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## Belly Full of Mao Representations of Agriculture, Ideology, and Production in Modern China

During the tumultuous years following the drawn out but inevitable dissolution of the Qing dynasty, China experienced a radical reconstruction of its identity as a nation. Among the powerful institutional changes taking place was the Communist's policy of land reform. At the heart of land reform was the central two-part concern of being able to feed China and winning the support of its rural population. The rural populace was composed of minority landlord aristocrats, various officials, and a wide range of peasant classes - the latter making up the majority, who had also historically formed the foundation for political legitimacy. The political importance of the peasantry has also been accompanied by a long history of representation: in the semi-legendary tale of the rise of the peasant to officialdom, as liminal space filled with myth and folklore, and in the romanticization of natural contemplativeness. The last of these took a dominant position in the post revolutionary era, in combination with other rural representative tropes, resulting in the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) idealization of revolution, labour, and perseverance in the represented body of the Chinese peasant. Thus the ongoing political movement of land reform was joined by the evolving iconicization of the peasant, both of which were lead by the state's ideology.

Post-revolutionary China was unlike anything China, nor the world had ever seen. Historical understanding of the events from the civil war up to the end of the Cultural Revolution (CR) and Mao's death were long frustrated by inaccessibility to primary source material. Even though China's borders have been open since 1976, scholars have still struggled to come to terms with the years of Mao's control, arguing for and against various theses of Mao's political involvement and popular agency. In my paper I adopt the conclusions of Chen Jian's recent analysis,<sup>[1]</sup> arguing for three central positions: the 'big man' theory of history, that Mao 'ran the show' in China is a veritable lens for viewing the complex of events and motives; Mao's domestic policy guided his foreign policy; and finally, as the 'big man' theory holds, so does the conclusion that (Mao's) ideology makes history. The last of these is perhaps the most contestable and the most crucial, but as Chen makes evident, the performance of the government, of which the images analyzed here are unquestionably a part of, rarely accepted reality as its model, choosing instead to edify its ideology's imperatives. This feature would not always maintain its legitimizing power for either the CCP or China's people, but it would be the dominating modus operandi until the CR's conclusion.

In spite of ideology's dominance, Mao, the man and his thought, were just as much a product of pre-CCP history as were general artistic trends. Without arguing for historical determinism, it seems clear enough that Mao's attacks on "big power chauvinism" were grounded in a more pervasive "victim mentality," the net result of China's semi-colonization by Europe and the U.S..<sup>[2]</sup> China's victim mentality was also evident in a wide range of cultural responses, including the arts. China's artists and art schools sought their own modes of reform to aid an ailing, backward China retake its ascendant global position. The problem of artistic reform, as it was in intellectual culture at large, was to what degree would China need to adopt "Western" concepts - in art's case, content, styles and mediums - in a totalizing or syncretic manner, against the argument that a return to "original" Chinese culture posed the only solution to the polluting effects of the semi-colonial period. As Julia Andrews argues: "Many of the theoretical issues that have guided or divided the Chinese art world since 1949, in short, were well established in the decades leading up to liberation." (Andrews, 11) The systematic disintegration of China's societal functionality, as well as early attempts at reformation precede the discourse of "liberation." As

such, the 'responses' that constitute one understanding of art in this period must find their roots in the fertile conditions for change in peasant culture; as it were, in the fields of China.

At the heart of Chinese land reform policy was the ancient feudal system. Unlike the cities where the economic structure had shifted according to mercantile contact, rural areas, due to a number of reasons, had maintained the feudal structure well through the Republican period, albeit, with some important considerations. Ownership of land was the primary commodity, forming the economic basis for the social network in operation between individuals, family clans (guanxi), and officials. Two aspects dominated this system: the relationship of people to the land, and the relationship of officials to the people. In the first case two models arise between familial connection and different access to resources. The guanxi networks extended from a familial center, normally a wealthier landowning family, to the familial periphery, composed of landless family members constituting the lowest classes. Regardless of land ownership, the guanxi model ideally worked to insure the benefit of the entire clan. Strictly speaking, however, the second model described this social network in terms of land ownership. In this second view, society was composed of a landed, rent collecting gentry, to various levels of land owning peasants, to landless peasants. Officials collected taxes based upon discrete family units, with each unit required to pay their share. Thus the feudal system's burden on the landless was harshest, as taxes were doubly imposed, first from rents due to the landed gentry, and secondly to the officials (whereas the gentry merely paid once, and even then often because of official connections, was able to 'smooth things over' and pay just a fraction). This system worked under normal conditions, when officials and the gentry alike did not overextend their demands upon the peasantry. Of course, in the years following the Qing, and during the Republican era, the added burden of war taxations, rampant corruption by officials, and the disruption of social fabric that is always the result of war made the plight of the peasants all the more volatile.

In one sense the ancient Daoist adage of 'full bellies resulting in a complacent society' was a working model for rural China. While social disruptions affected urban spaces, the centrality of power in the urban sphere meant that the problems it faced were different from the rural peasant's. Cities were more immune from the food shortages that the rural peasantry suffered from. Early land reform under the CCP gained support precisely through leveraging the burden of taxation with the possibility of land ownership. By disabling the feudal network (a process initiated with the KMT), the CCP could engage in direct taxation, which translated for the peasants into one less tax, while the ownership of land meant that each peasant family could better guarantee a minimum of subsistence level farming, and thus avert the very real danger of starvation.

Despite the cities' relative immunity from the fear of starvation (at least on a large scale), the plight of the peasant was never far from the city dweller's mind. As mentioned above, the various romanticizations of rural life were all personified through the peasant. Yet the representation of the peasant also changed early on to reflect the various socio-political changes. In the Republican era painting *Farmers* (1933) by Zhao Wangyun, a pastoral scene of workers tilling a field by hand is presented to us. [\[Fig 1\]](#) Trained in Beijing in the late twenties, Zhao was famous for observing "the daily events during his daylight travels in poor rural areas [that he] would then draw from memory in the evening." (Andrews 2000, 184) Apparently Zhao's work found a sympathetic audience through his regular publication in the Tanjian newspaper *Dagongbao*, to the point that he even cooperated on an illustrated album with an official in Shandong. (Andrews 2000) The official, Feng Yuxiang, was moved to make an analogy between Zhao's drawings of "China's destitute northern countryside" and "the bankruptcy of China that must be changed." (Andrews 2000, 185)

Naively this painting portrays five peasants hoeing, while one appears to supervise, and four others look on in the background; on the left horizon their village has been roughly sketched. Yet it is the absence of key characteristics in this painting that make it exemplary. To begin with, the field the peasants are tilling is not a flat plane. The contours of ink above the four observing

figures, as well as their relative height in comparison to the tillers, give the impression of hills. Even the lone overseer appears to be standing on higher ground than the tillers. While not the topography of steep hillsides, the fact remains that the tilling takes place in the trough between hills, which however realistic it purports to be, does not reflect the ideal for agricultural production (the fertile plain, the presence of water, light: none of these are present here). The swelling and falling terrain is added to the lack of remnants of cultivation. The field, if that is what it will become, seems wild and unworked. No previous planting lines appear; merely the local weeds, inedible tufts of fiber sprouting from the cold hillside. There is nothing joyful about the task at hand, simply work to accomplish. The relative monochromatic coloration enhances the raw brushwork to supply a mood of weariness, toil against odds, a difficult season at hand, or poor harvest to come. The rawness of mood also extends to the complete lack of interaction between all the actors in the painting. What seems like should be a community, historically in this instance the extended clan-family, in this presentation is a collection of individuals, all working (or viewing the work), but not collectively. Even the village in the distance seems but an empty collection of barren timbers. Life in this painting is present, but disconnected. Joyless toil, a community abandoned to the cultivation of wretched singularity, and the final absence of any sign of hope that would normally seem to appear in a scene of farming all mark this painting; the hunger, physically, socially, and ideologically, seems embodied in the emptiness.

Feeding hunger would soon consume the CCP on numerous fronts from intellectuals hungry for agency and modernity, to peasants interested in peace and plenty, and a political party devouring a nation weakened in spirit and starving for the glory of its past. Northern China was the first to experience the reforms of the CCP. Land reform meant land redistribution and equalization, the results of which were parcels of private property for nearly all levels of peasant society. Those in the gentry were theoretically also awarded land, though in practice it wasn't always the case. After the completion of the revolution the same reforms were carried out in the rest of China. In the densely populated South the effect was deeply felt. Here the last stronghold of the KMT had recently absconded to nearby Taiwan, and the People's Liberation Army with the CCP were eager to demonstrate their functional socio-political superiority over the KMT, and in so doing also demonstrate to the general populace the real and ideological 'benefits' the CCP would continue to deliver.

Art also felt the onset of reform. Though Zhao's style already begins to show the Chinese-Western syncretism that would become the dominant aesthetic under the CCP, the balance between the two was in constant flux. The strong desire to reform (by all, not just the CCP - which can be viewed as taking advantage of this fomentation) was manifest in displays of nationalism. Exactly how nationalism was constituted was not fixed, but the underlying drive was the belief that the reemergence of China as a national power meant being as pro-China as possible. However, what being pro-China meant in art practice was not clear, as conservatives and liberals had differing notions of how to achieve this; whether this meant discarding the old 'Confucian' system of painting entirely in favor of new styles, salvaging portions of the old system, or returning to styles that were viewed as being purely Chinese, without the polluted taint of other styles. The search for this national style (*guohua*)<sup>[3]</sup> is usually coupled with deep nationalistic political motifs.

Zhao's *Farmers* bears the stylistic traces of his experience as an illustrator, while also adapting the *xieyi* (lit. "idea writing") technique to contemporary genre scenes. (Andrews 2000, 241) This combination can be understood as a contemporary melding between traditional techniques (the brush, *xieyi*) and modern styles (influenced by the printing press, the direct link between his artistic practice, mass-production and commodification). Development of *guohua* would take an even more emphatic turn after the revolution. Zhao's style may reflect his diverse training and occupation, and is likely in service of his personal sentiment and ideology, but in 1933 his style would not have had to undergo the coercion of ideology's influence. Twenty-five years later *guohua* became more pronounced in its syncretic development, as well as exhibiting

the direct influence of the state's influence on artistic production, as in the example of Zhu Qizhan's *Autumn South of the Yangzi* (1958). [Fig 2]

Here a peaceful scene of open expanse is punctuated only by the appearance of a flock of migrating geese. The horizontality of the earth is marked in the mid-ground by two unmoving trees, and on the horizon, by a grove of trees and farmhouses. The field is flat and fills the entire distance between foreground and background. The trees appear on a dirt embankment, possibly a path. On the horizon the plane of the field is only slightly interrupted by a second, but equally smooth, low and gently undulating line from a more distant field. Notably, unlike Zhao's painting, the openness in Zhu's painting does not register as negative or absent; rather the space is at rest, and as such, seems filled with peace, harmony, even contentedness.

Peace in 1958 is a kind of irony. While the major wars that had plagued China in the first half of the century had ended, domestic reforms had begun to shift into high gear by the late fifties. The first stage of land reform had by this time been accomplished, and China had recently emerged with confidence from the Korean War. The First Five Year Plan to modernize China appeared to have been successful, and a second plan was being put into action. Despite the government's position that the rosy picture was only improving, social fabric was beginning to show severe stress in places. For instance, though the First Five Year Plan had been labeled a success, the massive push to industrialize the country had resulted in an unbalanced approach favoring heavy industry over the regular agricultural needs. In fact, China's net agricultural harvests between 1956 and 1957 grew at half the rate of China's population, and this was after grain production had fallen by as much as forty-percent the year before. (Dietrich 114 and Becker 52) Part of the blame fell on the recent failures of the second wave of land reform: collectivization. In collectivization the peasants lost direct control of their private plots as they and their resources were reorganized into groups of one hundred to three hundred families.

A closer examination of Zhu's painting in light of these events suggests a number of things. Foremost to the Western eye is Zhu's use of European styles in this primarily xinguhua painting (new national style). Zhu was deeply influenced by his training early in the century, especially from his time abroad in Japan. His work is indebted to the Post-Impressionists and Fauves, in particular Matisse and Van Gogh. Zhu translates these influences into more traditional media in Autumn's hanging scroll, ink on paper format. Thus while the medium seems traditional, neither the colors nor composition resemble traditional models, even the painting's dimensions are uncommon for a hanging scroll. (Andrews 2000, 192) Secondly, as mentioned above, the space is very open, with a great portion of the painting dedicated to the sky. In the field everything is calm. Here, as in Zhao's painting, it is the absence of qualities that may be the most telling. Though the painting shows an autumn field, there are absolutely no signs of labor. Indeed, except for the migrating birds, there is no sign of movement at all. Yet the field is green and full, and the expectation of a good harvest seems apparent. Unlike Zhao's painting, though there is no labor, there is also no sign of bareness, toil, or destitution. While it is empty, the landscape suggests a contemplative hopefulness, even a faith in the future.

This faith fits nicely into the ideology driving the CCP's propaganda. In spite of the troubling situation brewing in rural China, this painting is untroubled. This collectivized field portrays exactly what the officials wanted to see: a tranquil rural space in high production. Images like this gelled with the inflated optimism of reports, ignoring the reality of the situation that was slowly beginning to filter upward through the ranks. The vast sky connotes the nearly limitless and rising potential of the collectivization project, and the extended plane complements the rising sky with limitless production. The green of the fields indicates that the limitless production is a healthy bountiful one, and the farmhouses depict the calm stability, even inevitability of all of these factors. The raised dirt path begins in the foreground and moves off meanderingly to the horizon, suggesting that the way to and through this prosperity is before the viewer. Of course, the viewer of such an ideological painting is none other than the idealist, and the path before her or him is exactly the path of reform dictated by Mao and the CCP. This seems even more

important knowing that the following year, in 1959, the Great Leap Forward (GLF) would be initiated and soon lead to a major famine.

An interesting note to Zhu's painting is that in the years leading up to, and including 1958, the Hundred Flowers Campaign removed a large portion of intellectuals from their urban institutions. A good number of these 'rightist' 'bourgeois' intellectuals (including students) were sent to the rural areas to work in the collectivized farms. Artists would have been among those sent away. Thus the depiction of rural success by an artist at this time would have held an especially critical position, as state dogma coerced aesthetic representation while coercing painters themselves. Still, more was to come in the years of the GLF, where agricultural reforms in the form of experimental agronomy, in conjunction with the creation of numerous small industrial complexes and the infamous "backyard steel furnaces," all combined to produce a domestic disaster. Mao's drive to maintain the revolution kept the gulf between actuality and expectations in place, and the art that emerged after the GLF is imbued with even an even greater presence of out-of-touch optimism fanned by ideology.

Figures 3-5 all depict scenes of rural China's agricultural abundance. All of them are clear instances of collectivized farms, their happy contented peasants, and the bountiful harvests they produce. None of these images allude to the famine during the years of the GLF. Figures reported by local officials to the central party indicated no problems at all. At the onset of the famine years in 1958 it was already normal practice to inflate production reports, and in some cases figures as high as fifty-six times higher than actual production were claimed.(Becker 132) This meant that the top government organs were initially shielded from the effects of the famine due to the illusion created from the misreported figures. When the disaster reached a point where it could no longer be ignored, major portions of the GLF were abandoned in favor of more moderate measures, and in short, anything that would promote a policy of state economic and physical survival. The emphasis on industrial development was replaced with agricultural development. Likewise, more attention was placed on revitalizing the rural sector with better management, planning, technologies, and conservation. Thus these images can all be read as incentives for morale, as well as indications that the continuous revolution was still continuously improving things.

Wei Zixi's *Harvest* (1962)[Fig 3] antedates the betterment of conditions that would occur in the mid-sixties. At the time of this painting the great toll from the previous famine years was just beginning to come under control, and order was being restored. The piles of grain here have no basis in rural reality, and reflect only the determination of ideology's propaganda. Beyond the grain piles there are several other notable features. Foremost among this painting's differences is its radical change in style from the most traditional *guohua*. Wei's painting carries the evidence of the CCP's ideology "art for the masses." Instead of the erudite literati based *guohua* that was pejoratively deemed 'elitist', this painting's style has been influenced by traditional woodblock prints and *lianhuanhua* (roughly, comic books or illustrated novels). The latter of these was especially important as the CCP strove to educate a dominantly illiterate peasantry while also pursuing the ideal balance of a *xinguohua*. Thus while the painting was made using traditional media, its style and content are both radically affected.

Content-wise, *Harvest* is both a morality tale and a morale booster. By working together the painting reveals that success for the rural peasants' harvest and for China's grain production, could be had. Additionally, through this success, peasants' bellies were filled, as indicated by the stacked bowls near the group of women. The bowls also operate by lifting morale, since the famine was in people's recent memory, the moral of cooperation leading to good harvests was aimed at the peasants who stood to benefit directly. The peasant women pictured are themselves well clothed and appear well nourished. Wei has not depicted the women with edema or other signs of starvation. Their clothes are simple, but are aestheticized by their patterns and variation. The conventional image of peasants all wearing identical outfits - as the CCP uniform was modeled after - has been forsaken to express a minor celebratory variation meant to soften the

mood. While the women rest in the foreground, two men can be seen in the background as they work with the piling grain and a conveyor belt. Here another irony can be noted: the piles of grain are apparently the result of cooperative labor and, here, the machines used to facilitate the work and increase production. As noted in the painting, the machines look made of wood; indeed, the steel made in the ersatz backyard furnaces never produced usable results, and thus a portion of the GLF's machines of industrialization (and part of the reason why it failed) were made of wood. The wooden machines could not withstand continuous use owing to wood's softness and the burden of labor upon its gears, mechanisms, supports, etc. The organic machines were as prone to abuse and breakdown, as well as idealization and celebration as the peasants themselves. To imagine wooden machines functionally capable of enabling such large piles of grain was both a myth for morality (even if a failed moral) and a morale booster (perhaps to combat the machines' high failure rate). Lastly, the women are at rest while they observe the grain. It is convention by now to combine the gaze with possession, and even here the argument seems valid.[4] That the women rest, presents them as their own landlords. Just as landlords in the past would have gazed in possession, the women here gaze at the fruits of their own labor (not to mention the ongoing gendered gaze of Harvest's audience). Secondly, rest is reserved as a luxury, or in this case, as a deserved reward for the hard labor invested in the abundant harvest.

Rest is a product of labor, here. Labor also produces joy. In Li Baijun's *Wheat-harvesting Time* (1963 *nianhua*) [Fig 4] a similar scene takes place. A group of women attends to the harvest. In this picture they happily march to their field where other workers can already be seen busily reaping the bountiful returns. This image and the preceding image both feature women, another notable feature of the GLF's influence on Chinese society. Women began to enter the workforce en masse during this time. While women had always been a part of rural labor, the explicit depiction of them increases the value of their contribution specifically. Moreover, the women play a multipart role for cultural ideology. First, they are role models for other women in China, urban or rural; second they are actively represented in the absence of men, thereby highlighting both the importance of women cadres to the CCP, and their competing role with men in the labor force (where work points amounted to an economic surplus and greater social agency). Unlike Wei's painting, Li's picture is filled with activity, though it, too, is centered on abundance. Even the swallows are abundant and abundantly active as they dart through the air. The immense fertile plane in Zhu's painting six years earlier still remains, but now the space is filled and fulfilled by the greatness of harvest and celebration. Labor here has no rest, or desires no rest; finding ideal happiness in continuous activity.

In addition to the influences of traditional woodblock prints, Li's picture also displays the influence from Soviet socialist realism. One of the CCP's guiding voices on art policies, Zhou Yang, the vice minister of cultural affairs, is quoted as saying: "socialist realism demands that [writers and artists] be familiar with the new life of the people, their new thoughts and emotions." (Liang 20) Socialist realism was viewed as being particularly successful in transmitting the CCP's ideology, especially through its "means of reflecting life in art peculiar to socialist society. [Socialist realism] demands the true portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development." (Andrews 1994, 119) While Li's picture is not an archetypal example of socialist realism, certain characteristics come forward, especially in the postures and forms of the group of women. Typically the lead woman rolls up the sleeve on her right arm, and in her right hand the *liandao* (sickle) is lifted upright, ready it seems to fall to work at a moment's notice. Still, the picture is distinctly Chinese, even in its socialist realist influences. The lighter background, the compositional horizontality, and lack of triangular arrangement all demonstrate the adaptation of socialist realism to the particularities of the Chinese visual program; while the emphasis is on the figures' centrality, the diminished background, and the translation of the figures in the distance as an extension of the central group in the foreground all demonstrate adaptive differences to socialist realism. These adaptations were viewed as a part of the guiding ideology of embodying the CCP's agenda and the proliferation of that agenda to 'the masses'.

The issue of proliferation was one of the central problems with artist's works during the early years of the PRC. Without either the erudition to read traditional or syncretic imagery, or the means to capably reproduce them, paintings and other so-called "high" art works faced the possible condemnation of elitism. One of the 'solutions' to this was to employ these artists to make *nianhua*, or New Year's prints. By using the traditional form of the *nianhua* the CCP's ideology could be disseminated. *Nianhua*, besides being a format already widely used, were also designed to be mass produced and distributed: "much government support was given to [*nianhua*] because they were a people's art, because they reached the largest percentage of the population, and because through them the new ideology and socialist goals could be quickly conveyed to the population at large.(Liang 20) Thus Li's picture is called a "picture" and not a painting like the preceding artists' works. *Nianhua* had potentially massive circulations of hundreds of thousands each, so the production of such prints manifested their own variation on abundance and plenty, calling viewers to the analogous mimicry that the picture intends.

By the 1960's the Sino-Soviet relationship had diminished considerably, primarily over differences in the handling of international affairs.[5] The technological exchange heralded during the fifties had ended when Khrushchev abruptly recalled all of the technical experts (along with their blueprints) on loan to the CCP, leaving a great many projects unfinished, and with no possibility for their completion.(Chen 82) Besides massive public works projects, simpler technological exchanges were also affected, and the development of more advanced machinery was precluded, including agricultural and other land moving machinery. Now amidst the rehabilitation of the nation after the GLF, China found itself cut loose from its primary source of education and modernization aid. While China's machines were adequate, the current technology had already maximized its production capabilities making the increase of production demanded by Mao and the CCP that much more difficult (if not impossible) to accomplish.

In *Spring Returns* (1964)[Fig. 5] Chao Mei depicts a scene of two tractors tilling the field, while two peasants walk, and a flock of swans fly in the image's foreground. The machines here are based on the awkward machines in use (as alluded to above, in some cases tractor bodies were made of wood). The machines are depicted tilling a very large field whose boundaries above and below disappear beyond the image; only to the perspectival side, at the top left, is there an edge of the tilling, though it is no indication that the field ends there. The tractors perhaps move as effortlessly across the field as the birds in flight; no matter, neither fast nor slow, for it is evident that the tractors have already done so much. The black overturned earth is evidence that the till has passed through successfully. Against the odds, and against the reality, these tractors have mechanized agricultural production. Ignoring the failures of Chinese Lysenkoism, where hack science suggested, among other things, that tilling deeper (in some cases beyond the height of a standing man) was better and could improve productivity, the tractors in this image till wider instead of deeper.[6] The machines cooperate, since their path will lead them to meet somewhere in the middle, thereby visually splitting the labor. In effect, the collectivized farm works here. Collectivized machines till a field so large that only machines could accomplish it, and only collective labor could make these features possible.

What is most interesting about this image is its perspective. The flock of swans is close up in the foreground, whereas the earth and tractors are in the background on the earth. The perspective is semi-imagined, and unlike traditional compositions. A simple reading of this would suggest a kind of focus on the land as well as the ownership implied through height, as de Certeau has argued elsewhere.[7] Here the gaze approaches the perspective of a map. Craig Clunas argues that there is a deep ideological similarity between Chinese landscape paintings and Chinese maps, both in many ways returning to the point of gaze out over the space.(Clunas 80-92) Compared to Zhu's painting of expansive horizontal spaces, Chao's print is remarkable because it, too, is about expanse but with no trace of the sky. Ideology dictates from above to below, ultimately returning to the earth and the peasants. Having passed through fourteen years of control by the CCP, height is also the perspective of memory. To look back at the gains made through the years, to survey

the change and understand the progress that has been made. Even the swans are the symbols of plenty and change. Their migration (even if we recollect Zhu's painting above) is continuous and thus natural and in harmony with nature. Their passing over the land, a gesture of sweeping the hand over in benediction, announces the prosperity that will take place.

Besides a clear ideological perspective, the height at which the scene takes also refers to a mechanical perspective (differently/differentially ideological). That is, the machines of air, airplanes, had been a source of pride in modernization for China (as well as many other countries). As far back as the famous Lingnan School's Gao Jianfu's *Flying in the Rain* (c.1927), the airplane had figured in *xinguohua* as a symbol of the nation's pride in modernization. Here, above the birds the viewer can gaze down at the fields. Thus the focus on machines in the image can also be understood as the focus from machines.

All of this is set against the fact that Chao's image is a woodblock print - the oldest form of mass production, and a medium of art that operated between classes and boundaries, but tended to be popular. The advancement of the machine is represented through the medium of a woodblock, which is ironic in part because the machines themselves may have been made of wood. It is also telling because the primacy of the machine here is still primarily an ideological concern, since as mentioned above, the majority of the task depicted (tilling and other labor) tended to depend on China's oldest form of labor: human labor. This matches the reality of the post-GLF era when thousands were sent out into the country to work on the collectivized farms, in machine-free, hand-tool labor. The effort then was to re-educate the masses so they could continue Mao's revolution, just as this image through its ancient means re-supplies the revolution with images of its ideal, perfectly collectivized, modernized, bountiful productions.

Following the moderate years after the GLF, Mao's ideology seems to have become clouded by fears that his revolution was not being sustained by the CCP. Inaugurating the CR unleashed a terror on the nation that was only contained after nearly irreparable damage had been done. Ultimately the ranks of the CCP would be recast, the CR would end, and in the year after Mao's death (and the true end to the CR) the Gang of Four would be held responsible for the madness they had helped to unleash and foster. Yet as the CR gained momentum the imagery that portrayed it was saturated with Mao's ideology. The final images I will present here take the notion of bountiful harvests, starvation and plenty, land, nation, and ideology to an ultimate stage.

The CR was a backlash against many of the moderate policies, domestically and internationally, that Mao opposed. As such, while the Red Guard vandalized older historic objects (these objects were further from the revolutionary ideal), the art that was being produced under Mao's aegis grew in its propagandizing capacities. Even the physical representation of Mao's size grew in images as Mao publicly favored the "correct" personality that idolized him and idealized his policies.(Chen 67) Two anonymous paintings released during the height of the cultural revolution, *Chairman Mao on an Inspection Tour During the Cultural Revolution* (1968)[Fig 6], and *Follow Closely Chairman Mao's Great Strategic Plan* (1968)[Fig. 7], feature Mao as a titan lording over the nation. He stands rigidly, with his eyes turned slightly up looking out. The gaze is presumably toward the future, up towards the near reachable goals of the high ideology, or maybe in the former it is out at Taiwan, and in the latter he unleashes the forces towards the future realization of his "great strategic plan." In both cases what interests this inquiry most are the displays of plenty, the production of national identity under the manifestation of ideology, and the examination of agricultural metaphors in these two paintings.

What is taking place in both of these paintings is not a simple gazing ownership like that of the map; rather, Mao's gaze and presence are active in the cultivation of the space. *Chairman Mao on an Inspection Tour During the Cultural Revolution* reveals a diverse China below the god-like apparition of Mao. From the inner-country of mountains and hills, the small paddies and the fertile fields and villages, to the estuaries where the cities also transform skyward in their buildings, the mercantile power of the coast, the centers of power in the cities. Mao presides over this all, but even more so, he inspects the progress of his ideology, he is the creator and the true

architect of the entire nation. He is the reason here for the halcyon nation pleasantly mottled by clouds (are they the smoke trail from his cigarette?). Mao alone produces the bounty. Instead of close-up images of the tangible benefits of Mao's ideology, here Mao is peasant and leader, cultivating the land to grow the crop of a strong Chinese communist nation whose byproduct is reflected in the fertile growth of the land itself.

*Follow Closely Chairman Mao's Great Strategic Plan* may be viewed as a magnification of Mao's cultivating status. Already in the painting's title there is a direct anchoring reference to Mao's ideology, to his Great Plan, and the connection between Mao as the producer of the throngs of people in the painting. The rallying masses, the crowds of youthful Red Guard members waving banners, big character posters, pictures of Mao himself: all of these are the fruits of Mao's ideology. The literal mark of Mao has been freshly inscribed onto the painted surface as the exhortation of the foremost banner. Art produces itself here, and ideology is written on its own surface; Mao is the architect, the farmer, and the scholar-painter who sows the seeds of the continuous revolution. The masses are like the fertile crops on the rolling hillsides. Their topography swells and falls like low hills. The masses literally cover the land; perhaps they are the land. They are certainly products of it - products of the land that is the product of a nation, the first product of the "great" (massive, total) plan, the simple child of the governing, creating ideology. The plentiful and abundant crop is the masses.

That the paintings are made using oil or gouache is not insignificant as it also indicates the CR's policy against traditional modes (all labeled "Rightist"); their use, though potentially dangerous for its Westernization, can be justified here by the commanding presence of Mao and the lingering influence of art practices borrowed from the Soviet Union and now 'Sinocized'. Furthermore, the anonymity of the works can be understood as the specific identity of the collective whose authorial name is derived from the paintings' titles and their central icon. Even as Mao paints his proclamation with an ink brush, the painting syncretises guohua and xinguohua, while strongly adapting to Mao's ideological campaign.

Through these paintings a strand of continuous development may be marked. As China encountered both its changing political climate alongside the continuing practical concerns of a land and people long beset with difficulty, these changes came to be idealized in much of art during these times. A larger survey of images, especially in the years surrounding and during the GLF, displays numerous references to food (bowls, health, crops, etc.) that directly correspond to the ideological program. These images were meant to instill the various levels of domestic classes with Mao's homogenizing ideology, from peasant to city intellectual, as well as serve to educate the foreign world about the great progress and indefatigable strength of China (a warning, perhaps, to foreign imperialism in its numerous forms). Ideology here produces the image of history it wants to create, as well as enforce. Even if the reality of things proved otherwise, art would diligently serve the state to convince the people that heads full of ideology were better than bellies full of food. To show pain and suffering would be to ignore the promise of betterment. Thus art's ideological transference produces crops, harmony, and continues the revolution. The peasants' representation transformed from their cultivation of the nation through the abundance of their harvest, to the cultivation of themselves by the represented production of the guiding ideology. The new crop of people would be like the proposed crops themselves: fuller, more nutritious, more resistant to damaging influences (influenza), and cultivatable across China's universally fertile soil.

*Notes:*

[1] cf. Chen, Jian. *Mao's China and the Cold War*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001; pp. 6-10.

[2] *These are terms I borrow from Chen's account of Mao's policy; the former refers to Mao's distrust of the Soviet Union and the U.S., the latter to Chen's analysis of Mao's response to the former.*

[3] *"So called guohua, in general, are paintings painted with Chinese brush, Chinese ink, and Chinese pigments on Chinese paper or silk. A more appropriate term would be national painting [mingzu huihua]; it uses our own tools and methods and it adopts forms developed by our nation over a long period of time to manufacture paintings. [...] Where is the new in new guohua? I think we need (i) new contents and (ii) new forms. [...] I think we must substitute depiction of real objects for copying [old paintings] as the fundamental curriculum for the study of Chinese painting. [...] To paint landscapes [fengjing], you must go to the wilds to sketch from life. [...] One must make profound observation of people and nature. [...] Chinese painting is our national painting; it has a long and glorious tradition, and its legacy is limitlessly rich. Our people love their national art. We are the descendants of a great nation; our painters must cleverly continue their precious inheritance, enthusiastically creating paintings that describe new life. Chinese painting has a bright future." Ai Qing's "On Chinese Painting," translated by J. Andrews. PP112-118.*

[4] *cf. Clunas 92.*

[5] *cf. Chen*

[6] *cf. Becker, esp. Ch.5.*

[7] *cf. de Certeau 1984, Chapters 3-4.*

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