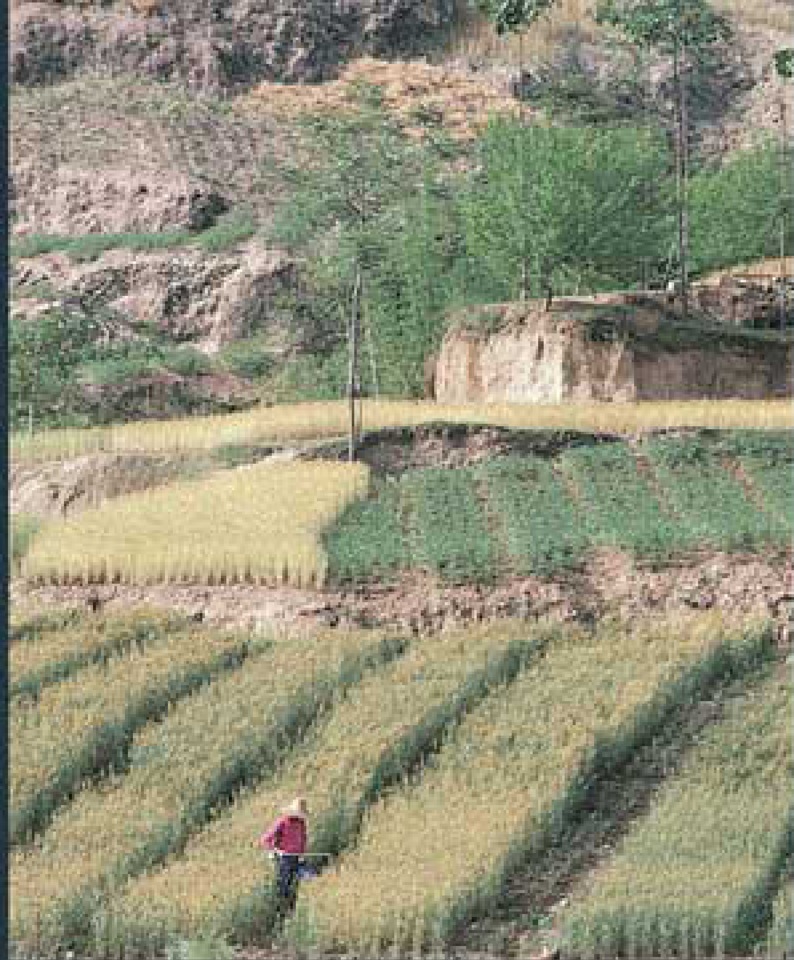

Radicalism, Revolution, and Reform in Modern China

Essays in Honor of Maurice Meisner

Edited by Catherine Lynch, Robert B. Marks, & Paul G. Pickowicz

Radicalism, Revolution, and Reform in Modern China

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To Mauri

This book springs from a depth of love, admiration,
respect, and gratitude that its pages cannot begin to express.

Contents

Acknowledgements ix

Introduction: Chinese Radicalism in Historical Context 1
Catherine Lynch, Robert B. Marks, and Paul G. Pickowicz

1 Individualism and Nationalism in the Thought of Chen Duxiu, 1904–1918 11
Sooyoung Kim

2 Radical Visions of Time in Modern China: The Utopianism of Mao Zedong and Liang Shuming 29
Catherine Lynch

3 Peasant and Woman in Maoist Revolutionary Theory, 1920s–1950s 55
Tina Mai Chen

4 Mao and Tibet 79
Lee Feigon

5 Chinese Communists and the Environment 105
Robert B. Marks

6 Post-Socialist Capitalism in Rural China 133
Thomas D. Lutze

7 Independent Chinese Film: Seeing the Not-Usually-Visible in Rural China 161
Paul G. Pickowicz

8 The "Rise of China"? 185
Bruce Cumings

Index 209

About the Contributors 221

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Introduction

Chinese Radicalism in Historical Context

Catherine Lynch, Robert B. Marks, and Paul G. Pickowicz

On June 4, 2009, the twentieth anniversary of the bloody suppression of Tiananmen Square democracy demonstrators by the Chinese state, former students and colleagues of Maurice Meisner gathered in Madison, Wisconsin, for a three-day conference honoring Mauri and his fifty years of scholarship on the Chinese revolution. The historic date and anniversary compelled us to look at the past, present, and future of China with a view toward better understanding the ideas, ideals, and people who have dared to imagine radical transformation of their worlds and to assess the limitations of these visions and their implementation. The ensuing examination of radicalism in Chinese history showed us also the ways in which our understandings of China's history have been intertwined with the particular frameworks we use in our analyses of China and revolution. As we contemplated not only 1989 but other historical moments from 1919 to 2009 in the long twentieth century, we found that the history of China's radicalism matters not only for students of Chinese history but also for those who seek to understand the broader contemporary significance of China and its history.

Maurice Meisner is a pioneering and towering figure in the study of Marxism, Mao Zedong and the "Maoist" interpretation of Marxism, Chinese communism, and the People's Republic of China. His seminal books include *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (1967), *Mao's China: A History of the People's Republic* (1977), *Marxism, Maoism, and Utopianism* (1982), *Mao's China and After* (1986), *The Deng Xiaoping Era: An Inquiry into the Fate of Chinese Socialism, 1978–1994* (1996), and *Mao Zedong: A Political and Intellectual Portrait* (2007).

Meisner's first book, on Li Dazhao (1888–1927), one of the earliest Chinese intellectuals to embrace Bolshevism and Marxism, explores the ways in which Li reinterpreted Marxism, including his articulation of a revolutionary role for peasants, and argues that Li's Marxism paved the way for Mao Zedong and others to become Marxist revolutionaries as well. In many respects that book is also a primer on Marxist ideas. Meisner's subsequent studies of Mao Zedong show the unique ways in which Mao departed from the Marxist tradition, including what Meisner calls the "voluntarist" and "utopian" impulses that contributed both to Mao's commitments to socialist revolution in a very backward China and to major disasters that befell China under Mao's leadership. People make history, Meisner often says, but they do so (at least in part—his caveat) on the basis of what they think. Hence we need to take Marxism seriously.

Meisner also recognizes that people make history in very particular socioeconomic and political circumstances. For Meisner, two things about China's modern predicament stand out: the general weakness of all social classes and China's profound economic and social backwardness. If, as Karl Marx (with Frederick Engels) wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" and hence of the victories of one social class over another, Marx did leave open the possibility that social classes might be so weak that none could achieve hegemony or victory. One particular historical example of this that Marx tried to explain was the dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte III in France (1852–1870). In that case, Marx argued, social classes had become politically enfeebled as a result of intense class conflict, allowing an opportunity for Bonaparte to appear to rise above social class and for the state to dominate society and social classes.

Meisner has been intrigued by that idea and its application to China. There, Meisner argues (especially in *Mao's China*), social classes were inherently weak (the peasantry), had become enfeebled (the landlord-gentry), were new and small (the fledgling bourgeoisie and the industrial working class), or were dependent on imperialist powers (the comprador bourgeoisie). What this perspective allows Meisner to explore is both the resulting centrality of (Maoist) ideas in the revolutionary movement and what Meisner sees, in the infamous stoking of "the cult of Mao" during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and earlier for example, as the domination of the state (and Mao as the state) over society. This domination of society by the Chinese state is a phenomenon that continues to this day.

That China was economically and socially "backward," at least when compared to the advanced industrial states of the world, also strikes Meisner as fundamental to understanding both Mao Zedong's approach to socialist revo-

lution and construction in China after 1949 and, after Mao's death in 1976, the emergence of capitalist formations under the auspices of Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997) and his successors. The centrality of backwardness is important to Meisner's interpretation of China's contemporary history and is linked to a very basic Marxist notion: history progresses through stages, and capitalism is the necessary prerequisite for socialism (although Marx had hedged a bit on that point in his correspondence with Russian Populists about the prospects for socialism there).

The idea that socialism presupposed capitalism proved only somewhat problematic for early-twentieth-century Chinese Marxists. Even before becoming a Marxist, Li Dazhao had been predisposed to think that human action was not limited by material constraints, a conclusion that was solidified in Li's mind by the success of Lenin and the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Li's co-founder of the Chinese Communist Party, Chen Duxiu, whose pre-Marxist thought is Sooyoung Kim's subject in chapter 1, was never quite convinced that China could (or should) leap historical stages (e.g., from a feudal or semi-feudal social formation directly to socialism), but the young Mao Zedong found the voluntarist impulses behind Li's understanding of Marxism to be liberating and exhilarating, as Catherine Lynch discusses in chapter 2.

China's historic failure to develop an advanced capitalist economy along with the concomitant preconditions for socialism—a revolutionary working class and the material plenty brought about by the rapid development of the forces of production—thus did not inhibit Mao's acceptance of Marxism, but it did contribute to his particular interpretation of Marxism, placing China's peasantry at the center of its revolutionary movement. Meisner draws a comparison between Mao's emphasis on a revolutionary peasantry and the similar ideas of Russian Populists, as chapter 2 describes. In chapter 3, Tina Mai Chen takes us more deeply into the image of the peasant with an exploration of how issues of class and gender informed Mao's revolutionary ideas.

In addition to a central role for the peasantry in China's revolution, Mao associated China's twentieth-century backwardness as well with imperialist aggression. Japan figured prominently in Mao's anti-imperialism, but Britain's actions from the nineteenth-century Opium Wars through the 1920s significantly informed Mao's revolutionary views. That confrontation with British imperialism was central to Mao's early ideas about the place of Tibet in modern China, and hence with Mao's relationship with the Dalai Lama, the subject taken up by Lee Feigon in chapter 4.

In Meisner's view, the historical conditions of China's socioeconomic and political backwardness presented almost insuperable dilemmas once the Communists seized power and formed the People's Republic in 1949. The revolution that Mao had led, Meisner emphasizes, was a social revolution

of historic proportions but not a socialist revolution. The effort to achieve socialism lay ahead. As with some other Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries before and after him, Mao had not been deterred by the absence of the material prerequisites for socialism, both because he was utopian in believing that China could skip historical stages and because he believed that peasants could be inspired to undertake that massive assignment. Just as Mao thought that political realities could be bent by human will, so too did he and other Chinese Communists think that nature could—and should—be subject to human domination in the service of building socialism. Robert Marks explores those ideas and their consequences for China's environment in chapter 5.

But the task of building a socialist China never proved to be so easy, leaving Mao on the horns of a dilemma. Rapid industrialization following the centralized Soviet model seemed to move China further from the egalitarian and liberating premises of Marxism, but Mao's attempts at a more decentralized and rural approach floundered upon the massive failures of the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). And after Mao's death in 1976, what his successors wound up doing to spur economic growth by unleashing market forces, instituting private ownership of the means of production, and integrating China into the capitalist world system was to create a Chinese form of bureaucratic, crony capitalism, not socialism, as Thomas Lutze argues in chapter 6.

Capitalist development thus emerges as a critical question in Meisner's research on the Marxism of Deng Xiaoping and the decisions Deng made in the late 1970s and later as China's "paramount leader." These decisions set China on a path that unleashed capitalist forces within China (including the birth of a capitalist class from the bowels of the Communist Party itself), while simultaneously squelching demands for democratic political and social reforms. The rural inequality and tensions that have emerged in the wake of those reforms not only fueled the protests that form the background to Lutze's analysis in chapter 6, but also provided material for some of the human dramas captured by the independent filmmakers discussed by Paul Pickowicz in chapter 7.

That Deng and his successors believed—and continue to maintain—that they have put China on a more rational path toward socialism (by building capitalism) has struck Meisner as dubious, both because of the social and environmental horrors accompanying capitalist development in China and because the Chinese state is (at best) postponing to some distant future the democratic and egalitarian promises of socialism, a theme addressed in several chapters. Nonetheless, that those promises lie latent and may yet fuel another upsurge in Chinese radical thought and action is not lost on Meisner.

Meisner's interest has been in assessing the historical significance of Chinese Marxism and the People's Republic of China in broader terms. What is the meaning of Chinese socialism, historically and for our time? What is the significance of revolution, in and beyond China? These questions, however, are increasingly ignored in the popular imagination of China. In the view of many Western analysts, the story of China's rapid economic development is summarized as "the rise of China," an idea that sees China replacing the United States as the world's economic and military power in the twenty-first century. None of the contributors to this volume make this argument, and in the concluding chapter, Bruce Cumings subjects it to a withering critique.

This book addresses these themes in chapters arranged chronologically from the early twentieth century to the present. We begin in chapter 1 with Sooyoung Kim's exploration of the pre-Marxist intellectual world of Chen Duxiu, one of the founders, along with Li Dazhao, of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921. Committed to the radical transformation of China's tradition, Chen's new values of individualism and nationalism remained inextricably intertwined both before and after the 1911 Revolution, even as his source for these values shifted from universalism to historicism. His idea of a racially based Chinese or Han nation, in contrast to the conception generally held after 1911 of a multiracial nation, may sound conservative to us now, but it was grounded in Chen's consistent vision of a radical change in the psychology and values, both individual and social, that defined the nation.

Kim's analysis of Chen Duxiu's concern with individual, nation and race, as well as with tradition and evolution, demonstrates that radical politics in China have been based on specific concepts of place and time and of the constitution of the people imagined to populate these spaces and times. Making a break with China's past required radically new concepts. Chapter 2 shifts our focus from place to time. Through a comparison of the thought of Mao Zedong and Liang Shuming, a leader in the Rural Reconstruction Movement of the 1930s, Catherine Lynch explores how the utopian imagination of a sharp break with the past implied not so much a removed, good place, a "utopia," as, more importantly, a new, good process, a "euchronia," of constantly emerging, new social shapes in the good unfolding of time. Like the earlier Russian Populists, Mao and Liang were critical of urban-centered industrialization and thought that backwardness gave a peasant movement in China the advantage in seeking an alternate form of modernity. Exploring Mao's and Liang's contrasting reactions to Marx's understanding of historical process, this chapter highlights the modern dilemma of the path to utopia and the strain between the urge toward transformative action and the restraints of history, a tension central to Meisner's concerns.

From the themes of place and time, we move to that of the people populating those places and times with an interpretation of the ways in which the concepts of class and gender can be used to illuminate key aspects of Mao Zedong's revolutionary thought. In chapter 1 the image of woman appears as an important component in Chen Duxiu's imagination of modern individualism, while chapter 2 introduces issues of the advantages of backwardness and the role of the peasantry in early twentieth-century radicalism. In chapter 3, these problems re-emerge as Tina Mai Chen explores the complex interaction of Maoist notions of peasant and woman as "nobodies" moving from the margins to become the central political agents of social transformation. Drawing together seemingly disparate texts, looking at different decades (including the 1920s and 1950s), and probing diverse fields and political contexts, Chen demonstrates consistent structures of Maoist logic and politics that serve to interlock inextricably these two categories of actors, ordinarily considered separately, and their radical potential.

China's minority nationalities are another example of marginalized groups, and the anti-Chinese protests and violence that shook Tibet in 2008 remind us of the importance both of Tibetans as political actors and of conceptions of Tibet as a place in time. If Chen Duxiu's early thought had envisioned radical transformation taking place in the Chinese nation and Han race, Mao Zedong's image of radical change was bound up with his view of the position and role of the peasantry and women. Mao, however, partook of the modern view of the nation as the appropriate ground for the self-determination of peoples. In chapter 4 Lee Feigon describes Mao Zedong's recognition, as early as 1919, of the problem of the status of Tibet and his consistent argument for moderation. A year in Beijing in 1954 left the Dalai Lama with a lasting, mainly positive regard for Mao. Both men were embedded in broader political landscapes however, limiting the play of their ideas. British threats to China through Tibet in the first decades of the twentieth century were replaced by those of the United States in the 1950s, and extreme factions both within the Communist bureaucracy and among Tibetan militant groups further constrained the two leaders' actions. Ironically the images underpinning the repressive treatment of Tibetans by chauvinistic Han Chinese officials derive to this day from British imperialist stereotypes of Tibet as a primitive hell and not from Maoist radicalism.

In chapter 5, Robert Marks continues the focus on place and, like Feigon, urges us to look more closely at what we frequently take for granted, raising again the problem of the restraints of history. He makes visible that which is too often considered the backdrop upon which radical change is envisioned: the environment. Marks shows how China's millennia-long processes of environmental degradation provided significant challenges to the building

of socialism in China, and how the commitment to doing so, be it under the regime of the utopian Mao Zedong or his pragmatic successor, Deng Xiaoping, has contributed to an environmental dystopia of ongoing deforestation. This degradation of the environment correlates both with peasant poverty and with the dominance of the Han Chinese over minority nationalities, a concern of the previous chapter. Marks reminds us that where we look and how we look matters when we consider the promises and pitfalls of China's radicalism.

The next two chapters return us to rural spaces and bring us further forward into the contemporary reform era. Like Marks, Thomas Lutze in chapter 6 deals with the land, albeit more narrowly defined as land under cultivation and in its economic rather than environmental aspects. Chapters 5 and 6 also share a concern with the consequences of developmentalist values as well as with the effects of changes in land tenure regimes. Through a concrete exploration of rural industry, markets, and land ownership in the building of capitalism in the countryside during the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, Lutze emphasizes the aptness of a Marxist framework of analysis. Against the backdrop of recent rural protests over land seizures, Lutze argues that China's current social formation is best understood as "post-socialist capitalism," with formal socialist remnants serving only to mitigate the instability produced by advancing capitalism.

In chapter 7, Paul Pickowicz further complicates the meaning of "peasant" in China with a look at three very recent examples of independent filmmaking that move our focus from the national to the local. Films appear as texts in chapters 3 and 4, but Pickowicz urges the central importance of visual sources and argues that new digital technology is allowing a democratization of culture in the tradition of New Culture radicals of 1915. In chapter 6, Lutze refers to the recent rash of peasant protests; Pickowicz's protesters are the filmmakers themselves, who make visible specific local spaces of rural China, offering a dystopian reality at odds with the sanitized, general image of the countryside the Chinese state wants to project. Both the filmmakers and their subjects are "nobodies," and the local spaces they present are places of considerable brutality and brutalization. A dynamic variety of meanings of the local peasant, and, at least in the third film, of gender, is at play here as in Tina Chen's chapter 3, although with very different implications. Instead of envisioning agents of national revolution, we are challenged to rethink the relationship of the local to the national. By focusing on diverse and complicated "local" settings, the filmmakers raise profound questions about the ways in which our current preoccupations with the "national" and the "global" distort our understanding of life as it is experienced at the grassroots of society. Where the New Culture movement figure, Chen Duxiu, highlighted the issue

of the relationship of the individual and the nation, Pickowicz warns against collapsing the local into the national or the global.

By arguing that the categories we use matter and by looking at the same time period, this chapter and the next examine very different perspectives on China. From Pickowicz's micro focus on the shocking local, Bruce Cumings' concluding chapter, critiquing seven English-language books, jumps to the macro view from outside of a China on the rise. Just as Feigon's chapter on Tibet alerts us to the dangers of relying on stereotypical understandings of Mao Zedong and the Dalai Lama, Cumings investigates the stubborn persistence of the master metaphor of the "rise of China," a metaphor which views China largely in a vacuum and sees it simultaneously as a miracle and a threat. Six of the books reviewed by Cumings proclaim the coming dominance of China, whether economic or military, paired with the demise of the West, and in so doing the books' authors fail to place China in the context of both contemporary realities and their world historical background. Only one book connects China since 1978 with its earlier radical history, while the other six sever recent, "capitalist" China from its "Maoist" past, at the same time dipping back into ahistorical millennia of glory. Cumings shows us that the master metaphor of China's rise, which appears to put China at the center of world history, in fact positions China outside of history and of any actual place, masking the reality of American domestic politics that determine relationships with China.

It is precisely this imaginary China that this book rejects. In different ways, each chapter shows that China's revolutionary past is contained in the present and that to adequately understand the present we must at once understand the past and allow for contingency in the future. This book thus is informed by the notion that China's recent past has been a long century of revolution, a century in which Chinese have grappled with the tension, in the words of Joseph Levenson, between "history" and "value," as well as ideas of time and place and their implications for action. China's relation to these problems has been central to the conscious struggle to create a modern Chinese history. In the twentieth century, Chinese faced the problem of how to relate to a "traditional" past in the face of universalistic claims emanating from what was considered to be the "modern" West. Although a radical break with the past grounded in an appropriation of Marxism appeared at the time to provide a solution, allowing at once the rejection of the Chinese past and of the Western dominated present, history of course did not end, and the problem remains. Sooyoung Kim opens this volume by noting that the issues with which Chen Duxiu dealt resonate with the contemporary Chinese debate on humanities a century later, and the underlying issues of all of the chapters similarly find echoes in the present. In the reform decades spanning the end

of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, however, the question of the historical significance of radicalism in China has taken on an added dimension.

There are now two pasts with which Chinese must come to grips. There is the deeper past of "traditional China" and the more recent past of "revolutionary China." In coming to terms with China's position in time and space, both the Chinese and those seeking to understand China, must deal with the issue of revolution's historical significance and role in China. Does radicalism in China today mean rejecting the revolutionary past or affirming it, or does it mean something much more complex? Are there revolutionary survivals, from May Fourth to June Fourth, that are relevant to a critique of socialism's past in China and the creation of a more fully human and radically democratic society in China and for the world? Ironically, as Chinese contemplate different ways forward into differently conceived futures (conceptions all the more complex in the context of the early twenty-first-century problems and failures of global capitalism), the examination of Chinese radicalism is all the more salient. The question of the nature of radicalism in China now merges with the question of whether revolutionary socialism was central to China's history or an aberration. It is essential to revisit and expand our ways of looking at China's revolutionary history, an endeavor that is central to the scholarship of Maurice Meisner. The understanding of and attitude toward the complex strands of Chinese radicalism remain critical to the fate of human aspirations for China's future.

1

Individualism and Nationalism in the Thought of Chen Duxiu, 1904–1918

Sooyoung Kim

There are significant differences between the historical problems faced by China in the early twentieth century and in recent times. Nonetheless, there are interesting similarities as well. For example, in both periods intellectuals desperately pursued new values and made conscious efforts to build nationalism. Since the 1980s, when Deng Xiaoping advanced reform policies, China has been struggling to develop new values and ethics—an effort clearly revealed in government attempts to see the "establishment of socialist spiritual civilization" as well as in the "debate on humanities" carried on among intellectuals. While the establishment of socialist spiritual civilization involved the goal of creating new "socialist" values, the fascinating debate on humanities discussed individualistic values as an alternative way of finding a solution to the moral and political crisis of contemporary Chinese society. The establishment of new values and ethics was also the foremost concern of Chinese intellectuals in the early twentieth century—abundantly demonstrated in the tendencies of the New Culture Movement. The new values propagated by intellectuals in the early twentieth century were mainly individualist values such as freedom, equality, and independence, which, they believed, would provide a fundamental solution to the formidable problems facing China. Similarities between today and the early twentieth century are even more apparent when we consider that the pursuit of new values in both periods has been entangled with nationalism. Chinese intellectuals are currently preoccupied with reinterpreting China's modern history, especially the story of the New Culture Movement and its leader Chen Duxiu. Their efforts involve the key role of ideas about individualism and nationalism, ideas that

functioned as the intellectual cornerstones for transforming society during the New Culture Movement. Thus, the "old" themes of individualism and nationalism in modern Chinese intellectual history still generate significant debate among historians today.

This chapter is inspired by the comparison of Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao offered in Maurice Meisner's monumental book, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism.* In *Li Ta-chao*, Meisner stated, "Chen Tu-hsiu compensated for his almost total rejection of the Chinese cultural tradition by a passionate admiration for French culture as the crowning achievement of Western civilization, whereas Li could only display enthusiasm for particular Western ideas and particular Western thinkers, not for Western civilization as a whole."[1] Meisner then proceeded to argue that the unique way in which Li perceived Chinese tradition had a significant impact on Li's future interpretation of Marxism. I would like to argue that Chen Duxiu's perception of the Chinese cultural tradition greatly influenced a broad range of his ideas, especially the relational structure of individualism and nationalism in his thought.

This chapter aims to analyze individualism and nationalism in Chen Duxiu's thought during 1904–1918 by offering a comparative reading of his essays in the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* and *New Youth* magazine. What kind of continuities and discontinuities comprised Chen's comprehension of individualism and nationalism during 1904–1918? What kind of historical and intellectual significance did these continuities and discontinuities suggest? How did Chen conceptualize the relationship between individualism and nationalism? What problems did Chen confront by introducing individualism and nationalism simultaneously? How did he respond to those intellectual problems, and what was his solution to them? Comprehending the connections between individualism and nationalism in Chen's writings during 1904–1918 will lead us to a better understanding of the substance of current trends in Chinese intellectual transformation in which individualism and nationalism occupy a central place.

BUILDING NEW VALUES: UNIVERSALISM VS. HISTORICISM

The writings of Chen Duxiu in the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* (1904–1905) and during the New Culture Movement (1915–1918), when seen from the viewpoint of building new values in China, manifest important similarities. Throughout the two periods (separated, as they were, by the 1911 Revolution) Chen consistently argued for and demanded the individualist values of freedom, equality, and independence as the foundation of new morals in mod-

ern Chinese society. In the *Anhui Common Speech Journal,* Chen's advocacy of individualistic values was clearly revealed in his essay "Bad Customs," in which he argued that Chinese traditional marriage was "bad" because it did not consider the will of each party and that dressing women in prescribed ways actually limited their physical freedom and spiritual independence, thus ultimately turning women into slaves. He also criticized Chinese traditional education because it did not respect individuality and the free will of children and young people.[2]

The individualistic values of independence, equality, and freedom were more directly propagated by Chen with the birth of *New Youth* magazine in 1915. In the first issue of *New Youth*, Chen announced the launch of the New Culture Movement:

> Modern European history was called the history of liberation. . . . Liberation, being freed from the yoke of the slaves, means realizing the human personality of independence and freedom. Each person plans what to eat and wear with one's own hands and feet, and speaks what one likes or does not like with one's own mouth and tongue, and acts upon one's own beliefs. . . . Also each person becomes the owner of him- or herself and cannot enslave others. Once one acknowledges the phenomenon of human independence on one's own accord, one should then base all rights, behavior, and beliefs only on one's own knowledge and understanding and can never subordinate them to the will of others and follow others blindly.[3]

In early 1916 when Chen offered Chinese youth "the lesson of the year," he advised them to "respect the independent personality of each individual and not be an accessory of others."[4] He proceeded to criticize the fundamental principles of Confucianism on the basis of individualistic values:

> The three bonds of Confucianism are the source of all moral politics. . . . People are an accessory to the emperor, thus they lack an independent personality. Sons are accessories to fathers, thus lacking independent personality, and wives are accessories to husbands, thus they do not have independent personality. . . . Such beautiful words like loyalty, filial piety, fidelity . . . amount to slave morality which demands one's subordination to others. In fact, every human behavior should be based on one's own will.[5]

This argument consistently appeared as the main theme developed by Chen in the New Culture Movement, which called for the total rejection of traditional Chinese culture. Chen denounced the social system of the "clan code" for the following four reasons: the clan code destroyed "the individual's independent personality," "the individual's free will," "the individual's right to legal equality," and, finally, "the productive power of the individual."[6] By rejecting the traditional social system, Chen made clear his ultimate goal:

modern Chinese society should be built on the individualistic values of independence, freedom, and equality.

The following arguments of Li Zehou, a noted present-day scholar who recently analyzed the thought of modern Chinese intellectuals, allow us to understand Chen's individualism in greater depth:

> The [New Culture] movement, at least in the early stage of its development, was essentially nothing but the continuation of the historical tasks that had been pursued by the personalities of the previous stages, people such as Tan Sitong, Yan Fu, Liang Qichao, etc. Tan's intense attack on feudal ethics and his comments on the sharp contrast between Chinese and Western cultures, as well as Liang Qichao's enthusiastic call for "New people," etc., were all part of the enlightenment movement that opposed "Chinese learning" based on an appreciation of "Western learning." The pursuit of these people was not in its nature different from that of the New Culture Movement. Rather they were . . . very much in proximity to each other and even quite similar.[7]

According to Li Zehou, there was no essential difference between the New Culture Movement and the previous enlightenment movements in rejecting tradition and importing Western culture. Their differences, he implies, were only a matter of degree.[8] This conclusion of Li Zehou seems to be well illustrated by the case of Chen Duxiu, whose writings both in the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* and in *New Youth* showed, as we have seen, consistent devotion to individualistic values. However, if we approach Chen's writings from a different angle, not the new values Chen was trying to promote but rather what he understood as the sources of "authority" of those values, we can arrive at a significantly different conclusion than the one reached by Li Zehou. If we analyze Chen's writings on the question of where the authority of the new values resides, we can see that the individualism he discussed during the times he was writing for the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* and *New Youth* comes from two contradictory cognitive structures.

Precisely what did Chen have to say about the origins of the authority for individualistic values? In the essay on "Marriage" published in the *Anhui Common Speech Journal*, Chen wrote the following about the equality of man and woman:

> When a woman is bad, our Chinese law provides a man with the right to kick out his wife on the basis of "seven privileges." However, when a man is bad, a woman is not even allowed to divorce him. Is this not really unequal? Men and women are born equal, so why can a man can kick out a woman but a woman cannot even divorce a man? Why are women despised and abused from birth? . . . This is *Heaven's way and earthly righteousness, a truth that can never change* (emphasis added).[9]

Chen claimed that Chinese society should adopt the value of gender equality because equality, not inequality, is "Heaven's way and earthy righteousness." From this statement we notice that Chen was locating the authority for the value of human equality in its universal nature transcending time and space. But how did Chen verify the universality of the value of equality? In other words, how did he know the value of equality was "Heaven's way and earthly righteousness?" "Why are Chinese marriage [customs] bad?" Chen asked. "It can be summed up with four big words," which are "*bu* (not), *he* (grounded in), *qing* (feelings) and *li* (mind)."[10] According to Chen, the values of equality, freedom, and independence were by nature universal and absolute because they did in fact originate in human feelings and thought. "Everything in the world is linked to the two words *qing* (feeling) and *li* (mind). Needless to say, in managing such an important thing as marriage between men and women, . . . the Chinese never behave in ways consistent with *qing* and *li* from the beginning to the end of their marriages."[11] Chen's criticism of Chinese customs was based on his strong belief in the universality of truth. To him, the individualistic values of freedom, equality, and independence were "truths that can never change."

Interestingly, Chen's idea about the universality of these values was connected to the "incompleteness" of his criticism of Chinese tradition in his *Anhui Common Speech Journal* writings. Unlike the total rejection of tradition associated with the New Culture Movement, Chen did not, and could not, totally reject Chinese tradition when he was writing for the *Anhui Common Speech Journal*. Though he believed that no matter the time and space, truth was always the same, Chen made an effort to find a universal truth that was consistent with aspects of the Chinese tradition. From the teachings of Wang Yangming, Chen quoted the following passage: "Educating children is like growing plants. Thus we should not severely oppress the children, but rather make them always feel full of pleasure and realize the joy of life."[12] At the same time, Chen quoted similar ideas present in the work of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi: "The education of children should employ various methods in order to be appropriate for each different personality, thus allowing them to realize the joy of learning by bringing out their curiosity."[13] By juxtaposing similar ideas in the writings of Wang Yangming and Pestalozzi, Chen emphatically argued that universal truth did in fact reside in Chinese tradition. In his essay "Worshipping the Bodhisattva," Chen described the Chinese custom of worshipping icons of the Bodhisattva as examples of shamanistic behavior, but at the same time he said that he "believed in and obeyed the truth" of Buddhism itself.[14] Similarly, in another essay, "On Plays," he evaluated in a positive way Confucian attitudes and concepts regarding music, quoting the words of the ancient sage in order to support his arguments.[15] Throughout

the *Anhui Common Speech Journal*, Chen harshly criticized the undesirable customs of China, but at the same time he recognized the universal principles of equality, freedom, and independence contained in Chinese tradition.

In contrast to the universalism of the individualistic ethics one finds in the *Anhui Common Speech Journal*, Chen's writings in the *New Youth* period revealed a strong historicism with respect to his view of values. In "Confucian Truth and Modern Life," Chen wrote that "In the universe, spirit and matter are at every moment involved in a process of change and evolution. . . . How can morals be an exception?"[16] Because "moral codes change and evolve into new ones following the development of society and time, the morals of the past," Chen argued, "do not fit the world of the present."[17] From this historicist worldview, Chen came to denounce the whole spectrum of traditional Chinese values because he believed morals and values had to change into something new over time. The "half-civilized barbarian era was accompanied by half-civilized barbarian morals (the loyalty, filial piety, and fidelity of the feudal era) and highly advanced civilization was accompanied by the morals of highly advanced civilization (brotherhood, public spirit, etc.)."[18] Now in Chen's writings, historicism, not universalism, came to occupy the intellectual foundation of individualistic values.

It is not surprising that Chen's historicist conception of morals in *New Youth* was accompanied by an adoption of Darwinism. In the first issue of *New Youth*, Chen wrote two essays: "Warning Youth" and "The French and Modern Civilization." While "Warning Youth" was published to showcase the new ethics and values to which young people should become committed, "The French and Modern Civilization" aimed to introduce the worldview supporting those values. In "The French and Modern Civilization," Chen pointed out that "human rights, biological evolutionism, and socialism" were three key elements of modern civilization contributed by the French.[19] Of the three, Chen paid attention to biological evolutionism as the modern worldview supporting the other ideas of human rights and socialism. Chen highly praised French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck in this essay for his achievement in developing the idea of biological evolutionism. Lamarck "explained that the earliest precedent of life was a simple organism of the lowest level and it . . . passed through biological evolution." Chen cited this theory of Lamarck as the origin of Charles Darwin's evolutionism, a system of thought which would later shock the world.[20] Thus he applauded Lamarck as the founder of the evolutionary worldview. His "philosophy of law," according to Chen, "was an unprecedented and great achievement" because "it could present a scientific explanation of the evolution of animals and the origins of human beings." By launching the New Culture Movement in the first issue of *New Youth*, Chen had made a special effort to relate two foundational ideas of the

modern era: individualism and evolutionism. In 1917, when he lectured on "modern Western education" at Nankai University, Chen quoted the French philosopher Auguste Comte to the effect that the "evolution of humankind passed through three stages: the first was the religion-superstition era, second came the pedantry-fantasy era, and the third was an era of science-positivism." According to Chen, "European culture had already passed from the second to the third stage in the eighteenth century" and thus "not only politics and culture but also education and morals were founded on science-positivism in Europe and America."[21]

Chen's enthusiastic adoption of evolutionism naturally led him to the following conclusion: "[Our] concern should be what is fitting in the present, not what was [once regarded as] absolutely right or not . . . because what does not adapt to the time cannot survive." In his 1915 essay "Today's Principles of Education," Chen emphasized that "educational principles were not the same over time and space . . . because there was no truth that was absolutely right or wrong." He argued that the rise and fall of values throughout history "were determined by whether they fit the need of the times. Thus, what Chinese education needed now was "to pursue what fits and to discard what does not fit."[22] According to Chen's historicism, the ultimate source of authority of new values was practicality and utility.

BUILDING A NEW NATION: THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUALISM

Scholars who are interested in the relationship between individualism and nationalism in Chen's thought before the May Fourth Movement tend mostly to emphasize 1914 as a critical turning point. In 1914 Chen published an essay entitled "Patriotism and Awakening," breaking a long silence following the discontinuation of the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* in 1906. In this essay Chen expressed for the first time his ideas on the relationship between individualism and the nation. Interpretations of Chen's thought focusing on this essay can be divided into two categories. One is the argument that the essay "Patriotism and Awakening" represents a radical shift of Chen's ultimate concern from nation to individual. In the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* Chen's foremost value had been the survival of the Chinese nation, but now in "Patriotism and Awakening" he began to subordinate nationalist interests to individualist values. The subordination of nationalism to individualism, according to arguments of this sort, became the essential characteristic of the direction of *New Youth*. The other interpretation of Chen's thought suggests that nationalism had been consistently functioning as the foremost concern in Chen's mind. Despite his powerful writings in favor of individualism during

the New Culture Movement, Chen's individualism actually was only a means for achieving the fundamental goal of national salvation.

Regardless of these differences, the various interpretations agree on one point: in the *Anhui Common Speech Journal*, Chen subordinated individualism to nationalism. Chen's essays in the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* did emphatically deal with the physical survival of China as a nation. The articles "Carving up China," "On the Nation," "Education and National Language," and "On the Fall of the Nation" clearly demonstrated Chen's primary interest in the survival of China. However, one cannot fail to notice that in these articles Chen was simultaneously making a great effort to explain what a nation should be. In other words, his defense of the Chinese nation and his effort to conceptualize "nation" often came together in his writings in the *Anhui Common Speech Journal*.

Conceptualizing the nation as "owned by the whole people, not by one person [the emperor],"[23] Chen emphasized that the destiny of the Chinese nation could not be separated from the destiny of the Chinese people. "If the nation fell, the people would degenerate into slaves . . . and . . . the family also would be destroyed. . . . Just as a branch could not survive without a tree and as bird eggs could not survive without nests," the individual and the nation, Chen argued, shared the same destiny. These statements have often been quoted as a way of pointing to Chen's idea of organic statism, a mode that justifies the domination of state power over the individual. However, the organic relationship between the individual and the nation in Chen's writings was firmly based on his perception of a nation "owned by the whole people."

In addition to his effort to emphasize the sovereignty of the people, Chen emphasized that individualist values also played a crucial role in strengthening the nation. Denouncing the traditional Chinese marriage, Chen explained why China should introduce individualist values: they would bring happiness to the people and create well-being for the nation. This relationship of individualism to nationalism consistently appeared in Chen's earlier writings in the *Anhui Common Speech Journal*. For example, when Chen criticized the extravagant dressing up of women, he did it not only because such practices suppressed the free and independent spirit of women, but also because they had a negative impact on the labor force and the national economy. When he denounced the popular religion of the Bodhisattva, he did it not only because it harmed human reason, but also because he thought it damaged the national economy.[24] Chen's writings in the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* presented individualism and nationalism as mutually reinforcing in the building of a strong nation.

"Patriotism and Awakening" took a critical step away from the spirit of the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* by discarding the concept of the organic relationship between an individual and the nation. Now, in "Patriotism and Awakening," the organic relationship of the individual to the state, which had

allowed individualism and nationalism to be mutually supportive in Chen's previous arguments, no longer functioned. On the contrary, in this critical essay Chen's discussion advanced the premise that the individual and the state could have conflicting interests. In such cases, Chen made clear, if the interests of the individual and the state conflicted, the priority should be given to the interests of the individual. The "creation of a group [state]," according to Chen, "was for the purpose of preserving and developing individual rights, and thus if there existed no individual rights there was no need for the group [state]."[25] This strong commitment to individualism continued to be expressed throughout the New Culture Movement. In the essay "Fundamental Philosophical Difference between Eastern and Western Peoples," Chen further developed these ideas:

> Western people have been thoroughly individualistic from the past to the present. . . . The mode of the society and the goal of the state are to pursue the freedom, rights, and happiness of an individual. . . . If the interests of state and society conflict with individualism, the starting point should be how to strengthen the interests of an individual.[26]

This devotion to individualism caused Chen to accept without hesitation even the ruin of the state. In "Patriotism and Awakening" he wrote:

> The state is to ensure the rights of the people and to promote the happiness of the people. If it does not fulfill this responsibility, the state no longer reflects any glory even though it still exists; there is no regret even though the state is ruined. . . . China could not protect its people from invasions from the outside; worse still, China is not only unable to protect the people but it exploits and frustrates the people. . . . If a state like China does not come to ruin as soon as possible, debts will pile up upon debts. . . . By abusing power, the state kills the people and robs their money. . . . The lives of the people are so painful. . . . [Thus] if foreign teachers come to us, our people will welcome them with tears. . . . In view of the disaster involving the pillaging of the people, a bad state is worse than no state. . . . A people without a state may suffer, but if they rely on the constitutional sovereignty of a foreign state, the rights of [our] people may not be the same as those of the people of the dominating state, but the survivors of this desperate situation would feel as if they were in heaven. Why is it not true that no state is better than a bad state?[27]

According to Chen, a bad state that oppresses the people should be destroyed, and the rule of a foreign constitutional state would be better for the Chinese people. As an example, he discussed Korea, which was colonized by Japan. After Korea was annexed by Japan, "its domestic politics became advanced and thieves and robbers were extinguished and lawsuits were no longer delayed. Thus the annexation was a great fortune for the [Korean] people."[28] Furthermore, he said that if Mexico "became part of the U.S. federation, the

happiness and freedom of the people would be much better than it is today."[29] Chen continued to make this argument until February 1919, the eve of the May Fourth Movement, when he concluded that "if military rule cannot be destroyed by the people, it would be better to lose national sovereignty."[30]

Even with his devotion to individualism, Chen began to mention more often the need for statist approaches during the New Culture Movement. In *New Youth* in October 1915, Chen wrote, "I do not worship statism but definitely argue for it." Even though "the sins of the state are already manifest in Europe and we know [the state] will finally disappear . . . now in our situation when the people are scattered like specks of sand, . . . statism is in fact a good method of rescuing ourselves."[31] At the same time Chen asked Chinese youth not to become too idealistic and make demands for democracy without the state.[32]

As he made clear in his later call "to develop personality in the inner world and to contribute to the collective outwardly,"[33] Chen insisted in the pages of *New Youth* that the advancement of individualism would increase the power and wealth of the state. In 1916, he stated that "since the state was formed by the gathering of the people . . . if the personality of the individual is stronger, the spirit of the state will be greater," and "if the rights of the individual are stronger, the rights of the state will be enhanced."[34] Chen's belief is also revealed in his discussion of a representative scientist of his era. Explaining the thought of Ilya Ilyich Machinikov, Chen stated that "the complete development of individuality greatly affected the advancement of human civilization." Even though Machinikov announced that "he did not take benevolence and altruism as his ultimate guiding principle," he "was not egoistic and did a lot of benevolent and altruistic work." Here, what Chen wanted to stress were not the ideas of benevolence and altruism in isolation, but the complete achievement of an individualism that "would rescue the masses."[35]

Individualism and nationalism continued to appear as mutually supportive ideas in Chen's writings during 1904–1918. However, the fundamental structure of the relationship of the individual to the nation changed. The organic relationship between the individual and the state in the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* was replaced on the eve of the New Culture Movement by a new notion of the possible conflict between the individual and the state and by the ultimate priority of individualism over nationalism.

NATIONALISM AND RACE

In the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* Chen defined the nation as the people "sharing race, history, custom, and language" and stated that only this kind of community had the capacity to become genuine citizens of a nation in the

modern world. "Race, history, custom, and language" were the four elements comprising the nation and they were closely interrelated in Chen's view. Race was the link because each race naturally shared history, custom, and language. Therefore, for Chen, who subordinated the other three elements of a nation to race, any attempt to distinguish race from the nation was meaningless. This belief was typically revealed in his praise of Western countries for realizing "racial nationalism." They had built nations comprised of one race each and had not been ruled by other races.[36]

The *Guomin bao,* a journal first published by Chinese students in Tokyo in 1901, expressed strong anti-Manchu racial feelings in their nationalism. Since his first trip to Japan in 1901, Chen maintained a close relationship with some of the Chinese revolutionaries there, people such as Zhang Ji who was the editor of the *Guomin bao*. *Guomin bao* argued that "the land of the Han race had been taken over by a non-Han race and the non-Han race did not care whether the land of the Han was robbed or partitioned." Therefore "in order for the Han race to survive, the slave relations of two hundred years [the rule of the Manchus over the Han] should be completely severed by massacring [the Manchus]."[37] On April 26, 1902, *Guomin bao* even held "a memorial service for a China that had lost its nationhood for 242 years," thus reminding the people of the fall of the Ming dynasty to the Manchus. This racial nationalism went further to involve a reformulation of the concept of Chinese territory when the radical newspaper *Su bao*, responding critically to the movement against Russian cruelty in Manchuria, stated that "Manchuria was the land of the Manchu race. Thus the Chinese did not have to intervene."[38]

Liang Qichao also clearly recognized the importance of nationalism during this period. In a 1902 letter to Kang Youwei, Liang confessed that "the nation could not be sustained without nationalist spirit. . . . In order to inspire nationalist spirit, we cannot but help attacking the Manchu race."[39] However, when he changed his political position in the direction of constitutional monarchy, Liang began to reject race as the essential element of modern Chinese nationalism, arguing that the Chinese nation was not comprised of one race but a fusion of several races. Chinese nationalism, according to Liang, was a "great nationalism" incorporating the various races.[40]

Those who criticized racial nationalism at that time were, like Liang, mostly constitutional monarchists. However, concepts of nationalism were not simply determined by political dispositions. Some of the anti-Manchu revolutionaries strongly denied the concept of racial nationalism. For example, Cai Yuanpei, who was the leader of a radical revolutionary organization in Shanghai, published an essay called "On Hatred of the Manchu Race," in which he argued that "there was in fact no racial difference between the Han and Manchu races. . . . The privileges that the Manchu race enjoyed were sim-

ply associated with the rights of kingship and the ability to fill half the ranks of government officialdom." Therefore, he proclaimed, "the struggle against [the Manchu race]" was not a racial issue but an issue of ending the "dictatorship of the minority over the majority."[41] Chen Tianhua, who was a well-known anti-Qing revolutionary, also wrote that "if the Manchu dynasty did its best from now on, ruled well, extended reforms, and did not discriminate against the Han race . . . and fought with Western countries to the death . . . then I would discard my previous position and support the Manchu dynasty with all my heart in the task of fighting against the foreigners."[42] The cases of Cai Yuanpei and Chen Tianhua reveal that race was not generally accepted as an essential element of modern Chinese nationalism, even among staunch anti-Qing revolutionaries.

Chen must have known about this interpretation of nationalism embracing different races, because Liang Qichao's *Xinmin congbao* (New Citizen Journal) circulated widely in radical schools all over China. Chen, who went to Japan twice to study, kept close ties with such revolutionaries as Cai Yuanpei and with such radical newspapers as *Su bao*. However, among the many concepts of nationalism competing in Chinese intellectual circles, Chen Duxiu chose the concept of racial nationalism. In his 1904 essay "On the Fall of the Nation," Chen deplored the fact that "every time I passed through Luxun, Weihaiwei, Jiurong, and Hong Kong on the way from Tianjin to Guangzhou, I saw that our mountains and rivers are no longer the world of our Han race."[43] "If several different races lived in one state," Chen proclaimed, the state "could never be at peace." In this statement, there was no space for contingencies—no room even for the view of Chen Tianhua: "If the Manchu dynasty did its best from now on, I would discard my previous position."

In 1905 Chen organized an anti-Qing revolutionary society called the Yuewanghui with Bai Wenwei, Shang Hangfang, and others. One year later, the general meeting of the Yuewanghui decided that all its members, except Chen, would join the Tongmenghui (Revolutionary Alliance).[44] Some scholars believe that the reason Chen did not join the Tongmenghui was because he was dissatisfied with the racial nationalism of the Tongmenghui.[45] However, during 1904–1905, from the beginning of the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* to the time when he virtually stopped his publishing activities at the journal, all of Chen's writings strongly emphasized the role of race as an inevitable element of nationalism.[46]

In order to inspire racial nationalism, Chen employed basically the same method as the Tongmenghui's media arm, *Min bao*. The first issue of *Min bao* carried an image of the legendary Emperor Huang Di with the caption "the founder of the Chinese nation" and "the greatest hero of nationalism."[47] Chen wrote three historical essays from the sixth through the eighth issue

of the *Anhui Common Speech Journal*: "The Revolution of Tang Wu," "Fourteen Years of the Republic," and "The Restoration of Royal Rule." In "Fourteen Years of the Republic" Chen introduced the history of the ancient Chinese republic, said to have been in place "291 years before the birth of Confucius and 1,742 years after Huang Di's accession to the imperial throne."[48] He chose two great historical events to be the baseline years—one was the birth date of Confucius and the other was the enthronement date of Huang Di. By choosing Huang Di's accession date, not his birth date, Chen could effectively unite nation building in China with the lineage of the Han people, just as the *Min bao* had done with the Huang Di illustration. In another essay, "The Restoration of Royal Rule," Chen discussed the restoration of royal rule in China after the end of the ancient republican era. However, this essay did not focus on restoration of royal rule itself, but afforded more attention to a description of how the Han race, after King Xuan's accession, repelled invasion and suppressed the rioting of the foreign races and thus conquered them. "King Xuan had been enthroned for forty-six years. . . . During this period he defeated foreign races of all sorts. This was the second time our Han people conquered the other races after founder Huang Di defeated the Miao people."[49] This historical writing revealed Chen's perception of the current Chinese crisis as a conflict between the Han race and foreign races and implied a hope that once again the Han race would suppress the foreign races.

Chen's racial nationalism survived even after the 1911 Revolution, when most of his comrades discarded their previous tenets and adopted the concept of multiethnic nation. In the 1916 essay "My Patriotism," Chen emphatically used the phrase "guomang zhongmie" (the fall of the nation and the perishing of the race) and clearly identified the "guomang" (the fall of the nation) with "zhongmie" (the perishing of the race).[50] In the same essay he also used interchangeably the terms "citizens of one nation" and "our Hua [Chinese]."[51] What did Chen mean by *zhong* (race) and Hua (Chinese)? In early 1916 when Chen encouraged Chinese youth to be conquerors instead of the conquered, he mentioned that "among the races of the Far East, the Mongol (Menggu), Manchu, and Han races were the conquered races."[52] Here Chen clearly distinguished among the Manchu, Mongol, and Han races, knowing well that only the Han race comprised the readership of *New Youth*. Again, in 1917 he wrote that "our Hua people's greatest malady was living for thousands of years subordinated to a despot and foreign races."[53] Here, the concept of "Hua people" who had lived in subordination to foreign races was not identical to the term "Hua" used by Liang Qichao, who referred to a Chinese people (Zhong hua) comprised of several races. In Chen's writing, "Hua" clearly meant the "Han" race.

In 1919, when confronting the idea of dividing China into northern and southern states, Chen's stern criticism of this idea was based on the notion that "in consideration of race, religion, language, and history, there is no reason to divide people who had long lived in one community."[54] As he had in the *Anhui Common Speech Journal*, he still believed that race, religion, language, and history were the essential elements of building a nation.

The 1911 Revolution established a multiracial nation in which races with distinct languages and histories were incorporated. So why did Chen fail to jettison his old belief in racial nationalism? We can find a clue in the theory of national character that was influential at that time in Chinese society. In fact, the idea of national character had been playing a critical role in the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* for some time. In the *Anhui Common Speech Journal*, Chen answered questions about "the reason for the fall of the nation" in the following way:

> What was the reason [for the fall of the nation]? The reason was not that the emperor was bad, or that officials were bad, or that soldiers were bad, or that money was in short supply, or that a foreign country deceived us, or that thieves had rioted. As far as I know, the rise and fall of a nation is determined by whether the national character is good or bad. Our Chinese had a bad character from birth and this was the reason for the fall of the nation.[55]

In *New Youth*, Chinese national character was consistently presented as the source of the fall of the nation. In the article "My Patriotism," Chen argued that "witnessing the endangerment of China today, it may be the case that the force of destruction is a strong enemy or military leadership, but what caused the destruction was the behavior and character of the people of the nation. Therefore, in order to survive in the current situation, what is needed is a reform of national character and behavior."[56] Chen then went on to state that "the deepest and greatest source of our sickness is the weakness of our powers of resistance," which resulted from a psychology formulated during a long history.[57] If the national character of China was "a psychology formulated during a long history," this, for Chen, was a clear commentary on the nature of the Han race:

> Our nation of Hua, one of the oldest countries in the world, is located in East Asia. Civilized earlier than others, [our Hua nation] has always been surrounded by small barbarian races and inclined to close its doors with the self-pride of a big country. Therefore, all our scholarship, religions, and politics developed by themselves [in isolation] and have not been in touch with others. From the time of the Wei and Jin dynasties, Buddhism arrived to awaken the gentry. However . . . it too was subordinated to the requirements of secular success and failed to change the fundamental nature of the Hua people.[58]

In Chen's mind, the Hua people meant the Han race, thus his faith in the role of national character naturally identified the Han race as the essential element of Chinese nationalism during the New Culture Movement.

CONCLUSION

The concept of national character anchored Chen Duxiu's intellectual consistency throughout the 1904–1918 period and allowed a conceptualization of the relationship between individualism and nationalism as mutually supportive components. The idea of national character was closely related to his enthusiastic perception of the need for cultural change, a change of values and morals in the everyday life of each individual. "Nation," Chen argued, "is nothing but 'social psychology' that added up each 'individual psychology.' It is the collective will of all individuals." Therefore, "real nationalism," according to Chen, "is 'psychological nationalism' which in turn is the intended and conscious identity of the national people based on a common historical legacy."[59] This perception of the relationship between the individual and the nation led many Chinese intellectuals, including Chen, to emphasize the formulation of new ethics and morals as the most important task confronting nationalists.[60] In order to avoid "the fall of the nation and the perishing of the race," Chen argued, what was needed was not the heroic acts of a few patriots but the collective power and moral essence of each ordinary individual.[61] The theory of national character generated an awakening in Chen: nationalism and individualism were inseparably interrelated in building a modern Chinese nation.

NOTES

1. Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (New York: Atheneum, 1982), p. 38.
2. Chen Duxiu, "Esu pian" [Bad customs], *Chen Duxiu zhuzuo xuan* [A collection of Chen Duxiu's writings] (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1993), vol. 1, pp. 39–52 [hereafter referred to as CDX]; "*Wang Yangming xiansheng xunmeng dayi de jieshi*" [An interpretation of the outline of Wang Yangming's principles on teaching children], CDX, vol. 1, p. 95.
3. Quote from Maruyama Matsuyuki, *Osaundongui sasangsa* [History of thought in the May Fourth Movement], (Seoul: Iwolseogak, 1983), p. 149.
4. Chen Duxiu, "1916 nian" [The year 1916], CDX, vol. 1, p. 172.
5. Ibid., p. 173.
6. Chen Duxiu, CDX, vol. 1, p. 185.

7. Li Zehou, *Jungguk hyeondae sasangsaui guljeol* [Reflections on the intellectual history of modern China] (Seoul: Jisiksaneopsa, 1998), pp. 13–14.

8. Ibid., p. 18. Lee Feigon also maintained that there was a strong continuity in many of Chen's essential arguments, including individualist values. However, he pays more attention to the difference in Chen's writings between the *Anhui Common Speech Journal* and *New Youth* periods and accounts for these differences with reference to the particulars of the social scene in the two periods. See Lee Feigon*, Chen Duxiu: The Founder of the Chinese Communist Party* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 106, 116.

9. Chen Duxiu, "Esu pian," p. 45.

10. Ibid., p. 39.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., p. 92.

13. Ibid., p. 93.

14. Ibid., p. 46.

15. Chen Duxiu, "Lun xiqu" [On plays], CDX*,* vol. 1, p. 87.

16. Chen Duxiu, "Kongzi zhidao yu xiandai shenghuo" [Confucian truth and modern life], CDX, vol. 1, p. 231.

17. Ibid., p. 277.

18. Ibid., p. 277.

19. Chen Duxiu, "Faranxiren yu jinshi wenming" [The French and modern civilization], CDX, vol. 1, p. 137.

20. Ibid.

21. Chen Duxiu, "Jinshi xiyang jiaoyu" [Modern education in the West], CDX, vol. 1, pp. 324–25.

22. Chen Duxiu, "Jinri zhi jiaoyu fangzhen" [Today's principles of education], CDX, vol. 1, pp. 141–142.

23. Chen Duxiu, "Shuo guojia" [On the nation], CDX, vol. 1, p. 57.

24. Ibid., pp. 50–52. In the same essay, Chen also advised, "Do not waste money on sacrificial ceremonies but invest it in projects which benefit not only the state but also individuals, such as school and education."

25. Tang Baolin and Lin Wusheng*, Chen Duxiu nianpu* [Chronology of Chen Duxiu] (Shanghai: Renmin chuban she, 1988), p. 61.

26. Chen Duxiu, "Dongxi minzu genben sixiang zhi chayi" [Fundamental philosophical difference between Eastern and Western peoples], CDX*,* vol. 1, p. 166.

27. Chen Duxiu, "Aiguoxin yu zijuexin" [Patriotism and awakening], CDX*,* vol. 1, p. 118.

28. Ibid., p. 115.

29. Ibid., p. 116.

30. Chen Duxiu, "Wo de guonei heping yijian" [My opinion on domestic peace], CDX*,* vol. 1, p. 462.

31. Chen Duxiu, "Jinri zhi jiaoyu fangzhen," p. 144.

32. Ibid.

33. Chen Duxiu, "Xin qingnian" [New youth], (September 1919), CDX, vol. 1, p. 186.

34. Chen Duxiu, "1916 nian," p. 172.

35. Chen Duxiu, "Dangdai erda kexuejia zhi sixiang" [Thoughts of the two greatest scientists of our times], CDX, vol. 1, p. 193.

36. Chen Duxiu, "Shuo guojia," p. 56.

37. Min Du-ki, *Xinhae hyeokmyeongsa* [A history of the 1911 Revolution] (Seoul: Minumsa, 1994), p. 44.

38. Mary Backus Rankin, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries: Radical Intellectuals in Shanghai and Chekiang, 1902–1911* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 80.

39. Min Du-ki, *Xinhae hyeokmyeongsa*, p. 49.

40. Baik Youngseo, *Dongasiaui gwihwan* [The return of East Asia] (Seoul: Changjakgua Bipyong, 1986), pp. 74–75.

41. Cai Yuanpei, "Shi chou Man" [On the hatred of the Manchu race], *Su bao* (1903), in Mary Backus Rankin, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries*, p. 57.

42. Min Du-ki, *Xinhae hyeokmyeongsa*, p. 52. Chen Tianhua participated in the anti-Russian movement in Tokyo and, after returning to China, joined a revolutionary organization called Huaxinghui (China Restoration Society) that was led by Huang Xing.

43. Chen Duxiu, "Wangguo pian" [On the fall of the nation], CDX, vol. 1, p. 69.

44. Shen Su, "Xinhai geming shiqi de Yuewanghui" [The Yuewanghui during the period of the 1911 Revolution], in *Chen Duxiu pinglun xuanbian* [Selected critical essays on Chen Duxiu] (Beijing: Dongya shuji, 1933), vol. 1, p. 86.

45. Thomas C. T. Kuo, *Jindogsu pyongjeon* [Chen Tu-hsiu (1879–1942) and the Chinese Communist Movement] (Seoul: Minumsa, 1985), p. 50; Qi Guang "*Chen Duxiu de shengping jiqi zhengzhi zhuzhang*" [Political opinions of Chen Duxiu during his lifetime], in *Chen Duxiu pinglun xuanbian*, p. 178.

46. The *Anhui Common Speech Journal* was discontinued on September 13, 1905, with issue 22.

47. Min Du-ki, *Xinhae hyeokmyeongsa*, p. 55.

48. Chen Duxiu, "Shisi nian gonghe" [Fourteen years of the republic], CDX, vol. 1, p. 62.

49. Chen Duxiu, "Wangzheng fuxing" [The restoration of royal rule], CDX, vol. 1, p. 63.

50. Chen Duxiu, "Wozhi aiguozhuyi" [My patriotism], CDX, vol. 1, p. 207.

51. Ibid., pp. 207–10.

52. Chen Duxiu, "1916 nian," p. 172.

53. Chen Duxiu, "Da Yi Hengjia (dui De xuanzhan)" [Reply to Yi Hengjia (a declaration of war against Germany)], CDX, vol. 1, p. 312.

54. Chen Duxiu, "Weishenmo yao nanbei fenli" [Why divide north and south?], CDX, vol. I, p. 506.

55. Chen Duxiu, "Wangguo pian," p. 180.

56. Chen Duxiu, "Wozhi aiguozhuyi," p. 207.

57. Chen Duxiu, "Di kang li" [The power of resistance], CDX, vol. 1, p. 152.

58. Chen Duxiu, "Wuren zuihou zhi juewu" [Our last resort], CDX, vol. 1, p. 175.

59. Lung-kee Sun, “Social Psychology in the Late Qing Period,” *Modern China,* vol. 18, no. 3 (1992), p. 238.

60. Gao Yihan announced in *New Youth* that “any meaningful political change would be determined by the psychology of the majority of the people, not by political agendas” (Baik Youngseo, p. 61).

61. Chen Duxiu, “Wozhi aiguozhuyi,” pp. 207–13. The Socialist Party of China also participated eagerly in the Reforming National Character Movement by claiming that individual morality would serve as the basis of building a utopian society (Cho Sehyun, “Jungguk Sahoedang yeongu, 1911–1913” [A study of the Chinese Socialist Party], *Zhongguksa yongu* [Research on Chinese history], no. 15 [Nov. 2001], pp. 230, 234). In Beijing, Wu Zhihui organized the “Develop Morality Society” that included Li Shizeng, Cai Yuanpei, Zhang Jingjiang, Zhang Ji, Wang Jingwei, and others. Shortly after arriving at Beijing University, Chen Duxiu joined the society (*Chen Duxiu nianpu*, p. 85).

2

Radical Visions of Time in Modern China: The Utopianism of Mao Zedong and Liang Shuming

Catherine Lynch

In his book, *Marxism, Maoism, and Utopianism: Eight Essays*,[1] Maurice Meisner delineates utopianism as an important strand in the thought of both Karl Marx and Mao Zedong. Utopia is integral to modern revolutions, and a consideration of Mao's utopianism is critical for understanding Mao and Maoism. While utopian themes were present in Mao's thought as early as 1919, his utopianism took sharp form in the Great Leap Forward of 1958. China appeared then to Maoists to be on the verge of a utopian moment, promising an imminent break with the present and past and emergence into a future, ideal society where, much as Marx had described it in his "Critique of the Gotha Program,"[2] there would no longer be an antithesis between mental and physical labor and in which people would develop their many-sided capacities as human beings. As early as the 1930s, Mao's contemporary, Liang Shuming, had also come to conceive of China as at a utopian juncture when it was possible to break with history and create an ideal society, grounded in the basic, good capacities of human beings. In broad strokes, Liang shared many utopian elements with Mao. Mao was certainly not singular in his "utopian propensity."[3]

Mao Zedong and Liang Shuming, like most nineteenth and twentieth century socialists, focused their utopian imaginations on the future rather than on a removed place. The new society would not only be a good place, a utopia, but also in a future, good time, "euchronia." Shu-chin Wu has argued that there was a "temporal crisis" in twentieth century China,[4] and Mao and Liang formed their concepts in this context. Together they display a propensity for euchronia in a new and specific sense, demonstrating a particular

form of utopianism which can perhaps be seen as distinct to modern China. Euchronia for them was not only good time in the sense of a future endpoint in history but more essentially good time in the sense of temporal process, an unending unfolding of human creativity. An investigation of the ideas of Liang Shuming set against those of Mao Zedong can enlarge our understanding of both Maoism and of modern utopianism in general.

THE USES OF UTOPIA

The meanings of utopia are many, and Meisner uses the term in several of its senses. At the most general level, however, the heart of utopia can be described as the desire for a good place, a *eutopia*, in historical circumstances which ensure that such a good place is *outopia*, no place. In the last century in particular, this has given utopian imaginings a bad name, condemning the term to the realm of useless, at best, or, at worst, harmful fantasies. But as Frank and Fritzie Manuel argue in their book, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, written over roughly the same years as those during which Meisner was engaged with his eight essays, utopian thought has been widespread and persistent.[5]

Where the Manuels focus on the Western world, scholars have frequently noted that China has its own utopian tradition.[6] Wolfgang Bauer delves into utopian themes, broadly defined, in his large book, *China and the Search for Happiness: Recurring Themes in Four Thousand Years of Chinese Cultural History*.[7] Li Zehou, in *Marxism in China*, refers to strains of utopianism running through China's traditional schools of thought and into such modern thinkers as Hong Xiuquan, Kang Youwei, and Sun Yatsen, arguing that this utopian tradition facilitated the acceptance of Marxism in China.[8] In *Marxism, Maoism, and Utopianism: Eight Essays*, Maurice Meisner describes the Chinese utopian tradition as lacking historical optimism, much as pre-Enlightenment utopias in the West.[9] Steven C. Davidson has recently echoed this distinction between modern and traditional Chinese utopias and offered a careful consideration of the extent to which we can speak of utopianism in early imperial China,[10] while, in a study of a Chinese novel, Daria Berg has demonstrated how utopian and anti-utopian visions, pastoral and urban, emerged in the seventeenth century as a way to grapple with the dislocations of late imperial China.[11]

For the West, the Manuels root utopia in "a tension between the Two Kingdoms" and its resolution "in that myth of a heaven on earth which lies at the heart of utopian fantasy."[12] Meisner too perceives utopia as arising out of a tension. "Utopian conceptions of the world as it should be clash with

the world as it is to generate a sense of tension between what Max Weber termed 'the actually existent and the ideal.'" The clash between hopes and actual circumstances constitutes a tension, but utopia goes further and strives to resolve the tension. Meisner's sentence above continues, "and [utopian conceptions] at the same time generate a sense of hope for the future, thereby producing the essential preconditions for human actions which aim to transform the world in accordance with an image of what it should be."[13]

Modern utopia implies action. The Manuels describe the shift in Western utopias over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from narrative fictions of isolated places, including Thomas More's *Utopia* itself, to discursive utopias laying out principles for the transformation of all of humanity. "In these rationalist, systematic utopias whose province was the whole world, the means of reaching utopia was transformed from an adventure story or a rite de passage to Elysium into a question of political action: How do you change a present misery into a future happiness in this world?"[14] And it is in the drive to action, political and social, that Meisner finds "the utility of utopia."[15] As distinct from mere dreaming—although utopia is also a kind of dreaming—a modern utopian vision impels people to act to realize that vision. The dream and action are intertwined. "For people must hope before they can act," Meisner writes, "and their hopes must be lodged in a vision of a better future if their actions are not to be blind and devoid of purpose."[16]

Utopia, of course, is not just a "good" place but an ideal place. It resonates with profound human values, and because the thrust of utopia is to resolve the tension between the real and the ideal by building the ideal society in the real world, the action utopia stimulates aims at transformation. Incremental steps toward a better place, extending elements already present in actual historical circumstances, are not enough. The Manuels distinguish such projections of the present from "the leap into a new state of being in which contemporary values in at least one area—the critical one for the utopian—are totally transformed or turned upside down."[17] Utopians, the Manuels write, have insight that "serves them as a springboard for a jump into a future which could be either a total negation of the present or so sharply lateral that others would at first glance consider it chimerical, fantastic, improbable—in a word, utopian."[18] Similarly, Karl Mannheim emphasizes transformative action in separating the utopian imagination from other visions which may be at odds with existing circumstance. "Only those orientations transcending reality will be referred to by us as utopian which, when they pass over into conduct, tend to shatter, either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at the time."[19]

With purposive political or social action aimed at transcending or shattering current historical circumstances, the modern utopian is focused on the

future. Meisner, the Manuels, and Mannheim all concur in relating modern utopianism to a radical orientation in time. In his essay, "The Utopian Mentality," Karl Mannheim roots his analysis of utopianism in orientations in time. "This wish [the utopian element] is the organizing principle which even moulds the way in which we experience time."[20] Mannheim continues, "Just because of this central significance of the historical time-sense, we will emphasize particularly the connections which exist between each utopia and the corresponding historical time-perspective."[21] Mannheim here is expansive in his interest in temporal orientations, as in his conception of what can be characterized as utopian.

Meisner and the Manuels are more narrowly focused. Where Mannheim, conceding that "in certain historical periods wish-fulfillment takes place through projection into time, while, in others, it proceeds through projection into space,"[22] does not find this a useful distinction and is equally interested in the experience of time in both cases, Meisner and the Manuels are interested in exactly this difference. Meisner argues that before the European Enlightenment and the introduction of the idea of progress, utopia lacked historical optimism and political activism.[23] Earlier utopias were literary descriptions of places, whereas "certainly of far greater historical significance … is the activist form of utopianism, which not only sets forth a vision of the future society but combines that vision with the expectation that its advent is more or less imminent. . . ."[24]

The Manuels identify a similar shift and find it sufficiently significant to mark it with a new term. They created the neologism, "euchronia, good time, and applied it to a major departure in Western utopia and utopian thought that occurred when good place, good state of consciousness, and good constitution were all translated to a future good time."[25] Meisner shows us, through his study of Mao Zedong, that the shift to an activist form of utopianism colored by historical optimism was not limited to the West. He does so without the use of a neologism like "euchronia." A closer look at Mao and Liang Shuming together, however, will show that the term "euchronia" can be appropriated and developed to denote something more specific and distinctive of modern China.

UTOPIAN SOCIALISM

If transformative action oriented toward the future is central to modern utopia, then there is clearly a connection between utopianism and modern revolution. This brings us to both Karl Marx and Mao Zedong, as well as to Liang Shuming. Meisner's main concern, after all, is not with modern utopia in

general but with the utopian strains in Marx and Mao. Here, with the Marxian tradition, Meisner's use of the term utopia becomes nuanced as "Marxism at once conveys the most powerful of utopian visions of the future and presents the most devastating critique of 'utopianism.'"[26] Marx himself was utopian in the general sense; however, he and Friedrich Engels applied the word in a specific and pejorative sense to others, to the nineteenth century "utopian socialists," Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Owen.[27] As Meisner shows us, both Marx and those he criticized as utopian socialists largely shared a vision of a potential future. What divided them was their understanding of how to engage with history to achieve that future. "Indeed, the Marxist critique of utopian socialism is essentially a criticism of the failure of the utopians to understand the workings of modern history, neither recognizing the restraints that history imposes nor appreciating the potentialities that history offers."[28]

The same shared goals and same division over history that characterized the relationship of Marx and utopian socialists, Meisner finds also in the relationship between Marx and Mao. "It is not the utopian goal that distinguished Mao from Marx (and Lenin) and that gave Maoism its 'utopian' character, but rather different conceptions of how and under what conditions that goal was to be pursued."[29] It is the second, specific sense of utopian, that of utopian socialism, which Meisner largely pursues, finding striking congruencies between nineteenth century utopian socialists and Mao. Moreover, Meisner adds to Marx's roster of utopian socialists the Russian Populists of the late nineteenth century, in whom Meisner finds descendants and a variant of utopian socialism.[30] Comparison with the intellectual patterns of Russian Populism gives Meisner an entry into understanding Mao's utopianism.

Utopian Socialism and Mao Zedong

Maurice Meisner shows us how Mao Zedong shared many elements with both utopian socialists and Russian Populists. Marx saw industrial capitalism as a historically necessary and progressive precursor of socialism, an objective historical phase that could be scientifically analyzed to reveal the critical role of the proletariat in achieving a socialist future.[31] With similar visions of the future, it was in attitudes toward capitalism and history that Mao, together with utopian socialists and Russian Populists, diverged from Marx. Far from necessary and progressive, capitalism in their view was unnatural, an evil that could be circumvented if people's natural impulses were released by tapping into their moral virtues.[32] For Mao, as for the Russian Populists, this utopian approach was framed by a specific historical circumstance. Both Russia in the late nineteenth century and China in the twentieth were largely agrarian nations, clearly behind the industrialized West in a capitalist developmental

process. And both Mao, as a Chinese populist, and the Russian Populists took this not as a handicap but as an advantage. A distinguishing feature of populism is its claim of the advantages of backwardness. Relying on the traditions and traits of the peasantry, who constituted the vast majority in China as in Russia, populists expected to avoid the entire painful episode of capitalism, moving directly, and before the West, to a socialist future. They had a voluntaristic faith in the peasantry once its active impulses were released—and perhaps guided—to form a new, ideal, socialist society.

Clearly this populist version of utopianism is one that Mao fit. He focused early, in 1927, on the peasants as the motor of revolution, and he viewed capitalism together with the cities where it was centered as alien forces tied to imperialism. In this Mao departed from Marx's fundamental idea that socialism must be preceded by capitalism and that it was the proletariat, in cities, that would actively create socialism. Mao instead saw capitalism as a burden that made revolution more difficult and hence its weakness in China as an advantage. At the onset of the 1960s, for example, Mao noted,

> Lenin says, "The transition from capitalism to socialism will be more difficult for a country the more backward it is." This would seem incorrect today. Actually, the transition is less difficult the more backward an economy is, for the poorer they are the more the people want revolution. . . . Workers there [in the capitalist countries of the West] have been deeply influenced by the bourgeoisie, and it would not appear to be all that easy to carry through a socialist transformation. . . . [T]he backward overtake the advanced.[33]

China was undeveloped, "poor and blank" as Mao had begun to put it in 1956,[34] and this meant that it had the impulse and the freedom to create the most beautiful society. While for Marx socialism could be attained only after understanding the objective conditions of history, conditions which themselves contained the potential for a good future, Mao saw backwardness as a liberation from the constraints of history. The human subjective will, exercised by the peasantry, could create utopia. What emerged in 1927 in Mao's turn from the proletariat, and even the party, to the peasantry as the leader of revolution, had crystallized by the late 1950s into the ideas underlying the Great Leap Forward and the expectation of an imminent utopia.[35]

Utopian Socialism and Liang Shuming

Although if one looks for individual influence, his was arguably the most important, Mao Zedong was not alone in China in his utopian populism, and others also engaged populist themes. Meisner has shown us the populism of Mao's mentor, Li Dazhao.[36] Li Zehou has also noted the importance of popu-

lism in the thought of Li Dazhao and as a tendency in modern China.[37] Another Chinese populist, and a close friend of Li Dazhao, was Liang Shuming, the cultural theorist and social activist, a leader of the Rural Reconstruction Movement of the 1930s. Expanding the investigation of China's utopian socialism beyond Meisner's studies to include Liang can take us deeper into understanding China's modern utopianism.

What had drawn Li Dazhao and Liang Shuming together in friendship was a common commitment to discovering the nature of the good society and China's route to it.[38] Throughout his life Liang was concerned with the future of China and with prompting positive actions to achieve that future. In this very general sense Liang always had a tendency toward utopia. Born in 1893, in the same year as Mao Zedong, Liang in his early years was convinced that China needed to adopt the achievements of Western society, in particular its political forms, even as he criticized aspects of that society. This was hardly the anticipation of a radical transformation that one would expect in a utopian. It was the disintegration of the alliance between the Nationalist and Communist parties in 1926 and 1927 which served as the catalyst for a new conviction, a conviction which set Liang squarely in a populist mold.[39] From 1927 onward Liang Shuming's mature thought was utopian in both the general and the specific, Marxian, senses.

Like other utopian socialists, Liang Shuming saw the capitalist system of private property as a source of society's ills and industrialization as it had occurred in the West as a cruel, abnormal process. "Industrialization's high level of civilization has quite simply all come in exchange for blood," Liang wrote in his 1937 book, *A Theory of Rural Reconstruction*.[40] The process of capitalist accumulation was cruelly exploitative, and it was also concentrated in cities. Liang was not against cities he claimed. Societies needed cities as centers for such things as the upper levels of government, economy, education and culture, but these centers depended on the countryside. "Villages are the roots: cities are the branches. Villages are originally humanity's home, and cities are established by humanity for particular purposes."[41] Cities may be centers, but the center of gravity must rest in the countryside. Modern cities, however, had turned this upside down. "If the center of gravity is in one place, this is extremely dangerous."[42] The villages should control the city as kite strings control a kite. "If the city comes to control the villages, that is the minority using force to dominate the majority of the people; this is not right, not normal."[43]

It was to the villages and the peasants living there that Liang looked for the social force on which to base a new kind of society, one which would accord with mankind's basic humanity. China's traditional morals, Liang argued, were of course not sufficient to give direction to a peasant movement.[44]

Society had to be made anew, and Liang concluded, with words that could have been spoken by a Russian Populist, "The initiation and completion of the solution to the China question lies entirely in the intellectuals and the villagers of its society merging to form a force."[45] The intellectuals could help the peasants overcome their inertia and lack of connectedness, while the villages would rescue intellectuals from meaningless lives in the cities. As the rural movement matured, the role of the peasants would expand and that of the intellectuals shrink.[46]

At the core of Liang Shuming's turn toward populism in 1927, in what he called his awakening, was his abandonment of what he had sought up to that point, a way for China to follow the West. Such attempts, he now realized, were futile since China could never copy Western forms. Instead China had two options, extinction or the creation of an utterly new and ideal society.

> The problem of the entire construction of society is a fundamental problem, both deep and distant, seemingly not what China, with peril pressing right up against eyebrows and eyelashes, can discuss. Of course as soon as one discusses the construction of society, one involves the ideal; how could Chinese have the leisure to be thinking about the ideal? Nonetheless the problem already compels pursuit to its depths; even if one wished to, it cannot be avoided. Chinese history having arrived at this day must undergo a great transformation, society must undergo a great remaking, it is exactly *necessary to head straight for the distant, great ideal in order to resolve the immediate problems*.[47]

What ordinarily might seem merely "utopian" was also, at this juncture in China's history, the only practical option.

A backward China in economic, social, and political disarray and dominated by imperialism, Liang Shuming concluded, could never catch up with industrialized nations by copying an urban centered industrialization, whether based in Western capitalist competition or Soviet socialist state power. In China a movement of peasants and intellectuals would have to build a new society from the bottom up through cooperation rather than competition or state force. What Liang envisioned was an expanding network of local cooperatives that would reconstitute China's economy and social structure and undergird minimal political administration.

A cooperativist movement was the only practical solution to China's crises, but it also, happily, accorded with the creation of a humanly ideal society. This would be a new kind of society which had never before existed, a new socialism merging together polity, economy, and education. In the future there would be no division between city and country, intellectual and peasant, nor would there be any international competition as a cooperativist social structure spread through the world. China would thus show the way

toward a new global ideal.[48] China's shortcomings, which had plunged it into disaster in the modern world, would hence also prove to be its advantages. "In short [China] cannot seek cohesion from above but must rather seek cohesion from below. In all things, failings when turned over become strong points; it is always so."[49] Thus China was free to avoid the inhumanities of other modern societies and construct instead an ideal society. Local cooperatives, as also the future utopia, would be grounded in the most basic aspects of human nature. Peasants throughout the world had an affinity for cooperation and mutual regard, and cooperatives were the economy of the weak. The new society would allow full play to fundamental humanity, human reason founded in impersonal feeling and the urge toward improvement, mutual respect, and communication. China, according to Liang Shuming's vision, with all the advantage of backwardness, was on the verge of a radical transformation ushering in utopia, a utopia which would finally resolve the tension between China's present crises and the values of human nature, as Liang understood them.

Mao Zedong and Liang Shuming, then, can be understood in the light of both of the meanings of utopian that Maurice Meisner employs. They, like Karl Marx, were utopian in the general sense, and they were utopian in the specific sense which Marx criticized. Capitalism for Mao and Liang, far from being a necessary historical development, which contained within itself the solution to its own crisis as it was for Marx, was the obstacle to a good society. The advantage of China's backwardness was to free an active peasantry to create a new world without traversing capitalist industrialism.

In *Marxism, Maoism, and Utopianism*, in which he argues persuasively for the importance of the concept of utopianism, Maurice Meisner's judgment of Mao's utopianism is complex. Meisner is positive in his evaluation of Mao's larger utopianism, while his judgment of Mao's utopian socialist elements is layered. To the extent that Mao ignored the restraints of history that Marx described, Meisner points out, Maoism invited the dangers of historical regression, political elitism, and personality cults.[50] Mao further ignored, at the risk of denying it, Marx's core utopian value of the free and full development of individual human potentialities.[51] And Maoists never directly confronted the problem of alienation and the power of the state over society.[52] Meisner, furthermore, is uncertain of the continuing impact of Maoist utopianism without Mao in the years following Mao's death. Liang Shuming would have fared better had Meisner evaluated him along similar lines. Liang saw the free development of individual potentialities as entwined with the full development of society's human potential, and the power of the state was, in Liang's eyes, one of the chief obstacles to a good society.

A quarter of a century after *Marxism, Maoism, and Utopianism*, in the book *Mao Zedong: A Political and Intellectual Portrait*,[53] Maurice Meisner's tone shifts. In this book he writes little of utopianism and, when he does, concentrates on utopianism in Marx's pejorative sense.

> Mao Zedong's removal of Marxian restraints on the revolutionary will in the late 1950s opened the way for the catastrophic consequences of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. It was not Mao's so-called "hardline Marxism" that was responsible for the debacles, but, in a sense, his lack of Marxism, or more precisely, his "utopian" departures from Marxian teachings on the imperatives of history.[54]

Although Meisner acknowledges its roots in Mao's early thought, it is the "late Maoism" of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution that earns Meisner's condemnation for its utopianism.

In the earlier book by contrast, Meisner sees Mao's utopian socialism paradoxically as simultaneously involving positive elements despite its large limitations. Whatever its historical restraints, Marx appears to have been wrong about the potentials of capitalism's future in the West. Approaching history more as a utopian populist than as a Marxist, Mao was able to see the revolutionary potential in a backward, peasant society and attempt to move China toward larger utopian goals.[55] Further, even after the peasant-based revolution succeeded, Mao and Maoism kept larger utopian goals alive.

> If Maoism did not create a genuinely socialist society in China, it did create a situation of permanent revolutionary ferment which left open the possibility of attaining (or, at least, pursuing) Marxian socialist goals. If Marx's injunction to change the world rather than simply interpret it is any standard by which to measure the credentials of a revolutionary Marxist, then Mao may perhaps eventually be judged a better Marxist than a Leninist.[56]

Liang, like Mao, argued against allowing the present to constrain a vision of the future. Openness to future possibilities and the urge to act to transform the present are the positive elements that Mao and Liang shared in a utopian propensity. The question, highlighted by Meisner's complex approach to Mao Zedong, is whether the urge to transformation is sufficient or whether that urge must be restrained within deeper understandings of human experience.

EUCHRONIA

As modern utopians, Mao Zedong and Liang Shuming placed their utopias in the future, a future to be shared by all of mankind, and not in some hidden

valley or on an isolated island. In this they engaged in euchronia, good time, and not merely utopia, good place. Yet the euchronias of Mao and Liang were more than this. Frank and Fritzie Manuel see in the shift from good place to good time the emergence of a new concern, that of the path to utopia. "In early utopia the mode of access did not alter the nature of the perfect society. In the discursive universal utopia, though the idea was rarely spelled out, the way of attaining the ideal city affected the nature of the city itself. The vision of perfection was henceforth either disfigured or enhanced by the path to utopia."[57] The mode of access, the path taken, was critical to the utopias of both Mao and Liang. An orientation of time toward the future was central to their engagement with history. And for both men, more than some final endpoint, the process of creative change in time was itself, in large part, the locus of utopia. It is in pointing to this, the process in time, the movement along a path, as distinct from a final destination or endpoint in time, that the word "euchronia" can take on a more useful meaning.

Euchronia and Mao Zedong

Karl Mannheim, Frank and Fritzie Manuel, and Maurice Meisner all value the activist aspects of modern utopianism, Meisner quoting Max Weber's claim that "man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out for the impossible."[58] Mao Zedong's reach for the impossible had everything to do with his approach to historical time and, in particular, his extreme voluntarism. Instead of an enveloping constraint, history for Mao was something that could be challenged and redirected by human actions, actions which proceeded from heroic wills. Meisner connects Mao's emphasis on the will, which he likens to that of the Russian Populists, with Mao's "striking lack of faith in the objective forces of history and his sense of indeterminateness about the future."[59] This is a sharp contrast with the sense of historical direction of many Marxists.

Karl Marx's own approach to history has been read in differing ways, sometimes, as with Mao, as providing a field for action and often, as with orthodox Marxists, as presenting a deterministic force leaving no place for the active will.[60] The "Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*" is a *locus classicus* of the deterministic reading of Marxism. This was where Marx sketched out broad rules governing history and social revolution. In human development, as Marx described it, the superstructure, the legal and political structures and social consciousness, rests on a foundation in the economic structure of society. "The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that

determines their consciousness."[61] Revolutionary change then, Marx argued here, does not issue from the superstructure, much less the will, but from within the production of material life, when developing material productive forces come in conflict with the existing relations of production, the property relations. When these relations of production too tightly constrict new productive forces the result is revolution, and change in the superstructure follows on. A spectrum of implications for action, ranging from voluntarism to determinism, can be drawn from Marx's writings, together with a mix of conclusions about the path to utopia. Contrasting approaches to Marx's "Preface," neither one deterministic, by Mao Zedong and Liang Shuming, as we will see, grew from differing orientations toward historical time but shared a common euchronia.

Mao turned the Marx of the "Preface" on his head. Where Marx claimed, "No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself,"[62] Mao proclaimed "To be sure, the revolution in the production relations is brought on by a certain degree of development of the productive forces, but the major development of the productive forces always comes after changes in the production relations."[63] And revolution in the relations of production stemmed from a revolution in the superstructure in Mao's experience, a revolution preceded by joining conscious wills in a new public opinion.

> All revolutionary history shows that the full development of new productive forces is not the prerequisite for the transformation of backward production relations. Our revolution began with Marxist-Leninist propaganda, which served to create new public opinion in favor of the revolution. Moreover, it was possible to destroy the old production relations only after we had overthrown a backward superstructure in the course of revolution. After the old production relations had been destroyed new ones were created, and these cleared the way for the development of new social productive forces. With that behind us we were able to set in motion the technological revolution to develop social productive forces on a large scale.[64]

At the outset of the 1960s, in these "Reading Notes on the Soviet Text, *Political Economy*," Mao was not willing to wait for a deterministic history and the growth of productive forces but started at the top, with consciousness.

If one looks closely at Mao's argument in his "Reading Notes" turning Marx's "Preface" upside down, one can find a vagueness about the boundaries between and the differing natures of revolutions as conceived by Marx. Mao gave as evidence that the superstructure and productive relations change before productive forces the fact that in Europe bourgeois political revolu-

tions had preceded major changes in productive relations and these had preceded the Industrial Revolution.[65] This, of course, makes the Industrial Revolution part of the bourgeois revolution and not the beginning of something qualitatively different, a proletarian revolution. And Mao argued, "Although between the bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution there are certain differences . . . , basically they are alike."[66] There was more involved in Mao's approach than a reversal of the roles of consciousness and of productive forces and social being. Rather Mao's departures from Marx connected to his deeper, temporal sense and orientation toward history.

The merging of one process of historical change into another, while strange for a Marxist, was natural for Mao Zedong, who saw in history not a series of punctuated revolutions but a constant flow of change. Meisner speaks of Mao's "philosophical world view that postulated the constancy of change as both inevitable and desirable, as both a cosmic law and a human need,"[67] and Frederic Wakeman writes of Mao's "commitment to continuous and unending historical change which was far more extreme than Marx's own."[68] Mao's sense of historical change was, as Meisner indicates, cosmic. Reacting to a phrase in the Soviet economic text, *Political Economy*, Mao wrote,

> "Full consolidation"—a phrase to make one uneasy. The consolidation of anything is relative. How can it be "full"? What if no one died since the beginning of mankind, and everyone got "fully consolidated"? What kind of world would that be! In the universe, on our globe, all things come into being, develop, and pass away ceaselessly.[69]

This vision of ceaseless going and coming led Mao to speak by the 1960s of a distant future where mankind would have disappeared and the sun of its solar system grown cold.

Meisner takes this as a gloomy, dystopian prediction of an inhuman future, but for Mao it was the prediction that something could be "fully consolidated" and cease changing that was chilling. "If there were no such thing as death, that would be unbearable," said Mao in the summer of 1964.[70] A cosmic view of history as unending change was connected to the will to act. Much as Zhuang Zi's tale of the great Kun fish and Peng bird,[71] it functioned to loosen imaginations and free consciousness from the immediate circumstances. And, as Meisner concedes, "Mao's dystopian philosophy conveyed a message of the necessity and desirability of change in general and the ethical value of struggle to effect change in the present world."[72] In his 1964 "Talk on Questions of Philosophy," Mao continued,

> The life of dialectics is the continuous movement toward opposites. Mankind will also finally meet its doom. When theologians talk about doomsday, they are

> pessimistic and terrify people. We say the end of mankind is something which will produce something more advanced than mankind.[73]

Advance was an absolute value for Mao, and advance arose out of struggle, the continuous dialectical contradictions of opposites.

It is well known that contradiction played a central role in Mao's thought. Meisner sums it up thusly:

> For Mao, contradictions and struggles were not simply the motive force of historical change in class society but universal and perpetual laws of nature and history which would persist under socialism and communism as well; they characterized not only the current historical epoch but would continue into eternity.[74]

Without contradictions and change, Mao held, the life of human society and, more largely, the cosmos would cease. With the indeterminateness of the movement of opposites, it was an ethical imperative for humanity to engage that history of change through conscious action, the will, to move it in a progressive direction.[75]

Looking at past history as one of struggle, and more specifically class struggle, is what one would expect of a Marxist. By projecting struggle between opposites into an infinite future, engulfing socialist and communist societies alike and extending into time beyond humanity's existence, Mao departed from Marx. We have seen a hint of this in Mao's insistence that bourgeois revolutions and proletarian revolution are "basically alike." Marx, by contrast, saw the proletarian revolution as fundamentally different from all previous revolutions. The proletarian revolution would finally end the existence of classes and class struggle. While Marx had famously stated of the past and its revolutions, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles," he projected a radically different future after a final, proletarian revolution. "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."[76] This new, utopian era of association and free development would be a radical transformation of and departure from the past. The proletarian revolution, in Marx's eyes, was the process through which humanity would overcome its self-alienation[77] and finally resolve the tension that underlay the urge toward utopia. For Mao, however, there could be no resolution to conflict. As Meisner notes, "Mao, in effect, proclaimed the permanence of conflict and denied the possibility of any definitive resolution."[78] It would appear that Mao was a strange utopian who did not envision the future resolution of basic tensions with the entrance into utopia.

Maurice Meisner, however, suggests that we might look elsewhere in Mao's thought for a different reconciliation, a reconciliation not of a tension between Heaven and Earth but between means and ends.[79] Further,

> The Maoist departures from Marxism lay not simply in the "utopian" character of the means by which Maoists proposed to realize communist ends, but also—more profoundly—in the normative value placed on those means and their partial conversion into ultimate ends. The means of Maoism were themselves components of the Maoist vision of the good society of the future.[80]

With the idea that means themselves were converted into ultimate ends, Meisner bring us close to locating Mao's utopia, in euchronia.

If Mao's vision of an infinity of change arising from permanent conflict seems dystopian to Maurice Meisner, he points out that it also insulates Mao from one of the major critiques of utopia. By resolving everything, or at least what they see as the main things, it is charged, utopians present a picture of a society in which nothing happens, an unappealingly static place. Mao certainly avoided this. Meisner writes,

> The Maoist utopian vision not only allowed for change but demanded it, and at the same time envisioned a future utopia which remained tied to the struggles and sorrows of human experience in the present world, a future which remained fraught with risk and uncertainty and one which allowed a role for human heroism and courage.[81]

Mao's utopia did not fall into stasis, allowing for human development, and this makes him unusual among utopians.

For Mao Zedong, process, revolutionary activity in and against history, was itself part of utopia. The idea that the path to utopia affected the nature of the good place toward which it led was integral to Mao's thought, and moreover the path, activity in time, was as much the location of utopia as was the path's destination. Frederic Wakeman writes, "From personal revolutionary experience, from reading Kautsky, from Yang Ch'ang-chi's lectures on will and efficacy, Mao Tse-tung learned to think of socialism as becoming rather than being."[82] The good society was a process rather than a static state. Focus on the process of becoming, as Wakeman points out, did not for Mao imply an emphasis on the present moment. Becoming partook of a process with duration within the continuity of history, and the process of good becoming must be willful and aimed at a good future.

The emphasis on purposive action within the continuity of history is contained in Mao's famous description of his "theory of permanent revolution."

> In making revolution one must strike while the iron is hot—one revolution must follow another, the revolution must continually advance. The Hunanese often say, "Straw sandals have no pattern—they shape themselves in the making."[83]

There are two things to notice here. First Mao found it imperative to act and not merely allow history to take its course. The iron must not be allowed to become cold. And second, there is no fixed pattern for the future. Rather process itself is what gives creative shape to things. The advance of mankind, and of the cosmos beyond mankind, lies in continuous creativity. "We should always be bringing forward new things. Otherwise what are we here for?"[84] Mao asserted. There is no end to the process of creating, no final good place. What can be good is the process of engaging with history to move it in a good direction, a good quality of time itself, a euchronia.

Euchronia and Liang Shuming

As was Mao Zedong, Liang Shuming was deeply engaged with understanding time and history and did so in a manner which also made his utopia a euchronia. This, of course, is not how Liang has frequently been understood. Liang is most widely known for his early writing, the book *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*,[85] and it is primarily this book, published in 1921 in the wake of the May Fourth era, that garnered for Liang a reputation as an old fashioned, Confucian conservative. Already in the *Cultures* book, time was important to Liang as he discerned three main world cultures, each rooted in a different cultural attitude, and placed them in temporal sequence, the culture of the West being appropriate to the past and present, that of China belonging to the near future, and India's cultural attitude belonging to the very distant future. However this interest in temporal sequence has often been taken as secondary, a conceit to allow Liang to claim for China, although a failure in the present, superiority over the West by projecting that superiority into the future. Guy Alitto, for example, argues that Liang's prediction of an imminent revival of China's culture served to give Liang's readers hope.[86] Far from really being interested in history, Liang, according to Alitto, was fundamentally dedicated to preserving China's culture outside of time. "[F]or Liang that heritage possessed not just historical but trans-historical significance."[87] But Liang's interest in history, already a major element in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, was not just a passing fancy. The *Cultures* book rested on the premise that cultures existed in time and could change, and it addressed the questions that would absorb Liang all his life, questions of how China and humanity could and should change.

In addition to understanding the nature of cultures' successes in terms of a logical temporal sequence, there were other early signs of Liang Shuming's emerging fascination with questions of time and history.[88] The *Cultures* book reflected Liang's attraction to Zhang Taiyan's discussion of evolution, while another of Liang's early influences was Henri Bergson. One of Liang's observations in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, perhaps stimulated by his reading of Bergson, was that Chinese culture differed from those of both the West and India in one respect. Where the West's and India's philosophies dealt with fixed things, China's emphasized process and change.[89]

Liang's concern with history continued to be fundamental to his thought, although it underwent changes with and after his awakening in 1927. Liang then turned away from the notion that there was a fixed sequence of appropriate stages for societies to follow and came to the conclusion that it was impossible for China to retrace the path of the West. But this raised a host of new problems. Liang had already, in the *Cultures* book, rejected the determinism implicit in historical materialism, objecting that it left no role for human subjectivity.[90] With China's society disintegrating and no unilinear history as a guideline, Liang, unlike the utopian socialists of a century earlier, also rejected the possibility of individual example effecting practical change. As he put it a decade later,

> And there are some people who boldly appoint themselves, as if the problems of the country, the problems of society could be solved by the wishes of an individual, the exhortations of comrades. In fact, we are terribly insignificant in the midst of society. Society determines us; we would be hard put to it to make [society] listen to us. The major affairs of the world cannot be resolved by you or me; rather the power of resolution exists naturally within the problem.[91]

To find something between determinism and arbitrary change, Liang now had to look deeper, and again he turned to history.

By the end of the 1920s, Liang Shuming thought that China's society was in utter collapse and that to effect change and resolve the crisis, it was imperative to understand history. With his next two major books, *A Theory of Rural Reconstruction* in the 1930s[92] and *The Essence of Chinese Culture* in the 1940s,[93] Liang investigated China's history in a manner that was both more concrete and more complex than before. In the place of history as an abstract, logical sequence, Liang now began to inquire into actual, empirical history. In this Liang was attending to Chinese Marxist publications and to Marx.[94] Interestingly, in his attempt to understand the direction radical change could take, Liang, like Mao Zedong in the early 1960s, used the terminology of Marx's "Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*,"

although he did not, in the context of the censorship of the time, acknowledge a source. Liang's reading of the "Preface," however, was quite different from that of Mao.

A society's structure, Liang wrote, was made up of three realms, the social reality [*shehui shishi* 社會事實], by which he meant the economic realm, the social order [*shehui zhixu* 社會秩序], or the realm defined by laws and customs, and the realm of conscious demands [*yishi yaoqiu* 意識要求], much as Marx had written of society's economic foundation, superstructure and intellectual life.[95] In times of stability, the different structural realms were consonant, the social order according with the social reality and consciousness with both. Societies were not static however. Progress in the social reality, the economic foundation, could lead to a disjunction between the social reality and the social order, the old laws and customs. Here society's conscious demands, reflecting the shifting economic reality, would change the social order, gradually bringing the different parts of the structure back into mutual accord. Sometimes, however, the change in the social reality was too large and the inertia of the social order too great, producing a gap that consciousness was unable to overcome. When the old, unchanging order became as "fetters" [*zhigu* 桎梏][96] on the development of the new reality, then revolution broke out resulting in a more or less abrupt transformation of the entire structure of society.

Mao Zedong baldly reversed Marx's account of the interrelationships of the economic base, superstructure and consciousness in societies' development, giving causal force to consciousness and social relations and making productive forces derivative. Liang Shuming, by contrast, was closer to Marx's spirit and had a more complex view of the varieties of social change than did Mao. Like Marx, Liang originated change in the economic base and saw consciousness as limited by the economic reality. Yet Liang went beyond Marx, moving somewhat closer to Mao, in giving consciousness a more active role in historical change, whether gradual or revolutionary. The social order, the political order and property relations, however, although a possible motive of change for Mao, was for Liang both derivative and conservative.

What stands out in Liang Shuming's Marxian account of social structure and change is his application of the model to China. Of the three patterns of change, relative stability, gradual change, and revolutionary change, none, Liang asserted, fit contemporary China. China's circumstances were unique. The various structural realms were all at odds leaving society in limbo, unable to reconstitute its past structure and containing within itself no basis for forming a new structure. Over its long past history, China had evolved an elastic, fluctuating structure of society quite unlike the West's class structure. In contemporary China the impulse for change, rather than emanating from development within its own society, had come from the outside, from the West.

Stimulated by the West, China's consciousness had shifted and effected the destruction of the old social order. It was however powerless to erect a new social order to replace the old as there was no new economic reality to fit and support the new order.

China then was left with bits and pieces, none of which fit together. There was a new social consciousness. There was an old social reality still existing in the economic life of the vast countryside although partially disintegrated by the economic activity of the West. Of the social order, the old formal, legal and political aspects were gone, while many informal, customary aspects continued on in the villages. China was in complete collapse with a failed economy, no social order, and a social consciousness powerless to realize its demands.

This failure of the structure of society to provide its own, internal solution to change had plunged China into disaster. But at just the same time, Liang Shuming discovered, history presented China with a rare utopian moment. The failure of the normal workings of history also meant a freedom from ordinary history, a tear in time which allowed a greater role for the creative consciousness.

> This organization [China's new social organization, *shehui zuzhi* 社會組織] will be one that humanity has never before possessed: In all of human history up to now, the constructions of its social organizations have always developed out of a sort of mechanistic, unself-conscious evolution. . . . But now, this organization of which we speak will be sought entirely through reason.[97]

Here then was the opening for self-conscious intellectuals and peasants to craft a new economic reality in China from the bottom up. Happily, the West at just this juncture contributed the socially neutral resources of science and technology, giving human consciousness the latitude to create a new society and culture that had never before existed, one which would be grounded in the deepest seat of human nature and would lead to a new global culture.

If China was in a rare moment with the unique opportunity to move toward a utopian future, Liang also discovered that the means to create that future would be congruent with the ends, with the nature of utopia, and the path to utopia would itself be good. Given the structureless state of China's current society, certain options, certain means, for overcoming the crisis were closed, no matter the perceived ends. Two such options, those being pursued by the Nationalist Party and other reformers and by the Communist Party, were state action and class conflict. Both these means, due to the absence of any underlying structure to hold them, amounted to simple, destructive force incapable of engendering new structures of society. Here was a fundamental difference between Mao Zedong and Liang Shuming, the former seeing conflict and contradictions as constitutive of life and the latter finding conflict to be an obstacle to life. For Liang, the means that were impractical in China's current

circumstances, the use of political or social force, were also the means which precluded the ends he imagined.

The only means that were practical were the means that included within themselves their own ends. Instead of the reformist state activity of the Nationalist Party or the revolutionary social conflict of the Communist Party, Liang envisioned a rural movement of intellectuals and peasants forming cooperatives and eventually a cooperativist network. Encompassing both individual and group cooperatives, Liang asserted,

> exactly accord with our ideal. Examining the establishment of cooperatives, however, there are certain prior realities; it's not that anyone proposed them as the ideal, it's merely that they were seen to be a way to address problems. But now they might well become a sort of ism. On the one hand a means and on the other an ideal goal, two levels of meaning exist simultaneously, and given its importance, we might use the term "cooperativism."[98]

The cooperatives would be constituted through self-aware, community activity. Human reason would replace force, as the self-aware activity of the villagers stemmed from humanity's endless urge for improvement and mutual communication. And here euchronia enters in again, since in Liang's understanding human nature was connected to life and life to change in time. The emerging social groups would be held together not by a static, mechanical structure but by the dynamic interplay of the group and individuals grounded in their most human qualities.

While Liang was convinced of where China needed to begin, with a rural, cooperative movement, he declined to predict exactly what shape that movement would take as it matured. Furthermore, Liang argued, there would be no final, fixed form that an ideal society would take. There were no fixed standards of humanity whose very nature, just as the nature of the universe, was endless potential and lively progress. Much like Mao Zedong with his metaphor of the creation of straw sandals, Liang Shuming saw a new, and most human, kind of society as created in the process of constant movement itself. The creation of utopia was a process in time containing both means and ends, or, more precisely, where the means were themselves converted into ends and the movement creating the path to utopia was itself the locus of utopia. Liang's China stood at a utopian moment that opened onto euchronia.

CONCLUSION

At differing points in their careers, both Mao Zedong and Liang Shuming made use of the scaffolding Karl Marx had provided in his "Preface to *A*

Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," but they did so in very different ways, exposing fundamental differences in their approaches to historical change. Where Mao saw a continuous flux of time, Liang, closer to Marx, saw a depth of societal structure within which gradual changes accumulated until the structure itself underwent transformation. Time was, at least potentially, a punctuated series of changed structures for Liang. Both Mao and Liang embraced the active human subject. Liang emphasized the role of the "subjectivity" [*zhutixing* 主體性] of humanity,[99] and Mao, as Li Zehou has argued, stressed humans' "conscious dynamic nature" [*zijue nengdong xing* 自覺能動性].[100] For Mao, the human subject acted within and through contradictions, and history progressed in revolutionary conflict. Liang, on the contrary, saw conflict as destructive in China's current circumstances. Progression would come in creative construction arising out of active communication in human community. Mao's subjects, if they read the contradictions correctly, were free to act against the burdens of past history across all of time's flux. Utopian moment followed utopian moment. Liang's subjects were more constrained by history, and his utopian moment with its freedom from the past was an opening unique in world history.

The illusion of freedom from the restraints of history is the main basis for the Marxian critique of utopian socialism and of Meisner's criticism of Mao Zedong in particular. Significantly, although they both came to see their society as standing at a utopian juncture, Mao and Liang Shuming moved in opposite directions with regard to their attention to actual, empirical history as opposed to abstract time. Li Zehou has written persuasively about the intertwining in the thought of Mao Zedong of abstract dialectical materialism with empirical experience. Yet, Li points out, the abstract had a higher standing than the empirical for Mao, and the empirical experience to which Mao referred had more to do with military and political experience and little to do with historical materialism, the objective history of structures of human society arising from material life.[101] Li shows us how, after 1949, empirical experience played less and less of a role in Mao's thought while the abstractions of his dialectical materialism were ever more dominant.[102]

Liang Shuming moved in the opposite direction, traveling from the abstract to the empirical. Having begun in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies* in 1921 with a conception of historical time as an abstract sequence, he came by the end of that decade to reject unilinear time and turned instead to a closer look at actual historical experiences and deeper societal structures for the clues to constructive action. It was this greater understanding of the restraints of history, paradoxically, that led Liang to see China's current circumstance as one of complete structural collapse, giving Chinese society greater latitude within the channels set by history. Where Mao, by

the 1950s, increasingly ignored the restraint of empirical history, Liang drew more from it and developed in his ideas for a rural movement in the 1930s a specific, detailed image of the context in which euchronia could unfold.

The question of the relationship of utopian action to empirical history, to historical materialism or practical reality, is also a question of the nature of the path to utopia. What made Karl Marx's utopianism distinct from that of utopian socialists was his grounding of hope for a good future in an analysis of humanity's history. In his sketch in the "Preface," Marx found that the path to the future is itself laid out by the past.

> Therefore mankind always sets for itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the task itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation. . . . The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production . . . ; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation brings, therefore, the prehistory of human society to a close.[103]

Here the path to the future and the compatibility of that path with the good future it is meant to access are not in doubt. The path is simply given by the processes of history and by its nature leads where it should go. History contains the answers to its own questions.

For Mao Zedong, history was less reassuring. As an endless dialectical flux and not material history, time could move in either direction, forward or back. Utopia lay not in achieving some endpoint but in the going itself, and euchronia, once engaged, could also be lost again. The nature of the path was never in doubt but its direction was. Liang Shuming, on the other hand, developed an approach that, like Marx's, was grounded in empirical history. And, like Marx, he saw time as a series of historical accumulations which could not be entirely reversed. However what Liang discovered was that history had set for China a task for which it did not already provide the solutions. China's path into the future would have to be self-consciously created from whole cloth. Liang brought the modern utopian problem, the problem of how the path to utopia would affect the nature of utopia, back to the fore.

Despite their deep divergences over the roles of conflict and contradictions or of empirical history, Mao Zedong and Liang Shuming did share many common elements of utopia, as well as a distinct sort of euchronia. Both looked for action to transform radically the existing society, creating in its stead an ideal society. As populists, both were critical of the human consequences of urban centered industrialization and thought backwardness gave a peasant movement in China the advantage in seeking an alternate, more hu-

man form of modernity free of the burdens of history. Further they envisioned constantly emerging, new social shapes with no final, fixed utopia. Utopia rather could be found in the good unfolding of time, in euchronia. The ideal future, for Mao and for Liang, held processes in which active communities comprised of lively individuals were conscious subjects engaged in ever new and better creation. The path toward utopia was itself utopia.

The comparison of Mao Zedong and Liang Shuming shows us that Mao's utopianism may be understood as widely grounded in the circumstances of modern China, going beyond the thought, and the death, of one individual. It also demonstrates that the modern Chinese utopian propensity can express itself in a variety of ways, not necessarily in the form taken by "late Maoism." The roots of the euchronia found in Mao Zedong and Liang Shuming may yet provide the resources for new utopian thinking in China, allowing a questioning of the end toward which China's current path propels society and an openness to the imagination of a future fundamentally different from the present.

NOTES

*I am grateful to Steven C. Davidson for a careful reading of an earlier draft of this chapter.

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3. Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1979), p. 11.

4. Shu-chin Wu, "Time and Marxism in China: The Case of Li Dazhao," paper presented at the conference, "June 4, The Twentieth Anniversary: Reflections on History and Contemporary Change in China Before and After Tiananmen," Madison, Wisc., June 4–7, 2009.

5. Manuel, Introduction.

6. Shiping Hua's recent book, *Chinese Utopianism: A Comparative Study of Reformist Thought with Japan and Russia, 1898–1997* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009), contains useful references to sources dealing with utopianism. Hua's focus is on reforms however, and his use of the term "utopianism," to denote "the general notion of hope" (p. 12), is broad for the purposes of this chapter.

7. Wolfgang Bauer, *China and the Search for Happiness: Recurring Themes in Four Thousand Years of Chinese Cultural History*, Michael Shaw, trans. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976).

8. Li Zehou, *Makesizhuyi zai Zhongguo* [Marxism in China] (Xianggang: Ming bao chubanshe, 2006), p. 10.

9. Meisner, p. 5.

10. Steven C. Davidson, “Peasant Movements and Politics at the End of the Han: The Language of Taiping,” paper presented at the conference, “June 4, The Twentieth Anniversary: Reflections on History and Contemporary Change in China Before and After Tiananmen,” Madison, Wisc., June 4–7, 2009.

11. Daria Berg, “Marvelling at the Wonders of the Metropolis: Perceptions of Seventeenth-Century Chinese Cities in the Novel *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*,” in David Faure and Tao Tao Liu, eds., *Town and Country in China: Identity and Perception* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 17–40.

12. Manuel, p. 1.

13. Meisner, p. 4.

14. Manuel, p. 3.

15. Meisner, p. 20.

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34. Mao Tse-tung, “On the Ten Great Relationships,” in Stuart Schram, ed., *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 83. See also, Mao, “Speech at the Supreme State Conference” [January 1958], ibid., p. 92, and *Hongqi* [Red flag] (June 1958), pp. 3–4, quoted in Maurice Meisner, *Mao Zedong: A Political and Intellectual Portrait* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 149.

35. Meisner, pp. 191–92.

36. Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).

37. Li, pp. 15–18.

38. See Catherine Lynch, *Liang Shuming and the Populist Alternative in China* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1989), pp. 112–13.

39. Lin Qi [Catherine Lynch], “20 niandai Liang Shuming de sixiang zhuanzhe” [Liang Shuming’s turn in the twenties], *Sixiang yu wenhua* [Thought and culture],

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46. Ibid., pp. 473–474.

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51. Ibid., p. 202.

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74. Meisner, *Marxism*, p. 203. Li Zehou has emphasized a similar theme by stressing Mao Zedong's dialectical materialism in contrast to Marxian historical materialism. See, for example, Li Zehou, *Marxism in China*, pp. 53–54.

75. See Wakeman, *History and Will*, for a full discussion of issues related to these aspects of Mao Zedong's thought.

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77. See Andrej Walicki, "Marx and Freedom," *The New York Review of Books* (November 24, 1983), pp. 50–55.

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80. Ibid., pp. 201–2.

81. Ibid., pp. 210–11.

82. Wakeman, p. 320.

83. Mao, "Speech at the Supreme State Conference," p. 94.

84. Mao, "Talk on Questions of Philosophy," p. 229.

85. Liang Shuming, *Dong Xi wenhua ji qi zhexue* [Eastern and Western cultures and their philosophies] [1921], *Liang Shuming quanji,* vol. 1 (1989), pp. 319–547.

86. Guy Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 105.

87. Ibid., p. 13.

88. For a discussion of the uses of history in *Eastern and Western Philosophies and Their Cultures*, see Lynch, *Liang Shuming and the Populist Alternative in China*, pp. 141–58.

89. Liang, *Dong Xi wenhua ji qi zhexue*, p. 442.

90. Ibid., pp. 372–73.

91. Liang, *Xiangcun,* p. 446.

92. Ibid., pp. 141–585.

93. Liang, *Zhongguo wenhua yaoyi* [The essence of Chinese culture] [1949], *Liang Shuming quanji,* vol. 3 (Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 1990), pp. 1–316.

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96. Ibid., p. 232; Marx, in Tucker, ed., p. 5.

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98. Ibid., pp. 432–33.

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3

Peasant and Woman in Maoist Revolutionary Theory, 1920s–1950s

Tina Mai Chen

From the 1920s to the 1950s Mao Zedong articulated a complex and shifting relationship between class and gender. His conceptualization of "the peasant" and "woman" as figures of history as well as figures of historic possibility shaped the ways in which he theorized and implemented a revolutionary movement. A conjoining of class and gender was at the core of Maoist notions of who makes historical change and in what contexts. Because Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) made explicit their belief that gendered and class-based forms of exploitation in the feudal era had delimited China's socio-historical progress, revolutionary transformation rested upon the intertwined emergence of new forms of gender and class subjectivity.

As scholars of Maoism oft note, one of the major innovations of Maoism was the extension of the proletariat class to include the peasantry as agents of socio-historical transformation. Moreover, the explicit inclusion of women as historical subjects broadened the group that could potentially make revolution and bring about the future.[1] The inclusion of peasants and women as revolutionary actors reflected: one, a pragmatic assessment of China's situation in the first half of the twentieth century; two, ongoing socio-political engagements by Chinese intellectuals from the turn of the century with the "modern woman"; and, three, a theoretical position informed by a belief in "advantages of backwardness" for future progress. The linked projects of championing peasants and women as politically "present" furthermore rested upon multiple levels of historical relevance attributed to peasant and woman. Peasants and women simultaneously were the actors who would bring about social transformation, the bodies whose

oppression legitimated the need for transformation, and the future beings made possible by the transformation.

The revolution—in theory and practice—was entwined with a politics of claiming historical relevance for peasants and women. Maoism and general CCP discourse insisted that prior to encounters with the CCP and its socialist revolutionary movement, peasants and women occupied a status as "nobodies" located on the margins of history. This formulation of history and its subjects was not only about a politics of claiming women and peasants for a CCP-led socialist revolution, however. It was also about the political claims of Maoism and the CCP to represent "nobodies"; as well as the new forms of subjectivity and politics demanded when "nobodies" become the agents of history. In this chapter, I undertake to rethink "the peasant" as a category produced through the connected processes of theorizing who makes revolution and enacting particular forms of revolutionary politics. The result is a more explicit rendering of the ways in which "the peasant" in Maoism, even when embodied in male form, could not exist without its counterpart "woman." In making explicit the gendered basis of revolutionary liberation as related to "the peasant," I call for a shift in the theoretical and historical lens through which we understand peasant and gender history in China.

HAUNTED CATEGORIES: PEASANT AND WOMAN

Feminist scholars of modern China argue that the historical championing of any category of people (be it woman or peasant) rests upon a continuous making and remaking of the category and the people who inhabit it. This point brings to the forefront the politics of claiming the category and encourages us to interrogate how a movement comes to define its subject. Tani Barlow argues that to pursue such an analysis entails acknowledging the historicity of categories and emphasizing the temporal heterogeneity of the present.[2] Moreover, as Barlow continues, analyzing ubiquitous key terms such as "woman" or "peasant" as historical catachresis draws out the historical and theoretical work done by simple terms. In this chapter, I am particularly interested in how the universalized figure of peasant was haunted by the simultaneously articulated figure of woman, and what Barlow terms the "occulted quality" of these catachreses.[3]

Barlow uses the term "occulted quality" to draw out the ways in which key terms like peasant or woman are repositories of past meaning. Similar to Barlow's approach to *nüxing/funü*, we can reconsider "*nongmin*" (the peasant) in Maoism by working through an analytic framework attentive to apparitions

and haunting in the Marxist tradition. Jacques Derrida interprets Marx's reference to the "specter haunting Europe" in terms of two key concepts: time and simulacrum. Both prove important for thinking about the category of "the peasant" in Maoist theory because of the ways in which modalized presents structure the very meaning and universalized possibilities of "the peasant." For Derrida, the spectral moment is one that no longer belongs to time because it is not bound by predetermined progress from one moment to the next.[4] Rather, the spectral moment exists through the interaction of past present, actual present, "now," and future present. Bearing this in mind, the following analysis remains attentive to the dialectical tensions between multiple temporal moments inhabited by peasant and woman in Maoist theory.

HETEROGENEOUS TEMPORALITY AND COMPARABILITY

The focus on multiple temporality is not a point of merely academic interest. Rather, multiple temporality has political relevance for how we conceptualize the possibility for change. It highlights historic potentiality in the past, present, and future, a fact recognized by Li Dazhao.[5] Moreover, as Maurice Meisner reminds us, post-Maoist Marxist theory denies agency to peasants as a way of deflecting criticism of contradictions produced by the forms of capitalist modernization currently embraced by the Chinese state.[6] The silencing of alternative historical visions rests upon uncritical acceptance of, on one hand, a belief in linear progression of capitalism as modernization and, on the other hand, an understanding that Maoist modernization was a fixed progression through stages that ultimately was responsible for great human disasters. The focus in this chapter on heterogeneous temporality intervenes into the politics of writing history. It foregrounds the importance of historical contingency and dialectics for revolutionary transformation and the very existence of peasant and woman in Maoism as modern categories produced in, and through, the "present."

Certainly, Maoism was infused with a spirit of modernization and an acceptance of stages of development for historical progress as adapted from Chinese interpretations of social Darwinism and Marxist-Leninist historical periodization. Yet, to understand peasant and woman in Maoist China requires critical engagement with peasants or women as recognizable collectivities who exist simultaneously as oppressed beings, as liberating agents with emerging consciousness, and as fully formed embodiments of revolutionary transformation. These different modes of existence appear as a central motif in the intertwined personal and national narratives of the PRC. Most often they are understood as a linear progression from one stage

to the next. However, the Maoist investment in voluntarism and championing of the possibility for transformation rested upon modalized presents alongside a linear model of development. To focus on modalized presents, rather than the linear progression, returns contingency to the very categories of peasant and woman. It highlights their intertwined existence and powers of transformation—as well as the limits imposed as the liberating categories also functioned in the post-1949 period as legitimating categories for the CCP. Moreover, it draws out the theoretical implications for subjectivity of the theory of the advantages of backwardness, dialectical materialism, and Maoist politics of the "nobodies."

The combined articulation of woman and peasant as signifiers of feudal oppression *and* the "new woman" and "*nongmin*" of China emerges out of the political potentiality invested in the "untimely" of each (rather than in the presumed replacement of one by the other). By juxtaposing texts from the 1920s and 1950s this aspect of the shared articulation of "peasant" and "woman" in Maoism becomes evident. First, woman and peasant appear as the most recent instantiation of a historically situated emerging consciousness. That is, they are an evolving repetition of an existing category. Second, woman and peasant appear in each moment as the first iteration of a category of people whose realization has only just become possible because of new historic possibilities. As such they appear as vanguard elements through which the future will be realized. Third, woman and peasant appear as the dying vestiges of a past oppression. Because the demise of the old system is deemed imminent, woman and peasant in this form are presented as a final iteration. Importantly, however, while CCP discourse sought to locate particular bodies as first, final, or evolving iterations, the existence of all embodied forms of peasant and woman exists in reference to the other and as such they exist simultaneously at all levels of signification.

The ensuing comparative analysis of the temporal conditions of peasant and woman as agents of revolutionary change in the 1920s and 1950s also counters assertions that post-1949 Maoist references to "the feudal remnants of the past" or the use of a "feudal image" of woman and peasant functioned instrumentally as rhetorical flourishes to allow the past to serve the politics of the present. The comparative approach, as opposed to a genealogical approach that would trace the evolution of woman and peasant from the 1920s to the 1950s, highlights the centrality of particular tensions and sets of relations within Maoism regarding the role of the peasant.[7] The intention is not to excerpt Yan'an era writings from Maoist theory by moving directly from the 1920s to the 1950s, but to provide a new lens through which we understand two moments widely recognized for making explicit the political and theoretical stakes of "the peasant."

PEASANT MOVEMENTS, HISTORICAL TIME, AND GENDERED CONTEXTS, 1927/1955

Mao Zedong's 1927 essay, "Report on the Hunan Peasant Movement," generally receives credit as the earliest articulation of Mao's championing of the peasantry as revolutionary force. Standard textbooks and document collections present the essay as a definitive point in 1920s leftist views on the revolutionary potential of the rural population.[8] The context provided for Mao's 1927 essay typically mentions tensions over the direction of the CCP, the near annihilation in urban areas of the CCP after 1927, and the advent of Jiang Jieshi's (Chiang Kai-shek) White Terror. But what if we also locate the "Report on the Hunan Peasant Movement" within a frame of reference that includes Mao's early writings on women and gender, as well as other contemporaneously circulating works that had a role in the unfolding of Maoist theory and practice, such as Lu Xun's oeuvre, particularly the short story "*Zhufu*" (New Year's Sacrifice)?

Lu Xun's short stories capture the unevenness of modernity and its social contradictions, in part, through disjunctive temporalities.[9] For Lu Xun, the present appears paradoxically as fated to death because of the iron cages of the past, as well as holding within it the seeds of an alternative but perhaps not realizable future. The oft-quoted final lines of Lu Xun's 1918 "The Diary of a Madman," "Perhaps there are still children who have not eaten men? Save the children. . . ."[10] finds an echo in Mao's early writings. In "Miss Chao's Suicide" (1919),[11] Mao argues that the "three iron nets" (family, future husband's family, and society) prevented Miss Chao from being able to develop her individual free will. He called upon all to remember Miss Chao—in universalized (and gender inclusive) terms—as a martyr for free will in love. As a martyr she could "warn the other human beings who are not yet dead." For Mao, Miss Chao's historical relevance derived from recognition that her choice of death constituted a moment of historic possibility. Miss Chao could not live in a world where her ideas about love placed her beyond the iron nets of family and society. Notably, for Mao, Miss Chao's death was not an erasure of her existence by society. Nor was it a form of martyrdom akin to "China's New Women" who died while contributing through military efforts to the foundation of the PRC as nation-state. Rather, Miss Chao rose after death as a specter at the crossroads of death and life, and as a point of intersection for the past, present, and future. Mao, in this essay, presented historic possibility and contingency as inherent in oppressed women for whom living within the nets of oppression had elicited the sprouts of a gendered consciousness and the promise of *duli renge* (independent personhood).[12]

Eight years later when he penned the "Report on the Hunan Peasant Movement" (1927), Mao's understanding of independence had moved from the individual to the collective. He also encountered a different political situation and exuded greater optimism for change. Peasant action had, according to Mao, begun to open the iron nets of society in a more pronounced way than the nascent consciousness of a "Miss Chao." Yet even as Mao proclaimed that the peasants were striking down the enemies who battered their flesh, the historical relevance of peasants extolled by Mao in 1927 invoked a similar conceptualization to that expressed in "Miss Chao's Suicide" of historic possibility and its gendered forms. First, "Report on the Hunan Peasant Movement" is marked by a celebration of historic contingency that emerges when individuals and social formations perish at the very moment that new forms emerge. This moment of transformation was not only about the deaths of corrupt officials, landlords, or the Guomindang who had resisted the peasant associations. Historical transformation also rested upon the death and rebirth of the peasant and woman as a transformation of subjectivity. According to Mao, peasant associations as a "movement of the riffraff" were a historic formation produced by those "people with no place in society, people with no right to speak, [who] have now audaciously lifted up their heads." Moreover, the future present of the peasant association was one in which "the whole feudal-patriarchal system and ideology is tottering with the growth of the peasants' power."[13] It is the tension between being nobody and becoming somebody, simultaneously occupying the past present and future present, that rendered the peasant a historical force for change.

The differentiated political strategies assigned to the "now" present in which the peasant associations took action and the future present of the struggle against patriarchy, of course, had very real implications for women's liberation within the CCP and PRC. In 1927, Mao wrote that destroying the landlords and completing the economic struggles would take place first, and then would be followed by attacks on religion and patriarchy. He thus put forth a political strategy that prioritized certain struggles over others. At the same time, Mao's remarks about patriarchy as the "fourth" system of inequality were not merely passing commentary for future consideration. The modalized presents that underpinned Mao's very understanding of socio-historical transformation rendered economic and gender struggles layered projects rather than successive ones. As such, Mao's explicit recognition of the system of oppression as feudal-patriarchal demanded that the universalized (future) peasant could exist only at the historic moments and in the spaces where the iron cages of gender inequality were also being opened up.

Moreover, the "untimely" haunting of the present by alternative gender relations "prior to" the present contributed to the constitution of the categories of

people who would bring about the future. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Maoist voluntarism often invoked the advantages of backwardness. Many scholars tend to see this as a pragmatic political strategy that enabled Mao to apply Marxism-Leninism to China.[14] However, as Mao's "Report on the Hunan Peasant Movement" indicates, for Mao historic possibility rested upon the coexistence of differently gendered past, present, and future. This point helps make sense of why, when Mao makes one of his most important theoretical points, namely that the peasants themselves will complete the historic work of bringing down the old, the point is articulated via questions of gender relations. The paragraph begins by talking about the blurred edges of patriarchy among the poor peasants[15] and concludes with the destruction of temples to the martyred virgins and the arches to the chaste and faithful widows as the actions that will demonstrate the full consciousness of the peasant.

Mao's 1927 "Report on the Hunan Peasant Movement" certainly emerged out of a different historic moment than "Miss Chao's Suicide." Yet as the above cited passage makes clear, both make strong historical and theoretical claims for woman and peasant as agents of historical transformation. In each case, and this is the oft-overlooked point, the very existence of woman and peasant depends upon the productive tension between past, present, and future iterations of the conjoined categories. The Maoist insistence that transformation of the subjective world was the decisive factor in the transformation of the objective world[16] thus needs to place writings on the peasant alongside those that engage questions of subjective transformation in different registers. These include writings on woman as well as the "riffraff" or historical "nobodies."

In 1927, when Mao Zedong remarked that the peasants might also address the patriarchal structure of feudalism, he drew upon the legacy of the May Fourth and New Culture Movements in which various forms of gendered representational politics and temporal modalities informed Chinese intellectuals' engagement with socialist ideas.[17] The grammatical parallelism of the statement that aligned patriarchal ideas and institutions with local tyrants, evil gentry, corrupt officials, and bad practices and customs, on one hand, supports the conclusions offered by scholars of gender in twentieth-century China who emphasize a conflation of gender and class in Chinese socialist revolutionary theory and practice. On the other hand, the mutual articulation of class and gender liberation was premised upon a particular form of dialectics and transformative politics that rendered both dynamic sources of social revolution.

When Mao returned to the theme of peasant political activism in 1955, he once again drew upon a gendered imagery of feudalism when he addressed class struggle as the mode of historical progress. References to "tottering" women with bound feet who were "constantly complaining 'You're going too fast'" proved rhetorically powerful for Mao Zedong as a means to dismiss

the predominantly male leaders who opposed implementation of his policies on agricultural cooperation in 1955.[18] Mao utilized as shorthand for feudal elites and feudalism, a negative effeminacy embodied by feudal women. This positioned them in the "past present." The rhetorical reference was an effort to render oppositional voices historically irrelevant by placing them in a temporal moment that would be overcome by the future. Maoist representations of feudal women drew upon a longer history of representation of feudal women since the turn of the twentieth century that had rendered these women products of a socio-political system doomed to decline and failure.[19] Their bound feet signified the violence of oppression, historical silencing, and irrelevance to modernity. These women had no voice; but in Maoism their bodies "spoke" as the "past present" of transformation. In the process they acquired historic relevance in a temporal dialectics of death/life/birth that produced the categories of peasant and woman.

The rhetorical appearance of feudal women in Mao's 1955 "On Agricultural Cooperation" functioned politically to de-legitimate leaders within the CCP who opposed Mao. Because these leaders sought to control the pace of agricultural cooperative formation and continued to uphold a position in which socialization of the peasantry presupposed urban industrialization, Mao insisted that they stood in the way of "the people" and outside history. It was not so easy, however, to banish these elements within the party to the past and to embrace a linear temporal framework. The difficulty arose not only because of competing political factions but, as evidenced by the gendered rhetoric through which Mao delineated his position, because historic possibility for the peasant emerged out of the "untimely." As such, the past/present/future coexisted as modalized presents within "On Agricultural Cooperation" just as it did in "On the Hunan Peasant Movement." Modalized presents and the dialectics of struggle were what made change possible, even if Mao sought to lead the transformation in a particular direction. Because peasant and woman existed as occulted categories, neither peasant nor woman could exist independently of the other, nor be contained to past, present, or future. Rather, the historic possibility of any given moment and group of people depended upon the evolving iterations of the categories such that the haunting forms of the past remained "present."

NEW FORMS OF SUBJECTIVITY AND POLITICS: FROM AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES TO *DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER*

Analyzed through the lens of the untimely of woman and peasant, the evocative gendered rhetoric with which Mao began "On Agricultural Cooperation"

appears as much more than rhetorical flourish. Rather, it demonstrates the inseparability of the historic possibility of peasant from that of woman. [20] "On Agricultural Cooperation" not only produced a full endorsement of Mao's rural policy; it also promoted an alliance between CCP and peasants premised upon active leadership of the peasants in the transition to socialism. The historic possibility invested in the peasant in 1955 benefits by cross-referencing this essay with other mid-1950s texts preoccupied with transformations of subjectivity, gendered ghosts, and temporal conditions productive of revolutionary change.[21] Moreover, it also returns us to the important intersection noted in Mao's 1927 "On the Hunan Peasant Movement" between the subject of a movement and the mode of politics it demanded. In each case, the transformation of subjectivity of the "nobodies" and the CCP's claim to represent these nobodies occupies a central position. That is, in addition to prioritizing Mao's rural policy, as Maurice Meisner notes, "On Agricultural Cooperation" signaled a new era in CCP politics. Mao sidestepped the Central Committee and the leadership's emerging consensus for gradual and controlled expansion of the number of cooperatives.[22] When Mao delivered this speech to the provincial and regional Party secretaries, Mao located revolutionary political energy in the countryside and insisted that the peasants were to be the judges of the revolutionary sufficiency of the Party. Notably, this was not the only text in the mid-1950s in which Mao addressed the political voice of "the nobodies."

The gendering of feudal ideas and relations as past present, and the championing of the political voices of "nobodies" found in "On Agricultural Cooperation" echoed the sentiments expressed in Mao's 1954 "Letter on *Hongloumeng* Criticism."[23] This short letter, at first glance, seems distant from Maoist rural policy and theorizing of the peasant. After all, the letter was directed at bourgeois idealism within the field of literary studies, particularly the interpretations by Yu Pingbo and Hu Shi of the Qing-era novel, *Hongloumeng* (Dream of the Red Chamber). Yet, recognizing shared preoccupations in both texts and accompanying political campaigns highlights the embedded gendered positions and productive "clash" of temporalities through which Mao understood class struggle.

As discussed above, Mao insisted in 1919 that Miss Chao's suicide was an embodied form of martyred political potentiality, in 1927 that peasant associations were the basis of social transformation, and in 1955 that agricultural cooperatives consolidated the historic possibility of transformed peasant subjectivity. In the 1954 "Letter on *Hongloumeng* Criticism," Mao extolled youth and students as those whose distance from established power rendered them embodiments of revolutionary change. While not classic examples of the advantages of backwardness, a theory usually grounded on the bodies of

women and peasants, the two students whose voices Mao championed in the "Letter" acquired historic relevance based on a similar logic. Mao's 1954 letter—and the controversy that became known as the *Wenyi bao* Affair—reveals that Mao's interest in *Hongloumeng* criticism was linked to questions of revolutionary authority, political reliability of the "inner circle," and sublimation of gendered cultural referents into newly articulated class categories.[24]

In the short letter addressed primarily to the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CCP, Mao wrote:

> The whole thing has been set in motion by two "nobodies." As for the "big shots," they usually ignore things or even obstruct them, and they negotiate a united front with bourgeois writers on the basis of idealism and are willing captives of the bourgeoisie. This is almost the same situation as when the films *Qing gong mishi* [Inside story of the Qing court] and *Wu Xun zhuan* [The life of Wu Xun] were shown. . . . We have the strange situation in which Yu Pingbo's idealism is tolerated, and lively, critical essays by "nobodies" are obstructed. This deserves our attention.[25]

The subsequent "attention" led to the publication of self-criticism by Yu Pingbo and *Wenyi bao* editor-in-chief, Feng Xuefeng, the removal of Feng from his post, and a campaign against Hu Feng after he criticized the "sectarian-oriented control of the CCP" over literary work, particularly the role played in this controversy by Zhou Yang and Yuan Shuipai.[26]

In this instance, the championing of criticism from "nobodies" as a means to launch a campaign constituted both a political maneuver as well as a theoretical position. Both were based on Mao's suspicion of establishment intellectuals or bureaucrats and his belief in the ongoing nature of class struggle within socialist society. The marginalization of established power in the name of youth and peasants who embodied untainted revolutionary commitment underpinned Mao's comments on the seemingly narrower debate over interpretations of *Hongloumeng*.[27] This mode of politics informed his advocacy of peasant revolutionary potential since 1927. It is this consistent effort to ensure a political legitimacy and historical relevance to voices "on the margins" that brings together diverse texts that Mao produced for different segments of society. It is also what makes the historic possibility of women, peasant, and now also students inseparable in Maoist theory and praxis. Importantly, as discussed at the outset of this chapter, historic relevance entailed disrupting the temporal conditions of subjectivity that located certain people *a priori* outside historic time, or in the early stages of their incorporation into history. Mao's approach to transforming peasants, woman, and youth into political actors was not simply to substitute one group for another. Rather the radical politics of Maoism entailed recognition of the co-temporality of peasant,

women, and youth with established political leaders associated alternately with feudal, bourgeois, and/or CCP power. This then rendered as generative *modus operandi* the dialectical struggles between these groups and the modalized presents occupied by different forms of their bodies.

Mao promoted a vision of revolutionary progress premised upon subjective and social transformation in which peasant and woman came into being through struggle and constant reiteration of their multiple forms. The oppressed body of feudal woman and peasant, therefore, was constitutive of *funü* and *nongmin*. The consensus since the turn of the twentieth century that feudal female bodies belonged in the past made this body an essential part of Maoist discourse.[28] On one hand, the feudal female body could prove useful rhetorically to "banish" others to the past and then "use the past to serve the present."[29] On the other hand, however, such an instrumentalist understanding fails to address how the female body as shorthand for feudalism as class system ensured that woman's historic potentiality was always "present" in the bodies of oppressed women as well as their counterpart, the new woman. The point I am developing is that Maoist references to feudal women may appear to be another instance in which a male leader mobilized the imagery of women's oppression to serve political projects divested of any feminist goals. Yet, regardless of what one concludes regarding the variant of feminism articulated by Mao Zedong, the transformation of women's subjectivity could not be delinked from the transformation of peasant subjectivity, nor by the mid-1950s that of youth/students. As such, the untimely haunting by women of Mao's writings against bourgeois idealism and in favor of agricultural cooperatives also invests these struggles with the dual objectives of class and gender liberation.

Even though Mao, in the 1954 "Letter on *Hongloumeng* Criticism," did not explicitly refer to the content of *Hongloumeng* or specific characters within the story, the mere mention of the story ensured that the gendered characters representative of feudal China instantly became references through which contemporary political campaigns were understood. The ways in which class struggle was premised, for Mao, upon productive clashes produced by the untimely of haunting specters becomes evident when we think about how *Hongloumeng* criticism in the mid-1950s cross-fertilized the articulation of peasant revolutionary potential.[30] Moreover, by focusing on how historic potentiality was conceptualized we can also begin to appreciate that the outcomes of this conjoined struggle were never predetermined. Rather it was a constant political process that simultaneously celebrated and disciplined the "untimeliness" of woman and peasant as figures of historic possibility. As such, we need to bring into conversation the celebration of agricultural cooperatives and achievements of woman as workers that appeared in 1955[31] with

the dialectics of "death" and emergence of the peasant and woman as collective categories. As will be developed below, the forms of death and birth of woman and peasant differed from the 1920s to the 1950s, but the structure of Maoist logic and politics that interlocked the categories and their radical potential remained consistent. This entailed the claiming of historical relevance for these presumed "nobodies" and foregrounding subjective transformation at the individual and collective levels as essential to any program of social transformation.

BUDDHIST SPECTERS AND THE PEASANT OF MAOIST THEORY: *HONGLOUMENG'S* BAOYU AND *ZHUFU'S* XIANGLIN'S WIFE

It is not mere coincidence that in the mid-1950s as Mao advocated renewed energy for a peasant revolution and proclaimed the completion of the liberation of women, the political voice of nobodies reverberated not only in the campaign against Hu Feng but also in the new visual representation of Lu Xun's *Zhufu* (New Year's Sacrifice). The 1956 state-produced filmic adaptation of Lu Xun's 1924 short story functions as part of a set of conjoined texts from the 1920s and 1950s in which Mao worked through the meaning of peasant and woman, revolutionary and subjective transformation, and the demands of particular historic moments. The film, along with *Hongloumeng*, is instructive as a means to distinguish the dialectic mode of historic potentiality advocated by Mao from Buddhist and Daoist cycles of birth, death, and rebirth that appeared in the original text.

Both the new studies of *Hongloumeng* (known as "*Xin Hong xue*") of the 1920s associated with Hu Feng and Hu Shi that focused on Cao's critique of the degeneration of feudal families and Lu Xun's original short story provided a poignant critique of feudal patriarchy by richly describing its human costs. These 1920s critiques operated largely through individualistic frameworks, but one can identify within them alternative political possibilities.[32] That is, as Mao's 1920s writings implicitly suggested and as he made increasingly explicit by the 1950s, one could read *Hongloumeng* or *Zhufu* for seeds of class-consciousness appropriate to a particular historic moment. For *Hong xue,* then, the 1950s emphasis was to study *Hongloumeng* as commentary on the social depravity and corruptness of the feudal elite that, through its use of the vernacular, was a product of "the people" projected back into history. In terms of Lu Xun, Marxist critics read *Zhufu* as allegory for the failure of a Chinese Enlightenment and an argument for class struggle as the means to achieve human emancipation. Beyond the realm of literary criticism, I suggest that the ambiguity of death and despair characteristic of Lu Xun's works

folded into a radical dialectics that was central to the making of peasant and woman as historical subjects.

With the founding of the PRC, and certainly by the mid-1950s, Mao sought to develop a legacy of Lu Xun that prioritized the moment of becoming occasioned by newly formed consciousness, revolutionary rupture, and collectivism. In the 1920s, Lu Xun's critical realism had played an important role in subjective transformation because of the emotionally driven responses it elicited for class struggle against patriarchal feudalism, embodied by landlords. Yet by the mid-1950s following the implementation of Land Reform and the Marriage Law (albeit in truncated fashion), conditions shifted and the narrative of "standing up" was already well entrenched in the discourse of the PRC. The time had come, as Mao projected in 1927, for attacks on religion as well. What remains to be analyzed, however, is why these attacks found expression alongside the championing of the revolutionary agency of peasants, renewed calls for class struggle, and a celebration of women's accomplishments.[33]

For Mao, even when peasant as a collective category was projected back into history, the existence of peasant and woman depended upon their constant refinement and struggle. As such, he privileged the nexus at which modalized presents existed in creative tension and produced the political subjectivities necessary for a new society. This does not mean that the past present, now present, and future present remained fixed. These, too, were dynamic. As the material conditions of class and gender oppression were addressed in the post-1949 period, the socio-cultural dimensions of feudalism, namely religion and superstition, became the primary elements associated with the feudal body. The existence of the peasant of Mao's agriculture cooperatives thus emerged through dialectical struggle with the female embodiment of presocialist practices, as well as the subjects of the political project that included women and peasants.

These theoretical points suggest a different approach to understanding Lu Xun's works and *Hongloumeng* criticism in the 1950s, and to the importance of a comparative analysis with the 1920s. Specifically, reading the 1956 filmic adaptation of *Zhufu* in terms of feudal woman as untimely specter constitutive of radical dialectics only makes sense when the gendered rhetoric of "On Agricultural Cooperation," the "Letter on *Hongloumeng* Criticism," and the film are considered as linked texts preoccupied with key theoretical questions. These texts need to be read for the ways they worked out new forms of subjectivity and politics required by a political project premised upon claiming historic relevance for peasants and woman. Otherwise, the filmic adaptation appears simplistically as the placing into the past of feudal woman, an interpretation I argue that fails to grapple with the modalized presents that

conjoined peasant and woman to radical historical contingency. This point then takes us back to the 1920s.

In order to consider how the protagonist of *Zhufu*, Xianglin's Wife, shifts our understanding of the peasant in Maoism, it is useful momentarily to engage Lydia Liu's recent analysis of Lu Xun's short story.[34] Liu situates the questions within *Zhufu* regarding the soul posed to the narrator by Xianglin's Wife within the debates on Science and Metaphysics (1923–1924). Citing Marston Anderson, Liu remarks upon the ironic stance of the narrator within a student-teacher relationship such that "the realist narrative, by imitating at a formal level the relations of oppressor to oppressed, is captive to the logic of that oppression and ends by merely reproducing it."[35] Second, Liu draws attention to the ways in which Marxist and postcolonial readings of *Zhufu* are based upon the assumption that Xianglin's Wife is superstitious and therefore her questions regarding the existence of a soul are not taken seriously. Third, Liu proposes that the primary literary prototype for Xianglin's Wife is a Brahmin woman Bhiksuni Suksma, a woman featured in the Buddhist *Sutra of the Wise and Foolish* who is visited by a set of calamities including the death of her first husband and her infant son being eaten by wolves. This suffering woman, as one of Buddha's primary disciples, then repeats her story to enlighten mankind. Fourth, by foregrounding this Buddhist connection and refusing to dismiss the questions posed to the narrator by Xianglin's Wife, Liu argues that *Zhufu* "places the problem of life at the threshold of biomimesis, where the rational mind—that of the narrator, author, or reader—is continually framed and contaminated by invisible or occulted knowledge (from elsewhere) such as life is always foreshadowed by death. Herein lies the ultimate challenge to life as form."[36] From this Liu argues that Lu Xun did not maintain silence during the Science and Metaphysics Debate (1923–1924) and that *Zhufu* was Lu Xun's contribution to the debate.

Liu provides a compelling historically situated reading of *Zhufu* that develops out of the structure and themes of the short story. By linking this story to the Science and Metaphysics debate, Liu exposes the complicity of reader and narrator when operating in the mode of Marxist analysis to silence the querying oppressed woman. She asks us to consider how *Zhufu* spoke to the raging attack in the early 1920s on "metaphysical ghosts." This then brings this text into the broader relation between scientism, socialism, and romanticism in China. For the purpose of this chapter, Liu's analysis proves productive because she draws out the ways in which the threshold of death and life operates as ambiguous and provocative space in *Zhufu* both within the literary text and within the framework of debates that came to inform the sinification of Marxism.

I am interested in the historical relevance accorded to Xianglin's Wife in the 1920s and 1950s, and the logic that folded her into Maoist articulation of

the peasant and woman as categories of historic possibility. Along these lines, it is not sufficient simply to note Xianglin's Wife's location at the threshold of life and death. The issue becomes how she haunts, in the sense of the untimely specter, humanity itself. This returns us to the point with which this chapter began: specifically that the historic relevance of woman and peasant depended on an intertwined understanding of their simultaneous existence as oppressed being, revolutionary actors, and creations of social transformation. They were, in short, signifiers of the death of humanity (as Marxist critics have read *Zhufu*) and arrival of a new humanity.

The Maoist understanding of humanity, moreover, was coded through the 1920s debates on science and metaphysics. According to scholar Wang Hui, one of the results of the 1923 debate was that "by borrowing certain categories, methodologies, and forms of training, they [the community of scientists in China] asserted that humanity could understand the world, which included themselves in it; humanity thus became part of the objective world."[37] Given the common themes in Mao's early writing on peasants and women, as well as the ways in which the 1923 debate became part of Party history and historiography, we can also understand Mao's 1927 essay as a call for inclusion of peasants and women within the objective world of humanity. Such an inclusion necessitated more than an expansion of the category of humanity, but a radical rethinking of humanity and its temporal conditions in which the inhumanity of earlier oppression is what legitimated and produced the peasant and woman as newly emerged historical actors. This point returns us to the conditions of emergence of the categories that made up humanity—namely peasant and woman—and that were rooted in modalized presents and radical dialectics.

Foregrounding the conditions of historic possibility for the peasant and woman that Mao expressed entails distinguishing Mao's radical dialectics from other cycles of birth, death, and rebirth. Liu's analysis of the short story *Zhufu* suggests points of convergence with *Hongloumeng* as a contemporaneously circulating literary work in both the 1920s and 1950s. Both texts contemplated existential questions of form through Buddhist and Daoist concepts, even as they were understood as important condemnations in the vernacular of feudal tyranny. For *Hongloumeng*, the title metaphorically refers to desire for the material world and its benefits; the mysterious monks are messengers from beyond; and the old servant who appears at the beginning of the novel reappears at the end as prophet.[38] The ambivalence expressed by the narrator of Lu Xun's *Zhufu* toward the existence or non-existence of ghosts and demons is echoed in *Hongloumeng*'s use of Buddhist salvation as the prize for renouncing "worldly effeminacy" embraced by Baoyu.[39] In what manner, then, did women (or the effeminate Baoyu) who sought deliverance from oppression through Buddhism assume almost supernatural stature as

figures of the pre-socialist past that haunted mid-1950s China and developments within Maoism?

The targeting of "backward" ideas and practices including religion were a recurrent theme in Maoist China. Generally, however, this aspect of the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution tends to be discussed as the result of factional struggles, purges, or irrationality. The frequent references to "ghosts and demons" are seen as hyperbolic political rhetoric aimed at countering superstition in instrumentalist fashion.[40] But, if we locate this political rhetoric within the project of making peasant and woman as subjects of a political movement, we can see how locating ghosts and demons in the past present was about subjective transformation that would render woman and peasant the now/future present. It was also about ensuring the radical evolution of the categories themselves, and their continuous mutual articulation.[41]

This happened at two intertwined levels: first, disarticulation of the collective category of peasant and woman from its individualized and oppressed historical predecessors; second, radical reconceptualization of political power so that emergent peasant forces, akin to those of 1927, were the wave of the future and constituted a new form of politics. This occurred by making explicit the different forms peasants and woman occupied. On one hand, the death of superstitious beings, in a similar fashion to Miss Chao, acted as an alarm for the future. On the other hand, the death of feminized political opponents as called for in the opening lines of "On Agricultural Cooperation" reconfigured who occupied the political arena in favor of the "nobodies." By the mid-1950s, moments of death were still a necessary part of the present because of the political potentiality inherent in these moments; but the attitudes, economic formations, and subjectivities slotted for death had changed. The rising political voice of the "nobodies" Mao stressed in the 1950s sounded the familiar themes of voluntarism, peasant agency, and social transformation, yet also recognized the figures of peasant and woman already generated through this process.

The simultaneous recognition of the existence of woman and peasant as new political subjectivities and an assertion that these categories needed to be made cannot be separated from the temporal conditions Mao identified as essential for historic potentiality. The interpretation of *Hongloumeng* as the vernacular of a peasant "class-in-the-making" reminds us of this point. Moreover, this dynamic is clearly evident in the 1956 Beijing Film Studio color film adaptation of Lu Xun's *Zhufu* (dir. Sang Hu, script by Xia Yan). This film appeared in the context of the Hundred Flowers movement and the March 1956 termination of centralized control of screenplay production. Zhang Yingjin identifies the return of May Fourth Literature like Lu Xun's *Zhufu* to the screen as one result of this policy.[42] The decentralization of

scripts, script continuities, and synopsis certainly allowed for a broader range of films and a marked increase in PRC film production. Yet, when one examines the functioning of class and gender in *Zhufu* their appearance seems less a reflection of the Hundred Flowers Campaign *per se* and more an artistic contribution to revolutionary theory premised upon rural socialist transformation, creation of a gendered peasant class and "the people," and reassertion of the Maoist line in party and national history.

Unlike Lu Xun's story that begins with the narrator and his unsettling encounter with Xianglin's Wife as Buddhist "ghost," the film script opts for a conventional chronological narrative that follows Xianglin's Wife from one calamity to the next. It is only at the end of the film that Xianglin's Wife, reduced to the state of a beggar invisible to those around her, asks into the swirling snow and gusting wind: "Tell me, does an individual have a soul after death?" The forces of nature swallow up her voice almost before she finishes uttering the sentence, and she does not expect a reply as she staggers to her death on the threshold she donated in the belief this would cleanse her sins. Against the swirling snow, the staggering then inert body of Xianglin's Wife, the film concludes with an off-screen male voice-over stating, in a kind but authoritatively distant voice:

> Xianglin's wife is an industrious and kind person. She died after enduring much suffering and insults. This is something that happened over forty years ago. Yes, this is something belonging to the past. We should rejoice that such things have become part of the past and that they will never again happen in the present or future.

The filmic narrative provides authoritative closure to the story of Xianglin's Wife such that the viewer can only read Xianglin's Wife as representative of feudal oppression and its erasure by the forces of history. The film refuses the unsettling dimensions that allow Lydia Liu to read Lu Xun's short story in relation to questions of life form, alternate authorities for knowledge, and Buddhist prototypes. Rather the film participates in "drawing clear lines of demarcation" to control the haunting of the present by "ghosts." Xia Yan explained that having Xianglin's Wife mutter the question about the existence of a soul to empty space at the end of the film (rather than at the beginning as in the short story) was a device to ease audience comprehension. The same logic justified, for Xia Yan, the use of an off-screen (male) narrator to conclude the film.[43]

The audience comprehension to which Xia Yan referred can be understood as audience education concerning the prehistory and preconditions for production of a historically relevant "the people." The existence of individualized suffering embodied by Xianglin's Wife, as well as feudalism and its

supporting superstitions, are firmly located in another historical moment. *Zhufu* as film, therefore, provides closure on one era in order to open up the socialist present and future. But it is not an erasure of the moment. It is an attempt to tame the untimely, while also embracing its productive tensions. The oppositional temporality of the narrator's comments and his general summation of Xianglin's Wife's life as "full of suffering and insults" invites the audience to revisit these sufferings and insults as portrayed in the film, place them alongside one another in "the past" and then imagine the present/future as the historic potential of men and women freed from these conditions.

This construction of historical moments and socio-economic trajectories makes explicit the ways in which comments on patriarchy, policy on agricultural cooperation, literary criticism, and socialist theory were mutually articulated and mediated through each other. The taming of the past was critical for the subjective transformation Mao championed. But it was not a form of discounting or forgetting; rather the past embodied by Xianglin's Wife appeared as untimely specter. It thus functioned to remind all that the categories of the present and future—the peasant and woman—had to be imagined, created, and brought into being. Even though a female body associated with feudal ideas and elite practices provided the visual reference for discounting those who resisted full-scale formation of agricultural cooperatives, we thus cannot simply conclude that all female bodies were relegated to the past. When in 1955 (much like in 1927) Mao admonished those who lagged behind the mass movement, he had already imagined a new class that exemplified the future—and whose existence was intimately tied to the revolutionary potential of the peasant and woman, and the willingness of the CCP to take inspiration from this revolutionary potential.

CONCLUSION

As Meisner and others have noted, Mao's insistence on allying the political goals of the Party with the Chinese peasants constituted one of the most significant innovations for Marxist revolutionary theory. As this chapter has explored in different valences, peasants' suffering, backwardness, and death proved useful for mobilizing productive energies as well as in the realm of ideological struggle and representational politics. Rey Chow remarks: "the Chinese Communist Party seized upon peasant backwardness and let it 'sing.' . . . [T]he peasants' naiveté, poverty, deprivation, and hopelessness become tools of party propaganda and the backbone of party power."[44] We could, of course, supplement this with the death moan of feudal woman and its counterpart the "singing" of liberated women. But, as this chapter has argued, if we are fully to appreciate the gendering of the peasant as a revolutionary

category, it is not a question of adding women to the list of those to be liberated by the CCP and Maoism or whose oppression legitimated the political movement of the CCP. Rather, it entails an appreciation of the ways in which women in different guises and social positions haunted the very formation of peasant as a category. Recognizing this allows us to see the intimate connections between the politics of claiming historic relevance for peasant and woman, and the political claims of "the nobodies" who would lead history.

By approaching peasant and woman as constituted through a series of texts in conversation across time and political campaigns, we can rethink "the peasant" and its relationship to "woman" in terms of a politics of embodied transformation, and a gendered haunting constitutive of "the peasant" in Maoism. Engendering "the peasant class" from its inception was integral to the claims made for the revolutionary potential of the class, and its attendant theoretical interventions in Marxism-Leninism. We thus need to supplement the excellent scholarly work that has interrogated what the conjoining of class and gender did to the category of woman in China with serious inquiries into what this meant for "the peasant" as revolutionary category. Moreover, because the transformations enacted through and by peasant and woman as conjoined categories rest upon historic contingency, we are reminded that there was no predetermined or necessary relationship between woman and class within Maoism. There was a practice that evolved and had consequences for the lives of millions of peasants and women, and for which Mao as the leader of the PRC from 1949 to 1976 bears responsibility. At the same time, Maoist theory sought to imagine a world in which the collective forces of men and women, peasants and workers, were continuously reiterated. This point is one that is worth remembering in an era when the radical politics of the untimely and historic contingency is too often relegated to the past in the name of a present and future in which alternative projects for class and gender liberation are themselves denied historical relevance.

NOTES

* My thanks to Rebecca Karl and Tani Barlow for feedback on an earlier version of this chapter, as well as to all the participants in the June 2009 conference at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

1. Tina Mai Chen, "Female Icons, Feminist Iconography? Socialist Rhetoric and Women's Agency in 1950s China," *Gender and History*, vol. 15, no. 2 (August 2003), pp. 268–95.

2. Tani E. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), chapter 1.

3. Barlow, p. 34.

4. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx, The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, Peggy Kamuf, trans. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 11.

5. Shu-chin Wu, "Time and Marxism in China: The Case of Li Dazhao," paper presented at the conference, "June 4, The Twentieth Anniversary: Reflections on History and Contemporary Change in China Before and After Tiananmen," Madison, Wisc., 4–7 June, 2009.

6. Maurice Meisner, *Marxism, Maoism, and Utopianism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), pp. 225–227.

7. Harry Harootunian, "Some Thoughts on Comparability and the Space-Time Problem," *boundary 2,* vol. 32, no. 2 (2005), pp. 23–52.

8. http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/china/modern/rev_stu.htm (accessed 23 April 2010).

9. Lu Xun's place in the canon of the People's Republic of China has been the subject of much attention. See the introduction by Julia Lovell to a recent translation of Lu Xun's works that focuses on Mao's "commandeering" of Lu Xun for the revolution. Julia Lovell, *The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun* (forthcoming). Also, "Rang Lu Xun de wenben ziji shuohua—Zhang Xudong fangtan li" [Let Lu Xun's writings speak for themselves—an interview with Zhang Xudong], *Wenyi yanjiu*, no. 4, (2009).

10. Lu Xun, *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*, William Lyell, trans. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press: 1990), p. 41.

11. Mao Zedong, "Miss Chao's Suicide," http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/1919/miss-chao.htm (accessed 1 November, 2009). Also see Roxanne Witke, " Mao Tse-tung, Women and Suicide in the May Fourth Era," *The China Quarterly,* no. 31 (July–Sepember, 1967), pp. 128–147; Rebecca Karl, "Journalism, Social Value, and a Philosophy of the Everyday in 1920s China," *positions: east asia cultures critique*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2008), pp. 539–66.

12. On feminism and *duli renge* in May Fourth discourse, see Wang Zheng, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

13. Mao Tse-tung, "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," *Selected Works*, vol. I (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), pp. 44–46.

14. Maurice Meisner, *Mao Zedong: A Political and Intellectual Portrait* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); Nick Knight, *Rethinking Mao: Explorations in Mao Zedong's Thought* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007).

15. "As to the authority of the husband, this has always been weaker among the poor peasants because, out of economic necessity, their womenfolk have to do more manual labour than the women of the richer classes and therefore have more say and greater power of decision in family matters. With the increasing bankruptcy of the rural economy in recent years, the basis for men's domination over women has already been weakened. With the rise of the peasant movement, the women in many places have now begun to organize rural women's associations; the opportunity has come for them to lift up their heads, and the authority of the husband is getting shakier every day" (Mao Tse-tung, "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," pp. 45–46).

16. Maurice Meisner, “Utopian and Dystopian Elements in the Maoist Vision of the Future,” *Marxism, Maoism, and Utopianism*, p. 198.

17. On time in the thinking of Li Dazhao, also see Claudia Pozzana, “Spring, Temporality, and History in Li Dazhao,” *positions: east asia cultures critique*, vol. 3, no. 2 (fall 1995), pp. 283–305.

18. Mao Tse-tung, “On the Question of Agricultural Co-operation” [31 July, 1955], *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1971), p. 389.

19. On feudal woman in Maoist discourse, see Gail Hershatter, “The Gender of Memory: Rural Chinese Women and the 1950s,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* vol. 28, no. 1 (2002), pp. 43–70.

20. On the practices associated with the conjoining of woman and peasant in the revolutionary imagination see, for instance, Gao Xiaoxian, “‘The Silver Flower Contest’: Rural Women in 1950s China and the Gendered Division of Labour,” *Gender and History*, vol. 1, no. 3 (2006), pp. 594–612. Gao contextualizes the cotton production contests in Shaanxi going from “the goal of industrialization [as] intimately connected to agricultural development” to explaining the dual measures of controlling the supply of cotton and raising cotton production. While I find Gao’s analysis of the gendered dynamics of the “Silver Flower Contest” to be superbly nuanced, the article is also symptomatic of the ways in which contesting theories of economic production and political roles for peasant class have been overlooked in gender history.

21. Late 1955 through early 1956 marked a turning point for the status of peasants. With agricultural cooperatives, distinctions between peasants and workers were partially collapsed. This was a practical issue of Party membership, advanced in part by Deng Xiaoping in 1956, with the relaxation of the selection procedure for non-workers in the new Party Constitution. It was also a theoretical issue as the category of “proletariat” was redefined based on commitment to socialist revolution and the CCP, and on participation in production under (state) collective control. Membership in the “working class” no longer was contingent upon prior achievement of a certain minimum level of (urban) industrialization. Stuart Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-tung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 118–22.

22. Maurice Meisner, *Mao’s China and After* (New York: Free Press, 1999), p. 149.

23. The context of Mao’s letter included the publication in 1952 of Yu Pingbo’s “Research on *Dream of the Red Chamber*” [*Hongloumeng yanjiu*]. In 1954 Li Xifan and Lan Ling, two young graduates of Shandong University, criticized Yu’s book for using a bourgeois idealist perspective and bourgeois methods of textual analysis. Mao praised Li and Lan as “the first serious fire in over thirty years of erroneous views of a so-called authoritative figure in the study of *A Dream of the Red Chamber*.” See Henry Yuhuai He, *Dictionary of the Political Thought of the People’s Republic of China* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), p. 298.

24. On the issue of the sublime and aesthetics in *Hongloumeng*, see Wang Ban’s analysis of Wang Guowei’s essay “A Critique of *Dream of the Red Chamber*,” in Ban Wang, *The Sublime Figure of History, Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 27–34.

25. Mao Zedong, "Letter on the Problem of *Hongloumeng yanjiu*," in Michael Y. M. Kau and John K. Leung, eds., *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1986), p. 483.

26. For an excellent study of Hu Feng and his challenges to CCP bureaucratic and political control of writers and literary production, including the Anti–Hu Feng Campaign of 1955, as linked to tensions around Chinese modernity and the discourse of collectivism see Kirk A. Denton, *The Problematic of Self in Modern Chinese Literature: Hu Feng and Lu Ling* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

27. Criticism of *Hongloumeng* was summarized in Mao Zedong, "Letter on the Problem of *Hongloumeng yanjiu* (16 October 1954)," in Kau and Leung, pp. 481–85.

28. See Louise Edwards, *Men and Women in Qing China: Gender in the Red Chamber Dream* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 1994), p. 3.

29. For a less instrumentalist analysis of Mao's phrase "Use the past to serve the present," see Tina Mai Chen, "Use the past for the present; the foreign to serve China (古为今用, 洋为中用)," in Ban Wang, ed., *Words and Their Stories: Essays on the Language of the Chinese Revolution* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 205–226. During the Great Leap Forward period (1958–1961), the phrase "Use the past to serve the present" was at the center of debates that conjoined philosophical concerns regarding materialism and idealism to political campaigns that sought to create revolutionary subjects as the motive forces of history. In 1958, notice was given to historians and others in the literary realm that their work could not be separated from the politics of mass mobilization, revolutionary praxis, and historical contextualization. The concern was with those who "*zhonggu qingjin*" (take the past seriously and dismiss the present), for which a proclivity for teaching *Hongloumeng* over modern works (including the Soviet socialist realism novel featuring Pavel Korchagin) was considered symptomatic.

30. Mao's "Letter on *Hongloumeng* Criticism" held further significance for understanding the push toward agricultural cooperativization and its impact on Maoist theory because of the ways in which the criticism of *Hongloumeng* studies intersected with theoretical debates regarding the sinification of Marxism-Leninism and Maoist understanding of materialist dialectics. This aspect, however, is outside the scope of this chapter.

31. In 1955, Mao wrote in "Women Have Gone to the Labour Front" (reproduced in the *Red Book*): "In order to build a great socialist society it is of the utmost importance to arouse the broad masses of women to join in productive society. Men and women must receive equal pay for equal work. Genuine equality between the sexes can only be realized in the process of the socialist transformation of society as a whole." At this time, proclamations regarding the success of agricultural cooperativization appeared alongside new directives that increased women's work hours in agricultural production and concerted efforts to promote female agricultural labor heroes. Mao Zedong, "Introductory note to 'Women Have Gone to the Labour Front'" [1955]*, The Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside*, Chinese ed., vol. I. http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/red-book/ch31.htm (accessed 23 April 2010).

32. Kirk Denton argues that Chinese (socialist) modernity did not develop out of an antithesis between May Fourth individualism and Yan'an revolutionary collectivism, despite the use of this opposition in the 1955 Anti-Hu Campaign and the repro-

duction of the antithesis in recent scholarship on Hu Feng. Rather, as Denton asserts both were "as much intertwined as antagonistic" in the literary arena. Denton, p. 10.

33. Tina Mai Chen, "Re-forming the Chinese National Body: Emulation Campaigns, National Narrative, and Gendered Representation in the Early Maoist Period," PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin–Madison (1999); Gao Xiaoxian, "'The Silver Flower Contest': Rural Women in 1950s China and the Gendered Division of Labour."

34. Lydia H. Liu, "Life as Form: How Biomimesis Encountered Buddhism in Lu Xun," *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 68, no. 1 (2009), pp. 21–54.

35. Marston Anderson, *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 91; cited in Liu, p. 45.

36. Liu, p. 49.

37. Wang Hui, "Discursive Community and the Geneaology of Scientific Categories," in Madeline Yue Dong and Joshua L. Goldstein, *Everyday Modernity in China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), p. 116.

38. Judith Zeitlin analyzes the banishing of Lin Siniang's ghost by Cao Xueqin in *Dream of the Red Chamber*. She writes: "Lin Siniang's ghost is banished in *Dream of the Red Chamber* because the Qing bureaucratic machine portrayed in the novel permits no gaps in the 'edifice of memorialization' through which the unsettled dead from a previous dynasty could reappear." Judith T. Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine, Ghosts and Gender in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), p. 106. The gendering of ghosts and their role in seventeenth-century literature is a point for further exploration in relation to the *Hongloumeng* criticism of the 1950s.

39. On reading *Hongloumeng* as a Buddhist quest and enlightenment, see Li Qiancheng, *Fictions of Enlightenment: Journey to the West, Tower of Myriad Mirrors, and Dream of the Red Chamber* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

40. In the 1 July 1957 *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao*) editorial "*Wen hui bao*'s Bourgeois Orientation Should be Criticized," Mao wrote: "The purpose was to let demons and devils, ghosts and monsters 'air views freely' and let poisonous weeds sprout and grow in profusion, so that the people, now shocked to find these ugly things still existing in the world, would take action to wipe them out. In other words, the Communist Party foresaw this inevitable class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat."

41. The Anti-Hu Campaign associated with *Hongloumeng* criticism is interesting in this regard because it ended Hu Feng's claim to be the soul of Lu Xun and the legitimacy of his self-conscious portrayal as heir to Lu Xun's spirit. This freed Lu Xun for others to claim. See Kirk Denton, http://mclc.osu.edu/rc/pubs/institutions/denton.htm (accessed 23 April 2010).

42. Zhang Yingjin, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 205–6.

43. Xia Yan, *Zhufu: Cong xiaoshuo dao dianying* [New year's sacrifice: From novel to film], p. 123. Cited in Paul Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics Since 1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 201.

44. Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 91.

4

Mao and Tibet

Lee Feigon

Historians trained by Maurice Meisner might envy insects their compound eyes and ability to focus in several directions at once. One of the great gifts Mauri bestowed on his graduate students was the need to shift perspective as needed to better examine a subject. Following the teachings of their mentor, Meisner's students have wandered into many areas—film, feminist studies, philosophy, environmental studies, economics and of course intellectual and social history.

Maurice Meisner taught us to look and think outside of the box. What people actually said, Meisner always emphasized, mattered, even when others tended not to believe them. It is in this tradition that I am turning to what Mao actually said and did on Tibet.

In a recent meeting with Chinese intellectuals, the Dalai Lama emphasized the close personal relationship he once had with Mao and the support he at times received from Mao. The Dalai Lama's description of his relationship with Mao solicited surprise even from Chinese intellectuals open minded enough to attend a meeting with him.[1] The astonishment this group showed is indicative of the contradictions and misunderstanding that today pervade ideas both of Mao and of "the Land of the Snows."

Depicted by many as a land of simple, peace-loving people brutally savaged by the Chinese, Tibet is in fact home to fierce, sword-wielding nomads. Never colonized, Tibet is today a de facto Chinese colony. A country with a long and sophisticated history, Tibet, as seen through the eyes of Chinese polemicists, is often described as one of the most primitive and savage societies in the world. This latter viewpoint comes as no surprise to observers

like Elliott Sperling, who recently noted: "China often illustrates its 'Hell on Earth' thesis with photographs and anecdotes derived from rather biased British imperial accounts of Tibet. That one might use such material to create a similar narrative depiction of traditional China is no small irony; and such assertions can certainly be found in literature from the age of imperialism." [2]

Adding to the conflicting descriptions of Tibet are the images of the two men who in the modern age have best symbolized the two countries—Mao Zedong and the Dalai Lama—both telegenic, articulate, and charismatic figures with oversized presences on film and in print. Just as most Chinese once wore Mao buttons, ordinary Tibetans today cherish photos of the Dalai Lama in spite of the dire punishment the Chinese government can mete out for the possession of such pictures. Given some of the similarities between the two men, it is perhaps not surprising that despite being considered implacable foes, both Mao and the Dalai Lama long held positive images of the other and even spent a considerable amount of time in one another's company.

Both Mao and the Dalai Lama had to deal with long-standing attempts to define their respective countries from a Eurocentric perspective. As early as 1775, George Bogle, the first East India Company representative to visit Tibet, tried to persuade the Panchen Lama to use European categories to describe under whose sovereignty Tibet fell. The Panchen Lama resisted:

> [W]e live in a cold hilly country, on one side of us is the Chinese Empire, on another the Great kingdom of Hindoostan of which I understand the Company is now master, and on a third the Russian Empire. We know nothing, and we do nothing but read and pray to god. One cannot tell who is chief of the country, one man says I am rajah, but the Emperor of China is above all.[3]

Years later, the British, frustrated by the continued Tibetan refusal to categorize themselves from a Western perspective, came up with the term suzerainty—a suzerain being a state that has certain authority over a dependent state—as a way to define Tibet's status in a manner amenable to British interest in and actions toward China. The British stubbornly adhered to the use of this term until October 2008, long after most other Western states had capitulated to Chinese pressure and concurred that Tibet was legally part of China. Just when the British insistence on China's suzerainty—but not sovereignty—in Tibet began to seem admirable, the British suddenly dropped their use of the term and joined the long line of Western powers agreeing Tibet had no claim to autonomy.

As this illustrates, the West, especially Britain, was often an ally of China in seeking to redefine Tibet.[4] Few people knew this better than Mao Zedong. Mao was long aware of the degree to which Tibetan needs had often been shunted aside by both Britain and China.

In 1919, before Mao became a Marxist, one of the first groups he helped found, the Hunan Problem Study Society, stated in its statutes that it sought a solution to "The Tibet Problem."[5] The Hunan Problem Study Society appears to have been formed in response to Hu Shi's well-known July 1919 article in the pages of *New Youth Magazine*, "More Study of Problems, Less Talk of Isms." Following Hu's suggestion, Mao's Hunan society was formed with the idea of studying concrete problems. At this early stage of his career, Mao recognized that one of the concrete problems confronting China was Tibet and the position of all the non-Han regions within what was considered China.[6]

Mao clarified his thoughts on Tibet the following year in an article advocating a separate "Republic of Hunan." In this article Mao complained that the Chinese state was a repressive, ineffectual sham. Great states, he argued, only served to advance imperialism and suppress the minorities in their country. He felt that there should be a Republic of Hunan and the Hunan people should "pursue self-determination and self-government."[7] He lamented that China had reduced "the Mongols, Huis, and Tibetans to their last gasp."[8] The best thing for China, Mao argued, was to divide the nation into twenty-seven separate countries.

Mao's views on minorities were in sync with those of the Chinese Communist Party, which he joined not long after writing this essay. On July 16, 1922, the second national congress of the CCP affirmed the right to self-determination of ethnic minorities, a point restated at the party's sixth national congress on June 18, 1928. In 1929, in the "Manifesto of the Communist Party," Mao called for "the right to self-determination of the Manchu, Hui, Tibetan, Miao and Yao nationalities."[9] The same month in the "Notice Issued by the Fourth Army Headquarters of the Red Army," Mao stated this point even more emphatically: "As for Manchus, Mongols, Hui and Tibetans, they will determine their own statutes."[10]

It should be clear that in none of these comments was Mao stating that Tibet would be independent. He was saying only that the Tibetans had *the right to self-determination*. In other words, in Mao's view the Tibetans should determine their future themselves. What later became an issue for Mao was which lands were actually Tibetan and to what extent the Tibetans were able to make that decision without interference from foreign interests.

One of the reasons for the later confusion was that China and Tibet were not the sole players in this region. After the 1903–1904 Younghusband invasion of Tibet, launched to thwart supposed Russian intervention in the area, the British asserted an influential role in Tibet. That role was challenged briefly in 1910, when, in response to growing British influence, Qing forces occupied Lhasa. After the 1911 Revolution, the Chinese left and the British again asserted their influence.

One of the paramount issues for Britain was defining the so-called Eastern border between Tibet and China. (The Eastern border today excludes Tibetan-inhabited areas in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces.) The Chinese, too, wanted to define the border, because like the British they had now adopted European nation-state ideas about fixed country boundaries. They agreed with "British agents of empire, [that determining] the status of Tibet required determining the boundaries of Tibet. . . ."[11]

The Tibetans, however, held a unique and very different concept of state. For them boundaries "were determined locally [and often had] buffer zones and overlapping zones. . . . A realm [was] defined not by territorial integrity, but by power relationships of allegiance between territory and center."[12]

In 1913, the British convoked a conference at Simla, India[13] to discuss Tibet's borders and status. Chinese, Tibetan, and British representatives attended. The British introduced an idea that had worked in Mongolia but was completely unprecedented in Tibet—splitting the region into an Outer Tibet ruled by Lhasa but under Chinese suzerainty and an Inner Tibet (Eastern Tibet) under the jurisdiction of the Chinese government. The Tibetans were not happy with the plan, but border issues were not of paramount concern to them. Under British pressure and with British promises of future protection against the Chinese, the Tibetans eventually agreed to the treaty, understanding that it was to be a temporary division. The Chinese negotiator initialed the document, but the Chinese government refused to accept it, because they did not like the way the Eastern border was to be drawn and feared the treaty would make Tibet into a de facto British protectorate.

After the conference, the British furnished the Tibetans with five thousand new rifles, provided military training for Tibetan soldiers, and agreed to send four young Tibetan men to Britain for an education. In 1917, the British-sponsored Tibetan army defeated Chinese forces in Eastern Tibet. With British aid, the Tibetans extended the territory they controlled to the Upper Yangzi River, gaining back much of what they had thought of as lost land. They could have taken more, but the British, hoping to appear a neutral party to the Chinese, insisted the Tibetans agree to a truce.

After World War I, the British became more manifest in Tibet. They trained Tibetan soldiers in Gyantse, assisted in the development of a modern police force, and helped with the construction of a telegraph line from Gyantse to Lhasa. The British even opened an English school in Gyantse for Tibetan children. By the 1920s, the Lhasa government stationed ten thousand troops in the border region, virtually the entire Tibetan armed forces.

The growing influence of the British and with it the increased power of the central Tibetan government worried many of the quasi-independent Ti-

betan regional political and religious leaders. Internal dissent grew. Slowly, it weakened the Tibetan army.

In 1925, an unlikely source brought this discord to the fore: John Noel's groundbreaking silent documentary "The Epic of Everest." Dragging his camera to previously unimaginable heights, Noel dramatically concluded his movie about the British attempt to conquer the world's tallest mountain with George Mallory and Andrew Irvine disappearing into the clouds near the summit. Both men plunged to their deaths after climbing higher than humans had ever done before.

In a monumental act of what today would be called political incorrectness, Noel introduced each screening of the film by having a troop of dancing lamas (only one was actually a lama) chant, blast trumpets, beat drums, and clash symbols. Noel thought this display would "convey to the people in England a feeling of the mysticism and romance of Tibet."[14]

The Tibetan government was outraged, not just by the "lamas," who had left Tibet without permission, but also by an ethnographic scene in the movie in which "a man delouses a boy and then appears to eat the lice."[15] The dancing lamas incident, and even more so the lice-chomping scene, vividly illustrate Elliott Sperling's point that Chinese discussions of traditional Tibet as "Hell on Earth" mirror former imperialist attitudes.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama had given the British permission to climb the sacred slope of Everest. In exchange the British shipped more guns to Tibet and the climbers pledged to respect Buddhism. With internal opposition to the British presence growing, the Tibetan government reacted to the perceived insult to Tibetan culture from the film and revoked British permission to send another expedition up Everest. The British attempted to put things right. They launched an investigation of the film that consigned the pioneering documentary to obscurity. The Tibetans held firm. British shipments of arms to Tibet ceased.

The Tibetans did not relent until 1932 when renewed Sino-Tibetan hostilities began to go against them.[16] This round of fighting began in May 1930**,** when two Tibetan monasteries in Kham (now part of Sichuan)—Beri and Dargyas—began to fight one another. Similar incidents had occurred many times in the past. This time the Chinese supported one side, the Tibetans the other. Other monasteries in southern Qinghai (Amdo to the Tibetans) became involved, and the Qinghai Muslim warlord Ma Bufang intervened. In 1932 Ma Bufang drove the Tibetan forces back over the Yangzi River.

With the situation on the Eastern border awry, the Tibetans gave permission for another Everest climb. British gun shipments to Tibet resumed. It was too little, too late. Not only did the Tibetans no longer have the muscle to win back the lost territory, but also Chinese public opinion had become inflamed.

The new British shipments of guns to Tibet drew Mao's attention back to the region. In 1933 he wrote: "In western China, the British imperialists are making use of Tibetan forces to attack and occupy our Xikang and Sichuan provinces, and are preparing to turn western China completely into a British colony."[17] A few months later, in his September 1933 "Report at the Conference of the Eighteen Southern Xian Regarding the Election Campaign," Mao noted that "England wants to set up a Tibetan state in western China."[18]

Mao was not denying the Tibetan right to self-determination. He was angered at the incursion of British-trained and -equipped troops into territory the British at Simla proclaimed China's (Inner Tibet).[19] In the 1930s, many Chinese felt threatened by what was perceived as renewed British meddling in a region they felt was theirs.[20] They feared Tibet could be used as a springboard for the invasion of their country, an idea, as we shall see, that would remain in Mao's mind.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama died in 1933. In a 1934 armistice, the Tibetans gave up all territory to the east of the Yangzi—including the region of Batang—but kept control of the Yaklo (Yenchin) district that had previously been a Chinese enclave to the west of the river. The Tibetans also allowed the Chinese to install a wireless machine in Lhasa. The Chinese later used the presence of the technician they left behind to run the radio to "prove" they had maintained a long-term presence in Tibet.

In this surreal new world things like telegraph office personnel and movie scenes exerted influence over national boundaries and issues of statehood and sovereignty. The dancing lama episode may seem an aberration, but in fact movies had a continuing influence on the Chinese decision to take over Tibet. In spite of the lice-chomping scene in Noel's film, the Tibetans discovered an appreciation for the moving image. Within a decade of the resumption of the Everest expeditions, British diplomats were screening documentaries about Britain for the Tibetan elite. Showings of Rin Tin Tin and Charlie Chaplin followed.[21] Around the same time the American Dixie Mission put on John Wayne movies for Mao and other members of the communist elite in Yan'an.[22]

The young Fourteenth Dalai Lama acquired his own movie camera and convinced his tutor, the German climber and former S.S. officer Heinrich Harrer, to learn how to use the camera to take movies of Tibetan rituals and ceremonies as a way of showing them to the world. Harrer wrote that the Dalai Lama always sent him "precise instructions, sometimes in writing and sometimes verbally through Labsang Samten. He advised me how to make the most favorable use of the light in certain positions, or, maybe, he would send word that this or that ceremony was due to start punctually."[23]

Like the pioneering Chinese filmmakers discussed by Paul Pickowicz in his contribution to this volume, the Dalai Lama (and Mao) understood the impor-

tance of film in documenting ordinary life.[24] Seemingly ordinary images could be used to make political and cultural statements. Mao rose to power by understanding that analysis of local conditions could help gain national strategic and political advantage. In a sense it could be said that what both the filmmakers Paul discusses and the Dalai Lama were doing was quintessential Maoism.[25]

Today it is often pointed out that Mao's analyses of Chinese conditions were one-sided as a way of in effect dismissing Mao's work. As Bruce Cumings shows in his chapter in this volume, people often forget about history in their embracement of current ideas.[26] Bruce, of course, is talking about the present-day "Orientalist craze," which holds that somehow China will, in a few years, be the world's new economic superpower. People have forgotten that similar ideas (all of which were wrong) pulsated through the world just a few years ago about Japan and later about the so-called Asian tigers. In like fashion, those who today disparage Mao's ideas and works often fail to remember how fresh and novel Mao's approach once seemed. Mao invited Edgar Snow to Yan'an to get him to document what was actually happening on the ground in rural China and also of course to broadcast to the world both the Chinese communist case and that of Mao himself.

Snow brought not only his notebook to Yan'an but also both a still and a movie camera. Snow's images had almost as much impact as his writing. *Life* magazine paid Snow the then extravagant fee of $1,000 for his photographs and displayed forty-one of them across the pages of two successive issues of the magazine. The picture of Mao with Snow's hat on his head, which was set up by Snow but actually taken by the future UN ambassador Huang Hua, became an iconic shot.

Just as Mao requested that Snow come to Yan'an, so the Tibetans allowed Western filmmakers into Tibet to produce favorable documentary films about their country. In 1949, the famous broadcaster, Lowell Thomas, traveled to Tibet with his son. Using handheld cameras, the father and son took the first color and motion pictures of the Dalai Lama. Their images of yellow-robed monks in red hats and maroon-robed monks in heavy hoods parading against the panorama of Lhasa helped establish the allure and specter of Tibet.

Like Snow, and pretty much every documentarian, Thomas became involved with his subject. He advocated shipping "arms and advice" to Tibet, arguing "that there is sufficient manpower in Tibet for defense purposes, if it is properly equipped and trained."[27]

The Thomas film alarmed the Chinese Communists, who were just then consolidating their victory. They saw Lowell Thomas's visit and the subsequent propaganda it engendered for Tibet as proof that the United States planned to replace Britain in Tibet and might threaten China's western borders.

Well before this time, Mao's line on Tibet had hardened. In a 1936 interview, Mao said that the "Tibetan peoples, likewise, *will form* [emphasis added] autonomous republics attached to the China federation."[28] In 1938 he dropped mention of autonomy and stated that a unified Chinese state would grant the Tibetans and other minorities full equality with the Han, while respecting and preserving the culture and language of the minority groups.[29]

The Nationalist position was not any different. In 1943, Guomindang leader Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) declared that the Tibetans were Chinese. The Tibetans and other minorities, he said, all had common ancestors. Any differences are due "to religion and geographical environment. In short, the differentiation among China's five peoples is due to regional and religious factors, and not to race or blood."[30] The Dalai Lama's father was apparently interested in cooperating with Jiang. In the 1940s, before China invaded Tibet, the father sent the young Dalai Lama's brother to study in China, something unheard of among the Tibetan elite. The father supposedly did it because he thought China might be useful to Tibet.[31] The Guomindang-educated brother later tried to work with the Americans to get the Dalai Lama to leave Tibet in 1950.

Not all allied with Jiang were against Mao and the Chinese Communists. In the fall of 1949, when Communist victory in China seemed imminent, the Tenth Panchen Lama allied himself with the new Communist government and called for the liberation of Tibet. The Panchen Lama was almost as revered in Tibet as the Dalai Lama. The head of a powerful monastery in Xigaze, the Panchen Lama was both a regional and religious rival to the Dalai Lama. The Tenth had been appointed with the support of the Chinese Nationalist government after the Ninth Panchen Lama (1883–1937) fled to Mongolia following a dispute with the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. In spite of his ties to the Nationalists, the Tenth Panchen Lama cabled Mao, praising him for "having completed the salvation of the country and the people" and suggesting that "the realization of the democratic happiness of the people and revival of the country are only questions of time and it will not be long before Tibet is liberated."[32]

Mao replied:

> Tibetan people love the homeland and are opposed to foreign aggression. They are dissatisfied with the policies of the Kuomintang and wish to be a part of the great family of New China which is united and strong and in which all the nationalities cooperate as equals with one another. . . . We hope that you, Sir, and all the patriotic people of Tibet will strive together to fight for the liberation of Tibet and the unity of the Han and Tibetan peoples.[33]

Liberation came swiftly. In early 1950, the Chinese Communists massed a huge army. In July 1950, the Chinese launched a lightning raid that captured the Tibetan wireless station set up along the northeast section of the border.

The Communists lowered the onerous taxes the Lhasa regime had levied and promised religious freedom. This weakened the resolve of much of the population, including members of the monastic community.

On October 5, 1950, on the eve of the Chinese entrance into the Korean War, the Communist army advanced into Eastern Tibet (Kham). Large numbers of Khamba irregulars accompanied the Chinese troops. They met little resistance. "The battle began on October 7 and was concluded on October 15."[34] At this point, an advance to Lhasa would have been easy.

Mao, however, refused to order the advance. Having made China's intentions and strength clear, he sought to liberate Tibet without force. At Mao's behest, the Chinese suggested the two sides discuss a peaceful solution. The fifteen-year-old Dalai Lama, who officially took power on November 17, 1950, fled with his government in early January 1951 to the border town of Yatung. From his refuge, the Dalai Lama sent a high-level delegation to China. After some feeble attempts at negotiation, the delegates signed what is known as the Seventeen-Point Agreement.

The Seventeen-Point Agreement stated: "The Central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet."[35] It pledged the Dalai Lama could remain in office and Tibetan religious customs and institutions would be preserved. The agreement promised social and economic reforms would not be forced on the Tibetans, though the Tibetan army would be integrated into the Chinese one and a military and administrative committee would be established in Lhasa to implement the agreement.

The Dalai Lama was surprised that his delegates signed the agreement without further consultation with him. Representatives from the United States with whom the Dalai Lama's Chinese-educated brother met in Calcutta, urged the Dalai Lama to go into exile and spurn the Chinese-written agreement.[36] Instead the Dalai Lama agreed to return to Lhasa and work with the Chinese government.

On May 24, 1951, after the signing of the Seventeen-Article Agreement on Tibet, Mao stated:

> For hundreds of years there was no unity between the Han people and the Tibetan people. Internally as well the Tibetan nationality was not united. This was the result of the reactionary rule by the Manchu government and the Chiang Kai-shek government, and also the result of the discord sown among us by the imperialists. Now, unity has been achieved among the forces led by the Dalai Lama, those led by Panchen Gnoertehni, and the Central People's government.[37]

On October 24, 1951, the Dalai Lama sent an official confirmation to Mao Zedong accepting "the peaceful liberation of Tibet" and recognizing China as the "motherland."[38]

The peaceful liberation of Tibet resolved a major security concern for a country worried about the developing Korean conflict and concerned that the United States, which was already throwing support to the Tibetans, might attempt to take over the former British role in South Asia and threaten China from Tibet. As Mao told the Panchen Lama in 1954, "Now that the Tibetans are cooperating with the Han, our national defense line is not the Upper Yangtse River but the Himalaya Mountains."[39] He explained to the Dalai Lama, "If you had chosen to cooperate with the imperialists and made the Upper Yangtse River as the border with us and made us your enemies, things would be very difficult for us."[40]

The existence of the Seventeen-Point Agreement shows that the Chinese viewed the region as set apart from the rest of China. Only in Tibet did China acknowledge that they were dealing with a political, social, cultural, and ethical system so entirely different from their own that they needed to guarantee its political and religious autonomy. Tibet was not to be an integral part of China but an area with special standing and status, not dissimilar to that which Hong Kong enjoys today.

Not long after the agreement was signed, Mao Zedong noted, "[O]ur army finds itself in a totally different minority nationality area." He admitted that while the Tibetans "are inferior to us in military strength, they have an advantage over us in social influence."[41]

In 1952, at a reception for Tibetan delegates, Mao stated:

1. The Communist Party has adopted a policy of protecting religions . . .
2. . . . Whether or not land should be redistributed in regions inhabited by minority nationalities will be decided by the minority nationalities themselves. At the moment, land redistribution is out of the question in Tibet. Whether or not there should be redistribution in the future will be decided by you yourselves; moreover, you yourselves should carry out the redistribution. We will not redistribute the land for you.
3. The setting up of a military and administrative committee and the reorganization of the Tibetan army were stipulated by the Agreement. Because you were afraid, I have informed the comrades working in Tibet to postpone the implementation [of this].[42]

Mao went on to say that the postponement would be continued if the Tibetans remained worried.[43] In 1952, he explained to yet another Tibetan delegation that China was busy with its own development and only after completing three five-year plans would China "be able to give greater assistance to Tibet." The "political, economic, cultural development of Tibet is to be carried out primarily on the shoulders of the leaders and people of Tibet.

. . . However, it will be some time before [these things] can be carried out, and moreover, [they] must be carried out on the basis of your own volition, and gradually."[44]

Mao repeatedly told officials to go slow and to respect the Dalai Lama. In 1951, he told a group of officials, "Winning over the Dalai [Lama] will be our greatest victory."[45] In a directive he noted that "the [Panchen Lama's] opinions about the political and religious organization of Tibet are very good. It's very good and very important that the Panchen [Lama]'s group is willing to cooperate with us."[46] When the Tibetan government was reorganized and two of its leading officials dismissed, Mao wanted to make sure that the Dalai Lama was on board, instructing the "Tibet Work Committee" not to make the decision hastily:

> We should influence the Dalai [Lama] via the Kashag ministers in order that the Dalai [Lama] can make his own determination to dismiss the two sitsab [officials]. . . . We need [to wait] several days or longer. . . . [Doing it this way] the Dalai [Lama] and those elements of the middle faction in the Tibetan local government will not feel humiliation. This point is very important. Please pay attention to it.[47]

As Melvyn Goldstein makes clear, Mao time and time again warned CCP officials they had to pay attention to the feelings and attitude of the Dalai Lama. They were not to override him. They were not to act precipitously. They were not to act on their own. He notified officials in Tibet that they had to consult with the central government before taking any action.[48] Repeatedly, however, officials like Fan Ming, a military commander who became one of the main political commissars in Tibet in the early 1950s, contravened Mao's orders and engaged in a more confrontational approach in Tibet.[49] To countermand this, Mao stressed that all actions had to be approved by the Center. In a sign of the complex Chinese bureaucratic rivalries that bedeviled Mao's policies, Fan Ming, one of the few cadres from the Northwest Military Bureau (most came from the Southwest Military Bureau), later adamantly denounced Han chauvinism, something some saw as an attack on the Southwest bureau.

In early 1954, the Dalai Lama, to the chagrin of a number of his followers, accepted Mao's invitation to go to China. He stayed for almost a year, learning Chinese and touring the country. Forty years later, the Dalai Lama still fondly remembered how interested he was in the changes he saw during his visit.[50] The Chinese leaders, especially Chairman Mao Zedong (though not Zhou Enlai), particularly impressed him. The Dalai Lama wrote a number of poems and letters praising Mao's rule.

At the First Assembly of the Communist Party, the Communists elected the Dalai Lama a Vice-President of the Steering Committee of the People's

Republic of China, an impressive though largely honorific job that was evidence of the close relationship between the two sides.[51]

The Dalai Lama felt particularly close to Mao. After meeting Mao in Beijing for the first time, the Dalai Lama turned to the Tibetan associate with him and said, "Phunwang-la, today things went very well. Mao is a great person who is unlike others."[52]

In his formal speech to Mao and the others present, the Dalai Lama noted all the things the new Chinese government had done and was doing in Tibet:

> On the question of religion, one of the main fabrications of the enemy for sowing discord is that the Communist Party and the People's government destroy religion. The Tibetan people are very earnest in their religious faith and these rumours caused apprehension and misgivings among them. But now these pernicious rumours that "the Communist Party and People's government destroy religion" have been utterly exploded. The Tibetan people have learned from their own experience that they have freedom of religious belief.[53]

Mao explained to his officials that although according to China's constitution the head of an autonomous region should be elected, China needed to stick to the Seventeen-Point Agreement:

> The Dalai [Lama] is a living Buddha. He is a living god. He was not elected by the people. So we should let the majority of people decide what is the form of the new power. They believe in the Dalai [Lama] and its [local chief] much more than they believe in us. It is impossible to shake his position. Therefore, let us act according to the will of majority of the people [who support the Dalai Lama as their leader].[54]

Although for political and security reasons, Mao wanted Tibet to be part of China, he recognized that Tibet was different. While Tibet had similarities with China, Mao understood it had a very different tradition, one that Mao told his officials to respect.

The Dalai Lama went on a tour of China. It was eye opening for him. Seeing communism in practice excited and encouraged him. He even asked to join the Communist Party. The Chinese had to discourage him. The Chinese Communists, not the Dalai Lama, were concerned that such an action would alienate some of the traditional forces in Tibet.[55]

The Dalai Lama's interest in joining the Communist Party is easy to understand. As the Dalai Lama repeatedly noted, Mao impressed him. The transformation he saw happening in China gave him hopes and ideas for Tibet. In her chapter in this volume, Catherine Lynch discusses how Liang Shuming felt that China's failure in the early part of this century had given its peasants and

intellectuals "a freedom from ordinary history, a tear in time, which allowed a greater role for the creative consciousness."[56] Meeting Mao and seeing the changes swirling around China in effect gave the Dalai Lama a similar freedom to explore an unprecedented approach for his land. It appeared to him, as it apparently appeared to Liang Shuming in the case of China, that Tibet's failure to stand up for itself in the early twentieth century had freed the country from its old approach. Through Mao, Tibet was going to be able to try a different path.

Mao was equally supportive of the Dalai Lama. The Panchen Lama came to Beijing at the same time as the Dalai Lama. Although the Panchen Lama, unlike the Dalai Lama, had backed the Communists early, Mao told the Panchen Lama that he should work under the Dalai Lama.

Mao went on to say that the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama should unite together to support the traditional hierarchy in Tibet. He even implied that Tibet was as distinctly different from China as Korea:

> You should not only say Long Live Chairman Mao in Tibet. This is not good. Do not only hang portraits of Chairman Mao, but also hang the portraits of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, because this is a custom of Tibetans. Every nationality has its own leaders. It is very good that Tibetans have leaders like the Dalai [Lama] and Panchen [Lama]. For example Kim Il-sung is the leader in Korea. When you try to do things in Korea, you have to respect him.[57]

In another statement, Mao declared: "The number of Han cadres should gradually decrease. We should train their [Tibetan] cadres. The uniform of their Bodyguard Regiment does not have to be the uniform of the People's Liberation Army. They can wear their own uniform."[58] Mao made a similar point even more strongly a few days later:

> One day Mao unexpectedly came to visit the Dalai at his residence at about 8 p.m. During their conversation, Mao suddenly said, "I heard that you have a national flag, do you? They do not want you to carry it, isn't that right?" After I translated Mao's words, the Dalai Lama asked me, "Who does he mean by 'they'?" Although I knew who he meant, I translated this back to Mao, who responded frankly that "they" meant Zhang Jingwu, Zhang Guohua, and Fan Ming.
>
> Since Mao asked this with no warning that the topic was to be discussed, the Dalai Lama just replied, "We have an army flag." I thought that was a shrewd answer because it didn't say whether or not Tibet had a national flag. Mao perceived the Dalai Lama was concerned by his question and immediately told him, "That is no problem. You may keep your national flag." Mao definitely said "national" flag (Tib. Gyedar). "In the future," he said, "we can also let Xinjiang have their own flag, and Inner Mongolia, too. Would it be okay to carry the national flag of the People's Republic of China in addition to that flag? Would that

> be all right?" The Dalai Lama nodded his head yes. This was the most important thing that Mao had told the Dalai Lama, and I was amazed to hear it.[59]

Shortly before the Dalai Lama left Tibet, Mao unexpectedly dropped in on him. In a long conversation, the two men expressed their appreciation of one another's person and values. Mao emphasized he understood that some of the Han cadres in Tibet favored their fellow Han over the Tibetans. He told the Dalai Lama: "Any Han cadres who are sent to Tibet and cannot work with you or cannot unite with you, you tell me, and I will recall them."[60] There's no evidence the Dalai Lama ever took him up on this.

When he was leaving his private meeting with the Dalai Lama, Mao made his oft-quoted comment him that "religion is poison." Mao made this statement while telling the Dalai Lama he should train people in technological things like sending telegrams and should stay in close contact with Mao. Mao remarked on how scientific the Dalai Lama's mind was. He followed up with advice about religion. In spite of their differing attitudes to religion, the Dalai Lama was pleased with the meeting and felt he had a good accord with Mao. The Dalai Lama mentioned a number of times the great spirits he was in when he returned from China.

Mao told the Dalai Lama that after the Tibetans learn to help themselves "after twenty years you will improve and we will withdraw."[61] Although Mao talked about withdrawing Han cadres once the Tibetans could handle things on their own, this did not mean Tibet would become independent, only that Tibet would operate on its own in cooperation with China.

Many would argue that Mao's shift from his earlier views advocating self-determination for Tibet to his advocacy of a Tibetan Autonomous province forced on the Tibetans is an example of Mao's wily mercurial nature and his opportunistic opinion and policy changes. An examination of the record, however, shows not only how determined Mao was to carry out at least the spirit of his earlier ideas on Tibet but how difficult doing so was in the face of continued resistance not only from many Tibetan factions but also from members of his own government (a continuing problem for Mao that came to a head in the Cultural Revolution).

The sorts of problems Mao faced from his officials can be seen in an incident that occurred during the Dalai Lama's return from China. The Dalai Lama promised his government he would not fly in an airplane. As a result, he traveled to and from China by land. When he arrived in Sichuan, Li Weihan, the First Party Secretary of Sichuan and Long March veteran, refused to meet him. The Dalai Lama noticed the slight. So did the central government. Zhou Enlai immediately flew to Sichuan to meet with the Dalai Lama and upbraid Li Weihan, a man who later came to be seen as a moderate on the Tibet issue.[62]

Whatever Li Weihan's real views of Tibet were, one of the issues for Mao was that most Chinese did not really think of Tibetans as equal partners in the new Zhongguo. Sooyoung Kim notes in her chapter in this volume that even Chen Duxiu, one of the most democratic and open of the early Communist leaders, believed, at least in his pre-Communist days, that China needed to be a single racial state totally identified with the Han people.[63] Similar attitudes continued to prevail after 1949. Mao and Zhou Enlai could not intervene in every incident. After the decision had been made to take over Tibet, Mao's efforts, however well meaning, often foundered amidst the racist bias of the Chinese bureaucracy.

The Dalai Lama, however, had good reason to believe he was being treated well. In a speech after he got back to Tibet, the Dalai Lama told his government that "because of our lack of experience and work in secular matters . . . it is important to rely on help from the Chinese [Han] nationality . . . [I]n particular you should be friendly with the Chinese nationality."[64]

As already noted, the problem was not just the reluctance of Chinese officials to treat the Tibetans with tact and dignity in spite of Mao's efforts, but also the lack of unity of the Tibetan side, particularly the continued opposition toward the Chinese from traditional Tibetan groups. Making matters worse was that these groups received powerful aid from the Americans.

In 1956, the CIA decided to support the Tibetan resistance in its fight against the Chinese, gradually helping change a small rebellion into a growing internal problem backed by China's fiercest foreign foe. The CIA trained Tibetan soldiers first in Virginia and then in the mountains of Colorado and parachuted them into Kham. By the late 1950s, what had been a disorganized and uncoordinated movement became a serious effort conducted by people familiar with bomb building and paramilitary techniques.

All this might not have gotten anywhere, if it had not been for the problems the British had created in Eastern Tibet. After 1955, the Chinese treated most of what had been Kham and Amdo as an integral part of China, as the British had in effect authorized them to do at the 1913 Simla Conference, and as the Chinese Nationalists also had tried to do. As the British had proposed, the Chinese applied different standards to the two-thirds of the Tibetan population in Eastern Tibet than to the remaining one-third living in the Autonomous area where the Dalai Lama still held sway.

The different treatment meted out to Tibetans in what the British had called Inner and Outer Tibet not only led to growing rebellious resentment in what had once been Kham and Amdo, but also meant that as the resistance got more violent, refugees from Kham and Amdo could seek succor in Central Tibet. Central Tibetan officials aided and protected them. Posters and leaflets denouncing the Chinese appeared all over Lhasa. Anti-Chinese meetings

were held. Many central Tibetan government leaders, including the Dalai Lama and his family, were from Kham and Amdo. They sympathized with the stories of the dissidents from these areas. They resisted Chinese efforts to clamp down on them.

As American efforts to destabilize Tibet grew, Tibetan hostility to Beijing increased. The pressure on Mao to take strong action against Tibet accelerated. Just as the Hundred Flowers campaign was ramping up, things came to a head when the Dalai Lama asked to leave the country to go to a conference in India. Most Chinese officials opposed this, fearing that if the Dalai Lama left, he would not return. It was known that Tibetan exiles, supported by the United States, were trying to get the Dalai Lama to leave Tibet permanently.

Mao refused to restrict the Dalai Lama. In her chapter, Tina Chen notes the way Mao's notions of gender relationships affected his idea of class and shaped the images the CCP used in carrying out its revolutionary policy during the Maoist period.[65] In November 1957, Mao utilized the relationship between a husband and wife (and his belief that a wife could not be artificially bound to a husband) to explain to the Second Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee that it was not in China's interest to prevent the Dalai Lama from leaving the country if he did not want to stay:

> Here I'd like to address myself to the problem of the Dalai [Lama]. The Buddha has been dead for 2,500 years, and now the Dalai [Lama] and his group of followers want to go to India to pay homage. Should we let him go or not? The Center believes that it is better to let him go and that things would be worse if he's not allowed to go. . . . We must take into account the possibility that he may not come back. Not only that, but he may curse us every day and say such things as "The Communists have invaded Tibet." He may even declare "Tibetan Independence" in India, or he may instigate the reactionary elements in the upper stratum of Tibetan society to raise a hue and cry for an insurrection to try to throw us out. . . . If such bad situations were indeed to arise, I'd still be happy. Our Working Committee and our armed troops in Tibet must be prepared, build fortifications, and store up more food and water. We have just a handful of troops there; anyway, one is free to do what one likes. If you intend to attack, we will defend. We should never be the first to take the offensive; let them attack first, and then we'll launch a counterattack to beat the attackers soundly. Would I be sad if we lost one Dalai [Lama]? If there were nine others and all ten got away, I would still not be sad. . . . You can't have a husband and wife [relationship] simply by tying two people together. If a person no longer likes our place and wants to run away, let him go. What harm to us is there if he runs away? There's no harm in it except that he will curse us.[66]

In a second version of the same speech, Mao went into greater detail about mistakes the Chinese had made dealing with the Tibetans and other minori-

ties, comparing the situation in Tibet to the problems the Soviets were having in Poland and Hungary. "In China, the [minorities'] nationality issues in the Tibetan region have not been fully resolved. . . . Don't assume it is a very easy thing to unite [with] minority nationalities. We must oppose Han chauvinism, and must earnestly and thoroughly unite with the minority nationalities."[67]

In January 1957 Mao returned to this theme. Commenting on the outbreaks that had occurred in Kham, he noted:

> If no disturbances had erupted in Tibet, there would have been two possibilities: the Dalai Lama either would have run off to the United States or he would have stayed in India. Even if the Dalai Lama doesn't return, the Chinese mainland will not sink into the sea. The reasons for the disruptions are: we have committed economic and political errors; our work methods are rigid, and there are counterrevolutionary elements around.[68]

In his original speaking notes of "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" (February 27, 1957), Mao was even more forthright in his criticism of the way the Tibetans and other minorities were being treated in China:

> The eleventh problem, the problem of national minorities and great Han chauvinism [and] the problem of Tibet . . . [We] must certainly change this great Han chauvinist work style, [these] ideas [and] sentiments, monopolizing matters that ought to be done by others [i.e., the minorities themselves] the disrespect for national minorities. There's a group in Tibet who want to set up an independent kingdom. Currently this organization is a bit shaky; this time India asked us to let them return. We permitted the Dalai [Lama] to go to India; he has already gone to India. Now [he] has returned to Tibet. . . . If Tibet wants to be independent our [position] is this: [If] you want to agitate for independence, then agitate; you want independence, I don't want [you to have] independence. . . . As for reform, the seventeen points stipulate that reforms be made, but the reforms need your agreement. [If] you don't want reform, then we won't have any. If in the next few years you don't [want] reforms, then we won't have any. This is the way we have spoken to them just now.[69]

As implied above, in November of 1956 the Dalai Lama, with Mao's permission, attended the conference in India celebrating the 2,500th anniversary of the birth of the Buddha. Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai happened to be passing through New Delhi at the same time as the Dalai Lama. After Indian Prime Minister Nehru intervened, the Dalai Lama put his case to Zhou. Zhou agreed to postpone reforms in Tibet. Mao publicly announced on February 27, 1957, that "it has now been decided not to proceed with democratic reforms in Tibet. . . ."[70] He put land reform in Tibet on a back burner,

and stopped road, dam, and school building for a while. The Chinese even postponed work on a new hydroelectric plant. They also recalled many of the Han cadres working in Tibet.

In March 1957, shortly after Chinese leaders gave him these reassurances, the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet. This was in spite of the efforts of his brother and others who had been in contact with the Americans to prevent him from leaving India.

But the rebellion escalated. Newly armed Tibetan rebels viewed the Chinese moderation as a sign of weakness. In the summer of 1957, open warfare erupted in much of Kham and Amdo. In response, the Chinese bombed towns and villages and tortured and imprisoned increasing numbers of people.

Tension and paranoia mounted on both sides as the refugees created growing numbers of disturbances in Central Tibet. In April 1958 the Chinese government sent a special police force to Lhasa to deal with the crisis. Still just one month later they could not prevent the rebels from eradicating a one-thousand-man Chinese military post only 25 miles from Lhasa.[71]

Chinese officials wanted the Dalai Lama to use his Tibetan army against the rebels. He refused. In January 1959, the Dalai Lama declined to attend a meeting with Mao in Beijing. The Chinese worried he might join the rebels. The Tibetans feared that Chinese commanders in Lhasa would seize the Dalai Lama and issue orders in his name.

In March, with suspicion and paranoia mounting on both sides, the Chinese commander invited the Dalai Lama to come to the Chinese military headquarters in Lhasa to witness the performance of a visiting dance troupe. When the Chinese suggested the Dalai Lama attend the performance without his usual retinue of armed guards, the Tibetans grew suspicious of Chinese intentions. Word spread among the people that the Chinese might try to capture the Dalai Lama. They began to mass outside the gates of the Norbulingka, the summer palace where he stayed. Fearful of provoking the mob, the Dalai Lama canceled his visit by writing a letter to the Chinese. He stated he desired to attend the performance but was unable to do so, "owing to obstruction by the people, both religious and secular, who were instigated by a few evil elements and who did not know the facts. This has put me to indescribable shame." He further insisted: "Reactionary, evil elements are carrying out activities endangering me under the pretext of protecting my safety."[72]

As time passed, the crowd grew larger and more militant. A group of junior officials, some of the Dalai Lama's personal bodyguards, and the remaining popular leaders held a meeting in which they denounced the Seventeen-Point Agreement and declared that Tibet no longer recognized Chinese authority.

The Dalai Lama tried to calm the crowd. His actions had little effect. The Tibetans became certain that the Communists intended to launch an attack on

the palace after several shells fell near the palace. Fearful of capture, the Dalai Lama and a small retinue donned disguises and slipped into the crowd. He made his way out of the city and fled by horseback toward the Indian border, accompanied by several Tibetan-trained CIA operatives. He was soon joined in exile by thousands of followers.

With the Dalai Lama gone and the population in an uproar, Chinese troops entered Tibet in large numbers. The uprising was confined mainly to Lhasa, and the Chinese announced it had mostly ended two weeks after it began. But the Chinese considered the events an abrogation of the Seventeen-Point Agreement. On March 28, the Chinese announced that Premier Zhou Enlai had issued an order "that from that day the Tibetan Local Government which had instigated the rebellion was to be dissolved and the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region should exercise the functions and powers of the Tibetan Local Government."[73] They put the country under direct Chinese control and proceeded to disassemble the old Tibetan political structures and sack monasteries and religious institutions.

A few weeks after the reorganization of the Tibetan government, the Second National People's Congress meeting in Beijing declared: "The existing social system in Tibet is an extremely backward system of serfdom. The degree of cruelty that characterized the exploitation, oppression and persecution of the laboring people by the serf-owners can hardly be paralleled in any other part of the world."[74]

Chinese policy did not immediately make Tibet into "Hell on Earth." In the aftermath of the rebellion, the Chinese started to change many of the old Tibetan institutions. But then the Panchen Lama intervened to help mitigate many of these changes. After the Dalai Lama fled, the Panchen Lama immediately sent a statement stating his support for the new government the Chinese had established in Tibet. Over the next couple of years, the Panchen Lama began to take over the role of political leadership once assumed by the Dalai Lama. The Panchen Lama worked aggressively and successfully to slow down the pace of the reforms.

In 1961, the Panchen Lama spent six months in China. He criticized the way the reforms were being carried out in Tibet. Mao met with the Panchen Lama in Beijing and promised to address the problem of "leftist deviation" in Tibet. At the Panchen Lama's behest, Mao issued a directive saying that Tibetan peasants should not be forced to form co-ops (communes had not come to Tibet) and members of the Tibetan elite and religious communities who did not participate in the revolt should be protected.

Mao encouraged the Panchen Lama to express his views. After receiving Mao's support for his message, the Panchen Lama took his new role to heart. In the following months, the Panchen Lama castigated many Han officials.

Although the Panchen Lama's criticism rubbed some senior cadres the wrong way, the party took what he was saying seriously.

In June 1962, the Panchen Lama went further. He presented his "Seventy Thousand Character Petition" to the Chinese government. The petition criticized almost every aspect of Chinese policy in Tibet and claimed the Chinese were destroying the Tibetan nationality. He demanded the Chinese lighten up their rule, especially the policy toward his own Tashilhunpo Monastery.

After writing this petition, the Panchen Lama met with Mao. Mao once more supported him. At Mao's behest, major changes were instituted in China's policies in Tibet that greatly enhanced the Panchen Lama's standing in Tibet.

Circumstances intervened. In the fall of 1962, the Sino-Indian border war erupted, at least in part because of increased hostility between India and China in the wake of the 1959 Tibetan uprising. Because of the war, China's military presence in Tibet increased. China abandoned its gradualist policy in Tibet. The Panchen Lama lost his access to Mao. Officials whom the Panchen Lama had criticized plotted revenge. In 1964, after the Panchen Lama failed to give a speech criticizing the Dalai Lama, he was arrested. This was on the eve of the Cultural Revolution. Once the Cultural Revolution began, all semblance of moderation in Tibet ended.

In the following years, the Chinese government imposed ever more harsh, unfair, unjust, and draconian policies on Tibet. The Chinese must be blamed for the cruel way they have treated the Tibetans, but countries responsible for the historical backdrop against which the Chinese acted should also not be let off the hook. British imperialists seeking to expand their influence into Central Asia as their part of the Great Game helped turn the Chinese toward Tibet and made the Chinese fearful that if they did not act, areas of Western China would be threatened. By supporting Tibetan rebels and encouraging groups within Tibet to obstruct the Dalai Lama's cooperation with the Chinese government, the United States destabilized the situation.

Although no one wants to blame the victims, many Tibetans did not make the situation any better. Traditionalists opposed to the Communists and in cahoots with the United States often undermined the Dalai Lama's efforts. Inter-Tibetan rivalries, especially between the Dalai Lama's camp and that of the Panchen Lama, contributed to the precariousness of the situation.

Mao's policies in Tibet give perspective to the troubles he faced from an often difficult-to-control Chinese bureaucracy. Although Mao's position evolved from the one he advocated as a young man, after 1949 he expended considerable time and effort trying to maintain a moderate policy in Tibet that would allow the Tibetans to retain much control over their country. It may be true, as it is sometimes said, that Mao was mostly interested in government by the people—as long as the people agreed with Mao. In the case of Tibet, Mao

seemed to believe that the religious and political policies of the Dalai Lama should continue and that the Dalai Lama should retain his position. He held on to this policy even when the Dalai Lama fled into exile. Mao personally gave the order not to fire on the Dalai Lama as he fled. It was he who let the Dalai Lama gallop off into India.

Unfortunately, this policy of toleration held only when Mao himself kept a sharp eye on what local officials were doing in Tibet. The rebellion in Eastern Tibet, the actions of the CIA, the growing problems elsewhere in China, and finally the border war with India made it difficult for Mao to closely supervise what was happening in Tibet and put a lot of pressure on him to change his course of action. Even during the Great Leap, Mao continued to advocate relatively moderate policies in Tibet. Moreover, when the Panchen Lama wrote the petition that was later said to have exceeded Peng Dehuai's "letter in its 'anti-party and socialist principal,'" Mao initially responded not with anger but by listening to what was being said and moderating policies in Tibet, at least for a while.[75]

Although it is beyond the purview of this chapter to discuss what happened in Tibet during the Cultural Revolution, it should be noted that a recent study by Melvyn Goldstein based on interviews with various participants has shown that much of what occurred in Tibet was not the result of struggles between Tibet and the Central government or even between Tibetans and Han. It was a struggle between local power holders that was not ethnically based. Tibetans and Han were on both sides. Goldstein describes the supposed rebellion led by the warrior/nun Trinley Chodron. What actually happened during this supposed rebellion was that one Communist party faction in the nun's county, which was attempting to gain power by criticizing the corruption and economic policies of another faction, enlisted the support of the mentally deranged nun. After the nun was induced to support one of the factions, she began to go into trances in which an ancient Tibetan God talked to her, espousing support for Chairman Mao and opposing the old party structure.[76] Her faction was therefore able to use her trances to gain rural support for their communist agenda. She did not, at least according to Goldstein's impeccably researched book, try to lead a struggle against the Communist government.

The divisions Goldstein describes accord well with the problems that undermined earlier policy in Tibet, where there were splits not only among different Tibetan groups but also Chinese ones such as the Southwest military commission, generally seen as closely associated with the Dalai Lama, and the Northwest military commission, which was closer to the Panchen Lama. It was only when Mao intervened that the two groups were able to function together smoothly.

Mao of course made many mistakes towards Tibet. But in a sense the issue is similar to that which Robert Marks, in his chapter in this volume, has noted

in terms of Maoist environmental policy. There was devastation of China's environment in the Maoist and pre-Maoist period, but as Bob suggests, the most disastrous nationwide period of deforestation occurred during Deng's Reform Era.[77] It should not be surprising that policies towards Tibet have become more severe during the reform period, a time in which, as Thomas Lutze nicely delineates in his chapter in this book, China developed the highest level of inequality of any country in Asia.[78] In an interview I had with the Dalai Lama in 1992, the Dalai Lama not only spoke positively about Mao, but noted that since Mao died the split between Han and Tibetans has become much more extreme.[79]

NOTES

1. Since I wrote this chapter, the Dalai Lama has had several meetings with overseas Chinese students and intellectuals. For a brief description of one of the first of these events see: "A Talk with the Dalai Lama," *Boston Globe*, May 5, 2009.
2. Elliott Sperling, "China Digs in Its Heels in Tibet," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (April 2009), p. 5.
3. Dinesh Anand, "The British Imperial Scripting of Tibet's Geopolitical Identity," *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 68, no. 1 (February 2009), p. 232. Anand quotes the Younghusband Collection, MSS EUR/F197/105, 44.
4. Ibid. See also Carole McGranahan, "Empire and the Status of Tibet: British, Chinese and Tibetan Negotiations, 1913–1934," in Alex McKay, ed., *History of Tibet, Volume III, The Modern Period: 1895–1959: The Encounter with Modernity* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), pp. 267–95.
5. Mao Zedong, "Statutes of the Problem Study Society" (September 1, 1919), in Stuart R. Schram, ed., *Mao's Road to Power, Volume I: The Pre-Marxist Period, 1912–1920* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), p. 410.
6. Ibid.
7. Mao Zedong, "The Fundamental Issue in the Problem of Hunanese Reconstruction: The Republic of Hunan," in ibid., pp. 543–544.
8. Ibid., p. 545.
9. Mao Zedong, "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (January 1929), in Stuart R. Schram, ed., *Mao's Road to Power, Volume III: From the Jinggangshan to the Establishment of the Jiangxi Soviets, July 1927–December 1930* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), p. 134.
10. Mao Zedong and Zhu De, "Notice Issued by the Fourth Army Headquarters" (January 1929), in Stuart R. Schram, ed., *Mao's Road to Power, Volume III*, p. 138.
11. Carole McGranahan, "Empire and the Status of Tibet," p. 267.
12. Ibid., p. 268.
13. There may be a jinx to Simla. This is the same place a 1945 British sponsored conference led to an irreparable split between the Muslim Alliance and the Congress Party and eventually the split of the subcontinent into two unfriendly states.

14. Peter H. Hanson, "The Dancing Lamas of Everest: Cinema Orientalism and Anglo-Tibetan Relations in the 1920s," in Alex McKay, ed., *History of Tibet* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003) vol. 3, p. 375. Peter Hanson found the program from the film in the British Library. His article provided the description on which this discussion is based.

15. Ibid., p. 376.

16. Ibid., p. 388.

17. Mao Zedong, Xiang Ying, and Zhang Guotao, "Telegram of the Central Government to the International Conference against Imperialist and War," (August 30, 1933) in Stuart R. Schram, ed., *Mao's Road to Power, Volume IV: The Rise and Fall of the Chinese Soviet Republic 1931–1934* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), p. 520.

18. Mao Zedong, "Report at the Conference of the Eighteen Southern Xian Regarding the Election Campaign" (September 6, 1933), in ibid., p. 528. Mao made the same point a year later: "Report of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the Chinese Soviet Republic to the Second National Soviet Congress" (January 24–25), 1934, in ibid., p. 659. The fear of Britain using Tibet to take over part of China became such a standard part of the discussion during this period that he also repeated the point a third time six months later: "Proclamation by the Central Government of the Chinese Soviet Republic on the Selling Out of North China by the Guomindang" (June 19, 1934), in ibid. p. 760.

19. For a further discussion of this issue, see Carole McGranahan, "Empire and the Status of Tibet," p. 288.

20. Ibid.

21. Peter H. Hanson, "The Dancing Lamas of Everest," p. 390.

22. John Roderick, "Mao and Comrades Met U.S. at Dixie Mission," *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 2004. In a visit to the United States in the 1980s, Roderick entranced the students of Colby College with his stories of these evenings.

23. Heinrich Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953), pp. 256–57.

24. Paul G. Pickowicz, "Independent Chinese Film: Seeing the Not-Usually-Visible in Rural China," in this volume.

25. After this chapter was completed, a piece in the *New York Times* pegged China's indie filmmakers as "China's New Guerillas." Kirk Semple, "Indie Filmmakers: China's New Guerrillas," *New York Times*, September 27, 2009.

26. Bruce Cumings, "The 'Rise of China'?" in this volume.

27. Lowell Thomas, *Out of This World: Across the Himalayas to Forbidden Tibet* (New York: Greystone Press, 1950), p. 236.

28. Mao Zedong, "We Are Not Going to Turn the Country over to Moscow," in Stuart Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung* (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 420.

29. June Dreyer, *China's Forty Millions: Minority Nationalities and National Integration in the People's Republic of China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 67.

30. Chiang Kai-shek, *China's Destiny*, trans. Wang Chung-hui trans. (New York: MacMillan, 1947), pp. 12–13.

31. Melvyn Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 2: The Calm before the Storm: 1951–1955* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 234–37.

32. Melvyn Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913–1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 684.

33. Mao Zedong and Zhu De, "Telegram to Panchen Gnoertehni" (November 23, 1949), in Michael Y. M. Kau and John K. Leung, eds., *The Writings of Mao Zedong 1949–1976* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1986), vol. 1, p. 41.

34. "Military Communiqué on Entry of Chinese Army into Tibet," New China News Agency (November 8, 1950), in Union Research Institute, ed., *Tibet: 1950–1967* (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1968), p. 2.

35. Hugh Richardson, *Tibet and Its History* (Boston: Shambhala, 1984), p. 291.

36. George Patterson, *Tibet in Revolt* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), pp. 80–85.

37. Mao Zedong, "Speech on the Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet," May 24, 1951," in Kau and Leung, eds., vol. 1, p. 201.

38. Melvyn Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913–1951*, p. 13.

39. Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong Xizang gongzuo wenxuan* [Selected works of Mao Zedong on Tibetan affairs] Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiu shi [Party Literature Research Center of the CPC Central Committee], Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu weiyuanhui [CPC Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee], Zhongguo Zangxue yanjiu zhongxin [China Tibetology Research Center], eds., (Beijing: Wenxian chubanshe, 2001), pp. 117–122. The book consists of 101 of Mao's writings between August 1949 and January 1961 on Tibet, giving an indication of the amount of time Mao devoted to the matter in the 1950s and early 1960s. Quoted in Melvyn Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 2*, p. 22.

40. Melvyn Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 2*, p. 22.

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5

Chinese Communists and the Environment

Robert B. Marks

This chapter is an exploration of aspects of China's environmental history.[1] At its most basic level, environmental history examines the mutual interaction between the ways in which natural environments condition human settlement and use of the land and its resources, and the ways in which human activity then changes the environment. More particularly, in William Cronon's view, the task of environmental history is to anchor human institutions—states, economies, and societies—in "the natural ecosystems which provide the context for those institutions."[2] This chapter will do that with respect to the People's Republic of China, paying particular attention to forests, deforestation, the cascading effects of deforestation on China's environment, and the ways in which ecological degradation limited and conditioned choices people in China could and did make.

My starting point is with an idea that Maurice Meisner—whose scholarship we honor with this book—called "the critical factor" conditioning modern Chinese history. In *Mao's China and After*, Meisner created a context for understanding his history of the People's Republic of China by examining the historical legacy Mao Zedong and the Communists faced upon their victory in 1949, and comparing their situation with that of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1917. Despite a smaller industrial base—even given the ravages of war in both cases—and no urban proletarian base, among other relative disadvantages, the Chinese Communists in 1949 did have an organized state and a battle-tested military, did not face civil war (although an invasion from the U.S. in the context of the Korean War soon threatened), and had broad popular support springing from nationalist wells in the anti-Japanese

war (1937–1949), disgust with the Nationalists that grew in the Civil War (1945–1949), and popular social programs such as rent and interest reduction campaigns, and the beginnings of land reform.

Nonetheless, Meisner concludes, "these relative advantages were overshadowed, and perhaps outweighed, by China's terrible backwardness, a backwardness both social and economic—the historical legacy of a century of the failure of both reform and revolution. In 1949 the Chinese Communists inherited a war-ravaged economy far less developed than the Russian economy at the time of the October Revolution. It was this condition of massive backwardness and impoverishment that was the critical factor in the Chinese historical situation and the question of how to deal with it was crucial in the determining Chinese social development after 1949."[3]

The purpose of this chapter is to inquire into the environmental bases of that "massive backwardness and impoverishment," and to explore how that inquiry contributes to our understanding of modern China, especially the ways in which environmental degradation after 1949 continued to pose serious challenges and constraints to Chinese Communist goals and actions.

BIODIVERSITY AND ITS SIMPLIFICATION

Paradoxically, China is one of the most biologically diverse places on earth; indeed, it is one of twelve "mega diversity" countries. The reason for that diversity is China's size and the tremendous variety of ecosystems within its borders.[4] With the highest and lowest points on earth, glaciers and coral reefs, deserts and tropical rain forests, among other places, species (including humans) have had a vast number of ecological niches to exploit. The fact that its surface was not scraped clean by glaciers in the last Ice Age (ca. 25,000–11,500 years ago), unlike North America and Western Europe, preserved many species as well. China has 30,000 types of seed plants (13,000 of which are in the southwestern province of Yunnan), next in number only to the Amazonian rain forest of Brazil and Colombia, and 6,300 species of vertebrates, accounting for 14 percent of the world total.[5] Three thousand years of agriculturally driven deforestation, coupled now with the environmental ravages of industrial development, have threatened that biological diversity.

Forests

Among China's nearly six hundred ecosystems,[6] those hosting the most diversity of plants and animals are its forests. Historically, forests covered the eastern half of what is now China, from Manchuria in the north to Hainan Is-

land in the south.[7] In the north, a coniferous forest grew in the northern part of Manchuria, a mixed coniferous and deciduous broadleaf forest spanned southward to the North China plain which originally had been a deciduous broadleaf forest of oaks and associated trees. The Yangzi River valley was covered with a mixed deciduous and evergreen broadleaf forest, with subtropical evergreens in the lower lying valleys. In the inland parts of South China stood an evergreen broadleaf forest, with tropical rain forest along the southern edge of Guangdong and Fujian provinces, into Guangxi, as far west as Yunnan, and covering all of Hainan Island.[8] In brief, natural forest once covered nearly all of the eastern half of what is now China, forming, in the words of forest expert S. D. Richardson, "an unbroken sequence of communities from tropical monsoon forest in the south to coniferous forest in the north."[9]

Deforesting China

Because the Han Chinese ultimately developed as a highly efficient agricultural society, forests had to be removed to make way for farms and farmland; the land was literally scraped clear of the original vegetation. In effect, China experienced an exceptionally long period of progressive deforestation of its land, starting with the development and spread of Neolithic agriculture.[10] By the twentieth century, so little forest remained that scientists had to develop innovative methods to reconstruct what forests had been there previously.[11] The North China plain, including the Huai River valley, had been deforested by the Han; the lower Yangzi was poldered and planted with wet rice during the Song; Chinese pushed into the south, southeast, and southwest from the Yuan on, with even the hills deforested by the eighteenth century; Chinese lumber barons started felling Yunnan's forests in the nineteenth century; and Chinese migrants into Manchuria in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries removed much of the forest in what is now Liaoning Province. Today, only parts of the far southwest (Yunnan Province), western Sichuan/eastern Tibet, and the far northeast (Heilongjiang Province) remain forested; but as we will see, those forests too are under severe pressure.

Consequences of Deforestation

In a nutshell, much of China's environmental history is a continuing story of the simplification of environments, peoples, and institutions into Han Chinese dominated agro-ecosystems. Where four thousand years ago there had been extraordinary natural diversity, agriculture and farming have created simpler, less complex agro-ecosystems. Where there had been hundreds (if not thousands) of different peoples, Han Chinese have proliferated and other peoples

have disappeared. Where there had been numerous ways to organize states and societies, the Han Chinese way marched across the landscape.[12]

Even though China remains one of the most biologically diverse places on earth, the simplification of its natural environment has resulted in the loss of unknown numbers of ecosystems and species. The four thousand years of Chinese occupation and transformation of its land has put nearly four hundred of those species at risk of extinction, largely because habitats have been so fragmented by people that the areas remaining are no longer sufficient to sustain healthy natural populations, putting them at risk of extinction.[13] To put China's four hundred endangered species into perspective, worldwide since 1600, there have been just over five hundred recorded species extinctions.[14] There were probably many more species extinctions in China over the past millennia, largely because of habitat destruction and fragmentation that we do not know of because of the lack of documentation.

Environmental Degradation

The removal of forest for farms and the consequent simplification of China's ecosystems into agro-ecosystems led to more than the loss of biodiversity. By the nineteenth century, these processes were also leading to the degradation of the environment. Degradation differs from the loss of biodiversity, in that a degraded environment is so changed and depleted of the nutrients needed to support life that ecosystems seldom have the ability to regenerate themselves. Instead, the environment is permanently altered at lower levels of energy, increasingly unable to support complex and life-generating ecosystems. Erosion into steep gullies of the loess lands of northwest China and the flooding of vast amounts of silt into the lowlands or into the Yellow River, salinization of vast stretches of farmland on the North China plain, burned over hills in central and south China that slough off huge chunks after tropical rains saturate the soil, all deprive the soil of nutrients, making it difficult if not impossible to replant forest or other vegetation. Nutrients might have flowed down into valley farms, but even then constant cropping without adequate fertilization left nearly all of China's farmland deficient in critical nutrients, in particular nitrogen by the twentieth century.

China's Forests ca. 1949

Despite China's long historical record of deforestation and environmental degradation, not all of the hills and mountains in the eastern half of China had been deforested by 1949. Extensive forests still stood in the northern reaches of Manchuria, in Yunnan to the southwest, in the border region of western

Sichuan and eastern Tibet, in southern and central Fujian, in the border of western Hubei and northeastern Sichuan, and in parts of the Qinling Mountains in southern Shanxi and northern Sichuan. Additionally, trees were being planted and harvested in at least two hill regions. In the hills bordering Zhejiang and Jiangxi, entrepreneurs had been growing trees for sale downriver to fire the kilns of Jingdezhen. And in southern Hunan Province, and probably in the Nanling Mountains of northern Guangxi and Guangdong provinces, the Miao peoples and other Han Chinese who had become upland specialists (the Yao and the Hakka) too replanted or coppiced trees that could be harvested every twenty years or so.

Even with its remaining stands of forest, though, China was a heavily deforested country by 1949, with only between 5 and 9 percent of its land surface forested. That legacy of deforestation presented the rulers of the new People's Republic with two problems: dealing with the consequences of degraded environments, and tapping forest resources to support their ambitious plans for economic development. On the eve of the establishment of the People's Republic, China's forest resources were extremely low, both when compared with the Soviet Union, but also in per capita terms compared with the rest of the world, ranking twentieth and 121st out of 160 nations. As Vaclav Smil put it, "Clearly, China's poor forest resources put the country at a disadvantage in both environmental and economic terms, and the difficulty is compounded by the extremely uneven distribution of forested land."[15]

In the century prior to the Chinese Communist victory in 1949, the evidence clearly points to a widespread ecological crisis precipitated largely by deforestation and its consequences such as increased siltation and flooding of river plains, loss of soil nutrients and its ability to hold water, energy shortages, and constrictions of timber supplies for building. With declining energy levels, the metabolism of China's agro-ecosystems was slowing, with humans becoming impoverished along with their environment.

DEFORESTING THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

The victory of the Chinese Communists in 1949 and the formation of their new state, the People's Republic of China, signaled the beginning of a new era marked by a determined state effort to industrialize as rapidly as possible. And there can be little doubt that the sixty-year history of the People's Republic has seen China transformed from an agrarian society into one of the largest, but arguably most polluted, industrial economies on earth. [16] And despite official claims to the contrary, over that period China's forests continued to shrink both because the state harvested those resources for industrial

production without adequate provisions for protection or afforestation, and because owners (both individuals and collectives) threatened with confiscation cut down trees to pocket the income.

To be sure, the policies and practices of the first three decades of the PRC under Mao Zedong differed dramatically from those worked out under Deng Xiaoping and his successors. While both claimed to be building a socialist China, Mao distrusted markets and bureaucratic hierarchies, searching instead for a distinctively rapid Chinese (i.e., "Maoist") route to the socialist future, whereas Deng Xiaoping thought that a state controlled by the Communists would be able to use markets and other "capitalist tools," as Thomas Lutze shows in his contribution to this volume,[17] to build the material prerequisites for a socialist future. Despite significant differences between the two that resulted in intense political infighting, large numbers of deaths, and "historical reassessments," both were committed to the most rapid economic development of China possible. Whatever else may have been heralded or promised in 1949, Marxism and socialism in China have provided the ideological support for rapid industrialization in the service of a sovereign state controlled by the Chinese Communist Party.

Chinese Communist Ideas about Nature

Embedded within those commitments to economic development were ideas (some explicit and some implicit) about nature derived from Marxism, the Chinese Communists' own history, China's imperial legacy, and Western science. Despite significant differences among these, and the fact that any tradition contains contradictory elements (and hence that it is unwise to essentialize a "Chinese" view of nature),[18] they shared the general disposition that humans were separate from nature, that resources derived from nature were to be used to support humans and their society, and that people should dominate and control nature.

China's centralized imperial state, including its ancient predecessors, had long operated on the presumption that to demonstrate and wield power, nature needed to tamed, if not subdued.[19] The point of political, military, and economic action was the human-centered one of proper governance and social order. In examining Chinese ideas about nature, Robert Weller and Peter Bol point out that "the idea that political authority has fundamental responsibility for maintaining harmonious relations between society and environment has a long history in China. On the other hand, this view did not result in the conscious establishment of environmentally sound practices, largely because human utility always received first consideration."[20] The end result of the imperial period was a largely deforested China and an environmentally degraded landscape.

Marxist ideas about nature and science also contributed to Chinese Communist views. In perhaps their most readily recognizable comment about the place of nature in the human world, or more precisely the capitalist world, Marx and Engels observed in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* of 1848 that "The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalisation of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?"[21]

The Chinese Communists also shared with their Guomindang rivals the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western view of science as a tool to control nature, brought to China in the 1920s and 1930s with European and American science advisors, and their newly minted Chinese PhDs. But that view of science was accentuated even further by the Maoist voluntarist conviction that nature, like human society, was "infinitely malleable," in Laurence Schneider's words, and that the mobilized masses themselves could master science and hence nature. In this Maoist "discourse, nature and society were equated as objects of change and control; neither was considered to be informed by any permanent structures, qualities, or tendencies; both could be altered and directed from the outside, as it were, by reshaping environments. Doing science and making social revolution became equated metaphorically."[22]

These views coalesced within a decade after the Chinese Communists came to power in 1949 in what first Rhoads Murphy called the Communists' "war against nature,"[23] and Judith Shapiro later more precisely identified as "*Mao's* war against nature."[24] In Murphy's prescient view (his article was written in 1967), the Chinese Communists thought that "nature is no longer to be accepted but must be 'defied and conquered,'" defining and carrying out policies for agriculture and industry that put a human stamp on their environment, including as examples mass campaigns to eliminate sparrows because they were thought to be pests, to scatter soot by airplane over the ice and snow in the mountains surrounding the Tarim basin to speed their melting for irrigation, to dam the silt-laden Yellow River in the huge Sanmenxia dam project, and to spread industry from the coastal regions to peripheral areas. Given the huge gap between China and the advanced West, Murphy thought that the mass campaigns to conquer nature gave the peasantry a sense of "national pride" in a "holy war" in which commitment and action were preferable "to inaction or to resignation."[25]

These general ideas were institutionalized in changes brought to the academic field of biology in the 1950s when ideas about biology developed by Stalin's agronomists I. V. Michurin and Trofim Lysenko were imposed on Chinese higher education. Most Chinese biologists had been trained in European and American universities in genetics, evolutionary theory, and experimental biology. This Western approach to science was dismissed by Lysenko and his followers, in Schneider's words, as "totally useless for achieving the only appropriate goal of science—the control of nature and its manipulation for the benefit of the nation and the masses."[26] Lysenkoism dismissed "the old biology" as bourgeois, devoted merely to understanding nature, whereas the aim—adapting a famous Marxist proposition about philosophers[27]—was to change nature.

Lysenko's "transformist belief that all of organic nature is infinitely malleable and subject to human manipulation"[28] harmonized with Mao's ideas about social revolution, and Lysenkoism was adopted as formal party doctrine in 1952. In the critical field of botany and plant science, genetics and experimental plots were abandoned to the idea that food plants could be quickly improved to grow in previously hostile environments, or more abundantly in native ones, in part on the belief that individual plants of the same species would not compete for nutrients. In forestry, Lysenkoist botany "led to some unusual silvicultural and ecological concepts and practices . . . [such as] nest-sowing of seed, group planting, and very close spacing of seedlings. . . ."[29]

Although genetics was reinstated during the Hundred Flowers opening of 1956 and scored important successes in the early 1960s with the development of new strains of seeds that responded to chemical fertilizers, new farm machinery, and irrigation, Maoist attacks on the entire scientific community during the Cultural Revolution decade (1966–1976) decimated genetics-informed biology (along with all other science). In Lawrence Schneider's view, it would then take years of post-Mao leadership to "dissolve the Cultural Revolution miasma of contempt and distrust, and to rehabilitate the stature of the scientific community."[30] Although Chinese Communist leaders of the post-Mao reform era repudiated Mao's attempts to control China's scientists, they shared with Mao (and others, for that matter) the basic belief that the role of science is to understand, control, and manipulate nature for the greater good of human progress.

The Communist State and the Environment

If the Chinese Communists came into power in 1949 with numerous disadvantages and hurdles, including a seriously degraded environment, what they did have were a strong state and a powerful military, both built during

a decades-long period of protracted revolutionary struggle, resistance to Japanese invasion, and civil war with their adversaries, Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) and the Guomindang. And that state, whether its leaders were the utopian socialist Mao Zedong or the pragmatic socialists Deng Xiaoping and his successors, has been crisply described as "Stalinist bureaucratic," meaning strongly centralized and top-down.[31] A strong state was (and apparently remains) required for China to industrialize.

For better or for worse, nearly everything that "counts" as economic development involves both an interaction with, and transformation of, nature. The expansion of agriculture involves the transformation of natural ecosystems into agro-ecosystems for the more efficient capture of solar energy flows for human use. Industry too "grows" by using and transforming natural resources into products for human use, largely through the application of ever greater sources of power generated by burning fossil fuels. Where intensive agriculture, especially that supported by modern energy and synthetic fertilizer inputs, can pollute the air, water, and land, industry is the modern world's greatest source of pollutants. And where the development of agriculture has mostly local environmental effects, industry has affected global environmental processes, from nitrogen and carbon flows to global warming. The faster the economic development, then, the greater the transformation of the natural environment.

While committed to the most rapid industrialization possible, the Chinese Communists also had inherited a profoundly rural and poor country. With a population enumerated at 583 million in the 1952 census, and efforts to limit or slow China's population growth labeled as "Malthusian" heresy, the population did grow to nearly 700 million by 1964, and over one billion by 1982, by which time the death of Mao Zedong enabled China's new leaders to implement strict measures to limit China's population growth (the "one child policy").

Those new hundreds of millions of people needed to be fed. Where the industrialized countries began applying chemical fertilizer to boost yields on existing land,[32] China was internationally isolated because of the Korean War and could not buy chemical fertilizer on the world market. Soviet aid built a few fertilizer plants, but China did not have adequate supplies until 13 new plants purchased from the United States and Europe came online in the late 1970s.[33]

Until then, the only way to increase food output and sustain the growing population was to increase the amount of land under the plow. The Chinese Communists inherited a rural economy that included perhaps eighty million hectare (nearly 200 million acres) of farmland, perhaps 40 percent of which was rice paddies. By 1980 that total probably increased by 50 percent to 120–130 million hectare,[34] with increases coming from forests in China's northeastern and southwestern provinces (Manchuria and Yunnan in particular), and grasslands in the north (Mongolia) and the northwest (Gansu and

Xinjiang). In other words, in the first thirty years of the People's Republic, as much new farmland was added as had been under the plow during the first millennium CE (e.g., Han to Song dynasties). During the first thirty years of the People's Republic, the spread of agriculture to new regions thus continued to be a major force transforming China's environment, as the next section on China's forests will show.

All of these topics (and more) need to be addressed in a general environmental history of the People's Republic. Fortunately, several good books and numerous scholarly articles on the topic have been published.[35] Whereas supporters of both Mao's socialist and Deng's market approaches blame the other (and either "socialism" or "capitalism") for China's environmental problems,[36] in general the scholarly literature documents an exceptional amount of environmental damage wrought under both the Mao and Deng approaches to economic development.

Here, I want to narrow the focus to forests. Forests not only provide timber for construction, mining, and housing and pulp for paper, but fuel for heating and cooking. Forests are renewable resources, as long as the harvesting is not done in an unsustainable way—and that is a very dubious proposition concerning the history of the People's Republic. But more than that, forests provide numerous ecological "services," the most important of which are the retention and purification of water to control flood waters and provide safe drinking supplies, the prevention of soil loss and erosion, and the sequestration of carbon to moderate local and global climate.[37] "Because forests have such important monetary and environmental benefits," Qu Geping, the first head of China's Environmental Protection Agency observed, "careful forest management *should* [emphasis added] receive high priority."[38] The problem is that forest services are seldom if ever given a price in market economies, let alone considered in socialist ones. Mostly, "nature" has been seen as a source of "free" resources, where the only costs are those of extraction, and so the history of forests in China after 1949 continued to be one of rapid exploitation and depletion, and hence of continued degradation of China's natural environment. But that is not the official story.

China's Official Forest-Cover Statistics

Problems with statistics and definitions complicate the task of examining the use and abuse of forests in the PRC. Western analysts who have examined official Chinese statistics of the extent of forest cover have all identified important issues of interpretation. The main ones have to do with the definition of "forest." Where I have used an implicit definition of "natural forest" (and even that has ambiguities), Chinese official statistics include both stands of natural forest

and the extent of land area that are claimed to have been afforested. And those afforestation figures have in the past counted the entire area planted with seedlings, not the survival rate. As Richardson notes, "the wild claims during the spring and autumn campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s—with few references to failure—destroyed China's credibility among visiting foresters."[39] Vaclav Smil demonstrates that the actual survival rate was less than 30 percent.[40]

Even among the surviving saplings, the question arises as to when (or whether) that stand constitutes a "forest." Until 1986, the Chinese Ministry of Forestry used a standard of a 40 percent canopy cover as a definition of a "forest," but lowered that to 30 percent, the current standard, thereby vastly increasing China's "forest" by the stroke of a pen.[41] Even when that standard is met, oftentimes the "forest" is comprised of a single species, or of species planted in contiguous belts, not mixed as in a natural forest. That issue becomes important in assessing forests as healthy ecosystems that sustain a wide variety and number of plant and animal species. A "forest" of a single species, whether it is composed of pines or poplars to be pulped for paper, eucalyptus for their aromatic oils, or rubber trees,[42] is more like a monoculture plantation than a forest supporting a variety of wildlife. To be sure, such a plantation will provide important ecosystem services such as retention of water and soil, and the sequestration of carbon, but few animal species will thrive.

With those problems in mind, let us take an overview of the official figures of China's land surface covered by forest during the People's Republic.

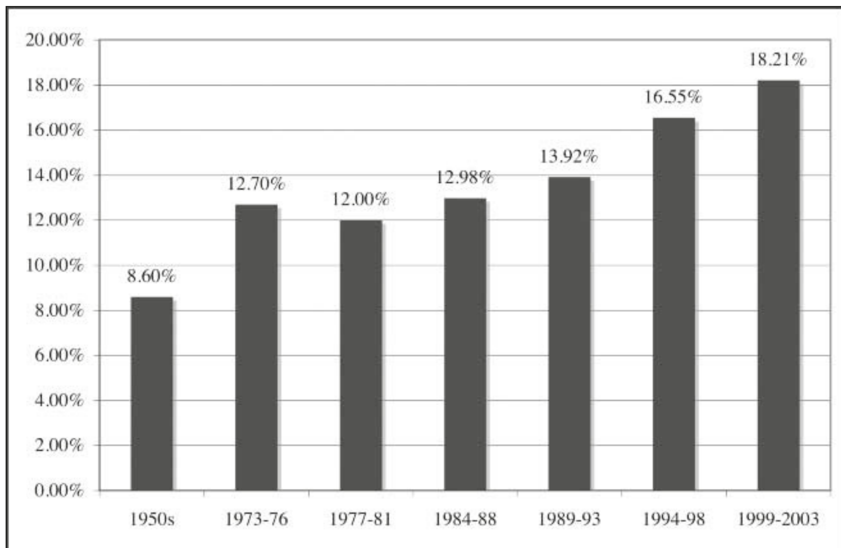

Figure 5.1. Percentage of China's Land Area Reported to Be Forested, 1950s–2003[43]

The story that this graph appears to tell is pretty straightforward: From the relatively deforested landscape that the CCP inherited, afforestation and conservation during the Mao years increased China's forest cover by 50 percent. The decline from 1977 to 1981 is accounted for by a rash of tree cutting by peasant families when the ownership of forests and trees was uncertain in the first years of the Deng-era reforms. But then forest cover again climbed from 1980 to 2000 by 50 percent as the new regime of private ownership led to successful afforestation, accompanied by a massive project called the "Three Norths," or the "Green Great Wall," to afforest thirty-seven million hectares across nearly 5,000 km from Heilongjiang Province to Xinjiang.

According to these official statistics, with the exception of the early 1980s, China's forests have kept expanding, deforestation and its baleful effects were being arrested, and progress toward a sustainably green future was always being made. The problem, of course, is that at each point where official forest statistics were published and plans announced for even greater afforestation, almost certainly China's forests actually were deteriorating, and forested areas actually were substantially less than the officials claimed. The 1950s figure of 8.60 percent forest cover, for instance, was most likely more like 5 percent, and the 1979 figure a third less than claimed.[44]

Assessments made in the 1990s—when forest cover supposedly had increased to 16 percent of China's land surface—give a sense of the disconnect between the official statistics and what was happening on the ground (literally). According to Vaclav Smil, "[T]he Third Forest Census undertaken by the Ministry of Forestry between 1984 and 1988 found a combination of sharply declining forested area, diminishing growing stocks, and poorer quality of timber." "[T]he environmental foundations of China's national existence," he concluded in 1993, "are alarmingly weak, and they continue to deteriorate at high rates."[45]

A year later, Richard Louis Edmonds wrote: "Degradation of vegetation in China has reached a serious stage . . . [A]s of 1993, it is likely that China's annual harvest of timber still exceeds annual growth and rapid success of remote hillside afforestation is not likely. . . . China *hopes* [emphasis added] current reforestation efforts will make the country self-sufficient in timber by AD 2040. . . . The key question is whether degradation of China's forests will send the whole country into an ecological tailspin before bureaucratic reforms, new technologies or a population decrease can halt current trends."[46]

By the late 1990s, and despite apparent acceptance of international norms regarding the protection and conservation of biodiversity, according to James Harkness, "China's forests and biodiversity are doubly threatened in the 1990s, suffering from both the legacies of the planned economy and the perverse incentives of the current order. Deforestation (and ineffective af-

forestation) during the Mao years left the country with a seriously depleted resource base, and [now] the wasteful, dying state logging industry threatens to take the last of China's old growth forests with it long before newly planted forests can take their place. Economic growth has brought ever more rapid depletion of wild plant and animal populations, far exceeding the state's regulatory capacity."[47]

"THE THREE GREAT CUTTINGS," PLUS ONE

The official story implied in China's forest cover statistics obscures four waves of deforestation, two each during the Mao and Deng eras: (1) the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960); (2) the campaigns to "Take Grain as the Key Link" and "Learn from Dazhai" during the Cultural Revolution Decade (1966–1976); (3) in the early- to mid-1980s (possibly to 1988) following the dismantling of collective agricultural production and the introduction of household-based production; and (4) in the 1990s as state-owned forest enterprises and state-established nature preserves cashed in on their forest reserves. Chinese farmers call the former ones the "Three Great Cuttings" (*san da fa*),[48] over and above the "normal" rate of "harvesting." During the First Five-Year Plan, for instance, the State Forest Bureau reported that 1.332 million hectare of state forests were clear-cut, but only 242,000 hectare replanted (18 percent).[49] So, the "Great Cuttings" added to the ongoing state-sponsored deforestation, including the spasms of tree felling following the various changes in forest ownership regimes.

Great Cutting No. 1—The Great Leap Forward, 1958–1960

During the Great Leap, agricultural production was consolidated into 24,000 or so large "people's communes," which Mao believed were the social formation needed to unleash the productive forces latent in the peasantry, resulting in the industrialization of the countryside and the production of enough steel to surpass Britain within fifteen years. The key technology was the "backyard steel furnaces," primitive affairs that more often than not transformed "good steel into bad" as peasants collected and melted down existing metal objects like plows and pots into ingots that had so many impurities that they were useless. Nonetheless, the 600,000 furnaces operating by October 1958 needed huge quantities of charcoal, nearly all of which was made by cutting down local forests. In one example from Guangxi Province, villagers established 190 charcoal burners, cleared swaths of a sub-tropical broadleaf evergreen forest, and left a poor-quality low-stocked secondary forest in its wake.[50] How much

forest was cut for the iron furnaces is unclear, but the anecdotal evidence certainly suggests “a lot.” An additional amount of forest was lost with the construction of reservoirs.[51]

From Mao’s point of view, of course, the people’s communes and the industrialization of the countryside were rational approaches to dealing with the problems arising from the separation of town and countryside, peasant and worker, and mental and manual labor. Marx as well had bemoaned the separation of town and countryside, and the degradation of soil that came with the export of food and fiber (and the nutrients that came from the soil) from the countryside to the cities as the nutrients in human waste polluted waterways rather than being recycled back to the farms.[52] But Mao was less concerned with those nutrient cycles than with increasing industrial output—at whatever cost to the environment.

Great Cutting No. 2—The Cultural Revolution: “Take Grain as the Key Link” and “In Agriculture, Learn from Dazhai.”

A devastating famine following in the wake of the Great Leap Forward,[53] coupled with security concerns sparked by both the split with the Soviet Union and the U.S. buildup in Vietnam, led CCP leaders to conclude that if the ideal of being “self-reliant” (*zili gengshen*) in general was good, so too was having all regions of China being self-sufficient in grain. That led to the policy to “Take Grain as the Key Link” and Mao’s identification of the Dazhai production brigade in the impoverished and environmentally degraded mountains of southeastern Shanxi Province mountains as a national model.

Dazhai was a small village of 160 families that was devastated in a 1963 flood that wiped away the residents’ houses, fields, tools, and even fruit trees. The denuded hills undoubtedly were a major factor in the floods, and the village probably looked something like the photos from early-twentieth-century Shanxi of a bridge and gate tower buried in silt.[54] The local Communist party leader, Chen Yonggui, claimed that Dazhai would accept no outside aid, and mobilized the residents not just to dig out from the flood, but to transform Dazhai and prevent future disasters. With their own labor, they terraced the crumbly loess soil, tunneled through hills for water for irrigation, and spread chemical fertilizer from a local plant on their fields; agricultural yields climbed.

By late 1964, Mao Zedong had singled out Dazhai as a model for the entire country to follow, and within a few years learning from Dazhai had been coupled with the slogan to “Take Grain as the Key Link.” Dazhai leader Chen Yonggui shared the view of other Party members that to subdue nature was good and heroic, and perhaps harbored Lysenkoist ideas that grain could be

made to grow almost anywhere—taking over river flood plains, grasslands, steep slopes, and sandy beaches. With encouragement from the top, and in the midst of Mao's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a vast assault on nature to make it yield agricultural bounty quickly led to widespread deforestation. In the view of the first head of China's State Environmental Protection Agency, "China was overzealous with the campaign. . . . Regardless of the topography, grain production became the all-important priority. . . . Large forested areas were either destroyed to produce grain or neglected, aggravating hydrological cycles and soil erosion."[55]

As a result, in the north and northwest, grasslands were opened to the plow, and with or without irrigation, winds eroded the soil and turned what had been hoped would be farmland into desert: "Under the leadership of the Party," officials in arid Qinghai Province declared, "we have finally subdued nature and turned the grasslands that have been desolate for a thousand years into fertile farmland."[56] In mountainous areas with slopes over 25 percent, forests were cut down and crops planted, even in rows up and down the slope, increasing the rate of erosion and degradation; terracing in the mountains near Chongqing did not halt the erosion; lakes throughout Hubei were encircled and filled in ("reclaimed"); and the wetlands of the famed Dian Lake near Kunming in Yunnan were filled in for fields, but then ironically became the site of the National Minorities Park.[57] As summarized by Liu Dachang, these policies "caused large areas of forest and grassland to be cleared and cultivated for food production . . . [Even] shifting cultivation/swidden agriculture became unsustainable because increasing population pressure on land resulted in much shorter fallow periods. This factor contributed especially to forest loss in the southwest provinces of Yunnan and Sichuan."[58]

Great Cutting No. 3—Deng's Reform Era

As noted above in terms of the discussion of landownership systems, the dismantling of collectivized agriculture and the creation of the "household responsibility system" whereby control over agricultural decision making, farmland, and forestland passed into the hands of peasant families who contracted to do the work, coincided with a rash of illegal cutting of forests, especially in the provinces of south and southwest China. This episode in the early- to mid-1980s was no small affair. According to Liu Dachang, this was the "most disastrous nationwide period of deforestation."[59] Despite the intention of the central government to encourage private farmers to reforest degraded lands and to mindfully harvest their newfound timber wealth, "the results of the forest reform were not what the policy makers had planned or

anticipated. Instead of planting trees and improving forest management, significant deforestation occurred in most villages" in south China.[60]

Market-driven Deforestation, 1992–1998: The Last Great Cutting?

The Deng-era reforms included extending market reforms to state forest products, but price increases paid for wood products from the state forests during the 1980s had not elicited greater supplies, in part because the market was being flooded with massive supplies from the great illegal cutoff from the contracted-out collective forestland. During the nationwide drive to implement a market economy from 1992–1998, though, the state-owned forest companies gained considerable freedom from the Ministry of Forestry (downgraded in 1998 to the State Forestry Administration). "With reduced government interference," Wang et al. conclude, "forest companies were able to respond to market needs and thus improve economic efficiency."[61] With heavy machines and platoons with chainsaws, state forest companies clear-cut great swaths of forested mountains in western Sichuan, the headwaters of the Yangzi River, in the Qinling Mountains, and in the Amur River watershed in Heilongjiang, seeking to capitalize on the markets for old-growth timber.

A breaking point was reached in 1998. From June through early August, an unusual climatic event led to huge downpours of rain across south and central China—up to 68 inches in coastal Guangdong and 50 inches in Jingdezhen—resulting in massive flooding along the Yangzi River. Officials reported 3,656 people killed, 14 million homeless, and twenty-five million hectares of farmland flooded.[62] Neither Dongting Lake nor Poyang Lake, which normally acted as "lungs" for the Yangzi drainage basin, expanding as necessary to contain annual runoff, could hold the 1998 flood waters.

The unusual rainfall was the proximate cause of the flooding. The more long-term cause, though, was extensive logging of the old growth forests in the western hills of Sichuan Province and eastern Tibet that denuded the hillsides and sent the unusually heavy rainfall cascading down the mountainsides into the Yangzi River. To address the disastrous flooding, the anger it caused, and its longer-term cause, Premier Zhu Rongji announced an immediate ban on logging in western Sichuan, and shortly afterwards extended the ban to additional provinces and municipalities.[63]

It turns out that the forests of primary and secondary stands, mostly in the northeast, in Yunnan, and in western Sichuan/eastern Tibet, contain 93 percent of China's wood volume, are among the healthiest and most diverse ecosystems in China, and are state owned and had been designated for logging by 135 state forest bureaus. As with most state-owned enterprises confronted with market forces in the reform era, the state logging companies were short

of capital and deeply in debt. So, instead of following sustainable harvesting practices, such as by cutting only swaths and leaving strips both for future harvesting and for reseeding the cut-over portions, state forest bureaus clear-cut up to ridge tops, leaving but a few trees for reseeding. Needless to say, such clear-cutting led to degradation of the watersheds and increased flooding. Before 1979, it was estimated that a third of all forests cut down were replaced by degraded mountain slopes. James Harkness estimated in 1998 that of the 135 state forest bureaus, 30 had nothing left to cut, and that at the rate of clear-cutting state forests, the number would reach ninety forestless state forest bureaus by the year 2000. Adding further pressure to clear-cut, local officials—who should have been acting to conserve forest resources—instead encouraged the cutting to reap the greatest tax revenue possible.[64]

There are indications that the 1998 ban on logging has been effective but perversely that that success is affecting forests elsewhere. China is now the world's second largest importer of logs (the first being the world's major consumer of virtually all natural resources, the United States). "[I]n moving to avoid ecological disaster at home, Beijing is causing a catastrophe abroad: to make up for the shortfall in timber, China is devouring forests from Burma to Siberia to Indonesia, much of it in the form of illegal logging." Chinese lumber barons, some possibly former managers of state-owned enterprises, either send their own crews, as into Burma, or contract with illegal loggers, especially in Sumatra and Siberia, and pay local authorities to look the other way as the logs roll out on their way to China.[65]

Deforestation and Rural Poverty

Deforestation and the degradation of the environment contribute to rural impoverishment as well. The evidence cited here comes from the World Bank. Since the early 1980s, the World Bank has been funding environmental restoration and protection projects to address various of China's developmental needs, as understood within the context of Deng Xiaoping's reforms and the unleashing of the market as a driving force of China's economic development. From 1981 to the end of 2008, the World Bank has funded 298 projects and invested nearly US$44 billion. Of that total, 9 percent has been earmarked for projects defined as "environment."[66]

A recent project report, "The Changjiang [Yangzi]/Pearl River Watershed Rehabilitation Project," established clear linkages among deforestation, the degradation of the environment, and rural poverty in Guizhou, Yunnan, Sichuan, and Hubei provinces. A research team from Hohai University found, in their words, "that deteriorating ecological environment is an important cause of poverty. The fundamental productive conditions in the [project] localities

have deteriorated and in some areas have even lacked the basic conditions for existence due to special geographical environment with vulnerable ecosystems and exposure to natural disasters, as well as artificial destructions such as long-term wasteland cultivation, unauthorized and uncontrolled logging and overgrazing, resulting in serious water and soil erosion. Deteriorated ecological environment has lowered local residents' income and living standards and increased the number of the poor."[67] The $100 million project involves direct investment in soil retention through afforestation and the building of sediment retention basins, and financial incentives to farmers to terrace steeply sloped farmland and to plant fruit trees to stabilize the slopes.

Another World Bank study, the 2007 "Watershed Development Best Practice Review," also concluded that the direct "linkage between rural poverty and resource degradation has long been aggravating watershed deterioration," spanning both the Mao years and Deng's reform era. "From the 1950s to the 1970s about 6.7 million ha of grasslands were converted to cropland as part of the drive to achieve food sufficiency in the face of growing population pressures," resulting in advancing desertification. During the reform era, the authors of this World Bank report concluded that "The PRC has many of the worst land degradation problems in the world with >40 percent of its land area adversely affected. Land degradation has accelerated over the past 50 years *increasing from the mid to late 1990s from an annual rate of 2,460 sq km to 3,400 sq km*" [emphasis added].[68] Whether World Bank projects effectively ameliorate rural poverty in China (or anywhere else for that matter) is a separate question.

The linkages among deforestation, environmental degradation, and rural poverty are also informed by ethnicity, a continuation of the long story of Han Chinese relations with other peoples introduced at the beginning of this chapter. In Yunnan, for instance, in the 1950s the state set up military rubber plantations and relocated Han Chinese into valleys farmed by Dai people and lower mountain slopes inhabited by Hani, Bulang, Yi, Lahu and others. "Such farms are a kind of product of industrial society," Yin Shaoting says, "bringing in Han Chinese values and culture, highways and automobiles, modern communication and media, hospitals and schools, production methods and ways of life under a military system, administration and technology of intensive plant production industry, the market economy and the concept of consumer goods and so on."[69] All of these have had predictable deleterious effects on the Dai and mountain peoples, and on the environment. That story has been repeated elsewhere in China's provinces and autonomous regions in the southwest, west, and north.

The causes of rural poverty in China (as elsewhere) are complex, as the history of the People's Republic demonstrates, and as Paul Pickowicz's contribu-

tion to this volume illustrates.[70] But what does seem clear is that environmental degradation is an integral part of the problem, and that stopping and reversing that degradation must be part of any solution to rural poverty in China.

Recent Afforestation Projects[71]

To address deforestation and environmental degradation, China engaged in numerous massive afforestation projects. Basically, the story until now has been one of "more trees, fewer forests, less timber." That is, as the millennia-long process of the removal of China's healthy forests continued during the People's Republic, afforestation projects under state, collective, and private auspices have planted huge numbers of seedlings with varying degrees of success. Even when successful, these become more like plantations than forests, and the volume of standing timber has continued to decline as young stick-like stands replace healthy forests and mature trees. Hundreds of thousands of acres of saplings—dead or alive—have been counted as forest cover.

Despite the problematic nature of the mass afforestation campaigns of the Mao years, some analysts hold out hope that the variety of state and private afforestation projects (such as those funded by the World Bank) since then will bear fruit. Prior to the October 2000 launch of the Natural Forest Protection Program, there had been six major state-sponsored campaigns that had as their goal increasing China's forest cover to 20 percent of its area by the year 2000 (given the caveats with that kind statistic discussed above). Among the earliest projects was the Coastal Protective Forest Project begun in the 1950s designed to stabilize the barren coastal hills in Guangdong and other coastal provinces. A project to afforest the upper and middle reaches of the Yangzi River began in the mid-1990s, and as we have seen, massive flooding in 1998 brought significant changes to forest protection policies there. A 1980s project to green the Taihang Mountains met with little success: "Vegetation cover is low, soil erosion is serious, the environment is worsening and the peasants are very poor," leading to the depressing conclusion that the serious degradation that was documented before 1949 still plagues the region. Another project aims to plant trees of economic value among the villages on the north China plain, while another obligates urban residents to plant trees that are then often uprooted for urban development schemes.[72]

The largest project, and the one that accounts for the bulk of area claimed—and planned to become—afforested in China, is the Three Norths Shelter Project (*sanbei fenghulin*). Stretching nearly 5,000 kilometers from Kashgar in the west to the Great Xing'an Mountains bordering Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia in the east, and covering four million square kilometers, the project calls for afforesting mountains, stabilizing loess land and desert with shrubs,

providing fuel wood for populations in oases and other towns, and generally halting the southeasterly advance of desert into north China, Beijing included. Writing in 1994, Edmonds expressed caution about the claims being made for the area planted with trees, shrubs, or grasses, and noted that while "initial reports . . . are optimistic," it will take decades—until 2050—to judge how successful the project has been.[73]

A more recent assessment is more optimistic, in large part because the 1998 Yangzi flooding caught the attention of the central government. Analyst Liu Dachang of The Nature Conservancy has concluded that the logging bans in the upper Yangzi watershed and the mid-to-upper Yellow River watershed have been enforced: "Forest depletion was effectively controlled, and forest area and growing stock increased. Commercial timber harvesting virtually stopped in the upper Yangtze River and mid-to-upper Yellow River. Annual timber output in the northeast China State-owned Forest Region was reduced by nearly forty percent. . . . Some 3.5 million ha of plantations were established and 4.1 million ha of secondary forests naturally regenerated through mountain land closure."[74]

Liu provides data on other afforestation projects as well, with similar measures of success.[75] Mostly, though, these "forests" are plantations. And while these have important environmental benefits, such as controlling erosion, sequestering carbon, moderating local climates, and stemming desertification, protecting biodiversity is a spin-off benefit in just a few areas, Yunnan in particular, which Conservation International has designated as one of the world's biodiversity "hot spots" (that is, places defined as being species rich with a minimum of 1500, but having lost 70 percent of its primary vegetation). Incentives to farming households to plant trees to contribute to afforestation efforts have led mostly to the planting of trees of economic value (e.g., fruit trees), not the reestablishment of healthy forests. The state thus formulated a policy limiting such plantings to 20 percent of the total; whether that policy will be followed is questionable. And so, despite the impressive figures for the millions upon millions of hectares of new plantings, such plantations cannot be considered "forests" in the sense of preserving biodiversity.

CONCLUSION

Continuing from late imperial times into and through the twentieth century to the present, the pressures on China's forests have proven relentless, and more continuous than not. Despite vast differences in their capabilities, the imperial, Republican, and Communist states all have seen forest ecosystems as resources to be controlled and exploited to enhance state power. Growth of the

Han Chinese population pushed cereal farming into non-Chinese peripheries, transforming grasslands and tropical rain forests alike into farms and plantations that provide tax revenue to the state. Forces fueled by the demands of industry and growing domestic consumption led more than one farming family to cut down the last tree on nearby hills for the income it could bring, or the energy it could provide to cook or keep warm. Rapid industrialization, repeated changes in land tenure regimes, and more-or-less unfettered market forces pushed deforestation.

As a result, few natural forests remain in China. Centuries of exhortations to stem deforestation, to halt the degradation of the environment, and to maintain harmony between man and nature, have been followed by even more deforestation, environmental degradation, and loss of habitat and species. Today, the Asian elephant—once thriving throughout the region—has been displaced to the furthest reaches of China's southwest, the South China tiger is on the verge of extinction, the Yangzi River dolphin is probably extinct, and a couple of Yangzi giant soft-shell turtles in two zoos are all that remain of that species. And those are just the "star species" we know about; hundreds of other species have gone extinct. Biologists estimate that nearly 40 percent of all remaining mammal species in China are endangered, and 70–80 percent of plant species are threatened.

Given the disasters of 1998, the almost annual drying up of the Yellow River 500 miles or so from the sea, and planning for the 2008 Olympics, it is not surprising that China's Tenth Five-Year Plan (2001–2005) gave "priority to environmental protection," in the words of the *People's Daily*. The article quoted an "academician" saying that the "plan describes a beautiful picture for us: a prospering economy, controlled population, well-preserved resources and a beautiful environment."[76] In 2003, conservation became "an integral part" of China's elementary school curriculum, and in 2006, the Chinese Communist Party proclaimed "promoting harmony between man and nature" an important step in building a "socialist harmonious society."

Chinese have expressed such environmental sentiments for at least 2,300 years, most famously going back to Mencius's allegory about the deforestation of Ox Mountain.[77] These ideas and sentiments should not be dismissed, for as Robert Weller and Peter Bol argue, they do exist and might become the basis for a Chinese environmental ethics that is translated into action,[78] in part by supporting the work of an increasing number of environmental NGOs.[79] As the extraordinary 2008 BBC production *Wild China* shows, China still has some exceptional ecosystems that deserve protection from further human encroachment. But the vignettes in those episodes center on protected or endangered species and environments. Even the successful panda program in Sichuan at the Wolong Reserve breeds more panda cubs than can be released

back into the wild—their natural habitat has been so reduced and fragmented that the captively raised pandas would starve and die. Instead, they are sold to zoos around the world.

Is it too late for China? Will rapid industrial development, population growth, and state policy continue to ravage China's environment? The owl of Minerva, as Hegel observed and Marx approvingly quoted, spreads its wings only as darkness begins to fall.[80] We should hope that that metaphor is merely another anthropocentric appropriation of nature.

NOTES

1. This chapter is part of a larger book project tentatively entitled *China: Its Environment and History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, forthcoming).

2. William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), p. vii.

3. Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, third edition (New York: The Free Press, 1999), p. 58.

4. China's size and current borders are, of course, historical artifacts, the result of millennia of interactions between the Han Chinese and other non-Chinese who inhabited the space that became "China." These non-Chinese peoples, who numbered at least in the hundreds of different races, tribes, and ethnicities, also derived their sustenance from the environment, oftentimes in ways quite different from that of the Han Chinese. Sometimes these non-Chinese were hunter gatherers, sometimes farmers, sometimes nomads, and sometimes combinations of some or all. The extraordinary diversity of China's natural environment meant that there were numerous ecological niches that people could, and did, exploit.

5. *China's Diversity: A Country Study* (Beijing: China Environmental Science Press, 1998), p. 2.

6. According to a recent count, China has 599 separate categories of ecosystems. See *China's Diversity: A Country Study*. For slightly different figures, see J. Mackinnon et al., *A Biodiversity Review of China* (Hong Kong: World Wide Fund for Nature International China Programme, 1996), p. 21. The concept of ecosystem was coined in 1930 to indicate the combined physical and biological environment, and the interactions among all constituent elements. In the early 1990s, 175 nations ratified the "Convention on Biological Diversity" and committed to protecting ecosystems, leading to various schemes for defining what an ecosystem was, and to develop lists of them.

7. According to Nicholas Menzies, "the forests of China are largely confined to the eastern half of the country. Grasslands and scrub predominate in the arid west, except in mountainous areas where sufficient water is derived from winter snowfall to support coniferous forests. . . . The historical geographer Wen Huan-Jan has identified five forest zones (not including the western grasslands and desert) which combine the biological factor of the dominant plant communities with the human factor of

the history of history of exploitation of the forest. These are the boreal forest [of the northeast], the temperate forest of north China, the subtropical forest of central and southwestern China, and the tropical forest of southern China" (Nicholas K. Menzies, *Forestry*, vol. 6, part III of *Biology and Biological Technology, Agro-Industries and Forestry*, Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], pp. 548–49).

8. S. D. Richardson, *Forests and Forestry in China: Changing Patterns of Resource Development* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1990), ch. 2.

9. Richardson, *Forests and Forestry in China*, p. 39.

10. Agriculture did not have a single point of origin in north China. Millet-based agriculture arose in the loess lands of the northwest, and wet rice was cultivated from the Yangzi River delta south into Vietnam.

11. On the use of forest remnants, especially around Buddhist temples, to reconstruct historic forests, see Robert B. Marks, *Tigers, Rice, Silk, and Silt: Environment and Economy in Late Imperial South China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 37–39.

12. From the origin of their early states in what is now north and northwest China, Han Chinese expanded to the east, south, and west, besting the non-Chinese inhabitants of those regions with superior military force backed by social, economic, and political institutions designed to extract the most (or at least, more than their competitors) from their natural environment, at any given technological level. In the process, non-Chinese were either pushed out, eliminated, or assimilated, making it possible for Han Chinese to take their land and to transform the environment into farms. The Chinese thus did not expand from their core region in North China into a pristine wilderness. Other peoples were already there, having established ways of supporting their population from the natural environment. The story of China's environmental history in many ways thus is the seizing and remaking of land from non-Chinese who were already altering the "natural" environment. On the Qing-era "deliberate use of massacre [and]…ethnic genocide" directed against the Zunghars, see Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 284–84.

13. Pollution of air and water, and the proliferation of dams, put additional species at risk, but those topics are beyond the scope of this chapter.

14. *China's Diversity: A Country Study*, pp. 2, 17. For slightly different figures, see Mackinnon et al., *A Biodiversity Review of China*, p. 21.

15. The statistics and quote are from Vaclav Smil, *The Bad Earth: Environmental Degradation in China* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1984), p. 11.

16. Richard Smith, "Creative Destruction: Capitalist Development and China's Environment," *New Left Review*, no. 222 (March–April 1997), pp. 29, 35–41.

17. Thomas Lutze, "Post-Socialist Capitalism in Rural China," in this volume.

18. At any given particular historical moment, people in China held a wide variety of views about nature and the relationship of people to the environment. As Mark Elvin observed,

> A systematic study of Chinese views of nature . . . at least in late-imperial times for which materials are abundant—reveals almost the entire possible spectrum of attitudes. There were Qing-dynasty enthusiasts for gigantic engineering projects, even more demented than Li Peng's Sanxia (Three Gorges) Dam. There were those who believed that nature should be attacked in military fashion. Others argued that humans should accommodate themselves to the pattern of natural processes without forcing matters. Others again saw nature as savage towards humankind, or indifferent. . . . Others again saw nature as benevolent . . . [T]here was no single set of attitudes towards nature that could legitimately be called "Chinese." (Mark Elvin, "The Environmental Legacy of Imperial China," *China Quarterly* no. 156 [December 1998], p. 755.)

The classic statement on ideas about the environment in "the West" is Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science*, New Series, vol. 155, no. 3767 (March 10, 1967), pp. 1203–1207.

19. Robert B. Marks, "Asian Tigers: The Real, the Symbolic, the Commodity," *Nature and Culture*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2006), pp. 63–87.

20. Robert P. Weller and Peter K. Bol, "From Heaven-and-Earth to Nature: Chinese Concepts of the Environment and Their Influence on Policy Implementation," in Michael B. Elroy, Chris P. Nielsen, and Peter Lyon, eds., *Energizing China: Reconciling Environmental Protection and Economic Growth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 473. As they further point out: "China is not the only place where a unitary view of nature and society nevertheless supports anthropocentric activity. Seeing humanity and nature as part of a single system can easily support the human right to alter that system" (p. 497, note 2).

21. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), p. 477. Until quite recently, most readings of Marx and Engels have cited their embrace of a "Promethean industrial outlook in which human progress corresponds to ever-greater human domination and control over nature," in the words of Paul Burkett, *Marx and Nature: A Red and Green Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 5. Burkett attempts to reconstruct a Marxism that is relevant to ecology and an analysis and critique of environmental problems, and so critiques the common view of Marx as either irrelevant to ecology and/or hostile to environmental protection. So too does John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000). That convincing new interpretations can be developed (largely on the basis of a reading of *Capital* and Marx's consideration of capitalist agriculture and the impoverishment of the soil by the movement of food and fiber from the countryside to cities; see especially Foster ch. 5) should not obscure the point that Chinese Communists (and others) who wanted the fastest possible development of the forces of production did take a Promethean message from Marx. Marx seems to have made a distinction between the irrational exploitation of nature under capitalist relations of production and the rational control of nature under socialism (see Foster, pp. 159–65), but either way, it seems to me, human control of nature was central to Marx's concerns: labor + nature = value. See also Howard L. Parsons, *Marx and Engels on Ecology* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977).

22. Laurence Schneider, *Biology and Revolution in Twentieth-Century China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), pp. 3, 272.

23. Rhoads Murphy, "Man and Nature in China," *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1967), pp. 313–333.

24. Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

25. Murphy, "Man and Nature in China," p. 321.

26. Schneider, *Biology and Revolution*, pp. 4–5.

27. From the XIth Thesis on Feurerbach: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it" (Tucker, *The Marx–Engels Reader*, p. 145).

28. Schneider, *Biology and Revolution*, p. 3.

29. S. D. Richardson, *Forestry in Communist China* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), p. 144.

30. Ibid., pp. 205–206.

31. Maurice Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping Era: An Inquiry into the Fate of Chinese Socialism* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), p. 523. For a summary of the general argument, see Maurice Meisner, "The Other China," *Current History*, vol. 96, no. 611 (September 1997), p. 269.

32. That fascinating story is told in Vaclav Smil, *Enriching the Earth: Fritz Haber, Carl Bosch, and the Transformation of World Food Production* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

33. Interestingly, the purchase of those chemical fertilizer plants was one of the first transactions between China and the United States following Richard Nixon's 1972 visit, putting a new perspective on China's motivations for dealing with the U.S. See Vaclav Smil, *China's Past, China's Future: Energy, Food, Environment* (New York and London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), pp. 114–120.

34. These land figures have been calculated from data provided in Kang Chao, *Man and Land in Chinese History: An Economic Analysis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 87; and Vaclav Smil, *China's Environment Crisis: An Inquiry into the Limits of National Development* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 52–56. As Smil notes, these land statistics are open to question and interpretation.

35. E.g., Smil, *The Bad Earth*; Smil, *China's Environmental Crisis: An Inquiry into the Limits of National Development*; Richard Louis Edmonds, *Patterns of China's Lost Harmony: A Survey of the Country's Environmental Degradation and Protection* (London: Routledge, 1994); He Baochuan, *China on the Edge: The Crisis of Ecology and Development* (San Francisco: China Books, 1991); Xiaoying Ma and Leonard Ortolano, *Environmental Regulation in China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); Lester Ross, *Environmental Policy in China* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Robert P. Weller, *Discovering Nature: Globalization and Environmental Culture in China and Taiwan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Elizabeth C. Economy, *The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China's Future* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Qu Geping and Li Jinchang, *Population and the Environment in China* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1994); Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in*

Revolutionary China; and the articles in the special issue on China's environment in *The China Quarterly*, no. 156 (December 1998).

36. E.g., Richard Smith, "Creative Destruction: Capitalist Development and China's Environment," *New Left Review*, no. 222 (March–April 1997); Martin Hart-Landsberger and Paul Burkett, *China and Socialism: Market Reforms and Class Struggle* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2005); William H. Hinton, *The Great Reversal* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990); William H. Hinton, "A Response to Hugh Deane," *Monthly Review*, vol. 40, no. 10 (March 1989).

37. For a succinct discussion, see Qu and Li, *Population and the Environment in China*, pp. 55–57.

38. Ibid., p. 56.

39. Richardson, *Forests and Forestry in China*, p. 89.

40. Smil, *China's Environmental Crisis*, p. 60.

41. Richardson, *Forests and Forestry in China*, p. 89.

42. Ken-Ichi Abe, "Collaged Landscape: History and Political Ecology of Forests in Yunnan," in Ken-Ichi Abe and James Nickum, eds., *The Good Earth: Regional and Historical Insights into China's Environment* (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2009), pp. 124–135; Shaoting Yin, "Rubber Planting and Eco-Environmental/Socio-cultural Transition in Xishuangbanna," in Abe and Nickum, eds., *The Good Earth*, pp. 136–143.

43. The data for this graph is from a PowerPoint presentation by Dr. Wang Qiming, Counselor for Science and Technology, Embassy of the PRC to India: "Environmental Bio-remediation Programmes in China," March 7, 2008, www.chinaembassy.org.in/eng/kj/P020080313486177342453.ppt, (accessed January 21, 2009).

44. Smil, *The Bad Earth*, pp. 10–12.

45. Smil, *China's Environmental Crisis: An Inquiry into the Limits of National Development*, pp. 62–63, 66.

46. Edmonds, *Patterns of China's Lost Harmony: A Survey of the Country's Environmental Degradation and Protection*, pp. 58–59.

47. James Harkness, "Recent Trends in Forestry and Conservation of Biodiversity in China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 156 (December 1998), p. 929.

48. Ibid., p. 914.

49. Smil, *The Bad Earth*, p. 16.

50. Liu Dachang, "Reforestation after Deforestation in China," in Abe and Nickum, eds., *The Good Earth*, pp. 90–105. See also Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature*, ch. 2.

51. Qu and Li, *Population and the Environment in China*, p. 57.

52. See Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*, ch. 5.

53. The causes of the famine—natural, or political—are disputed. For an indictment of Mao's Great Leap Forward policies, see Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine* (New York: First Owl Books, Henry Holt and Co., 1998).

54. Norman Shaw, *Chinese Forest Trees and Timber Supply* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1914), photos facing p. 126.

55. Qu Geping, in Qu and Li, *Population and the Environment in China*, p. 61. Sharply differing views of Dazhai can be found in William Hinton's *Shenfan: The*

Continuing Revolution in a Chinese Village (New York: Random House, 1983), pp. 682–93, and a later article, "Dazhai Revisited," *Monthly Review*, vol. 39, no. 10 (March 1988); and Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature*, ch. 3.

56. Quoted in Peter Ho, "Mao's War Against Nature? The Environmental Impact of the Grain-First Campaign in China," *The China Journal*, no. 50 (July 2003), p. 51.

57. These examples and more can be found in Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature*, ch. 3; Qu and Li, *Population and the Environment in China*, and Smil, *The Bad Earth*, ch. 1. A contrary view is developed by Ho, "Mao's War Against Nature? The Environmental Impact of the Grain-First Campaign in China," pp. 37–59.

58. Liu, "Reforestation after Deforestation," p. 91.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., p. 92.

61. Sen Wang et al., "Mosaic of Reform: Forest Policy in Post-1978 China," *Forest Policy and Economics*, no. 6 (2004), p. 74.

62. National Climatic Data Center, http://lwf.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/reports/chinaflooding/chinaflooding.html#SITES (accessed January 21, 2009).

63. Economy, *The River Runs Black*, p. 121.

64. Harkness, "Recent Trends in Forestry and Conservation of Biodiversity in China," pp. 924–26.

65. Brook Lamer and Alexandra A. Seno, "A Reckless Harvest: China Is Protecting Its Own Trees, But Has Begun Instead to Devour Asia's Forests," *Newsweek* Jan 27, 2003, http://newsweek.com/id/62877 (accessed January 9, 2009). China's demand for timber is but one of the causes of the increasing deforestation of Sumatra's lowland tropical rain forests. Cutting pulp for paper and clearing forest for palm oil production are major factors. See also Chang Li, "Memorandum Concerning the Asia Pulp and Paper Co. Ltd (APP) Incident," in Liang Congjie and Yang Dinging, eds., *The China Environment Yearbook* (Leaden: Brill, 2007), pp. 103–116.

66. Compiled from The World Bank, www.worldbank.org, (accessed December 31, 2008).

67. World Bank, "Changjiang/Pearl River Watershed Rehabilitation Project: environmental and social assessment (Vol. 2 of 8): Social assessment executive summary," http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?menuPK=51447259%26pagePK=51351007%26piPK=64675967%26theSitePK=40941%26menuPK=64187510%26searchMenuPK=51351213%26theSitePK=40941%26entityID=000160016_20051031134633%26searchMenuPK=51351213%26theSitePK=40941" (accessed December 31, 2008), p. 5.

68. John Dalton and Mantang Cai, "Watershed Development Best Practice Review for China Watershed Management Project (CWMP)" (April 4, 2007), www.worldbank.org/siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEAPCHINAINCHINESE/.../watershed.pdf (accessed December 31, 2008).

69. Yin Shaoting, "Rubber Planting and Eco-Environmental/Socio-cultural Transition in Xishuangbanna." See also Shapiro, *Mao's War against Nature*, pp. 171–185.

70. Paul G. Pickowicz, "Independent Chinese Film: Seeing the Not-Usually-Visible in Rural China," in this volume.

71. The idea of state support for afforestation projects was not new to the PRC. Even Yuan Shikai, the first president of the Republic of China and failed monarchist, in 1914 established China's first National Forest Law. Nor was the disconnect between official state plans for afforestation and actual results peculiar to the PRC. As Elena Songster shows, Fujian Province had a long history of private nurseries and managed timber forests, largely of a fast-growing, tall fir called cunninghamia. Provincial plans to expand on that heritage in the late 1910s failed, as did more ambitious plans in the 1920s to afforest Fujian by following foreign experts on "scientific forestry." After breaking with the Communists in 1927, two years later Jiang Jieshi announced an "Afforestation Movement," calling on provinces to mobilize citizens to plant trees each March 12, the anniversary of Sun Yat-sen's death. But as Songster observes, "Afforestation and timber regulation efforts that grew from mere policy in 1914 into enforced practice in 1929 demonstrate how governmental regulation actually disrupted the industry that its afforestation campaigns were designed to support." Even a modestly successful effort to establish a nursery to produce saplings for afforestation along the Min River ended with the Japanese invasion in 1937: "[A]fforestation projects could not be maintained under fire" (E. Elena Songster, "Cultivating the Nation in Fujian's Forests: Forest Policies and Afforestation Efforts in China, 1911–1937," *Environmental History*, no. 8 [July 2003], pp. 454, 468).

72. Edmonds, *Patterns of China's Lost Harmony*, pp. 51–57.

73. Ibid., pp. 55–56.

74. Liu, "Reforestation after Deforestation," pp. 95–96.

75. For a list of the ten major forestry programs and their goals, see also Sen Wang et al., "Mosaic of Reform," p. 76.

76. *People's Daily*, http://englishpeoplesdaily.com.cn, (accessed March 13, 2010).

77. For a translation of the original text, see Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, comps., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 151. For an interpretation of that text in a global environmental context, see J. Donald Hughes, *An Environmental History of the World: Humankind's Changing Role in the Community of Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 66-73. For other examples of ancient Chinese descriptions of environmental change, see Edmonds, *Patterns of China's Lost Harmony: A Survey of the Country's Environmental Degradation and Protection*, pp. 22–41.

78. Weller and Bol, "From Heaven-and-Earth to Nature."

79. Bao Maohong, "Environmental NGOs in Transforming China," *Nature and Culture*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring 2009), pp. 1–16.

80. G. W. F. Hegel, in the Preface to *The Philosophy of Right*, T. M. Knox, trans. (Chicago, London, and Toronto: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), p. 9.

6

Post-Socialist Capitalism in Rural China

Thomas D. Lutze

The new millennium has witnessed the outbreak of tens of thousands of protests throughout the Chinese countryside each year, erupting in ever increasing numbers.[1] These protests raise significant questions as to what kind of political, social, and economic conditions exist in rural China that could give rise to such widespread expression of grievances. While the immediate sparks igniting the protests have included a variety of causes, from local government corruption and abuse[2] to industrial pollution that has ruined crops and fisheries,[3] one of the most common causes has been the loss of control over the primal concern of peasant-farmers—land.[4] Indeed, some analysts have asserted that "official land seizures have become the main cause of protests in China."[5] Yet identifying land seizures as one of the main sources of rural protest only raises new questions: Who is taking the land, and how? Whose land is it that is being taken? If all the land is owned by collectives or the state, why do peasant-farmers feel that it is *their* land that is being seized?

While scholars have carried out extensive and illuminating studies to understand the rural unrest in terms of the political relationships between the state (especially at the local level) and the farming population,[6] little attention has been paid to the *economic* underpinnings of these conflicts. Indeed, the answers to the questions posed above necessitate an understanding of the broader context of the rural economy; in particular, the answers lie both in understanding the predominant social formation that has characterized China since the death of Mao Zedong, a social formation that might be called "post-socialist capitalism," and, more specifically, in understanding the

privatization of rural industry, market relations, and land ownership during the post-1978 reform era.

POST-SOCIALIST CAPITALISM

Identifying the social formation of their country (or "national conditions" *guoqing*) has long been recognized by the Chinese Communists as the key to determining the national tasks at hand and the future road for advancement. Chinese historians, for example, have marked as one of Mao Zedong's greatest achievements his ability during the years leading up to 1949 to formulate a revolutionary political program to address China's "semi-colonial, semi-feudal" social formation, and his related identification in the 1940s of the "three mountains" of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism as the targets of the revolution. Only on the basis of this understanding, these historians contend, were the forces of the new-democratic revolution able to seize power in 1949.[7] Today, identification of China's *guoqing* is deemed no less important. China's social formation remains described as it had been by Deng Xiaoping as "socialism with Chinese characteristics," and this assessment has provided the rationale for the reform era's emphasis on economic development over all else.

Post-Socialist Capitalism vs. "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics"

This chapter takes issue with Deng's formulation and suggests instead that the social formation of post-Mao China might more accurately be described as "capitalism with socialist characteristics," or as worded above, "post-socialist capitalism." Post-socialist capitalism is a social formation wherein the capitalist mode of production has become predominant in a society that had previously undergone a socialist revolution. Remnants of structures (such as Communist Party leadership, centralized institutions, state control over the media, state or collective ownership of certain means of production—all of which had been established earlier with the intent of advancing socialism) continue to play a role in society, but these remnants have become subordinate to the rationalities of profit maximization imposed by capitalist production and market relations. Indeed, these seemingly "socialist" structures stand today not only devoid of their previous socialist content, but have been transformed now into tools for the advancement of capitalism. As Maurice Meisner has shown, the goal of communism—of abolishing exploitation and inimical social differences, and of achieving a classless society through conscious struggle and activism—has been, if considered at all, relegated

to a distant future and replaced by the goal of pragmatically "developing the productive forces" by any means, within a social context in which class struggle—and, one might well argue, classes themselves—are relegated to a period of the past, and social stability receives highest priority.[8] The manifestation of this ideology takes form in the ascension to power of a new class of capitalists, promoted by (and including) top CCP leaders. This new class is comprised of three main groups: 1) bureaucratic capitalists (who, as government/Party authorities themselves, or as children—often referred to as "princelings"—or cronies of these authorities, have assured their privileged access to capital),[9] 2) comprador capitalists (whose partnerships with foreign capital have provided their wealth), and 3) entrepreneurial capitalists (whose accumulated holdings have resulted from government policies encouraging some to "get rich first"). Post-socialist capitalism is the reality behind the mask created by Deng Xiaoping's description of China's social formation as "socialism with Chinese characteristics" and by his notion of China's system of production and distribution as a "socialist market economy."

The arguments in defense of Deng's formulations of Chinese "socialism" have grown increasingly feeble as the reforms have deepened during his era and after. Deng's embrace of marketization had already in the 1980s dismantled much of the socialist past: guarantees of job security, health benefits, and a living wage that workers had enjoyed during the Mao period. This "smashing of the iron rice bowl" was accompanied by a vast migration of rural laborers—some 30 million by the end of that decade—to urban areas, broadening the impact of contract labor and exacerbating the unemployment problems now faced by industrial workers. These assaults on worker rights emerged side by side with an enormous spread of corruption, as those in positions of opportunity utilized the dual pricing system of the time to purchase inputs at low state prices and sell outputs at much higher market prices, lining their pockets all the while. Still more corruption surrounded the massive sell-off of state-owned assets to private interests as a result of the urban reforms launched in 1984. These economic developments played no small part in the widespread support by workers of the Tiananmen protests in the spring of 1989, which culminated in the violent suppression of demonstrators on June 4 and the days that followed.[10]

Over the next few years, different perspectives were voiced within the Communist Party on the appropriate response to these powerful and threatening protests. Questions were raised as to whether or not the reforms were proceeding too fast, and, in some areas, debates even ensued as to whether the reforms were capitalist or socialist.[11] The controversies were officially put to rest, however, with Deng Xiaoping's pronouncements during his southern tour at the beginning of 1992. Embodying what might be called

the "Tiananmen Resolution," these pronouncements, delivered in a series of speeches given during Deng's inspections of Shenzhen and several other rapidly expanding cities on the southern coast, were soon propagated throughout the country as the new directive for China's future.

Deng not only embraced the Open Policy of encouraging foreign direct investment and the adoption of management techniques from capitalist countries, but he also promoted a new definition of socialism, focusing on three determining criteria. Deng now maintained that any policy or enterprise was socialist so long as it 1) expanded the productive forces, 2) strengthened the state, and 3) raised the general standard of living of the people.[12] Dismissed from consideration were Maoist notions of the narrowing of differences between mental and manual labor, between workers and peasants, and between town and countryside.[13] Also ignored was the Marxist (and Maoist) conceptualization of socialism as a conscious transformation, led by the working class, from class society to classless society. Indeed, it might well be argued that the sole element of Deng's discussion of socialism that excluded the United States and other advanced capitalist powers from joining the ranks of socialist countries was his contention that, reflective of his second criterion, the state had to maintain ownership of the majority of the means of production,[14] including, one must presume, industrial enterprises and land.

Even this tenuous element of Deng's definition of socialism, however, has since been rendered moot by the inexorable expansion of capitalist norms and institutions. In the years since 1992, the majority of industrial facilities have become private, with the state-owned share of China's GDP now reduced to roughly 30 percent of the total.[15] To justify this new situation, contemporary ideologues have adjusted Deng's definition so that now socialism is marked not by state ownership of the majority of enterprises, but rather by a situation where "the state economy controls the lifeblood of the national economy and plays the leading economic role."[16] The bending of the definition of socialism to suit the reality of contemporary China (a social formation where private capitalist enterprises are most numerous) has been matched by the bending of the rules for membership in the Communist Party to allow owners of these private enterprises, the capitalists themselves, to enter the ranks of the CCP.[17] These changes suggest that formal state ownership, on the one hand, reveals little about which class interests are truly represented by the state in today's China and, on the other, reveals little about the actual relations of production within the enterprises at the point of production. Extensive, though decreasing, state ownership characterizes, in part, the "post-socialist" element of capitalism in China today. A state that advances the interests of the newly dominant bourgeoisie characterizes, in part, the "capitalist" essence of post-socialist China.

Post-Socialist Capitalism vs. Postsocialism

In addition to taking issue with Deng Xiaoping's "socialism with Chinese characteristics," post-socialist capitalism also rejects various notions of "postsocialism."[18] Postsocialism is at once a historical situation, a social formation, and, most importantly, a deconstructive approach to rethinking ideological categories (such as capitalism and socialism) in the spirit of postmodern criticism, analysis which has no doubt contributed to recognizing more deeply the complexity of our world, while giving new prominence to both agency and contingency in processes of change. Postsocialism's conscious objective has been to provide scope for the "uncertainty" of China's future, breaking out of "the conceptual prison into which Chinese socialism is forced by ideological efforts to constrict it between received notions of capitalism and socialism."[19] Postsocialism cautions that "we must not hasten to accept the claims of either discourse, to affirm or negate the claims of Chinese socialism, either to take it at its word, or to deny validity to its self-image."[20]

It is evident that post-socialist capitalism violates this caveat—but the violation is justifiable. Postsocialism is reflective of the major problem of postmodernism: its radical relativism. What appears to be a very dialectical approach to analysis in fact ends in paralysis, for no aspect is principal, and contradictions cannot be resolved in such a way as to realize a new totality (impermanent as it may be). David Harvey has noted in his critique of postmodernism that it is only upon such a totality that a vision of the future can be created and a project for change be built.[21]

Further, while it is no doubt true that discourses can indeed become material reality, it is something else to claim, as postsocialism does, that representation is itself reality, and that the crucial site of change is in the realm of discourse. Such thinking is but philosophical idealism. Both radical relativism and idealism appear to be conjoined in postsocialism. The result of this postmodern approach to contemporary China is an agnosticism that ultimately impedes analysis. After all, if Chinese officials project a self-image that they are socialist—that they are dedicated to the advancement of the interests of workers and peasants—then who is anyone to say they are not? (Or are?) Apparently, it is fruitless to attempt to establish criteria by which to assess capitalism and socialism,[22] not to mention criteria by which the laboring classes in China can identify friends and foes in their ongoing struggles.

The Problem of China's Rural Economy

Contributing to this controversy among social theorists (and political economists) over the nature of China's contemporary social formation is the rural

economy, in particular the factor at the heart of the rural protests mentioned at the outset—land ownership. Is it not the case that land remains state owned in the cities and collectively owned in the countryside? Does not this condition of ownership justify the conclusion that this sector indeed embodies socialism, or at least postsocialism?

While on the surface this conclusion may indeed appear to be justified, a deeper analysis of the fundamental nature of the forms of ownership and conditions under which work is performed and remunerated in the Chinese countryside demonstrates that in reality the current social formation is neither socialism (even of a particularly "Chinese" type) nor postsocialism. The preceding pages suggest that the broader political, ideological, and economic situation throughout China provides a crucial context for assessing what is currently happening in the Chinese countryside. The following pages attempt to assess in brief the conditions of ownership at the heart of the rural protests.

CAPITALISM IN THE RURAL ECONOMY OF CHINA

To understand the controversy over the question of land ownership, it is important to understand first the wider economic context within the countryside itself in which the peasant protests have been occurring; it is important to evaluate the nature of rural industry and the expansion of rural markets in China's countryside since the launching of the post-Mao reforms. The sum total of the evidence leads to the conclusion that post-socialist capitalism,[23] not "socialism with Chinese characteristics" or postsocialism—has long been predominant in the rural economy.[24]

Rural Industry

The dynamic engine of economic growth in the Chinese countryside during the first two decades of the reform era was rural industry;[25] thus, analysis of the nature of these expanding enterprises is crucial to understanding the evolving economic conditions in the countryside as a whole. Two distinguishing factors merit particular consideration: the forms of ownership and the purpose of production. As to the first factor, these industries rapidly proliferated in the 1980s primarily as "collectively owned" town and village enterprises (TVEs).[26] Already by the end of that decade, however, these enterprises were rarely controlled by collectives, but rather had increasingly come into the ownership hands of a permanent managerial structure of individual entrepreneurs.[27] Relations with state organs during this early period varied widely. Sometimes this individual control was autonomous (under the

authority of the provincial or township economic organs); sometimes it was a concession offered by the township or village.[28] Sometimes rural industries were joint enterprises, operating as subsidiaries or subcontractors for urban (usually state-owned) factories, or even for foreign business interests. While the specific institutional structures and contractual conditions in which these enterprises operated may thus have varied, rural entrepreneurs typically exercised private (economic) ownership.

One of the most experienced observers of the Chinese countryside since the 1940s, William Hinton, published in 1989 a series of essays chronicling the privatization of the rural economy under the Deng reforms. Hinton pointed out the extent to which state policies had fostered this privatization of rural industry:

> Central Document No. 1 for 1983 legalized the private hiring of labor, the private purchase of large-scale producer goods (processing equipment, tractors, trucks), the pooling of capital for private investment, and the leasing of collective property to individuals. In the wake of all this, individuals also began privately loaning out money at usurious rates. The new fiscal and credit policy gave tax holidays to new private businesses and authorized liberal bank loans to such businesses as well as to specialized single households. . . . The larger the enterprise the better the terms of the loan, and the easier it became to get one.[29]

Hinton added that state policy gave private contractors "the right to hire and fire, set wage levels and profit margins, and, if they reinvested heavily in the enterprise, the right to gradually convert the whole thing into private property."[30] The Thirteenth Party Congress of 1987 officially approved this privatization of rural industry by lifting all limits on the hiring of wage labor by individuals and by sanctioning two newly distinguished classifications of enterprise: "individual" (self-employed craftsmen and shopkeepers) and "private" (enterprises with more employees).[31]

By the late 1990s, the privatization of rural industries had become so widespread and so clear that their designation as township and village enterprises would soon be almost universally abandoned. In fact, central authorities in Beijing became so concerned about the cronyism and corruption associated with the relationship between local governments and TVEs that, citing "conflict of interest" as the cause, they passed a series of measures that served as strong disincentives for the continued sponsorship of rural industry by local officials.[32] The "collective" township and village enterprises have thus virtually become a phenomenon of the past.

Besides the "individual" or "private" nature of rural industrial management and (economic) ownership—including the hiring and firing of wage labor, there is a second issue regarding the nature of these enterprises that is relevant

to the question as to whether or not capitalism has become predominant in the Chinese countryside: the purpose of production. Have these rural enterprises functioned primarily in order to meet social need? Or have they proliferated largely in pursuit of profits? There is little doubt that the motivation has been profit, as production either has attempted to establish niches in the market or, in the cases of subcontracting, has been guided by the market needs of larger manufacturing enterprises.[33]

To be sure, the profit motive was not entirely absent during the pre-reform period under Mao's leadership; when agriculture was collectivized, brigades and communes did produce to provide subsistence and profits for the members of the collectives. But profit as the main criterion of production was tempered by several factors. For example, the quota system as part of the state planning mechanism, for all its defects, tended to gear production toward identified social needs of the country as a whole. The state allocated investment credits and resources for rural industrial development in large part to strengthen the base of the Chinese economy, agriculture. Investment targeted infrastructural development (roads, waterways, and conservancy projects) and agricultural support industries such as fertilizer plants and farm machinery manufacturing and repair plants. In other words, although various rural cooperative industries sought to turn a profit, state policy tended to channel the profit-seeking ventures toward planned social (and socialist) goals of narrowing differences between town and countryside and achieving a relatively balanced development of the economy.

The post-Mao period, by contrast, has witnessed the reversal of all such socialist tendencies. While many of the early TVEs utilized their profits to assist in the development of schools and in the production of other public goods, the collective spirit began to wither. Earlier socialist ideological campaigns were halted, replaced by the new ideological refrain sung over and over that "some must get rich first."[34] Structurally, other factors tempering the profit motive for rural production were altered: quotas were eliminated; cooperatives were privatized. Although the standard of living in China's rural regions generally improved—in many cases dramatically—production for social need (especially in terms of provision of social services) was increasingly replaced by production which chased the highest returns on investment.

The increasing participation of rural laborers as wage workers in the nonfarm, industrial economy of the town and village enterprises was accompanied by a massive growth in their participation as migrant workers in the expanding urban industrial economy. The migrant labor force of 30 million in 1989 mushroomed over the next 20 years into a force of more than 130 million.[35] The experiences of these workers in the labor markets of cities from Beijing to Shenzhen (where, in the latter case, 12 million—of the total popu-

lation of 14 million—are migrant workers) have taught them the realities of capitalist labor relations: they are usually hired for labor-intensive, low-pay jobs.[36] When economic shocks reverberate in China, such as the recession of early 2009, millions of migrants join the ranks of the unemployed. These realities of migrant labor have impacted and become integrated within the countryside in many ways, not least of which is the fact that the oft-cited improvement in rural living standards is in reality attributable in large measure to the portions of migrant wages that are sent back to the village.[37] Capitalist wage labor, therefore, in both rural and urban industry has deeply informed the economic practices and norms in the Chinese countryside.

By the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Chinese model of growth pursued under the reforms had resulted in disparities that had grown to immense proportions.[38] In just thirty years, China rapidly transformed from one of the most egalitarian societies in the world to one of the most economically polarized, in particular with regard to the gap between city and countryside.[39] Rural resentment, perhaps not surprisingly, boiled over. It was only within the context of massive rural unrest that the government began at that time to intervene with new policies to ease tax burdens and provide health insurance for the oftentimes desperate farming population.[40]

Markets

The market has taken on new significance under the reforms, and the reliance on the market to determine economic activity has been enshrined by Communist Party leaders in their embrace of the concept of a "socialist market economy." While it may indeed be possible to conceive of a "non-capitalist market economy,"[41] it is not possible to conceive of a capitalist economy without markets; surely in the case of Reform Era China, the vast markets for wage labor in China's booming rural and urban industrial sectors, as described above, are consistent not with some "socialist" or "non-capitalist" market economies, but with the capitalist market economy itself. In the countryside, the market has not only driven the development of the rural industrial sector, but the development of the agricultural sector as well. The expansion of the market in China's earliest post-Mao rural reforms progressed through two main stages. The first stage, during the early years of 1979 and 1980, consisted of government efforts to free up the rural trade fairs, encouraging sideline production of vegetables, poultry, and hogs. This reform resulted in immediate increases in the private income of peasants, averaging 10 percent the first year and 11 percent the second. By comparison, increases in the still predominant collective income measured 2.8 percent and 6.9 percent.[42]

This initial reform addressed what was indeed a serious problem in the Chinese countryside prior to its implementation. The problem was not only one of low income levels for farmers, but also of choked-off circulation of rural commodities so that demand failed to be met with adequate supply.[43] A *People's Daily* article of May 9, 1976 (written shortly before Mao's death, presumably under the direction of the so-called Gang of Four) candidly identified several aspects of the circulation problem, which was clearly aggravated by overzealous attempts by county-level Communist Party leaders either to exercise complete control over rural trade fairs or to abolish them by fiat.[44]

Why might local leaders have been so heavy-handed in their approach to trade fairs? Rural trade fairs had a long history in China, and served both as necessary commodity markets *and* as props for a "rich peasant" economy. Price haggling, trickery, and profiteering at these fairs all tended to enrich some at the expense of others, and generally contributed to a private ownership mentality, undercutting efforts in the 1970s to advance socialist relations and consciousness in the countryside that had been fostered by collectivization. Furthermore, in practical terms, cadres often found that trade fairs furnished a disincentive for peasants to work on collective lands as opposed to private plots, for the open markets provided a marginal rate of return on private land that was much higher than on collective land.[45] Many communists, seeking to root out the vestiges of the social relations of the pre-revolutionary society, were certainly concerned by these latter features of the trade fairs. By comparison, they devalued the significance of the commodity circulation provided by these markets, and therefore acted to limit severely the scope of the trade fairs—or simply to liquidate them.[46]

By taking the initial step of opening up the trade fairs as new markets in the rural economic reforms, the post-Mao regime did help solve a serious problem of supply and demand in the countryside. But it also unleashed what might be called "small-capitalist" consciousness and economic relationships that were only further promoted by the introduction of stage two of the rural reform program, the "household contract responsibility system" (*bao chan dao hu*).

Although the responsibility system—which contractually allocated land and production quotas to individual peasant-farmer families—began to be implemented as a direct result of the reforms of 1978, it took a giant leap as the agricultural norm when Hu Yaobang replaced Hua Guofeng as Communist Party chairman in 1981. Introduced to provide incentive for increased agricultural production, this system was originally rationalized as a measure to tie the rewards received for rural labor more closely to the work actually performed.[47] The previously predominant work-point system of compensation, introduced during the period of collectivization as an institution of

economic democracy, had often turned out to be unwieldy and tendentious, with the result that a peasant's income from the collective, determined by self-assessment and mutual assessment, was not always an accurate measure of actual effort,[48] and was often based on an unwritten, semi-egalitarian principle that might be described as "to each according to his work plus need." The responsibility system was designed to reestablish "the socialist principle"—loudly trumpeted in the early years of the reform—of "to each according to his work."[49]

The responsibility system appears to have been initially welcomed by many peasant-farmers as a step in the direction of greater flexibility in agricultural management.[50] However, in the first years, no uniform pattern of change clearly emerged. Hinton offered a rough estimate, based on a Chinese government survey, that, prior to reform, approximately 30 percent of the Chinese peasantry—in areas where good leadership prevailed—prospered under collectivization, another 40 percent experienced mixed results, while the final 30 percent—in the absence of good leadership—suffered.[51] Given this situation, a good many farmers strove to maintain cooperative forms of economic activity, while others rushed to embrace the private contract system.[52] Within the first five years after 1978, however, government policy rendered it virtually impossible to sustain rural cooperation:

> Given the scale of the campaign [to implement the responsibility system], given the penalties for non-compliance, and realizing that it is always easier to return to the past than to pioneer the future, it is not surprising that the reformers were able to dissolve the coops wholesale even where they were doing well.[53]

By 1983, virtually all of China's rural communes had been disbanded and collective agricultural production had given way to individual household farming.[54] Formerly collective tracts of land were allocated to nuclear farm families, normally for a period of fifteen years. In exchange for land use rights, the families were at first obligated to meet tax and production quotas required by the state. But soon it became evident that applying quotas to individual households was unworkable. By 1984, the state, which had already endorsed the trade fairs as the means for local commodity exchange, now turned to market mechanisms to stimulate production of desired commodities for the national economy as well.[55] In 1985, the state sharply curtailed quotas for agricultural crops, and announced the goal of completely eliminating quotas within a short, but unspecified period of time.[56] Rural economic "planning" thus became an issue of pricing policies, subsidies, taxation, and market manipulation. It goes without saying that these are the same planning mechanisms employed by the state in capitalist countries like the United States.

The conclusion that capitalism was already predominant in rural China in the 1980s is supported by arguments advanced by economist Michel Chossudovsky at the time. He contended that neither the Great Leap Forward nor the Cultural Revolution had eliminated the traditional stratum of rich peasants (especially in the most productive rural areas). This stratum's accumulated savings amounted, in Marxian terms, to a type of local, primitive accumulation that provided the basis for its appropriation of the means of production as specialized households, suppliers of credits and loans, or entrepreneurs. This appropriation of the means of production by rich peasants was sanctioned by the Communist Party in the name of wiping out egalitarianism. The Party officially encouraged some farmers to "get rich first"—it set as an explicit policy the extension of bank credit to individual rich peasants; eventually, the Party maintained, the wealthy could assist the poor. This Chinese version of the "trickle down" theory designated the *rich* peasants as the agents of "socialist construction" in the countryside! The result was that even within the first decade of the reforms, the average income differences between rich and poor farmers in wealthy regions were seven to one; average income differences between rich farmers of wealthy regions and poor farmers of needy regions were a hundred to one.[57]

Along similar lines as Chossudovsky, developmental theorist Gordon White noted three aspects of these early reforms that merited description as capitalist.[58] First, White demonstrated, the reforms had "expanded the scope for private capital accumulation at the individual, household, and corporate/associational levels." At all these levels, both physical and financial capital was being accumulated. In particular, the specialized households—those families who, because of their considerable savings (as rich peasants) or their close relations to cadres, enjoyed privileged access to capital—had been allowed to "rent" farm and transport equipment for a fee and then use the machinery to turn a profit. The specialized households, along with "family workshops" and "economic associations," all had come to exert control over labor, trade, transport, services, and industry.[59] Further, there had been increased capital mobility through joint enterprises, joint stock companies, and private credit and lending institutions.[60]

Second, White observed, by the late 1980s, there already existed in the Chinese countryside mobile labor power—a rural proletariat—which had arisen from the transfer of land. This labor force had become available for exploitation both in the fields and in the rural industrial enterprises established by the new rural business stratum. In reference to the exploitation of field labor, Hinton, writing at the time, described a common pattern of social differentiation that resulted from the reforms: "Bold contractors assume the use-rights to more property than they can work, and then hire their poorer

neighbors to do the hard manual work."[61] This commodification of rural labor had already by 1986 received official sanction.[62]

Land Ownership

White noted a third element of the rural reforms that demonstrated the prevalence of capitalism: the new system of land ownership. White pointed to the

> increasing scope for the stabilization of *de facto* private ownership over major agricultural assets—most notably land, through a series of measures . . . to lengthen the contractual term of household control over former [*sic*] collective land (to fifteen, twenty, or, in the case of reclaimed mountain land, thirty or more years).[63]

In other words, long-term land-use contracts had resulted in private ownership in every sense but formal legality.

Officially, the Communist Party in the early post-Mao period maintained that "the public ownership of the means of production would not change. The peasants would only have the right to use, not to buy, sell, or transfer the land, farm machinery [and so on] owned by the production team."[64] Such legal strictures against private ownership allowed the CCP at the time—and still to this day—to claim that the reforms have merely embodied economic adjustments within an essentially socialist system of public ownership. Political scientist Thomas Bernstein has echoed this view, maintaining that no rural economy can be called capitalist unless land itself can be bought and sold.[65]

But from a Marxist point of view (and the CCP leadership stills claims to adhere to Marxism), *legal* ownership is not the crux of the ownership issue. In his theoretical writings on Marx and the state, Nicos Poulantzas drew a critical distinction between *legal* ownership and *economic* ownership. He argued that the former is a juridical form of property, while the latter involves the power to assign the means of production and to allocate resources and profits (or surplus) to one usage or another, including exploitation as one aspect.[66] According to Marxist thinking, economic ownership, not legal ownership, is the key determinant of the social relations corresponding to a particular mode of production.

Economist Michel Chossudovsky has offered a similar understanding in the following passage:

> The issue is not whether private ownership of land is reinstated or not. The private farmer need not own property in the form of land; he has, however, the *private use* of agricultural land. Although public ownership of land is a *necessary* condition for the construction of socialist agriculture, it does not in itself and by itself define the basis of socialist relations of production.[67]

Chossudovsky cited Marx and Engels' writing on the Russian *mir* (traditional village community) to further substantiate the argument that economic ownership, not formal (legal) communal ownership, is the determining factor. Marx noted that within the system of collective ownership by the *mir*, "labor on one's own lot was a source of private appropriation making possible accumulation of movable goods."[68] Engels concluded that

> because the communally owned land in Russia is not cultivated by the peasants collectively and only the product is divided, . . . [a]lmost everywhere there are a few rich peasants among them—here and there millionaires who play the usurer and suck the blood of the masses of peasants.[69]

Formal (legal) public ownership of land was for Marx and Engels no guarantee against capitalist exploitation.

To be sure, the Chinese party-state leadership continues even now to cling—for ideological and political reasons—to a notion of "socialist" land ownership (a combination of state and collective ownership) throughout the country. This holdover from the past reflects precisely the "post-socialist" element of Chinese capitalism today. While the "collective" element has at times represented a remnant from the Mao period that can protect peasants from some depredations of the market upon their land,[70] the predominant trend since the original breakup of the commune system has been the continued expansion of privatization in the countryside. For years, peasant-farmers have done as they have pleased with their contractual use rights. Many have built new houses on their contracted land;[71] some have continued to farm their contracted plots; others have rented plots to neighbors; still others have allowed their plots to sit untended while they have migrated to the cities in search of industrial jobs. In some regions, large scale land rentals have drawn migrant farmers from distant provinces to utilize vacated tracts.[72]

In still other cases, the village collectives, or the "village committees," or even the townships (all three of which are [contested] loci of legal ownership of rural land[73]), have made decisions to buy or sell tracts of land. For example, even in the relatively poor inland regions of northern Shaanxi Province in 2009, the construction of new roads required the sale of farmers' lands to the government, and the farmers, who only grudgingly complied, were compensated at 7,000–8,000 yuan per mu; by contrast, the expansion of private development projects into farming lands, though it has usually required city and, in some instances, provincial permits, has also resulted in land sales (in this case, by more eager farmers) for the much higher price of 70,000–80,000 *yuan* per *mu*.[74]

In the case study in northern Shaanxi, individual farmers appear to have received the compensation for the sale of their contracted land, but in many

other cases, the cadres themselves in their private capacity as township or village leaders have negotiated the transactions—and have made for themselves quite a tidy profit.[75] With so much money at stake, this type of land sale by officials, especially to urban-based developers, has been at the heart of an estimated 60 percent of the thousands of protests in rural China over the past several years. Political scientist Joseph Fewsmith has noted that

> this relationship [between farmers and cadres], of course, has been at the crux of mass incidents, and the reason is quite simple: under the current system the "collective" owns the land, and the farmer cannot bargain on an equal basis with potential buyers of the land. Accordingly, farmers do not benefit from the high prices at which the land is sold—and they resent the village cadres who benefit from the sale of the land.[76]

In these cases, the battle is over who has control over the sale of the land (or land use rights): individual farmers, or individual cadres acting in the name of the "collective." There is no question, however, as to whether or not there is a market in land.[77]

In describing the overall situation concerning rural land, political scientist Peter Ho has noted, "[T]he Household Contract Responsibility system has moved beyond its initial confines, and farmers can in principle sublease and transfer their contracts. . . ." Moreover, the "valued use system," introduced by the revised Constitution of 1988, has "boil[ed] down to . . . [t]he free transfer, rent and mortgage of land in and outside the agricultural realm."[78] The extension of (heritable) land contracts from the original fifteen years to thirty years has only increased the activity in land use transfers.

In the fall of 2008, both President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao visited the countryside and made important statements in favor of extending land contracts indefinitely (Hu's actual words were "for a long time with no changes" [*changjiu bu bian*]) and *encouraging* the transfer of land use rights to (re)create, for the first time since the communes were dissolved, agriculture of scale.[79] The statements reflected the government's recognition of what has already become a widespread practice.[80] As Fewsmith has noted, "Indeed, in some eastern provinces, the rate of land exchange is as high as 30 to 40 percent. And the Party's main rural policy pronouncement, 'Document No. 1,' issued in late January this year (2008), called for establishing a market to exchange land operating rights."[81] It seemed on the basis of that statement that the central authorities might soon announce an unambiguous and full commitment to private ownership of land.

But at the Third Plenum of the CCP's Seventeenth Central Committee, convened in October of 2008, the Party's "Decision of the CCP Central Committee on Some Important Questions in Promoting the Development of

Rural Reform" fell short of endorsing full-scale privatization, stating clearly, "circulation of the right to operate on contracted land cannot change the collective ownership of the land." In addition to the Party's ideological reasons for formally committing to "collective" ownership, another major reason for this decision, according to CCP rural affairs leader, Chen Xiwen, was to try to prevent real estate developers from seizing new opportunities that such private ownership would create to press individual farmers to sell their land.[82]

While the Party leadership has thus far embraced the benefits of land use transfer (e.g., the creation of large fields for economies of scale), the potential problems of an unregulated sale of land nevertheless appear to be creating new concerns. Not only is there the threat of increasing corruption and social conflict associated with such land sales, but there are at least two other worries: first, that too much farmland will be taken out of agricultural production at the very time when difficulties securing sufficient food imports for Chinese consumers are arising;[83] and second, that even more massive migrations to urban areas will follow the land sales, creating the potential for expansive slums and poverty-stricken districts in the cities.[84] Summing up the Central Committee Decision, Fewsmith observes,

> [E]nterprises with the help of local governments have moved farmers off their land, often for little remuneration, while they set up commercial farms. This movement has evoked comparisons with the "enclosure movement" of eighteenth-century England, and has been a source of social discontent and intellectual criticism. Now, the central government has tried to set out a vision for the orderly transfer of land rights and gradual integration of urban and rural areas.[85]

Much of the language of the Decision does indeed speak of gradual integration of town and countryside and continues to advance the role of the "collective" as it is presently constituted in rural China. But nowhere does the language relate these measures to the goals of socialism—the empowering of the laboring classes to consciously transform society step by step toward the elimination of classes. On the contrary, the motive driving the government is an attempt to utilize the remnant shells of socialist institutions—the "collective" now serving as a corporate layer in the rural political economy through which the state can hope to exert management—in order to quell the anger and protests that have erupted in the countryside and to achieve the stability and to create the efficiencies that are necessary to make the market function more smoothly. This Decision epitomizes the workings of post-socialist capitalism.

In sum, both steps of de-collectivization—the freeing up of traditional trade fairs and the privatization of land use—have furthered the establishment of capitalism in the Chinese countryside. The evidence strongly suggests that market-driven, simple commodity production of agricultural goods, private

economic ownership, capitalist production in rural industry, and massive migration spurred by the urban job market have come to dominate rural economic relationships and behaviors. Whether one surveys rural industrial enterprise (permanent management—now almost universally private—of hired wage labor), the mushrooming migrant labor market (employing rural laborers in the dirtiest, most dangerous, and lowest paying jobs), marketing mechanisms (originally trade fairs, and now, increasingly, regional, national, and even international markets), or land ownership patterns (household responsibility system with expanded individual economic ownership over use rights)—all in all, the entire rural economy has been restructured along the lines of privatization, production for profit, and integration into the capitalist structures that predominate in China and throughout today's world.[86]

CONCLUSION: CAPITALISM AS THE ECONOMIC UNDERPINNING OF PROTEST

It is this combination of economic realities that underlies the situation that has given rise to farmer protests over land seizures in recent years. Throughout the Chinese countryside, there is a strong sense of private ownership. Rural industry is privately owned and managed; agricultural inputs and product are privately determined; and, most importantly in this case, land use is privately determined by individual families or contract holders. In all these economic activities, profits and losses are privately absorbed.[87] The long-term extension of marketable use rights to rural families—within a broader context of a privatized economy that has, on the one hand, enveloped the rural population in a matrix of activities linked to the expansion of capitalist industrial labor practices, and, on the other, emphasized individual initiative and "household responsibility"—has understandably resulted in peasants' seeing the land as their own. When the sale of this real estate not only results in the loss of the security that only land ownership can provide, but also results in the enrichment of the privileged few at the expense of the property rights of the many, the conditions for angry protest are created.

The "collective," as a remnant from the previously socialist period, does not alter this fundamental reality. Capitalism predominates in the Chinese economy as a whole, and the rural economic features of the reform period (from TVEs and migrant labor to markets and private economic ownership of land) have been developed as key components of this economy—integrated into and essential to the unprecedented growth of this East Asian "miracle." The question that remains is why those in power have chosen to maintain adherence to certain "socialist" elements from the past.

Two answers seem most apparent. First, post-socialist capitalism can utilize, as the leaders deem necessary, structural implements—originally designed to build socialism—to advance its development agenda. Already mentioned is the current effort by central authorities to curb runaway land sales to urban developers by legally vesting the right of sale in the "collective." But in a broader sense, socialism, as practiced in the past, embodied a high degree of state intervention in the economy. As Deng Xiaoping stated during his 1992 southern tour, the virtue of socialism was its ability to effectively "concentrate our forces on a major task."[88] This aspect of state intervention can be a significant and ready tool for the Chinese leadership to pick up and wield as situations dictate.

Second, post-socialist capitalism is a social formation in which leaders of the state initially owe much of their legitimacy among the people—to the extent that they maintain legitimacy—to the promises of socialism: the ending of exploitation and invidious inequalities, and the creating of new social relationships in the constructing of a new economy, polity, and society. Having come to power on these promises of socialism, the Communist Party has maintained an interest in preserving certain institutions and rhetoric that won popular support in the past. As the socialist past has faded into the shadows of the capitalist present, however, the basis of legitimacy for the Party has been shifting: the promises of socialism have become secondary to the promises of an increasingly affluent consumer society and an increasingly strong nation. Perhaps before long the rationale for post-socialist capitalism will be lost, and post-socialist capitalism will give way to the less disguised forms of capitalism that have been taking shape in Eastern Europe, in Russia, or even in India or Brazil over the past two decades.

The serious dislocations and conflicts that have continued to accompany these transformations, however—conflicts such as those over land seizures in China—certainly raise questions as to what kind of future capitalism has to offer. Perhaps we will find that whether the Chinese leadership perseveres in its embrace of post-socialist capitalism or ultimately opts to accept some form of the democratic-capitalist model prescribed by elites of the advanced industrial countries, the situation will result in fresh appraisals of and renewed struggles for the socialist alternative.

NOTES

1. The *Wall Street Journal* reported in a May 2009 interview with Chinese dissident Bao Tong that protests in China had begun to exceed 100,000 per year. See Leslie Hook, "'Tiananmen Is Still Here,'" *Wall Street Journal*, May 30–31, 2009,

p. A11. In 2005, the *New York Times* cited China's public security minister Zhou Yongkang in reporting that China had experienced 74,000 "mass incidents, or demonstrations and riots," during 2004, an increase from 58,000 in 2003. See Howard W. French, "Land of 74,000 Protests (but Little Is Ever Fixed)," *New York Times*, August 24, 2005, www.nyt.com/2005/08/24/international/asia/24letter.html (accessed May 31, 2009). The vast majority of these protests have been peasant-farmer protests, and the number of such protests clearly grew throughout the decade.

2. For a searing exposé by Chinese investigative journalists, Chen Guidi and Wu Chuntao, of local government corruption and brutality in rural Anhui Province, see *Will the Boat Sink the Water?* (New York: Public Affairs Books, 2006).

3. See, for example, Edward Cody, "For Chinese, Peasant Revolt Is Rare Victory: Farmers Beat Back Police in Battle over Pollution," *Washington Post* Foreign Service, June 13, 2005, p. A01. See also Jim Yardley, "Thousands of Chinese Villagers Protest Factory Pollution," *New York Times*, April 13, 2005, www.democraticunderground .com/ discuss/duboard.php?az=view_allandaddress=102x1392651 (accessed November 13, 2009).

4. Throughout this chapter, the term "land" is used to describe productive (or potentially exploitable) agricultural lands and forests.

5. Jamil Anderlini, "Losing the Countryside: A Restive Peasantry Calls on Beijing for Land Rights," *Financial Times*, February 19, 2008. Similarly, journalist Peter Ford of the *Christian Science Monitor* has declared, "land grabs by corrupt officials—who sell the land to developers or rent it out for personal gain—are not uncommon in China: They are the cause of most of the tens of thousands of peasant riots that break out every year across the country." See "Chinese Farmers Protest a Key Mao Tenet," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 22, 2008, www.csmonitor .com/2008/0122/p01s01-woap.html (accessed November 27, 2009).

6. Among the best of these many studies are the essays collected in Elizabeth Perry and Mark Selden, eds., *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), and in Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, eds., *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

7. See, for example, Ho Kan-chih [He Ganzhi], *A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1960), pp. 354–59, and "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China," (abridged) (adopted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, June 27, 1981), http://english .cpc.people.com.cn/66095/4471924.html (accessed November 30, 2009).

8. For a brilliant analysis of the Reform Era's conceptualization of "socialism"—and of the implications of that conceptualization—see the final essay, "The Ritualization of Utopia: Chinese Marxism in the Post-Mao Era," in Maurice Meisner, *Marxism, Maoism, and Utopianism: Eight Essays* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), pp. 212–39.

9. Maurice Meisner has characterized the economy of Reform-Era China as bureaucratic capitalism. He has argued that with Deng Xiaoping's rise to power, the earlier Maoist attacks on the bureaucracy came to a halt. Although the bureaucrats, who were mired in inertia and jealous to maintain their established positions

of power, originally resisted the reforms to some degree, they soon came to see the enormous material benefits they could reap through their privileged positions in the process of privatization. They quickly embraced the "virtues" of marketization and set about creating what had been missing in China—a modern bourgeoisie. However, this new bourgeoisie, according to Meisner, was marked by characteristics common to bourgeois elements in both imperial China and Guomindang China: it survived and flourished only insofar as it maintained the patronage of state bureaucrats and their relatives and friends. Meisner notes that the ascension of the bureaucrat capitalists under the reforms was accompanied by a general increase in living standards, but the process also resulted in a concomitant increase in social costs to the Chinese people. Maurice Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping Era: An Inquiry into the Fate of Chinese Socialism* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), chapter 11.

10. Li Minqi, "China: Six Years after Tiananmen," *Monthly Review*, vol. 47, no. 8 (January 1996), pp. 3–4.

11. "Tree-Point [*sic*] Criteria for Socialism," *China Daily*, April 17, 1992, p. 2.

12. Ibid.

13. At one point in the published remarks, Deng noted that socialism requires that measures be taken against extreme polarization, presumably in income differentials, but he made no mention of these social inequalities. To prevent the income polarization, Deng proposed that taxation and state requisition of excess profit might someday be enacted. See "Excerpts from Talks Given in Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, and Shanghai, January 18–February 21, 1992," http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/d1200.html, p. 3 (accessed October 28, 2009). The thrust of his comments on this subject, however, was that for the time being it was more important for the rich not to be deprived of the incentive to make more money. Ibid., p. 2.

14. During his southern tour, Deng had concluded that the SEZs (Shenzhen in particular) were socialist in that state ownership was dominant—quantitatively; the foreign-invested sector, he pointed out, was only one-quarter of Shenzhen's economy. (Ibid.) Deng's remarks indicate that in his view, as long as the majority of economic enterprises in the market economy were state owned, then the economy as a whole was socialist.

15. Economist Li Minqi has noted that "there have been no official estimates of the state sector's share in China's GDP. But a rough estimate would be that state-owned enterprises and government services together contribute about 30 percent of GDP." He elaborates as follows:

> [T]he total "value added" of state-owned and "state-controlled" enterprises in the industrial sector contribute to about 40 percent of the value added of "industrial enterprises above the designated size." (State-owned enterprises alone account for about 15 percent; "state-controlled enterprises" refer to share-holding companies where the state has more than 25 percent stake.) But that's for industry. Most of the service [sector] and the entire agricultural [sector] are privately owned. (Correspondence with the author, December 22, 2009.)

In short, the state-owned sector is now considerably smaller than the private sector in China's economy.

16. This line of argument is now found in official Chinese high school textbooks. The Chinese reads, "*guoyou jingji kongzhi guomin jingji mingmai, dui jingji qi zhudao zuoyong."* See *Mao Zedong sixiang he Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi lilun tixi gailu* [An Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought and the Theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics] (Beijing: Gaodeng jiasyu chubanshe, 2008), pp. 162–63.

17. This decision to admit capitalists into the Communist Party was formalized by Chinese President Jiang Zemin and the Party leadership in July of 2001. It may be of interest, and significance, to note that it is now easier for capitalists to enter the CCP during the current period of "socialism" than it was during the period of New Democracy, the "bougeois-democratic" phase of the Chinese revolution, which concluded at the end of 1952. At that time, a capitalist was compelled both to transfer his private holdings to the state and to renounce his status and the system of capitalism itself before being considered for Party membership. (Interview by author with six former capitalists and members of the China Democratic National Construction Association, Shanghai, June, 1992.) Now, capitalists must agree only to "'reinvesting a good sum of their after-tax profits to expand production' and 'be enthusiastic in charitable work.' They also should respect the rights of workers and 'sincerely strive for their benefits.'" See Josephine Ma, "China Promises to Keep Tight Reins on 'Red Capitalists,'" *South China Morning Post*, August 29, 2001.

18. The concept of "postsocialism" was introduced as a theoretical paradigm by Arif Dirlik in his stimulating essay, "Postsocialism," in Dirlik and Maurice Meisner, eds., *Marxism and the Chinese Experience: Issues in Contemporary Chinese Socialism* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1989). An apparent variant of postsocialism has reportedly been offered more recently by Marx scholar, Bertel Ollman, whose 2002 lecture at People's University in Beijing was summarized as follows by Viren Murthy, who attended the talk:

> Ollman claimed that China is not capitalist and that the state does not represent the interests of the capitalist class. He did not go into detail about why this is the case, but he explained why such a question is important for the future of socialism. He argued capitalism is now in crisis and this will eventually lead to its end. In a few years when capitalism's crisis becomes even more serious, Ollman asserted that the CCP could break free from the capitalist world system. Given that CCP officials are pragmatists, they will see that it is not in their best interests to stay on a sinking ship. In his words, "They will jump [off] of the Titanic and realize that the state (the party) is their lifesaver." Then the CCP will supposedly socialize industries and start a wave of socialism. Workers throughout the world will look to China as a model (Murthy, "Ollman: Is China Capitalist?" e-mail correspondence posted on Zhongguo listserv, October 17, 2002).

This view is entirely consistent with Dirlik's contention that "Chinese society today . . . is postsocialist because socialism, as its structural context, remains as a possible option to which it can return if circumstances so demand. . . ." (Dirlik, pp. 377–78).

19. Ibid., p. 362.

20. Ibid., pp. 363–64.

21. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 52.

22. Postsocialism's denial of "capitalism" and "socialism" as distinctive and useful frameworks of analysis is surprising on both a theoretical and practical level. In the former instance, socialism was orginally conceived in the early stages of capitalism as a fundamental critique of this new economic system based on private ownership and the utilization of wage labor to produce for the maximization of profits; socialism was the antithesis of capitalism. While it is no doubt true that as ideal types (and in common with all ideal types), capitalism and socialism may never have been—and may never be—fully realized, they nevertheless embody key characteristics that can help structure our understanding of reality and against which reality can be measured.

In practical terms, capitalism and socialism, among other things, embrace very different economic and class relationships. These practical differences have been well-documented in the Chinese case by, for example, the contrasting studies of industrial labor conditions by Charles Bettelheim, *Cultural Revolution and Industrial Organization in China: Changes in Management and Division of Labor* (New York: Monthly Review Press,1975) and by Anita Chan, *China's Workers Under Assault: The Exploitation of Labor in a Globalizing Economy* (Watertown, MA: Eastgate Books, 2001). Recent studies of the Chinese countryside also emphasize the contrast. See Han Dongping, *The Unknown Cultural Revolution: Life and Change in a Chinese Village* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008); Mobo C. F. Gao, *Gao Village: A Portrait of Rural Life in Modern China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999) and *The Battle for China's Past* (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

23. It should perhaps be emphasized that in using the prefix "post," the hyphen is included purposely to denote that "post" only means "after" and contains none of the implications of association with postmodernism.

24. It should perhaps be noted as well that the evidence presented in the following pages argues against the more recent descriptions by Giovanni Arrighi of the contemporary Chinese economy as a "non-capitalist market economy," an economic form that has existed in China since traditional times. (See Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the 21st Century* [New York: Verso, 2007].) Arrighi suggested that a distinction exists between capitalism and market economies, and that the non-capitalist market economy he finds in China is relatively benign and poses an attractive alternative model, particularly in the global South, to American-style capitalism. For a video in which Arrighi presents his argument, along with a lively exchange with critics David Harvey and Joel Andreas, see "Symposium on Giovanni Arrighi's *Adam Smith in Beijing* (2008)," http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=2718530085458752500#. For yet another perspective on Arrighi's argument, see Jeong Seong-jin, "Karl Marx in Beijing," *International Socialist*, no. 123 (June 25, 2009), www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?id=563andissue=123 (accessed December 1, 2009).

25. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, rural industry contibuted as much, often more, to the growth of the entire Chinese economy as did state-owned enterprises. See Wing Thye Woo, "China's Rural Enterprises in Crisis: The Role of Inadequate Financial Intermediation," September 2001, pp. 2–3, www.hks.harvard.edu/m-rcbg/Conferences/financial_sector/InadequaciesofRuralFinancialIntermediation.pdf (accessed January 10, 2010).

26. Joel Andreas has identified two other forms of rural industry: small, family operations, and enterprises set up by foreign capital or its subsidiaries. (The latter was associated largely with the Pearl River Delta region.) The TVEs, however, predominated throughout China. ("Symposium").

27. Michel Chossudovsky, *Towards Capitalist Restoration? Chinese Socialism after Mao* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1986), p. 68.

28. See Chossudovsky, pp. 67–68, for examples.

29. William Hinton, *The Great Reversal: The Privatization of China, 1978–1989* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), p. 149.

30. Ibid, p. 150.

31. Ibid, pp. 135–36.

32. Interview with Township Vice-Director, Yan'an, May 2009.

33. The fundamental drive for profit in the TVEs did not always mean that *short-term* profit was the only managerial objective. As Satya Gabriel pointed out in a 1999 study,

> This [TVE efficiency] should not, however, be taken to mean that the only or overriding objective of TVE managers is profit maximization. In many cases, TVE managers are more concerned about expanding market share. This in no way contradicts the capitalist nature of the TVE. They remain enterprises run by managers who appropriate surplus through voluntary contracts with wage laborers. To the extent enterprise managers focus on other criteria than profit maximization, they are acting in accordance with the long-term capitalist objective of maintaining the wage labor system and, no doubt, the short-term objective of satisfying their own self-interest. Indeed, it is not so uncommon for capitalist enterprises in the U.S.A. and other advanced capitalist nations to focus on such factors as expansion of market share, even at the expense of short-run profitability. ("Ambiguous Capital: The Success of China's New Capitalists in the Township and Village Enterprises and Their Impact on the State Sector," China Essay Series, March 16, 1999, www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/sgabriel/economics/china-essays/14.html [accessed January 10, 2010].)

34. For discussion of such ideological efforts in the first decade of the reforms, see Hinton, p. 135.

35. The *China Labour Bulletin* cites official figures of 30 million migrant workers in 1989, 62 million in 1993, and 131.8 million in 2006 ("Migrant Workers in China," www.china-labour.org.hk/en/node/100259#4 [accessed January 10, 2010]).

36. Ibid.

37. The *China Labour Bulletin* notes that by 2004, 34 percent of rural income was accounted for by wages. (Ibid.) In his ethnographic study of his home village, Gao Mobo directly attributes the improvements in village amenities in the 1990s to the income sent home by the village's migrant workers. See Gao, p. 67.

38. Figures describing income disparity in 2007 indicate that the average urban resident makes 3.3 times the income of the average rural dweller. See "China's Effort to Narrow Rural-Urban Gap Dampened by Financial Crisis," www.china.org.cn/government/NPC_CPPCC_2009/2009-03/12/content_17433356.htm (accessed December 2, 2009). This income differential does not include the many

social services to which urban residents have better access (education, health care, unemployment insurance, and minimal living relief). See "Urban-Rural Income Gap Larger: Survey," www.china.org.cn/english/China/88528.htm (accessed December 2, 2009).

39. Joel Andreas has provided the following statistical information:

> In 1978, China's Gini coefficient (the measure used to compare international income inequality in which 0 indicates absolute equality and 1 absolute inequality) was calculated to be 0.22. This was among the lowest rates in the world. Observers were particularly impressed by it given China's size and geographic diversity. The PRC had accomplished this, despite large income differences between urban and rural areas and between more and less developed regions, because within each locality differences were minimal. Less than three decades later, in 2006, the figure was 0.496, surpassing the United States and approaching the rates of the world's most unequal countries, such as Brazil and South Africa. (See "Changing Colours in China," *New Left Review*, no. 54, November–December, 2008, www.newleftreview.org/?view=2756 [accessed January 10, 2010].)

For similar figures, see Xie Chuanjiao, "Bridging Urban-Rural Gap Is 'Historic Task,'" *China Daily*, September 4, 2008. www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-09/04/content_6996029.htm (accessed January 10, 2010).

40. Since the middle of the past decade, the elimination of rural taxes and the introduction of a new rural health insurance program (which costs the peasants some 10–20 *yuan* per year, matched by government funds of 90–100 *yuan* per year) appear to have alleviated some of the most pressing burdens endured by the peasants up until that time under the reform. (Interviews with peasants from Shaanxi, Sichuan, Yunnan, and Shandong in Chengdu, Sichuan, May 2009.)

41. See note 25.

42. Dwight H. Perkins, "Reforming China's Economic System," *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. XXVI, no. 2 (June 1988), p. 608.

43. Gao Mobo notes the absence of local markets in his home village during this period (Gao, p. 49). As Gao rightly points out, however, the problem with commodity circulation was only one of several serious problems in the rural economy, including government pricing policies, at the end of the Mao era (pp. 65, 71).

44. "Socialist Big Fair Is Good," in Raymond Lotta, ed., *And Mao Makes 5: Mao Tsetung's Last Great Battle* (Chicago: Banner Press, 1978), p. 230.

45. Ibid.

46. It may be interesting to note as an aside that the 1976 article from the *People's Daily* opposed both the liquidation of all trade fairs and the uncritical promotion of the traditional fair. Instead it offered as a model the "socialist big fair" of Ha'ertao County in Liaoning, which successfully expanded commodity sales of agricultural products through the state at set prices, thus restricting (though not completely eliminating) the capitalist tendencies associated with open market economies. (See ibid., pp. 229–237.)

47. Perkins, p. 608.

48. Ibid.

49. Although the Chinese reform-era theoretical writings on this "socialist principle" acknowledge Marx's concern that the equal right embodied in the practice of

"to each according to his work" is *bourgeois* right, they emphasize that the principle is socialist because in each preceding mode of production, non-working exploiters have lived off the surplus produced by the labor of others. Public ownership, according to these theorists, precludes exploitation, even though bourgeois right makes this distribution system more advantageous to some than others. One might ask whether exploitation is still precluded in a system of legal *public* ownership, but *private* use rights (where labor is hired and fired), as is the case in China's countryside today.

Further, these theorists emphasize that because socialism will not be superseded for "many generations to come," this system of distribution according to work must be "enforced" for the foreseeable future. Despite the fact that early post-Mao writings still made reference to "politics in command," they did not explore the political and ideological effects of a system of piece rates, bonuses, and material incentives, other than to conclude that the increase of workers' income will increase their enthusiasm for socialism. Politics and economics indeed appear to be separate questions, united only in the sense that both depend on the development of the productive forces for the "gradual" advance toward communism. See Li Hung-lin, "To Each According to His Work: Socialist Principles in Distribution" (originally in *Peking Review*, no. 7, February 17, 1978), in Lotta, ed., pp. 519–522.

"To each according to his work" soon became a practical failure in any case. In the countryside, the contract system quickly led to rewards being based on the capital controlled more so than work actually performed. Moreover, there is no evidence that the migrant workers and business owners are compensated with equal consideration for actual work performed. It is evident instead that, as in past societies, once again non-working exploiters are living comfortable lives from the surplus they have accumulated from the labor of others.

50. Chossudovsky, p. 44.
51. Hinton, p. 140.
52. Ibid., pp. 147–48.
53. Ibid., p. 148.
54. Perkins, p. 609.
55. Most economic studies point to the initial success of these efforts to stimulate production. Perkins has gathered the following comparative pre- and post-reform statistics (ibid., p. 612):

Growth Rates of Rural Output (percent)			**Share of Growth**		
	1971–78	1982–86		1971–78	1982–86
Total	4.3	13.0	Grain	39.6	7.9
Grain	2.9	2.5	Rural Industry	27.2	58.7

While the 13 percent growth rate in post-reform output was indeed significant, it must also be noted that the majority of this growth had been accounted for by rural industry. The rate of growth of grain output actually declined in comparison with that of the pre-reform period. Hinton noted at the time that, along with successes, widespread failures of small rural enterprises had thrown millions of rural laborers out of

off-farm work, and that grain shortages had been at the root of the serious inflation which soared to over 20 percent in 1988 (pp. 172–73). These developments appear to have been important social and economic components of the general political crisis which erupted in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

56. Perkins, p. 610.

57. Chossudovsky, pp. 52–59.

58. White's specific conclusion was that "some" of the changes in rural China "point in the direction of private capitalism." In his 1987 article on the impact of the economic reforms, White did not go so far as to label the system "capitalist," but rather he called it "a new hybrid economic system" for which he coined the term "socialist capitalism." (Gordon White, "The Impact of Economic Reforms in the Chinese Countryside: Towards a Politics of Social Capitalism?" in *Modern China*, vol. 13, no. 4 [1987], p. 422.

59. The exploitative and oppressive behavior of one such specialized household leader toward his fellow villagers has been graphically portrayed—and critiqued—in the 1993 Chinese film, *The Story of Xinghua* (*Xinghua sanyue tian*), directed by Yin Li.

60. White, p. 421.

61. Hinton, p. 107.

62. White, p. 421.

63. Ibid., p. 420.

64. From 1981 statement, quoted in Chossudovsky, p. 48.

65. Bernstein raised this point in a comment on an earlier presentation of the concept of post-socialist capitalism at the "Conference in Honor of the Life Work of William Hinton," East Asia Center, Columbia University, April 1999.

66. Bob Jessop, *Nicos Poulantzas: Marxist Theory and Political Strategy* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 161.

67. Chossudovsky, p. 48, emphasis in original.

68. Quoted in Chossudovsky, p. 49.

69. Quoted in Chossudovsky, p. 49.

70. Andreas, "Changing Colours in China."

71. Interview with political scientist, Han Dongping, Lisle, IL, April, 2009. The interview was based upon Professor Han's extensive research into contemporary rural conditions, particularly in his home village in Henan and in the countryside of Shandong as well.

72. In southern Hunan, for example, large numbers of fields have been rented out to farmers who have migrated from Jiangsu, where land pressures have mounted due to urban sprawl. The migrants have rented land in Hunan to cultivate strawberries, a cash crop commonly grown in Jiangsu, but, according to local sources, not previously widely grown in Hunan (author's investigation, May 2004).

73. See Peter Ho, "Who Owns China's Land? Policies, Property Rights, and Deliberate Institutional Ambiguity," *China Quarterly*, no. 166 (June, 2001), p. 407.

74. Interview with Township Vice-Director, Yan'an, Shaanxi Province, May 2009.

75. Ho, pp. 409–410.

76. Joseph Fewsmith, “Tackling the Land Issue—Carefully,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 27, http://media.hoover.org/documents/CLM27JF.pdf, p. 5 (accessed March 2009).

77. The foregoing activities include only those allowed by law. The transfers of land and land use rights that actually transpire in any given locale may go far beyond what is legally sanctioned. (Interview with Han Dongping.) All this activity demonstrates the existence of an active market in land use rights, i.e., in the transfer of economic ownership from one private party to another.

78. Ho, p. 419.

79. Fewsmith, p. 1.

80. Interview with Township Vice-Director, Yan’an, May, 2009. When asked directly what changes were brought about by the much publicized Central Committee decisions of fall 2008, he said that they “did not make for a major difference” (“*bushi henda de bianhua*”).

81. Fewsmith, p. 2.

82. Ibid., p. 5.

83. Ibid., p. 4. Chinese authorities have been sensitive to concerns such as those raised by Lester Brown in 1995 in his widely read tract, “Who Will Feed China? A Wake-up Call for a Small Planet.” As one Chinese publication recently replied, “Some foreigners once raised the question: ‘Who will feed China?’ ‘We Chinese will feed ourselves!’ replied China’s leaders and agriculture experts.” (“Development,” *China Human Rights*, www.humanrights.cn/en/Chinainbrief/Agriculture/t20070620_255904.htm [accessed September 15, 2010].) In order for China to feed itself, however, the government must monitor the rapid loss of its agricultural lands to development.

84. Fewsmith, p. 7.

85. Ibid., pp. 6–7.

86. In reference to the relationship between China’s countryside and the demands of capitalist expansion, Joel Andreas has concluded,

> The land-tenure system established in the 1980s has served the broader interests of capital. For it has not only averted the social instability associated with huge landless populations, but has also allowed rural subsistence production to subsidize the employers of migrant workers, and a reserve army of rural labour to fluctuate in accord with the changing requirements of capitalist production. (Andreas, “Changing Colours in China.”)

87. This reality is powerfully revealed in the film, *Women from the Lake of Scented Souls* (dir. Xie Fei, 1993), which portrays the unhappiness (and the reproduction of women’s oppression) within a rural family whose diligent wife/mother worked hard and “got rich” creating a small sesame oil factory during the reforms, but proceeded to take advantage of a neighboring family who, because of a flood, lost its investment in aquaculture and faced abject poverty.

88. “Excerpts from Talks,” p. 5.

7

Independent Chinese Film: Seeing the Not-Usually-Visible in Rural China

Paul G. Pickowicz

A young peasant mother dies of AIDS, and her withered body is laid out on the floor of her hinterland home for her three small children to see. A naïve rural widow, the target of a rural seduction gambit, is seen in bed romping with a local Communist official. Grandpa and Grandma take their sweet little grandchildren to see two pit bulls tear each other to shreds at a county dog-fight. These are not the kinds of images we see in the official film productions of the People's Republic. Nor are we likely to encounter them in our field research. But would seeing them with our own eyes cause us to understand China in new ways?

When new sources are available and new methodologies are developed, they can in fact cause us to think differently. Increasingly our sources on present-day China are visual in nature. Not that long ago, foreign researchers had no direct access to China and had to rely almost exclusively on official textual material. Benjamin Schwartz, Stuart Schram, and Maurice Meisner were the best at creatively interpreting such sources.[1] By the 1970s foreign scholars began to get very limited access to China and its people. But while field researchers, especially foreign ones, might make some progress reconstructing the *recent past* based on interviews, archival sources, official published sources, and even unofficial written sources, understanding the dynamics of the *present moment* is a more difficult challenge. Rural people do not easily open up to outsiders about the traumas of the present. But in the last few years, growing numbers of underground and independent filmmakers, mostly people whose names we have never heard, have allowed us to "see" the not-usually-visible in rural China. "Seeing" the current crisis at the

microcosmic level can be qualitatively different from and more penetrating than reading about it or hearing about it secondhand.

There are, it is true, new and captivating works to read by Chinese writers on the problems of rural China. We have important chapters in *China Candid*, as well as the courageous volume by Chen Guidi and Wu Chuntao.[2] We have peasant protest letters and unauthorized, unpublished rural memoirs.[3] We have an important volume by Kevin O'Brien and Lianjiang Li.[4] And there are the tidbits that pop up in newspapers, foreign as well as Chinese, from time to time. But, somehow, none of this is as illuminating as "seeing in detail" what we cannot easily see as scholarly field researchers in rural China. I believe that the work of independent Chinese filmmakers who dwell on rural life and its agonies is becoming increasingly important as a primary source of information. We already have stunning examples of such protest work, but I think there will be much more of it in the future. Scholars interested in the sometimes harsh realities of rural life in China will now need to make frequent visits to major underground and independent film archives or build personal collections of their own. It is that important. If we go to China hoping to "see" firsthand what is contained in independently produced films, we may not be making the most efficient use of our time. The age of private, Chinese-produced, digital reporting and documentation, much of it investigative and critical in nature, is well under way in China.

The new filmmaking (which gives rise to new methodologies and suggests new paradigms) is the result of inexpensive new technologies. There is something remarkably democratic about the new technologies. That is not to say that the new technologies are *always* put to life-enhancing uses. Quite often they are not. The same inexpensive, high quality, digital cameras favored by underground filmmakers who do insightful work on rural China and the local are also used by people like Zhu Yu, the "cutting edge" male performance artist who allegedly made a movie of himself witnessing an abortion (said to be performed on a willing young prostitute) and then immediately eating portions of the aborted fetus.[5]

But the new technologies also offer exciting opportunities for young urban filmmakers, including amateurs, who see themselves as ethnographers, social reformers, and advocates.[6] Armed with a cheap, but high quality, digital camera, all the filmmakers need is access to the rural sector and the trust (usually hard won) of their subjects. Their projects can be one-person operations. There is no need for a large, alienating crew or major funding. It is guerilla filmmaking. Their work is often more detailed and more nuanced than anything one can find in a written source. And when it comes to the rural and the local, the more detailed the better, the more microcosmic, the better. The new digital technology is not being put to good use unless it can go deeper into the rural and local

scenes than written material or field research. In this chapter I discuss three of the smartest, most interesting, and most disturbing films about the rural scene produced in recent years: *These Dogs Belong to All of Us* (d. Zhang Zhanqing, 2003), *Better to Live Than to Die* (d. Chen Weijun, 2003), and *Red Snow* (d. Peng Tao, 2006). The first two are documentaries, and the last is a full-length feature film. All were made underground and all represent the most provocative recent underground work on rural China and the local.

But what difference does it make if only small numbers of people can view the work of the young artists who are now making good independent films? The state, after all, still controls virtually all public screening and broadcast venues. A few years ago this was a very important and troubling problem. But now the new technological explosion has also generated a laptop revolution. Greater and greater numbers of Chinese own a computer and have access to the internet. Increasingly, they get both their information and their entertainment from low cost DVDs and from the internet. Young consumers no longer depend on state-controlled movie theaters and state-controlled television. It is true that the state does what it can to control internet activity, but it simply cannot keep up. Independent films are screened at film festivals and in private film clubs, but they are also widely available for sale as inexpensive DVDs that are shared and copied among friends.[7] Websites open and websites get closed by the state, but in the space between openings and closings tremendous amounts of digital material get downloaded and exchanged. In brief, lack of access to state theaters and state television is no longer a problem for independent filmmakers.

Viewing these intriguing works about the "eternal local" has forced me to conclude that we pay too much attention to the "national" and the "global" when it comes to the study of China. We privilege both the "national" and the "transnational" or "global." And we do so at our own risk. For decades, the study of modern China concerned itself with the "nation." This preoccupation was shaped by the nature of the sources that were available and the rhetoric of the modernizing Chinese state itself, a "nation-centered" rhetoric generated by urban intellectuals. In an effort to destabilize this scholarly preoccupation with the "national entity," Benedict Anderson and others taught us that "nations" are, after all, only "imagined" communities.[8] Preoccupation with the "nation" eventually gave way to scholarly emphasis on the crucial importance of the "transnational," the "cross border," and "globalization."[9] This has been helpful, though it has probably led to a new under-appreciation and lack of research on the ongoing potency of the "nation" and the "national project." It is worth pointing out that the "transnational" and the "global" are no less "imagined communities" than the "national." We sometimes replace one privileged category ("nation") with another ("transnational").

The "rural," the "local," and the "sub-national" are also imagined communities. But it seems to me that in an experiential sense they are as "real" or more "real" to more people on a daily basis and thus significantly less "imagined" than the national or the transnational/global. If we are going to privilege any category, it should probably be the "sub-national." The problem is we do not understand the sub-national—in all its gritty detail—very well. Learning about the sub-national is very hard work. By privileging the "national" and the "transnational" we intentionally or unintentionally ignore and diminish the local and the sub-national—arguably the most meaningful world inhabited by human beings. Also, by privileging the national and the transnational, we give their influence and their "shaping capabilities" too much credit. People who inhabit "local" realms lose their agency and appear quite often as the passive objects of larger, more powerful, and more impersonal "external" dynamics. It often seems more important for scholars to see "local" people acting *in response* to "national" and "transnational" forces than to understand how they live and shape their own lives. When we do not bother to learn the details of sub-national life, all we can see (and perhaps all we want to see) are the "local" manifestations of the national and the transnational. Perhaps it is time to start thinking about worldwide "trans-local" phenomena.

In the three "local" films under discussion in this chapter, all produced by educated urbanites, there are indeed hints and suggestions of the presence of the "alien," the "national" and even the "transnational." These are external intrusions which should not be ignored: a pit bull named "Saddam," a wall poster of a glamorous Shanghai movie star, a political party called the "Communist Party of China," a wall hanging of the "King of Boxing" (a black man named James Page), and a disease called AIDS. One could make a big fuss about any one of these references and claim that it obviously points to "national" or "transnational" penetrations. But in the end, if one is fair, all these things seem secondary and relatively superficial in the films. Of primary, overriding import in China (and elsewhere) is the "eternal local."

Mark Selden, Edward Friedman and I made an effort over thirty years to engage with the local, to understand it on its own terms.[10] But from the outset we were under pressure (much of it self-imposed) not to study the "merely" local. To justify our efforts in intellectual terms, we had to show the "local" interacting with and responding to the national and even the transnational. It is hard to say how well we did. But we had to justify our study of the local by locating the local in the context of the national and the international. I have often wondered what such studies would look like if justifications of this sort were not necessary, if it was legitimate to study the local as local or the local as worldwide trans-local. And what if studies of the national and trans-

national had to be justified in terms of the local? How different would things look then? Would such a framework constitute a paradigm transformation? I can think of a few novels that got me interested in the "local" in terms of the local. These works are grim but honest. One is Jerzy Kosinski's *The Painted Bird* and two others are Xiao Hong's novellas *Field of Life and Death* (*Sheng si chang*) and *Tales of Hulan River* (*Hulan he zhuan*).[11] There are certainly manifestations of both the national and the local in the work of both authors, but in the end the dynamics of the local are paramount.

We favor research on the "transnational" and the "global," but the rise of the "local" and the "sub-national" is abundantly apparent in many places today. Scholars of the transnational have noted that the demise of the Soviet empire in the early 1990s was followed rather quickly by the integration of the former Soviet Union and the Eastern European state socialist regimes into global networks and systems. Starbucks everywhere, Walmart everywhere, McDonald's everywhere. Global capital everywhere. All of this adds up, we are told, to a redefinition of "nations."

But there was a less appreciated and less understood, though highly contradictory, dynamic at play when the Soviet empire collapsed. I am referring to the remarkable rise of "long forgotten" sub-national and local identities and consciousness. Almost all the former Soviet republics opted for previously submerged local identities. Czechoslovakia split into two. The former Yugoslavia broke up into myriad warring ethnic entities. Somehow, all of this messy sub-national loyalty and identity caught "modern" political thinkers by surprise. We were not prepared for the grimness and brutalities that often accompanied the "process" of sub-national and local formations and reformations. Quite often the "eternal" local is not pretty. For many decades we saw it at its worst in Ireland. Such tensions are now more apparent in places like the Middle East, Thailand, and the Philippines.

The "nationalizing" Communist Party is still in power in China, but the retreat of the state in some spheres in the post-Mao era has led not only to China's integration into a "globalizing world," but also to a surge of local identity and local pride dynamics.[12] Shanghainese seem more conscious and more proud of being Shanghainese, Manchus search for Manchu roots, Uighurs express their localism in increasingly strident ways. Tibetans yearn for true autonomy. Hainanese pride is being resuscitated. The "urban-rural" identity divide seems far more explosive. Some would argue that these "local" and "sub-national" currents and passions have been there all along in China. But for various reasons, we could not "see" them. So let us now "take a look," while keeping in mind that underground filmmakers, most of them urban-based protestors, have intentionally rejected romantic or soothing representations.

DOG EAT DOG: THE BANALITY OF BRUTALITY

One of the most memorable underground films about local life in contemporary rural China is Zhang Zhanqing's vivid documentary entitled *These Dogs Belong to All of Us* (*Tamen dou shi women de gou*), produced in March 2003. Set in the dusty, rough-and-tumble, backwater county of Gongxian in Henan Province (some might call this type of space the China that foreign visitors and most Chinese never see and never want to see), the film is unforgettable because it is so unsparingly brutal. It is, quite literally, "hard to look at" (*nan kan*). In Britain in fall 2006 small numbers of viewers, unprepared for this particular view of local life in China, walked out of a screening of the work. Some angrily muttered "Enough is enough!" Interestingly, the rest of the audience was transfixed.

There are many mysterious things about this confrontational film. First, we do not know much about director Zhang and his small filmmaking team. In this sense, they are typical of the many nearly invisible, stealth-like, self-styled documentary filmmakers who do not need or want state support or elaborate studios. Their main qualifications consist of having a few ideas, possessing the relatively small amount of money required for the purchase of a digital camera, and having the know-how to press its "on" button. As Valerie Jaffe has pointed out, many like Zhang are near amateurs who directly or indirectly challenge the ways in which filmmaking has been professionalized, standardized, and, above all, "nationalized" and "internationalized" in state socialist China.[13] State sanctioned "professionals" often express contempt for people like Zhang Zhanqing, while others insist that their efforts to document the "local" and "sub-national" amount to a politically healthy democratization of culture—a goal in China since the time of the New Culture Movement of 1915.

At its most basic level this forty-minute work is about the preoccupation of local people with dogs that are bred and trained to fight to the death. The film is perhaps best described as an ethnographic work that details the relationship between local people and local dogs. But director Zhang has made a number of interesting aesthetic choices. For instance, unlike most conventional documentaries, especially didactic films produced by the state, *These Dogs* contains absolutely no voice-over narration. The viewer is never told what to believe or what to think about either the dogs or the people of Gongxian county, Henan. Viewers are forced to reach their own conclusions. We see and hear the people and the dogs, but the person behind the camera remains silent, never interacting with or being acknowledged by the subjects being filmed. The filmmaker keeps his distance and refrains from making overt expressions or what Zhang Yingjin has described as "truth claims."[14]

These Dogs has no particular narrative structure, no story that has a logical beginning and end. Viewers are simply invited to "take a look" at certain dynamics of local culture. Without exception, the people speak in their local Henan dialect. Allowing local people to speak their own local language is another hallmark of independent and underground filmmakers. The film begins with an intimate close-up of local people gathering in a broken down venue to see a series of dogfights. They buy tickets and enter a filthy outdoor arena. The local police are present. Indeed, one officer actually presides over the spectacle. Two dogs are brought into a large cage at the center of the arena and turned loose. "That dog's a monster!" one old timer remarks. Already battered and scarred from previous fights, the vicious dogs, mostly pit bulls, proceed to tear each other to pieces. The cameraman actually enters the cage so viewers of the film can be afforded shocking close-ups of the terrifying mayhem. The ground is covered with blood, and the dogs howl in agony as they fight for their lives.

Many such sickening and gory fights are included in the film, but the viewer learns at the outset that the camera is not primarily interested in the dogs. The camera is more concerned with the people in attendance. The camera moves back and forth from dogs locked in mortal combat to the faces and body language of the rural onlookers. These people are never asked precisely why they enjoy the dogfights. The filmmaker never tells his audience about the history of this local culture of dogfighting. Is it a time honored tradition that has been around for centuries? Is it something that has come along only recently? Was it a part of local life during the Mao era? We simply do not know. All we know is that it is going on now and that it is deeply embedded in local culture.

Viewers cannot help but notice that all members of the community partake. As the camera examines the faces of those in the crowd, we see plenty of tough young men, but we also see attractive couples on a date, grannies and grandpas side by side, and middle-aged women. We also see lots of young children, even babies. The dogfights seem to offer something for the whole family. It is especially painful for viewers to see the camera pan slowly from two dogs tearing each other apart to the faces of adorable children staring intently at the bloodbath unfolding a couple of feet away. The desperate dogs and the lovely children are separated only by a bit of wire mesh.

The filmmaker's interest in the people who attend the dogfights becomes even clearer when, early in the film, the camera moves suddenly from a close-up of two bloodied dogs mauling each other to a disturbance that has erupted among the onlookers! We do not know why, but suddenly a fight breaks out between two young men. Unlike the dogfight, this outburst of violence among humans is unscripted. The crowd—men and women, young

and old—is suddenly more interested in the fight between the two young men who are stomping, smashing, and cursing each other than the ongoing contest between the two pit bulls. In fact, the "color commentator" who is announcing and analyzing the dogfight by way of loudspeaker is forced to intervene: "Ladies and gents! Return your attention to the dogfight!" The absence of an authoritative voice of narration in this ethnographic film does not mean that Zhang Zhanqing, the urban filmmaker, holds no views. With this powerful scene of violent confrontation both inside and outside the "cage," Zhang intentionally blurs the line demarcating the killer dogs and the people.

This microscopic portrait of a nondescript "place" in China is unflattering in the extreme. The landscape is nasty. The dogs are ugly. The adults are unattractive. There is no direct evidence that the filmmaker wants us to interpret the "local" as an allegory of the "national" or the "global," but neither does he discourage such readings. And there is nothing romantic about this view of rural life. We are simply confronted with a repulsive corner of the local. The filmmaker never asserts that this moment conveys all that one needs to know about the sub-national, or that there is anything uniquely Chinese about the appeals of dogfighting. But there is no denying that on this occasion the "crowd" that gawks at the dogs at war seems uneducated, cultureless, emotionless, and even ignorant. At times, they stare without expressing feelings. At times, they find the dogs amusing. They chuckle when trainers have to use tools to pry apart dogs that have locked their teeth deep into each other's flesh. A middle-aged woman laughs at a pathetic and defeated animal, near death, that lies just below her gaze. Much of the tension created by the film centers on the unpleasant fact that while the film audience is likely to be deeply upset by the events on view, no one on screen seems the least bit disturbed. In this film, brutality is banal.

The international or "global" viewer is distressed, but so too is the "national" viewer. In the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, this was definitely not the image of "China" favored by the Chinese state. But the filmmaker insists nonetheless that these images are aspects of Chinese "reality." The locals we see on screen are remarkably convincing and confident of their identity. They are not nervously self-conscious, nor do they feel the need to "act." But people with "national" consciousness do not want these local people or this aspect of their culture "seen." They are a "national" embarrassment. For instance, at the open-air dog trading market, a crudely written advertisement, complete with phone number, announces a miracle cure for stuttering. It would be easy, but wrong, to dismiss all this as "peasant bashing." The fact is there is something honest and refreshing about the movie. If anything, it is a protest film that tries to counterbalance and thereby challenge the prettified and whitewashed images of China produced by the state sector.

At one point the camera records the comments of a fan who speaks in Darwinian/Social Darwinian terms about this dog-eat-dog world: "One minute one is winning, the next minute the other is winning. It's hard to tell who is going to win or lose. This kind of thing gives me a rush. They fight with such savagery." Another person comments, "Only the victor is the real hero! The more a dog fights, the braver he becomes." Not surprisingly, glory is connected to economics in this unforgiving realm. "It's a battle for the title; it's for prestige," a local dog breeder explains. "People will want to breed with your dog. Your dog becomes worth a lot more." A 10,000 *yuan* dog can suddenly become an 80,000 or 100,000 *yuan* dog. Not surprisingly, gambling is also an important component of the dogfighting culture—just as it is in the culture of slick, big-city real estate speculators.

If a Japanese or an Italian filmmaker had produced *These Dogs*, there would have been an instant outcry. Charges of racism and "anti-China" agendas would have been hurled. Indeed, it would be much easier to account for—and dismiss—this film if it had been made by foreigners. The film is a problem precisely because it was made by "insiders." Some will question Zhang Zhanqing's work on the grounds that he is a self-orientalizing "internal foreigner" who is doing nothing more than pandering to a foreign or "global" market. But this sort of explanation is unconvincing. There is no foreign market for such a brutal and upsetting film. There is nothing the least bit "exotic," "romantic," or self-orientalizing about *These Dogs*. The film is not meant primarily for a foreign audience; it is directed at a domestic audience, though even then it is a very hard sell. Perhaps it is more fruitful to locate this film in the context of the "urban-rural divide" framework mapped out so well by Jeremy Brown in his research on Tianjin and its rural environs.[15] That is, it is possible to read *These Dogs* as a good example of urban inspired peasant bashing, a China-centered critique of China that distinguishes between a retrogressive rural legacy that holds China back, and a progressive urban sphere that points to China's good future.

Another interpretive possibility involves seeing Zhang Zhanqing and *These Dogs* in the light of Lu Xun's early twentieth-century critique of Chinese culture. In a present-day version of this schema, the culture under review is not urban or rural culture, but—at another level of abstraction—postsocialist Chinese culture. The critique is not peasant bashing because rural culture functions as a symbol of a more generalized contemporary Chinese cultural mode. This approach "invites" the urban viewer to consider the shocking possibility that there is no basic difference between urban and rural in the brave new world of postsocialist China. It is "dog eat dog" in both realms. *These Dogs* is shocking and disturbing in the same ways that Lu Xun's accounts of Ah Q and Xianglin's wife are shocking. In these works, the image of the crowd is indeed dark

and menacing, and a self-defeating dog-eat-dog world is indeed exposed and denounced.[16] Lu Xun's critique, it must be recalled, was not self-orientalizing or crafted for foreign consumption or for money making purposes. His analysis reflects poorly on "China," thus it is misleading to dismiss it as peasant bashing. In fact, Lu Xun's most vociferous critics (and in all likelihood Zhang Zhanqing's harshest critics) were image-conscious urbanities who felt his humiliating critique embarrassed an entity called "modern China."

In addition to various local and national readings of the meaning of *These Dogs*, it is important to consider a universalistic or humanistic reading. Zhang's film may be intended primarily as a critique of life in present-day China, but the problems he addresses can be found throughout the world. What we see is trans-local. The post-Mao state, like its Mao-era predecessor, does all it can to keep out of "national" and "international" sight various unpleasant aspects of the local. But when it comes to "dog-eat-dog" dynamics, this film asks, is there really much difference between China and the rest of the world?

At the end of the film, in the closing credits, director Zhang finally makes some indirect editorial comments that support local, national, and universal interpretations of his film. His remarks take the form of a powerful Cui Jian–like heavy metal tune. The fast paced lyrics speak of a solitary "crazy" dog that breaks free and runs away from the mad world depicted in the film. The escapee is "crazy" in the way that Lu Xun's "madman" is crazy. The mad singer repeats over and over: "Looking through the eyes of dogs, all we see is people." "Looking through the eyes of people, all we see is dogs." "Looking again through the eyes of dogs, all we see is dogs."

LIFE AND DEATH: A TENDER CULTURE OF DESPERATION

Chen Weijun (Chen who Protects the Army) has made a film about life in rural China in the early twenty-first century that is as disturbing as, perhaps more disturbing than, Zhang Zhanqing's *These Dogs*, though Chen's aesthetic strategy is radically different. His ninety-two-minute film is entitled *Better to Live Than to Die* (*Hao si bu ru lai huozhe*, or literally *Living with No Dignity Is Better Than Dying a Noble Death*). Like *These Dogs*, it is a documentary film, it is set in rural Henan, and it was produced in 2003. Unlike *These Dogs*, *Better to Live* features an approach to local, sub-national rural life that is far more political than it is ethnographic. It is also far more tender—though never in danger of becoming romantic or sentimental. Indeed, it is hard to watch this film without concluding that a crime against humanity has been committed by someone. But that someone remains unidentified and unaccountable.

Chen's film discusses one of the many "AIDS" villages in Henan Province. Villagers in such places were encouraged to sell their blood to the Chinese military. During the process, the people were injected with contaminated blood products and thereby contracted AIDS. The refusal of state authorities from Zhengzhou to Beijing to acknowledge either the resulting epidemic or the subsequent cover-up of the "local," "sub-national" disaster allowed the disease to spread unchecked. Because China's "national" and "global" image was once again at stake, these "local" areas were sealed off. Insiders were not allowed to leave, and outsiders, especially snoopy reporters (foreign as well as domestic), were not allowed in. There was an information blackout of the catastrophe. Whole villages went under while the state did little or nothing to help. The state's solution seemed to be: isolate the trouble spots and let the people die.

Chen Weijun is like many newly emerging independent and underground filmmakers in that we know very little about his identity and associations. He simply shows up in one of the AIDS villages. We do not know how he got there, except to say that it is an unapproved visit. We do not know what, if anything, his connections are to the village. Why this village? He never tells us how the epidemic started. No background information is provided about the region, its history, or its culture. His focus is microcosmic in the extreme. Instead of trying to understand an entire province or county or even a single village, Chen settles in with a solitary family. Why this family? We do not know. This ordinary peasant family (not rich, not poor) consists of a husband and wife (both in their late thirties) and three children (an eleven-year-old girl, a six-year-old girl, and a one-year-old boy). Everyone in the family, except the oldest girl, has AIDS. We are not told how they contracted AIDS. We are aware that many others in the village have AIDS, and that many in neighboring villages have AIDS, but Chen makes no effort to tell their stories. The filmmaker's assumption seems to be that if we know the story of this single family, we know all we need to know.

Despite the ghastly nature of the subject matter, *Better to Live*, in very sharp contrast to *These Dogs*, has an almost lyrical quality. The power and poetry of the work is closely related to its tight narrative structure. This story is intimate, and it has a clear beginning and end. Filmmaker Chen, a solo protest act, and no doubt an urban intellectual, shows up like clockwork according to the seasons that govern rural life: once in the summer, fall, winter, and spring (the Chinese symbol of new life and a fresh start). We do not know how he gets in and out of this restricted area, nor do we know whether the state has knowledge of his documentary activities. We suppose it does not.

In contrast to Zhang Zhanqing, who declines to have on-screen communications with his subjects, Chen Weijun's project is all about his need to make intimate human contact with this family of unfortunates. His goal is to humanize

these individuals by giving the viewing audience a chance to "see" their daily lives and "see" them tell their own stories. But he cannot do this unless he can win their trust. We are never told why they allow Chen to enter their home under such dreadful circumstances. We imagine that most people in such dire straights would insist on their privacy. And it is clear that Chen is an outsider. He speaks from behind the camera (and once in a while in narrative voice-over remarks) with a pronounced Beijing accent, while the family members and other villagers who show up at the home speak the local Henan dialect.

The lyrical quality of the film is the byproduct of Chen Weijun's extraordinary success in winning the confidence of the family members. They are highly attractive people who come alive as human beings in ways that the people in *These Dogs* do not. They allow Chen to film things that are profoundly personal and private. They tell him things that we simply cannot imagine ourselves telling "outsiders." The process is slow, and Chen is remarkably gentle. One cannot escape the impression that Chen's project has given meaning to these otherwise wasted lives.

In fall 2006 viewers in Britain walked out of this film but not as an act of protest. *Better to Live* is "hard to watch" (*nan kan*) not because it is repulsive or brutal, but because it is so incredibly painful to witness these beautiful people suffering and dying off one at a time. This work is heartbreaking, and invariably reduces its audience to tears. Indeed, at a fall 2008 screening in Singapore members of the audience wept openly. Many simply cannot endure watching the whole thing. As bad as the situation is at the outset, it gets worse, much worse, as the film progresses. Chen Weijun is, of course, manipulating his audience, but for very good political reasons and never at the expense of the family. This is not an exploitation film. Nor is it a money-making commercial work designed for a foreign audience. It is a kind of investigative journalism and expression of protest intended for urban Chinese who are ignorant. It is hard to see this film and not want to do something about the AIDS crisis in China.

At the beginning of the film we note that the young mother is the sickest. Her body has been reduced to little more than skin and bones, and she is so weak she is unable to care for her young children. We see her motionless in bed, we see her praying in desperation to Buddhist deities, we see her babbling hysterically and incoherently, all the time beside herself with worry about the fate of her husband and children. Nothing helps, and we know she is doomed. By the time of Chen Weijun's second visit during autumn, she is dead. Her sick husband tried in vain to save her by placing her in a crude wooden cart and pushing her to some sort of local clinic. Her dead body lies on the floor at home, and the frightened children are brought in one at a time to say a final farewell.

The male toddler is the cutest and the most pathetic of the children. Though he is terminally ill and suffers from constant diarrhea, we nonetheless see him develop during the course of the year in ways that remind us of healthy children. For instance, we see him learning to walk, and we take delight when we see him at play with one of his sisters atop a mound of grain. Speaking of grain, it is important to point out that Chen's portrait of this family is effective, in part, because we can see that it is not a destitute family. By rural standards, their home is nice, their standard of living is reasonably high, and they are educated. It is their inability to work and their inability to gain access to state welfare support that has reduced them to abject poverty. There is no income, their neighbors are in similar predicaments, and their meager savings are gone, much of them spent on useless "miracle cures" peddled by local witch doctors and charlatans.

As the husband becomes weaker and weaker, his sense of panic deepens. He simply does not have the skills, the resources, or the strength to take care of the daily needs of the surviving family members. Chen Weijun is a good listener who refrains from cheap emotionalism. The young husband goes into great detail about the rigors of daily life. In cultural terms, the most important moment of the rural year is the lunar New Year celebration. It is a time when the local representatives of the state are expected to be generous. Knowing this, the husband concluded that he had no alternative but to pay a visit to the county authorities to beg for help. The husband recalls that when he was finally given access to an official, he immediately prostrated himself and repeatedly banged his head on the floor in imitation of the customary *ketou*. He explained that his wife was dead, his whole family was sick with AIDS, and he had no way to care for or feed the children. We see the husband telling Chen Weijun that the official responded by throwing 150 *yuan* (the equivalent of less than US$20) on the floor.

This anecdote captures the main political message of the film. The Communist Party organization and state apparatus are nowhere to be seen. They look very, very bad in this movie. The strong impression is left that they do not care. Their response to the crisis caused by the army's blood drive is reminiscent of their response to the Great Leap famine of 1959–1962—also centered in Henan. A friendly interpretation of the situation is that the party and state simply do not have the means to help these people. Although filmmaker Chen never says so in unambiguous terms, he seems to favor an alternative interpretation: they do not care about these people. The disaster was an embarrassment for the "nation" on the eve of the Olympics. The highest priorities are cover-up and containment. This explains why it was necessary to detain and place under house arrest people like Dr. Gao Yaojie, a resident of the provincial capital in Zhengzhou, who actually want to do something to

help the sort of victims featured in *Better to Live* by publicizing their plight and mobilizing a relief effort.

The most memorable family member in Chen Weijun's film is the eleven-year-old daughter, a fifth grader and the only person in the family who does not have AIDS. In the first half of the film we rarely see or hear her. But as the movie progresses, she becomes increasingly important. When her father gets to the point where he can do little to care for the remaining family members, the little girl takes over and virtually runs the family by herself—though she has very little to say to Chen Weijun. She prepares food for the entire family, tries to keep the house clean, and cares for the younger children who depend on her for everything. Heartbreaking though it is, Chen learns that the little girl is a model student. When Chen asks about her rank in her fifth grade class, she proudly proclaims that she is fourth in the class. In addition to caring for her sick father and running the family, we witness her trying her best to do her homework on the ground in front of the house.

The most poignant moment in the film occurs when filmmaker Chen is alone with the little girl for the first time. She is all knowing, but shy. Their conversation starts off slowly. But then at one point Chen simply asks the little girl whether she understands what is happening. She responds with a simple and unemotional "Yes, I know what is happening. They are all sick, and they are all going to die." It is at this point that the viewer of the film is forced to face a set of inescapable conclusions. This girl is smart and capable. In another time or place she would have opportunities to develop in various ways. But in the local world captured on film in *Better to Live*, she has no future. Her father, her sister, and her brother will die and she will be at the mercy of people who so far have shown no mercy.

RECAPTURING LOST HISTORIES: A LABYRINTH OF SEDUCTION, POWER RELATIONS, AND COMPLICITY

Red Snow (*Hongse xue*) is one of the most captivating Chinese movies ever made. Like *These Dogs* and *Better to Live*, it deals with the local, the rural, and the microcosmic and was made by an unknown director. But unlike these works, *Red Snow* is a feature film (*gushi pian*) rather than a documentary (*jilu pian*). And unlike the others, *Red Snow* does not deal with the present, it deals with the past, and it does so by employing a rare combination of side-splitting humor and gut-wrenching violence. It categorically rejects the paradigm of "melodramatic" representation that has dominated the Chinese feature film world since the 1920s.[17]

Completed in 2006 by directorial newcomer Peng Tao, this low-budget, independent film is set in marginalized rural North China (Shanxi) in the bitter cold winter of 1967 in the early years of the Cultural Revolution. Director Peng is one of the relatively few independent filmmakers who uses the feature film format to "recapture" or "rescue" controversial moments in the history of the People's Republic. *Red Snow* was intentionally completed in 2006, the fortieth anniversary of the outset of the Cultural Revolution. That is, Peng Tao sought to remember the Cultural Revolution at a time when the party and state were forbidding academic conferences, art presentations, and other commemorative activities. In the run-up to the Olympics, the party/state wanted to discourage reflection on the agonies of this catastrophe initiated by Mao Zedong. What is most interesting is *how* protestor Peng Tao chooses to tell the Cultural Revolution story. He tells it not as a "national" story, but as a riveting "sub-national," "local" story that has "national" and even "global" meanings. Further, the film is about the "past," but it is also concerns itself with a "present-day" political moment that discourages and punishes reflections on the past.

Working with a limited budget and digital technology, Peng made the ambitious and fascinating decision to try to tell the incredibly complicated story of the Cultural Revolution by reducing it (as Chen Weijun does in *Better to Live*) to the essence of what everyone needs to know, and by dwelling on the interactions of four people in a desolate farmhouse in the middle of a quintessentially local "nowhere." The whole story takes place within a relatively short period of time. Further, director Peng seems to be arguing that the best way to tell the Cultural Revolution story—once it is unambiguously set in the "local" and decidedly non-urban environment—is to focus on the themes of "desire," seduction, complicity, and sexual power relations. Even if the state sector was inclined to produce works on the Cultural Revolution (and it is not), raw sexual activity would surely not be the focal point.

The narrative begins with a thirty-seven-year-old widow named Cao doing ordinary chores. With the exception of her modest farmhouse, the vast, freezing, snowy landscape is devoid of human inhabitants. Cao's husband and son, we learn later, were killed by stray bullets fired in the local market town. She seems totally unaware of the political context of those killings. Her peace and quiet are disrupted when she notices an injured man named Lu, age fifty-five, stumbling around in the distance and eventually collapsing in a snowdrift. He literally begs for her help because he is being chased by "bad people" (red guards). If widow Cao represents the ordinary masses of China in this allegory, Lu represents the old Communist Party establishment. He was the Director of Forest Services in the county town before being driven from power. Imprisoned and beaten by rebels, Lu found a way to escape.

The first third of *Red Snow* deals with the evolving relationship between the widow and the veteran party cadre. He seems quite pathetic. She knows absolutely nothing about politics, but feels sorry for Lu. She takes him into her home, takes care of his injured leg, and feeds him when she discovers he is starving. She is kind, but simple and naïve. He needs her desperately and seems grateful at first. Lu says he will repay her for her consideration. Cao says that Lu can sleep in a shed outside the main house. He accepts, but he is not comfortable in the freezing shack.

The next day, the tranquility of the rural setting is disrupted once again by the sudden appearance of another stranger. The new visitor is yet another political refugee, a young man named Dagan, whose red guard faction in the small town has been overthrown by a rival group. He too is running for his life. He too begs for Cao's help. She hides him in a storage pit minutes before a team of three armed red guards arrives looking for him. They fail to find Dagan, but they do find Lu. Cao explains that Lu is her sick "husband." The red guards rush off, and the young man hiding in the pit thereupon flees in the opposite direction, thanking Cao for her help and insisting he, too, will "repay her kindness" one day. Old Lu surfaces before long and says Cao should not have saved the young man because he is the type of person responsible for her husband's death.

At this point, the first of several seductions ensues. Using the excuse of the cold, the party man says he would like to move into Cao's house. She says, no, people will gossip. But in the middle of the night Lu pounds on the door saying he will freeze to death by morning. "I'm honest and trustworthy. If not, you can drive me out." Cao takes pity, lets him in, and points to a spot on the floor where he can sleep. But Lu is not happy. What he really wants is to sleep with her and have sex with her on her *kang*.

The next night he actually slides up on to the *kang* in the middle of the night. It is important to point out here that Cao accepts his advances and has consensual sex with him. "China," gendered here as female, has indeed been seduced by the party. She is complicit. But the explicit sex (the sort of thing that is never seen in state-sponsored films) is not beautiful. It is rough. The two go at it like the animals in *These Dogs*.

The instant the sex is over, the party man shows a completely different face. Now he begins to dominate Cao and to boss her around. "Why don't you cook?" "I'm hungry already!" "Be quick about it!" After the food arrives he says, "It's really bad! In my opinion you're a lazy woman!"

This pattern continues. They have rough sex at night, and she waits on him hand and foot during the day. "I'm thirsty! Go pour a cup of water for me. Be quick!" Before long he wants to have sex in the daytime as well. She has never heard of such a thing. Lu promises to teach her new techniques. This is

how he will "repay" her earlier kindnesses, he says, as he starts fondling her breasts in broad daylight.

The second third of this neatly paced and well-acted film begins when a knock on the door interrupts a daytime tryst between party man Lu and widow Cao. The visitor is none other than the young red guard, Dagan, who earlier had been saved by the widow. He wants to take refuge in her home because he is still on the run. Again the widow takes pity and allows the visitor to stay in the freezing shack. Privately, Dagan asks her if Lu is her husband. Though the two are living and sleeping together, she states clearly that Lu is not her husband.

From the outset there is great tension between the two men, one a party veteran and the other a young rebel. But the tension focuses on their shared sexual interest in widow Cao. Lu warns her that the arrogant young man is not a pit bull, but "a wolf," and urges her to get rid of him the next day. But before the cold winter night is over, Dagan is banging on the door asking to be let into the warmer main house. To Lu's dismay, she lets him in and assigns him the same spot on the floor once reserved for Lu himself. To intimidate the young interloper, Lu decides to have noisy sex with Cao later that night. Cao complains that Dagan will "see." Lu responds, "I'll be screwing you to put him to shame!" Indeed, the frustrated young man closely watches the whole show. And, again, the widow, though uncomfortable, goes along.

In the morning, when Lu wakes up, he is shocked to discover that Dagan crept into bed with Lu and the widow in the middle of the night! A shouting match ensues, during which Lu attempts to assert his shaky authority by ordering Dagan to get out. The young man departs in what seems like a victory for the party man, but in fact Dagan is not gone; he has gone into the hills to collect firewood. Upon his return it is clear he intends to mount his own offensive. The widow is impressed because Dagan went out to collect wood—a man's work. Lu, constantly complaining about his bad leg, had consistently refused to do so. Before long, the tables are turned. The party man is banished to the freezing storage shack, and Dagan has moved into the big house and into widow Cao's bed. Cao has once again been seduced, this time by a "rebel." Lu, now reduced to a miserable Peeping Tom, watches through a window as Cao and the young man engage in the same type of rough sex ones sees earlier in the film. Lu is allowed to eat with them in the big house at mealtime, but he gets no meat! The young red guard continuously reminds Cao that the party man is nothing but a corrupt capitalist roader who deserves no mercy.

Alone and freezing in the shed, Lu is surprised late one night by a visitor. It is a young and innocent teenage girl named Xiaomei. She needs a place to stay for the night. She explains she is from Henan Province. Her hometown was flooded, and her family killed in the disaster. She is on her way to find a relative at a nearby state farm. She calls the party man "Uncle." He agrees

to let her stay, and she departs early the next morning before anyone else has noticed her. Her brief stop mirrors perfectly the short visit made by Dagan in the first part of the film. Like him, Xiaomei is a visitor who will return.

Meanwhile, the next day Dagan, physically stronger than the older man, decides to subject director Lu to ritual, "class-struggle" humiliations. Lu is forced to his knees in the snow and required to confess his crimes. But the veteran bureaucrat is a wily survivor. When Dagan is away, Lu convinces the widow to allow him into the house to warm up. He announces he is going to run away. Life at the farmhouse is intolerable. He does indeed flee, but along the road he discovers a site that has been devastated by factional violence. No one is around, but Lu finds a hand grenade in the ruins. He decides to return to the farmhouse and settle accounts with Dagan. He confronts Dagan, pulls the pin, and tosses the hand grenade. But it is a dud and fails to explode. The two men are so drained by the episode that they agree to a peace accord of sorts: Lu can continue living in the shed so long as he accepts the fact that widow Cao is Dagan's woman. He is even allowed to join them for dinner, a humiliation he is only barely able to endure.

The third and final part of the film begins with the return to the shed late one night of the pretty Xiaomei. She says she has nowhere to stay because her uncle has been sent to a labor camp for shouting politically incorrect slogans. She wants to move in with "Uncle" Lu. Not surprisingly, he agrees! This is too good to be true.

The next morning Dagan spots the young beauty. She instantly becomes the new object of his sexual desire. He is obsessed with her. He tells widow Cao that he is concerned that the old bureaucrat will "sexually assault" the young lass. Since Xiaomei is a "poor peasant," it is Dagan's sacred duty to protect her from the class enemy. But the widow is no fool. She understands the nature of Dagan's interest, and she is jealous of Xiaomei.

Old Lu, of course, has his own sexual interest in the young girl. After all, they are sleeping in the same small shed. Xiaomei is extremely grateful for his help and asks him how she can "repay" him. Lu ogles her body when she is not looking and is sorely tempted to take advantage of her. But, for the first time in the film, we notice that he has an iota of conscience. He has a daughter the age of Xiaomei (though the daughter denounced him at the start of the Cultural Revolution) and thus cannot follow through on his desire to sleep with the young girl.

He has another plan. He will torment Dagan. He starts by convincing Xiaomei that Dagan is a dangerous and unscrupulous fellow. He then allows Dagan to believe that Xiaomei does in fact desire to have sex with the old man. Dagan is frustrated beyond imagination. At dinner he says that he wants *both* women to be in the big house with him at night. Neither widow Cao nor Lu likes the sound of that demand. Widow Cao reminds everyone that it is

her house and she will decide about sleeping arrangements. The men, each confident that the widow agrees with his position, say that she should decide and everyone will abide by the decision. Then, in the one interesting feminist twist to the narrative, she abruptly decides that the two women will live in the big house and the two men will live together in the freezing shed. Both men are displeased, but have no alternative but to agree. Privately, widow Cao tells Dagan to keep away from Xiaomei, who is said to be a "virgin" and "chaste." More frustrated than ever, Dagan explodes, "She's just an insignificant woman; why can't I pursue her?"

One day old Lu catches Dagan peeking through the window as Xiaomei is taking a bath in the big house. In total denial, Dagan claims that Xiaomei wants to be his wife. He is consumed by his desire to posses (and control) her. He begins to stalk her. Finally he blurts out in her presence that he wants to marry her. She responds, "Impossible!" She would sooner marry the old man.

This ugly confrontation sets up the final, violent, scene in the movie when the snow does in fact run red with blood. This episode can only be described as *nan kan*. Xiaomei goes out one afternoon to cut wood in the hills. Dagan follows her. Deep in the forest, he attacks the girl, strips her naked, knocks her unconscious, and then brutally rapes her. He runs back to the farmhouse delirious with joy, singing "We are Chairman Mao's Red Guards," and proclaiming loudly to widow Cao and old Lu that Xiaomei is now his wife. But then the final humiliation occurs. While he is boasting, Xiaomei staggers out of the forest with a hatchet in hand. She denounces Dagan and takes a swing at him with the hatchet. Dagan knocks her to the ground, her head strikes a rock, and she dies. Enraged, the old party man picks up the hatchet and initiates a blood-curdling struggle with Dagan. But Dagan seizes the hatchet and kills old Lu, blood splashing in all directions.

Panic stricken, a suddenly remorseful Dagan approaches widow Cao and begins pleading. Everything will be fine now. They will bury the bodies out back and live happily ever after. When the Cultural Revolution blows over, he will take her into the city to live. Standing nose to nose, the two stare into each other's eyes. Widow Cao then suddenly plunges a dagger into Dagan's gut, and the young red guard collapses in a heap and bleeds to death. As the picture ends, the vast landscape of sky and snow turns blood red.

How upsetting is this particular rural-centered representation of the Cultural Revolution? When the film was screened at the University of Oxford in fall 2006, one young Chinese intellectual, a red-faced advocate of the new nationalism, raced up to the presenter at the end of the movie and launched a verbal assault, indignantly demanding to know the nature of the hidden and presumably anti-China agenda of the program organizers. "What motivated you to show this picture!?" he raged. He was, unfortunately, asking the wrong question.

EPILOGUE: THE ANATOMY OF AN UNFORTUNATE FAILURE

It is hard to dispute the notion that *These Dogs*, *Better to Live*, and *Red Snow* offer us highly unusual pictures of the rural and the local, pictures that the state sector has been unwilling to offer. In part, these protest pictures perplex us because they represent China-based perspectives that we have rarely seen in the form of moving pictures. Comparably powerful postsocialist films about life in socialist East Germany, including *Goodbye Lenin* and *The Lives of Others*, were made long after the collapse of the repressive East German regime. When one thinks of cultural production in other state socialist historical settings, it is difficult to think of films as potent as the three discussed here. Of course, it is important to remind ourselves that not all underground and independent productions in present-day China are as critical or as serious as what one finds in these three works. Much of it is self-indulgent and superficial.[18]

And we cannot predict what all directors of serious independent films will do next. One is happy to note, however, that two of the directors discussed here have recently completed new and highly compelling "local" films about some of the harsh realities of life in rural China. In 2008, Zhang Zhanqing, the director of *These Dogs*, completed a powerful (and depressing) full-length documentary entitled *For Every Minute I Live I Will Enjoy Sixty Seconds* (*Huole yi fen zhong kuai huo liushi miao*) that chronicles the life of a repulsive, Ah Q-like, small town "loser" who is in serious denial about the origins and nature of his defects as a human being. In 2008, Peng Tao, the talented director of *Red Snow*, finished a gut-wrenching feature film entitled *Little Moth* (*Xue chan*) that reveals how ruthless criminal gangs purchase small, handicapped children from destitute villagers for use as props in local begging scams.

Noted independent filmmaker Wu Wenguang has also made a valiant attempt to promote non-state filmmaking about the rural and the local.[19] We like Wu Wenguang because, among other things, he was one of the pioneers of independent documentary filmmaking in China—a risky business under any circumstances. We also like him because he is a decent person who seems to have good instincts. But unlike the directors discussed here, Wu Wenguang *is* famous and he has *lots* of money. These factors may explain a recent failure of his. It may be the case that precisely because a person (even an independent artist) is rich and famous, he or she may not be able to make convincing and more-honest-than-usual pictures of local life in rural China.

Wu Wenguang had the best of intentions. Funded lavishly by the European Union, Wu agreed to undertake a major documentary film project on "village governance." According to the nearly breathless publicity associated with the project, "When China's central government allowed local elections to proceed in 2005, Wu Wenguang, one of the main exponents of the Beijing-

based 'New Documentary Movement,' offered villagers in remote areas of the country DV cameras and technical training so that they could document this historic event. From housewives to peasants young and old, the newly empowered villagers tell stories that are intimate, earnest, revelatory—and uncensored."[20] A German commentator put it this way, "Self-administration is introduced into China's villages: a novel step in the country's three-thousand-year-old history. By offering the villagers an opportunity to document changes, this film provides a completely new perspective."[21] The production notes for the project continue in the same vein: "The exciting comments written in the proposals entered in by the villagers serve as testimonies of how valuable this unprecedented project is—out there in the countryside, the villagers, who previously had only been the *objects* of curious cameras, have always had a yearning for expressions of their own."[22]

Comments like these create very high expectations, especially once we have seen the earlier works by the unknown directors discussed in this chapter. One is led to believe that ten "real" peasants—the salt of the earth—were turned loose by independent filmmaker Wu Wenguang and European Union funding to make their own authentic, uncensored, truthful films about life in China's complicated rural sector. Unfortunately, the ten short documentary films (each about ten minutes long) that were turned out in 2006 under the clunky heading *China Village Self-Governance Film Project: Villagers Documentary Films* fails by a considerable margin to live up to virtually all the grand claims made in various publicity statements. They are not *nan kan*. On a scale of one to ten, if the three films discussed in this chapter qualify as eights or nines, the ten films completed in Wu Wenguang's well-funded project are mostly twos.

First, few of the people who got selected to make the "peasant" films are real peasants. Two live in cities and rarely return to their home villages. One is a village Communist Party secretary. One is a twenty-four-year-old Tibetan woman who has never done a stitch of farmwork. One is a small businessman. One is an army veteran. Only two of the ten are women, one of whom lives in a Beijing suburb. Second, the people "newly empowered" to make their own peasant films were in fact closely supervised every step of the way. With so much money involved, there was no way the Chinese state was not going to be heavily involved. China's Ministry of Civil Affairs (*Min zheng bu*) cosponsored the activity and closely monitored its development. Project operatives accompanied the "peasants" to the villages. A second camera (Wu Wenguang's) was constantly filming the "peasants" while they were making their films. In most cases the editing of the film was done in Beijing by members of Wu's staff. The project was a media circus.

Third, it is absolutely untrue that the films were "uncensored." The highly likable and well-intentioned Jian Yi, the young man who coordinated much of

the project for Wu Wenguang and who made his own documentary film about the unfolding of the project, visited the University of Oxford in fall 2006 to screen the "peasant" films. He was asked directly whether he and the "peasant filmmakers" engaged in self-censorship or were subjected to state censorship. To his eternal credit he answered "yes" to both questions and gave details. Given all the publicity associated with the project, and the certainty that the films were going to be shown throughout Europe and the United States, he explained, it was inconceivable that the state was not going to run all the films by state censors. Jian Yi said explicitly that the state ordered material to be cut and that the cuts were made. With a couple of exceptions (an otherwise bland film about Guanyinwangjia village in Shandong made by a young man whose body language unintentionally betrays a deep sense of rage and anger, and a movie about four young people in the city of Jinhua in Zhejiang Province who have no interest whatever in returning to their home village of Xiayi to participate in meaningless local elections), the documentaries strike us as incoherent and strikingly self-conscious home movies. Despite the claim that the ten films are about village elections, they say almost nothing useful about village elections, and—in a couple of cases—focus instead on dispute resolution.

It is necessary to end on this note because doing so highlights the glaring differences between Wu's project and *These Dogs*, *Better to Live*, and *Red Snow*. Absolutely none of the explosive topics tackled in the films made by the unknown directors figures in any of the "peasant" films produced by Wu. As unpleasant and painful as it is to view the films discussed in the main body of this chapter, the people who appear in them nonetheless look, sound, and feel much more like real peasants than the people who appear in Wu's project. The point is not to tear down Wu Wenguang. Very little independent and underground work has the interpretive force and visual power of *These Dogs*, *Better to Live*, and *Red Snow*. The point is that it is possible to produce exciting and challenging work on the rural and the local. But it is not at all easy.

What, then, do the most challenging of the new independent film sources teach us? I think they expose a number of problems. They expose viewers' ignorance of important aspects of the "local," ignorance that causes viewers to dismiss and ignore the rural, the local, and the trans-local. The films ask us why we flinch and feel embarrassed when we "see" some of the nasty and gritty realities of the rural and the local. These films do not fit into ready made categories. As a consequence, they make viewers feel disoriented. Yet, there they are.

Many years ago I asked the graduate students in my seminar on rural China to read *The Painted Bird*. One of the students was sickened and refused to finish the book. We feel "uncomfortable" when we are exposed to the harshness and inhumanities that are a part of the local and the rural. Rather than face

those painful realities, it is easier to question the motives of the messenger. It is easier to opt for a more heroic, romantic, one-dimensional, and "feel good" picture of the rural "moral economy." Never mind that such approaches distort. It is easier to deal with unpleasantness by treating rural and local people as the passive "victims" of evil "national" or "transnational" forces. It is easier to dwell exclusively on the "resistance" that heroic peasants wage against "national" and "transnational" intruders. The films under review here help us think about new approaches. They confront us by refusing to confine themselves to any of the "easy" interpretive strategies mentioned above. The films discussed here distort, but they do so in order to destabilize and challenge distorted views of the rural and the local that have been offered up by state-sector cultural producers for many decades. Not only do these protest films offer new perspectives of the local, they force us to rethink what we mean by the national and the global.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Benjamin Schwartz, *Communism and China: Ideology in Flux* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

2. Sang Ye, *China Candid: The People on the People's Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Chen Guidi and Wu Chuntao, *Zhongguo nongmin diaocha* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2004); Chen Guidi and Wu Chuntao, *Will the Boat Sink the Water: The Life of China's Peasants* (Boulder: Public Affairs, 2007).

3. See Paul G. Pickowicz, "Memories of Revolution and Collectivization in China: The Unauthorized Reminiscences of a Rural Intellectual," in Rubie S. Watson, ed., *Memory, History, and Opposition Under State Socialism* (Sante Fe: School of American Research Press, 1994), pp. 127–147; Paul G. Pickowicz, "Rural Protest Letters: Local Perspectives on the State's War on Tillers, 1960–1990," in Ching Kwan Lee and Guobin Yang, eds., *Re-visioning the Chinese Revolution: The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memories in Reform China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 21–49.

4. Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

5. For a disturbing photo of a person said to be Zhu Yu, see www.Chinasucks.org/zhuyu5.jpg (accessed on September 30, 2010).

6. See Chin-Chuan Lee, ed., *Chinese Media, Global Contexts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

7. See Seio Nakajima, "Film Clubs in Beijing: The Cultural Consumption of Chinese Independent Films," in Paul G. Pickowicz and Yingjin Zhang, eds., *From Underground to Independent: Alternative Film Culture in Contemporary China* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), pp. 161–187.

8. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

9. Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, ed., *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997).

10. Edward Friedman, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Mark Selden, *Chinese Village, Socialist State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) and *Revolution, Resistance, and Reform in Village China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

11. Jerzy Kosinski, *The Painted Bird* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981); Xiao Hong, *The Field of Life and Death and Tales of Hulan River* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979).

12. Emily Honig was one of the first to recognize ethnic distinctions among Han Chinese (except, of course, for Hakkas): Emily Honig, "Pride and Prejudice: Subei People in Contemporary Shanghai," in Perry Link, Richard Madsen, and Paul G. Pickowicz, *Unofficial China: Popular Culture and Thought in the People's Republic* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 138–155.

13. Valerie Jaffe, "'Every Man a Star': The Ambivalent Cult of Amateur Art in the New Chinese Documentaries," in Pickowicz and Zhang, eds., *From Underground to Independent*, pp. 77–108.

14. Yingjin Zhang, "My Camera Doesn't Lie? Truth, Subjectivity, and Audience in Chinese Independent Film and Video," in Pickowicz and Zhang, eds., *From Underground to Independent*, pp. 23–46.

15. Jeremy Brown, "Staging Xiaojinzhuang: The City in the Countryside, 1974–1976," in Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Andrew G. Walder, eds., *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 153–184.

16. For a discussion of the function and meaning of the "crowd" in Lu Xun's fiction, see Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House: A Study of Lu Xun* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), chapter 4.

17. Paul G. Pickowicz, "Melodramatic Representation and the 'May Fourth' Tradition of Chinese Cinema," in Ellen Widmer and David Der-wei Wang, eds., *From May Fourth to June Fourth: Fiction and Film in Twentieth Century China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 295–326, 425–428.

18. Paul G. Pickowicz, "Social and Political Dynamics of Underground Filmmaking in China," in Pickowicz and Zhang, eds., *From Underground to Independent*, pp. 1–22.

19. On Wu Wenguang, see Matthew David Johnson, "'A Scene beyond Our Line of Sight': Wu Wenguang and New Documentary Cinema's Politics of Independence," in Pickowicz and Zhang, eds., *From Underground to Independent*, pp. 47–76.

20. These comments are contained in an advertising circular entitled "Film at Redcat Presents" distributed by California Institute of the Arts in connection with a screening of the "peasant films" held on January 29, 2007 in Los Angeles.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

8

The “Rise of China”?

Bruce Cumings

Consider that country whose economy is “galloping ahead,” or that country which is “galloping into view,” or that country which seems about to “walk all over us”: China. Its economy has indeed been growing fast—about 9.4 percent per annum on average over the past three decades (but no better than South Korea and Taiwan from 1965 to 1997). Casually perusing newspapers and magazines tells us China is newly “in view” (but where was it before unviewed?). Book after book now suggests that China is emerging, rising, overcoming the U.S., “putting it in the shade”; it is likely to be the superpower of the twenty-first century (but did we not say the same thing about Japan in the 1980s?).

We are in the midst of a new Orientalist craze, yet another hyperactive spasm of Western and especially American hopes and fears about East Asia, reminiscent of the simultaneous admiration and exaggeration *cum* fear and loathing that attached to Japan’s economic prowess twenty years ago: it is called “the rise of China.”[1] The Beijing Olympics come and go, far more successfully than China’s detractors predicted, punctuated at beginning and end by precisely choreographed mass displays, and a historian who just returned from his first visit to Beijing summed up the American reaction: “it’s amazing—and terrifying.”

Now consider this list of China metaphors:[2]

> Unchanging China, cycles of rise and decline, the inscrutable Forbidden City, boxes within boxes, sick man of Asia, the good earth, agrarian reformers, China shakes the world, who lost China, containment or liberation, brainwashing, the Sino-Soviet monolith, Quemoy and Matsu, the East is Red, containment with-

out isolation, ping-pong diplomacy, the week that changed the world, whither China-after-Mao, the Gang of Four, the Four Modernizations, the China card, butchers of Beijing, whither China-after-Deng, China shakes the world (again[3]), cycles of rise and decline (again[4]), unchanging China (yet again[5]).

Beyond all that, our pundits and experts remain captured by a master metaphor of China's unfathomable-in-a-lifetime vastness,[6] its long history, its huge population, and (therefore) its overriding importance to the world we live in.

China has not been a nation for Americans, but a metaphor. We are encouraged to think about "China" (miracle or threat) as if it exists in a vacuum; like the "Japan as Number One" literature, most of the scenarios for what China's rise means and where China is going demand of the observing eye "an absurdity and a nonsense," in Friedrich Nietzsche's words: somehow the all-seeing eyes of the China watchers hardly ever alight on CINCPAC in Honolulu, the 6th and 7th fleets, the largest American airbase in the region at Kadena on Okinawa, the singular Marine expeditionary force permanently located abroad, also in Okinawa, the international proctology practiced by myriad satellite and other technologies on China, or the spy planes that the Pentagon sends along China's coasts. The practiced eyes of the China watchers miss an entire archipelago of empire.[7]

American bases in East Asia go back to 1945, when they completely neutered the Pacific rivalry between Japan and the U.S. that went on for half a century before Pearl Harbor, but their utterly unimagined and unprecedented longevity also reflects a mix of atavism[8] and anachronism; an outgrowth of World War II and the war in Korea, these bases persist well into the new century as if nothing had changed. Since 9/11 the U.S. has vastly expanded this archipelago of empire around the world—especially into former Soviet bases in Central Asia that put American power on the ground near Russia's southern and China's western borders for the first time—while retaining most of its Cold War leverage over its allies; the U. S. still holds the linchpins of international and military stability among the advanced industrial countries. This global structure gives us the best explanation for the extraordinary continuing weight of this singular superpower in world affairs—this, and its continuing economic productivity compared to almost anyone else. (China's growth is rapid, but its productivity is still at Third World levels.)

Here is the essential structure constraining every country in East Asia, including China: for the first time in world history, the leading power maintains an extensive network of bases on the territory of its allies and primary economic competitors—Japan, Germany, Britain, Italy, Spain, South Korea, all the major industrial powers save China, France[9] and Russia (and even then,

the U.S. has many bases on the territory of the former U.S.S.R.)—marking a radical break with the prewar balance of power (where it would have been inconceivable for Britain to base its troops in Germany or France) and thus the operation of *realpolitik* among the major powers. None of this matters, though, when the point is to hype a new miracle-cum-enemy.

THE WESTERN GAZE AND THE GLORIES OF CHINA

When China's imagined rise is set against its "known" past—its ancient, illustrious, five-thousand-year-long heritage of piling triumph upon triumph—then hearts truly take wing: here is the maximal formula for embroidered nonsense. Standing in the known present, gazing into the (unknown) future, wielding bold, even earth-shaking predictions about where we are headed, while casting an eye back to that halcyon period when China was the center of known civilization and "Westerners" were running around in bear skins: that is the ticket. China is rising, nay, *Asia* is rising, the West (and especially the United States) is declining, sinking, soon it may be *kaput.* Plus there is going to be hell to pay: but we can all applaud because world civilization is returning to its point of origin.

An example is Kishore Mahbubani's *The New Asian Hemisphere*,[10] which contains either the most cliché-ridden blurbs ever written, or the best clichés ever text-messaged between baggage claim and a waiting taxi. Take Harvard professor Ezra F. Vogel: Mahbubani is "deeply immersed in the West and in Asia, [and] is arguably the most articulate Asian voice bluntly telling the West how informed Asians see it. The tide is shifting and while Mahbubani's message will not be easy to take, Western leaders will ignore it at their peril." Mr. Mahbubani, a former ambassador to the United Nations and now the dean of the "Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy" in Singapore, expresses his appreciation to the many additional friends generous enough "to offer 'blurbs' for this book," including Zbigniew Brzezinski, Amartya Sen, and Lawrence Summers. He drops similarly illustrious names throughout the book, culled from a surreptitious list that appears to exclude anyone who never got invited to Davos.

The opening line of the book: "The rise of the West transformed the world. The rise of Asia will bring about an equally significant transformation. This book describes why Asia is rising now. . . ."[11] Notice that he says "Asia"; the author wants India also to have its place in the sun. But beyond a hailstorm of "rise-speak" and a farrago of imprecations about "a great day of reckoning" to come between East and West, Mahbubani does not have much new to say. He accepts that "modernization" is the name of the game, and believes this is

the century when "all of Asia may well be modernized," but his conception of modernity leaves him about where modernization theory was in the 1950s.[12] He does remind us, though, how bad things could be in the bad old pre-modern days: no flush toilets for example, Thomas Crapper's invention which we all still bow unto several times a day. Indeed right at the start of his discourse on "the March to Modernity" Mahbubani recalls "the more excruciating memories of my life" when he held it as long as he could and then braved accursed metal-bin shitholes in Jakarta. He also cites well-known Japan scholar Robert Kagan, who wrote about "young Meiji reformers" visiting the United States in 1860 and "marveling at . . . flush toilets." (No mean feat this, coming eight years before the Meiji Restoration.) Nor had I known that there is another WTO, namely, the World Toilet Association, with the inspiring total of "forty-seven international members." But Mahbubani skims over other interesting statistics, for example that the number of Indian and South Korean students gaining PhDs in science and engineering in the U.S. from 1983 to 2003 was about equal at 17,000 each, and that while China had 62,582 students in the U.S. in 2006–2006, Korea had 58,847.[13] Left unexamined is how Korea, with about fifty million people, matches India and China, each with more than a billion. Left completely unexamined, given Mahbubani's scatological interests, is rising India's unquestioned global lead in the number of people relieving themselves in the great outdoors—not in outhouses, but in any handy spot: 638 million, or 55 percent of the population.[14]

Mahbubani opines that the West's predominance is a mere two centuries old ("for the vast majority of recorded history, Asia . . . had the greatest share of the world's economy"), and like Giovanni Arrighi he also spots Adam Smith in Beijing—in particular "the dramatic impact the applications of Smith's principles has had on the economic productivity of Asian societies." Nonetheless he wonders "why it took so long for Asian societies to implement them." When you have the most people, your position in a pre-industrial world of agrarian kingdoms is likely to be predominant: so what? Is having the most people also an advantage in this century? China's annual growth since Deng Xiaoping's reforms in 1978 has been undeniably spectacular, running at an average just under double digits (9.7 percent), and an astounding 12 percent in 2007, before the 2008 financial meltdown. For three decades after 1965 South Korea and Taiwan were the most rapidly growing states, averaging about 9.5 percent and 9 percent respectively. Are they not "rising," too? Is it China's unimaginable scale that pushes so many analysts into Mr. Mahbubani's tumescent bailiwick?

Mahbubani returns to daily life in his conclusion, writing that what the Chinese really want is "the American dream," defined as homes, TVs, washing machines, trips to Disneyland, and "study at Harvard" (not to mention

flush toilets). This is the best and most predictive point in the book, but it takes us back rather a long way, at least to Henry Luce's 1941 essay, "The American Century," where this Asia-first prophet defined the American global vision as a surfeit of consumer durables: "Once we cease to distract ourselves with lifeless arguments about isolationism, we shall be amazed to discover that there is already an immense American internationalism. American jazz, Hollywood movies, American slang, American machines and patented products, are in fact the only things that every community in the world, from Zanzibar to Hamburg, recognizes in common."[15] In other words, somewhere Henry Luce is smiling; this is the China he hoped and prayed for. Of course, Mahbubani does not tell us how the ozone layer can tolerate 1.3 billion people living the profligate good life that Americans have claimed as their birthright for about a century.

Martin Jacques, once the editor of *Marxism Today* but now a cheerleader for capitalism with Chinese characteristics, got slightly more authoritative blurbs and put in a bit more elbow grease than did Mahbubani for his book, but *When China Rules the World*[16] shares the same teleology: subtitled "The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order," we are again asked not just to consider China's rapid growth rate, but the pending triumph of Orient over Occident and the demise of the American economy.

We are living in a "global moment of China-awareness," which Jacques attributes to two factors: China becoming "the workshop of the world," and China's growth fueling higher commodity prices in the world, and thus inflationary pressures.[17] The first is a fair but misleading point as we will see, and the second point seemed true until the autumn 2008 panic stabilized gas prices at a historically low level (about $2.50 a gallon in the U.S.) and raised fears of global deflation (which are still alive).

Unlike many others, Jacques can see the American military reach in the Pacific, with a big navy and bases ringing China, but China is nonetheless "the dominant land power" in East Asia, and for this and other reasons, China "is not so far away from achieving hegemony within the region."[18] This is the purest poppycock: China was a big enough "land power" to stalemate the U.S. in Korea and to backstop the Vietnamese until the Americans gave up in 1975. Both Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson were deterred from challenging China's "land power"—sixty years ago when the U.S. towered over the rest of the world economically, and nearly fifty years ago amid the first alarms of American decline.

Any analysis of replacing American hegemony has to find some power waiting in the wings to take over; that is where the U.S. resided from 1890 to 1945, but there is no such power today, least of all a China with barely any force projection capability. Yet Jacques says that China is slowly emerging as

"an alternative model to the United States." This model includes multilateralism, the doctrine of "peaceful rise," lots of aid to developing countries, and a "democratic" world of equal sovereign states—not democracies at home necessarily, but among and between each other.[19] This comes close to taking China's self-proclaimed global strategy for the reality; in any case I cannot think of a single country or region where this "model" has replaced the American, except perhaps among the poor and failed states of Africa, which the U.S. and its allies no longer see as having much developmental potential.

Somehow even the data Jacques culls to make his case for Chinese advance and American retreat fails to impress: the U.S. share of world GDP stood at 19 percent in 1914, he writes, a little over 27 percent in 1950 (when the other industrial countries were still recovering from World War II), 22 percent in 1973, and about 20 percent today.[20]

What this tells us is that America was the leading economic power in 1914, and almost a century later, it still is—so "China's rise" must be coming at the expense of someone else. Not wanting inconvenient facts to disrupt his narrative, Jacques shifts into prophetic mode for the last 100 pages of the book, imagining what the world will be like fifty years hence when China rules it (assuming all his trend lines continue to ascend).

David Kang's ineffably titled *China Rising*[21] is a much better book. He is intent on a serious exploration of the East Asian past to explicate its resurgent present, and perhaps its preponderant future. Scholarly and popular discussion of China and East Asia, he thinks, is "unduly restricted in its explanatory power by remaining locked into a method" that parses differences between a handful of theories of how the world works—most of them American—and thus treats East Asia as if it were just like any other part of the world.[22] The American literature on international relations soldiers on, claiming that all nation states are on the make, the big ones get most of what there is to get, others engage either in "balancing" or "bandwagoning," international life is nasty, brutish and long (indeed never-ending), and ineluctably a war looms between the rising power, China, and the hegemonic power, the U.S.

Professor Kang introduces some common sense by arguing that today East Asia neither balances nor bandwagons amid "China's amazing rise." Instead China's ubiquitous slogan of "peaceful rise" (*heping jueqi*) harks back to the unwarlike pre-1800 Chinese world order. He may be right—we can all hope so—but the proposition cannot be tested in our world, where an American command headquartered in Honolulu surveils 52 percent of the earth's surface and has such overwhelming dominance across the Pacific Ocean that only fools—like the doddering Soviet elite in the 1980s—would dare try and field a blue-ocean navy that was not in CINCPAC's harness to begin with (like the Japanese and Korean navies). "Peaceful rise"? When a country that

is entirely ambivalent about your March to Modernity can send a Trident submarine (armageddon in one black sausage tube) gliding up to your coast any time it wants, or take down your infrastructure in a hailstorm of pinpointed cruise missiles while people sip latte in a Starbucks two blocks away, you take notice. (The Iraq War illustrates that Americans have no idea what to do *after* they pulverize your economy, but that does not negate the point.) Like the other analysts and most of the "China miracle" literature, Kang thinks contemporary Chinese history began when Deng Xiapoing got his market signals straight and opened China up to the world economy three decades ago. Before that China was "a moribund and isolated middle power." Contrast Lin Chun, who points out that China's GNP grew at an annual average rate of 6.2 percent between 1952 and 1978, and therefore calls it a "socialist developmental state."[23]

THE COMING WAR WITH CHINA?

David Kang is right about political scientists in the U.S. Two of the more influential ones, John Mearsheimer and the late Samuel Huntington, both ended their prominent books with predictions about a Sino-American war in the twenty-first century, an upcoming cataclysm presented in an almost casual, offhand way, as if anyone would understand the likelihood of this eventuality. Books like theirs have far more influence in America than the work of China watchers (even though they, too, produce books in the coming-war genre),[24] but their rash and irresponsible prognostications rarely seem to get criticized or even countered in the mainstream press. (They also forget that we had a war with the PRC already, in Korea, and did not do well.) A more sobering prediction comes from Richard Bush and Michael O'Hanlon's *A War Like No Other*:[25] if a war comes, it will most likely be over a small island once named for its beauty: Formosa. Here, they write, a Sino-American war is still a distinct possibility. It is a daunting and frightening fact that today thermonuclear war could break out over a fly stuck in the ointment for 60 years, now called Taiwan. And so Bush and O'Hanlon title their first chapter "Thinking the Unthinkable." Like Mearsheimer and Huntington, they offer scenarios for how war might break out—as soon as 2012. But they are much more knowledgeable about the realities of Sino-American relations, and their real intent is to "manage" Taiwan so that war becomes unlikely. They offer many useful suggestions for warding off trouble, but they show no interest in the origins of the problem, which leaves their analysis superficial.

Harry Truman moved the 7th Fleet into the Taiwan Straits in the immediate aftermath of the North Korean attack on South Korea (June 25, 1950),

demolishing the studied ambiguity that had marked American policy toward Taiwan: would Washington defend it or not? A mutual defense treaty with Jiang Jieshi's (Chiang Kai-shek) Nationalist government followed soon after. Then Jimmy Carter unilaterally abrogated the treaty in 1979 as the prelude to normalizing relations with China, and Taiwan returned to its pre-1950 ambiguous state. Internal deliberations within the Truman administration, however, make clear that there was little ambiguity about what Washington preferred, well before Korea: the island separated from the mainland, so long as communists ruled the latter. Dean Acheson (whose name does not appear in *A War Like No Other*), declared in 1949, "We must carefully conceal our wish to separate the island from mainland control," while talking publicly about "letting the dust settle" from the Chinese civil war. But then Harry Truman hated Jiang Jieshi, who he (correctly) believed freely looted American lend-lease aid during World War II, and the general view was that Jiang had just contrived to lose the mainland, so how could he be expected to save the island? The result: no U.S. commitment to back the Nationalist regime. How then to keep the island out of communist hands? Simple: overthrow Jiang and get a different regime, or a United Nations trusteeship, or just neutralize the place. Paul Nitze, Dean Rusk and others thus planned a coup against Jiang to climax on the same weekend when the Korean War broke out. But the Generalissimo had a virtual doctorate in political intrigue, and saw this coup coming from a mile away. Soon the American favorite to replace him, General Sun Liren, was under house arrest—only to emerge from it in 1988.[26]

Think about this business from Beijing's point of view: Mao's forces finally unify China after a century of imperially inflicted disorder; all that remains is the former Japanese colony of Taiwan; the highest American officials proclaim non-involvement and no interest in defending it; evidence accumulates in the spring of 1950 that Chinese Communist forces are massing to invade the island—and secretly Acheson is scheming to again divide China and install a pro-American regime. Instead the Korean War comes along, saves Jiang's regime, and gets him his coveted treaty with the U.S. The internal documents on this were declassified long ago and are quite persuasive, but most historians and nearly all policy pundits act as if they do not exist. For James Peck, however, this episode is a key element in his book *Washington's China*,[27] which puts China at the center of American foreign policy concerns not in the twenty-first century, but at the dawn of the Cold War.

Peck is right to view the Taiwan Straits intervention as a logical result of Acheson's duplicity, and to see Taiwan as a hardy "perennial" in the U.S.-China relationship. But he also sees it as the key to "the direction of Washington's Asia policy" and the linchpin of a general strategy of isolating China, and in that he is wrong. Isolation was the policy, but East Asian strategy was

formed in 1947, coterminous with the Truman Doctrine, and was pinned on the revival of Japanese industry and its corollaries—reinvolving Japanese economic influence in its former colonies (Korea and Taiwan) and throughout Southeast Asia more generally. Scholars made all this comprehensible quite a while ago and traced its critical importance to American intervention in both Korea and Vietnam.

Peck's judgment is another one laboring under the weightiness of "China," which indeed weighs from one end to the other of this nonetheless thoughtful, deeply researched and interesting book. This leads him to overestimate the importance of the Eisenhower administration and its "relentless animosity" toward China. John Foster Dulles certainly unleashed a farrago of heated rhetoric, and he certainly squinted beady-eyed through his bifocals at the fault lines of conflict in the Taiwan Straits (Quemoy and Matsu), but the gravity of American policy toward the PRC always swings between its anchor in the Truman era, the Nixonian demarche that dramatically weighed anchor on Taiwan, Deng Xiaoping's stunning reforms that slowly cranked the PRC open, and the 150-year-old British/American dreams about the China market (now *there* is a perennial).

But Peck is right that Taiwan is a constant thorn in the flesh of Sino-American relations, and Bush and O'Hanlon are right that it could still lead to war—and please read Richard Rhodes' harrowing account of how maddeningly provocative moves on both sides over another littoral island in 1962 nearly led to general war, nuclear winter, and the deaths of hundreds of millions.[28] The truth today, though, is that "China's rise" can both be central to American nightmares *and* something that nothing is done about, because of domestic politics—a bipartisan coalition eying the China market has its own centrality. Take George W. Bush: he started off hostile to China, had his first international crisis over the April Fool's Day spy plane incident, broke the ambiguity of U.S. policy that same year by declaring he would do "whatever it takes" to defend Taiwan[29]—but chose instead to invade Iraq. Taiwan policy retreated to ambiguity and China went on the back burner, right where it wanted to be—so it could double its industrial production under Bush's averted nose.

WEAK CHINA

If we jog our memories about the American lake in the Pacific, it is unquestionably true that America's position in the power balance in East Asia dwarfs China's, and will for a very long time. For David Shambaugh, the closest American student of China's military, "the PLA has not yet developed

(or even placed a priority on developing) a power-projection capability." In recent years it has expanded its capabilities vis-à-vis Taiwan, but Taiwan has not been sitting with its hands folded, either. The seemingly absurd truth is that China's capabilities to invade and take over Taiwan are not relatively much better today than they were in June 1950, when the CIA expected an invasion to occur; Taiwan's air force is still superior, China's amphibious capabilities are still insufficient to land the requisite number of troops, and so all it can really do in a war is demolish the island with its many missiles—not an outcome that any Chinese general in his right mind would want, unless a regional all-out war had broken out.[30] American policy toward Taiwan is also essentially what it was in 1950: retain ambiguity as to whether it would or would not defend the island if China attacked. Meanwhile today all of China's neighbors are significant military powers. Japan's air force, its missiles (however few in number) and its Aegis-equipped destroyers are greatly superior to China's; its Coast Guard is almost as big as the PRC's surface combat fleet. The combined defense spending of South Korea and Taiwan nearly equals China's, depending on how the figures are calculated. North Korea has the fourth largest army in the world, nuclear weapons and a full panoply of short- and medium-range missiles. One hundred fifty thousand Chinese invaders got badly bloodied by Vietnam in 1979. Then we have nuclear-armed India, Pakistan, and Russia. In short, China is ringed by nations with formidable military power. Take them all away, and you would still have the global U.S. military towering over China: take it from Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who in some uncommon remarks at the Eisenhower Presidential Library in May 2010 asked, "Does the number of warships we have and are building really put America at risk when the U.S. battle fleet is larger than the next 13 navies combined, 11 of which belong to allies and partners? Is it a dire threat that by 2020 the United States will have only 20 times more advanced stealth fighters than China?"[31]

No wonder China's overriding goal is to "secure a favorable, peaceful international environment and maintain good relations with our surrounding countries," as the slogan goes. China also moved dramatically away from Cold War diplomacy in the East Asian region, indeed much further than Washington has; it recognized former enemy South Korea while maintaining its long-standing relationship with North Korea, developed cross-straits trade and tourism with Taiwan, and carries on an active horizontal diplomacy with all its near neighbors under its own "good-neighbor policy." China has thus been central to an East Asian pattern over the past three decades in which economic forces have systematically eroded or erased formerly impervious Cold War barriers. American leaders could learn much from China's recent diplomacy. But it is also a diplomacy that flourished in

the vacuum of Bush's unilateralism; Barack Obama's presidency has raised hopes of a similar American return to multilateralism, deployed with much more weight than China's.

CHINA IS NEAR—AND UBIQUITOUS

David Kang's historically informed analysis argues that an East Asian international system with much to recommend it functioned for centuries before modern imperialism descended on China (1839–1842), Japan (1853), Korea (1876), and Vietnam (1880s). This benign empire had its seat in Beijing where the emperor communed with "all under heaven," but radiated influence outward in nearly all directions to kingdoms that fell within its civilizational spell.[32] Often misinterpreted as Chinese "suzerainty" over a hierarchical system of tribute, the kingdoms on China's periphery like Korea, Japan and Vietnam were fundamentally independent for centuries, and China rarely interfered in their internal affairs. This was a mostly pacific system in which the Middle Kingdom exercised benign neglect toward its neighbors, especially Korea and Japan, and they reciprocated by adopting and adapting Chinese civilization and statecraft to their own needs. Long, stable relations with Southeast Asia also led to a large Chinese diaspora getting ensconced, usually because of superior economic skills, and today the nations of the region either welcome this, or hesitate to do anything about it. (This and other Chinese diasporas around the world have been major sources of investment in China.)

Unfortunately Professor Kang makes two fundamental mistakes: he sees these places as "national states" when they were traditional monarchies full of people who did not necessarily identify with places we call "Vietnam" or "Korea," something particularly true of Japan's semi-feudal parcellized sovereignty before 1868; the new Meiji leaders had to move heaven and earth to invent traditions and create popular attachments that we can call "national."[33] Kang identifies Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century or Manchu wars in Korea in the seventeeth century as "Chinese," when they were anything but. He could have made all his points without casting nationhood back where it does not belong. His second mistake is more interesting: it is to find a vast trading network throughout East and Southeast Asia before the advent of Western imperialism.

In this Kang is a piker compared to Giovanni Arrighi, a brilliant thinker and good friend whose life was tragically cut short by cancer in 2008. Arrighi suffuses his fascinating *Adam Smith in Beijing*[34] with the mantra that China—we better call it "China"—not only will dominate the twenty-first

century, but through its economy and its own world system, it dominated all the others before 1800 too. After a brief hiatus of 200 years, in other words, sprinkled here and about by things like the Industrial Revolution, a couple of world wars, the rise and demise of the British and American empires, etc., we are now back in a Sinocentric world as "China" returns to its normal position: dominant and all-encompassing. This is by far the most provocative recent book on China (an admission: I blurbed it), as Arrighi sprawls back and forth between a brilliant tutorial on what Adam Smith really said and meant, many cogent observations about our world today, and a looping excursion into East Asian history that alternates between a learned discourse on the same international system Kang explores, and a carnival bumper-car ride where fact collides merrily with fantasy.

We get it on page one of the preface, where two developments shape our world: "the rise and demise of the neo-conservative Project for a New American Century," and the rise of China as "the leader of the East Asian economic renaissance." These two forces are shifting "the epicenter of the global political economy from North America to East Asia." In other words, George W. Bush's blinkered unilateralism is taken to be the essence of American hegemony; Japan, South Korea and India are falling under China's long shadow (even though Japan was the number two economy in the world until China surpassed it in 2010, and Wall Street projections say Korea may become the second richest country in the world by 2050 in per capita terms—after Arrighi's wheezing U.S.); Europe is so inconsequential that it barely merits a mention; and we all better start learning Chinese. For Arrighi the rise of China signals the demise of the West, or at least "the inglorious end of the sixty-year long struggle of the United States to become the organizing center of a world state," a world-historical denouement or "terminal crisis" welcomed with a certain relish.[35] Bush somehow contrived to undo the work of all his predecessors, in a short few years—but lo and behold, now even the American people finally see through "the cunning of Karl Rove."[36] All this typifies a book characterized by a quickly obsolescing presentism, fascinating but flawed theorizing, and world-historical projections sent winging into the future and backward into history.

How this oft-proclaimed American demise is going to come about is a mystery, given the 700-plus military bases that the Pentagon maintains worldwide, and the absence of barely a single significant form of high technology residing in non-American hands. Arrighi gets around this by several conflations—some absurd, some serious. He merges the empty rhetoric of late-1990s neo-conservatives about "a New American Century" with a post-2001 attempt "to bring into existence the first truly global empire in world history," and declares "the abysmal failure of [this] Project on the Iraqi testing ground."

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan enlarged the ongoing American sphere in the world, as we have seen, but Bush could not begin to fathom what Dean Acheson understood: a "truly global empire" places the U.S. as first among equals and requires assent and legitimacy. For Bush and Cheney empire meant territorial expansion, a dim vision barely advanced over McKinley's 1898 gobbling up of the Philippines. Arrighi makes this mistake because he equates American power with military prowess and assumes that the other sinews of American strength are sapped and decrepit, so Washington soldiers on as the capital of a dying empire, with the Pentagon its main source of support. Yet American productivity advanced more rapidly after 9/11 than it did in the heyday of growth in the late 1990s, its technological lead in almost everything important remains long, and the undeniable loss of authority occasioned by Bush's fiascoes merely presented Barack Obama with a golden opportunity to restore the American reputation in the world. The American economy has done far better in the past fifteen years than almost anyone imagined in the "declinist" literature of the 1980s and in spite of all manner of crises it still accounts for about 30 percent of world gross product. Absent access to the American market, its high technology and its global protection force, and the East Asian economies would collapse.

Arrighi's corollary to American decline is much more interesting: the "ascent of China" bids fail to realize Adam Smith's vision of "a world-market society based on greater equality among the world's civilizations," a harbinger of mutual respect between East and West.[37] This is a profound insight, given that the British-American hegemonies of the past two hundred years were so often run by white men afflicted with condescension and racism. Arrighi also shrewdly notes that China is the only competitive power with a leading economy *not* protected by American military power. But is China outside the reach of American hegemony, broadly defined? I do not think so, not when you examine the broad popularity of things American in China, from basketball to Hollywood films to pop music to shopping habits—Henry Luce's stuff, or what Victoria de Grazia calls the American "imperium as an emporium." And simple error sometimes masquerades as argument: for example, "the fact that China has replaced the United States as the world's fastest-growing economy." Japan did this long ago, but did not replace the U.S. in any serious way. China is following in those footsteps, trying to catch up with an America that has grown remarkably well, all things considered, for nearly two centuries (before the contemporary economic crisis, the U.S. grew by nearly 4 percent in the third quarter of 2007 and 3.3 percent in the second quarter of 2008, which in absolute terms produced two Chinas).

Still, Arrighi punctuates his theme with a long *tour-de-force* treatment of Adam Smith's thought that will not endear him to the Chicago School of

(purportedly) Smithean economics. Smith thought that China had long been ahead of Europe, and was "an exemplar of market-based development" in Arrighi's words.[38] This marketing was situated amid small-holding producers who excelled in "intensive" development, but did not follow the Western path of "endless accumulation of capital." Moreover, it turns out, China was not just big, but the center of the world economy. Like David Kang, Arrighi wants to convince us that his future scenarios for China's ascent are merely the predictable resurgence of patterns of the East Asian past, and so he lands with both feet amid controversies that have occupied historians and graduate seminars for at least half a century.

Arrighi likes Kenneth Pomeranz's idea that 200 years ago China and the West were about equal in economic strength, but a spurt of technological change in the West combined with imperial subordination in the East put China in a harness from which it is only now escaping. He likes Bin Wong's argument that China and Europe shared similar patterns of market-based growth and "labor intensification" in the centuries leading up to the Industrial Revolution. He likes Kaoru Sugihara's theory of "industrious" development in East Asia after 1600, a form of growth based on labor-intensive, energy-saving house holding and the cultivation of human capital, and he likes Takeshi Hamashita's pioneering work on East Asian trading networks. From this work he derives the dictum that "trade and markets were more developed in East Asia in general, and in China in particular, than in Europe, through the eighteenth century." Even "Smith himself" saw China as being ahead of Europe, Arrighi writes, as if to close the debate. Soon he conflates Sugihara and Smith (who liked house holding, too) to get East Asia's "Industrious Revolution," which, he thinks, also explains a lot about China's growth today.[39]

These authors take us to the dawn of industrial modernity but not beyond. For Wong and Pomeranz this is a given: they want to explain what everyone agrees was a grand divergence between East and West. However extensive markets and trading may have been, it is unquestionable that when the warlord Hideyoshi tried to conquer Korea as an incident to subduing China in a major Northeast Asian war in the 1590s, his failure caused Japan and Korea to recoil into isolation for the next 250 years, and the fall of the Ming fifty years later led to a closing off of China's trade as well. Arrighi knows this: after 1644 the incoming Qing dynasty "reimposed the ban on private sea traffic and pursued a scorched-earth policy" to turn its crucial southeast coastal entrepots "into a no-man's-land," just as the Tokugawa Shogunate's policies caused "a sharp contraction of trade" in northeast Asia. But he does not see that 250 years is a long, long time for bureaucratic systems in Japan, Korea and China to close themselves off and trade through three prophylactic en-

claves called Nagasaki, Pusan, and Canton—indeed this period encompasses much of what we call the modern history of the West.

The scholarship by Hamashita and Sugihara also raises a key question of scale. Any reader of Fernand Braudel's preeminent work on the emergence over centuries of modern trade in the Mediterranean world would question whether the extensive trading networks Hamashita writes about or Sugihara's post-1600 intensive development can possibly have had the same scale or transformative weight as those in Europe. But these historians can hardly be faulted for their awesome projects: the interrogation of modern history itself, through the lenses of East Asia.[40] As for "Smith himself," Perry Anderson pointed out three decades ago that Adam Smith and most other European luminaries—Hegel, Marx, Montesquieu—knew next to nothing, really, about China, and in the night of their ignorance their favorite theory of how the place worked was not peasant "industriousness" but the hoary tale of "Oriental despotism."[41]

Barely pausing to catch his breath, Arrighi also wants to tell us what is wrong with Robert Brenner's theories of East Asian development, and dwells on another seminar favorite, the notion that capitalism "nearly occurred first" in the Song Dynasty. Then, sad to say, Chinese growth slowed after 1300 because it got trapped in "a high-level equilibrium." This last idea was in Mark Elvin's 1973 book,[42] but suffice it to say four decades of seminars plus Arrighi's excursus gets us no closer to figuring out why China did not originate capitalism—and by now the reader is gnawing the carpet because what could things happening (or not happening) in 1300 possibly have to do with the price of eggs in China, not to mention Karl Rove bamboozling the American people? And is the irruption of capitalism (or its absence, or its failure to appear) not just another Western discourse?

LAVISH LIES AND ENDURING TRUTHS

For three decades after 1949 China was full of sharp twists and turns, usually spawned from above—by Mao, mostly, rather than from the society or the economy—but ever since Deng's reforms it has been a model of steady double-digit growth, apart from the Tiananmen tragedy; disruptions have come from the growth itself, like the hundreds of millions leaving the countryside for the cities. This makes a consistent narrative since 1949 difficult, and accounts in part for the tendency to divide PRC history into two: the awful Maoist pre-history, and everything else since 1978. It therefore sucks the breath out of a reader, and out of much of the literature under discussion, to encounter someone who wants to interpret it all with a rigorous consistency,

honesty, balance and goodwill toward those who have actually had to live through the past six decades in China. Lin Chun's *Transformation of Chinese Socialism*[43] is a landmark book and a breath of fresh air amid the timidity, groupthink, reflexive liberalism and even bad faith of the foreign (and particularly American) work on the PRC, and the theorizing of fine scholars like Kang and Arrighi. You put down her first chapter and say, aha: finally we can examine China's modern history (and our own) with the scrupulous reflection and unpretentious seriousness that it deserves, with unblinking self-awareness and self-criticism, and a simple desire to penetrate to the quick of important questions. And, you think, here is a book that truly walks in the path of and shares the humane sensibility of Maurice Meisner's lifelong scholarship.

Lin Chun's achievement begins with her stance: she has her feet firmly lodged in China and Europe, and uses both to reconnoiter her subject; she may or may not be a liberal in her own political orientation (I would not know), but she is very widely read, at home with Western and East Asian thought and scholarship, fully cognizant of the depth and strength of modern European civilization and its relative achievement in building different versions of social democracy, and skeptical of scholars like Arrighi who believe that developmentalism has failed, or that the West and its modern values have been eclipsed by the East.[44] At every stage in her argument she invokes theoretical and comparative reflections (Toqueville, Marx, Derrida, Schumpeter, Weber, Williams, and so many others), always in the interest of thought and not name-dropping, making this also a reasoned examination of post-colonial modernity in all of the world.

She begins her book with the truth that China sought to build socialism, not the China that Western missionaries wanted to see but never could find, or the world's largest parliamentary democracy, or the latest version of the Taiwan and South Korean "miracles." Both Mao and Deng were committed to "the pursuit of a socialist alternative, tricky and rocky as it has been and will still be," and if in the recent period this could proceed "under compelling moral and rational impulses backed by a broad social consensus," this might not simply challenge, but in the long run contribute to "transforming capitalist modernity" in the direction of the social market. But China "developed" in the pincers of international isolation and millennial backwardness, strewing its path with monumental obstacles.[45]

Europeans, Americans and Japanese were eager imperialists in East Asia, but that sordid history often evaporated in China's passage from "sick man of Asia" to the totalitarian PRC; yet how can we ignore Chinese suffering and imperialist atrocities that formed the moral justification for movements of national liberation, Lin writes; is it not "a lavish lie" to do so? And was China supposed to plant the tender roots of liberal democracy in this soil,

fouled by imperialists covetous of their liberal practice at home (but only at home)? Or was China "historically robbed of the option of liberal capitalism" by imperialism and the harsh circumstances of the PRC's birth at the height of the Cold War?[46] For onetime acolytes now turned incessant critics of the PRC like Jonathan Mirsky of the *New York Review of Books*, it has all been half a century on the road to nowhere: at the PRC's fiftieth anniversary in 1999 there was "nothing to celebrate," he remarked, and he is hardly alone among China-watchers. An observant woman like Lin Chun, growing up in China, could never say such an unashamedly solipsistic thing, as if PRC history exists to please or displease foreigners, as if nothing was accomplished. Heaping scorn on history is also a way of burying it and suppressing its immanent contradictions; "the past thus cannot pass and only becomes a specter in the present"—the last line in Lin Chun's book.[47]

For her the revolution ushered in a political culture of egalitarianism and also "a protective and regulative state" that not only unified China for the first time in 150 years, but developed "a sophisticated social organization of production and distribution" for the whole country—and developed the economy at a fast rate. Cycles of centralization and decentralization distributed significant initiative to the localities, and hundreds of millions of ordinary people participated in local politics, however beholden that politics was to the Communist Party. Mao and Deng were both revolutionary nationalists and modernizers, determined to catch up with the West ("Modernity cannot be terminally capitalist," Lin says, "if only because communist revolutionaries were bound to transform themselves into ruthless modernizers"). Mao's rule led to disasters like the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution (which produced a "cultural wasteland," Lin thinks), but global capitalism also "evolved and reformed through triumphs and crises." In spite of consistent economic growth, Mao bequeathed a society with nearly half a billion people in poverty (as the United Nations Development Program defined it), something that more rapid growth and state-led anti-poverty initiatives reduced to eighty-eight million by 2003, meaning that about three-fourths of those lifted out of poverty on a world scale in the same time period were Chinese (a stunning achievement).

Lin Chun is fully aware of the wretched conditions that millions still live in, the sweatshops they work in, the choking pollution they all breathe, the stifling corruption of the officials. But China is also living through the longest boom in its modern history, yielding broad support for the leadership. What should unfold is not "China's rise" (she has no interest in such nonsense) or a neo-liberal program of ever more liberalization and deregulation, but serious reforms putting "the sovereign place of the people" alongside their socioeconomic rights and their participation in decisions affecting their lives: "only

political and economic democracy can rescue the Chinese model by placing it, and the market society it fostered, under public scrutiny and control."[48] Lin's book happily announces a moratorium on the binary divides of capitalism and communism, liberalism and totalitarianism, the individual and the collective, China and the West, and rings down a much-belated curtain on self-righteous and presumptuous commentators who always end up on the superior (usually Western) side of China's overwhelming developmental conundrums, without ever having to face them. Choosing up sides, in any case, abolishes the very dilemmas we ought to be worrying about.

CONCLUSION: A DECENT BURIAL

Much more might be said about China's growing power and influence. It is not surprising that the successes of China's people and leadership, following in the wake of the rapid postwar industrialization of Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, should raise fears not of another East Asian growth wave, but a tsunami—one that might engulf the region and even the world economy. That would be the subject of a different chapter, however, and one I am ill fitted to write. It is hard enough to explain history without venturing into long-range prognostication ("moving into another century" as historians would put it, but without the benefit of any sources). The past several decades ought to have schooled us in Hegel's cunning of history, with utterly unanticipated events like the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rise and demise of "Japan, Inc.," the 9/11 attacks, even five people on the Supreme Court deciding in December 2000 that George W. Bush had won the presidency despite losing the popular vote by half a million, and perhaps also the Electoral College. (Yet four years later some fifty-five million Americans said they were right to have done so. For a person who voted against Bush, this was a worse comeuppance.)

Human history has a nasty way of coiling up and biting us or slapping us in the face when we least expect it. In a broader sense, the cunning of history in general and China's modern trajectory in particular left us without a single socialist system that could be recommended to anyone else, if there ever was one; the remains of the day were varieties of meliorist American liberal democracy and European social democracy that ultimately have to answer to the market. Whether that is a good or a bad thing is not the point: the point is, this was hardly the pot of gold at the end of the socialist rainbow. Meanwhile, a decade after 1989, the tribunes of neo-liberalism had to watch as an entire continent (South America) said no to their nostrums, and elected to bring one variety of would-be socialist (Chavez) or social democrat (Lula) to power. In

this sense history is an equal-opportunity avenger and a relentless reminder of human fallibility.

It is better to bring into focus what we know about China today, and try to comprehend its current and likely effects on the rest of the world in a historical and comparative perspective. I have argued that if Henry Luce were alive today, he would think China was finally carrying out his "American vision"—doing what American leaders want it to do, without having to be told (the most effective kind of power). But more broadly, the overriding Western and Japanese stake in China, in my judgment, is a hugely powerful business coalition that finally got access to the storied China market after Deng Xiaoping's reforms, and has been cavorting with abandon in that capacious arena for three decades, making money hand over fist. Beijing's determination to allow much higher levels of foreign direct investment than its competitors like Japan or South Korea helped to create this coalition, but its real strengths are two: first, American political leaders hardly ever talk about these interests, so they barely enter the press outside of the business pages. (Jim Mann is almost alone in reminding us that the modal atmosphere enveloping the Sino-American relationship is an elitist interaction prizing extreme secrecy.[49]) Second, business interests come close to having a veto power over the China policies of both political parties. That does not mean that a military crisis could not override business interests: it certainly could. But in the dailiness of Sino-American relations since 1978, the largest interest is the business interest, which creates a bipartisan political coalition in Washington favoring engagement. Republican administrations tend to come in with harsh rhetoric about China to appease the right wing of the party, then quickly turn toward engagement (true of Nixon, Reagan, and Bush II; Bush I was a congenital engager)—a quiet strategy that usually flies under the radar of most Americans' attentions. The Democrats have no anti-PRC elements in their constituency except protectionist blue collar unions and workers, and a small but vociferous human rights contingent.

Underpinning this business/politics coalition is a relatively simple fact, namely, that China does not even remotely threaten the United States technologically, commercially, financially, or militarily—and neither does Japan. Twenty years ago when Japan also appeared to be a looming menace to American technology, commerce, and finance, most of the experts claimed that the U.S. was lagging behind Japan in just about every important technology, that Japan had a predatory business model that enabled it to capture global markets, and had somehow accumulated six or seven of the ten largest banks in the world. That "threat" evaporated in the early 1990s. And today China has no world-beating technology, the firms capturing global markets are usually foreign firms in co-production arrangements with China, China's

financial sector is still quite immature, and the health of its economy is utterly dependent on access to the American market. Chinese scholars like Li Minqi correctly note that China is not the "economic powerhouse" of American dreams and fears, but "a backward late industrializer"; Hu Angang's judgment is that "generally speaking, China has by now reached a phase of lower-middle income development."[50] Here we have the essential basis for the overriding characteristic of the Sino-American relationship since 1972, namely, peaceful cooperation and competition.

The U.S. has a full-blown structure of containment and "constrainment" in the region that is now in its seventh decade and shows no signs of diminishing. The structures and field forces of power that East Asian history has created in the past century also still hold sway: these days Chinese and Koreans appear to care much more about Japan's astonishing, almost madcap failure to reckon seriously with its own imperial history (going back at least to 1895) than they do about this or that coming imbroglio with the U.S. China's future cannot be imagined apart from these lingering pressures, just as its economic growth absolutely cannot—and will not—continue at the 1979–2008 pace of nearly 10 percent per annum (indeed, the global crisis sharply reduced its growth in 2009). At some point the capitalist gravity of the world economy will capture it, if it has not already (there are many examples of this happening to Japan, for example the Plaza Accord of 1985), just as its own people and its sorely taxed environment bring mounting pressures to bear on the leadership to decompress and live with the rest of the world, rather than disrupt or dominate it.

So why does this relationship often appear neuralgic, given to swings between optimism and pessimism, or to ever-growing angst about "China's rise"? Again, there are some simple approximations: in June 1989 the Tiananmen massacre outraged world opinion and caused a few hiccups even for the American business coalition and George H. W. Bush, self-described China expert; Beijing's missile fireworks in 1995–1996 and Bill Clinton's mobilization of two aircraft carrier task forces to waters east of Taiwan also momentarily halted the momentum of engagement, as did the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade and the spy plane incident in April 2001. Taiwan's predicament always carries weight and the capability to disrupt (or even destroy) the relationship. But every rough patch or crisis since 1978 pales before the onrushing juggernaut of business access to China. Also, no East Asian country has a politically powerful diaspora in the U.S., analogous to the Cuban community in Miami or the Polish community in Chicago, nor does policy toward East Asia have much of a constituency outside of business, military and political circles. The general condition of most Americans, even college-educated ones, is ignorance about China, which leaves them open to easy manipulation, even stampeding; this makes of China not a nation, but

a permutating metaphor and a palimpsest for American imaginings—and its "rise," a surefire way to sell stupid books. All things considered, it would be better to read a few good books and give "the rise of China" a decent burial.

NOTES

1. I presented an earlier version of this chapter to a colloquium at UCLA, and I thank Bob Brenner and Perry Anderson for their helpful comments.

2. This is drawn from Bruce Cumings, *Parallax Visions: Making Sense of American–East Asian Relations* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999).

3. Napoleon is alleged to have said that "When China wakes up, it will shake the world." Jack Belden used that title for his classic account of the Chinese revolution, but books on China by our best experts open with Napoleon yet again: Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn use this aphorism for their title in *China Wakes: The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power* (New York: Times Books, 1994); also Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China: From Revolution Through Reform* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), p. xv; see also Harry Harding, *China's Second Revolution: Reform After Mao* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1987), p. 239.

4. Harry Harding frames his useful account of Sino-American relations with cyclical metaphors in *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China Since 1972* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1992), as does Suzanne Ogden in *China's Unresolved Issues: Politics, Development and Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1995), p. 6.

5. W. J. F. Jenner, who by his own account once sympathized with the Chinese revolution, argued that Tiananmen proved that China was still captured by its ancient, unchanging and probably irremediable tendency toward tyranny. See *The Tyranny of History: The Roots of China's Crisis* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), pp. 1–11.

6. Vaclav Smil begins his important study of China's environmental calamities this way: "For knowing China—really knowing this continent-like country of diverse environments, ancient habits, contradictory leanings, and unpredicted challenges—even a lifetime is not enough." One is tempted to say, well, a lifetime will still have to do. See *China's Environmental Crisis: An Inquiry into the Limits of National Development* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), p. vii.

7. In April 2001 you needed an electron microscope to find in the American media any explanation of what EP-3E spy planes were doing thousands of miles from their home base in Whidbey Island (near Seattle) spying off China's coast, and I saw no mention of the unilateral nature of this spying; the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. had well-understood protocols for their mutual practice of sending spy planes on their prying missions, but China has no such capability. Chalmers Johnson did yeoman labor in calling attention to the American base structure in *The Sorrows of Empire* and other recent works. I first referred to these bases as an "archipelago of empire" in the *Radical History Review* in 1993, but my linkage of these bases to U.S. power and the political economy of Northeast Asia goes back thirty years, to when I first read

declassified high-level documents that made this American strategy of dual containment (enemy and ally) clear.

8. This is a Schumpeterian phenomenon, in that Joseph Schumpeter believed that high policy called imperialism into existence, but once it got going it kept going, like a perpetual motion machine that long lost sight of its purpose.

9. In May 1966, DeGaulle said he wanted "full sovereignty [over] French territory" and so asked Washington to take American forces and bases home. See Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), p. 194.

10. Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008).

11. Ibid., p. 1.

12. Ibid., pp. 3, 7, 13.

13. Ibid., pp. 65, 91.

14. Malise Ruthven, "Excremental India," *New York Review of Books* (May 13, 2010), p. 36.

15. Henry Luce, "The American Century," *Life Magazine* (February 17, 1941).

16. Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: The Rise of the Middle Kingdom and the End of the Western World* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009).

17. Ibid., p. 319.

18. Ibid., p. 315.

19. Ibid., pp. 353–54.

20. Ibid., pp. 6, 43–4.

21. David C. Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power and Order in East Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

22. Ibid., p. 9.

23. Ibid., p. 10; Lin Chun, *The Transformation of Chinese Socialism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 50.

24. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996). See also Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Knopf, 1997). Americans seem unembarrassed about the mindless interchangeability of Asian enemies; six years before this book, *The Coming War with Japan* appeared (George Friedman and Meredith Leband, *The Coming War with Japan* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992]).

25. Richard C. Bush and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *A War Like No Other: The Truth About China's Challenge to America* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2007).

26. Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 2 (Princeton University Press, 1990), chapter 14; see also the useful account by Ronald McGlothen, *Controlling the Waves: Dean Acheson and U. S. Foreign Policy in Asia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993).

27. James Peck, *Washington's China: The National Security World, the Cold War, and the Origins of Globalism* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), pp. 85–93.

28. Richard Rhodes, *Dark Sun: The Making of the Hydrogen Bomb* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), pp. 570–76.

29. Bush and O'Hanlon, p. 14.

30. David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 39, 307–27; Bush and O'Hanlon, pp. 102–103, 129.

31. Robert Gates, "Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates," Abilene, KS, Saturday, May 08, 2010, http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1467 (accessed September 10, 2010).

32. Kang, pp. 25–27.

33. See Tak Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (University of California Press, 1996).

34. Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the 21st Century* (London and New York: Verso, 2007).

35. Ibid., pp. 9, 261. This tendency is even stronger in the late Andre Gunder Frank's last work: *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (University of California Press, 1998). Arrighi dedicated his book to Frank.

36. Ibid., p. 262.

37. Ibid., pp. 8, 379.

38. Ibid., pp. 25, 69.

39. Ibid., pp. 24–25, 31–35, 73, 335, 351.

40. Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World* (Princeton University Press, 2000); R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Cornell University Press, 1997). The most recent account of Hamashita's work is in Takeshi Hamashita, Mark Selden, and Linda Grove, *China, East Asia and the Global Economy: Regional and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

41. Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1979), pp. 462–550.

42. Arrighi (2007), pp. 330–31; Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford University Press, 1973).

43. Lin Chun, *The Transformation of Chinese Socialism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

44. Ibid., pp. 22–23, 28.

45. Ibid., pp. 5, 173.

46. Ibid., pp. 40, 48, 236.

47. Ibid., pp. 47, 287.

48. Ibid., pp. 10–11, 13, 19.

49. Mann's account consistently calls attention to both the business component and the secrecy surrounding China policy. See Jim Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, From Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), pp. 9–10, 284–85 and *passim*.

50. Quoted in Wang Chaohua, ed., *One China, Many Paths* (London: Verso, 2003), pp. 232, 322.

Index

abortion, 162
abstraction, 49
accountability, 201–2
Acheson, Dean, 192, 197
Adam Smith in Beijing (Arrighi), 195–99
aesthetics, 77n24
Afghanistan, 197
Africa, 190
agency: human, 4, 5, 13, 31, 32, 39, 43–44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 137; in local realm, 164; peasants', 6, 34, 55, 57, 58, 60, 61, 67, 70, 90; women's, 6, 55, 58, 60, 61, 67, 70; workers', 73
agriculture, 7, 62, 63, 65–66, 67, 72, 75nn20–21, 76n30, 107–9, 111, 113–14, 117–20, 122, 125, 127n10, 128n21, 133, 140, 141–45, 147–48, 156n43, 159n72
AIDS, 161, 164, 171–74
Alitto, Guy, 44
"American dream," 188
Anderson, Benedict, 163
Anderson, Marston, 68
Anderson, Perry, 199
Andreas, 154n24, 155n26, 156n39, 159n84
Anhui Common Speech Journal, 12, 15–20, 22–24
Anti-Rightist Campaign, 70
Arrighi, Giovanni, 154n24, 188, 195–99, 200, 207n35
"Asian tigers," 85

backwardness: advantages of, 3, 5, 6, 33–35, 36–37, 44, 49–51, 55, 58, 61, 63–64, 72; disadvantages of, 106, 169; Western, 187
Bai Wenwei, 22
banks, 139, 144, 203–4. *See also* World Bank
bao chan dao hu (household contract responsibility system), 142–43, 147
Bao Tong, 150n1
Barlow, Tani, 56
Bauer, Wolfgang, 30
BBC, 125
Belden, Jack, 205n3
Belgrade embassy bombing (1999), 204
Berg, Daria, 30
Bergson, Henri-Louis, 45
Bernstein, Richard, 206n24
Bernstein, Thomas, 145, 158n65
biodiversity, 106–9, 124
biology, 112
Bogle, George, 80

Bol, Peter, 110, 125, 128n20
boundaries, 82, 98
bourgeoisie, 77n40, 135, 152n9, 153n17
Braudel, Fernand, 199
Brazil, 150, 156n39, 202
Brenner, Robert, 199
Brown, Jeremy, 169
Brown, Lester, 159n82
Buddhism, 15, 18, 24, 66, 68–72, 83, 87, 127n11, 172
Bulang ethnicity, 122
bureaucracy, 4, 6, 110, 113, 134, 135, 151n9, 178, 198
Burkett, Paul, 128n21
Burma, 121
Bush, George H.W., 203, 204
Bush, George W., 193, 195, 196–97, 203
Bush, Richard, 191–92, 193

Cai Yuanpei, 21, 28n61
Capital. See under Marx, Karl
capitalism: in Asia, 188; bureaucratic, 134, 135, 151n9; in China, 3, 4, 8, 57, 120, 125, 133–50, 151n9, 153n18, 154n24, 156n46, 158n58, 188–89, 198, 199, 201; comprador, 135; entrepreneurial, 135; global, 9, 149, 150, 153n18, 154n24, 155n33; in Marxist theory, 3, 33–34; post-socialist, 7, 133–50, 158n65; "socialist," 158n58; in utopian theory, 35;
capitalist roaders, 177
Carter, Jimmy, 192
categories, construction of, 56–58, 60–61, 62, 66, 69–73
categories of analysis, 161–63
centralization, 4, 113, 134
change, as constant, 16, 17, 3041–45, 48, 49, 50–51, 66–72
Chao, Miss, 59–61, 63
charitable work, 153n17
Chen Duxiu, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11–23, 93
Chen Guidi, 151n2, 162
Chen Tianhua, 22, 27n42
Chen, Tina, 94
Chen Weijun, 163, 170–74, 175
Chen Xiwen, 148
Chen Yonggui, 118
Chiang Kai-shek. *See* Jiang Jieshi
children, 13, 15, 113, 167, 171–74, 180
China: imperial, 11–23, 23, 110, 124, 127n12, 128n18, 152n9, 153n24, 188, 190, 195, 198–99; as market, 193, 203; Republican, 124, 131n71, 152n9 (*see also* Jiang Jieshi; Nationalist Party; Taiwan); "rise of," 8, 85, 185–205
China Candid, 162
China Restoration Society (Huaxinghui), 27n42
China Rising, 190–91
Chinese Communist Party: and agriculture, 62–63, 147–48; and arts, 76n26; and capitalism, 4, 135, 136, 153n17; and class and class struggle, 47–48, 55–56, 72–73, 75n21, 77n40; depiction in film, 173, 175–79; and foreign policy, 85; founding, 5; and gender, 55–56, 60, 62–63, 72–73; internal debates, 62, 135; and land reform, 145; and localities, 165, 173; membership, 75n21, 90, 136, 153n17; and minorities, 91, 88–90; and national conditions (*guoqing*), 134; and Nationalist Party, 35, 59; and nature, 110–14, 125
Chossudovsky, Michel, 144, 145–46
Chow, Rey, 72
Christianity, 200
cities, 5, 34, 35–36, 59, 62, 75n21, 105, 118, 135, 140–41, 146, 148, 149, 150, 155n38, 156n39, 158n72, 163, 165, 168, 169, 171, 179, 181, 199
clans, 13
class: social, 2, 3, 6, 46, 55, 134, 136, 148, 153nn17–18, 154n22; struggle, 2, 47–48, 66, 67, 77n40, 135, 178; *See also* bourgeoisie; landlords; peasantry; proletariat
Clinton, Bill, 204

clothing, 13, 18
collectives and collective ownership, 117, 133, 134, 138–40, 142, 143, 144, 146–48, 150
collectivism, 76n26, 76n32
colonialism, 19, 134
communes, 97, 117–18, 143, 146, 147
Communist Manifesto. *See* Marx, Karl
Comte, Auguste, 17
Confucianism, 13, 15, 44
Confucius, 23
Conservation International, 124
Constitution of 1988 (PRC), 147
consumer goods, 187–89, 197
contingency. *See under* history
contradictions, 42, 49, 137
cooperatives, 36, 48, 62, 63, 67, 72, 75n21, 76n30, 97, 143
cooperativism, 36, 48
corruption, 60, 61, 135, 151n2, 151n5, 158n59, 177, 201
credit, 139, 144
crime, 180
Cronon, William, 105
Cuba, 193
cults of personality, 37. *See also under* Mao
Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), 4, 38, 70, 92, 98, 99, 112, 117, 118–19, 144, 174–79, 201
cultures, 44
Cumings, Bruce, 85

Dai ethnicity, 122
Dalai Lama (Thirteenth, 1876–1933), 83, 84, 86, 90
Dalai Lama (Fourteenth, b. 1935), 3, 6, 79–80, 85, 86, 87, 89–93, 95–100
Daoism, 66–72
Darwinism: biological, 16–17; Social, 57, 169
Davidson, Steven C., 30
Dazhai production brigade, 118
De Gaulle, Charles, 206n9
de Grazia,Victoria, 197
death, 68–69, 71, 72
democracy, 1, 4, 7, 9, 21, 86, 93, 95, 143, 150, 162, 166, 190, 200, 202
Deng Xiaoping, 4, 5; and bureaucracy, 151n9; and capitalism, 110, 114, 136, 152nn13–14; and the environment, 7, 114, 119–20; and Mao, 114, 200–201; and peasants, 75n21; reforms of, 3, 11, 100, 110, 116, 119–20, 121, 134–37, 188, 191, 193, 199, 200, 203; and "socialism with Chinese characteristics," 4, 110, 113, 134–37, 150, 151n8, 152nn13–14, 200
Denton, Kirk, 76n32
Derrida, Jacques, 57, 200
Develop Morality Society, 28n61
developers (real estate), 147, 148, 150, 158n72, 159n82, 169
dialectic, 137
dialectical materialism, 49, 58, 66, 69, 76n30
diaspora, Chinese, 100n1, 195, 204
diplomacy, 84, 186, 194–95
Dirlik, Arif, 153n18
dog fighting, 161, 166–70

economic development and growth, 18, 108–9, 113, 114, 117, 121, 135, 140, 150, 157n55, 185, 186, 188, 189, 193, 197, 198, 199, 201, 204. *See also* Gross National Product
economies of scale, 147–48
ecosystems, 104–5, 108–9, 113, 115, 120, 122, 124, 125, 126n6
Edmonds, Richard Louis, 116, 124
education, 13, 15, 16, 18, 26n24, 35, 82, 125, 140, 153n16, 156n38, 174, 188
elections (2005), 180–82
Elvin, Mark, 127n18, 199
empiricism, 48–49
enclosure movement (England), 148
Engels, Friedrich, 35, 111, 128n21, 146
Enlightenment, European, 32
enlightenment movements, Chinese, 14, 66

environment, 6–7, 100, 105–26, 189, 201, 204, 206
Environmental Protection Agency (PRC), 114, 119
espionage, 204, 205n7
ethics. *See* values
ethnicity. *See* minorities; race; *and specific ethnicities*
euchronia, 5, 29–30, 32, 38–51
Europe, 13, 20, 21, 111, 113, 150, 182, 196, 198, 199, 200
European Union, 180–82
extinction (biological), 108, 125

family, 13, 18, 59, 66, 171–72
famine, 118, 130n53
Fan Ming, 89, 91
"feeling-mind." *See qingli*
Feigon, Lee, 26n8
feminism, 65, 74n12, 179
Feng Xuefeng, 64
feudalism, 14, 16, 55, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 66, 67, 69, 71, 134
Fewsmith, Joseph, 148
filial piety, 13, 16
film: audiences for, 168, 169, 172, 182; documentary, 83–85, 166–74, 180–81; feature, 174; "hard to look at" (*nan kan*), 166, 172, 179, 181; independent, 4, 101n25, 161–83; and localities, 161–83; melodramatic, 174; as protest, 7, 162, 165, 168, 171, 172–74; state control of, 70–71, 163, 166, 180, 181–82; and Tibet, 83, 84–85; "truth claims" in, 166; by women, 181
films: *Better to Live Than to Die* (*Hao si bu ru lai huozhe*), 163, 170–74, 175, 182; *China Village Self-Governance Film Project,* 180–81; *For Every Minute I Will Enjoy Sixty Seconds* (*Huole ye fen zhong kuai huo liushi miao*), 180; *Goodbye Lenin,* 180; *Inside Story of the Qing Court* (*Qing gong mishi*), 64; *Life of Wu Xun* (*Wu Xun zhuan*), 64; *Little Moth* (*Xue chan*), 180; *Lives of Others,* 180; *Red Snow* (*Hongse xue*), 163, 174–79, 182; *Story of Xinghua* (*Xinghua sanyue tian*), 158n59; *These Dogs Belong to Us* (*Tamen dou shi women de gou*), 163, 166–70, 182; *Women from the Lake of Scented Souls,* 159n85; *Zhufu,* 66–72
Five-Year Plans, 117, 125
floods, 108, 118, 120–21
foot-binding, 61–62
Ford, Peter, 151n5
foreign investment, 135, 136, 139, 155n26, 180–81, 203, 207n49
forests and deforestation, 106–10, 114–26, 126n7, 131n65, 131n71, 151n4
Foster, John Bellamy, 128n21
Fourier, Charles, 33
France, 2, 12, 16–17, 186–87, 206n9
Frank, Andre Gunder, 207n35
Friedman, Edward, 164
future. *See* temporality

Gabriel, Satya, 155n33
gambling, 169
Gansu, 82
Gao, Mobo C.F., 155n37, 156n43
Gao Xiaoxian, 75n20
Gao Yaojie, 173–74
Gao Yihan, 28n60
Gates, Robert, 194
gender, 3, 6, 15, 55, 175–79. *See also* women
genocide, 127n12
Germany, 186–87; East, 180
ghosts, 63, 69, 70, 71, 77n38
global, as category, 7–8, 168, 171, 175
globalization, 163, 165, 189, 197. *See also under* capitalism
Goldstein, Melvyn, 89, 99
Great Leap Forward (1958–1960), 4, 27, 33, 38, 76n29, 99, 117–18, 130n53, 144, 173, 201
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP), 136,

152, 190, 191, 197. *See also* economic development and growth
Guomindang. *See* Nationalist Party
guoqing. *See* national conditions

Hakka people, 109, 184n12
Hamashita, Takeshi, 198–99, 207n40
Han Dongping, 158n71
Han ethnicity, 5, 6, 7, 19, 21, 23, 25, 92, 93, 99, 100, 107–9, 122, 125, 126n4, 127n12, 184n12
Hani ethnicity, 122
Harding, Harry, 205n4
Harkness, James, 116, 121
Harrer, Heinrich, 84
Harvey, David, 137, 154n24
health care, 141, 156n38, 156n40, 171
Hegel, G.W.F., 126, 199, 202
heping jueqi. *See* "peaceful rise"
Hideyoshi, 198
Hinton, William, 139, 143, 144, 158n55
historicism, 16, 17
history: contingency, 8, 22, 57, 59, 68, 73, 137, 202–3; restraints of, 5, 6, 27, 33, 34, 37, 49; stages of, 3, 4, 5, 33–35, 38, 39–41, 42, 45–46, 48–49, 57–58, 73
Ho, Peter, 147
Hong Kong, 88
Hong Xiuquan, 30
Hongloumeng (Dream of the Red Chamber), 63–72, 75nn23–24, 76nn29–30, 77n38, 77n41
Honig, Emily, 184n12
household contract responsibility system (*bao chan dao hu*), 142–43, 147
Hu Angang, 204
Hu Feng, 64, 66, 76n26, 76n32, 77n41
Hu Jintao, 147
Hu Shi, 63, 66, 81
Hu Yaobang, 142
Hua Guofeng, 142
Hua, Shiping, 51n6
Huang Di (legendary emperor), 21
Huang Hua, 85
Huang Xing, 27n42
Huaxinghui (China Restoration Society), 27n42
Hui ethnicity, 81
human rights, 16, 18, 203
humanities, debate on, 11
Hunan Problem Study Society (1919), 81
Hundred Flowers Campaign (1956), 70–71, 94, 112
Huntington, Samuel, 191

idealism, 137
image, national, 168, 170, 171, 173–74, 175, 179
imperialism, 3, 6, 22, 34, 80, 81, 84, 85, 98, 101n18, 194, 195, 197, 198, 200, 206n8
India, 44, 80, 94, 95, 98, 100, 150, 187, 188, 194, 196
individualism, 5, 6, 12, 13–14, 17–20, 37, 45, 66, 76n32
Indonesia, 121, 131n65, 188
Industrial Revolution, 41, 196
industrialization, 4, 5, 35, 36, 61, 75nn20–21, 105, 109–11, 113, 117–18, 122, 125, 135, 198, 202, 204
"Industrious Revolution," 198, 199
industry: rural, 7, 134, 138–40, 144, 149; urban, 61, 75n21, 140, 141, 146, 154n25, 155n26, 157n55
inequality, 13, 15, 100, 152n13, 155n38, 156n39
inflation, 158n55, 189
infrastructure, 140
intellectuals, 11, 12, 14, 25, 36, 47, 55, 61, 80, 91, 100n1, 163, 171, 179
Iraq, 191, 193, 196–97
"iron rice bowl," 135
Islam, 83
isolation of China, 192
isolationism, 189
Italy, 186

Jacques, Martin, 189
Jaffe, Valerie, 166

Japan, 3, 19, 22, 27n42, 85, 185, 186, 188, 190, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 202, 203, 204, 206n24
Jenner, W.J.F., 205n5
Jian Yi, 182
Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek], 59, 86, 113, 132n71, 192
Jiang Zemin, 153n17
Johnson, Chalmers, 205n7
Johnson, Lyndon, 189
June Fourth. *See* Tiananmen Square demonstrations

Kagan, Robert, 188
Kang, David, 190–91, 195, 198, 200
Kang Youwei, 21, 30
Kautsky, Karl, 43
ketou, 173
Kim, Sooyoung, 93
Korea, 19, 105, 113, 186, 189, 192, 193, 195, 198; North, 91, 194; South, 185, 186, 188, 190, 194, 196, 202, 203, 204
Kosinski, Jerzy, 165, 182
Kristof, Nicholas, 205n3

labor, 29; contract, 135, 144–45, 149, 157n49; manual and mental, 74n15, 118, 136, 144; remuneration of, 135, 143, 155n33, 157n49; wage, 139, 149, 155n37, 157n49. *See also* proletariat; workers
Lahu ethnicity, 12
Lamarck, Jean-Baptiste, 16
Lan Ling, 75n23
land tenure and reform, 7, 67, 88, 95, 106, 116, 119, 125, 133, 136, 139, 143–49, 158n72, 159n77, 159n85
landlords, 60, 67
language, 18, 20–21, 24, 66, 172. *See also* rhetoric
Lenin, 3, 33, 34, 105–6
Li Dazhao, 2–3, 5, 12, 33–35, 57
Li, Lianjiang, 162
Li Minqi, 152n15, 204
Li Peng, 128n18
Li Shizeng, 28n61
Li Weihan, 92–93
Li Xifan, 75n23
Li Zehou, 14, 30, 49
Liang Qiqiao, 14, 21, 21–22, 23
Liang Shuming, 5, 29, 32–40, 44–51, 90–91
Life magazine, 85
Lin Chun, 191, 200–02
Liu Dacheng, 119, 124
Liu, Lydia, 68, 71
local, as category, 7–8, 85, 163–65, 168, 171, 174, 175, 180
Lovett, Julia, 74n9
Lu Xun, 59, 66–72, 74n9, 77n41, 169–70, 180, 184n16
Luce, Henry, 189, 197, 203
Lutze, Thomas, 100, 110
Lynch, Catherine, 90–91
Lysenko, Trofim, 112, 118–19

Ma Bufang, 83
Machinikov, Ilya Ilyich, 20
Mahbubani, Kishore, 187–89
Manchu ethnicity, 21–23, 81, 87, 195
Mann, Jim, 203, 207n49
Mannheim, Karl, 31–32
Manuel, Frank and Fritzie, 30–32, 39
Mao Zedong, 2–3; and advantages of backwardness, 33–35, 36–37, 44, 49–51, 55, 61, 72, 105–6; and agriculture, 61–62, 63, 65–66, 76n30, 118–19, 140; and bureaucracy, 110; and capitalism, 33–34, 110; and change, 50–51; and class, 3, 6, 55–73; and communes, 117; cult of, 2; and Cultural Revolution, 4, 175; and Dalai Lama, 3, 6, 79–80, 89–90, 91, 92, 100; and Deng, 114, 200–01; and dialectical materialism, 49, 66, 69, 76n20; and economic development, 114, 199; and the environment, 7, 114, 116–17, 123; and gender, 3, 6, 55–73; and film, 84–85; and histo-

rians, 76n29; and Lenin, 105–6; and Liang Shuming, 45–49; and literature, 76nn29–30; and Lu Xun, 66–72, 74n9; and Marx, 4, 5, 48–49, 54n74; and minorities, 6, 81, 86, 87, 91, 92, 94–95, 98–99; and national conditions (*guoqing*), 134; and peasantry, 3–4, 5, 55–73, 117, 118; and religion, 60, 67, 68–72, 90, 92, 98–99; and socialism, 2–4, 33–34, 43, 64, 76n31, 110, 113, 200; and Tibet, 3, 79–100; and utopianism, 4, 5, 7, 29–51; and women, 55–73, 76n31
markets. *See* capitalism
Marks, Robert, 99–100
marriage, 13, 14, 18, 59, 67, 74n15, 94, 179
Marx, Karl, 200; and agriculture, 118; *Capital,* 128n21; on China, 199; and class struggle, 2; *Communist Manifesto*, 2, 111, 128n21; and the environment, 118, 128n21; and land, 145–46; Li Dachao and, 12; "Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,*" 39–40, 45–46, 48–50; Mao and (*see under* Mao); and nature, 111; and remuneration of labor, 157n49; "specter haunting Europe," 57; and stages of history, 3, 5, 38, 39–41, 42, 47, 48–49, 57–58; and utopianism, 29–51
May Fourth movement (1919), 9, 17, 20, 43, 61, 70, 76n32
McKinley, William, 197
Mearsheimer, John, 191
media: exposés by, 151n2, 151n5, 162, 172; state control of, 134, 163, 168, 170, 171, 173–75, 176. *See also* film
Meisner, Maurice, 1–5, 161, 200; on "backwardness," 105; on bourgeoisie, 152n9; on bureaucracy, 152n9; on capitalism, 151n9; on Mao, 37–38, 41, 43, 72, 105–6; on peasantry, 57, 72; on populism, 33–35; on socialism, 133; as teacher, 79; on utopianism, 30, 32–38, 43; Works: *The Deng Xiaoping Era,* 1, 152n9; *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*, 1, 12; *Mao's China,* 1, 2; *Mao's China and After,* 1, 105–6; *Mao Zedong,* 1, 38; *Marxism, Maoism, and Utopianism,* 1, 29–43
Mencius, 125
Menzies, Nicholas, 126n7
metaphors for China, 185–88, 199, 205, 205nn3–6
methodology, 161–65, 190
Mexico, 19
Miao ethnicity, 23, 81, 109
Michurin, I.V., 112
migration and migrant workers, 135, 140–41, 146, 148, 149, 155n37, 157n49, 158n72, 159n84, 199
military power, 5, 8, 19, 26, 82, 88, 98, 105, 112, 126n12, 186–87, 189–97, 203, 204, 205n7
Min bao, 22–23
Ming dynasty, 19
Ministry of Civil Affairs (*Min zheng bu*), 181
Ministry of Forestry (PRC), 115–16, 120
minorities, 6, 7, 81, 86, 87, 91, 92, 94–95, 99, 107, 122, 125, 126n4, 127n12, 165, 184n12, 204. *See also specific ethnicities*
Mirsky, Jonathan, 201
missionaries, 84, 200
modernity, 5, 6, 8, 51, 57, 59, 62, 76n26, 76n32, 170, 198, 200
modernization, 122, 163, 188, 191, 201
monarchy, 13, 18, 24
Mongol ethnicity, 23, 81, 195
Mongolia, 82, 86
Mongolia, Inner, 91
Montesquieu, 199
morality. *See* values
More, Thomas, 31
Mt. Everest, 83, 84
multilateralism, 195
Munro, Ross H., 206n24

Murphy, Rhoads, 111
Murthy, Viren, 153n18
music, 15

Napoleon I, 205n3
Napoleon III, 2
nation: character of, 24; definition of, 6, 18, 20–25, 93, 163, 165, 195; survival of, 17–18
national conditions (*guoqing*), 134
national, as category, 7, 163, 168, 171, 175, 183
nationalism, 5, 11, 12, 17–25, 105, 179, 201
Nationalist Party (Guomindang), 35, 47, 85, 93, 106, 111, 113, 192
nation-state, 21–25, 82
Nature Conservancy, 124
nature, 110–12, 125, 128n18. *See also* environment
Nehru, Jawaharlal, 95
The New Asian Hemisphere (Mahbubani), 187–89
New Culture movement (1915–1918), 7, 11, 13–15, 16, 19, 25, 61, 166
New Democracy (1949–1952), 134, 153n17
New Documentary Movement, 181
New Youth, 13, 17, 15–20, 23–24, 28n60, 81
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 186
Nitze, Paul, 192
Nixon, Richard, 129n33, 193, 203
Noel, John, 83
nongmin. *See* peasantry

Obama, Barack, 195, 197
O'Brien, Kevin, 162
O'Hanlon, Michael, 191–92, 193
Ollman, Bertel, 153n18
Olympic Games (Beijing 2008), 125, 168, 173, 175, 185
one-child policy, 113
Opium Wars, 3
"Oriental despotism," 199
"Orientalist craze." *See* China: "rise of"
Owen, Robert, 33

The Painted Bird (Kosinski), 165, 182
Pakistan, 194
Panchen Gnoertehni, 87
Panchen Lama (Sixth, 1738–1780), 80
Panchen Lama (Ninth, 1883–1937), 86
Panchen Lama (Tenth, 1938–1989), 86, 87, 89, 91, 97–98, 99
past. *See* temporality
patriarchy, 60, 61, 66, 67, 72
"peaceful rise" (*heping jueqi*), 190
peasantry (*nongmin*), 3–4, 7, 55–73, 137, 142–45, 156n40, 171–74; associations, 60, 63; "bashing" of, 168–69; as category, 55, 56–58, 60, 65, 67, 69, 72; as driving force of revolution, 5, 6, 34, 35–36, 37, 47, 55, 59, 61, 63, 64, 69, 90–91; and the environment, 116, 118; in film, 161–83; and industrialization, 62, 117, 135, 140; protests by, 133, 139, 141, 151n1, 151n5, 162, 183; rich, 144; Tibetan, 97; and workers, 118, 136. *See also* rural areas; *see also under* agency
Peek, James, 192–93
Peng Dehuai, 99
Peng Tao, 163, 174–79, 180
Perkins, Dwight H., 157n55
Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich, 15
Philippines, 197
Pickowicz, Paul, 84–85, 122–23
place. *See* local, as category
Pomerantz, Kenneth, 198
popular sovereignty, 18
population, 113
populism: Chinese, 34–38, 50; Russian, 3, 5, 33–34, 36, 39
porcelain, 109
postmodernism, 137, 154n23
postsocialism, 137–38, 153n18, 153nn22–23
Poulantzas, Nicos, 145

poverty, 7, 106, 121–23, 148, 159n85, 173, 180, 201
present (time). *See* temporality
privatization, 134, 135, 136, 139–41, 146, 148, 149, 152n9
profit, 140, 149, 153n17, 155n33
progress, 32, 41–42, 44, 46, 49, 55, 57
proletariat, 34, 55, 75n21, 105, 118, 135, 136, 137, 144
prostitution, 162
protest, 7, 133, 139, 141, 149, 150n1, 151n5, 162, 165, 168, 171, 172. *See also specific incidents and movements*
psychology, 5, 24, 25, 28n60

Qinghai, 82, 83
qingli ("feeling-mind"), 15
Qu Geping, 114
Quemoy and Matsu, 193

race, 5, 21–25, 93. *See also* minorities *and specific ethnicities*
racism, 169
Reagan, Ronald, 203
reason, 17, 37, 47, 48, 68
Reforming National Character Movement, 28n61
relativism, 137
religion, 15, 17, 24, 26n24, 60, 66, 67, 68–70, 86, 87, 88, 90, 92, 97, 99
Revolution of 1911, 5, 81
revolution: bourgeois, 41; causes of and prerequisites for, 40, 46; peasantry in (*see under* peasantry); permanent, 43–44; women in (*see under* women)
Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmenghui), 21
rhetoric, 94. *See also* women: rhetorical use of
Rhodes, Richard, 193
Richardson, S.D., 107, 115
romanticism, 68
rural, as category, 163–65, 180
rural areas, 4, 48, 50, 59, 63, 71, 74n15, 85, 113, 118, 121–23, 133, 135, 137–49, 151n2, 155n37, 155n38, 156nn39–40, 161–83. *See also* industry, rural; peasantry; villages
Rural Reconstruction Movement, 5, 35
Rusk, Dean, 192
Russia: imperial, 21, 27n42, 80, 81, 146; post-Soviet, 121, 150, 186, 194; Revolution (1917), 3. *See also* Soviet Union

Saint-Simon, Henri, 33
Sang Hu, 70
sanitation, 188
Schneider, Laurence, 111–12
Schram, Stuart, 161
Schumpeter, Joseph, 200, 206n8
Schwartz, Benjamin, 161
science, 17, 20, 47, 69, 110–12. *See also* biology
science and metaphysics, debates on (1923–1924), 68, 69
Selden, Mark, 164
self-orientalizing, 169–70
self-reliance (*zili gengshen*), 118
self-sufficiency, 159n82
sexuality, 173–79
shamanism, 15
Shambaugh, David, 193–94
Shang Hangfang, 22
Shapiro, Judith, 111
Sichuan, 82, 84
Silver Flower Contest (1950s), 75n20
Simla Conferences: of 1913, 82, 84, 93; of 1945, 100n13
Singapore, 172, 187
slavery, 13, 18
Smil, Vaclav, 109, 115, 116, 205n6
Smith, Adam, 188, 196–99
Snow, Edgar, 85
socialism: and the arts, 68, 71, 72, 76n29, 166, 180; "with Chinese characteristics," 134–36, 150, 151n8, 153n16, 153n18; Deng and (*see under* Deng

Xiaoping); and democracy, 4, 9; and the environment, 7, 110, 113, 114, 128n21; and evolution, 16–17; failure of, 202; and individualism, 76n32; and industrialization, 110, 113, 191; and intellectuals, 61; Mao and (*see under* Mao Zedong); and modernity, 76n32; and peasants, 56, 61, 75n21; and romanticism, 68; and science, 68; and temporality, 29; and utopianism, 29, 32–38, 49, 50; values, 11; and women, 56, 61, 76n31; *See also* capitalism: post-socialist; history: stages of; postsocialism
Socialist Party of China, 28n61
socialist realism, 75n29
Songster, Elena, 132n71
sources, 161–65
South (global), 154n24
South Africa, 156n39
South America, 202
Soviet Union, 4, 95, 105–6, 108, 112–13, 118, 165, 186–87, 190, 202, 205n7. *See also* Russia
Spain, 186
Special Economic Zones, 152n14
Sperling, Elliott, 79–80, 83
standard of living, 122, 136, 140, 141, 152n9, 155nn37–38, 173, 188–89
state enterprises and ownership, 120–21, 134, 136, 138, 152nn13–15, 154n25
State Forest Bureau (PRC), 117
state: role of, 18–20, 47–48; power over society, 18, 20, 37; and social classes, 2
steel, 117–18
stereotypes. *See* metaphors
students, 63–65
subjectivity (*zhutixing*). *See* agency
the sublime, 77n24
sub-national, as category, 163–65, 168, 171, 175
Sugihara, Kaoru, 198–99
Sun Yatsen, 30
superstition, 67, 68, 70, 72
suzerainty, 80, 82, 195

Taiwan, 185, 188, 191–94, 202, 204
Tan Sitong, 14
taxation, 87, 141, 143, 152n13, 153n17, 155n40
technology, 7, 47, 82, 84, 92, 162–63, 166, 181, 188, 197, 198, 203
temporality, 4, 8–9, 29–51, 56–65, 67, 71–73, 76n29, 134–36, 174–75, 196
Thomas, Lowell, 85
Three Gorges Dam, 128n18
Tiananmen Square demonstrations (1989), 1, 9, 135, 158n55, 199, 204, 205
Tibet, 3, 6, 79–100; autonomy, 80, 86, 88, 92; flag, 91–92; self-determination, 81, 84, 92; Seventeen-Point Agreement (1951), 87–88, 90, 95, 96, 97; suzerainty over, 80, 82
Tibetan ethnicity, 6, 80–84, 86, 87, 92–95, 98–100
Tocqueville, Alexis de, 200
Tongmenghui (Revolutionary Alliance), 21
town and village enterprises (TVE), 138–40, 149, 155n26, 155n33
trade fairs, 141–42, 148, 156n46
trade, 199
tradition, 5, 8–9, 13, 15–16, 18, 19, 35, 47, 61, 80, 98, 144
Transformation of Chinese Socialism (Lin), 200–02
translocal, as category, 170
transnational, as category, 163, 183
tribute system, 195
Trinley Chodron, 99
Truman, Harry, 189, 191–93
truth, 15, 166

unemployment, 135, 141, 156n38
unilateralism, 195, 196
United Kingdom, 3, 6, 80, 81–84, 88, 93, 98, 100, 101n18, 148, 166, 172, 179, 182, 186, 193, 196, 197

United Nations, 187, 192, 201
United States, 6, 8, 19, 84, 85, 87, 88, 93, 94, 95, 98, 99, 105, 111, 113, 118, 121, 129n33, 154n24, 155n33, 156n39, 182, 185, 186, 188–94, 196–97, 200, 203, 204, 205n7, 206n24, 207n49
universalism, 8, 15, 16
utopianism, 4, 5, 7, 29–51, 51n6; as pejorative term, 33, 38, 49

values, 5, 25, 33, 92; feudal, 14, 16; individualistic, 11, 13–14, 26n8; scientific, 17; socialist, 11 sources of, 14; traditional, 35; utopian, 31
Venezuela, 202
Vietnam, 118, 189, 194, 195
villages, 35, 47, 146–47, 155n37, 156n43, 158n59, 158n71, 171, 180. *See also* rural areas; town and village enterprises
Vogel, Ezra F., 187
voluntarism, 2, 3, 34, 39, 58, 61, 70, 111

Wakeman, Frederic, 43
Wang Ban, 75n24
Wang Guowei, 75n24
Wang Jingwei, 28n61
Wang Yangming, 15
Wang, Sen, 120
A War Like No Other (Bush and O'Hanlon), 191–92
Washington's China (Peek), 192–93
Weber, Max, 31, 39, 200
Weller, Robert, 110, 125, 128n20
Wen Huan-Jan, 126n7
Wen Jiabao, 147
Western culture, Chinese views of, 13, 14, 15–17, 19, 21, 35–36, 44, 45
Western views of China, 5, 8, 83–85, 171, 181, 199. *See also* China: "rise of"
When China Rules the World (Jacques), 189
White, Gordon, 144, 145, 158n58
will. *See* agency
Williams, Raymond, 200
women, 55–73; associations of, 73n15; as category, 55, 56–58, 60, 66, 69, 72; and chastity, 61, 179; and clothing (*see* clothing); as driving force of revolution, 55, 61, 69; as entrepreneurs, 159n85; as filmmakers, 181; and foot-binding, 61–62; "New," 59, 65; rhetorical use of, 61–63, 65, 67, 70, 72; social status, 13, 18; and virginity, 61, 179; as workers, 65–66, 76n30. *See also under* agency
Wong, Bin, 198
workers: agency of (*see under* agency); and CCP, 135; migrant (*see* migration); and peasants, 75n21, 118; protests by, 135; rights of, 135, 140–41, 153n17; women as (*see under* women). *See also* labor; proletariat
World Bank, 121–22, 123
Wu Chuntao, 151n2, 162
Wu, Shu-chin, 29
Wu Wenguang, 180–82, 184n19
Wu Zhihui, 28n61
WuDunn, Sheryl, 205n3

Xia Yan, 70–71
Xiao Hong, 165
Xie Fei, 159n85
Xinjiang, 91
Xuan, King, 23

Yan Fu, 14
Yan'an, 58, 76n32, 84, 85
Yang Ch'ang-chi (Yang Changji), 43
Yao ethnicity, 81, 109
Yi ethnicity, 122
Yin Li, 158n59
Yin Shaoting, 122
Yu Pingbo, 63, 75n23
Yuan Shikai, 131n71
Yuan Shuipai, 64
Yuewanghui (anti-Qing revolutionary society), 22
Yunnan, 82

Zeitlin, Judith, 77n38
Zhang Guohua, 91
Zhang Ji, 21, 28n61
Zhang Jingjiang, 28n61
Zhang Jingwa, 91
Zhang Yingjin, 70, 166
Zhang Zhanqing, 163, 166–70, 171, 180
Zhou Enlai, 89, 92, 93, 97
Zhou Yang, 64
Zhou Yongkang, 151n1
Zhu Rongji, 120
Zhu Yu, 162
Zhuang Zi, 41
zhutixing (subjectivity). *See* agency
zili gengshen (self-reliance), 118
Zunghar ethnicity, 127n12

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