

The Creation of a New World

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Abstract

This essay will first discuss the importance of form for Chinese revolution. The success of the Yan'an revolution lies in its discovery of an appropriate national form, wherein Marxism transcended from the abstract realm to the material, and as a result, the arts that were produced were able to embody a Chinese style and spirit. In these rural reconstruction movements, in contrast to Republic-era rural reconstruction movements like Liang Shuming's, the arts served as a practice which, starting from the small tasks of everyday life, and a new family tradition to a new village custom, ultimately winning the heart of the masses and encouraging peasants to stand up. As cultural politics, the Yan'an arts movement also became an art that created a new world.

Keywords

Form of Revolution, Subtle Revolution, Industrious Revolution

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1. Revolution and Its Form

Mao Zedong Thought gradually matured around 1936. What helped bring about this maturing is the revolutionaries' practice of rediscovering and understanding rural China. The Red Army developed a habit of first surveying the learning attitude and work style of the people of every new place they went to. Field investigation is the starting point of modern governance. From this, we can perhaps see the difference between rural surveys conducted under Mao, and the previous rural survey movement. Across more than ten rural surveys, Mao made sure that each successive survey deepened and transcended the previous one. These land and population surveys allowed the Communist Party under Mao to gradually feel out the locality of China, and learn about China within a global context. This brought about the birth of twentieth century revolutionary China's notion of "modernity," and how to correctly change the world. In 1936, when Edgar Snow asked Mao whether or not the Soviets had influenced the Chinese revolution, Mao was already able to clearly state: "Revolution cannot be imported." He believed that revolution must stand on the historical conditions of the land, and be produced through practice. This does not mean that revolution must obstinately follow Chinese traditions or the "local." Though "revolution cannot be imported," the general principles of Marxism nevertheless must be imported – from here we can see Mao's dialectical understanding of Communist universality and the specific practice of the Chinese revolution. This type of dialectical thinking not only points to how the universal elevates the specific, but also how revolution uses the universal to abstract the specific, and create a new universal for the modern twentieth century world.

"Revolution cannot be imported" means that revolution must always create its own individual form, by reincarnation. On modern China's long road since the nineteenth century, all of the ghosts of its previous revolutions sought out their own flesh in order to revive themselves. In his series of speeches and essays around 1938, Mao repeatedly pointed out the issue of "national formation," and searched for and created the conditions for revolution based on the significance of a philosophy of praxis. The Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art's emphasis on a national formation, therefore, is no longer an issue within the arts, but rather an entire set of political philosophy. The Forum not only emphasized the political nature of the arts, but also the "artistic" nature of revolution. And through search-

ing for the “artistic” form of revolution, the abundance of revolution and the subjectivity of politics can be understood. Thus, in 1938, Mao stressed the importance of research: in order to “understand what China is,” then we must investigate China’s past, present, and future. The party’s historians must focus on researching the Chinese problem, instead of “Always speaking about only Ancient Greece.” “Make every action contain a Chinese characteristic; in other words, utilizing China’s characteristics becomes a question that the entire Party must understand and solve. Foreign stereotypes must be abolished, empty, abstract melodies must not be sung, and dogmatism must be laid to rest. They must be replaced with the fresh, lively Chinese style and spirit that Chinese common people love to be entertained by.” If the “Chinese style” emphasizes the Chinese-ness of the revolution, then the “Chinese spirit” seeks for a greater, universal broadmindedness and character.

In seeking the Chinese revolution’s “national formation,” we must first tackle China’s rural village problems. If the Chinese revolution were to succeed, “there needs to be a large-scale rural movement.” The road to Yan’an, which started in the rural villages, must not only transcend classical Marxism’s assertion on the “Asiatic Mode of Production”; it also resolved Russia’s October Revolution treatment of the peasants, and answers the hard questions that have plagued China’s intellectuals of previous times. Facing a China that had not changed in three thousand years until the late Qing period, those with insight from the Ming and Qing periods onwards all had a common understanding of the need to “wake up the people” and place importance on the organization of rural villages. Beginning in the 1920s, Sun Yat-sen and Liang Shuming, and Chinese intellectuals alike all sought to “go to the people,” and excitedly instigated “New Folk” education movements for peasants. Liang Shuming and Yan Yangchu all realized that the rural village was key to solving China’s problems. Liang Shuming discovered that revolutions of the past had failed because they were unable to stir up the peasants, and foresaw the special meaning of Chinese culture’s modernization process, as well as the importance of culture in reconstructing ethics and revitalizing the nation. Thus, his “rural reconstruction” plan focused particularly on developing people’s spirits. It cannot be said that rural administrative policies from the Ming/Qing era onwards did not improve in terms of elements like focusing on the organization of rural society, paying attention to people’s hearts, and top-to-bottom social reform. But China’s rural villages were still un-

able to break free from the prefectural county system, nor their destined collapse. Neither the government-led “rule by officials,” nor the “civil rule” advocated by local elites were successful; in fact, they did not go according to plan, and instead headed in the opposite direction. Liang Shuming once questioned his own “rural autonomy movement,” when intellectuals passionately flocked to the villages, yet “the peasants did not welcome the village construction work; at best, they did not resist.” The result was, “we took action, but the peasants did not.” Afterwards, he lamented the challenges with rural reconstruction, especially the difficulty in grabbing the peasants’ “hearts.” With the decline of Ming/Qing era rural communities, Liang Shuming believed that traditional China had still not broken up, but he had been too optimistic. Society’s structure had already broken up, and the emergence of Liang’s “occupation-differentiated” social mobility was impossible. Between peasants and the government elite, and peasants and outsiders, formed the “gulf” that Lu Xun deeply grieved about, and this inevitably led to the failure of the Kuomintang’s rural modernization movement. Liang Shuming was mired in a dilemma: he tried to use science and culture to save rural society, yet could not touch rural society’s foundational structures; his notion of “culture” seemed unique, but also unclear, and was thus unable to create a modern “common culture”; the organization tried to bypass the village government’s “regularization,” yet because of the lack of village leadership, it could not help but attach itself to the regime. The Yan’an Way sought to realize a path, outside of “rule by officials” and “civil rule,” which utilized culture and politics to administer “rule by the Party” in rural villages. The main responsibility of the Chinese revolution is to figure out how to create a form of society that could both respect the traditions of Chinese rural society, yet also change it for the better; how to create a new social form that both resolved modern bureaucratic authority, yet also transcended ethnic and regional communities. The success of the Yan’an Rural Revolution lies precisely in its ability to unite the real conditions of the national war under the leadership of the party. Through its creation of a new nationalism with the “Yan’an Form,” peasants and people of all levels of society alike were successfully mobilized to create a universal political community. Liang Shuming was deeply impressed by Mao Zedong, because he saw how the Communist Party’s Rural Revolution won the “people’s hearts.”

During the Yan’an period, the new opera *Red Cloth* (written by Su Yiping) became very popular. The opera tells the story of a rather inflexible Eighth Route

Army soldier who is in charge of securing housing for the soldiers. He believes that, since the Eighth Route Army is fighting on behalf of the common people, it's only right for the common people to in turn allow the soldiers to stay a night in their homes. The confident yet narrow-hearted old landlady, in a fit of rage, affixes a red cloth to the head of the door to the cave dwelling, signifying that someone in the dwelling is pregnant, thereby not allowing any man to enter. The squad leader, who is adept at reconciliations, leads the soldiers inside the landlady's yard, where they sweep the grounds and fetch water for her, which touched the landlady. At last, she removes the red cloth from the roof, and welcomes the soldiers inside her home. Though the story of *Red Cloth* is quite simple, concealed within it is the story of how an "outsider" is able to enter a rural village, and how the Communist Party is able to resolve its self-limitations, and finally enter the rural society. The appearance of the tabooed symbol of the "red cloth" is a metaphor for the old traditional customs that the Communist Party must overcome, in order to change the resistance that peasants have against intruders. At the same time, the Party must transcend their role as supervisors, and create a new type of relationship between the Party and the people, by first being attentive to how the masses live, starting with the "small tasks." It can be said that through the Long March – a Pilgrim's Progress of the utmost symbolic importance – the Communist Party passed through the frontier lands where various ethnic groups reside, accumulating an enormous amount of experience and a feel for how to deal with local cultures, while constantly striving to improve further. Through doing the "trifles" well, they were able to improve their relationship with the local people, and plant seeds for the revolution. Through doing the "trifles," the revolution changed from "strangers" and "outsiders" to "acquaintances" and "one of our own." *Red Cloth* does not solely describe how power seeps into the common people's "homes," thus it is not a top-to-bottom "May Fourth"-esque enlightenment story, but rather a story of how an outside intellectual was able to "mutually transform" with the peasants. There needs to be both education of the peasants, and also transformation of the self; there needs to be both a transformation in the army's work style, and also an improvement of peasants' thinking. This point alone breaks past the May Fourth era and onwards model of grassroots mobilization.

The transformation of administration can be clearly seen in the Yan'an transformation of the role of the army, which demonstrates the Communist Par-

ty's transformative and creative abilities, as well as hugely changing the historic image of the "soldier" in the eyes of the peasants. Today, we can no longer understand the significance that the small task of "carrying water" was to the peasants in *Red Cloth*. Drawing water, digging wells, making sure each household has its own latrine – these tasks may seem trivial, but were significant in peasants' everyday lives. At the start of Yan'an, the prices of commodities shot up due to the influx of outsiders, which caused stress and grievances from the local people of Yan'an. Whether it's through the *Red Cloth* soldiers carrying water inside peasants' kitchen, or Old Comrade Yang's refusal to eat from a different pot as the peasants in Zhao Shuli's short story, these depictions show us how the peasants' initial fear of strangers slowly changed into a welcoming mindset. Through carrying water for the peasants, laboring alongside them, and eating the same food from the same pots, we can see how the "subtle revolution" turns into new tradition, leading the everyday lives of peasants.

2. New Family Tradition and New Village Atmosphere

When entering the village, the Communist Party must also transform the "organic"-ness of the village. Creating their own village form answered many difficult challenges that have existed from May Fourth onwards, for instance, issues surrounding family and women's rights. How do we transplant the May Fourth-esque question of women's liberation onto a Chinese rural village in the 1940s? During the Yan'an revolutionary practice, more emphasis was placed on placing women's liberation into the revolution of specific production relations. The Yan'an period firstly inspired the transformation of family and the natural village, initiating the "New Family Tradition and New Village Atmosphere." As Philip C. C. Huang points out, the basic unit of production and economy in rural China is the family, not the individual. Early in the *Xunwu Survey*, Mao Zedong had already discovered that the Soviet regime had once promoted the freedom of love, stipulating that "marriage and divorce must be free," and to "stop catching adulterers in the act." Not even a month later, the villages' "gender problem had gotten out of hand." The peasants refused the propagandist who had gone down to the villages: "Comrade, please stop spreading these ideas, otherwise the women in our villages are all going to leave!" Adult men opposed the freedom of divorce

even more, complaining to the Soviets: the revolution had taken their wives, and a source of labor lost from their homes. Modern laws evidently did not consider the reality of production in the rural villages; due to this, Cai Chang, a leader of women's rights movements in the CCP, also criticized early intellectual women's cadres for floating above reality, tackling problems according to their ideas, only knowing how to recite the slogans "freedom of marriage," "independence of economy," "oppose the four oppressors." As a result, when it came to resolving disputes with women and their families, "side with the wife, punish the husband, side with the daughter-in-law, punish the husbands' parents," bringing about tensions between mother and daughter-in-law. As a result, women's rights undertakings became increasingly isolated. During the mobilization of women to go out of their villages to learn weaving, the husbands and mothers-in-law all worried that "once they learn how to do it, they'll be whisked into the factories," "what if they make money and decide to leave us?" Thus, later-period Yan'an women's rights undertakings stressed both the significance of women's labor, as it allowed them to increase their economic standing, as well as requiring that "women and their families should live well." Using traditional home spinning-wheels, women worked on small weaving projects, "picking flowers, weaving yarn, and changing cloth," and their work did not leave the "home." The formerly one-sided emphasis on "liberating" the youth, had turned into an emphasis on improving mother and daughter-in-law relations. No longer was there a divide between women's liberation, household reform, and societal reform; women's status was uplifted, while respecting elders' values in traditional rural villages, and focusing on improving harmony within families. All of these undertakings were operating within reason. Around 1944, the *Jiefang Daily* newspaper published an important editorial on the family issue, the focus of the debate being: "Should families exist, and if so, what kind of families do we need?" Directed at the development of large-scale industries, and the rash belief that people should leave the home, Mao Zedong promptly released a two-fold policy on both strengthening the home and leaving the home. Thus, if we say that May Fourth created a new type of family, then it also expresses a search for a new relationship with production. But the confusion of "new person" on the way out indicates not only that the rural community is facing a crisis, but also that this method of reform is not realistic. Yan'an's rural reform focused more on the function of the "household" within the village community. The family was the Party's starting point for the reform

of everyday life, and step-by-step, from the family to the household to the natural village, reform took place. From the transformation of the idle, to land reform, to shared labor, to the migration movement, all of these forms of production were all initially carried out within the family unit. This attempt also involved solving family issues through public life, thereby transforming the family, creating a new society and new nation. And this transformation of the “new family” is what induced political awareness in peasants. The transformation of the private sphere also changed the notion of public and private when it came to the “family.” For the purpose of cooperative labor, they did not advocate sons and daughters to live in separate families, instead developing peasants’ understandings of the political ideas of “public,” “democracy,” and “cooperation,” by caring for the big state through caring for the “small state” within the “big feudal household.” The changes that took place in the thousands-of-years-old internal family structure and dynamics liberated the family’s production power. Under the slogan of household reform, the public and the private united, and “paternalism” was erased from the “new family” structure, replaced by “democracy.” Issues ranging from big to small were discussed democratically at family meetings, flourishing more and more day by day. The story of “*Li Laicheng and His Family*” is a model of the new family structure: a peasant named Li has a family that consists of “eight people with eight different hearts, not including the mute child.” Relations between the mother and daughter-in-law, and father and son, are strained, with each person having their own separate private desires. As the days go by, the family grows poorer and poorer; they fall into a vicious cycle where the poorer the village becomes, the more the family wants to split up, which in turn makes them even poorer. But once the family implements the division of labor, democratic family meetings, and a system of rewarding the hard-working and punishing the lazy, the family prospers. “Eight people formed one heart.” As the Li family goes from rags to riches, and the “benevolent father and filial son” appear in the new family structure, the new “family style” was formed. Simultaneously, the army, in order to promote production, created the “Tengyang plan,” which was beneficial to both the public and the private. All of this was not only New Democracy’s most realistic measure, but also followed traditional Chinese notions of the public and private, among families and the nation. The “New Democratic Family” structure not only satisfied peasants’ simple desires for wealth, but also was not put into place just for the sake of developing the economy. To peasants, “democracy”

was no longer an abstract voting system, but rather changed their lives in real, tangible ways. Even more importantly, throughout this process, the public and the private no longer were opposed: notions like “democracy,” “the masses,” “bean election” gained acceptance through entering the internal family structure. As the peasants’ political awareness gradually developed, the transformation of the family structure brought along a renewal of society’s structure as a whole.

The transformation of the natural village is what turned the new family into the “new society.” The formation of the new family style naturally had a lot to do with changing the village’s relationship with external forces. The most direct change is the disposal of the Lv-Ling System and the Bao-Jia System, both of which were still used by the Kuomintang. The Lv-Ling system paternalistically uses the household as its unit; both the Lv-Ling system and the Bao-Jia system are extensions of patriarchal society, only serving the interests of higher-ups, and had long lost its life. But after 1938, the Yan’an innovations in governing rural villages transformed the acquaintance society of the “natural village.” Land reform, behavior reform, and the mobilization of peasants all took place within the natural village. Mao Zedong believed that “the province, county, and village systems of feudal society both streamlined and isolated the masses,” because “the best method of implementing the Soviet workstyle is to mobilize the masses with the village as its unit. The most fruitful way to obtain results is to rely on the appropriate division of villages, the establishment of grassroots organizations, and village leadership that benefits all.” To this end, Xie Juezai, with a realistic perspective on democratic village politics, advocated for the political power of small villages that are units of the natural villages. This is why ‘a building of a thousand feet starts from the ground!’ Because no matter what, the political power of the higher-ups only consisted of planning and making announcements. “The foundations of villages and towns are not good. Even though there are good facilities at the top, corners are cut on the way down, so when it comes to village-towns, there is nothing and/or nobody left to carry things out. Furthermore, what people are riled up about are issues that are personal to their well-being, but they must twist and turn to communicate these issues. They are not happy about this. Yet, it is only through their experiences with their personal issues, that they can comprehend who the bigger and more distant players are.” This is why towns and villages should be the direct democratic units, rather than the customary ‘county as autonomous unit’. This is also different from the Ming/Qing-onwards

“county official” system. The January 1943 editorial of the *Jiefang Daily* writes that towns and villages should also serve as the units of production:

“We must pay attention to the pre-existing conditions in the relevant areas, and distinguish their treatment. If we endeavor to create a shared labor organization among the masses today, the mutual labor-aid group will definitely not be too large. Towns and municipalities therefore cannot serve as units of production. If the teams are too large, there will be a huge waste of labor and time. Best to let the natural village serve as the unit of production instead.”

Respecting “the pre-existing conditions” is the spirit of the Yan’an revolution. The natural villages of traditional China are communities with ethics centered around blood relations. Local statutes are what maintained the effective running of the villages. Village leaders or executives held elections in which the people of the village each had their own standing in this order structure. In the Confucian one-country, one-family culture, royal power and gentry power were not necessarily at odds with each other. The royal power did not directly confront individual peasants, and successive generations of royal power would often recognize local statutes, in order to achieve cost-optimized management. Successive generations of village communities, though they varied in form and nature, played an important mediating role in the community’s internal and external relationships. Despite our romanticized notions of traditional China’s “gentry power,” the global environment and historical conditions of the 1930s lost the possibility of recreating this type of traditional “Rural space.” The natural and man-made disasters of the 1930s resulted in the decline of the rural community; the natural village was no longer a patriarchal clan. Along with the abolition of the Imperial Examination, the influx of the elite into cities, the rise of the literati, the increased power held by the evil and the perverted, and the strength of traditional ethics gradually collapsed. As modern capitalist markets reached the rural villages, the global economic crisis of the 1930s transferred onto these Chinese villages, resulting in their deterioration: soaring prices of commodities, decreasing land income, the depreciation of productive labor due to the non-material economy, the transferring of landlords’ wealth into cities; all of this led to the serious consequence of intensified village borrowing, thereby creating high-interest payments. The population of those in poverty undoubtedly increased. To peasants, hard work did not result in wealth, and semi-productiveness resulted in people questioning their own livelihoods; the inability to marry and have children result-

ed in the population of unmarried vagrants and migrants to increase, the latter becoming an important laboring force for the Yan'an Land Reclamation Movement. For small landlords, the profit they made from high-interest loans exceeded their income from collecting rent, and they did not have any aspirations for expanding their means of production on their land. This partially explains why there was an increasing amount of "new small landlords" who were giving out high-interest loans in rural villages in the 1920s and 30s. Mao Zedong's early Hunan Peasant Survey focused in particular on the modern phenomenon of the "new small landlords" deprivation tendencies being worse than that of big landlords when it came to giving loans to peasants. The loss of society's protections and increased economic pressures are what resulted in people like Ah Q (by Luxun), unmarried vagrants who drifted between cities and villages, to emerge. More and more people shed themselves from their village communities. This exploitative structure not only led to the wealthy's deprivation of the poor, but also resulted in the poor depriving other poor. If the rural village was to change, it had to first change this deprivation-based relation of production.

It can be said that the reforms in China's generations of dynastic power were firstly the result of the structural changes (uprising/rebellion) in the basic rural community. In modern times, history requires a new rural social structure that is compatible with modern China. With the shattering of traditional village communities, the traditional gentry class' model of rule by the elite could no longer endure. The Kuomintang, therefore, were very hesitant on how to tackle the basic issue of land reform, ultimately too scared to provoke the interests of the village elite. The modernized tax collection system, therefore, resulted in the government's bias towards "land rights," further depriving the rights of those who actually labored on the land ("land-rent forever rights"). This bias towards land rights not only led to the decrease in the status of farmers, further dissolving their rights, but also led to a change in laborers' relationship and feelings towards land. At the same time, the Kuomintang strongly believed that the modernization of rural villages was under the nation's hegemonic power. They did not know about the free dispersion of natural Chinese villages, and characteristics of small farmer economies. As a result, the "modernization" of villages allowed the massive costs of managing this two-level village governance system to fall onto the shoulders of peasants, creating what Prasenjit Duara calls the emergence of the involution (内卷化) and profit-driven managers (赢利型经纪人). The Kuo-

mintang's late-stage eradication of village autonomy further indicated their lack of respect for villages' self-discipline. Their new village policies of the 1930s, such as the Cooperation Movement, did not actually impact the natural villages, and the New Life Movement became a laughing matter for those who came after it. The most noteworthy element of village governance is the unique role of the village chief. As Philip C. C. Huang writes, the position of village leader is the important connecting point between the nation and the village community. The space of ambiguity lies in the fact that the village head is not an official bureaucrat. The Kuomintang's joint-protection system did not allow them to become village officials who lost money because if the peasants can't pay taxes in time the leader should pay for them in advance, or become a tool for the evil to profit from, or a position reserved for the rich and lazy. Therefore, the lower-class members of the village both received no protection, and were excluded from all village public affairs. Public cultural activities became the respectable work of only the middle-class and higher; whoever had more money took the lead. In Zhao Shuli's *Changes in the Li Village*, the evil and powerful Hengyuan played this exact role. Who gets to rule the village is a crucial matter.

During the Warlord Era, people of insight wanted to bypass the simple modernized route of rule by official, and sought out their path of self-rescue in the "self-autonomy" model. Both the left and right-wing Kuomintang, the rural village reconstructionists like Liang Shuming, and the Communist Party alike all recognized that China's problem lay within the rural village, and recognized the importance of organizing the peasants – but exactly how to organize them, what kinds of teams were needed, and an actual plan for how to bring this about remained unclear. Liang Shuming did not lack any insight into the problems within rural villages; he felt the uniqueness Western society's "individualism" in comparison with Chinese rural society, and he realized that modern Chinese villages were "dead," and that the Kuomintang's village modernization process could not free itself from the central government, nor the local government. Local officials and the common people were "separated up and down by layers," "yet especially below the county government (district, townships, etc.), the departments that directly deal with the peoples' matters bear the most problems, and all of the crimes are ultimately burdens for the common people." Under these conditions, Liang Shuming maintained distance from the "government" because he witnessed the modern malpractice of the village bureaucrats, and he aspired

to treat the customs and culture of local communities with respect. He attached great importance to the village, because “the cure must be sought from the villagers.” Furthermore, the construction of the culture of the rural lifestyle was absolutely critical, and as a result, township and village schools were set up to serve as the main method. But Liang Shuming continued to stress over how, during the village construction process, it was always “we taking action,” but “the peasants did not respond.” Evidently, the peasants had not been successfully organized, and thus, they rejected the political powers that intervened with the village, which merely relied on morality and science to improve the villages. This not only did not solve their financial problems, but also did not provide peasants with any basic prospects. In essence, there was still an opposition between the reformists and the peasants. With no real, deep understanding of the peasants’ sufferings, it was only natural that “the peasants never came to the meetings.”

What’s even more important is that transforming the current Chinese rural village requires transforming the current composition of society, and creating a new village community. All of these changes start from the natural village unit, and it boils down to the issue of village leadership. The question of how to break through traditions, create a new image of village leadership, and break past its self-autonomous nature, is an important modern-day issue, and also important to village politics. This not only relates to how to smoothly govern a village, but also what type of person the village needs as its leader, and the class politics around whose interests will be represented. It can be said that the prior dynasties’ governance of the rural village excessively relied on the traditional strengths of the village, such as village elders and fame, in order to rule the village. In the face of the aforementioned reality of rural villages in the 1930s, what first had to be changed was rural society’s rule by the gentry or distinguished families, and the traditional self-autonomous method of villagers taking turns as leaders. When compared to traditional village communities, the Kuomintang, Communist Party, and Rural Village Reconstruction Movement all could only place their hopes on outside forces to intervene in the village. But compared with Liang Shuming’s hopes to govern the village using science and expertise, or the Kuomintang’s image of the national administration, the Communist Party was able to both respect the village’s own tradition of government ethics, and emphasized the importance of the village leader; they stressed the transformation of lower-class masses, as well as the transformation of the village elite and the cadres. As a result, the new

village leader did not have to be the traditional rural Chinese “elder.” In this new world, even the poorest pauper could change his luck and become the village leader, “a chicken feather flying up to heaven,” altering the previous trend of China’s revolutions only catering to problems arranged by outsiders and the minority.

Secondly, through the practice of speaking bitterness, the Communist Party created the notion of “class struggle” during the Land Reform Movement. This is different from Liang Shuming’s understanding that the composition of Chinese rural society still followed the centuries-old “professional division,” and the benign flow between the rich and the poor. The structure of rural society after the late Qing Dynasty was predatory, and this type of exploitative structure caused the rural village to “die.” The awakening of the notion of class struggle could only take place in a society of acquaintances; it pointed directly towards equality and fairness, and did not match classic Marxist theory’s understanding of economic relationships and production relationships. For small manufacturers, “class struggle” in rural villages was something that the peasants witnessed firsthand, and need not mirror classic proletarian theory. As Zhao Shuli writes in *Rhymes of Li Youcai*: model or not, from East to West; those in the East eat pancakes, those in the West drink porridge. Fighting against landlords and the evil must also take place within the original village. Non-villagers who do not have firsthand experience with this type of exploitation do not care about these issues. Fighting against evil and landlords, without considering how “big” or “small” the landlords are, has always been denounced by historians. To fight against local tyrants is to change the village’s previous government only by the gentry or the idle wealthy, and the village leader as merely the nation’s “representative,” as well as the peasants’ lack of opportunity and free time to participate in the state of management. Thus, to turn over the hearts of peasants and transforming their political awareness through cultural change, this type of village structure is no longer the single modern governing system, and no longer the penetration of state authority into the village, nor does it merely give farmers scientific knowledge. Instead, the focus on how to create rural politics through the unification of Party politics and governing politics, through the unification of cultural leadership and the people’s will, allowed the revolution to discover a main subject within itself. With the people as the masters of the country, the Revolution not only established its legality, but also its legitimacy, thereby responding to the dilemmas that Liang

Shuming faced between modernization and dispersion of the peasants. Therefore, looking back on the Kuomintang's failure, the reason for this might not just be impractical bureaucratic administration and increasing internalization. Though Sun Yat-sen recognized the importance of parties, he was unable to create a Leninist political party; Chiang Kai-shek did not have the ability to stop the decline of the Kuomintang Revolution either. The Kuomintang lacked the notion of class struggle. The "All Peoples' Party" only brought about the generalization of politics; representing "everyone's interests" at the national level in reality did not challenge the interests of the landlord class. Allowing this interest to represent an abstract hole led to the loss of the basics of class struggle, and a breakaway from the reality of Chinese society.

When it came to adapting to the natural village, the Communist Party invented many forms of governance that were more practical than the Kuomintang's – for example, the "Ma Xiwu Method." The Ma Xiwu Method not only considered Chinese traditional ceremonial rites, regulations, and reason, but also, through its traveling court system, was able to suit the spread-out nature of natural villages, and mediate disputes instead of battle them through the court by following the mass line. In addition, cultural structures were also adjusted, from "small Lu Yi" (to only study in the Academy of Luxun's Literature and Art) to "big Lu Yi" (to study and practice throughout villages outside the Academy), interposing politics into the masses' daily entertainment. After 1938, the Ke Zhongping led Peoples' Entertainment Promotion Committee dedicated itself to transforming the villages' entertainment. The new Yangge continued the grassroots nature of the old Yangge, but also removed any erotic elements, gradually becoming more refined. This new People's Art elevated the political character of common people's arts. The form of drama also needed to match up with the natural village's form of the arts: unlike the proper, large-scale "urban-area" productions of Yan'an, Zhao Shuli and others believed that the natural village was restricted in terms of material conditions such as props, actors, stage and space. The distance between villages also prevented any large-scale audiences from forming. As a result, the rural village was more suited to small-scale productions. At the same time, Yangge and other forms of amateur theater were embraced by peasants, not only because they enjoyed viewing it as entertainment, but also because they themselves could sing and act in the productions. In the history of Chinese drama, peasants could finally make themselves heard. Schools also became increasingly flexible; there was

Winter Adults Amateur School, night school, and school during downtime. Making education compatible with production, with production as the central focus, better suited the peasants' cultural psychology. Whereas the Village Reconstruction Movement, despite having the best of intentions, set up unsuccessful village schools, and held meetings that weren't attended by any of the masses. It did not consider the rural village's nature of production; peasants were worried that their children would lose their productivity if they went to village schools, and that family members would lose their productivity if they became civil servant of the state ("gongjia ren"). To give peasants "good things," yet have them reject it, is something that Liang Shuming and others with lofty ideals never saw coming!

3. "Hard Work" versus "Hard Fate"

If up until then, administration of the rural village developed into both "rule by official" and "rule by self" under the government's setup, or sought to respect, restore, and recreate the traditional Chinese rural village community, then what kind of community or method of cooperation was established under the Yan'an New Democratic Revolution? The Communist Party's government of the rural village was carried out within the Party's field of vision, and from there on we can see how the new politics entered the village. During the May Fourth period, the rural village was objectified as a pre-modern space, and as a result, became the territory for the battle of modernity. In Mao Dun's *Spring Silkworms*, we can see how modern capitalism ill suits the Chinese rural village, and thusly, the failure of modern Chinese politics. On the other hand, Yan'an's greatest success was its ability to mobilize the power of all who could be mobilized. In terms of what to do with capitalism, what kind of capitalism to develop, and even how to deal with and mobilize pre-capitalist resources, Yan'an left behind priceless experiences, and brought out the challenges of the process of building this type of rural socialism in China.

The New Democratic Movement may share some similarities with Lenin's New Economic Policies, but is more agreeable with China's unique "Asiatic Mode of Production." The success of the revolution is first and foremost the success of the economy, but revolutionary politics towards the rural village held a higher, integrative, and rational design. When people's "hearts were touched,"

this could not only be attributed to the Communist Party bringing about “visible wealth” to the peasants; when the revolution seeped into the world of the countryside, it was the Party’s attentiveness to peasants’ realistic needs, promotion of the flourishing of wealth, and importance placed on organizing peasants by helping them with little things in their daily lives, which moved the common people’s hearts. But, in order to transform the peasants, there had to be more than just material change. The Communist Party recognized that “the most important challenge is educating the peasants.” Raising the peasants’ awareness is how the Chinese Revolution can produce a true main subject. As small-scale producers, peasants are not necessarily naturally inclined towards the path of socialism; their “natural inclinations” cannot be accounted for. The crucial questions are: how to learn from the peasants without becoming the tail of the masses, how to differentiate between the socialist revolution and populism, and how to differentiate between the socialist revolution and peasant socialism based on local interests? After the founding of the P.R.C., the criticism of the rich peasant Wu Manyou and the discussion of the short story *Do Not Go Down That Path* both exemplify how, by not pursuing a path of cooperation, the New Democratic society would only result in a new structure of exploitation. The rural village still contained the potential to polarize between the rich and the poor. While capitalism has demonstrated an even stronger vitality in human society, did socialism follow humankind’s “naturalness,” or did it continue to push forward on a path of struggle for its survival? At the same time, if the Yan’an village community structure wished to rise to universality, it must move beyond traditional blood-based and class-based communities, remain flexible, and also resolve each cooperative’s “the smaller the more effective, the larger the more failure” problem of egalitarianism. Socialism naturally must respect Chinese rural society’s traditions and ethics, but more importantly, it must break past the blood-centered tradition of ethics and local interests-based organizations that are divided by class, in order to create a new mode of cooperation. In the 1940s, there was heated controversy surrounding the question of “peasant socialism,” the focus of the controversy being whether to pursue the path of industrialized mass production, or to believe that small producers could spontaneously develop into socialism. This was where Liang Shuming and Mao Zedong split paths. Therefore, Yan’an’s success cannot solely be attributed to the series of policies on the recovery of manpower, such as land reform, the army reclamation movement, and tax reduction. Land reform was not only a

reassignment of economic interests and wealth, but also the cultivation of a new worldview; more importantly, through clarifying the relations of production in village society, and organizing peasants' everyday lives, a new type of person-to-person relationship was created. Objectively speaking, no matter how wonderful Yan'an was, it could not resolve the "bitterness" of peasants' material lives in a short period of time. As a result, peasants not only could not speak out about their bitterness, nor form an understanding of the bitterness, but also, even if they recognized the "bitterness" of their lack of food and clothing, this did not necessarily create any rebellion or unification under the awareness of the class struggle. Merely speaking out about the bitterness of peasants could not mobilize them for the long term. There must be a clear elucidation of the "relations" that caused their bitterness, namely the unreasonable community structure. Only when peasants clearly understand their relationship with the world, and with the people around them, can the defeat of local tyrants and division of land successfully take place. Thus, if it is believed that the Communist Party could not change the "hard work" of peasants' labor during the Yan'an period, it nevertheless achieved the most important thing: they changed the notion of "hard fate," which had hung over peasants' heads for thousands of years. We saw this during the Reclaim Wasteland Movement – the model migrant Ma Pi'en and his family tilled the soil of the wasteland day and night, in an "Industrious Revolution" (*Qin lao geming*). We have repeatedly seen that, once Chinese peasants experience the freedom of today, and the hope of tomorrow, they are bursting with energy for the industrious revolution. Under conditions of production that could not be completely changed, Yan'an's New Democracy Movement created a new form and opened up a new path for how to remold the understanding of labor and bring light to the virtues of laborers. In this remarkable new world, labor received a new significance, laborers gained dignity, and, unprecedented in the history of humankind, there emerged the image of the "labor hero"; laborers became the masters of life. We can see that, in this type of culture, laborers truly became the masters. In this world, we can find the politics of revolution and skills of organization everywhere. During Yan'an's village reconstruction, we saw the simultaneous legitimacy of the Party's unification with the people, as well as the legality of the government's administration of different places. During the carrying out of the Yan'an Revolution, we could see many examples of the Party's inventiveness and ability to self-improve, such as the Army reform, mass production, the Re-

claim Wasteland Movement, and the Rectification Movement. They not only overcame others, but also transcended themselves. Through labor, peoples' lives became a world of their own creation. In this world, peoples' liberation came about through the transferring of their internal abstract values into an objective, material manifestation. Through creating the notion of rural class struggle, the Party cultivated peasants' notions of equality, and how class is wrapped up within the village community. Through this battle line, landlords were given a way out, instead of facing a brutal battle. Literary works like Fan Denggao's *Three Mile Bay* and Lao Suntou's *Violent Gust and Rainstorm* showcase the potentials of the relationship between peasants and revolution. Thus, we cannot simply attribute Yan'an's success as merely the result of the military disputes of World War II; through the creation of a new form, Yan'an created a new society structure, and thus, a new world. This type of new world followed historic trends, grasped the spirit of the times, and allowed the people to become the majority. With this type of new structure, even a single spark was able to light fire to a whole field. Thus, it can also be said that seeking truth from facts means being down-to-earth, and looking for the general law of history; it also refers to the search of the specific historic conditions behind the "relations" of production. And in the process of conforming to history, the truth of the Chinese revolution was born. This kind of truth both creates a premise for itself, and opens up a path for itself. The "truth" sought out by Yan'an's advocates implies that despite respecting the historic realities of revolution, everything starts from reality, and to transform nature, we cannot essentialize or "naturalize" reality. To truly "organize," we must pay attention to both the economic cooperation of the masses, and to the political guidance of the masses. In this type of new cooperative organization, from both within and outside of the regime, how can we effectively manage the relationships between public and private, the individual and the collective, and socialism and capitalism? How can we let individual wealth bring about wealth to others? Such a community is a "new society" that has yet to be achieved in Chinese history, such a rural village is a space of hope, such a peasant is a "new person" that has yet to be seen in Chinese history, such new talents are the main subjects borne from within the Chinese revolution. These subjects no longer only care about their own economic lives, because improving their own lives is the only way others can improve theirs – only such a subject can become a political subject. Today, if we do not stop and sing the songs of Yan'an in the

defense of socialism, we can at least see how the Yan'an Revolution responded to China's problems since the late Qing, presenting the challenges of the Chinese revolution, and providing inspiration for how today's China can create a new consensus and community.

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