ahn Chung-si and Jaung Hoon have pointed out, political parties in South Korea tend to be very unstable and short lived, due to several reasons[18]. In this context, Kim defines South Korea as an unstable one man rule or personal regime and the above mentioned respective time periods of North Korea, China, Singapore and Taiwan as more institutionalized one party rule.

Finally, Kim describes the third type of political systems in East Asia, namely the **oligarchical unipolar regime**. In such a system political pluralism generally exists, but power is basically shared among a small circle of a political, economic and bureaucratic elite. Kim names Japan as typical example for such a system: it features a liberal, pluralistic democracy, but power is concentrated among conservative politicians, major conglomerates (in Japan referred to as zaibatsu) and bureaucrats of higher posts. However, Kim acknowledges that there is a certain level of pluralism

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[18] In contrast to other democratic systems, political parties in South Korea are often tailored to the respective party top candidate. Ahead of elections, parties try to rally for votes mainly through the geographical origin of the top candidate. This leads to a high degree of personalization of political parties. After electoral failure, parties are often artificially redesigned or completely dissolved. Thus, political party landscape in South Korea is highly volatile and unstable. See Ahn Chung-si/ Jaung Hoon in Blondel, Jean/ Inoguchi, Takashi/ Marsh, Ian (Ed.) (1999): 144, 148

in-between these groups and that Japan certainly is more pluralistic both socially and politically than other unipolar East Asian systems[19].

At this point, Kim's characterization definitely shows some flaws in its argumentation. Especially his definition of present South Korea as a one man rule remains highly questionable. At first, this might sound logical in context with the supplementary information provided by Ahn and Jaung. However, the fact that Kim classifies present South Korea by the same model as, for instance, North Korea under Kim Il Sung or China under Mao Zedong, reveals the weak points of his classification. Especially, when he describes the characteristics of an oligarchical unipolar regime, it would have been more convincing to name South Korea along with Japan. South Korea as well as Japan possess a liberal, pluralistic democracy and, like in Japan, power in South Korea is concentrated as well among politicians (mostly conservative), economic conglomerates (in South Korea known as chaebol) and a bureaucratic elite. The main reason for Kim classifying South Korea as a one man rule is its highly unstable and volatile political party landscape when compared to Japan or Taiwan. However, he leaves out all other aspects of South Korea's political system. Thus, his classification of South Korea must be considered suboptimal.

Besides, one might argue as follows: if Kim defines present South Korea as a one man rule, how would he define South Korea under the military dictatorship of Park Chung Hee? However, Kim offers a solution to this paradox by introducing the concept of soft authoritarianism and hard authoritarianism. Authoritarianism is usually understood as a system with a low level of both political participation and state penetration into the society[20]. Based on this assumption, Kim explains soft and hard authoritarian regimes in order to further specify the differences of unipolar systems.

As Kim notes, **soft authoritarian regimes** employ persuasion, propaganda and material incentives as prime methods for social and political control. He names South Korea under the first years of Park Chung Hee, as well as Singapore and Taiwan as possible examples of soft authoritarian regimes. In contrast, **hard authoritarian regimes** employ more explicit and extensive physical repression for social and political control. Kim labels Vietnam, China, North Korea, South Korea

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[19] This might be due to the fact that Japan has had an earlier and longer experience with modernization and liberalization than other East Asian nations. Still though, compared with western politics, Japanese politics is still highly personalized.
[20] See Kaufman Purcell (1973): 310-312

under military rule of Park Chung Hee and Taiwan before political liberalization as hard authoritarian. The following table shall give a short overview on Kim's assumptions.

**Table 1:** Classification of East Asian political systems according to Kim

|  | **One party regime** | **One man rule** | **Oligarchical regime** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **hard authoritarianism** | - present China<br>- present North Korea<br>- Taiwan before 1987 | - South Korea (1972-1987) |  |
| **soft authoritarianism** | - present Singapore | - South Korea (1948-1960)<br>- South Korea (1987-1992) |  |
| **democracy*** | - present Taiwan | - present South Korea | - present Japan |

*contains elements of soft authoritarianism

This table of Kim's assumption eventually make last flaws in his argumentation obvious. First, it fails to classify Vietnam as hard or soft authoritarian one party regime[21]. Second, it classifies present China as hard authoritarian one party regime. However, according to his above mentioned definitions of hard- and soft authoritarianism, it would be more plausible to classify present China as soft authoritarian one party regime, China under Mao Zedong as hard authoritarian one man rule and China under Deng Xiaoping as hard authoritarian one party regime. Eventually, according to this short discussion on Kim's terms of hard and soft authoritarianism, one might get the impression that by introducing these two terms Kim basically tries to avoid the rather emotionally charged term of totalitarianism. However, in order to satisfactorily define the political system of China under Mao Zedong and North Korea under Kim Il Sung we will first have to examine the concepts of authoritarianism and totalitarianism.

# 2.1.3. Authoritarianism vs. Totalitarianism

Research on authoritarianism and totalitarianism has been vast and extensive and eventually saw its peak in the 1940s, in the last years of and shortly after WWII. Continuously, it has been sometimes utilized at early stages of the Cold War by various western institutions and individuals, thus often possessing a certain ideologized flavour. However, research on authoritarianism and totalitarianism experienced a revival in the late 1980s with the starting political disintegration and transformation process of various Communist countries and eventually the Soviet

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[21] Another question regarding this point: Were North Korea under Kim Il Sung or Singapore under Lee Kuan Yew hard or soft authoritarian one man rules?

Union itself. The central problem of research on authoritarianism and totalitarianism is that most studies don't offer a secure theoretical grounding since most researches are descriptive. Particularly the research on authoritarianism is primarily conducted as a psychological study on ethno-centrism and often doesn't assess other aspects of totalitarian and authoritarian research. Another problem is the fact that scholars use the terms 'authoritarian' and 'totalitarian' in completely different and sometimes contradicting ways. To give a full account of the state of art on authoritarianism and totalitarianism is next to impossible. The definitions of authoritarianism and totalitarianism differ so widely, because the two models were used for various scientific purposes (such as examining socio-economic developments or ideological patterns of authoritarian/ totalitarian societies). This makes a clear structured subdivision of authoritarianism and totalitarianism very difficult and confusing. Thus, I will refrain from analyzing these two systems separately in this chapter. Instead, I will first sum up the main school of thoughts among scholars regarding research on authoritarian and totalitarian regimes (in the sense of unipolar systems). Afterwards I will focus on the two scientific approaches typically chosen by scholars in the course of research on this topic, namely the political and socio-psychological approach.

**Main school of thoughts**

Regarding the main school of thoughts among scholars, the following list shall give an overview. The first group of scholars regard authoritarianism as a subtype of totalitarianism. Hence, they perceive two forms of totalitarianism: Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) and Left Wing Authoritarianism (LWA). This group consequently considers RWA equal to authoritarianism. Typical examples of this concept are the works of Merle Fainsod, Roy C. Macridis and Robert C. Tucker[22]. In contrast, LWA has been subject of heated debates among scholars. Feldman, for instance, argued[23] that there is little empirical evidence that authoritarianism can evolve in left-wing ideologies, thus labelling the concept of LWA obsolete[24]. In contrast, Altemeyer has developed a left-wing authoritarian scale[25]. Members of the second group treat totalitarianism as a subtype of authoritarianism by equating LWA

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[22] See Fainsod (1963): 3-4; Macridis (1983): 170-231; Tucker (1971): 3-19
[23] In "Enforcing Social Conformity: A Theory of Authoritarianism" in *Political Psychology*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (March 2003): 44
[24] He concluded that Authoritarianism eventually is the same as Conservatism. See also Forbes (1990), Ray (1976, 1983)
[25] See Altemeyer (1996)

with communism. Scholars such as Gabriel A. Almond, G. Bingham Powell, Jr., Edward Shils, Talcott Parsons, Herbert McClosky, Dennis Chong, Milton Rokeach and Amos Perlmutter tend to use the concept of authoritarianism in this way[26]. The third group of researchers sharply distinguishes authoritarianism and totalitarianism and classifies these terms more or less as *sui generis*. The works of Juan Linz, Ferdinand A. Hermens, Leon P. Baradat and Jean K. Kirkpatrick represent this school of thought[27]. The fourth group is the most numerous group. Scholars of this group apply very inhomogeneous and different approaches. For instance, John Dewey defines[28] totalitarianism as the opposite of pluralism. George Sabine equates[29] Nazism and fascism (but not communism) with totalitarianism, while Hannah Arendt, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Carl J. Friedrich contrarily define Nazism, fascism and communism as totalitarianism[30]. Finally, the fifth group of scholars avoids authoritarianism and totalitarianism dichotomy and instead provides own classificatory models. Examples include Franz Neumann, whose classification model differed between simple, caesaristic and totalitarian dictatorships[31]. Giovanni Satori's model distinguished between one-party totalitarian, one-party authoritarian and one-party pragmatic dictatorships[32]. Dirk Berg-Schlosser's classification system described stable polyarchic, stable socialist and stable authoritarian regimes[33].

**Political and socio-psychological approaches**

As mentioned above, the perceptions of authoritarianism and totalitarianism as a concept differ so greatly, because scholars have focused on various aspects of authoritarianism and totalitarianism. The two main trends concerning the approach towards of authoritarianism and totalitarianism deal with political and psychological aspects of these two models. Some approaches on **political aspects** of authoritarianism and totalitarianism shall be highlighted below. Most prominently,

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[26] See Almond/ Powell Jr. (1980): 44-45; Shils in Christie/ Jahoda (1954): 24-29; Parsons (1951): 194; Chong/ McClosky in "Similarities and Differences between Left-wing and Right-wing Radicals" in *The British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 5 (July 1985): 329-363; Rokeach (1960); Perlmutter (1981)
[27] See Linz in Greenstein/ Polsby (Eds.) (1975): 175-412; Hermens (1958): 134-141; Baradat (1979): 285; Kirkpatrick (1982)
[28] In (1946): 28-73
[29] In (1959): 897-898
[30] See Arendt (1951); Brzezinki/ Friedrich (1956)
[31] See (1958): 233-247
[32] See (1976): 222
[33] In „African Political Systems: Typology and Performance" in *Comparative Political Studies,* Vol. 17 (April 1984): 121-151

Hannah Arendt claims[34] the following six characteristics to be found in modern totalitarianism:

- Ideology (in terms of an universal explanation for everything with its own logic)
- Terror (is not used to frighten, but to rule the masses)
- Clear and strict hierarchy & organizational principles[35]
- Mobilization of the masses (leads to the abolishment of the individual's identity and the creation of the Mass Man)
- Social ties are broken (lack of privacy, no space for realm)
- Interdependence between leader and society

Partly in support of Arendt's claims, Friedrich names[36] the following five closely linked factors shared by all totalitarian regimes:

- An official ideology
- A single mass party
- A technologically conditioned near-complete monopoly of control of effective armed combat
- A technologically conditioned near-complete monopoly of control of effective mass communication and mass media
- A system of terrorist police control

Waldemar Gurian defines[37] four characteristics of totalitarian states:

- An artificially organized, specific ruling group under a leadership and hierarchy
- A specific absolute belief in its mission
- A political religion connected with the production of public opinion from above
- All direct instruments and means of power are under direct state control

Karl Deutsch's short list featured[38] three characteristics of totalitarian systems:

- Extreme mobilization of effort
- Unity of Command
- Effective Power of Enforcement

To break it down, what most of these models regard as basic political aspects of totalitarian regimes are an official ideology, a monopoly of information, a state apparatus with a strict hierarchy, and the use of terror. The **official ideology**

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[34] In (1958): 190-196
[35] However, Arendt notes that these hierarchical elements are replaced by antibureaucratic organizational principles when it comes to putting the machinery of terror in operation.
[36] In (Ed.) (1964): 52-53
[37] In „The Totalitarian State" in *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 40 (October 1978): 514-527
[38] In Friedrich (Ed.) (1964): 308-332

propagated by the political authorities serves as the basis for political argumentation. It forms a society's identity and describes a society's past, present (problems) and glorious utopian future as ultimate goal in a pseudo-scientific [39] mystical way. Ideology in totalitarian regimes is monopolized, sanctified and proselytized by the ruling elite in order to control, manipulate and mobilize the masses[40]. In order to maintain this doctrine, authorities need to exert tight control on mass media, thus resulting in a **monopoly of information** and an extinction of any form of political opposition or pluralism [41]. In consequence, in order to maintain its information monopoly the totalitarian state apparatus has to possess a clear and strict hierarchy. Such **strictly hierarchical forms of organization** are also essential for exerting tight control over people by all means. In totalitarian societies standards of daily political life are reversed, when compared to so-called liberal systems. Totalitarian leaders depend on the support of the masses[42], thus mass mobilization plays a central role in totalitarian systems. The continuous mobilization of people is the standard condition in such a regime, it keeps the system agile and flexible. In this context, a standstill in daily political life can somehow be regarded as worst case scenario. This has several reasons. First, a continuous mobilization of the masses (in theory) supports the implementation of short- and middle term political goals. Political campaigns like China's Great Leap Forward or North Korea's Chollima Movement brought forward so called 'production races' in which communes were admonished to compete for higher production rates of various economic goods, thus presumably speeding up economic development. Second, it serves certain psychological purposes. As Arendt has pointed out, continuous incitement and mobilization of people results in the individual's increased acceptance and loyalty of/ towards authority, due to various psychological facts[43]. Arendt further explains in her Mass Man Theory, the ultimate goal of daily mass mobilization combined with terror[44] is mass atomization - the

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[39] See for instance Aryan Science in Hitler Germany or Bolshevik Science in the Soviet Union. See Arendt (1958): 364, 383

[40] In contrast, in authoritarian regimes these three features of ideology are never fully achieved (although it might remain an ultimate political long term goal). See Sung (1994): 846

[41] This is the main reason why totalitarian regimes are a rather modern phenomenon, since they heavily depend on modern forms of technology and organizational forms.

[42] Only through absolute support of the masses totalitarian leaders are more likely to overcome interior and exterior political crisis.

[43] Activism gives answers to fundamental questions like *"Who am I?"* or *"What do I stand for?"*. Through mass mobilization the masses elaborate a common identity propagated by the authorities (for instance, the 'Volksgemeinschaft' in Hitler Germany). See Arendt (1958): 331

[44] See for instance China's Anti-Rightist Movement or North Korea's land reform in the 1940s

complete isolation of the individual through the destruction of all forms of social ties[45]. Thus, the individual's mind becomes disaffected and the individual eventually turns into the Mass Man. The Mass Man is part of the mass and the mass itself is a new coherent class. The masses are not held together by a consciousness of common interest and they lack specific class articulations. Its only common feature is loyalty towards state authorities.

By examining Arendt's Mass Man Theory, we have already highlighted some psychological aspects of totalitarian regimes. The following passage shall give a more detailed overview on the findings of various scholars regarding **socio-psychological aspects** of authoritarian and totalitarian systems. Initial researches on this topic started with the aim of explaining collective social behaviour and proposed that the rulers of such regimes hold hostile attitude towards a certain group in society. For instance, with the concept of the Authoritarian Personality, Theodor Adorno et.al.[46] tried to explain such attitudes through personality factors. The concept was a sociological approach and argued that authoritarianism predicates social relations on a hierarchical principle in which every member of society becomes superior and subordinate to another member, thus eventually resulting in a repressive social environment. Similarly, Tomkins pointed out[47] that even simple interpersonal relationships in society automatically imply normative authority. According to him, children tend to be seen as essentially wicked, thus they must be impressed with the importance of obedience and respect for authority. In contrast, adults (especially parents) are idealized and are closely identified with the normative[48]. In this sociological context, an individual's educational and social background holds a special role. According to various scholars these two factors are the main sociological roots of authoritarianism, since they can limit an individual's perspective. Most prominently, Kelman and Barclay used their F-Scale Theory to put performance in school examinations in a psychological context. According to them, a low scorer at school tends to be a person with a very wide psychological universe. In contrast, a high scorer at school presumably moves in narrow circles and doesn't

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[45] Even former friends are transformed into bitter enemies: if an individual is accused or suspected of doing something 'wrong', his friend will very likely cooperate with the authorities in order to save his own life. This has two effects: First, the state extends his network of terror and control to the very grassroots of society. Second, it results in people avoiding intimate contacts as much as possible, thus further increasing their isolation. In this context, Arendt also stressed the importance of a secret police in totalitarian regimes. *Ibid.* : 323, 419-437

[46] See Adorno/ Frenkel-Brunswick/ Levinson/ Sanford (1950)

[47] Tomkins (1963)

[48] See also Fromm (1945, 1987), Reich (1986)

recognize the existence of a range of approaches and values[49]. Coherently, Chinoy suggested[50] that the awareness of cultural diversity is an antidote to ethnocentrism in the terms of ethnic authoritarianism. By analyzing working-class authoritarianism, Lipset argued[51] that low education, low participation in voluntary associations, little reading and isolated occupations produces a lack of a sense for reality, thus leading to narrow-mindedness, which prevents a sophisticated perspective on complex political structures. Similar to Lipset, Stewart and Hoult have described[52] an individual's social milieu as the cause for authoritarianism. According to them, social milieus limit an individual's perspective: by imposing a certain societal role on the individual through "class consciousness", the individual can't play new roles and is not able to understand or sympathize with groups being not coherent to his own group. Thus, the individual tends to reject such groups and feels hostile towards them[53]. Consequently, Stewart and Hoult find that authoritarian attitudes are particularly evident among: 1) the less educated, 2) the aged, 3) the rural, 4) members of disadvantaged minorities, 5) members of dogmatic religious organizations, 6) lower socioeconomic strata, 7) social isolates, and 8) those who have been reared in an authoritarian family environment[54].

However, the sociological approach of Adorno's et.al. Authoritarian Personality Concept and other similar theories have faced vast criticism since the late 1970s. Consequently, numerous scholars tried to refine Adorno's et.al. concept. Bob Altemeyer used[55] his Social Learning Theory to describe authoritarianism as an individual belief about the appropriate relationship that should exist between certain groups in society. Thus, Altemeyer defines RWA as a combination of the following three things:

- Authoritarian submission (a high degree of submission to authorities who are perceived as legitimate leaders of society)
- Authoritarian aggression (a general aggressiveness against various groups and persons of society)
- Conventionalism (a high degree of adherence to social conventions)

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[49] See Barclay/ Kelman (1963): 608
[50] See Chinoy (1967): 55
[51] (1960)
[52] Hoult/ Stewart (1959)
[53] Note how Stewart and Hoult's concept is completely diametrical to Arendt's assumptions, in which she claims that the complete destruction and abolishment of classes is a unique feature of totalitarian societies.
[54] See Hoult/ Stewart (1959): 275
[55] In (1981)

Duckitt[56] reconceptualized authoritarianism as a group phenomenon[57] by combining Altemeyer's theories on RWA[58] with the Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner[59]. In doing so, Duckitt noted that authoritarianism to some extent can be understood as a **psychological mechanism**. Duckitt assumed, that individuals identifying with a group (e.g. by national or ethnic standards) will automatically develop authoritarian beliefs, if both of the following scenarios will happen: 1) a strong identification of the individual with the group, and 2) a threat to that group. In partial support of Duckitt's assumptions, other scholars have referred[60] to historical archival data indicating that authoritarian behaviour[61] is on the rise in threatening times. Rosenblatt's et.al. Terror Management Theory[62] argued, that the awareness of human mortality produces a potential for overwhelming terror. Thus, in order to deal with this dilemma, societies develop new cultural world views in order to give life a deeper meaning. Consequently, all threats to this new cultural world view have to be eliminated[63]. In contrast, other scholars[64] have suggested that the mere perception of threat or a major crisis doesn't automatically cause authoritarian behaviour. Instead, authoritarian behaviours would only be activated among those people already possessing authoritarian dispositions. In this context, Feldman and Stenner have

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[56] (1989, 1992)

[57] See for instance Bettelheim's Coercion Theory, in which he explained why once established totalitarian systems become attractive even to its opponents. Bettelheim referred to the Hitler salute. Hitler's appearance in the public was usually welcomed by his followers through the Hitler salute. According to Bettelheim, even Hitler opponents will perform the Hitler salute in such a situation in order to not be deviant from the masses. See "Remarks on the Psychological Appeal of Totalitarianism" in *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 12, No. 1, *The Psychological Approach to the Social Sciences* (October 1952): 91

[58] (1981, 1988, 1996)

[59] (1986)

[60] See Doty/ Peterson/ Winter (1991), McCann/ Stewin (1984, 1987), Fromm (1941), Sales (1972, 1973), Rokeach (1960), Wilson (1973), Wilkinson (1972)

[61] For instance, Sales (1973) found that rates of various indicators of authoritarian behaviour (such as rise of police budget, power themes in comic books, prison sentences for sex offenders or the purchase of attack dogs) were higher during periods of crisis and societal stress (e.g. during the 1930s economic depression)

[62] See Rosenblatt et.al. (1989)

[63] In this context, Kamenetsky notes that the communist and fascist movements in the Soviet Union and Germany have emerged amidst the turmoil and insecurity of a profoundly shaken or endangered society. Both movements offered a visionary program of a new stability of society. No attempts were made to assimilate already existing religions to the goals of the respective regime, since they were supposed to be replaced by the Bolshevik/ Nazi new world view, thus inventing an own religion (ideology), which eventually would lead to a frictionless society. See "Totalitarianism and Utopia" in *Chicago Review*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (1964): 115, 121, 123

[64] For instance Feldmann/ Stenner (1997), Feldmann (2003), Rickert (1998); Bain noticed that political propaganda mainly addresses neutral or ignorant people and that overt propaganda will not convince those with opposite ideas, see N.S. Timasheff "On Propaganda" in *The American Catholic Sociological Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (March 1943): 13, 15

also described a polarization effect[65], in which people with low authoritarian attitudes tend to response to a threat in rather libertarian terms. Albert Lauterbach noted that totalitarian mentality reflects the emotional inability of excessively insecure persons to bear criticism[66].

## 2.1.4. Summary

In the political part of this papers' theoretical framework we defined political systems in general and went on by discussing the concepts of authoritarianism and totalitarianism and how to apply these concepts on China in the era of Mao Zedong and North Korea under Kim Il Sung. According to the findings of this chapter, we can conclude that both China and North Korea in the respective time periods were totalitarian regimes (or hard authoritarian regimes, as Kim would label them). This is, because both countries feature

- an official political ideology with a belief system and a political narrative,
- a monopoly of information and thus strong influence on the art sector,
- a state apparatus with strictly hierarchical characteristics, which rests upon a continuous mobilization of the masses as a standard political condition.

Of course, Arendt and other scholars have described further characteristics of totalitarian regimes. However, the three features mentioned above represent the least common denominator of all totalitarian theses' political approach dealt with in Chapter 2.1.3. Considering the socio-psychological approach on the totalitarian regimes of China and North Korea, we point out Arendt's central argument of her Mass Man Theory, which describes the isolation of the individual as the central goal of these regimes.

## 2.2. Ideological Framework

Every political system is embedded in a set of meanings and purposes that may be called ideology, political values, national character, cultural ethos etc. In this chapter, I will refer to this set of meanings and purposes by the term 'ideology'. Hereby, I use Almond's definition of ideology by describing it as the systematic and explicit

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[65] See „Perceived Threat and Authoritarianism" in *Political Psychology*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (December 1997): 761
[66] In Friedrich (Ed.) (1964): 281-296

formulation of a general orientation to politics[67]. Closely connected with this definition is the term 'propaganda'. Propaganda is nowadays a very negative word, often used by political opposition to criticize the ruling elite. However, the term 'propaganda' originally used to be positive: by means of disseminating, propaganda propagates a body of ideas and concepts. Political propaganda eventually reached its interim climax in the 20th century through the extensive utilization of various fascist and communist regimes, thus resulting in a general negative attitude towards the term 'propaganda'. However, when analyzing sociological phenomenons, such as propaganda, any normative elements (references to a given value system) should be avoided. The following passage shall give a short overview on the definition of various scholars regarding propaganda. Furthermore, I will demonstrate the operating mode of propaganda and ultimately establish a context between political ideologies and political systems. Subsequently, the political ideologies of China and North Korea and their impact on art will be discussed based on the Four Level Pyramid Model.

# 2.2.1. Defining Propaganda

As noted above, the term 'propaganda' itself actually already is propagandistic, since it is often used by political opposition to label the political ideology of the ruling elite. The ruling class instead usually refers to its own policies by using the term 'public relation' or simply PR. In this context, Winand Gellner notes[68] that propaganda can be understood as an advertising technique aimed at the consolidation of power, if it is applied by the ruling class. On the opposite, if deployed by the political opposition, the main purpose of propaganda is to weaken and eventually overthrow the political elite. The Brockhaus encyclopaedia defines propaganda as advertisement serving mainly intellectual and idealistic purposes[69]. Propaganda includes a set of strategies for political sense making and the inducement and control of public opinion and cognitive perception, aimed at the production of societal values and symbols[70]. Eric Hobsbawn characterized[71] propaganda as 'invented tradition': a set of practises,

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[67] See „Comparative Political Systems" in *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (August 1956): 397
[68] In Nohlen, Dieter/ Schultze, Rainer-Olaf (Eds.) (2005): 798
[69] See Daniel/ Siemann in Daniel/ Siemann (Eds.) (1994): 8
[70] *Ibid.* : 12
[71] In his introduction to (1984): I

which seek to rehearse certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition[72]. Read Bain has referred to the term 'propaganda' by describing it as:

> *"the procedures used by individuals or groups to influence the public favourably towards the values of said individuals or groups without the public knowing of the source of such influence. Thus, propaganda is solely defined by whether or not the identity and purposes of those trying to influence the public were known."*[73]

Cantril defines propaganda similar and thus concludes[74], that propaganda is well planned, selfish, non-critical and that it ultimately can be labelled good or bad, depending upon the social point of view of the individual judging it. Propaganda is manipulated and manipulative. Thus, Mittler argues[75] that whenever propaganda has an effect, this effect is bound to be negative, and that times in which propaganda flourishes are usually considered unhappy times by the people propaganda is deployed upon. Timasheff gets more precise and sees the main purpose of propaganda in inducing and indeterminate mass of people to accept definite principles of action[76]. Silverstein developed[77] the term 'integration propaganda' by defining it as the kind of propaganda, which makes people support or accept a certain political system or leadership. He further notes that integration propaganda is essential, since no modern society or belief system can function long without the support of most of its citizens.

# 2.2.2. Effectivness of Propaganda

Why is propaganda so effective? As Cantrill has pointed out[78], there are two main explanations to this question. First, most words, objects or symbols are linked with emotions. This means, that most of the time people don't react to the dictionary meaning of a word, but instead follow their own or societal associations with certain

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[72] Jacques Ellul noted that propaganda can only be effective when it is applied over a long time. See Ellul (1965): 18

[73] In *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 6: 887, see also N.S. Timasheff "On Propaganda" in *The American Catholic Sociological Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (March 1943): 10

[74] See „Propaganda Analysis" in *The English Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (March 1938): 217

[75] See "Popular Propaganda? Art and Culture in Revolutionary China" in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 152, No. 4 (December 2008): 466

[76] See „Cultural Order in Liberal, Fascist and Communist Society" in *The American Catholic Sociological Review*, Vol. 3: 63-65, see also "On Propaganda" in *The American Catholic Sociological Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (March 1943): 10

[77] See "Toward a Science of Propaganda" in *Political Psychology*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (March 1987): 49,50

[78] See „Propaganda Analysis" in *The English Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (March 1938): 219

words[79]. Second, a high percentage of people are unsure of themselves. These individuals seek a meaning in those things they don't understand, thus they are more likely to accept the judgement of an authority or other semi-authoritarian sources[80]. These two reasons are perfect conditions for disseminating specific sets of ideas or values. Propaganda aims at important elements of the human mind, such as the primordial hope and the primordial fear. These psychological elements are all heavily influenced by self-interest. Thus, it is no wonder that seduction and promises have a deep impact on the majority of people. As a consequence, the first task of a person or group trying to propagate a certain set of ideas and values – in short: the propagandist – is to gain profound knowledge about the psychological patterns of his target audience[81]. Subsequently, the propagandist must connect the propagated set of ideas with certain attitudes or symbols[82], which people already know and feel strong about. These attitudes or symbols usually appeal to nearly every person, since they are intentionally very vague[83]. In a final step the propagandist has to build up the propagated attitudes and symbols in the public through the dissemination of propaganda via mass media and/or political organizations[84]. In this undertaking, a picture or other visual methods are by far the most effective tool. In contrast to a political text, the core message of a political picture is also amenable to illiterate people. Furthermore, visual media are in favour towards intellectual phlegm, thus transferring its message very easily and vividly. In short, an enthralling picture along with a short explanation may be more effective than long political essays or articles published in newspapers[85]. Besides, newspaper industries have often been affected

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[79] Presumably, most people would consider a strawberry a positive object, while referring to a gun with negative attitudes. In fact, both object's dictionary meaning are originally neutral, but consequently transformed by our emotional linkings with these words.

[80] Such as a newspaper editorial or a radio commentator.

[81] Goebbels labelled this procedure as *'Seeing with the eyes of the masses'*.

[82] Bourdieu noted that the struggle for social recognition is a fundamental dimension of all social life. In this struggle cultural resources, processes and institutions hold individuals or groups in competitive and self-perpetuating hierarchies of domination. Thus, all cultural symbols, such as eating habits, language, religion or style in dress, embody interests and function to enhance social distinctions. See Swartz, David: "Bridging the Study of Culture and Religion: Pierre Bourdieu's Political Economy of Symbolic Power" in *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (1996): 72

[83] Typical vague and often repeated symbols are justice, beauty, liberty or patriotism.

[84] Jacques Ellul pointed out that propaganda is only effective, if it is deployed by an organized group. See (1965): 61

[85] In 1923 Nadezhda Krupskaia, Lenin's wife, noted: *"For the present and near future, a peasant can learn to improve his production only, if he is taught by visual example."*, See Bonnell (1997): 5

by the shortage of economic resources, thus resulting in the disruption of the print industry[86].

The phenomenon of propaganda itself and its application is omnipresent in all forms of political systems. However, in totalitarian or authoritarian systems propaganda is monopolized by the ruling authority, while propaganda in e.g. democratic systems is rather pluralistic[87]. Generally speaking, politicians in all forms of political systems have to deal with basically two groups in society: political supporters and opponents. The ruling political elite usually has the choice to deal with political opposition by force or by controlling what information the public and/ or political opponents receive. Considering the latter option, extracting or manipulating the right aspects of a message is hereby more essential than its actual amount of truth. If done correctly, this creates a more favourable view towards the government. Every state has a political ideology: a logically structured belief system that covers nearly all aspects of human existence. Such a belief system can serve many purposes. First, it can serve as legitimation for the exercise of power of a certain political elite or of a whole state[88]. Second, especially in totalitarian states such ideologies often include concepts of a perfect human being in an utopian final developmental stage[89]. Thus, in order to reach this final stage, all parts of society are ordered to follow the state's doctrine. People have to internalise the propagated values and ideas[90]. Every aspect of daily life is utilized and becomes part of a huge clockwork, in which every person, institution and action is assigned with a special role. Nothing exists for the mere sake of itself, instead everything has to serve the respective ideology's short or long term goals. These roles of society are thus also often mentioned in legal texts such as constitutions or legal codes. Such a thorough utilization of daily life aspects can only be achieved and controlled through a

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[86] The Soviet Union's civil war and the October Revolution caused a national shortage in paper and printing. The main party organ Pravda had a daily press run of approximately 138.000 copies and all 25 Red Army newspapers in total 250.000 copies. Even when considering that newspapers were shared among several readers, the audience reached through newspapers was still outnumbered by visual propaganda in public spaces. *Ibid.*: 5

[87] See Gellner in Nohlen, Dieter/ Schultze, Rainer-Olaf (Eds.) (2005): 798

[88] For instance, in the case of North Korea and South Korea both countries' belief systems, namely Juche and respectively anti-communism, served both nations as fundamental argument in its right to exist.

[89] See for instance communism.

[90] Therefore, political ideology and education are closely connected with each other, especially in totalitarian or authoritarian systems. John R. Lott, Jr. has argued that public educational spending in totalitarian systems is above-average when compared to political systems with political pluralism. See "Public Schooling, Indoctrination, and Totalitarianism" in *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 107, No. S6 (December 1999): 129, 154

hierarchical, strictly organized group as described by Arendt. This ultimately leads to an information monopoly by the respective group.

## 2.2.3. Aesthetics & Art

Generally speaking, art actually is just what it is, nothing else. For instance, when we take a look at a painting, we basically see composed colours painted on varying materials[91]. However, since such artworks are usually projected for human vision, we perceive these images intelligently and with comprehension. This is because aesthetic symbols and values[92] existing in our subconscious influence our process of thinking and judging. The process of implementing and acquiring such sets of symbols and values is a truly complex field of study and provides possibility for in-depth research, but would definitely go beyond the scope of this research paper. However, we acknowledge that such values and symbols can be actively shaped by other persons through respective measurements. Thus, the possibility of influencing a human's aesthetic values is a valuable tool for political ideologies.

The Greek word *aesthesis* originally means 'sensation' or 'sense perception'. Thus, aesthetics can be defined as the activity by which human beings communicate feelings to each other by external signs[93]. Consequently, other human beings are also infected by these feelings and experience them. Plato offered a profound discussion on art as a political instrument. He regarded politics itself as art: aesthetic forms of parliamentary democracy or a revolutionary movement may offer significant differences than aesthetic form accompanying totalitarian states or monarchies[94]. Art in the service of unipolar political systems tends to be magical and authoritarian, rather than critical and democratic. It also tends to be dramatic, since tragedy is of all poetic forms the one, which produces the most intense aesthetic effects[95]. According to Plato, both in politics and art, optimum psychological power is achieved by the

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[91] The concept of reduction of artwork to its physical identity, thus reducing art to the identity of its medium, is the theoretical idea of reductionism. See Kuspit, Donald B.: "Authoritarian Abstraction" in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Autumn 1977): 26

[92] For a detailed examination of aesthetic values see Walton, Kendall L.: "How marvelous! Toward the theory of aesthetic value" in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Summer 1993): 499-510

[93] See Rieff, Philip: "Aesthetics Functions in Modern Politics" in *World Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (July 1953): 479

[94] *Ibid.*: 478-479

[95] This especially applies for political propaganda pictures in China and North Korea, as will be demonstrated in the Four Level Pyramid Model in Chapter 2.2.4.

concentration on a single personality[96]. Beyond doubt, a unipolar regime or a revolutionary movement has certain emotional intensity when being compared to the cool, unemotional democratic process lacking any image of tragedy.

This emotional intensity partly also relies on political ceremonialism, such as for instance the ceremonially and dramatically staged Nuremberg rallies in Hitler Germany or military parades with a consequent appearance of Mao in China. In such ceremonies the masses become both participants and spectators of an aesthetically organized self-exhibition. Political ceremonial aims to elicit the technical approval of the masses: it connects identical aesthetics of single individuals, thus forming a mass consciousness based on the same set of values and symbols. This builds up public excitement and eventually results in massive euphoria and a certain solidary 'all of us' feeling[97]. Ultimately, this artificial solidarity unites the common people and stabilizes the power of the ruling elite.

Leni Riefenstahl's 1932 film 'The Blue Light'[98] used a wide range of aesthetics, which would later be used in various so called Aryan artworks and served as starting point for Riefenstahl's carrier as a film director in Hitler Germany. The film's main character Junta lives for an ideal (the crystal cave as a retreating place) and thus bears some dispositions that would later come to rise in Hitler Germany: a spirit of self sacrifice and anti-rationalism infused with blind enthusiasm and overwrought pathos[99]. Similarly, Riefenstahl's 1938 film 'Olympia' also focuses on the topic of the athletes' self sacrifice and their strive for an ideal (winning the competition). In contrast, agony, suffering or physical pain are simply edited out and not aesthetisized[100]. Additionally, 'The Blue Light' also adapts Christian symbols like sacrifice, abandon and death[101]. The story is set in an isolated alpine village and portrays the village people as a homogeneous group, similar to the

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[96] The Greek mythodology's Oedipus drama is often considered a model of tragedy, because it focuses on a single action of one individual.

[97] In Hitler Germany this solidarity was labelled the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the Soviet Union referred to it by the term *bolshevik* and China called it *revolutionary masses*.

[98] The question, whether The Blue Light is Nazi-propaganda, is subject to heated debates among scientists. For a detailed discussion on this questions see, most prominently, Susan Sontag: "Fascinating Fascism" in *New York Review of Books* (February 6, 1975) but also Rentschler, Eric: "Fatal Attractions: Leni Refenstahl's 'The Blue Light'" in *October*, Vol. 48 (Spring 1989): 46-68 or Schulte-Sasse, Linda: "Leni Riefenstahl's Feature Films and the Question of Fascist Aesthetics" in *Cultural Critique*, No. 18 (Spring 1991): 123-148 as well as Kracauer, Sigfried (1947)

[99] See Rentschler, Eric: "Fatal Attractions: Leni Refenstahl's 'The Blue Light'" in *October*, Vol. 48 (Spring 1989): 58

[100] See Alkemeyer, Thomas (1996): 483

[101] Considering death, for instance, Junta undergoes a transformation in the story. In the beginning, she is an outcast and treated like an animal. However, after her death and indirectly bringing wealth to the village, she is suddenly admired.

*Volksgemeinschaft* propagated later in Hitler Germany. With its open countryside, idyllic communities and evocative past of peasants the film thus represents what Ernst Bloch called a "gothic dream against proletarian realities"[102]. All these are typical omnipresent elements in later on national socialist aesthetics and mythology.

# 2.2.4. Ideology & Art (The Four Level Pyramid Model)

Nations have always used artworks for certain political purposes. Art plays a manifold role in this process. It is used to re-teach history[103], form a collective identity[104] or legitimate a (new) ruling authority[105]. The tight state control in totalitarian systems not only dictates the guidelines[106] for the production of artworks, but also the destruction of certain art[107]. Additionally, the political elite abolishes independent art groups and instead sets up state art academies or groups, which are under tight political control. The main purpose of such academies is to teach and perform art along the guidelines of the political elite. Art in a totalitarian regime must engage the masses. It must use a visual language easily accessible to common people in order to reify the ruling authority's message. Successful visual language of propaganda art is ensured in three ways. First, through the preferential use of illustrations instead of written text.

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[102] See "Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to its Dialectics" in *New German Critique*, No. 11 (Spring 1977): 27

[103] Socialist Realism, for instance, was defined in the Soviet Union as the artistic method whose central principle is the accurate, historically concrete presentation of reality in its revolutionary development, and whose main task is the communist education of the masses. See Kernig (Ed.) (1972): „sozialistischer Realismus"

[104] As Mittler stated, most of her interviewees noted that the Chinese Cultural Revolution's cultural activities, such as singing revolutionary songs or discussing Mao Zedong Thoughts had two main effects: First, it explained the reasons and purposes of the revolution to the common people. Second, it actually made people spend their time together, thus forming a solidarity among people through acknowledging that everyone is even. See "Popular Propganda? Art and Culture in Revolutionary China" in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 152, No. 4 (December 2008): 466-489

[105] Political changes like revolutions discredit and destroy existing institutions. Thus, a new authority without legitimacy provides basis for another power to overthrow it.

[106] After taking control of the arts in the Soviet Union and abolishing all independent art groups, Stalin announced Socialist Realism as the only officially approved form of art and was bound to the following four principles: accessibility to the masses, class consciousness, relevance to current issues, faithfullness to the party. See Portal (2005): 20, 21

[107] For instance, in Hitler Germany artworks made by artists like Picasso, Van Gogh, Gauguin or Matisse were disrespected and continuously destroyed. In contrast, efforts were made to develop a kind of Aryan art. In July 1937 the "Exhibition of German Art" was held in Munich. Simultaneously an exhibition of "Degenerate Art" took place but was held in back rooms, hung badly and accompanied by derogatory labels, describing the works as "artistic anarchy", "Jewish rubbish" or "Marxist propaganda". *Ibid.*: 19

This method is often used in countries with a high illiteracy rate. As pointed out above, a vivid picture with an optional short explanation is rather graspable to the common people than a long political essay. Second, such illustrations become even more comprehensible to the masses through adopting and remodelling old symbols and cultural codes[108]. Such symbols represent the cultural repertoire of the common people and are known by most of them. Soviet style Socialist Realism adopted many orthodox-religious symbols. Thus, the once holy colour red was henceforth used for communism or to highlight important persons in propaganda posters. Lenin was often flanked by workers or peasants and thus replicated respective religious drawings of Jesus and his apostles[109]. Third, also an effective but rather long lasting method is to actually raise literacy rate of common people, thus making them more amendable for written propaganda[110].
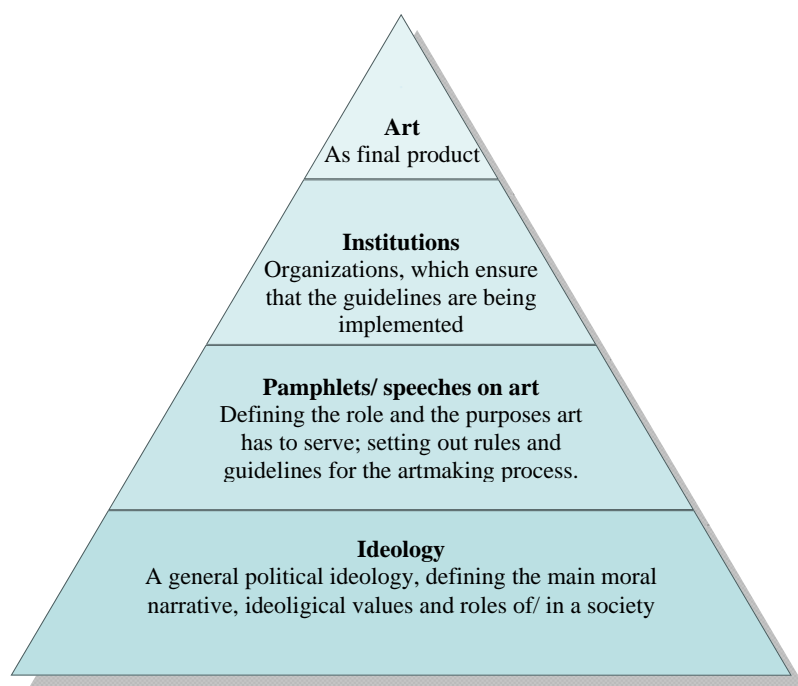


**Figure 1:** The Four Level Pyramid Model

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[108] See Bonnell (1997): 13
[109] Jesus was also often pictured in an oval frame, similar to later paintings of Mao Zedong at the peak of his personality cult. *Ibid.*: 146
[110] In the interviews Mittler conducted with people about their experience in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, several interviewees noted that campaigns like the anti-Confucius campaign urged people to read, discuss and criticize Confucius's works. Reading and participation at such discussion rounds was compulsory, millions of people, including farmers and workers, suddenly started reading by official order the Confucian classics. Thus literacy rate among common people was eventually raised through such campaigns. See "Popular Propaganda? Art and Culture in Revolutionary China" in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 152, No. 4 (December 2008): 474

The dissemination of political ideology through art in totalitarian systems can best be described through the Four Level-Model (see Figure 1). This passage shall describe the different levels by applying them on the specific cases of ideological art in China under Mao Zedong and North Korea under Kim Il Sung.

**Level I**

The first level consists of a political ideology in terms of a logically structured belief system. It describes the past, present and future history of a society, defining short and long term goals. This ideology embraces all aspects of daily life and all parts of society and eventually utilizes them for the sake of achieving these goals. By doing so it assigns certain roles to different parts of society, such as e.g. artists. Both in China and North Korea, Soviet style Marxism-Leninism initially represented this political ideology. However, in the course of history Marxism-Leninism was soon replaced by Mao Zedong Thought (China) and the Juche ideology (North Korea).

**Level II**

The detailed description and tasks of each role are described in detail in the second level. Pamphlets, essays or public speeches on certain topics often provide the foundation for these specific tasks and often define special institutions, which are meant to supervise the imposed art guidelines.

**China**

In the case of China, Mao Zedong's talks at the Yan'an forum on literature and art in May 1942 specified the role and tasks art(ists) had to perform in a socialist Chinese society. Here, Mao stated[111] that revolutionary art should primarily serve the abolition of imperialism, disseminate the ideas of Marxism and contribute to the liberation of the Chinese people[112]. He further called for an "army of artists in order to unite our people". According to Mao, revolutionary art is supposed to serve the masses, which

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[111] See "Reden bei der Aussprache in Yenan über Literatur und Kunst (Mai 1942)" in Mao Tse-Tung Ausgewählte Werke, Band III: 75

[112] At that time, parts of China were under Japanese military control amidst Japan's expansionary foreign policy throughout East Asia during WWII. See also "A national, scientific mass culture" in Mao Tse-Tung – Ausgewählte Werke, Band II: 444 and "The unity front of cultural work" (October 30th, 1944) in *ibid.*: 215 as well as "Speech at the CCP's national conference regarding propaganda work" (March 12th, 1957) in *ibid.* Band V: 480

he describes as 90%[113] of the whole Chinese population. He continues by stating that art for the sake of art is not acceptable:

> "Nowadays every form of art is bound to the rules and goals of certain societal classes and their political policies and causes. Proletarian literature and art is part of the whole revolutionary cause. (…) Art may influence politics, but it is ultimately subordinated to politics."[114]

Mao regarded revolutionary art a powerful tool of the revolution[115]. In fact it was even so important to him, that in 1948 he ordered to establish a nation-wide reporting system, through which he wanted the regional party branches to inform the party's central commission regularly about the progress made regarding military and political topics, such as land reform, party consolidation or propaganda and art[116]. In his Yan'an talks on literature and art Mao further sets guidelines for artists and their work. By doing so, he especially emphasizes the importance of realistic and authentic art:

> "The most important task of artists is to understand and become acquainted with the masses. At the moment most of our artists are uninformed and ignorant, because they stay away from the masses. (…) Artists have to spend a long time among the workers and farmers. (…) Only then the artist can eventually start with the creative part of his work. (…) Only the one connected with masses can regard himself as their [117] spokesman. Only a representative of the masses can teach them. Only the masses' student can become its teacher."[118]

Or:

> „Many things cannot be learned from books alone, these things have to be learned from the producers, from the workers and peasants. (…) It is not good, if one doesn't see a worker or peasant in his whole life. Our government officials, writers, artists, teachers and scientists – they all have to get to know the workers and peasants."

As well as:

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[113] The masses consist of: workers, as leading revolutionary force; farmers, as the revolution's numerical majority; armed workers and farmers like the 8th Route Army, as main power of the revolution; the working petite bourgeoisie and intellectuals in the city, as allies of the revolution. *ibid.*: 84

[114] *Ibid.*: 95-96

[115] "Revolutionary art is a powerful tool of the broad masses for the revolutionary cause. Ahead of the revolution, it is an ideological preparation towards the revolution. During the revolution, it is an essential and important phase in between the revolutionary front." Thus, Mao also emphasized the revolutionary art's role to ideologically unite the own people. See "A national, scientific mass culture" in *ibid.*, Band II: 446

[116] See „About establishing a reporting system" (January 7th, 1948) in *ibid.*, Band IV: 185-189

[117] See „Speech at the CCP's national conference regarding propaganda work" (March 12th, 1957) in *ibid.* Band V: 481-482

[118] See "Reden bei der Aussprache in Yenan über Literatur und Kunst (Mai 1942)" in *ibid.*, Band III: 79, 90, 93,108

> *"Revolutionary artists without any contact to the masses are like commanders without an army; their fighting power is not capable of defeating the enemy."[119]*

However, despite the clear guidelines and instructions as well as a tight control on the content of art, problems regarding the implementation of these guidelines continuously occurred and sparked Mao's anger. One of the central issues seemed to be the replacement of "old" art content with revolutionary content:

> *"The Theatre Newspaper is merely concerned with cow demons and snake ghosts[120]. (…) Especially in the theatre scene, the majority of artworks still consist of feudal and backwards stuff, socialist content is very rare. Only emperors, kings, military commanders and chancellors are allowed to enter the stage. The ministry of culture is supposed to look after cultural matters. It should be concerned with such problems, it should control and conscientiously solve them."[121]*

Or:

> *"The appearance of the film 'The Life of Wu Xun'[122] and especially the fact that the character of Wu Xun and this film in total are overwhelmingly praised, show what degree the ideological chaos among our national art scene has reached."[123]*

Over the time Mao eventually becomes clearer and even cynical, when addressing such ideological issues concerning art. Simultaneously he also emphasizes the primacy of politics over art:

> *"In the past 15 years, those [art] associations and the majority of the publications controlled by them (it is said, that some of them are actually good) basically didn't implement the policies of the party."[124]*

As well as:

> *"The socialist transformation in many [artistic] fields has yet had only minimal success. (…) Isn't it strange how many communists enthusiastically support the feudal and capitalist art, instead of socialist art?"[125]*

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[119] See "A national, scientific mass culture" in *ibid.* Band II: 447

[120] A synonym often used by Mao for describing ancient, imperial-style cultural content.

[121] See "Criticizing the Theatre Newspaper" (November 1963) in Mao Zedong Texte, Vol. 5: 186

[122] Wu Xun lived at the end of the Qing Dynasty. The film stressed Wu Xun's determined will to serve and fight for a certain cause, similar to Mao's emphasis of serving the revolution. However, since Wu Xun served and protected the "feudal, imperial rulers" instead of the "democratic masses", 'The Life of Wu Xun' was eventually labelled 'counter-revolutionary'.

[123] See "Pay close attention to the discussion regarding the film 'The Life of Wu Xun'" (May 20th, 1951) in Mao Tse-Tung – Ausgewählte Werke, Band V: 60

[124] See "Comment on the report of the Central Committee's propaganda department regarding the situation of the adjustment of the Chinese literature and art union and its various associated groups" (June 27th, 1964) in Mao Zedong Texte, Vol. 5: 305-306

[125] See "Comment on the report of Ke Qingshi" (December 12th, 1963) in *ibid.*, Vol. 5 (1979): 187

## North Korea

In North Korea, several public speeches of Kim Il Sung set out the guidelines for art[126]. Kim notes that art is an important medium for ideological education. Similarly to Mao, Kim first notes that workers, farmers and intellectuals are the driving force for the development of a new Korean society. Kim continues by stating that art has to serve a certain political cause:

> "We don't let artists perform on a stage just to make one's mark, but because artists should use their artistic activity to serve the masses."[127]

As well as:

> „You [the artists] should not create artworks, which are just using beautiful words. No matter how euphonic your works may be, as long as they don't live up to the demands of our time and our people, such artworks are useless."[128]

Or:

> "Artists should not create art for the sake of art. They should create art, which serves the Party and the revolution."[129]

In this context, Kim becomes very precise by defining the main purpose of art(ists) not only to serve the people and the revolution, but also the Party. Thus, Korea's art scene becomes a subordinate branch of the KWP:

> "Artists should be able to clearly identify and align their works along the requests of the Party's politics."[130]

Kim not only dictates the political content of artworks, but also for the artists themselves:

> "(…) it is every artist's duty to strictly support the Party's central committee in both political and ideological respect."[131]

Kim further describes other tasks for artists, such as obtaining profound ideological knowledge through private study sessions, eradicating old ideologies, inciting hatred against enemies, increasing the literacy rate among the masses or uniting the own people[132]. One of his central guidelines on art is the emphasis on realistic art.

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[126] The catalogue of the Kim Il Sung Works lists 43 speeches on the topic of literature and art. Most elements of these speeches were later adapted by Kim Jong Il in his Seed-Theory for the art of filmmaking.

[127] See "Become real artists of the revolutionary army!" (April 1947) in Selected Kim Il Sung Works, Vol. 3: 249

[128] See "On the tasks of artists at contemporary stage" in *ibid.*, Vol. 5: 333

[129] See "Motion pictures have to be meaningful and close to reality" (January 1958) in *ibid.*, Vol. 12: 10

[130] See "On the contemporary tasks of artists" (December 1949) in *ibid.*, Vol. 5: 333

[131] See "The enhanced fight against relics of old ideologies among artists" (October 1958) in *ibid.*, Vol. 12: 520

[132] See "The contemporary democratic construction and the tasks of artists" (September 1946) in *ibid.*, Vol. 2: 473-476

> *"In order to create authentic artworks, artists must dive deep into reality. Without a reference to reality, it is impossible to create art, which authentically reflects the life, thoughts, feelings and the ambitions of the people."*[133]

Or:

> *"Artists must know the reality very well and have to participate at the life of the masses. It is useless, if artists just sit around in Pyongyang. The life, which excites people, can only be seen and felt in factories and villages. One can only fully understand reality through continuously spending time together with the workers and peasants in order to become familiar with their needs."*[134]

Kim further suggests what kind of themes are supposed to be illustrated in revolutionary drawings.

> *"Especially such motives, which illustrate the revolutionary traditions of our party, are to be produced in large numbers. (…) Likewise, pictures depicting the struggle of our army and our people during the patriotic liberation war are to be painted."*[135]

Kim subsequently even orders, that these drawings must be used as wall decoration inside rooms and that their price has to be kept 'as low as possible', in order to enable everyone to purchase them[136]. Thus, he not only dictates the role of art, its task and its content, he also actively intervenes in economic affairs concerning art by determining the prices of certain pieces of art. Despite all these precise orders and guidelines on art, Kim obviously is not satisfied with their implementation, as he continuously criticizes the development of the art scene. He is especially concerned about the lack of authenticity in artworks:

> *"There are still errors occurring in our culture- and propaganda departments: artists still don't realize that they have to go into the masses. Their knowledge of the people's mindset and desires is still insufficient."*[137]

Or:

> *"Your [the artists'] work is detached from real life and still doesn't keep up with the fast developing reality. (…) At the moment, you are not capable of condignly illustrating the heroic struggle of our people or developing a critical attitude towards old ideas (…) in your artworks."*[138]

And:

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[133] See "On the development of art and the evolvement of a broad cultural mass work" (September 1947) in *ibid.*, Vol. 3: 419-420
[134] See "Towards an art in accordance with the Chollima Idea" (November 1960) in *ibid.*, Vol. 14: 422
[135] See "On some questions for the improvement and intensification of cultural and propaganda work" (March 1956) in *ibid.*, Vol. 10: 103
[136] *Ibid.*
[137] See "Artists are supposed to be fighters at the revolutionary front" (May 1946) in *ibid.*, Vol. 2: 237
[138] See "On some questions regarding our literature and art" (June 1951) in *ibid.*, Vol. 6: 399-400

> *"Many of them [the artists] don't know the contemporary situation and requests of the party's politics and instead align their artistic activities along selfish ideas."[139]*

But he also criticizes the disobedience of the art scene, as the primacy of politics seems to be questioned by some artists:

> *"Some artists are reluctant to be instructed by the party, because they believe, that the party's instruction on the process of creating art results in ignoring the artist's own opinion and instead imposing the party's opinion on him. (…) Such behaviour is a clear expression of ideological tendencies towards liberalism and revisionism, by rejecting the party's leadership of art. (…) We must not tolerate liberalist and revisionist tendencies among our artists."[140]*

Most of Kim's ideas obviously resemble Mao guidelines considering the ideological use of art. This is due to several reasons. First, the two countries share very similar political ideologies, with their roots in Marxism-Leninism. Both nations experienced similar historical events, such as suppressive occupation by foreign forces, out of which a guerilla-kind underground movement started with an ultimate goal of independence and self-determination. Along with these movements certain political ideologies, later commonly referred to as Mao Zedong Thought and Juche, were developed. Second, most of Kim's speeches regarding art are an unaccredited repetition of Mao's talks at the Yan'an forum of Art. This is due to the well known and trivial fact that Kim's speech writer in the late 1940s, Kim Ch'angman, was fond of plagiarizing Mao[141].

There are countless parallels in Mao's and Kim's speeches on art. In summary, both stress the importance of the ideological use of art. Art doesn't exist for the mere sake of itself. Instead, art has to serve a certain purpose, namely the people and the revolution. It is thus utilized and becomes a tool for political (re)education. This also means that art has to implement the political guidelines set by the party. Art content is as well as the procedure of producing and disseminating art is savagely dictated by the state. Hereby, both nations propagate the development of an own revolutionary art style, along with socialist themes and contents[142].

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[139] See „On the contemporary tasks of artists" (December 1949) in *ibid.*, Vol. 5: 333

[140] See "Towards the creation of more authentic artworks" (December 1956) in *ibid.*, Vol. 10: 452-453

[141] See Cummings (1990): 352-353

[142] However, Mao and Kim both noted that ancient art traditions shouldn't be completely abolished, since they also symbolize a nation's uniqueness. Instead, artists should only adapt useful aspects of ancient art traditions. For instance, the so called Revolutionary Model Operas during the Chinese Cultural Revolution were based in their style on the traditional Beijing Opera. In North Korea, the wearing of traditional Korean clothes like the hanbok was not forbidden, despite a nationwide socialist transformation. See for instance "Conversation with Musicians" (August 24th, 1956) in Mao Zedong

**Level III**

In order to supervise and execute the implementation of party guidelines, certain institutions were soon set up by the central government. These institutions will be examined in the Level III section of the Four Level Pyramid Model.

## China

Chinese revolutionary art's main purpose was to serve the people and the revolution. The implementation of this and other guidelines was assured by the 1938 established Lu Xun Academy of Arts[143] (and was later enforced in legal terms by the 1975 Constitution[144]). However, the first National Congress of Literature and Art Workers was not held before July 1949, when the Communist victory over the GMD was on the verge. In the course of this congress, an official policy towards art for the upcoming post-civil war era was addressed by Lu Dingyi (the back then propaganda chief), Zhu De, Zhou Enlai and, of course, Mao Zedong[145]. Besides replicating Mao's statements at the Yan'an Forum, further organizational policies were issued: artists had to receive regular salaries and accommodation for their families had to be free[146]. The central aim was to organize artists for national reconstruction of a new China.

## North Korea

Soon after WWII the Soviet Military Administration began to lay the foundations for a state-run art and literature scene in North Korea. This was mainly achieved through financial and political support of the Pyongyang Region Proletarian Art League, which in 1946 was transformed into the North Korean Federation of Literature and Art (NKFLA). The NKFLA united all writers and artists in North Korea[147] and was placed

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Texte, Vol. 2: 447-453 or "Towards the creation of more authentic artworks" (December 25th, 1956) in Kim Il Sung Werke, Vol. 10: 447

[143] in order to teach propaganda painting and encourage anti-Japanese sentiment among idealists who disliked the GMD's poor resistance against the Japanese invasion. See Portal (2005): 23

[144] See Chinese Constitution (1975) Article 12: *"The proletariat must exercise all-round dictatorship over the bourgeoisie in the superstructure, including all spheres of culture. Culture and education, literature and art, physical education, health work and scientific research work must all serve proletarian politics, serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, and be combined with productive labour."* Interestingly, this passage doesn't appear neither in prior (1954) nor in later (1978, 1982) constitutions.

[145] The fact that so many high ranking politicians and officials attended that meeting, shows the significance of the conference and the decisions made there.

[146] See Sullivan (1996): 129

[147] Until then, several art organizations had existed and were rivalling against each other for financial and political support of the Soviet administration. Kim Il Sung also noted that the establishment of the NKFLA was an important step in order to strengthen the fast growing national art scene's unity. See "On the tasks of the NKFLA" (March 4th, 1961) in Kim Il Sung Werke, Vol. 15: 38

under direct control of the KWP's department of agitation and propaganda. On its official founding ceremony in March 1946, the following goals of the NKFLA were announced[148]:

- the establishment of a national art and culture based on the principles of progressive democracy
- the promotion of the national unification of all Korean literary and artistic movements
- the extirpation of all anti-democratic and reactionary artistic forces and concepts, be they Japanese-imperialist, feudal, treasonous or fascist
- the implementation of a large scale enlightening movement for the cultural, creative and artistic development of the masses
- the suitable appraisal and appropriation of the nation's cultural heritage
- the exchange of our national culture with international culture

This listing makes it obvious to what degree the NKFLA and the national art scene in general at this point had become a political tool of the government. In 1951 the NKFLA was renamed into Korean Federation of Literature and Art (KFLA). Two years later, on the first Congress of Writers and Artists, the decision was made to follow the Soviet example and split up the KFLA into separate unions, such as a writer union, a painter union etc. However, Kim Il Sung was never really satisfied with the achievements on the art sector after the KFLA's division into several small unions, as he stated in a 1960 speech:

> "It seems, the leadership of the party is weak and the mass line has not been implemented. (…) It is apparently necessary to unite the unions of writers, composers, dancers etc. back into a Federation of Literature and Art, which like in the old days will be kept under party's direct control."[149]

Thus, in March 1961, the KFLA was re-established according to Kim's wishes. Similar to China, also North Korean legal texts provided legal enforcement measures to guidelines regarding artwork. The fact that a whole chapter (Chapter 3, Article 39-57) of all North Korean constitutions (except the 1948 constitution) is dedicated to "Culture" alone[150] shows the importance of art to North Korean policy makers.

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[148] See Myers (1994): 42
[149] See Kim (1965): 30-31
[150] In contrast, all Chinese constitutions handle cultural affairs within a few articles.

Several articles not only implement Kim's Juche ideology into the Constitution, but also link artworks with the ideological values of Juche[151].

**<u>Level IV:</u>**

The previous three levels have set out ideological principles, guidelines and aims of artworks, which are applied in Level IV and eventually form the final product of (ideological) artwork.

# 2.2.5. Summary

This passage shall give a short summary over the ideological implications of the theoretical framework of this research paper. We first referred to the term 'ideology' by defining it as the systematic and explicit formulation of a general orientation towards politics. Strongly connected with ideology is the term 'propaganda', which nowadays is mostly perceived in a negative way, but used to be a positive term by means of disseminating and propagating certain ideas or concepts. We then continued by pointing out why propaganda actually is so effective and found two main reasons. First, we link most words, objects and symbols to feelings and emotions. The propagandist's understanding of a person's emotional mind map is thus essential in order to successfully adopt and reframe this set of values. Second, most people are highly insecure. These individuals seek a meaning in things they don't understand and are thus more likely to accept the judgement of an authority or other semi-authoritarian sources. We further pointed out the importance of visual media in disseminating propaganda, since they favour illiteracy and intellectual phlegm, thus transferring its message very easily and vividly when compared to a long and complicated political article. We also noted that the phenomenon of propaganda is omnipresent in all forms of political systems. However, in totalitarian or authoritarian systems propaganda is monopolized by the ruling authority, while propaganda in e.g. democratic systems is rather pluralistic. This has direct influence on art in totalitarian and authoritarian systems, as art in the service of such unipolar systems tends to be magical and authoritarian, rather than critical and democratic.

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[151] See for instance North Korean Constitution (1972, 1998) Article 52: *"The State shall develop a Juche-oriented, revolutionary art and literature, national in form and socialist in content. The State shall encourage creative workers and artists to produce works of high ideological and artistic value and enlist the working masses widely in literary and artistic activity."* A slightly amended, but in its meaning identical passage, can be found in the 2009 Constitution, Article 52.

The implementation of political guidelines regarding the creation and dissemination of art is best described with the help of the so called Four Level Pyramid Model. Level I represents the basis of this model. It describes a political ideology, thus defining the main moral narrative, as well as introducing ideological values and roles of and in a society. In both China and North Korea, this moral narrative was represented by Soviet style Marxism-Leninism, which was later to be adopted and developed into the respective political ideologies of Mao Zedong Thought and Juche. On top of this level comes Level II, which is concerned with various speeches and pamphlets by important political leaders on the topic of art. These speeches and pamphlets define the role and the purposes of art and further sets out the rules and guidelines for the art making process. In the case of China, Mao's talks at the Yan'an form on literature and art serve as the theoretical basis for Level II. In North Korea, Kim Il Sung's numerous speeches on the topic of literature and art can be considered the theoretical foundation of Level II. Level III follows next and represents the institutional level. It defines the organizations, which are usually under direct party control and have to ensure that political guidelines regarding art are being implemented. In China, the Lu Xun Academy of Arts was established for this purpose. In North Korea, the NKFLA performed this task. The final Level IV represents art itself, as the final product of all previous levels, and will be discussed in the empirical part of this research paper.

## 2.3. Socialist Realism

Soviet style Socialist Realism ran counter to artistic developments in the West in fundamental ways. It emphasized the social role of art and insisted on the superiority of content over form. Socialist Realism is best defined both as an artistic style and a creative method, which in turn is linked to a (political) program[152]. It arose under the influences of the great social changes at the end of the 19th and the early 20th century and is not to be confused with Social Realism[153]. This chapter shall give a short overview on the origins, aesthetics and significance of Soviet Socialist Realism and will thus help answering the optional research question to what extent Chinese and North Korean propaganda paintings were influenced by it.

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[152] See Bown, (1998): 141
[153] Social Realism refers to the artist's concern with social issues while Socialist Realist artists are concerned with the implementation of a political programme. In Russian context, Social Realism is a 19th century phenomenon, while Socialist Realism is a 20th century phenomenon.

## Origins of Socialist Realism

Generally speaking, pre-revolutionary Russian painting has the look and the feel of European painting. However, artistic discoveries of the Renaissance came late to Russia. Until the 18th century the tradition of religious painting based on stylistic principles imported in the Middle Ages was still dominating Russia's visual art scene; artists were not held in high public esteem[154]. Shifts in the conceptual approach towards art started to occur in the 1840s when Viktor Gaevski, a Russian literary critic, was the first in Russia to argue that art had a duty to illuminate the people and express an opinion about questions of contemporary life. Gaevski's rejection of the notion of art as something elevated and his emphasis that art should be closely linked to reality was a complete new approach towards art. Soon, several other Russian writers and critics were bound to further develop this idea of socially concerned art. The most radical of them was Nikolai Chernyshevski[155]. In the context of art, he rejected idealism and fantasy and stressed the importance that art should serve as a judgment on life. Thus, he was a forerunner of Russian Marxist aesthetic thought and his arguments formed the foundation stone of the philosophy of Socialist Realism. In his 1860s novel "What is to be done? Tales of New People", Chernyshevski introduced the concept of the New Man.

> *"These new people are dry people without the aesthetic streak: they replace romantic love with friendship, hand-kissing with respect for women's views, they require only a spartan existence. In a few years we shall appeal to these new people."[156]*

Chernyshevski's concept of a morally, physically and intellectually superior New Person was later adopted by Bolshevik thinkers. The issue of the New Person, the constant search for the image of a new modern hero, thus became one of the central aspects of the latent formation of Socialist Realism (see Illustration 0a). However, until then Gaevski's and Chernyshevski's intellectual approach towards art were to be adopted and extensively developed[157] during the 1920s before they were to be

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[154] See Bown (1998): 3, 5

[155] Chernyshevski in turn was heavily influenced by Ludwig Buchner's 1855 work 'Kraft and Stoff' (translated into Russian in 1862), which offered a very materialistic approach towards art.

[156] See Chernyshevski (1961): 91, 175

[157] For instance, when reflecting about the New Man Concept in the late 1920s, Leon Trotsky followed the steps of Friedrich Nietzsche in combining the mythogenic cult of the 'Superman' with a mythogenic reverie about the 'man of the future', whose role it was to overcome the tragic, contradiction-ridden experience of history. In his 1920 essay 'On the Hero and the Crowd' Gorky stresses the importance of the need for a hero. According to him, the creation of a hero is especially important, since a hero also functions as an educational role model and thus positively contributes to the creation of the New People. Additionally, heroes are mostly heroes because they fight against bad persons or things. Thus, it is obvious that at a certain point of an aesthetic political narrative the archetypical enemy appears

implemented in the artistic concept of Socialist Realism in the 1930s. Actually, the term 'Socialist Realism' itself only appeared after several further decades, when it first appeared in print in the Literary Newspaper (Literaturnaya Gazeta) on May 25th 1932. Five months later, on October 29th, the concept of Socialist Realism was debated extensively for the first time at the plenum of the organising committee of the union of Soviet writers[158]. The first bibliography on Socialist Realism was published in 1934, the same year in which Socialist Realism was publicly promulgated by Andrei Zhdanov as the official artistic method[159]. In January 1936 the Art Committee[160] was created and had the task to control all leading art schools and publishing houses. This meant that for the first time in Russian art history, artists were not independent anymore regarding their autonomic freedom on the content of his works. Instead, artists suddenly had to fulfil the demands put upon them by the CPSU and art was now part of a political program, which defined certain goals and aesthetics.

**Aesthetics of Socialist Realism**

At a speech in 1939 Aleksandr Gerasimov, a Soviet artist, described Socialist Realism as an art realistic in form and socialist in content[161]. In fact, the term Socialist Realism itself is a contradiction, since its two parts are in contrast to each other. Socialist Realism means that art sets out to present a comprehensive reflection and interpretation of life in accordance with a certain political programme defined by a certain political party[162]. Thus, Socialist Realism is based on a direct relationship between the artist and the process of building a new person and a new society[163].

Socialist Realism is based on the three basic principles of Soviet aesthetics: **narodnost** (people-ness, the relationship between art and the masses),

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(counter revolutionaries, Hitler Germany etc.), which the hero (the workers, the motherland, Stalin etc) has to fight. See Morozov/ Günther in Groys/ Hollein (Eds) (2003): 71, 108 and Günther (1994): 89-100

[158] See Bown (1998): 140
[159] Until then, Socialist Realism was only an artistic tendency associated with the rise of the proletariat. See Vaughan (1973): 87
[160] Full name: All-Union Committee for Art Affairs
[161] See Bown (1998): 141
[162] See Vaughan (1973): 88
[163] The constitution of the Union of Writers of the USSR states that "Socialist Realism demands from the author a true and historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover this true and historically concrete artistic depiction of reality must be combined with the task of educating the workers in the spirit of Communism." This definition can also be applied on other artistic genres. *Ibid.*: 88

**klassovost**[164] (class-ness, the characteristics of art) and **partiinost** (party-ness, the identification of the artist with the CPSU). These three central principles basically emphasized the need for an ideologically committed art scene: an artwork's elements had to contribute to a dominant political idea. Of course this idea had to be communist in its content (klassovost)[165]. Klassovost stressed the profound social significance art can have once it is considered with social problems. Furthermore, artwork should not be abstract, it should be militant or aggressive in order to produce an active effect, thus accelerating the creation of a new (communist) person and society[166] (partiinost[167]). Eventually, art should serve the masses by properly and realistically articulating the feelings and the will of the people (narodnost). Narodnost not only meant that art should be easily accessible (in physical terms[168]) but also graspable (in intelligible terms) to the masses. These three cornerstones of Socialist Realism were later further developed and complemented by terms such as pravda/ pravdinost (thruth-ness)[169], which in turn was closely correlated with partiinost, since the CPSU defined terms of the national political narrative such as good or bad and true or false[170].

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[164] This principle is by some authors also referred to as ideinost and stresses the importance of ideological commitment of artwork. See for instance Heller in Dobrenko/ Lahusen (Eds.) (1997): 51

[165] By early 1920s Soviet authorities had started demanding that artists faithfully aid the CPSU in the communist education of the workers. Artists thus had to follow one certain creative method, which emphasized the party line (partiinost) and the national character of art (narodnost). These new regulations were enforced by the regime via political campaigns. For instance, in the 1930s authorities started a campaign against formalism and formalistic art. In the 1960s and 1970s several campaigns were launched against modernism and revisionism. See Morozov in Groys/ Hollein (Eds.) (2003): 67

[166] In 1934 Zhdanov stated that Socialist Realism has the task of the "ideological remolding and education of working people in the spirit of socialism". See Bown (1998): 141

[167] Partiinost eventually gradually evolved into the most important, single guiding factor in Soviet policy towards art, since it provides a unifying element as it draws together various concepts of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics. It embodies a threefold decision (from the artist). First, art must fulfill a specific social function. Second, that function is to further the interest of the masses. And third, to further the interests of the masses, art must become part of the activities of the Communist Party. See Vaughan (1973): 13

[168] This meant that certain artwork had to be distributed at prices as low as possible and that art is general had to be displayed in public space.

[169] Pravdanost stressed the importance of an accurate depiction of reality. However, it thus should not be confused with the traditional artistic genres of photographic art or naturalism.

[170] For a full description and in-depth analysis of the aesthetics of Socialist Realism see Heller in Dobrenko/ Lahusen (Eds.) (1997): 51-71

**Illustration 0a:** A guy from the Urals (Vasili A. Neyasov, 1959)[171]

## Significance of Socialist Realism

The function of art as a system of mediation between state and society has a long tradition in Russian culture. However, as Wolfgang Holz noted[172], it was never used that directly for political purposes as under the Soviet rule, under which it was allocated a role close to that of mass propaganda on behalf of the programmes of the Five-Year-Plans. Socialist Realist art, especially paintings, had to have an immediate appeal to the audience. A successful painting had to both attract the eye of the viewer as well as lend visual coherence to its political message. Paintings, which originally belonged to so called revisionist or formalistic genres, such as landscape paintings were only accepted, if the landscape underwent a kind of sublimation, a transformation[173] in the spirit of the 'romantic mythogenesis' of Socialist Realism[174]. This propaganda was working because it relied upon allegories known by most common people. The strong influence of the Orthodox church in vast parts of Russia made it obvious for Soviet art policy makers to adopt relevant religious symbols for propaganda purposes. Thus, the colour red, extensively used as a holy colour in Russia's orthodox church, was subsequently equated with 'good' terms such as socialism or the CPSU. Especially in the 1940s, at the peak of Stalin's personality cult, Soviet Socialist Realist painting was rich in religious symbols: heads of political leaders were surrounded by a nimbus and their faces were illuminated by a bundle of sunray, thus symbolizing the divinity of the respective individuals and the utopian

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[171] See Bown (1998): 380
[172] In Bown/ Taylor (Eds.) (1993): 73
[173] The technological transformation of the nature is a very prevalent theme in Soviet style Socialist Realist paintings as well as in China and North Korea, as will be shown below.
[174] See Morozov in Groys/ Hollein (Eds.) (2003): 72, 73

final stage of socialist ecstasy and paradise[175]. Political leaders were often depicted in white clothes, symbolizing purity and innocence, and were often flanked by workers and peasants enthusiastically looking up to their leader, thus resembling equivalent depictions of Jesus and his apostles (see Illustration 0b).



**Illustration 0b:** An Unforgettable Meeting (Vasili P. Efanov, 1937)[176]

Additionally, the mere fact that Lenin's body was preserved and put on public display in an own mausoleum after his death represented the borrowing of yet another religious symbol: according to Russian orthodox dogma, the bodies of saints are incorruptible and don't decay after death. Thus, Lenin, alike a saint, was made immortal[177]. The immortalization of Lenin was gradually surpassed in the 1930s by the slow veneration of Stalin. In 1930, the Pravda[178] issue of June 26th contained an illustration, which depicted Stalin in profile with Lenin behind him. The message was clear: Stalin was to be the new Lenin. Henceforth, this replacement process advanced and eventually resulted in the Stalin cult, which took off at Stalin's 60th birthday in 1939. Socialist Realism and its principle partiinost was increasingly linked

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[175] See Holz in Bown/ Taylor (Eds.) (1993): 76
[176] See Bown (1998): 163
[177] See Bonnell (1997): 149
[178] Pravda was a newspaper and the main organ of the CPSU

with Stalin's personality. Thus, when the era of De-Stalinization under Krushchev started in the 1950s, the slow decline of Socialist Realist art as part of a political programme was also initiated and eventually ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

# 2.4. State of the Art

Extensive research has yet been made on the subject of Chinese and North Korean visual propaganda. However, the vast majority of these works are descriptive and don't undertake an analytical comparison between China and North Korea.

In the case of China, some scholars have tried to develop an interpretive framework for propaganda posters in general, while other have chosen a more focused approach on various aspects such as the role of particular individuals in society, e.g. children, women, workers or enemies[179]. Such works are often backed by reports of contemporary witnesses[180] and typically broach the era of the Cultural Revolution, since this epoch represents the peak of Mao's personality cult and the dissemination of relevant visual propaganda paintings. Others, such as Richard Solomon and Lucian Pye, have chosen a psychological approach by examining[181] the problems associated with language and culture to the psychological dimension of Mao's acquisition of power. Stefan Landsberger has done tremendous research on the visualization and perception of Chinese propaganda motives and discussed how posters served the CCP as vehicle for the transmission of party ideology[182]. Theoretical approaches towards Chinese propaganda paintings mostly deal with Mao's talks at the Yan'an forum of literature and art in 1942, since other speeches or pamphlets by Mao on the topic of literature and art are extremely rare. Thus, Mao's talks at the Yan'an forum represent the theoretical basis for art in China. However, only in 1975 a formal legal text on this issue was formulated by the introduction of a

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[179] See for instance Meisner (1977), Dittmer (1974), Rosen (1982), Hinton (1972), Wang (2008) Sullivan (1996), Feldman: "Ideology and the Manipulation of Symbols: Leadership Perceptions of Science, Education, and Art in the People's Republic of China" in *Political Psychology*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (September 1985); Mittler: "Popular Propaganda? Art and Culture in Revolutionary China" in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 152, No. 5 (December 2008)
[180] Such as Chen in Evans/ Donald (Eds.) (1999)
[181] See Solomon (1971), Pye (1976)
[182] See Landsberger (1996)

new constitution, which stated[183] that literature and art must serve proletarian politics, the workers, peasants and soldiers.

In the case of North Korea, research has mainly been focused[184] on Juche Realism, which gradually has replaced Soviet style Socialist Realism after the introduction of the Juche ideology in the late 1970ies[185]. Others, such as Brian Myers, have examined[186] legal implications and thus the third level of the 4 Level Model on political art. What makes a scientific approach towards arts in North Korea so hard is the fact that numerous basis for this topic exists. In contrast to China, where one central piece of work as legal and theoretical foundation for arts exist (Mao's talk at the Yan'an forum), in North Korea numerous speeches and pamphlets by Kim Il Sung exist regarding this topic. The catalogue of Kim Il Sung's Works lists more than 40 entries on the topic of literature and art. Furthermore, the dates of these speeches spread over a vast time period of several decades and their content is mostly concerned with current issues and problems regarding the implementation of artistic guidelines. This fact leads some scientists into arguing that Kim Jong Il's Seed Theory, which originally is only concerned with film making, can be used as theoretical and legal foundation for artistic guidelines. However, this argumentation shows several flaws as Kim Jong Il's Seed Theory is mostly identical in its content with the various speeches and pamphlets of his father Kim Il Sung regarding the topic of literature and art. Besides, as Myers noted[187], the Seed Theory should be considered more critical, since it is only two pages long and has never been cited in any propaganda painting. Legal texts on the implementation of artistic guidelines only exist since 1972 when the then new constitution stated[188] that a revolutionary art and literature, national in form and socialist in content, should be developed by the state. This single article remains the only legal foundation on the implementation of artistic guidelines until today.

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[183] See 1975 Chinese Constitution Article 12: "*The proletariat must exercise all-round dictatorship over the bourgeoisie in the superstructure, including all spheres of culture. Culture and education, literature and art, physical education, health work and scientific research work must all serve proletarian politics, serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, and be combined with productive labour.*"

[184] See for instance Frank in Frank (Ed.) (2011): 14 or Koh: „Ideology and Political Control in North Korea" in *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (August 1970)

[185] See Portal, Jane (2005): 124

[186] See Myers (1994)

[187] In Frank (Ed.) (2011): 74

[188] See 1972 North Korean Constitution Article 52: "*The State shall develop a Juche-oriented, revolutionary art and literature, national in form and socialist in content. The State shall encourage creative workers and artists to produce works of high ideological and artistic value and enlist the working masses widely in literary and artistic activity.*"

As stated above, most of the scientific works regarding Chinese or North Korean artwork remain very descriptive in their style and don't offer an analytical framework that can generally be applied for the analysis of visual propaganda work. This has several reasons. First, these works are concerned with two countries. Although China and North Korea, as we already noted above, share a similar historical background and a similar ideological setting, it is next to impossible to develop a framework, which can be applied on the visual propaganda work of both China and North Korea. This is due to the fact that, second, both nations feature eras, which were heavily influenced by political campaigns[189], which were similar by their ideological terms and goals, but different in their enforcement[190]. Third, the analysis of visual propaganda in general is a very wide topic including dozens of various aspects and sub-categories. As pointed out above, there do exist several approaches on the analysis of visual propaganda, e.g. by comparing chronological eras, examining historical and political background of a certain era or focusing on the role of individuals of a society in visual propaganda. This vast research field makes it hard to create an overall analytical framework, especially when trying to apply it on more than one society. Fourth, the examination of a society's central leader by a single framework is impossible, since these leaders are human beings with respective mannerism and characteristics. Mao and Kim, although they may have emerged out of and strived for similar political reasons, basically represented two completely different personality types. This ultimately is reflected in the respective visual propaganda works[191].

I believe that in the course of developing an analytical framework towards Chinese and North Korean visual propaganda, it would be obtrusive to work out the historical, ideological and political details of the respective societies. Instead, a framework, which can be applied on both China and North Korea, should be rather

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[189] E.g., compare China's Great Leap Forward with North Korea's Chollima Movement

[190] For instance, both China and North Korea promoted the creation of a socialist society through people's art. However, Mao and Kim had different ideas and concepts of so called people's art. For instance, Mao – especially during the time of the Cultural Revolution, when China was internationally isolated – promoted the creation of a complete new culture and the abolition of everything considered as antique or feudal. In contrast, Kim's Juche ideology was also critical towards traditionalism, but simultaneously stressed the importance of the Koreanness in North Korea's new culture. For instance, the traditional Korean clothing hanbok was still allowed to be worn in the public under Kim's rule, while China's regulation of clothing peaked during the Cultural Revolution, when wearing military uniform style clothes were worn by most people as a symbol of revolution. See Meyers in Frank (Ed.) (2011): 78

[191] As will be shown below, Mao is often portrayed in motion, rarely depicted sitting or resting, while numerous pictures exist with Kim sitting on a bench together with common people.

general in its nature and not essentially focused on East Asian or Chinese/ North Korean aspects. Thus, I have chosen Erwin Panofsky's Three Stages Model[192] on interpreting works of the visual art, which I will describe in detail as follows.

# 2.4.1. Panofsky's Three Stages Model

Erwin Panofsky, a leading art theorist on the subject of iconography and iconology, developed the so called Three Stages Model for interpreting works of visual art in 1955. He first starts to distinguish the terms 'iconography' and 'iconology'. Both terms derive from the Greek word 'eigon', meaning image. Iconography also contains the Greek word 'graphein', meaning writing/ drawing. Thus, the term 'iconography' describes the analysis of the obviously existing content in its physical appearance. This is achieved by the correct analysis of symbols, anecdotes and allegories. In contrast, iconology contains the Greek word 'logos', meaning apprehension/ teaching. Consequently, iconology deals with everything beyond the mere physical existence of things that we perceive through our senses. While iconography is based on the analysis of obvious things, iconology is based on the synthesis, which in turn is based upon the iconographic analysis. Thus, we first have to examine visual artwork by its iconographic terms (Stage I & II) in order to proceed to the iconological synthesizing process (Stage III)[193]. Panofsky stresses the importance that these three stages are not three independent interpreting models. Instead, they are interdependent and based on each other. He continues by discussing the problems and processes when analyzing visual artworks in general by referring to the act of a greeting person taking off his hat.

**Stage I: The Primary/ Naturally Meaning (transmitted via senses)**
This stage is divided into A) the factual and B) the expressive meaning. In process A we describe the content of a picture basically by formal terms and thus avoiding terms like 'stone', 'horse' or 'tree'. Instead, we only use the very basic description of an artworks content regarding its configuration of lines, shapes and colours. Thus, a stone is described as an oval or round shape; a lake or the sea as a blue surface. Only through the correct analysis of the configurational content of a picture, process

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[192] See Panofsky (1955): 33-60
[193] The process of iconographic analysis is skipped though when examining landscape painting or abstract art.

A leads to process B, in which we can recognize the oval shape as a stone or the blue surface as a lake. This is done through our vital experience of being, which is based on our experience and inner action with certain objects and our environment.

In the case of the greeting person taking off his hat, we thus first identify the mere movement and shift in the configuration of lines, figures and colours through the action of taking the hat off (process A). After identifying the shapes and the shift in the configurational setting of the scene we proceed to process B, in which we identify the object as a man and the configurational shift as the act of greeting. Thus, the meanings of a scene in Stage I are merely transmitted by the perception of physical things through our senses.

**Stage II: The Secondary/ Conventional Meaning (transmitted intellectually)**

The fact that we recognize certain compositions of lines and shapes as certain symbols, automatically leads us to Stage II. At this stage we are able to intellectually grasp and understand the concepts of certain compositions and thus perform the second part of iconographic analysis. Thus, for instance, a cross turns into a symbol for Christianity and the depiction of a vivid dining scene suddenly becomes the Last Supper. This is accomplished through our literary knowledge of traditions and customs of a certain culture or society. Thus, without any bare literary knowledge or practical experience of occidental culture and symbolism one would not recognize the shape of a cross as a Christian symbol or a dining scene as the Last Supper. Let's once again return to our hat example: the fact that we understand the act of taking off one's hat as an act of greeting has brought us to Stage II. We intellectually understand the concept of taking off one's hat either through our literary knowledge (we know, that taking off one's hat derives from the medieval act of removing one's helmet, when wanting to show one's peaceful intentions) or through our practical experience with cultural conventions (we often saw this type of action and thus eventually figured out its meaning). Thus, the content's meaning in Stage II is perceived intellectually.

**Stage III: The Intrinsic Meaning (transmitted through our worldview)**

In this final stage of analyzing a visual art scene we perform the iconological synthesis process: we take a look at the work of art in a broader sense by analyzing the fundamental principles of e.g. a nation, an epoch, a social class or a

philosophical/ political ideology. For instance, in the case of Leonardo Da Vinci's Last Supper fresco we could examine this artwork as part of Da Vinci's personality or as part of the epoch of Italian Renaissance[194]. Thus, we basically start to treat artworks as part of something bigger. Of course, the symbolic values found in this process can fundamentally vary from the artist's original intentions. This is also due to the fact, that our perception at this stage is heavily influenced by the contemporary epoch, from which we are judging art. In the case of taking off one's hat, we can identify this action as the act of greeting, performed by a 20th century man with bourgeois background from an occidental society. We know this through our worldview and our general intellectual history. In this case our worldview suggests that the 20th century bourgeois upper and middle class of an occidental society rather tends to wear a hat and takes it off when greeting, than members of the working class.

## 2.5. Summary

This chapter shall give a short overview on the findings of the theoretical framework and will conclude by defining the analyzing categories for the empirical part of this paper. We first analyzed various forms of political systems in general and in East Asia. We thus concluded that China and North Korea at the time of Mao Zedong and Kim Il Sung were totalitarian regimes. In analyzing these totalitarian systems we applied Hannah Arendt's Mass Man Theory.

Afterwards we continued discussing various concepts of political ideology as well as the implementation of art into a political programme by the Four Level Pyramid Model. We then continued by examining the aesthetics of Soviet Style Socialist Realism, which presumably possessed a strong influence on Chinese and North Korean propaganda paintings. Hereby, we defined the three central aesthetic principles of Soviet style Socialist Realism as narodnost (people-ness), klassovost (class-ness) and partiinost (party-ness).

The empirical part of this paper will be concerned with Chinese and North Korean propaganda paintings itself. Due to the vast amount of artistic themes, I will develop analyzing categories based on the findings of Chapter 2. Thus, I define the analyzing categories for Chapter 3 as follows.

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[194] In this context, knowing additional background information, such as the artwork's publishing year, is vital to fully grasp an artwork's iconological meaning through a solid understanding of the time epoch, in which the artwork was created.

- The Masses
- The Leader
- Transformation
- Political Program (partiinost, klassovost)
- Aggression/ the enemy

## Category: The Masses

This category is based upon the findings of Arendt's Mass Man Theory, which central argument is the ultimate isolation of the individual. Instead, a new collective identity is formed, the so called mass man. The individual thus perishes amidst the masses. This category further stresses Arendt's argument that totalitarian regimes heavily rely on the continuous mobilization of the masses as a standard political condition.

## Category: The Leader

The theoretical foundation of this category is based upon the findings of Plato, as described in Chapter 2.2.3, that both in politics and art, optimum psychological power is achieved by the concentration on a single personality. Additionally, this category – especially when the masses and the leaders are depicted together – represents Arendt's argumentation of a strict hierarchy as well as the interdependence between the leader and the masses in totalitarian systems.

## Category: Transformation

This category is especially concerned with one of the most central aspects of Socialist Realist Art. In this context, transformation holds a two-fold meaning. First, it represents the (technological) transformation of nature. This is closely correlated with the construction of a socialist society based upon the continuous rise of industrial productivity and output achieved by the working class. As mentioned above, traditional landscape paintings were frowned upon in Socialist Realism unless they depicted the impact of socialism in terms of technological transformation. Second, this category also deals with the transformation of society and mankind itself into a New Person with a socialist spirit. This is also closely correlated with Socialist Realism's central aspect of the positive hero.

**Category: Political Programme (partiinost, klassovost)**

This category represents partiinost as one of the central aesthetic aspects of Socialist Realism. Since certain paintings often deal with political campaigns, this category emphasizes the role of art as a tool of the party and as a central mechanism in certain political programmes.

**Category: Aggression/ the enemy**

The theoretical foundation of this category is the Socialist Realist aesthetic concept of klassovost, which stresses the importance of art being socially significant. Art should not be abstract, but militant and aggressive in order to produce an active effect inside the viewer. This in turn accelerates the creation of a new society. This category also deals with Arendt's claim that totalitarian regimes use terror to further isolate the individual and result in a complete lack of privacy and realm for the individual. This category is also closely connected with the creation of the New Man and the concept of the positive hero, since every hero needs an enemy.

# 3. Empirical Findings

This chapter will examine various Chinese and North Korean propaganda paintings by applying the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2 of this paper. Due to the vast amount of paintings available in both countries, I will examine specially selected and representative works. In the case of China, I will examine selected pictures from Cushing's and Tompkin's Chinese Posters catalogue. Considering North Korea, the catalogue "Flowers for Kim Il Sung", named after a 2010 exhibition at the Vienna Museum for Applied Arts (MAK), will serve as image source. The main reasons for choosing these certain catalogues are twofold. First, the displayed pictures in these catalogues offer a wide range of topics and motives, thus possessing a representative character regarding the respective country's propaganda painting scene. The second reason is much more pragmatic. Numerous catalogues exist on the topic of Chinese and North Korean propaganda pictures. However, most of them proved to be inapplicable for this scientific research paper, because they either lacked a broad range of motives (e.g. only pictures of the political leaders) or they lacked the essential data (such as the year of publishing of a painting) needed for a scientific approach and examination. This is especially

important, because in the analysis of the following propaganda paintings I will focus on works painted created during the reign of Mao Zedong and Kim Il Sung. Thus, having access to additional information of a painting, such as the publishing year, is crucial.

The empirical chapter will start with an analysis of Chinese propaganda paintings and will conclude with the examination of North Korean propaganda paintings. The analysis procedure will be as follows. At first, a representative picture will be analyzed by means of Panofsky's Three Stages Model. Afterwards, the painting will be classified by means of the various analyzing categories as elaborated in Chapter 2.5 and will be compared with pictures containing similar motives. In a final step the findings of each country's propaganda paintings will be summarized and eventually compared.

# 3.1. China

**Example 1: Chairman Mao is connected with our hearts**

Illustration 1a shows a typical example of Chinese propaganda posters. First, we will examine the artwork by means of Panofsky's Three Stages Model. In the **first stage**, we see four people standing amidst a grain field. Judging from their clothing, they seem to be working class members, specifically of peasant origin. Thus, they obviously resemble a peasant family. The man in the centre somehow attracts the attention of the viewer: he wears clothes from the white collar working class and is the tallest of all depicted individuals, thus distinguishing him from the other persons. Since everyone looks at him, he seems to be the most important person in the scene. In his hands he is holding grain, which he seems to inspect. He is not only the tallest, but also the oldest person in the picture, thus resembling a person of respect in terms of Confucian values. Although a person of respect, he seems to be a friendly and easy going individual, which is illustrated through the joyful faces of his bystanders. The general mood of the entire scene is very friendly.

In the **second stage** of iconographic analysis we find that the centred person is Mao Zedong by looking at the title of the image 'Chairman Mao is connected with our hearts'. This further emphasizes his importance in the scene due to his political rank (Chairman). This also changes the way he is received in social terms: Confucian

China[195] stresses the importance of hierarchy through the so called Five Bonds[196], which regulate a society's hierarchy. The Five Confucian Bonds emphasize the social superiority of elder people (father to son, elder brother to younger brother). According to this scheme, the white dressed person would anyway be considered as the most important person in the scene, even without knowing of the person being Mao himself. However, since the artwork's title reveals the identity of this person as a central political individual, its importance is further increased according to the Five Bonds concept of Confucianism (ruler to ruled). Suddenly the alleged father or older person becomes the ruler, while his alleged family members turn into ruled people. The way how the bystanders are placed around Mao resemble equivalent depictions of Jesus and his apostles, thus adopting a Christian iconographic style. The picture contains further iconographic information. Historical records teach us that the CCP, in contrast to the Soviet Communist movement, recruited most of its adherents from the peasant class instead of the working class. Mao was firmly convinced that the revolution had to be brought from the countryside to urban areas. Therefore, the peasant class was essentially important to Mao, which is shown in this artwork by Mao himself directly visiting the grass root population. Mao, as a white collar worker, doesn't show any constraint to visit the humble people on the dirty countryside. The artwork's title further emphasizes this, by stating that Mao's heart is connected with the hearts of the grass root population. He is thus 'one of them'. This depiction of populism in turn arouses sympathy in the viewer towards Mao. Another method of emphasizing Mao's importance in the scene is the adoption of imperial Chinese political symbolism. In imperial China, agriculture and a good harvest played a central role in society. It not only served as the livelihood of the common people but also as a main legitimation for the emperor's rule[197]. Every year, the emperor prayed for a good harvest at Beijing's Temple of Heaven and even personally visited rural areas once a year, where he would perform a ceremonial ploughing of a sacred field

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[195] Imperial China was heavily influenced by Confucianism so that Confucian ideas and value continue to exist in contemporary Chinese society, despite several eradicating attempts by the CCP.

[196] These Five Bonds are as follows: Ruler-Ruled, Father-Son, Husband-Wife, Elder Brother-Younger Brother, Friend-Friend.

[197] Several dynasties in imperial China experienced tremendous social unrest in years of bad harvest due to government failures. For instance, the late Qing dynasty failed to invest taxes into the restoration and improvement of dams along the Yellow River, resulting in dam failure. In the course of the following flooding, the Yellow River's stream basin shifted several hundreds of kilometres northwards across the entire Shandong province, devastating large areas and washing-off the soil of agricultural land. This eventually lead to large scale famines and thus laid the foundation for massive social unrest and criticism towards the Qing.

with a highly ornamental plough kept especially for this purpose[198]. This concludes the iconographic stage of analysis.
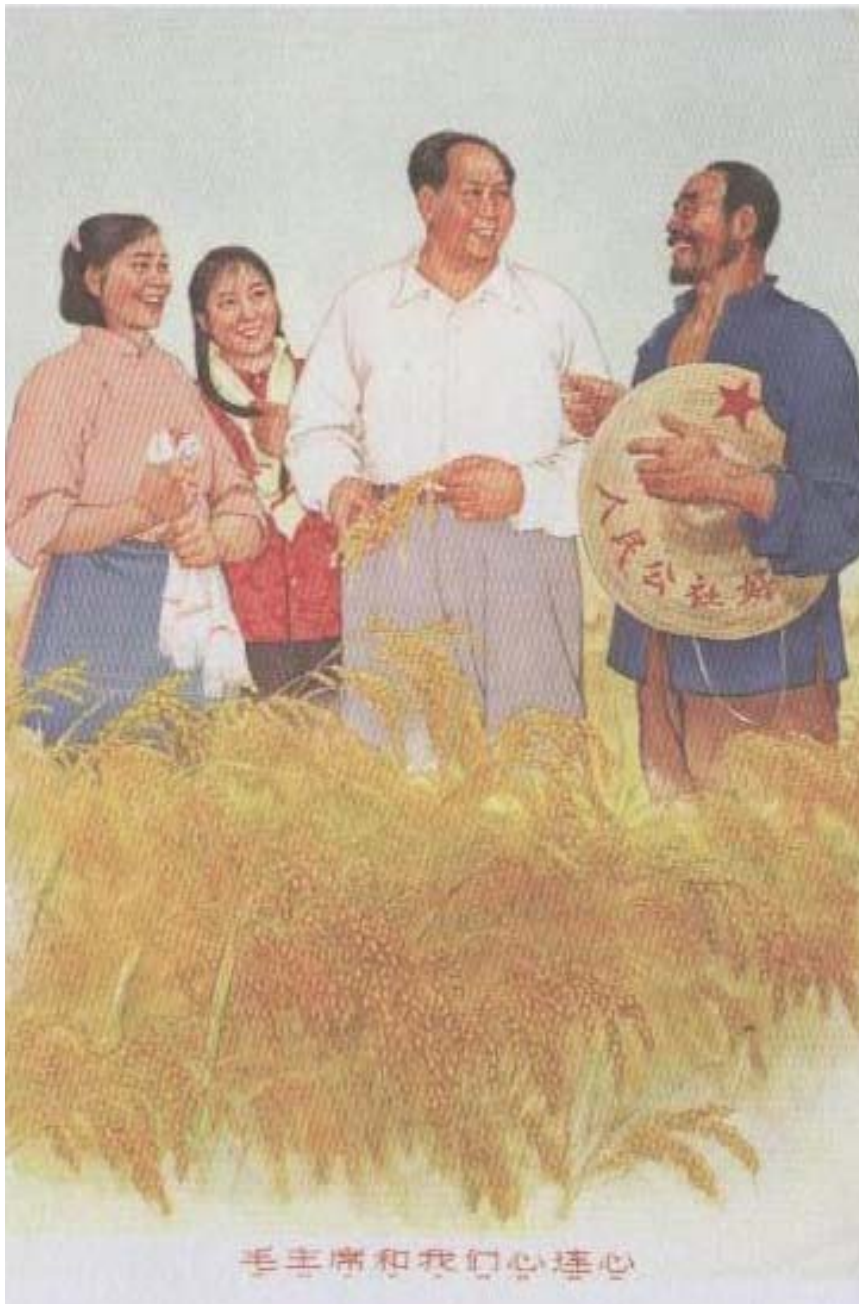


**Illustration 1a:** Chairman Mao is connected with our hearts (Han Min, 1964)[199]

In the following **third stage** we will examine the iconological content of Illustration 1a. From the artworks additional background information we find that it was created in 1964. At that time Mao was an unquestioned and fully respected person in domestic politics. 15 years earlier he led the CCP to victory in the civil war against the GMD and consequently founded the PR China. Judging from our categories developed in Chapter 2.5, we can classify Illustration 1a primarily as belonging to the category

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[198] See Williams (1976): 1-2
[199] See Cushing/ Tompkins (2007): 56

depicting the people and the leader. It thus symbolizes two theses of Arendt, namely a clear and strict hierarchy as well as the interdependence between a leader and a society in totalitarian systems. However, as will be shown below, these two symbolisms are rather weak in Illustration 1a, which is due to the fact that at the time of 1964 the personality cult around Mao was still far away from reaching its climax. In Illustration 1a the hierarchy between Mao and the people is not as strict and clear as in later pictures: The main features distinguishing Mao from his bystanders are his clothes, his body height and his central position in the scene.

Similar affinities can be found in other pictures, as for example in **Illustration 1b**. In this artwork, created in 1965, Mao is also depicted with common people – in this case peasant children. Again Mao's importance is illustrated by the same features: his central position in the scene, his body height and his different style of clothing (although this time he is wearing the same simple improvised shoes like the peasant boys). Additionally, the chosen angle of vision is slightly from below, thus not only resembling the peasant boys' point of view but also making Mao appear much taller and more important. Again, in this case the symbolism of a clear hierarchy and the interdependence between the political leader and the masses in totalitarian systems is moderate. However, **Illustration 1c** offers a strikingly different perspective. Painted in 1967, this artwork was created only shortly after Mao initiated the Cultural Revolution in 1966 and at the peak of his personality cult. Mao resembles the sun, floating above the cheering masses and thus taking a godlike status. This impression is further emphasized by Mao being depicted in surreal proportions to the common people and the artworks title "Long Live Chairman Mao", thus resembling a wishful thinking towards Mao being immortal. In contrast to Illustration 1a and 1b, the colour red in this artwork is essentially important. First, in imperial China red was already regarded a colour of fortune as it was (and still is) extensively used in traditional weddings and other important ceremonies. Thus, it is obvious that the colour red was already adopted at early stages by CCP propaganda officials to positively symbolize communism and party politics. Second, in Illustration 1c Mao is encircled by the red sun. At the same time Mao is not only visually but literally ('Chairman Mao is the reddest sun in our hearts') equalized with the sun[200]. This is essentially important,

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[200] Another symbolism, which emerged during the Cultural Revolution due to the interpretation of Mao being the sun, was the creation of sunflowers resembling the masses. This was a way of depicting the loyalty of the masses towards Mao, since sunflowers (the masses) continuously follow the course of the sun (Mao).

because the sun is regarded as the cradle of life on earth. The conclusion is simple: without the sun, there is no life. Without Mao, there is no 'us'. This is further emphasized by literally placing the sun (Mao) into the hearts of the common people: the red blood, essential for the proper functioning of the human body, is replaced by red sun rays (Mao), which thus serve as the vital impetus of the heart. This in turn is closely connected with the Christian symbolism of enlightening and the Holy Ghost or saints, which are often depicted with a nimbus around their bodies or faces. The people depicted in Illustration 1c are marginal in their size when compared to Mao. Additionally, the individual becomes insignificant in this setting, as only the individuals of the last two or three lines can be clearly identified. Beyond these lines, individuals disappear in remote distance and altogether start to form an endless red sea, enthusiastically waving Mao's so called Little Red Book[201] – a further proof of their loyalty towards him. This sea of people not only shows how Mao's supporters have grown in numerical terms. It also clearly resembles the symbolism of Arendt's creation of the Mass Man: the individual's identity vanishes, instead a common mass identity is formed. It also symbolizes Arendt's claims of continuous mobilization of the masses in totalitarian systems. Additionally, the strict hierarchy as well as the interdependence between the leader and the masses is clearly shown. In contrast to Illustrations 1a and 1b, Mao is not anymore part of the common people. He is no longer lingering around on muddy roads or endless cornfields during hot summer days. Instead, he has become a godlike figure. However, despite his divine status, there is still interdependence between Mao and the masses. As pointed out above, the masses can't live without Mao since he serves as their elixir for life. In turn, Mao also can't exist without the (support of the) masses as there is no god without worshippers and no leader without political backup. Another symbolism depicted in Illustration 1c is the Socialist Realist transformation of the people. The masses are depicted with their hands stretched out towards the sky: they try to reach Mao, striving for his idealistic figure. Thus, Mao becomes the archetype of the New Man and is turned into a positive hero, a role model for the common people.

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[201] As will be shown below, the Red Book and Mao himself gradually evolve into the personification of he Socialist Realist principle of partiinost, absorbing and symbolizing the CCP's policies.
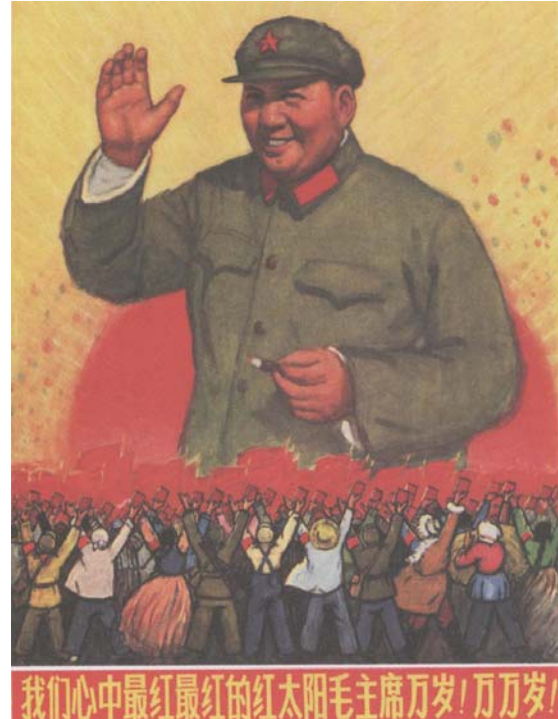
**Illustration 1b:** Peasant Sons (Cai Liang, 1965)[202]



**Illustration 1c:** Long live Chairman Mao, the reddest sunshine in our hearts! Long live Chairman Mao! (Artist unknown, 1967)[203]

To conclude our analysis of depictions of Mao and the masses, we now take a look on **Illustration 1d**, where we can see Mao sitting and chatting with common people. Actually, the most obvious difference to the pictures mentioned above is the fact that Mao is sitting. Consequently, he is neither the tallest person nor is he placed in the centre of the scene. This, of course, has several reasons. First, this artwork was created in 1973, amidst the Cultural Revolution and after Mao had already experienced several political backlashes as the Cultural Revolution didn't bring about the desired results. Mao had become a controversial person in the CCP. However, there were no intents to purge Mao, as he was the "nation's father" and thus still resembled a person of respect. In Illustration 1d this is shown through the unbowed attention of Mao's bystanders as they are carefully listening to him explaining something. Thus, Mao is still the political "commander" knowing what to do, having explanations and giving orders and advices. After the peak of his personality cult, Mao has again become one of the common people, staying in touch with the grass root population and being connected with their hearts (as literally indicated in the title of the painting). However, his once divine status has vanished. The second reason for Mao sitting is the fact that he was ageing. At the time Illustration 1d was created,

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[202] See Cushing/ Tompkins (2007): 93
[203] *Ibid.*: 124

Mao was already roughly 80 years old. Of course his actual physical age is denied in the picture, as he is depicted as an agile middle-aged man. However, in fact Mao already suffered from various health issues and would die only three years later.



**Illustration 1d:** Chairman Mao is connected with our hearts (Shaanxi Fine Art Production Group, 1973)[204]

**Example 2: Learn Chairman Mao's writings like comrade Wang Jie, do as Chairman Mao says**

Considering our second example, we again start by examining Illustration 2a by means of Panofsky's Three Stages Model. In the **first stage** the viewer is initially attracted by the young man placed in the centre of the picture as the most dominant aspect of the scene. He is embracing a book, holding it tightly to his body, and is surrounded by a red coloured crowd of people. The young man obviously is the artwork's key figure as his bright, grey coloured appearance and his surreal size clearly distinguish him from the masses. The masses consist of individuals from various class backgrounds, including soldiers, peasants, workers and intellectuals, thus resembling the whole society. The further the viewer looks at the remote

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[204] *Ibid.*: 123

distance of the masses, the harder it is to distinguish single individuals from each other. Eventually, the individuals vanish and together start forming a sea of people, in which each individual's identity and class background is denied, thus symbolizing Arendt's creation of the mass man.
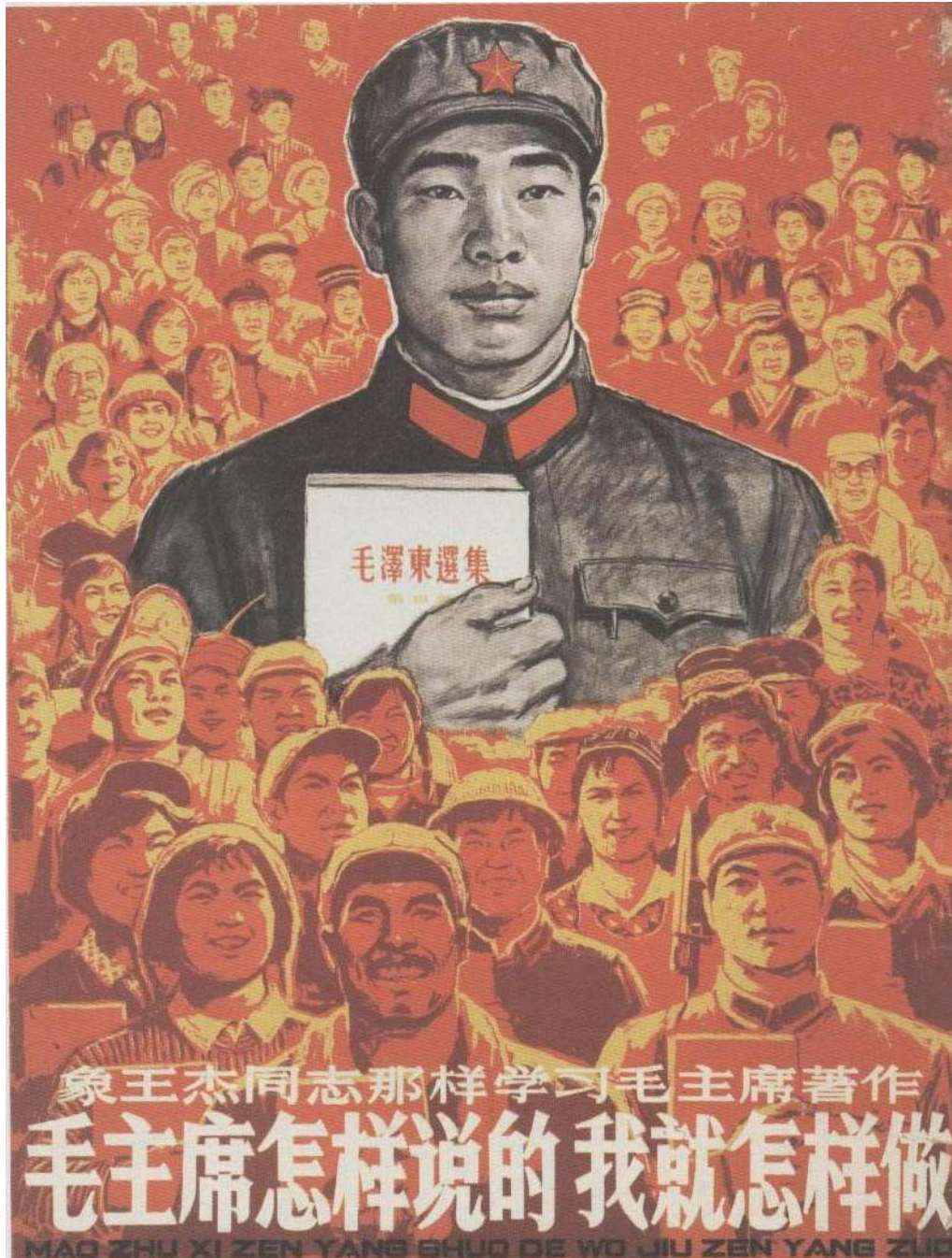


**Illustration 2a:** Learn Chairman Mao's writings like comrade Wang Jie, do as Chairman Mao says (Ha Qiongwen, 1965)[205]

In the **second stage** we find out the young man's identity by reading the artworks title 'Learn Chairman Mao's writings like comrade Wang Jie, do as Chairman Mao says'. Wang Jie is one of the positive heroes, such as Lei Feng or

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[205] *Ibid.*: 89

Ouyang Hai, which were created under the reign of Mao. All of these positive heroes had several things in common: they were fervent adherents of Mao and the communist cause in China; they all originated from very low social classes and were mostly raised in adverse conditions; they all died at a very young age while fully committing themselves to the achievement of various tasks, which would be beneficial for their comrades and/ or the communist cause[206]. These people serve as ideal role models, mainly because they possess a very modest social background. The message is clear: everyone diligent enough to become a better person (study Mao's works), can become a hero. This in turn, not only symbolizes the Socialist Realist concept of the transformation of the people and the creation of the New Man. It also represents one of the most fundamental concepts of communism: the belief in perfecting the human being. Another important aspect of the martyrdom surrounding common heroes like Wang Jie is the fact that those people died for a political cause: they were so selflessly committing themselves to the people and politics so that they were even willing to die for these causes. Thus, such heroic figures embody the Socialist Realist concepts of narodnost (serving the people) and klassovost (serving the political cause). But also the third central aspect of Socialist Realism, partiinost (serving the party), can be found in Illustration 2a. Wang Jie is embracing Mao's Works and pressing it close to his chest. This emphasizes the importance of Mao's writings in the course of becoming the New Man and a positive hero. There is a clear connection between Mao's writings and Wang Jie's status as heroic role model. Not only does the artworks title tell us, that Mao's writings were important for Wang Jie's development ('Learn Chairman Mao's writings like Wang Jie'). Also the fact, that Wang Jie is pressing Mao's writings close to his chest suggests that he is literally embodying Mao's thoughts: they become his personal advising guide and the central point of Wang Jie's daily life in the task of becoming a New Man and a hero.

In Panofsky's **third stage** we take a closer iconological look on the visualization of partiinost by examining the artworks background information. Illustration 2a was thus created shortly before the Cultural Revolution in 1965, when Mao was still a respected and unquestioned personality in the CCP. What can be

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[206] Wang Jie, a platoon leader in the PLA, was training members of the militia in the use of landmines. When an accidental explosion of dynamite was about to happen, Wang Jie threw himself into the blast in order to protect his comrades. Lei Feng, a PLA's squad leader, died through electrification when he was helping to raise a power line in the countryside. Ouyang Hai, member of the Communist Youth League and the CCP, rescued a horse carriage, which was stuck on a railroad crossing, by pushing it off the rails but himself being too slow and getting run over. See "The New Lei Fengs of the 1980s" in *Issues and Studies*, May 1984: 22-42

observed in this and other similar artworks is a twofold replacement. First, there is a gradual replacement of Mao's person with items symbolizing him, such as the sun or the Little Red Book. Second, Mao and all the symbols substituting him, increasingly start representing the party and the concept of partiinost, a trend that can also be observed in the case of Stalin and the CPSU. In this context, Wang Jie actually replaces Mao by indirectly representing him. Like Mao in Illustration 1c, Wang Jie is surreally large depicted when compared to the common people. He is floating above the masses, which he easily overviews. This is further emphasized by the angle of view, which is chosen from Wang Jie's perspective slightly above the masses.
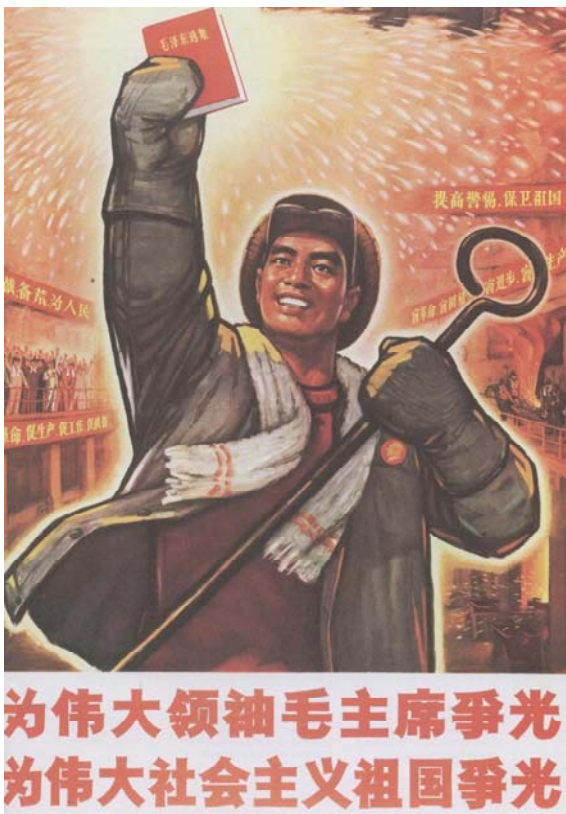


**Illustration 2b:** Make the great Chairman Mao proud, make the great socialist motherland proud (Central Arts & Crafts Institute, 1970)[207]
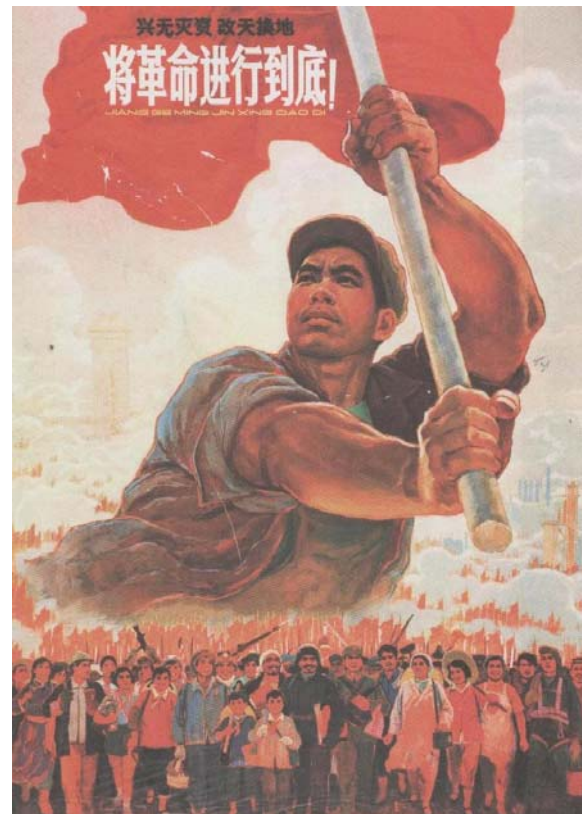
**Illustration 2c:** Carry the revolution through to the end, promote the proletariat, eliminate capitalism! (Ha Qiongwen, 1965)[208]

When comparing Illustration 2a with similar artworks, we find the following analogies. In **Illustration 2b** a young steel worker is depicted cheerfully holding up Mao's writings, thus resembling a similar pose like Wang Jie in Illustration 2a. The young steel worker is not as famous like Wang Jie, but he also is a positive hero, who derives from very low social origin (the working class) but, through the close studies of Mao's writings, has become a new man. Again, the steel worker is

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[207] See Cushing/ Tompkins (2007): 53
[208] *Ibid.*: 117

substituting Mao's person by praising his works, which are encircled by a nimbus sending out enlightening rays to the cheering people standing in the background of the scene.  Once again, the crowd forms a sea of undistinguishable individuals, thus resembling Arendt's symbolism of the Mass Man. Mao's writing is the highest item in the picture, thus further emphasizing its importance. The entire scene is set in a steel factory as appropriate works are underway on the right edge of the picture. The political context of the picture is created through the artwork's title 'Make the great Chairman Mao proud, make the great motherland proud'. In this context, the term 'proud' is obviously connected with achieving a certain goal. The steel factory as the artwork's setting thus indicates that this goal is the achievement or outperforming of steel production targets. This aspect resembles the Socialist Realist aspect of partiinost, as the Party defines the production targets of each industrial sector in course of developing an economic Five Year Plan. The fact that each and every person can help achieving these goals by studying Mao's works and fully committing oneself is shown by the young steal worker, who thus serves as a role model for the common people and symbolizes the creation of the New Man. **Illustration 2c** shows similar affinities. Again an unknown strong man in the centre is the dominant aspect of the scene. In this case Mao and the CCP are symbolized by a red flag, as red represents communism, which in turn is represented and promoted by the CCP and Mao. The flag thus resembles the symbolism of partiinost. Fiercely looking, the young man is waving the huge red flag with his strong arms. The picture's title 'Carry the revolution through to the end, promote the proletariat, eliminate capitalism!' is a political order from the party to carry out party politics, thus resembling the Socialist Realist aspect of klassovost. Furthermore, this order is implemented into the scene and placed onto the red flag. The flag thus becomes a banner, which serves two purposes. First, by enthusiastically waving the flag, the young man indicates that he is fully committed to (the orders of) the party. Second, he is also stirring his comrades and fellow men into action, who are following his appeal. Again, the individuals surrounding the young man in the scene are forming a huge red sea, where the individual's identity or class background is denied (Mass Man). The numerical dimension of the masses is emphasized by raised dust in the background of the picture. The masses thus resemble an unstoppable wave that is bound to flood the whole country for the sake of party politics. This also symbolizes Arendt's theory of

the continuous mass mobilization as the standard political condition in totalitarian regimes.

**Example 3: Red Flags at Daqing**

In contrast to the previous paintings, Illustration 3a depicts a completely different scene as it is primarily concerned with the transformation of nature, a fundamental concept of communism and Socialist Realism. In the **first stage** of Panofsky's analysing model we see several oil drilling towers and refineries as the dominant part of the artwork's scene. There is a clear contrast between the picture's foreground, which is dominated by untouched nature in terms of grass and flowers, and the background, represented through a heavily industrialized landscape. The transition between these two stages is illustrated by fog and a trail of industrial vehicles controlled and directed by men. In general, the few people depicted in the scene are very small in their size when compared to the large drilling towers. This impression is further emphasized through the angle of view, chosen from the perspective of a bystander. The drilling towers are topped by red flags waving in the wind and being the highest item in the scene.

In the **second stage** of analysis we once again identify the red flags as substitution for communism and the CCP (partiinost). Their importance is further emphasized through their dominant height in the scene as well their continuous waving in the wind. The waving symbolizes continuous motion and progress in achieving party politics, in this case the expansion of the country's industrialization (klassovost). This ongoing industrialization is further represented by the trail of industrial vehicles driving towards the yet untouched nature in order to industrialize also this part of nature. The few people in the scene play a crucial role, although they nearly vanish when compared to the dominant size of the drilling towers. The drilling towers are clearly the artwork's main focus. However, by depicting small people the viewer is reminded of the fact that these monstrous constructions were achieved by people. In this context the difference of size between towers and people is fundamental, as it proves that even allegedly small and insignificant human beings can create such tall structures. Of course, they were only able to do so, by following the directives of the CCP and thus becoming the New Man, as indicated through the red flags atop of the structures. The fog depicted in the scene can serve three purposes. First, it creates the impression of endless oilfields, thus resembling

endless industrialization. Second, it indicates that the scene is unfolding in the early morning hours as fog is still present. This in turn indicates that industrialization is underway throughout day and night, thus further resembling the continuous industrialization of the country. Third, as the fog is partly enframing the scene in the lower left corner it can also be understood as an artistic device to create the impression of a dream or a vision. This again represents the orders and goals defined by the party, thus resembling the Socialist Realist concept of partiinost.



**Illustration 3a:** Red Flags at Daqing (Artist unknown, 1977)[209]

In the **third stage** of analysis, the artwork's title 'Red Flags at Daqing' tells us the name and location of the scene (Daqing) and thus delivers additional details. Daqing in Heilongjiang province is China's largest and of the world's most productive oilfields. It thus played a central role in China's rapid industrialization during the early years after the founding of the People's Republic and soon became a role model for

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[209] *Ibid.*: 60

other industries by referring to the so called 'Daqing spirit'. In this context, the Daqing industrial complex serves as a positive hero and reference in the course of transforming the people, nature and eventually the whole country.
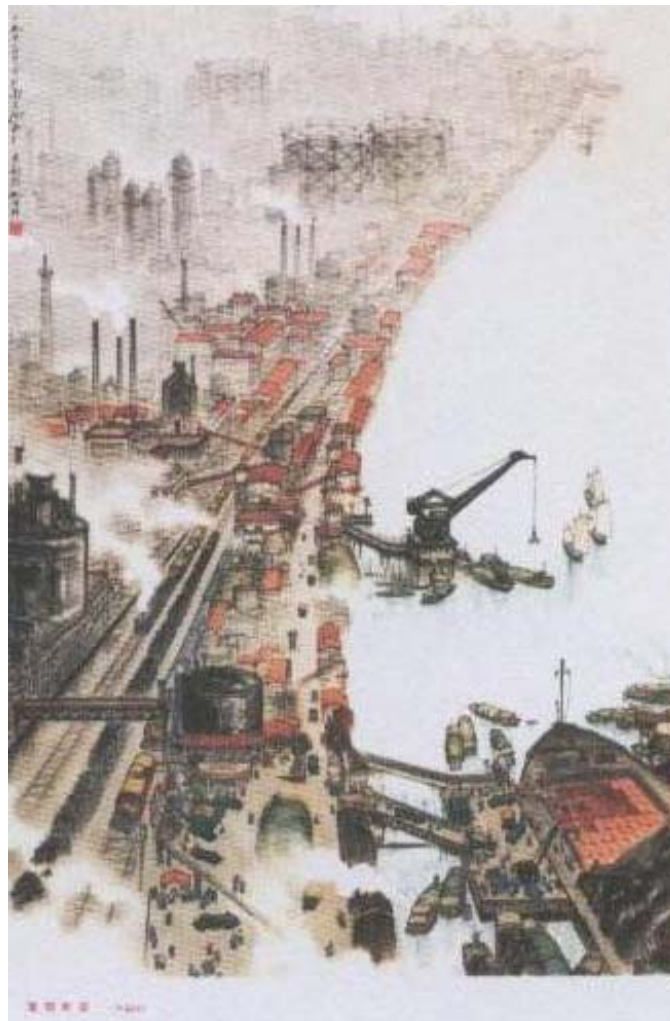


**Illustration 3b:** Exciting New Prospects (Qin Jianming, 1973)[210]

Similarities can be found when comparing Illustration 3a with other artworks. **Illustration 3b** offers a view on a coastal industrial complex. Again the impression of endless industrialized areas is created with fog in the remote distance of the scene and simultaneously also indicates that the scene is taking place in early morning hours, thus suggesting that production and continuous industrialization never stops. As in Illustration 3a, people are depicted very small and can be perceived only as small black dots in the industrial landscape. In contrast, the industrial buildings are enormously huge. Instead of flags waving in the wind, the continuous industrialization progress is symbolized through the rising and columns of smoke, which are blown over by the wind. These rising smoke columns visualize the ongoing production

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[210] *Ibid.*: 59

inside the factories. The fact that the columns of smoke are slightly blown over, symbolize motion by resembling the air stream of a moving object.



**Illustration 3c:** Fire trees and silver flowers make the night sky bright (Zhang Guiming, Yan Guoji, Xu Zhiwen, Cheng Shifa, Xie Zhiguang, 1973)[211]

In **Illustration 3c** we can observe similar features. The scene is set at a busy shipyard operating at night. Again the illusion of endless industrial landscapes is created by depicting objects in the far distance as blurry and by beaming the floodlight poles' rays against the angle of view, thus dazzling the viewer. The artwork's title transcribes the shipyard, actually a very cold and rough place, into a kitsch-like natural scene by labelling the industrial structures as 'fire trees' and 'silver flowers'. It further stresses the importance of uninterrupted production, as it explains how the night sky is turned bright by the diligently working people, who again can only be perceived as small blurry figures.

**Illustration 3d** offers a similar, yet somehow different view as it puts the common people back into the centre of attention. The scene is set on the countryside amidst agricultural fields. At first sight, one might get the impression of the depicted peasants being the artwork's central motive. In fact, it is nature and its transformation. The artworks title 'Planting rice by machine is wonderful' directs out intention to the machinery in the scene – rice planting machines. Thus the actual motive of the picture is the industrial automation of the agricultural sector. Of course, this brings many advantages, which are indicated by the endless corn fields reaching towards

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[211] *Ibid.*: 60

the horizon (the suggestion is clear: without appropriate machinery, there is no such big harvest) and the happy peasants, who can now cultivate much bigger amounts of food with much less physical hardship. The reason why they are actually equipped with such modern machinery is demonstrated by the waving red flags in the background, thus resembling not only the party (partiinost) but also the continuous motion of the country's industrialization.



**Illustration 3d:** Planting rice by machine is wonderful (Huang Miaofa, 1973)[212]

## Example 4: People all over the world, unite and to defeat American invaders and their running dogs

In the **first stage** of Panofsky's analysis model we see several individuals in the scene of Illustration 4a. Judging from their facial expressions they are furious. This impression is further emphasized by the fact that they are armed with rifles. The people are not a homogeneous group: there are both men and women and various ethnicities, all from different class background (soldiers, workers, peasants, intellectuals etc.). Together they form a sharp triangle form, resembling a phalanx or an unstoppable wave of people. The black man's gesture in the background, looking and calling up other people behind him and outside the depicted scene, suggests

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[212] *Ibid.*: 65

that this wave of people is much bigger in numerical terms than the viewer might originally think. His gesture also has an entraining effect on the viewer, who is indirectly addressed. The working class man's gesture in the centre of the scene, holding a red book and raising his rifle, has a similar effect as he is literally calling not only his fellow people but also the viewer to follow him.



**Illustration 4a:** People all over the world, unite to defeat American invaders and their running dogs (Xuhui District House Repairing Company, 1970)[213]

So far, we find that Illustration 4a, in contrast to most other pictures analyzed above, is dominated by a very hostile and aggressive mood. In the **second stage** of iconographic analysis we now take a closer look at the title of the image 'People all over the world, unite to defeat American invaders and their running dogs'[214]. This title contains further information regarding the artwork's background. First, it further emphasizes the existence of an enemy. Second, it reveals the enemy's identity (USA and its allies). The additional artworks title in the top of the picture 'All reactionary forces are paper tigers' also stresses the PLA's superior strength. All this is especially important, because the enemy is not depicted in the scene. Thus, a literal context has to be established. Third, it addresses not only the Chinese society, but all people around the world to unite against the enemy. This explains why people from

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[213] *Ibid.*: 102-103

[214] The dog is an ambivalent animal in traditional Chinese paintings, as it is both a guardian and a scavenger. However, in this context the term dog is clearly used by its negative meaning. See Williams (1976): 124

various ethnic backgrounds are depicted in Illustration 4a. The working class man in the centre of the scene is holding Mao's works. Again, this man functions as a replacement character for both Mao and the party (partiinost). Additionally, the depiction of Mao's writings and the red flags in the background establish a political context between the people and their actions: the call for uniting against the enemy thus becomes a political order from the party (partiinost).

This brings us to the **third stage** and the iconological analysis of Illustration 4a, as the full context of the American enemy can only be understood through additional background information of the artwork. The year 1970, in which Illustration 4a was created, gives us a first hint that the addressed conflict between China and the USA might be the Vietnam War, in which China supported communist Northern Vietnam. This assumption is further strengthened by various propaganda paintings addressing the Vietnam War were produced especially in the time period of 1965-1970. China has always labelled the American military operations in Vietnam as 'invasion' and 'imperialistic'. In fact, China had previously made especially bad experiences with imperialist actions during the late 19th century and in the course of Japanese occupation during WWII. Thus, this issue was (and still is) a sensitive topic in China, which explains why Illustration 4a not only addresses the Chinese society, but the global population to unite against the USA. This has also be understood in the context of the back then ongoing Cold War, as the Soviet Union bloc tried to expand communism in the world while Western nations, lead by the USA, tried to impede and curtail this process. In this context, the artwork's title is not only to be understood as a political order by the CCP (partiinost), but as an order in favour of the international communist movement, thus resembling the klassovost concept of Socialist Realism.

**Illustration 4b** depicts a similar scene. Again we see a group of people from various ethnic and class backgrounds in the centre of the picture. They are holding up weapons and their faces feature a determined expression, directly looking at the viewer and thus breaking the so called fourth wall[215]. With their risen weapons the crowd in the forefront form a sharp profile and thus resemble a phalanx.

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[215] The fourth wall is a term originating from the naturalistic theater and film industry. It refers to the imaginery wall between the stage/ the actors and the viewer.

**Illustration 4b:** Long live Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong
Thought (PLA Pictorial Publishing House, 1971)[216]

The masses in the background are unarmed, but also consist of individuals from various ethnic and social backgrounds. The concept of klassovost is of central importance in this picture. The title ('Long live Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought') as well as the year of publishing (1971) tells us that this picture mainly serves in favour of the international communist movement amidst the Cold War. Marxism and Leninism are named before Mao Zedong Thought. However, since this artwork is of Chinese origin, the superiority of Mao's works is symbolized through the red rising sun in the background of the scene, which serves as a symbol for Mao and the CCP (partiinost).

While Illustration 4a and 4b deal with international enemies, **Illustration 4c** addresses the enemy within the own society. Additionally, these enemies are not only depicted in literal terms by the title, but also by visual means in the lower left corner of the scene. Their body size is marginal when compared to the strong Chinese society symbolized by three individuals. The enemies are painted in black and white, thus not only resembling the iconographic impression something evil and soulless, but also taking the shape of dust or mud, which has to be swept away. This impression is further emphasized by two of the three Chinese society's individuals holding a broom and a shovel. The three individuals representing Chinese society

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[216] See Cushing/ Tompkins (2007): 101

**Illustration 4c:** Fight well in the people's
war to criticize Lin Biao and Confucius
(Zhang Ruji, Wang Jue, 1974)[217]

resemble every gender and various social classes, thus emphasizing that the 'people's war' can and should be fought by every member of society. This is further highlighted by the different armature of the people, such as a shovel (addressing the workers and peasants), a broom (addressing the housewives) or a brush (addressing the artists and intellectuals). The message is clear: everyone can and is supposed to contribute to the 'people's war', thus resembling the concept of the creation of the New Man, which ultimately leads to the New Society. The artwork's title is a direct order from the party (partiinost) aiming to mobilize the masses, thus symbolizing Arendt's thesis of the constant mobilization of masses as a political standard in totalitarian societies.

# 3.2. North Korea

**Example 1: We will follow only the great leader with a firm belief**

Illustration 5a depicts a typical scene with Kim Il Sung (in most artworks referred to as the great leader) among ordinary people. In Panofsky's **first stage** of iconographic analysis we immediately find the young man dressed in white as the

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[217] *Ibid.*: 118

scene's central focus of attention. This assumption is based on several findings. First, the young man is positioned in the relative centre of the picture. Second, he is wearing white clothes, thus distinguishing himself from the other people in the scene, who are painted in a colourful and somewhat blurry style. Third, this effect is further emphasized through the man's superior body height. Fourth, judging from the other people's posture and facial expressions, he is not only an important but also a beloved and respected person. The depicted people resemble all age groups, from recently born infants to old men.
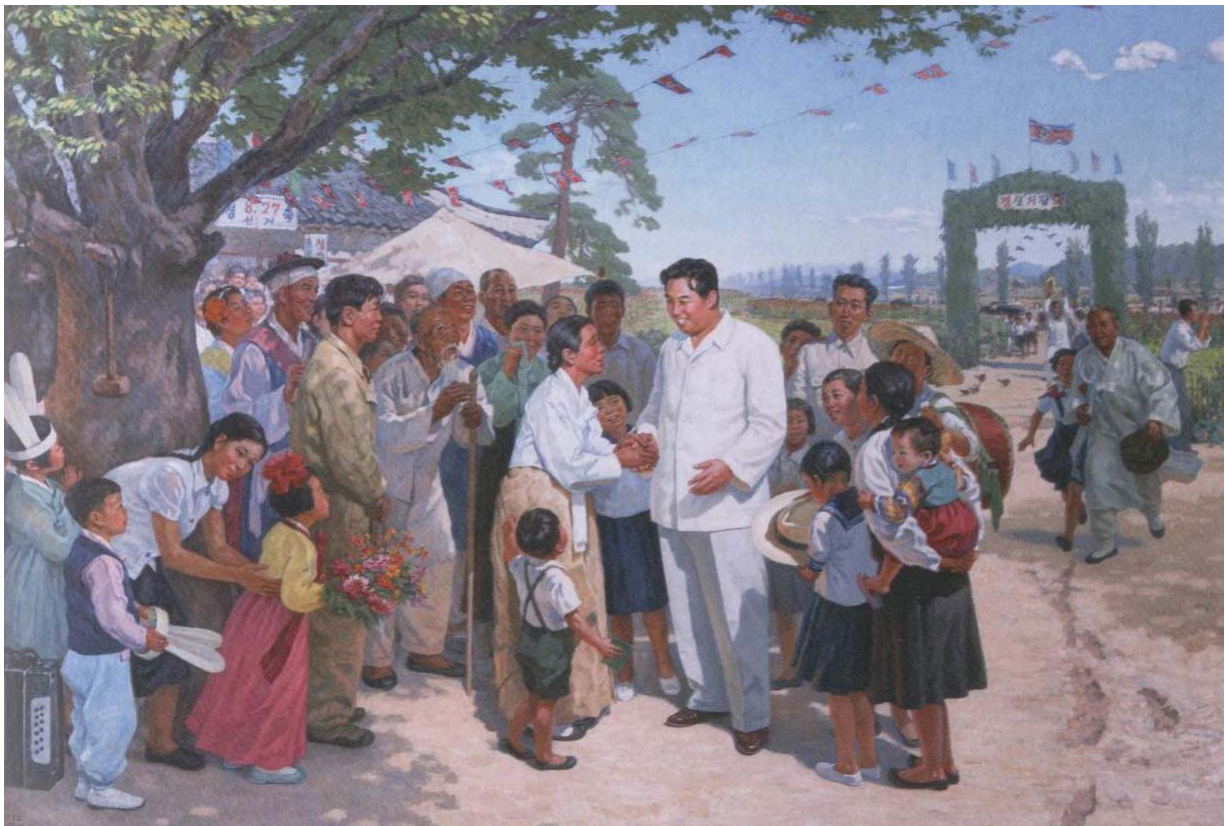


**Illustration 5a:** We will follow only the great leader with a firm belief (Jong Gwan Chol, 1982)[218]

In the **second stage** of iconographic analysis we find that the person dressed in white is actually Kim Il Sung. The artwork's creator obviously wanted to illustrate Kim's populism by depicting him during a visit in a small village, chatting and listening to grass root people. However, his superior status is mainly symbolized by his white collar worker's clothing style and its white colour, symbolizing innocence. The whole scene somehow resembles Christian symbolism in terms of Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem. Alike the scenes described in the New Testament, the village people offer Kim a warm welcome, giving him flowers (see small child) and striking up music (see accordion at the left edge of the scene). All people are wearing their finest clothes.

[218] See Noever (Ed.) (2010): 49

They are all rushing towards the scene and calling other people to do so, everyone wants to catch a glimpse of Kim. The fact that even old men admire the relatively young Kim reverses the age concept of the five Confucian Bonds (father-son, younger brother-elder brother) and instead emphasizes the Confucian relationship of ruler to ruled. Thus, Kim represents the KWP (partiinost), which is in constant concern about the common people's troubles and thus directly visits them and offers on-the-spot support (narodnost).

The **third stage** concludes the analysis of Illustration 5a by examining the artwork's iconological content. Generally speaking, the artwork is obviously a homage both to Kim's populism and the people's loyalty towards Kim. This is further emphasized by the artworks title "We will follow only the great leader with a firm belief". Here, the word 'only' offers further information, as it might hint at the failed coup against Kim during the 1950s while he was on a state visit abroad.

**Illustration 5b** offers a strikingly different scene by depicting Kim lying o the ground. This is especially interesting, because it contradicts most unwritten artistic rules when portraying a political leader with common people. In this example Kim is not only lying on the ground (thus, not representing a forward movement by walking or a political stronghold by firmly standing on both feed), but he is thus also overtopped by an old man. While his depiction in Illustration 5a turned the Confucian Bond of age upside down, he twists the Bond of ruler to ruled in Illustration 5b by lying on the floor while the common member of society is taller than him. However, there is again a hint indicating Kim's superior status by dressing him in white clothes and encircling him with a nimbus. Nevertheless Kim's modesty is the artwork's central theme: he is a simple peasant family's guest, sleeping together with them on the floor and taking care of the child, thus resembling a mother like figure. The fact that the artwork's title labels Kim as comrade, suggests that the scene might take place during Japanese occupation when Kim was fighting in anti-Japanese guerrilla forces. This in turn, emphasizes the peasant family's will to help Kim by letting him rest at their home, thus contributing to the communist cause (klassovost) and the creation of a new society (New Man). Kim's importance is further emphasized as he

**Illustration 5b:** The Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung among the children (Kim Rin Gwon, 1963)[219]



**Illustration 5c:** President Kim Il Sung among the artists (Union of Artists, 1972)[220]

is obviously explaining something to the old man, who regards Kim's words so important that he is writing them down (see notebook and pencil on the ground).

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[219] *Ibid.*: 57
[220] *Ibid.*: 55

**Illustration 5c** features a similar symbolism, as it depicts Kim Il Sung sitting among a group of people. The fact, that Kim is neither taller nor shorter than the other individuals in the scene, suggests that he is 'one of us'. Again, his importance is stressed by his central position in the scene and the other people thoughtfully listening to him and taking notes of his words. The action of taking notes emphasizes Arendt's thesis of the interdependence between leader and the people: the people need Kim to give them instructions, telling them what to do. Kim needs the people to enforce his ideas, thus symbolizing both the concept of partiinost (as Kim, alike Mao, is increasingly equalized with the party over the time) as well as the continuous mobilization of people as the standard political condition in totalitarian regimes.



**Illustration 5d:** President Kim Il Sung is always with us (Jong Hui In, 1994)[221]

**Illustration 5d** depicts Kim at the peak of his personality cult shortly after his death. He is sitting on the ground and surrounded by people from various ages and social backgrounds. Of course, Kim's actual age[222] is denied in the picture and only slightly indicated by his grey coloured hair and the glasses he is wearing. He does not anymore resemble the nation's father, but a grandfather-like figure. The artwork's title labels him 'president' and thus he is wearing statesmanlike clothes. The people

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[221] *Ibid.*: 37
[222] At his death in 1994, Kim was already 82 years old.

surrounding him are enthusiastically embracing and huddling against him. This action not only depicts a level of physical contact between Kim and the common people unknown before, but consequently also symbolizes the crowd's wish to incorporate Kim into their hearts. This in turn stresses Kim's immortality, as his spirit lives on in the heart and memories of the people. Thus, the people become representatives of Kim's thoughts and ideas. Again, this aspect is closely correlated with Christian symbolism, when Jesus' apostles spread his teachings throughout the society after his death. Kim's immortality is further emphasized through the depiction of flowers, namely the magnolia (North Korea's national flower) and the kimilsungia, a flower especially bred during the late 1960s to honour Kim Il Sung. In this context, the flowers represent Kim's ever lasting Juche ideology: alike the flowers, which continue to exist and accrete through bad times (winter periods), also the Juche ideology will sustain in the future throughout tough times[223]. This in turn, not only symbolizes the klassovost concept by means of Kim's political heritage, but also the idea of partiinost as the KWP (symbolized by Kim Il Sung) renews its claim to power by the succession of Kim's son Kim Jong Il.

**Example 2: The breath of the Party**

In the **first stage** of Panofsky's analyzing theme we find that the scene of Illustration 6a is set in a steel factory. This is illustrated by the dominant glistening red colour in the background of the picture and the working clothes of the individuals in the foreground. The individuals are the central theme of the picture. They are average working class men. Both are reading a newspaper in what seems to be a work break. There are no other individuals depicted in the scene. Their work is exhausting. This is emphasized through the warm red and bright colour tones of the background, indicating fire and heat, and through the fact that one of the workers is letting his overall hang down while drinking a bottle of water in order to cool himself. The other worker has a sweat absorbing towel hung around his neck. Both are leaning against a railing, indicating that they are exhausted and tired from their work.

In the **second stage** of iconographic analysis we take a closer look at the two steelworkers. The newspaper, which they are reading, is the Rodong Sinmun, the mouthpiece of the KWP. This is of tremendous importance. First, it tells us that these people are not only politically interested, but especially interested in the politics and

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[223] Actually, the fact that Kim Il Sung became the eternal president of North Korea until today, further emphasizes this scheme of the immortality of his person and his Juche ideology.

policies of the KWP by reading their official interpretations of current affairs and their consequent political actions, thus symbolizing partiinost. Second, albeit their exhausting work the steelworkers are still engaging themselves intellectually in their spare time by reading political essays in the KWP's newspaper. This not only shows their loyalty towards the party, but the transformation towards the New Man: they are not only working diligently, but also educating themselves in political terms. This in turn indicates that they are both actively working physically and mentally, thus forming the perfect role model of the New Man. This is further stressed by the fact that the depicted individuals look very common in their appearance. Neither are they especially tall nor are they extraordinary muscular. This tells the viewer that everyone can become such a New Man. Thus, the two steelworkers are transformed into common people's heroes. In a next step we take a closer look at the background



**Illustration 6a:** The breath of the Party (Park Jin Su, 1988)[224]

of the scene. The dominant colour is red, another way of symbolizing both the KWP (partiinost) and the communist cause (klassovost). The factory is working at full capacity as indicated by the rising smoke, the glistening fire and the sparks. The smoke is actually so dense that it covers other working personal. This in turn resembles the continuous progress of industrialization, thus symbolizing the concept of nature's transformation.

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[224] See Noever (Ed.) (2010): 155

In the **third stage**, the artwork's title gives us further information. 'The breath of the Party' is aimed at the ongoing works in the factory and at the two steelworkers: it indicates that these things are the foundation (the breath) of the party. Without them the party can't exist and the factories and people can't exist without the care taking party. This resembles Arendt's concept of the interdependence between the people and the leader. Furthermore, we examine the theme of transformation and constant industrialization in Illustration 6a. The North Korean economy is – similar to the political daily routine – dominated by campaigns in order to increase output or exceed production targets in the course of a Five Year Plan. The most prominent of such campaigns are the so called speed battles, which usually last for 100 days and organize labour force into work teams and brigades in order to let these teams compete against each other in terms of economic output. In this context, the scene in Illustration 6a not only features the symbolism of nature's transformation, but also the enforcements of economic policies of the KWP (partiinost). The fact that – albeit the increased workload during such speed battles – the steelworkers still find the time and motivation to politically educate themselves, further emphasizes their significance as role models for the New Man.



**Illustration 6b:** A break (Kim Hyon Chol, 1988)[225]

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[225] *Ibid.*: 128

**Illustration 6b** features similar symbolism. It depicts a working class woman playing an accordion on a construction site. The artwork's simple title 'A break' confirms the odd impression of a work force playing music amidst a work break after an exhausting work shift. This is a depiction of the transformation into the New Man, although in much more obvious and radical terms when compared to the steelworkers in Illustration 6a reading a newspaper during their work break. The fact that a young girl is working at a construction site, a typically male environment, further stresses the transformation into the New Man.



**Illustration 6c:** On the way to work (Kim Jong Jung, 1992)[226]

And similar symbolic patterns can also be observed in **Illustration 6c**, which depicts several individuals sitting in a bus on their way to work, enthusiastically discussing political issues as indicated through the man in the centre holding a newspaper and explaining something. The depicted individuals resemble common people, thus emphasizing the message that everyone can become a role model and a hero. The significance of the role model is further strengthened by the fact that these people are Pyongyang citizens (as indicated by the bus' destination plate in the background, with Mangyongdae, an outskirt district of Pyongyang, being the terminal station). In Socialist countries the capital city is often assigned the role of a role model city[227]. Living in such cities is often a privilege, since the citizens of a role

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[226] *Ibid.*: 119
[227] In Socialist countries the concept of the new society is often backed by the concept of new architecture and urban development aimed at promoting and accelerating the development of the New Man. A typical example of this idea the creation of big public squares, giving the people the chance to meet and discuss political issues with each other, thus allegedly sharpening political consciousness.

model city also have to be role model people. This in turn is a deal between the party and the people: by living up to the party's guidelines (becoming a New Man) and serving as role models the people are rewarded with the privilege to live in the role model city Pyongyang, enjoying above average living standards. This deal is also illustrated in the scene by the party, symbolized by the bus amidst a harsh blizzard, delivering its role models warmly and convenient to their workplace. This ultimately resembles Arendt's theory of interdependence between the leader and the society in totalitarian systems.



**Illustration 6d:** On the night when President Kim Il Sung visited
(Sok Rye Jin, 1979)[228]

Another example for the depiction of this interdependence is **Illustration 6d**. It features a young girl cleaning in front of a house's door amidst a cold winter night. The political significance of the scene is shown by the artwork's title 'On the night when President Kim Il Sung visited'. Kim Il Sung himself is not depicted in the scene, but we can identify his pair of white military boots placed next to the house's entrance. Kim Il Sung is often depicted in his white military uniform. Thus, the skilled viewer can clearly identify the white boots in Illustration 6d as Kim's property even without knowing the artworks title. Apart from the fact that the boots are clean, white and taller than the other earth coloured shoes at the doorstep, Kim's boots are illuminated by a beam of light from inside the house. Kim's boots are placed on the highest doorstep, thus further emphasizing his superior political role. However, he still

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[228] See Noever (Ed.) (2010): 98

doesn't appear arrogant due to this status, as his modesty is shown by him sleeping at a common family's home. In this context, the picture serves two main purposes. First, it illustrates Kim's populism and modesty. Second, it features the creation of the New Man in form of the family accommodating Kim and the family's daughter diligently cleaning the path in front of the house despite the harsh weather conditions.

**Example 3: Daybreak on Chollima Street**

The scene of Illustration 7a is set on a huge construction site in an urban area. In Panofsky's **first stage** of iconographic analysis we see two workers in the foreground working on a building's frontage. Both of them are cheerfully looking towards the sky. Other working individuals can also be seen in the background of the scene, although very marginal in their size. Besides the workers, heavy industrial machinery, such as trucks, cranes and dredgers, is depicted as well. Construction work is fully underway, despite the early morning hour.

In the **second stage** of iconographic analysis we take a closer look at the people depicted in the scene. The central theme of Illustration 7a obviously is the constant advance of industrialization through transformation of nature. This is indicated by the yellow sparks in the background and the people constantly working throughout night. Furthermore, the immense height difference between the tall buildings and the tiny people in the background illustrates the tremendous achievements of the workforce and the country's industrialization. All this promises a bright future thanks to the realization of communist policies, thus resembling the Socialist Realist concept of klassovost. This hope and positive anticipation towards the future is illustrated by the two workers in the foreground, looking towards the remote distance in sky, as if they would excitedly await something. Simultaneously, they are illuminated by a beam of early morning sunrays, resembling spiritual enlightening through Juche and thus symbolizing the creation of the New Man.

In the iconological **third stage** of Panofsky's analysis we examine the artwork's title. 'Daybreak on Chollima Street' not only confirms that the scene is taking place in the early morning, but also reveals the location of the scene. Chollima Street is located in Pyongyang and is of essential importance: it not only serves Pyongyang as a vital transportation route, it also features several prestigious landmarks such as the People's Palace of Culture or the Pyongyang Ice Rink.
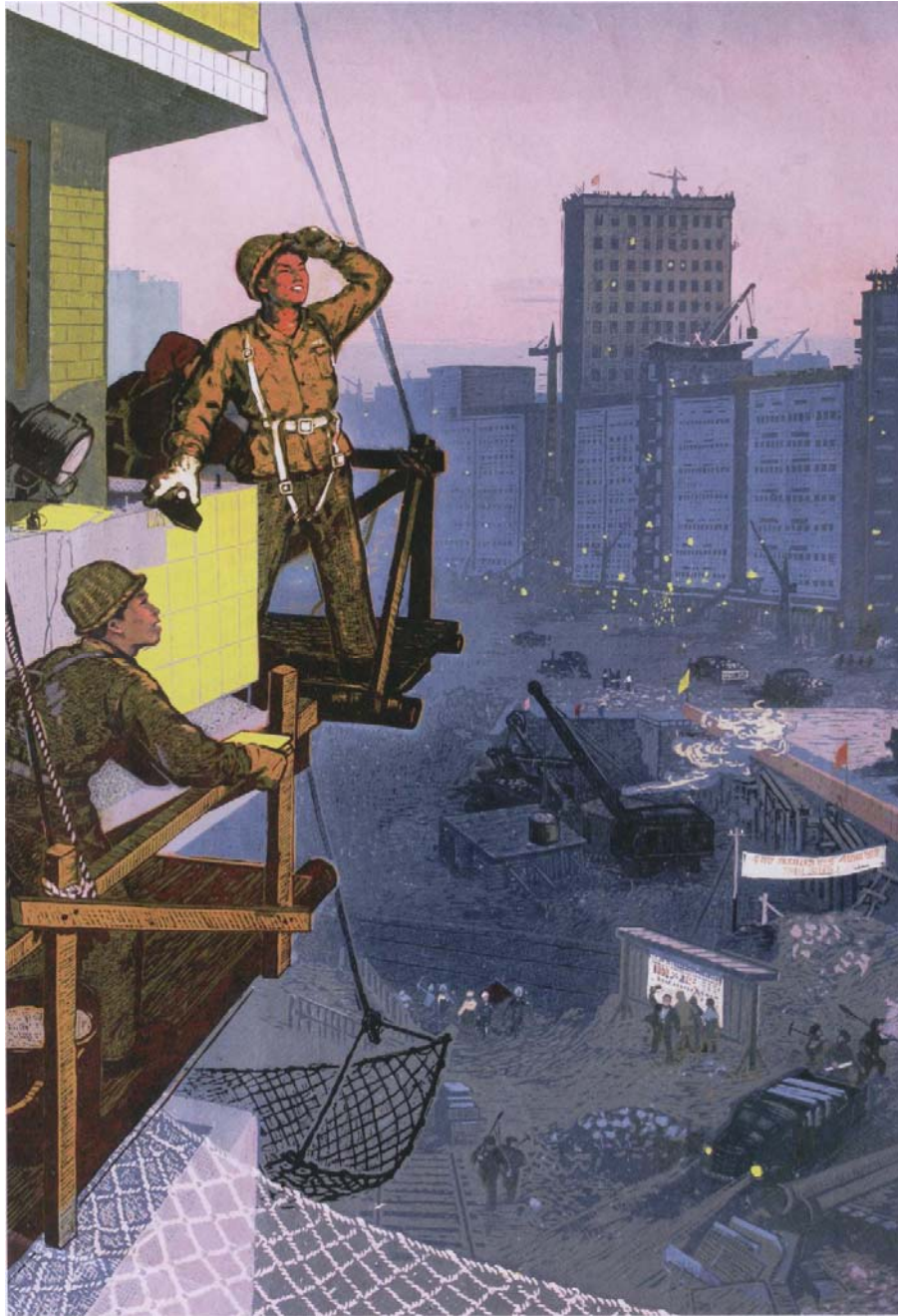
**Illustration 7a:** Daybreak on Chollima Street (Ri Pyong Rim,
1970)[229]

Thus, it serves as a role model street for urban planning. The fact that it is located in

Pyongyang, a role model city, further emphasizes its importance. The street itself is

named after a mystical winged horse called Chollima[230], which served as the eponym

in 1956 when the Chollima Movement, a campaign to speed up industrialization and

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[229] *Ibid.*: 141

[230] Chollima in turn has its origins in ancient Chinese mythology, which describes a magical horse with supernatural powers called Tianma (Caelestical Horse). The Tianma was eventually adopted by ancient Korean mythology in form of a magical White Horse, which can appear or disappear at will and travel a thousand li (300 miles) in a day without tiring. Furthermore, it can gallop across the sky and even go right up to heaven. Thus, the White Horse served as template for the Chollima, which was eventually adapted by the KWP for party politics. See Mullany (2006): 149, 150

increase economic output, was initiated. In this context, Illustration 7a's central theme of constant industrialization is further emphasized by letting the scene take place in a street named after an industrialization campaign. Additionally, the publishing year of the artwork (1970) coheres with Chollima Street being further developed during the 1970s by constructing the landmarks mentioned above.
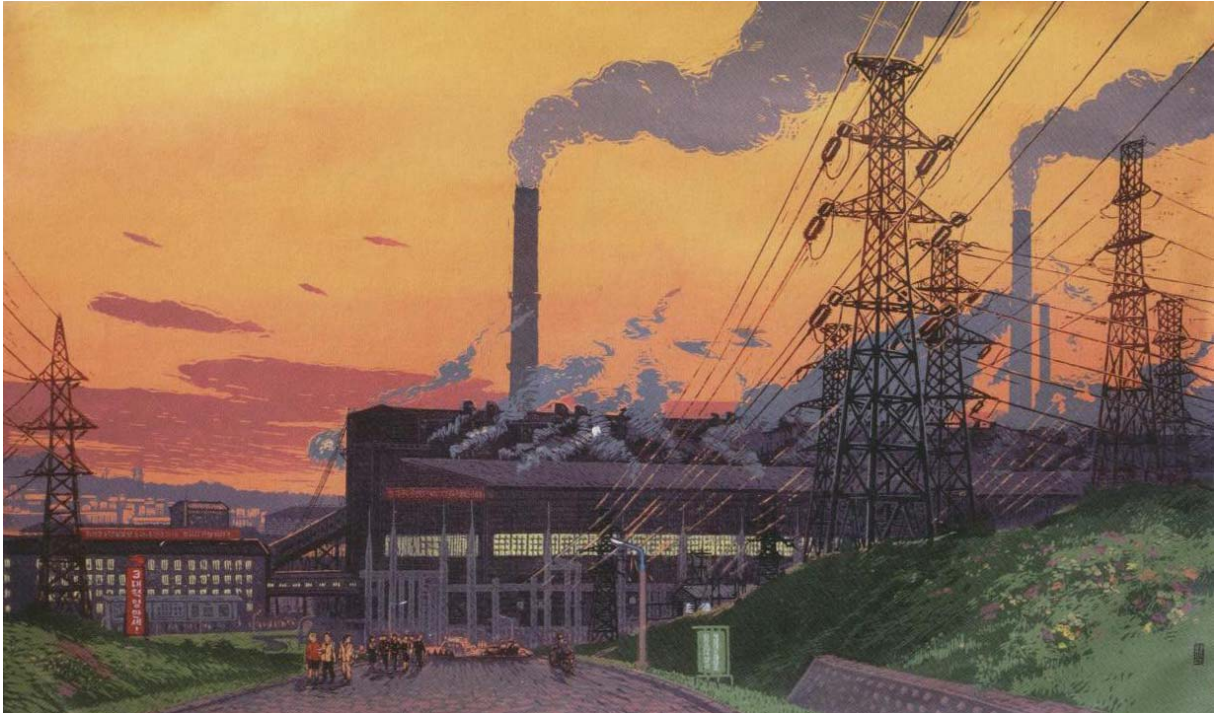


**Illustration 7b:** The breath of Pukchang (Ri Pyong Rim, 1977)[231]

**Illustration 7b** features a scenic view on an industrial complex during sunset. Again, the artworks central theme is the transformation of nature and constant industrialization. Although the day is slowly ending and some workers can be seen walking home, the rising columns of smoke in the background indicate that the industrial complex is still operating. This constant movement and action is further illustrated by a slight breeze blowing over the smoke columns. Thus, the smoke as something originally unpleasant, which is perceived negatively by most people, is transformed into a positive symbolism, as it resembles continuous industrialization. The fact that the chimneys in the scene's background are increasingly blurry depicted create the impression of an endless industrial complex. From the artwork's title we learn that the depicted industrial complex is the thermal power complex in Pukchang. This is essentially important, since the Pukchang power plant is the largest thermal power plant in North Korea and thus, like China's Daqing oil refinery, serves as role model for other industrial complexes. The artwork's title further emphasizes the

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[231] See Noever (Ed.) (2010): 154

significance of the power plant by labelling it "the breath of Pukchang". Thus, the power plant is turned into a vital organ for the city, which can partly be seen in the background of the scene. Without the power plant there is no city of Pukchang. Without industrial complexes like the Pukchang power plant there is no industrialized country. This allegory in turn creates the political connection to the KWP, which is responsible for the industrialization of the country. The ultimate message is clear: without the KWP there is no modern North Korea, thus resembling the concept of partiinost.



**Illustration 7c:** Evening glow over Kangson (Jong Yong Man, 1973)[232]

The continuous industrialization through the transformation of nature is also a central theme in **Illustration 7c**. It depicts an industrial complex in Kangson during sunset. Once again the constant operation of the complex is illustrated by the rising smoke columns despite the late daytime. The blurry buildings in the background create the imagination of an endless industrial facility. A new aspect is the fact that, contrary to Illustration 7a and 7b, Illustration 7c depicts the contrast between already transformed industrial terrains in the background and yet untouched natural areas like the river and the lawn in the foreground of the scene.

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[232] *Ibid.*: 86, 87

**Illustration 7d:** The day breaks (Kim Yong Gu, 1978)[233]

This serves as transition to the scene in **Illustration 7d**, which completely lacks industrial or urban areas and takes place in a rural environment. It features agricultural fields stretching towards the horizon, thus creating the impression of indefinite cornfields and endless food supply. The central theme of industrialization is illustrated by a power pole in the far distance and several tractors throughout the fields. The tiny size of the tractors in the background is in strong contrast to the sheer endless size of the fields. It thus depicts the yet unimaginable capabilities and benefits of industrialization[234]. The fact that the farmers are already working before sunrise not only creates the impression of continuous industrialization, but also emphasizes the farmers' diligent work attitude. Thus, the farmers serve as role models for the New Man. The two farmers in the front of the scene, like the two workers in Illustration 7a, look excitedly towards the sky. This, again, resembles the expectations towards the advent of something positive, for instance an era of full industrialization thanks to Juche and the KWP (klassovost, partiinost).

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[233] *Ibid.*: 137
[234] In Illustration 7a and 7b, this effect is created through the difference in size between the working people and the buildings surrounding them.

**Illustration 8a:** The grand march for reunification (Ko Sok Jon, 1992)[235]

Section I

US Imperialism

Section II

Solidarity

Section III

Japanese occupation

Section IV

Korean Reunification

Section V

Nationalism

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[235] See Noever (Ed.) (2010): 88

**Example 4: The grand march for reunification**

In the **first stage** of Illustration 8a's iconographic analysis we notice numerous people gathered together in what seems to be a protest or a rally. They are wearing various clothes and holding up numerous banners as well as posters with various motives. Some parts of the masses seem to be rather aggressive by clenching their fists and raising their arms, thus resembling a gesture of demand and protest (see individuals Section II & III). Others are very passive as for instance the white dressed people in Section I above the torn US American flag. They are mourning deceased persons by holding their pictures. Without proper background information it is unclear why these people are gathering for and what their central demanding is, as there are various themes and motives involved. Thus, I have divided the artwork into five sections, since every section features an own theme.



Section I of Illustration 8a

The sections will be analyzed in the **second stage** of iconographic analysis. Section I is dominated by the theme of US Imperialism. This term, often used by the KWP, refers to the Korean War and the eventual division of the Korean peninsular into two parts, with the Southern part being 'colonized' by the USA. The centre of attention clearly is the depiction of an American flag at the bottom of Section I, which is torn apart by two individuals. Behind this poster we can see mourning people. The fact that these individuals stand close to the US flag suggests that the deceased actually died due to the USA in the course of the Korean War. On both sides the mourning individuals are surrounded by taekwondo[236] fighters as indicated by their clothing style typical for taekwondo fighters. This in turn indicates that these taekwondo fighters either try to protect or avenge the mourning people. The rest of

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[236] Teakwondo is a Korean martial arts style.

Section I is very versatile in its composition. On the left we identify a picture of Paektusan, a sacred mountain in North Korea where Kim II Sung's son Kim Jong II was allegedly born, as well as a portrait of what seems to be a national hero. At the top of Section I we can see numerous armed people in the very last row of the crowd, aggressively waving their weapons. In context of the central motive of Section I, this obviously indicates retribution against the USA for the Korean War and its consequences.



Section II of Illustration 8a

The central motive of Section II is solidarity. This is first illustrated by the central banner at the top of Section II stating 'Let's overthrow the regime murder' and is a hint at the numerous protests in South Korea during the 1980s[237]. Thus, the individuals holding this banner can be perceived as North Korean citizen solidarizing with their South Korean counterparts or as South Korean citizens having defected to North Korea in search for 'true democracy, thus showing solidarity with the regime on the North. The second example for the illustration of solidarity as central motive in Section II is the poster just below the mentioned banner. It depicts protesting people, among them a black person. This in turn resembles the international solidarity with North Korea, as people from other ethnicities, not prevalent on the Korean peninsular, are shown. The protesting gesture of the people in the poster and its message is emphasized by the persons holding up the above mentioned banner and the poster resembling this gesture of demand and protest.

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[237] After the violent suppression of the 1980 Gwangju Democratic Movement numerous South Korean (especially student) activists constantly organized public demonstrations against the authoritarian government style of South Korean president Chun Doo Hwan. This eventually resulted in a nation wide democracy movement climaxing in 1987. North Korean propaganda officials sometimes picked out this South Korean issue as they constantly call the political system of North Korea a truly democratic system, in contrast to South Korea. See for instance North Korean Constitution (2009), Article 64 (1): *"The State effectively guarantees the genuine democratic rights and freedoms […] of all its citizens."*

Section III of Illustration 8a

Section III is mainly concerned with Japanese colonial rule. This is first indicated by the banner at the top right of Section III, which not only features Japanese characters (and is thus addressing Japanese people) but also the date of August 15th, which resembles the end of Japanese occupation on the Korean peninsular in 1945. Second, just below this banner we can see a picture featuring a Japanese warrior. We can draw this conclusion, because the individual on the picture is drawn in black colour (usually used for depicting enemies) and because he features a samurai sword sticking out of his backpack as well as a hachimaki[238]. The picture thus serves as accusation and identification of Japan as a hostile nation. On the left edge of Section III we can identify another poster. It is unclear, which historical scene it actually depicts, but the combination of Japanese soldiers, US-American soldiers and the canon of a naval artillery suggests that the poster's scene is actually concerned with the signing of Japanese surrender after WWII aboard the USS Missouri. Again, the individuals surrounding the samurai and the Japanese surrender poster feature rather aggressive posture by stretching out their arms.

Section IV is the largest sector of all and is mainly concerned with Korean unification, as it features several posters depicting a unified Korean peninsular. Compared to the previous sections the people in Section IV are relatively calm as most of them are depicted standing and holding their banners or posters peacefully. However, a red flag with a small white coloured unified Korean peninsular in central lower half of Section IV features political symbolism, as it demands a unified Korea under Socialist principles (as indicated by the colour red symbolizing klassovost and/ or partiinost).

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[238] The hachimaki, a typically white headband, is a symbol for courage and was often worn by Japanese soldiers during WWII.

Section IV of Illustration 8a

The most forward part of the mass gathering, Section V, is relatively apolitical. Some individuals in the lower left corner are again holding maps of a unified Korea. However, Section V's central theme seems to be concerned with North Korea itself. First, it features relatively peaceful individuals cheering and dancing along. This in turn is supposed to foster the image of North Korea as a peaceful nation without hostile intentions. Second, Section V is simultaneously concerned with nationalism, as it features by far the most people in the whole scenery wearing the hanbok, a typical Korean clothing.



Section V of Illustration 8a

Concluding the second analysis stage of Illustration 8a's various sections, we find that the artwork features several themes and motives. However, the most important theme seems to be the Korean unification (Section IV). This is shown by the mere fact that Section IV is by far taking up the biggest part of the demonstrating masses. This assumption is further stressed by the artwork's title 'The grand march for unification'. Another interesting fact is that the people depicted in Section IV are permanently depicted in a peaceful way, thus resembling the wish for a peaceful re-unification process. The whole demonstration march itself can be perceived as a 'story': it is primarily concerned with Korean unification, but in order to fully understand this aspect of the story, a prehistory has to be told first. This prehistory in turn is illustrated by the other sections, dealing with Korean occupation, the Korean War and all its consequences. Of course the story being told in this course is the official North Korean version. All depicted individuals tell this story by taking part in this mass rally. Thus, they resemble Arendt's theory of the constant mobilization of the masses as the people are telling the regime's official version of the story. By doing so, they become the Mass Man, which is illustrated by their uniformly looking faces missing all specific features.

In the **third stage** of Panofsky's analysis we examine the iconological content of Illustration 8a. We find that the artwork was created in 1992 and is mainly concerned with the Korean unification. This is of central importance, as political consolidation meetings between North- and South Korea started in the early 1990ies [239] and resulted in the agreement on reconciliation, non aggression, exchange and cooperation in December 1991. In this context, artwork 8a can be perceived as a direct result of the diplomatic harmonization between North- and South Korea in the early 1990ies, resembling the political mood of that time. Furthermore, it stresses the North's will for peaceful unification, as further indicated by the depiction of peaceful people in Section IV (reunification) of the artwork.

In **Illustration 8b** we see a man holding a red flag while riding a horse. He is aggressively looking and pointing at the viewer, thus breaking the fourth wall. His demands are further emphasized by the artwork's title 'Comrade, are you riding the Chollima Horse? Remove conservatism and passivity!'. The artwork's title provides

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[239] In September 1990 first high level talks for reunification were held in Seoul and during 1991 North- and South Korean sportsmen joined a unified Korean sports team, in which they competed altogether at various sporting events.

**Illustration 8b:** Comrade, are you riding the Chollima Horse? Remove conservatism and passivity! (Kwak Hung Mo, 1958)[240]

us with additional background information. Judging from the title we assume that the horse, which the man is riding, is the mythical Chollima Horse. The publishing date (1958) also tells us, that this painting is obviously a result of the Chollima Movement, which was an economic campaign launched in 1956 and aimed at increasing economic output and accelerating industrialization. Thus, the artwork indirectly deals with the theme of nature's transformation through industrialization. This is indicated by the horse riding man, who is wearing typical blue collar worker clothes and thus resembles the typical worker. The worker plays a vital role in the artwork, as he unites several Socialist Realist art concepts. First, he represents the average working class man, who is urging his fellow people to act by means of the Chollima Movement, which is ultimately a political program initiated by the KWP. He thus enforces party politics and resembles the concept of partiinost. This is further represented by the red flag he is holding, which serves as another symbol for the party. Second, he is not only urging his fellow people to follow party politics, but actually challenges his comrades by asking whether they are riding the Chollima horse. The fact that he is riding the Chollima horse (a symbol of obeying party politics)

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[240] See Noever (Ed.) (2010): 163

turns him into a role model for the New Man. Additionally, as he is portrayed as an average working class man, the message is clear: everyone can become like him, everyone can become a hero and a role model of the New Man. Third, the man's aggressiveness in combination with the artwork's title have an immediate impact on the viewer by telling him how to behave (obeying party politics) and what kind of behaviour has to be eradicated, namely conservatism and passivity. This is especially interesting, because – in contrast to Illustration 8a – Illustration 8b addresses not foreign but domestic enemy concepts. Conservatism in this context is to be perceived by political means and addresses all those not willing to adhere to party politics. Passivity is to be understood as a result of refusing to follow the party's policies: conservatism results in rejecting the KWP and its policies; rejecting the KWP's policies results in rejecting the Chollima Movement; rejecting the Chollima Movement results in passivity due to a lack of increased work attitude for the sake of the Chollima Movement. All this eventually impedes the successful implementation of the Chollima Movement and thus prevents an industrialization of the country. As artwork 8b was published in 1958, the ultimate industrialization was still far away. This is indicated by the blurry shapes of an industrialized landscape in the background of the scene, thus resembling the vague image of a dream or a vision of the distant future.

# 4. Analysis

This research paper dealt with the political and ideological symbolism of Chinese and North Korean propaganda paintings created during the reign of Mao Zedong and Kim Il Sung. This final chapter shall give an executive summary of the findings of this research paper.

**Political Findings**

I chose China and North Korea as example for an analytical comparison, because both countries have numerous similarities. They both feature a similar historical background, with periods of isolation and foreign occupation. In both countries the struggle against occupational forces eventually led to the emergence of a new nation through an underground movement, which followed a specific political ideology (see ideological findings). Apart from their ideologies, both countries also featured other affinities regarding their political system. First, the political system of China under Mao and North Korea under Kim were both totalitarian systems in terms of featuring an official ideology, a monopoly of information and a state apparatus with strict hierarchical forms of organization (see Chapter 2.1.3). Second, both nations undertook similar political campaigns, especially in the early years after the founding of the state. These political campaigns were primarily concerned with ideological and economic issues as they were mostly designed to eradicate enemies of the political regime (both within and outside the country) or accelerate industrialization and increase economic output.

**Ideological Findings**

Both nations' ideological foundations had their origins in the Soviet Union's Marxism-Leninism. However, in the course of time Marxism-Leninism was re-developed by Mao and Kim into ideological spin-offs, namely Mao Zedong Thought and Juche. This not only emphasized the alleged superiority of the respective ideology compared to Marxism-Leninism. It also helped to foster the position of Mao and Kim in the respective country's political system and thus eventually set off a tremendous personality cult. Both ideological spin-offs stressed the importance of the creation of a new socialist man and a new socialist society. This is turn was one of the central concepts of Soviet style Socialist Realism (see Influence of Socialist Realism) and

also resembles Arendt's Mass Man Theory: the social background of a person is eradicated and is replaced by a common identity defined and shaped by the official ideology of the political elite. Thus, the individual vanishes in the masses and by following the same ideology, the masses adapt one common personality. Thus, the Mass Man is created.

**Art in China and North Korea**

Both countries regarded art as crucial to accelerate the transformation of man and society. Thus, art in China and North Korea didn't exist for the mere sake of art, but instead was assigned a clearly predefined role with a clear goal within the strict hierarchical role structure of the respective state apparatus. This was achieved by means of the Four Level Pyramid Model (see Chapter 2.2.4). Hereby, Mao Zedong Thought and Juche served as the ideological foundation for art. The specific role and goal of art was defined by Mao during his 1942 talks at the Yan'an Forum on literature and art. Kim specified the roles and goals of North Korean art during several speeches over the course of time. In order to enforce and monitor these guidelines, both countries established respective institutions and organizations. China established the Lu Xun Academy of Arts, while North Korea founded the KFLA. Additionally, both countries soon strengthened these institutions through legal means by implementing the role of art in their constitutions.

**Influence of Socialist Realism**

Soviet style Socialist Realism had a tremendous influence on the Chinese and North Korean art scene. First, propaganda paintings in China and North Korea resembled the technical painting style of Socialist Realist paintings in the Soviet Union. Second, the three central concepts of Socialist Realism, narodnost, klassovost and partiinost (see Chapter 2.3) were continuously implemented into Chinese and North Korean artworks. Narodnost was constantly emphasized by Mao and Kim, who stressed that art should come from the masses and serve the masses. Klassovost and partiinost are typical motives in most of Chinese and North Korean propaganda paintings, as they are mainly concerned with the construction of a new man and a new society (klassovost) or with the glorification of the Party or their leaders (partiinost).

**Content of Chinese and North Korean artworks**

As Chinese and North Korean art was heavily influenced by Soviet style Socialist Realism, their symbolisms and motives are very similar and show numerous analogies. This was shown by the following main categories as art motives, which I analyzed in Chapter 3: 1) the glorification of the respective political leader, party or ideology, 2) the transformation of nature and society on behalf of the political ideology, 3) the creation of a hero by means of Mao/ Kim himself or by common people serving as role models for the New Man, 4) enemies of the people, the country or the ideology serving as negative role model.

While the first three categories serves as art motives in most Chinese and North Korean artworks, the fourth category – the depiction of enemies – is heavily underrepresented in the case of North Korea. While Chinese propaganda paintings often feature enemies, most examined North Korean artworks lacked this art motive. Initially, one could thus assume that North Korean propaganda paintings are less aggressive in their style when compared to its Chinese counterparts. This assumption clearly has to be rejected. First, as pointed out above China and North Korea both initiated several political campaigns in the early years after the respective political elite came into power. These political campaigns were primarily designed to eradicate groups or individuals possibly hostile towards the CCP or the KWP. Thus, such campaigns and the chase of 'counter revolutionaries' or 'enemies of the people' served as art motives for several propaganda artworks of that time. Second, in fact numerous propaganda paintings with such an aggressive style were also created in North Korea over the time. However, since I only examined propaganda paintings from two catalogues, the original number of artworks is heavily limited. Additionally, the primary source of North Korean propaganda paintings is the result of an art exhibition, which was jointly held at the MAK museum in Vienna in 2010 by Austria and North Korea. Thus, it is obvious that the North Korean regime, when presenting itself to the outside world, would not put artworks abroad on public display, which feature North Korean missiles destroying the White House or the like. Instead, through the selection of artworks rather moderate in their content, North Korean officials would try to present their country in a rather friendly and peaceful way.

Both nations' artworks feature extensive symbolism in various forms, which can most of the time only be understood through additional background information of the respective country's culture. This is because old symbols were often adapted

and reframed by Chinese and North Korean artists in the course of creating propaganda paintings. A typical example is the extensive use of the colour red, which is perceived in the Chinese society as an auspicious colour. Thus, red was often used to illustrate the party or the 'communist spirit'. Such symbols often served as replacement for other items. For instance, flowers were of essential importance both in China and North Korea. In the case of China, the loyalty of the common people was often symbolized by sunflowers, which constantly gaze at the sun, which in turn symbolized Mao. In North Korea Kim's immortality was further emphasized through the creation and depiction of an own flower, the Kimilsungia. Additionally, both countries' propaganda paintings feature Christian style symbolism, such as Mao and Kim often being encircled by a nimbus or being surrounded by fellow people, thus resembling Jesus and his apostles.

**Differences between Chinese and North Korean art symbolism**

Despite all these findings there are of course some differences between Chinese and North Korean art symbolism. First, Kim is generally depicted closer to the people than Mao. There are several artworks featuring Kim sitting together with common people, playing with children or conducting on site visits. Similar artworks also exist in the early years after Mao gained power in China. However, in the course of time such images increasingly disappear as they get replaced by artworks depicting Mao as a huge silhouette or sun floating ghost-like above the masses at the peak of his personality cult. However, with his personality cult slowly cooling down by the early 1970s, Mao is again more often depicted among common people. Generally speaking, Mao is standing or walking in most examined artworks. In paintings created during the last years of his life, Mao is not standing anymore but sitting, indicating his high age and health problems, but also the political backlashes, which he had received. In contrast, Kim is also at young age often depicted sitting or even lying down on the ground (see Illustration 5b), a posture completely absent in illustrations of Mao. The ageing Kim was increasingly often depicted in propaganda paintings by dressing him up in a suit, letting him wear glasses and colouring his hair grey.

Second, although the theme of the common worker or farmer as role model for the New Man is very prevalent in North Korean artworks, no specific individual heroes were created like in China. In the course of time Chinese artworks brought

forward several positive heroes, such as Lei Feng, Ouyang Hai or Wang Jie. However, in North Korean art scenes no such counterparts exist.

Third, the depiction of the Mass Man can be found in Chinese and North Korean propaganda paintings. However, in the case of China this theme plays a much more central role as art motive than in North Korea. While the depicted people in North Korean propaganda paintings are generally a rather small group, people in Chinese propaganda paintings are often illustrated in huge numbers, forming an excited red mass, which makes it impossible to distinguish single individuals from each other.

**Conclusion**

Any kind of art can't be fully understood without the proper background information of a society and its ideological values, out of which an artwork emerged. China and North Korea under Mao and Kim used art as a tool for their own political causes. Both believed in the possibility of bringing people to perfection. In this context, artworks served as essential medium, as they would continuously depict positive and negative role models. Through this constant confrontation with such role models the people were meant to be influenced by the ideological values serving these role models as basis. However, in the end the amount of themes and propaganda paintings is enormous. Thus, I emphasize that this research paper is not making any claim to completely cover the vast research field of Chinese and North Korean art symbolism. However, as coeval documents propaganda paintings serve as ideal media, which give us additional insights of the respective period of time in which they were created. In this context, they can serve as a bridge-builder and help us to further understand other societies. This in turn is of essential importance, as the contemporary world will have to deal with a rising China and a highly unpredictable North Korea in the next years. It is vital for us to fully understand these societies. In my point of view, propaganda paintings can serve as a good foundation in the course of this task.

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# Abbreviations

CCP   Chinese Communist Party

CPSU Communist Party of the Soviet Union

GMD   Guomindang

KFLA  Korean Federation of Literature and Art

KWP   Korean Workers' Party

LWA   Left-wing Authoritarianism

MAK   Museum für angewandte Kunst, Wien (Museum for Applied Arts, Vienna)

NKFLA North Korean Federation of Literature and Art

PAP   People's Action Party

PLA   People's Liberation Army

RWA   Right-wing Authoritarianism

WWII  Second World War

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# Appendix 1: Abstract

This research paper is concerned with the political and ideological symbolism of propaganda paintings in China under Mao Zedong and North Korea under Kim Il Sung. I have chosen a political approach by first classifying each country's political system in order to apply various theoretical theses on totalitarianism (such as Hannah Arendt's Mass Man Theory) on the two countries. By doing so, I elaborate the political bullet points, which later serve as theoretical framework for the empirical part of this paper.

In a second step, I examine the ideological patterns of both nations and how each country's respective ideology is linked with art in general and the process of creating art. Hereby, I apply my self-developed Four Level Pyramid Model.

Afterwards, I will examine the aesthetics of Soviet style Socialist Realism, which had tremendous influence on the Chinese and North Korean art scene under Mao Zedong and Kim Il Sung. Consequently, I elaborate the central aesthetic concepts of Socialist Realism, which will serve as analyzing categories for the empirical part and thus form the second part of the analytical framework.

The chosen pictures will be analyzed by means of Erwin Panofsky's Three Stages Model, which is concerned with the iconographic and iconological content of visual artworks.

In a final step the empirical findings will be compared and analyzed. In this research paper I argue that in both countries art didn't exist for the mere sake of itself, but instead was assigned a role as part of a political program. This is further emphasized by the political part of the theoretical framework. Additionally, I argue that art content in both countries was heavily influenced by Soviet style Socialist Realist aesthetics.

# Appendix 2: Kurzzusammenfassung

Diese wissenschaftliche Arbeit befasst sich mit dem politischen und ideologischen Symbolismus von Propagandagemälden in China under Mao Zedong und Nordkorea unter Kim Il Sung. Ich habe hierbei einen politikwissenschaftlichen Ansatz gewählt, indem ich zunächst die politischen Systeme der beiden Länder analysiere um im Anschluss verschiedene Thesen der Totalitarismusforschung (beispielsweise Hannah Arendts Theorie des Massenindividuums) anzuwenden. Im Zuge dessen erarbeite ich die politischen Punkte, welche später als Basis für den theoretischen Rahmen des empirischen Kapitels dieser Arbeit dienen.

Im zweiten Schritt behandle ich die politische Ideologie beider Länder und analysiere, wie diese mit Kunst im Allgemeinen und mit dem künstlichen Schaffensprozess in Verbindung stehen. Hierbei kommt mein selbst entwickeltes Modell der Vier Ebenen Pyramide zum Einsatz.

Im Anschluss untersuche ich die Ästhetik des sowjetischen sozialistischen Realismus, da dieser immensen Einfluss auf die chinesische und nordkoreanische Kunstszene unter Mao Zedong und Kim Il Sung ausübte. In der Folge erarbeite ich die zentralen ästhetischen Konzepte des sozialistischen Realismus, welche als Analysekategorien im empirischen Kapitel und  als zweiter Teil des theoretischen Rahmens der Arbeit dienen.

Die Analyse der ausgewählten Bilder erfolgt anhand von Erwin Panofskys Drei Stufen Interpretationsmodell, welches sich mit der ikonographischen und ikonologischen Analyse von visuellen Kunstwerken befasst.

In einem letzten Schritt werden die Ergebnisse des empirischen Kapitels der Arbeit analysiert und miteinander verglichen. In dieser wissenschaftlichen Arbeit behaupte ich, dass Kunst in beiden Ländern nicht um der Kunst willen existierte, sondern stattdessen eine bestimmte Rolle innerhalb eines politischen Systems erfüllen musste. Diese These wird zusätzlich durch den politischen Teil des theoretischen Rahmens der Arbeit hervorgehoben. Außerdem behaupte ich, dass der Inhalt von Kunstwerken beider Länder stark vom sowjetischen sozialistischen Realismus beeinflusst wurde.

# Appendix 3: Curriculum Vitae (English)

<u>Personal Data</u>

Name       Ingomar Stöller
Nationality    Austria

<u>Education</u>

Since 03/ 2011
**University of Vienna**
Chair of East Asian Studies
Master degree program: East Asian Economy and Society
Master Thesis: Political and Ideological Symbolism
in Chinese and North Korean Propaganda Paintings

09/ 2008 – 07/ 2010
**Beijing Language & Culture University** (Beijing, China)
Non-degree program: Chinese Language and Culture

10/ 2006 – 02/ 2011
**University of Vienna**
Chair of East Asian Studies
Bachelor degree program: Sinology

10/2005 – 09/ 2006
**Officer training at the Austrian Army**
Branch: mechanized infantry, numerous training
courses since then, 10/ 2011: promotion to second
lieutenant of the militia, ordered at: 35th mechanized
infantry battalion, position: deputy company commander

09/ 1996 – 06/ 2005
**High School Maroltingergasse GRG XVI Vienna**
University entry exam special subjects: English,
Geography, Religious Studies

<u>Language Skills</u>

German      Native
English       Fluent
Mandarin    Advanced
Korean       Basic

<u>Hobbies, Interests</u>

Travelling, East Asia, Politics, Economy, Amateur Films, Formula 1

# Appendix 4: Curriculum Vitae (Deutsch)

Persönliches

| Name | Ingomar Stöller |
|------|-----------------|
| Nationalität | Österreich |

Ausbildung

| Seit 03/ 2011 | **Universität Wien**<br>Institut für Ostasienwissenschaften<br>Masterstudium: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Ostasiens<br>Masterarbeit: Politischer und ideologischer Symbolismus in Propagandagemälden Chinas und Nordkoreas |
|---|---|
| 09/ 2008 – 07/ 2010 | **Beijing Language & Culture University** (Peking, China)<br>Studium: Chinesische Sprache und Kultur |
| 10/ 2006 – 02/ 2011 | **Universität Wien**<br>Institut für Ostasienwissenschaften<br>Bachelorstudium: Sinologie |
| 10/2005 – 09/ 2006 | **EF Ausbildung beim österreichischen Bundesheer**<br>Waffengattung: Panzergrenadier, seither zahlreiche Fortbildungskurse, 10/ 2011: Beförderung zum Leutnant der Miliz, beordert bei: Panzergrenadierbataillon 35, Funktion: stv. Kompaniekommandant |
| 09/ 1996 – 06/ 2005 | **Gymnasium Maroltingergasse GRG XVI Wien**<br>Vertiefende Maturafächer: Englisch, Geographie, Religion |

Sprachkenntnisse

| Deutsch | Muttersprache |
|---------|---------------|
| Englisch | Fließend |
| Mandarin | Fortgeschritten |
| Koreanisch | Grundkenntnisse |

Hobbies, Interessen

Reisen, Ostasien, Politik, Wirtschaft, Amateurfilme, Formel 1