

# CHINESE LITERATURE



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*monthly*

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## Uprising of the "Sinners"

The story published below is an excerpt from the novel *Uprising of the "Sinners,"* Part One. The 36-year-old author, Ulanbagan, is a Mongolian from the Kolchin Grassland, in Inner Mongolia. This novel, Ulanbagan's first, is based on events which took place there in the early forties during the War of Resistance Against Japan. Batjargal, the hero, is a young slave in the manor of Lord Darhan, master of many slaves and serfs, and thousands of sheep and cattle. His arm is branded with the word "sinner" for the "crime" his father is supposed to have committed as a leader of a rebellion against the lord. Superstitious and ignorant as a result of long years of feudal rule, Batjargal, like many other slaves, gradually comes to believe that he is indeed a "sinner." Only after he meets Li Ta-nien, a Communist sent by the Chinese Communist Party to the grassland, does he begin to wake up politically. But it is a very complicated struggle. The excerpt we have selected describes this process. We shall carry it in two instalments. On p. 74 of this issue we publish Ulanbagan's article: *How I Came to Write "Uprising of the 'Sinners.'"*

### Homage to the Lord's Ancestors

A soldier from the lord's manor came galloping across the plain. He shot through the little village of Aduchin like an arrow, barely missing the clusters of tent-like yurts.

“Herders, serfs,” he shouted as he rode, “sacrifices to the lord’s ancestors on the fifteenth day of the ninth month. Bring your gifts.”

His voice faded with the receding clatter of his horse’s hoofs. A pair of bright eyes peered after him through a rent in a tattered yurt. Then the rent was closed again.

“What’s he yelling?”

“Oh, Brother Li —” the girl replied softly. The rest of her words stuck in her throat. She couldn’t get them out.

All three people in the yurt were disturbed. Sanjma, the girl’s mother, lowered her head and stared at the earthen floor, breathing heavily.

Beside the girl, whose name was Oyunchichig, was a flower basket cleverly woven of aster grass. In it were two late autumn wild roses. Oyunchichig, holding an overblown iris, sat down weakly on crossed legs. A moment before she had been laughing and chatting, now she looked tense and worried. With a sigh she quietly placed the iris next to the basket and gazed dully at her mother.

Sanjma sat on the grass mat, poking up the dried cow dung in the stove. The messenger’s announcement had shaken her badly. She even forgot to put the milk tea on. Instead of making the flames burn higher, as she intended, she poked out the embers with trembling hands and extinguished the fire completely.

In order to learn what the enemy were up to, particularly inside Lord Darhan’s manor, and thus be able to fight them more effectively, Comrade Li Ta-nien was using the hamlet of Aduchin as his base. He lived in the home of Sanjma, one of Lord Darhan’s serfs. A good, honest woman, she treated Li like a son.

Although Li was only twenty-eight, the whiskers on his face gave him the appearance of a man of at least thirty-five. He was tall, stalwart, with a broad chest. His speech, even his walk, was thoughtful, steady, competent. In a critical situation, his eyes flashed, and he clenched his fists. A firm, straightforward fellow, Li was a Han, but he spoke Mongol fluently. In addition to pushing ahead with the task the Party had given him, he frequently helped Sanjma with her chores. He did his best to think of ways to get her family through

their difficulties. As the days went by, they all grew very fond of him, and he was accepted as one of them.

The announcement of the lord's messenger deepened the worried expression on Sanjma's face. She sat, stricken, by the fireside. Li walked over and sat down beside her.

"Don't worry, mama," he said soothingly. "Let's talk it over."

Sanjma sighed. Turning to him she said slowly: "Our life is hard, son. You've seen it yourself. That day we had to pay tribute to the Japanese, Lord Darhan's men took away our milk cow and her little calf. Now he's going to pay homage again to his ancestors, as he does every year. The rule is that each family has to contribute one sheep per person. We've only got three skinny sheep. If we give them all away, how are we going to live?"

As she was talking, she lit a new fire in the stove. Li thought a moment.

"Suppose you refuse, then what?"

"Refuse?" Sanjma's lips trembled so, it was quite a while before she could speak. "Who would dare to refuse? Fifty strokes of the whip if the lord let you off lightly. Turning you over to the Japanese for hard labour if he decided to be severe. He sends some from our village every year."

Silently, Li rose. His bushy brows knit together in a frown.

Oyunchichig, seated to one side, began to weep. At sixteen Oyunchichig was still a child. She remembered her darling calf — its little mouth and short tail. When she untied it from its tether in the meadow twice a day it used to gambol with joyous abandon. And she, carrying its halter, had run and skipped with it. Or she threw her arms around its neck, dragged it to the ground and pinned wild flowers in the hair on its poll. The calf looked cuter than ever then. And when her mother milked the cow, she used to hold the calf back. The sight of the fragrant liquid hissing into the bucket drove the little animal frantic. Extending its tongue, it bucked and tugged. Oyunchichig, exerting all her strength to restrain it, used to get red in the face, and perspiration broke out on her temples. When the milking was finally finished, she would release the calf and squat, watching

it suckle at the pendulous udder. Only when it had drunk its fill would Oyunchichig go home.

She knew that in the hands of the Japanese the cow and calf would either die of starvation or be killed and eaten. Every time she thought of them, she felt awful. Her mother's mention of the animals reminded her of how the little calf bawled when it was separated from its mother. Taking Sanjma's arm, she asked that she go to the manor and beg for the calf back. Sanjma's reply was impatient.

"Sixteen, and you talk like a child of three. Don't you understand—once those devils grab something, it's gone for ever. We're not even sure we can keep our last three sheep, and you still want your calf."

Not listening, Oyunchichig wept against her mother's bosom, as if this could make her wish come true. Poor Sanjma didn't know what to do.

"Don't cry, little sister," Li urged the girl. "Give your mother some peace."

Sanjma pushed her away. Oyunchichig wiped her eyes. "But Brother Li," she sobbed, "my calf was so precious."

Li patted her shoulder. His voice was kindly, but serious. "The people have lost no end of precious things. Whole herds of horses, cows, sheep, many yurts — all plundered by the Japanese and Lord Darhan."

"But mine was the cutest calf in the world," the girl said half to herself. "I'd give anything to see it again." She wept, her shoulders shaking. "I'll go myself," she choked. "I'll beg the Japanese and the lord to give me back my calf. And if they don't —"

"What will you do?"

"I'll cry."

Li laughed at the girl's naivete. But his heart ached. Carefully he explained: "Those people are not kittens. You can't frighten them into dropping any morsel they get their teeth into, no matter how you cry and carry on."

Oyunchichig lowered her eyes and sighed. "Finished," she said hopelessly. "My little calf will never return."

For generations Sanjma's family had been slaves. Only after she became pregnant with Oyunchichig was Sanjma able to move out of the lord's manor. She made up her mind that the girl must remain free. She raised her tenderly, and Oyunchichig was as pure as a white sheet of paper. Oyunchichig loved to work. She went at it gaily, like a sparrow winging across the sky. Her first real taste of sorrow came only when her calf was taken away.

Now she stood motionless and silent, her eyelids swollen. It was very silent inside the yurt. The only sound was the hissing of the kettle on the stove.

Suddenly the door was noisily pushed open. All turned to look. It was the family's spotted brown dog. The animal made a circuit of the yurt, peering at each of its owners' faces, then quietly lay down at Oyunchichig's feet. Usually it raced up to its young mistress, crouched on its front paws and wriggled with delight, wagging its tail madly. Oyunchichig was surprised at the change in the dog. She stared at it, then uttered a cry. The animal's head was clotted with blood.

"*Aiya*. Who did that to our dog?"

At that moment her father, Baldandorj, carrying two dead sheep on his shoulders, entered the yurt. He flung the carcasses to the ground angrily. Pulling out his pipe, he lit up and smoked furiously, filling the yurt with tobacco fumes. Only after Sanjma questioned him for a long time did he snap out a curt reply:

"Wolves."

His wife blanched. She gazed at the dead sheep in despair. A weight seemed to be crushing her chest. She had no tears, but she felt a hot stinging in her eyes.

The dog had been injured in a fight with wolves. Oyunchichig tenderly patted the animal's neck. She was unable to speak.

Two of their three sheep had been killed. That meant they would not be able to present one sheep for each member of the family as required for the homage ceremony. What could they do?

A depressed atmosphere pervaded the yurt. Li paced the floor. His legs felt heavy. He walked around the dead sheep and paused at the door of the yurt. Gazing out at the distant sand dunes and

the dark grey sky above the plain, he recalled a painful scene of his childhood: The landlord's flunkey coming to their home to demand the rent. His mother and father not daring look the man in the face. His little sister crying. That night Li travelled over a hundred *li* to another village. There he borrowed a cow from a family friend, to give as rent to the landlord...

Turning around, Li said to the impoverished couple: "Don't worry. We'll find another two sheep somehow, and that will solve it."

They looked at him, then looked at the dead sheep. Sanjma heaved a long sigh. Baldandorj held his head in his hands. Oyunchichig stopped weeping. Her black eyes, fixed on the fire, were exceptionally large.

On the opposite of the stream from Aduchin, by a forest west of Lord Darhan's manor, tents of many sizes and shapes had been set up in a meadow. Nobles and merchants had come from afar with gifts for the sacrificial ceremony. They gave everything from cattle, silks, satins and horses with saddles, to money and jewelry and slaves. For several days now the place had been swarming with people, coming and going through the forest.

The time for homage to the lord's ancestors was approaching.

For the wealthy families of Aduchin it was a time of rejoicing, but for the impoverished serfs it meant only additional burdens.

Sanjma, too weary even to read her Buddhist beads, sometimes forgot to fill the kettle with the milk tea before putting it on to boil, and it turned a cherry red over the fire. Baldandorj grew increasingly irascible. He frequently struck his beloved brown dog without any reason, and he noisily smoked one pipeful after another. Whether sitting up and lying down he was wrapped in a thick cloud, as if this were the only thing that could bring him solace. The usually garrulous shepherd didn't say a word all day.

If, on the day of homage, they couldn't produce three sheep, they would be put to unbearable torment. How could Li stand by and see this happen?

A month ago, before parting from Comrade Liu Chih-hung, who had also come to do underground Communist Party work on the grassland, Li had sold an old watch in town for ten dollars. He had given six of these to Liu and kept four for himself. Two he gave as dues to Jamsuren, the secretary of local underground Party branch. Extracting the remaining two dollars, he showed them to his hosts and said:

“There’s no need to be upset. We can buy one sheep with these, and I’ll raise enough for another. Those plus the one you still have at home will make three — just enough for the tribute.”

The old man shook his head. After a morose silence, he said: “You still have a long road ahead. If you spend all your money on us, how will you manage? We have a saying: ‘Skimp at home if you would travel abroad.’ It seems to me we’d better just grit our teeth and wait.”

“I’ll find money somehow, when it’s time for me to move on,” said Li. He saw grateful tears glistening in Sanjma’s eyes. He quickly switched his gaze to Oyunchichig. “Have you got a short length of rope?”

The girl hurried outside and returned with the article requested. Handing to him, she queried: “What do you want this for?”

“I’m going to market to buy a sheep.”

“I’ll go too.”

“Better not. If you went with me, I’m afraid — anyhow, I’ll be right back.”

“What are you afraid of?”

“Nothing. Just that I walk too fast for you.”

Li hung the coil of rope over his arm and strode out of the yurt. First he tried Uncle Liu. But the horse gelder was out, so he went to Jamsuren where he collected something over two dollars. After asking directions to the market-place, he set forth. He soon covered the fifteen *li* distance. Li priced a number of animals, but nowhere could he find two sheep that his total of four dollars would buy. Pushing his way through the crowds, he broke into a sweat. Finally, after much bargaining, he managed to buy two thin little lambs. They were so weak after walking only a short distance they were unable to

move. He had to carry them all the way home, slung from either end of a shoulder pole.

The fifteenth of the ninth month was the day Lord Darhan had set for visiting the graves of his ancestors, and for offering prayers and sacrifices to their spirits.

Carrying the three skinny sheep, Li and Sanjma and her family set out for the homage ceremony fair. The whole village of Aduchin seemed to be going in the same direction that morning. Some drove carts laden with sheep or hides. Some, tying the legs of their sheep together, carried them draped around their necks. One old man, unable to tote such a heavy burden, pulled his sheep along on a rope. The lazy animal wanted only to lie on the grass. Pulling and beating, the old man managed to drag it on to a bridge, but there it lay down again. Another herder, meaning to be helpful, gave the sheep a shove. Startled, the animal leaped suddenly, ripping the rope out of the old man's hand, and fell into the deep water with a resounding splash.

The old man sat down on the railing of the bridge and wept aloud.

Empty-handed except for the flagon from which he kept taking little nips, the village drunkard was also on his way to the fair, fully expecting to be beaten for not bringing any gift. Already soused, he walked as if floating on air. Though others wept, he laughed and sang. Coming to the top of the bridge, he hailed the unfortunate old man.

"Hey, Dobchin, old friend, why is a man your age crying? Control yourself. Here, have a couple of swigs. With this stuff inside you, even if they slice your flesh you won't feel it. Come on, drink." He laughed uproariously.

Dobchin sipped a few mouthfuls and stopped weeping. The drunkard patted his arm.

"Come on. Let's join the fun. What are we sitting here for?" He ambled off.

Listlessly, the old man moved along with the crowd. At the Black Dragon Temple, he dropped to his knees. "Buddha, save me," he cried. "If I don't give a sheep, Lord Darhan's black whip will take my old life."

He kowtowed repeatedly, pounding his head against the stone porch of the temple, moving forward with each prostration until his head was beating against the door. Again he wept, then resumed his kowtows. His wild grief touched the hearts of everyone going to the sacrificial ceremony, but no one tried to stop him.

Oyunchichig, who was walking ahead of Li, when she saw this exclaimed: "Poor ill-fated old man."

Her father, Baldandorj, had been intending to lead their sheep across the bridge. But when he learned what had happened, he quickly picked up two of the animals and handed the third to Li.

"How can people like us expect a good fate?" he demanded bitterly.

"But our family has had a bit of good fate," the girl said cheerfully, with a glance at her father.

Sanjma corrected her. "That's called luck, not fate. We really are lucky to have met a good boy like Li."

"This family has suffered one misfortune after another," Li thought. "People have a remarkable resilience. With the least improvement in their conditions they forget all about their previous hardships." He looked at Sanjma admiringly. Li took the sheep he was carrying and placed it on Oyunchichig's shoulders. In a low voice he said: "Take this for me, sister."

Holding her flower basket in one hand and grasping the sheep's legs with the other, she looked at him from beneath a halo of fleece.

"Where are you going, brother?"

"I've something to do. I'll be right back."

"Oh." The girl walked on.

As Li pushed through the crowds, he found himself walking behind a man wearing a sheepskin tunic, fleece-side out. Most of the fleece had been worn off, and the old garment was flecked with blood. A long leather sack hung almost to the ground from the man's belt together with his tobacco pouch. Li nudged him.

"Where were you this morning, Uncle Liu? I went to your place but you weren't home."

Liu turned his head. When he saw it was Li, he rubbed the front of his bald head with his hand and, crinkling his eyes, replied: "I was out gelding a horse. Just got back."

Li had heard that Liu was a skilled gelder. The wildest stallion became docile in his hands. Lowering his voice, Li said:

“An old man from our village was careless and his gift sheep jumped into the river. He’s crying and carrying on in front of the Black Dragon Temple. Can you think of any way to help him?”

Liu pondered. He made no reply.

“Well, what about it?” Li urged.

By then Liu’s wife and two children, a boy and a girl, caught up. They were leading four sheep. Liu pulled over one of the animals.

“Give him this.”

“Then you’ll be short of a gift sheep.”

Liu patted his pendulous leather sack. The gelding implements inside clinked. “I can do a few more horses at the fair today. I’m sure to earn enough to buy another sheep.” He smiled and nodded his head.

Hoisting the sheep on his shoulder, he walked to Black Dragon Temple and deposited it beside the white-bearded old man.

“This is for you, Brother Dobchin.”

The old man blinked. Overjoyed, he cried with tears in his eyes: “I’ll never forget your kindness, Brother Liu.”

Li gazed after the gelder as he disappeared in the crowd. “Uncle Liu is a fine fellow,” he thought.

Tents and yurts had been erected on the meadow north of the forest. Merchants’ stalls were lined up in neat rows. People shouted and jostled, examining the merchandise. Li and Sanjma’s family pushed their way to a particularly crowded stall. It was here that the gifts for the sacrifice ceremony were registered and delivered. Baldandorj and Oyunchichig led forward their three sheep.

“They’re nothing but skin and bones,” exclaimed the piggy-eyed fellow in charge of receiving the serfs’ gifts for Lord Darhan. “How do you expect us to give these to the Japanese?”

The old man’s hands went cold, his fingers trembled. “They’re all we have. Please excuse us and take them.”

“Nothing doing,” the fellow blustered. “When I say no I mean no.”

Sanjma tugged at his sleeve. "Have pity on a poor serf's family," she beseeched. "They may be thin, but they're a token of our good wishes."

Flinging off her hand, the fellow shouted: "No. They're positively an insult to our lord."

Her heart beating fast, Oyunchichig hid behind her father and stared fearfully. With a few quick steps, Li strode up to the man. Suppressing the rage that was in his heart, he said amiably:

"We're all here to take part in Lord Darhan's sacrifice to his ancestors, not to do business. Even in buying and selling, there are fat sheep and thin — each has its price. It would be very wrong of you not to take these sheep. Lord Darhan would be angry if he knew. You shouldn't throw cold water on a serf's warm-hearted offering."

Li's remarks cut the fellow's flow of words abruptly, like a dam blocking a rapid stream. His face and ears grew red, his eyelids fluttered. People all around set up a clamour. It was as if they were saying: "You're not buying these sheep, we're presenting them, free. What are you so fussy about?"

Piggy-Eyes wasn't sure who Li was. Helplessly, he accepted the three skinny sheep, as the spectators gazed at him contemptuously. As a result, all the others with thin sheep were also able to hand them in.

Sanjma and her family felt as though a great load had dropped from their chests.

Skipping excitedly, Oyunchichig followed Li through the crowds. She didn't feel a bit tired. She came to the sacrifice ceremony every year with her parents to see the fun, but it seemed to her that none of the past fairs could compare with this one. Oyunchichig carried her small flower basket. In it were not flowers but cheese and pancakes.

At the west end of the forest, hearing a disturbance, Li turned around. Red-hatted attendants of Lord Darhan had set up several cauldrons in a corner of the meadow and were cooking gruel and bits of meat. Many people, with empty bowls and buckets, had formed a wide circle around the cauldrons and were staring hungrily at the bubbling gruel. Some, too weak from starvation to walk, could only drag themselves to the edge of the trees. A few naked children

ran right up to the cauldrons and begged for food. The red-hatted attendants kicked them to the ground. Not daring to cry aloud, the children crawled away. An old man, coming out of the woods, collapsed from hunger. But he struggled desperately towards the cauldrons and embraced the legs of one of the attendants.

"Save me, master. I haven't eaten for two days. I'm dying."

"Get away from here," the attendant shouted. "Lord Darhan doesn't give out the charity food till after the ceremony starts."

Instead, the old man extended a trembling hand towards the steaming gruel. The attendant struck it roughly aside.

"If you stick that hand out again, you old wretch," yelled the attendant, "I'll chop it off. An old serf like you ought to know the rules. In a little while, Lord Darhan will pour the gruel on the meadow so that you serfs can pick it off the ground. We've been doing it that way for years."

One of the older red hats was more soft-hearted. "I'll give him a little first," he said.

At that moment several cavalymen of the Kolchin Black Horse Troop charged into the crowd, brandishing their whips.

"Make way, make way. The lord is coming."

Their whips flailed the serfs' heads and shoulders. The serfs hastily cleared a path. With lowered heads they moved back gradually. Then all fell to their knees. The noise subsided. The air seemed to fill with menace.

Li saw two large sedan-chairs approaching, each borne by eight slaves dressed in green. The outlines of the occupants were faintly discernible behind the jade-green gauze that draped the doors.

No doubt about it — in the sedan-chair with gold satin bunting on its roof was Lord Darhan; in the chair that followed, its roof covered with blue satin, was the head of Japanese Intelligence on the Kolchin Grassland, Colonel Kanagawa. After the chairs passed, the Black Horse Troop trotted by, with Wanchin, the man with the wedge-shaped face whom Li had seen a month before, at its head. Lama monks of Lord Darhan's family temple brought up the rear.

The old man who had just begged a bowl of gruel from the red-hatted attendants knelt by the roadside, his face shining with joy at

the lord's beneficence. Tears of gratitude streaming from his eyes, he held the bowl with both hands above his head.

Wanchin spotted him. Angrily, he rode up to the attendants and berated them for distributing gruel before the ceremony had commenced. The attendants servilely dropped to their knees. Wanchin attacked the older attendant who had given out the gruel and beat him senseless with his whip. Next he turned on the old serf, snatched the bowl from him, and poured the gruel on the ground.

"How do you like the taste of that?" he demanded with a cruel laugh. "So you want to eat before the lord starts the ceremony, eh?" He rode off.

With a wail, the old man scabbled with both hands in the spilt gruel, scooping it back into his bowl, earth and all. Even so, he restored less than half a bowlful.

Li glared after the arrogantly retreating Wanchin. Hurrying to the old man's side, he gently raised him. It was the white-bearded old serf whose sheep had jumped in the river. Reduced to begging for gruel, he still could not be excused from presenting a sheep. Uncle Liu had helped him solve the sheep problem, but who could solve the problem of his livelihood? Or the livelihood of thousands of other oppressed people?

Li took two dried pancakes from his pocket and handed them to him. Sanjma had made them for Li just before they left the yurt.

"Here, grandpa, eat these."

The old serf Dobchin stared at the pancakes. "Are you a man," he asked, "or an angel?"

"Please take them."

"You're an angel. An angel." The greybeard accepted the cakes and kowtowed several times. "An angel has taken pity on me," he intoned, weeping.

By then many more serfs had gathered around Li. Oyunchichig was also hemmed in by them. "Brother Li has really become the angel of the serfs," she thought. She felt proud to have such a friend.

A number of naked children stared at her flower basket, intrigued by the pancakes and cheese. One of them edged forward softly and,

timidly extending his hand, touched the basket. Startled, Oyunchichig turned around. The child laughed wryly.

"I'm hungry, sister."

Oyunchichig lowered her gaze. Should she give him a piece? That would mean less for herself. Yet Brother Li had given all his provisions to the old man, even though he himself would now have to go hungry. "I'm hungry right now," she thought. "I'll eat in a little while." But then she saw Li glance at her, and her sympathy for the child gained the upper hand. Her hunger seemed to vanish. She took a pancake from her basket and gave it to the boy.

Instantly, a dozen more children surrounded her.

"Sister, please give me a little cheese."

"I haven't eaten in three days, sister, please give me a piece of pancake."

"Sister . . ."

All the children were shouting at once.

Oyunchichig looked at their faces, their starving eyes. She sighed. "You're pitifully hungry," she thought, "but I'm not much better off. All I've got are these few pancakes and some cheese. I can give them to you, I'm not afraid of going hungry. But won't my parents scold me? My father is very hot-tempered. He surely won't forgive me." Tears came to her eyes. The children's clamour increased. Some were frantically crying aloud.

Suddenly, Oyunchichig raised her head. "All right, you can have them all."

At this unexpected generosity, the children fell silent. Oyunchichig divided her pancakes and cheese into small pieces and distributed them among the children.

Smiling, they ate. But Oyunchichig couldn't restrain her tears.

Li, who had been watching, lightly pressed her arm. "Don't feel badly, sister. Control yourself." He gave her his handkerchief. She wiped her eyes. Then she looked at Li with a smile.

"You did very well, sister," he commented in an undertone.

In the forest, Uncle Liu selected a tall straight tree for a hitching post, shoved his gelding knife into the bark and sat down. He waited

a long time, but no one asked for his services. Uneasy perspiration broke out on his forehead.

"Blacky," he said to his son, "go to the edge of the woods and drum up some customers. Let them know we're here."

"Right," said the boy. He trotted to the clearing. "Who wants his horse gelded?" he sang out. "Come into the grove."

No one paid any attention. The boy shouted until sunset. His throat grew hoarse, but still there was no response. At dusk dozens of lanterns began flickering on the meadow, illuminating the fair grounds.

Li heard the boy calling from afar. Approaching, he asked: "How many horses has your father gelded, Blacky?"

"Not a single one."

Disturbed, Li hastened into the forest while the boy watched a campfire being lit on the meadow. In its glow he saw a few men with some sort of implements in their hands. They seemed to be waiting for something. Among them he recognized Jamsuren.

Two Japanese soldiers, leading a stallion, walked by Blacky. The horse whinnied. The boy ran up, bowed to soldiers and asked: "Would you like to geld your stallion?"

One of the Japanese grunted and glared at the boy in annoyance. They didn't understand him. Blacky grew red in the face with the effort to convey his meaning. He pointed at the horse's underquarters and made the motion of cutting with a knife.

"Geld, geld," he exclaimed.

"Idiot," swore one of the Japanese. "Army stallion no geld." He punched Blacky in the face. The boy fell with a cry.

Jamsuren saw it all clearly. Furiously, he poked the implement he was holding into the fire. To the man beside him he said: "I'll do that one."

Under orders from Wanchin, Jamsuren was branding army mounts for the Japanese free of charge.

The two soldiers swaggered up to the fire with their horse. One of them indicated the animal's rump and said: "You, make mark, this place."

"Lead him over here, gentlemen," invited Jamsuren.

The Japanese soldiers complied. Jamsuren took the red-hot branding iron out of the fire and pressed it hard against the horse's flank. The beast reared high in pain. The Japanese leading the horse let out a frightened yell and dropped the halter rein, his helmet falling off in the process. The other soldier tried to dodge and fell flat on his back. The iron-shod hoofs, coming down, landed directly on the dropped helmet, crushing it flat.

The celebration in honour of Lord Darhan's annual sacrifice to his ancestors had been in session for two days.

Merchants from far-away Shenyang and Harbin, pedlars from nearby towns and cities, were doing a brisk trade. Attracted by their colourful foreign wares, people wandered from one stall to the next, looking at everything. Tax offices and levy depots had been set up by the Japanese invaders. The normally deserted meadow had been converted into a crowded market street.

A Mongol got a packet of tobacco in exchange for a cow. For a horse he was given a few bottles of spirits. A herd of sheep brought him one or two bolts of cheap printed cotton cloth.

Colonel Kanagawa was in partnership with the big merchant Tu Fu-kuei. Their business was conducted in a large tent. Relatively simple in appearance, it housed the best and most expensive merchandise at the fair. Behind the tent Tu had erected several pretty yurts where he entertained his Mongol customers. He plied them with food and drink until their senses were numbed, then began bartering for their goods.

That morning, after leaving Oyunchichig's parents resting in the shade of a tree, Li again strolled with the girl through the fair grounds. Passing the entrance of Tu's tent, Li cast a glance inside. He saw Tu, decked out in Mongolian costume, drinking and singing with some local customers. Clinking glasses, Tu shouted:

"Mongolians are all wonderful people. The best. Treat this place as your own home. Do whatever you like. For your convenience I've built six horse corrals, ten cattle stockades, and dozens of sheep pens. Although I'm only a small merchant, you can have anything you want. Just keep bringing your animals in."

His guests laughed appreciatively.

Li turned to Oyunchichig. "Can you tell me what that bird is up to?"

The man looked vaguely familiar to her. Now that Li asked her, she recalled another fair ten years before.

It was in early spring. An unusually severe storm had hit the plain, blanketing it with three feet of snow. Drifts covered a number of yurts. With the cold wave came the liquor merchants. They arrived with cartloads of spirits from neighbouring towns, sure that this was their chance to make a killing, as if people couldn't live without drink.

Tu came to Aduchin then for the first time. He drove up in a rickety cart laden with four big casks of liquor. But he didn't sell right away. Even when the snowfall grew heavier, he still made no move. The freezing herdsmen were longing for spirits. If Tu had demanded a whole sheepskin for a single drop, he probably could have found someone who'd have given it to him. He waited until people were simply avid, then he commenced to sell. For four casks of liquor, he got a dozen loads of skins, to say nothing of half a sackful of gold and silver ornaments.

An old man walked by the door of the tent. Li saw him stare balefully at Tu and mutter: "If it weren't for your black-hearted deals, you wouldn't be so high and mighty today. Swindler." The old man looked daggers at the merchant.

"How he hates him," Li thought, as the old man stumped away.

He observed a small crowd, not far off, also cursing Tu. At that moment Wanchin, riding a chestnut mare, cantered up to the tent, reined in and shouted:

"Tu, old fellow, I hope business is good."

Oyunchichig shivered and plucked Li by the sleeve. The crowd melted away.

The merchant came out of the tent. "Good," he replied casually. "Very good."

Li at last got a good look at his face: A yellow waxy complexion, short brows slanting downward at the outer ends like a broken centipede, dark glasses resting on the ridge of a flat nose.

Wanchin jumped down from his horse and lightly patted the animal's neck. With one hand on his hip and the other on the beast's saddle, he smiled and said:

"What do you think of this horse, old friend?"

Tu tilted up his dark glasses and peered at the animal with one eye. After circling it, he came close and carefully inspected its coat.

"Excellent," he beamed. "Splendid."

"Wait till you see it run," crowed Wanchin. "We're entering it in the race."

The merchant smiled. Raising his right arm, he shook his hand out of his long sleeve and stuck up an approving thumb: "An animal without a peer. I'm sure you'll win."

The two exchanged knowing glances and laughed. Tu led Wanchin into the tent. Li heard Tu say:

"And after you've won, I'll present you with some small gifts in honour of your victory — four bolts of silk, three bolts of satin and two casks of top-rate liquor. There'll also be a few pieces of silver."

Wanchin murmured a happy retort.

Leaving the tent entrance, Li passed the chestnut mare. He looked at it. It certainly was a fine animal. A foot higher than the average local breed, it was cleanly muscled and had a deep chest. Its powerful legs were planted firmly on the ground like pillars. There was a faint sabre scar on the side of its head. Its translucent eyes shone with an amber glow.

Li glanced at the girl beside him. For some reason Oyunchichig was very uneasy, as though she had a foreboding of evil. She gave him an odd stare and said in an undertone:

"Let's get away from here. My heart is troubled. Let's go, quickly."

Li nodded. After a final glance at the horse, he went with Oyunchichig back into the crowds.

Noon that day was the hour for the sacrifice to Lord Darhan's ancestors. Whole boiled cows and sheep were laid out on the meadow north of the forest. Wicks burning in great tubs of butter served as the sacrificial lamps. Everywhere, sticks of incense sent up columns

of fragrant smoke. The fumes, hanging over the meadow like a fog, pressed down on the heads of the kneeling serfs.

A loud crashing of drums and cymbals startled the onlookers. The lamas of Lord Darhan's private temple, made up grotesquely, had begun their "demon dance." Wearing head-dresses of deer, horses, skeletons and other frightful beings, they danced and skipped, their wide sleeves flapping, to the rhythmic accompaniment. The deer demon danced the wildest, racing among the others, at times leaping upon their heads.

Next came a pair of long brass horns, each carried on the shoulders of four young novices and blown by a big fat lama. The deep mournful blasts of the horns cleared the way for a long procession of lamas. Some wore hats like cocks' combs and large red robes; these were the ordinary priests. Others tinkled little bells, or held vermilion staves, one arm bared to the shoulder. Several were dressed in yellow cassocks and wore peach-shaped hats. Seated in a flowery sedan-chair was a young "Living Buddha."

Finally came two huge "demons," each ten feet high, made of flour paste and glistening with smeared butter. It was as if two towers had suddenly been erected on the meadow. With a cry, the serfs fell back to clear a wider path. As the lamas carrying the figures passed, the beat of the percussion instruments and blare of the horns grew in frenzy. At the edge of the meadow a huge fire of wood and butterfat was set ablaze. The famished eyes of the serfs stared at the butter-smeared figures. The lamas threw the figures into the fire. They landed with heavy thuds and the flames momentarily died down. Black greasy smoke shot up into the sky, then spread like a pall over the forest.

Oyunchichig rose from her knees to look. Her mother pulled her down abruptly. "Kneel, kowtow," Sanjma commanded. "The spirits are on their way to heaven."

"Who cares whether they're going to heaven or under the earth. It's just a waste of good flour and butter."

"Hush, stupid child. Are you out of your mind?" Sanjma gave her an angry glance.

Oyunchichig obediently knelt and lowered her head. But her hands toyed with the end of her long braid of hair.

"Lord Darhan," exclaimed a serf in a whisper.

The serfs touched their foreheads to the ground. Everyone seemed to be holding his breath. Li, who was kneeling behind the man who had announced the lord's arrival, looked up slightly. A long purple carpet had been spread upon the meadow, extending between the rows of serfs directly to the bonfire.

His angry eyes picked out Lord Darhan advancing from the far end. The great lord was a pallid fatty, with a wicked fleshy face. His dress was a motley assortment of styles. Wrapped in a Ching dynasty type robe embroidered with nine dragons, he wore a mandarin hat crowned by a red button from which a cluster of feathers sprouted rearward. His feet were shod in tall riding boots, figured with gold filigree thread. A military sabre which the Japanese had given him hung from his waist. Around his fat neck was a fancy tie. Lord Darhan's gaze was fixed on the edge of the forest, his eyes as motionless as a dead sheep's. He marched steadily forward, the flesh on his beefy face trembling with each step.

Behind him on the carpet came his retinue of twelve wives, one more peculiarly attired than the next. There were white square faces with red lips, and big fat faces with thin pencilled brows and hair piled high on the head in Japanese style. Some wore dragon-embroidered gowns, others were swathed in satin decorated with flying phoenixes and wearing glittering ornaments in their hair.

When the tread of Lord Darhan and his wives could no longer be heard, the serfs kneeling on either side of the carpet raised their heads and heaved sighs of relief.

Li stood up, his eyes flashing fire, and gazed angrily after Lord Darhan and his retinue. He ground his teeth. By then the party had reached the sacrificial bonfire. Facing the forest, they fell to their knees and kowtowed. The lamas began chanting prayers, firecrackers were set off, drums rolled, cymbals clashed and the demon dancers worked themselves into a frenzy.

Li couldn't bear to look at the lord any longer. Turning away, his gaze fell on the surrounding serfs, and at once the fury in his eyes changed to love.

When the sacrifice ceremony ended, it was time for the wrestling and horse racing.

On a high oblong platform, a sky-blue awning was erected and hung with green and red rosettes of silk and satin. Lord Darhan was giving a banquet to coincide with the wrestling matches and horse races. Amid exploding firecrackers and applause, he and his guests — lords of various banners, nobles, Japanese officials, his steward Wanchin, and Tu the merchant — took their seats.

Darhan and Colonel Kanagawa sat at the centre of the table. Silver goblets clinked. General laughter rose on all sides, Lord Darhan laughing loudest and longest.

Uncle Liu, having failed to geld any horses, was unable to raise the money to buy a gift sheep. Lord Darhan's bullies had beaten him savagely.

Bent with pain, his footsteps dragging, Liu was moving slowly past the festive platform when the sound of the lord's laughter reached his ears. He paused and glared wrathfully. Tu, the merchant, was at that moment presenting Darhan with a white ceremonial *bata* scarf, together with a small intricately carved golden platter on which rested a jade snuff bottle inlaid with gold.

Trembling from head to toe, Liu ground his teeth.

"Let the wrestling begin."

When that command came from above, the people in front of the platform moved away, Uncle Liu with them. Hatred gave his agonized body the support it needed.

Quickly, the several hundred wrestlers who would contend leaped and hopped into the area before the platform, the silver studs on their garments gleaming in the sunlight, the breeze fluttering the colourful strips of silk around their necks.

"Let the races begin," shouted the steward Wanchin.

Ten of the best Kolchin horses entered the arena. Their coats were of different colours, their manes and tails were decorated with ribbons. These were followed by dozens of other handsome animals, the pride of their owners — lords of other regions. An appreciative cry went up from the guests beneath the awning. Lord Darhan stroked his black moustache with suppressed excitement.

Singers raised their voices in chorus: "Race, oh horses, splendid Mongolian horses. . . ."

The chestnut mare was conspicuously handsome. To reflect glory on himself, Lord Darhan had decked out the animal beautifully. Yellow satin ribbons had been woven into its mane, a wreath of plaited silk hung around its neck, a knot of golden silk with red fringes danced upon its head. The bit in its mouth was of bronze, and the rein rings on either end were of finely chased silver.

Lightly prancing, the mare swished its be-ribboned tail, its eyes flashing. It whinnied as a young man, his thin face burnt coffee brown by the sun, jumped on to its back. The rider was dressed in red jockey togs, his head was bound by a green silk bandanna. He held a yellow-tasselled riding crop. The yellow satin band around his waist was particularly eye-catching. When he waved his crop, the beast broke into a run, and the long fringes of the young fellow's waist band fluttered behind like a small flying dragon.

Oyunchichig stood among the crowd of spectators. Her large almond eyes lit up when she saw the boy on the chestnut mare. Then they filled with tears and she stared after him mutely. She uttered a cry:

"Batjargal."

Li, standing by her side, looked at her curiously. "You know that young man, Oyunchichig?"

The girl didn't answer. She hadn't even heard his question. Had thunder boomed in her ears she wouldn't have heard that either. Her eyes sparkled happily. Such joy was rare for Oyunchichig.

She pushed to the front of the crowd so as to be able to see the rider better. "He's thinner, and his face is sallow," she worried. "Why is his gaze so lacklustre? Batjargal, Batjargal, how I've missed you."

Li stayed close behind her. Obviously she was in love with the young man. But he also knew that love between the daughter of former slave now living as a serf outside the manor and a slave working within it, in nine cases out of ten could only result in tragedy. He gazed at Oyunchichig sympathetically. But then he thought — he ought to encourage the girl, urge her to fight for her love.

"Every day I watch the manor gate," he heard her say to herself, "hoping you'll come out. Every day I watch the Eighteen Hills, hoping to see you grazing sheep. If there's wind or rain, I worry about you."

"What are you saying, sister?" Li interrupted softly.

Startled, the girl rubbed her eyes as if emerging from a dream. She blushed.

"Nothing, brother. Nothing at all."

"I know something is troubling you. Tell me about it. Who is that boy? What's his name?" Li asked with a laugh.

Oyunchichig's face was red as fire. A smile played at the corner of her lips. Harassed by shyness, joy and pain, she didn't dare look Li in the eye.

"Don't feel badly, sister. If you've made up your mind, I'll definitely help you."

The girl put the back of one hand to her burning cheek. She raised the end of her braid to her mouth and bit into it.

"Say no more, Brother Li," she begged. "There's nothing between us."

Actually, she was very grateful to Li for his support. This was the first time anyone had offered to help her. Removing her hand from her face, she raised her head and looked at him with tears in her eyes.

The racing horses, which had disappeared over the horizon, now could again be seen, coming down the home stretch. The chestnut mare was leading by only a head over a sleek brown which belonged to Lord Badmaravdan of Jalaid. Batjargal shouted and swung his crop, and the mare shot forward, leaving the brown a length behind.

On the reviewing platform Lord Darhan's aristocratic guests became wildly excited. They laughed and shouted. Darhan, practically out of his mind, yelled and waved his fists. Several lords stood and gripped the table, staring in agony as their own horses fell to the chestnut's rear.

In an ecstasy of joy, Darhan removed his plumed hat and raised his glass. "Our Kolchin horse will win," he announced smugly.

“Those nags couldn’t catch up even if they sprouted wings.” He laughed uproariously.

His wives laughed with him. Some waved their chiffon handkerchiefs. Others removed flowers from their hair and tossed them at Lord Darhan and Colonel Kanagawa. Two Japanese officers danced around the table drunkenly, beer bottles in hand. The bedlam on the platform was clearly audible to the people below.

Wanchin had also risen. Patting his chest, he boasted to the merchant Tu, who was standing beside him: “The horses of our manor are the best.”

“They’re indeed an honour to the Kolchin Grassland,” Tu agreed in an oily voice.

As the chestnut mare raced by Oyunchichig, she stood on tiptoe and shouted excitedly: “Faster. Faster.”

The boy turned his head and saw her. At that moment, the sleek brown pulled ahead. Batjargal was gripped by misery at the sight of the girl. Feeling the spirit drain from its rider, the mare slowed down. Every horse in the field passed it by.

Lord Darhan thudded into a chair, his face the colour of ashes. He sat in a glowering fury, his plumed hat askew.

His silence spread to his guests. Only his second wife, seated to the right of Colonel Kanagawa, dared to speak.

“What’s the meaning of this?” she demanded of Wanchin.

“It’s all the work of that sinner slave,” the steward grated.

Darhan pounded a fist on the table and grasped Wanchin by the collar. “Seize him and beat him hard,” he hissed through clenched teeth. “Hard. Leave him only a breath of life.”

Wanchin took his black whip and went down from the platform. He ordered that Batjargal be brought to him. The boy was at once stripped of his riding togs.

At the sight of Wanchin, Batjargal cringed, dropped to his knees and hung his head. He closed his eyes. Placing one hand on his palpitating chest, he said in a low voice:

“This sinner of a slave has sinned again.”

“You’ve made me lose face. You’ve made our lord lose face. You’ve made all of Kolchin lose face,” roared Wanchin. “I’m going to flay you alive.”

His cruel whip cut the boy into bloody ribbons. Only when Batjargal collapsed senseless to the ground did the steward desist. With a cold snort he walked away.

Throughout the beating the boy hadn't uttered a single word or shed a single tear. His eyes remained closed, he clenched his teeth. It wasn't till he revived that he spoke again:

"This sinner of a slave has sinned again."

Slowly he opened his eyes. Wanchin was gone. Around him stood several people; he heard the rustle of leaves. He opened his eyes wider. Before him a girl was weeping softly. He couldn't see her face clearly. Again he closed his eyes. In a voice hoarse from crying the girl exclaimed:

"Wake up, Batjargal. Drink, I've brought you some water."

He forced open his blood-clotted eyelids. He could see the girl's hair and her tear-stained face.

"Oyunchichig," he said weakly, quite surprised. "What are you doing here?" Again he fainted.

As the girl washed the blood from his face, her tears fell like rain.

After Wanchin had beaten Batjargal, Li had rushed over and carried him into the forest. When he heard Oyunchichig call the boy's name during the race, he remembered meeting him the first day he arrived at the grassland after fording the Sharmuren River. How beautifully Batjargal had sung that day.

Again the boy opened his eyes. He wiped his bleeding mouth, accepted a bowl of water from Oyunchichig and gulped it down avidly. His senses fully recovered at last, he gazed at the girl in misery. Weeping, he said in a voice that trembled:

"You still remember me, Oyunchichig. I forgot you long ago, forgot you without a trace."

"How can you say such a thing, Batjargal? I know your bad luck today was my fault. I shouldn't have called out to you in the middle of the race...." Her words trailed off unhappily.

"I don't mean because of that. What I mean is you must forget me, for ever."

He wept bitterly. The girl wiped his tears. Weeping herself, she replied: "I'll never forget you. You mustn't say such things."

Suddenly he stopped crying. "It's not that I want to forget you," he said in an agonized tone. "But you must forget me. Because—" He held up his left arm. It was branded eternally with the word "sinner."

She lightly stroked the seared flesh. "And what if I refuse to forget you?" demanded the girl. "Then what?"

"You'll suffer."

Staring at the brand, Oyunchichig shivered, as if pelted by a sudden hailstorm. She hesitated, then she said firmly:

"I won't do it."

"Think, Oyunchichig, the stain of 'sinner' is in my bones. All the tears in the world can't wash it away. That's why I must forget you, forget everything. For your sake, I hope you will forget me, too."

"No, no, I'll never forget you..." Oyunchichig couldn't go on for weeping.

Outside the grove, someone called: "Batjargal, the master wants you to walk his horse."

Batjargal painfully rose to his feet. "Remember what I've told you, Oyunchichig. I must go."

Overcome with grief, the girl threw herself against a tree and sobbed convulsively. But Batjargal had already dried his tears and hurriedly left the glade. Li, who had been a silent witness, ran after him and called:

"Remember me, young fellow?"

Batjargal turned and scrutinized Li's even features. He fell back a step and shook his head.

"No."

"Take another look. Can you really have forgotten?" Li came closer.

Not replying, the boy continued to fall back. Suddenly, he whirled and ran. Li watched until he had disappeared. Then he shook his head and returned to Oyunchichig. She was seated beneath a tree, her eyes red with weeping.

"He's gone," she said listlessly. "He wants to forget me for ever."

“Stand up, sister,” Li said quietly. “Don’t cry. He won’t forget you.”

## The Silver-Handled Whip

A thick red candle incised with gold letters burned in a silver candlestick, reflecting its glow on the highly polished surface of the hardwood table on which it rested. A green and gilded ceramic horse, ornamental vases, silver bowls and other precious objects also gleamed in its light. The spacious room was suffused with an oppressive silence.

Wanchin sat leaning upon the table, his eyes fixed on flame, his big red nose twitching with the movements of his mouth. He scowled and shifted his gaze to a heavily sealed envelope, marked “top secret” in the left-hand corner. He had received it only this morning from Colonel Kanagawa, head of Japanese Intelligence in the Kolchin area.

He extracted from the envelope a document entitled “Report of Agents.” Wanchin read it carefully, almost reverently, for the eighth time:

“July 18. Cloudy. Observed two strangers walking along the edge of the forest towards the Sharmuren River. Immediately dispatched our Japanese soldiers and the Black Horse Troop of Lord Darhan to head them off. The strangers plunged into the woods and vanished in the fog. They are believed to be Communists. Our investigations of the past month reveal that one of them has escaped, but we are still on the trail of the other. From the testimony of Skinny Monkey, a slave now deceased, we learned that the second man crossed the river and stopped to talk with a shepherd slave on the Black Dragon Dyke. A number of night raids on villages in the vicinity, and various other measures, have not produced the suspect. But we are convinced that he is hiding somewhere north of the Sharmuren River, probably in one of the villages. We have

discovered that the shepherd slave with whom he spoke is called Batjargal. . . .”

Wanchin expelled a harsh breath. Replacing the report in the envelope he took out a letter and perused it slowly. It read:

Dear Mr. Wanchin,

To expedite the imperial rule of Great Japan and preserve order, you are hereby appointed Special Agent to assist our department in destroying the concealed Communist. We hope you will take immediate action in our service. Pay particular attention to the activities of all slaves branded “sinner,” since the Communists find it easy to approach and make use of them. . . .

(signed) Colonel Kanagawa  
Great Japan Intelligence Department, Kolchin

“And make use of them.” Wanchin repeated the phrase, his face hardening. Frowning, he rubbed his scalp with his fist, then he pounded it down on the table so hard the candlestick shook.

With an evil grin, he opened a cabinet, from which he removed a strong-box. Placing the document and letter in the box, he locked it and the cabinet up again, and called out:

“Attendant.”

A man softly entered and stood by the table, bent servilely forward at the waist.

“Bring that sinner Batjargal to me.”

The attendant bowed and withdrew.

After losing the horse race, Batjargal felt that his burden of sins had increased. He was sure Wanchin would not forgive him. At the same time Oyunchichig’s tender image was still in his heart. Try as he might, he could not forget her.

He was miserable. Lying on his bed in the pine grove, he gazed up through the pine needles at the pale moon drifting amid thin clouds. He stared and stared, as if seeking something in the heavens. A meteorite streaked briefly across the sky and was gone. “That didn’t last long,” he thought, “but at least it brought a bit of light to the dark night. But I—what use am I to anyone? Enough of these wild thoughts. Sleep.”

Batjargal closed his eyes. He dreamt he saw a girl approaching. It was Orchid, a slave in the lord's household. She was very good to him. They always helped each other in adversity. He called to her, and she sat by his side and put a cooling hand on his bruised face. "We must have the courage to go on, brother," she said. "One day we'll break out of this hell." Then she vanished, and another girl seemed to be whispering in his ear: "I'll never forget you, Batjargal. If you die, I'll erect a tombstone with your name. And on it, next to yours, will be carved my own."

"Oyunchichig," the boy exclaimed in his sleep. Wanchin's attendant, who had just arrived, laughed coldly.

"Nice dreams you're having. Come with me, quick."

"Where to?" Batjargal sat up.

"Quit pretending. My master Wanchin wants to flay you alive and use your skin to replace the face you've lost him."

Batjargal's body contracted. He knelt at the feet of the attendant.

"Uncle, what shall I do?"

"Why ask me? I don't know."

The boy crawled into Wanchin's room. He imagined he saw several of the steward's bullies standing around, each holding a long black whip. Wanchin had only to say the word, and those whips would chew the flesh from his bones, piece by piece.

With a pleasant laugh, the steward left his seat and came towards him. His red nose twitching, his eyes screwed up, Wanchin put a hand on his shoulder and said:

"You've been a slave here for some time, so you know how I am. When I get mad I beat people. You must excuse my rotten temper. Come over here and sit down." He led Batjargal to a chair.

The boy was mystified. What made Wanchin suddenly so benevolent? He stood on trembling legs, but he didn't presume to sit down. The steward had a servant bring the boy a fresh suit of clothes and put them on.

"Now sit down," Wanchin commanded.

"Master, your slave doesn't dare," Batjargal stammered.

Wanchin pulled him over to a chair, forced him down on it, then addressed him with hypocritical kindness.

“You’re a sinner who’s sinned again. I feel very badly about that. As your master I’m always racking my brain, trying to think of ways slaves like you can cleanse yourselves of that name.”

“Have you thought of something for me, master?”

The steward gazed at him with an evil smirk. Many years ago when Wanchin was already working for Lord Darhan and the Japanese imperialists, he captured and killed, after great effort, a Mongol who had risen in rebellion and his wife. At that time their son, Batjargal, was a mere child. Wanchin threatened to kill anyone and his entire family who dared tell the boy the truth. To this day, therefore, Batjargal still didn’t know the circumstances of his parents’ death.

The boy knelt at the steward’s feet. His icy body grew warm, his eyes flashed. He felt light and free, as though a great weight had dropped from his chest.

Wanchin raised him. With a fond, sympathetic smile he said: “It takes a lot of determination to get rid of the mark of the ‘sinner.’”

“I’ll do anything,” Batjargal said fervently. “Even if it costs me my life.”

A cold light came into the steward’s piggy eyes. He pulled a silver-handled whip from his belt, waved it before Batjargal, and tossed it on the table. It landed with a thump. Wanchin’s face turned savage. He pointed at the whip.

“You know what that is?”

Batjargal shivered. The whip lay like a writhing black snake which was about to coil itself around his neck. It had taken the life of many a slave. He didn’t dare look at it. Some of the blood with which it was flecked was his own.

“It’s your whip, master,” he replied hoarsely.

“Right. If you really want to cleanse yourself of your sins, you’ll take that whip and capture a man for me. It will be a symbol of your authority. If anyone tries to stop you, beat him to death with it. There will be no questions asked. Understand?”

The boy paled. “Who is the man? What do you want him for?”

“A Han, a Communist. When we get him, we’ll turn him over to Colonel Kanagawa for execution.”

“What? Execution? Why?”

“That’s none of your business.”

Batjargal dared ask no more.

“What’s the matter?” demanded the steward. “Are you afraid?”

“No,” the boy retorted. “Tell me, master. What is the man’s name? Where is he?”

“He’s hiding north of the Sharmuren River, maybe in the village of Aduchin. We don’t know his name.”

The boy’s heart contracted when he heard the word “Aduchin.” His hand, which was reaching for the whip, pulled back.

“Scared, eh?” the steward barked.

Large beads of cold sweat broke out on the boy’s forehead. His eyes widened and the light in them dulled. His wildly beating heart seemed trying to tear itself from his chest. He had difficulty in breathing. The candle flame appeared to be moving in a circle. He clutched his chest with the hand that had extended towards the whip.

“When I was little,” he thought, “my mother told me I must live clean. Now the Japanese want me to seize a man so that they can kill him. That will make me a murderer. If I refuse, I won’t be able to get rid of my sinner’s taint. Shall I kill a man to cleanse my sins? No! No! I won’t do it. I’d rather remain a sinner.”

He seemed to see the black whip in Wanchin’s hand again, beating him. He cried out and retreated towards the door. The steward stopped him with a shout.

“Both your father and mother were murdered by the Hans. This Communist is also a Han, one of the same Hans who killed your parents.” His voice grew threatening. “If you don’t avenge them, I’ll tell the lord to add ‘unfilial son’ to your sins, and have you burned alive. No matter how you scream and cry, it will be too late.”

“So it was the Hans who murdered my mother and father?” thought Batjargal, his eyes distending. He picked up the blood-stained whip with trembling hands. Cold sweat soaked his clothes. But then he hesitated. Could it be true? Wanchin slapped the table.

“Now what’s the trouble?”

“Were my father and mother really killed by the Hans?”

Wanchin flew into a rage. "Filthy scum. Who ever heard of a master who would lie to a mere slave?" He glowered in silence a moment, then continued menacingly: "We know you've met that Communist. If you don't carry out my orders there'll be another crime on your head — conspiring with the Communists to overthrow the rule of Lord Darhan and Great Japan."

"But I don't know anything about the man," the boy protested.

"You don't, eh? A couple of weeks ago when you were grazing sheep on the dyke a stranger spoke to you. Do you deny that?"

Batjargal suddenly remembered. "Oh, yes, that's true."

"Well, that man is a Communist. One of the Hans who murdered your parents."

Batjargal recalled that at the festival in celebration of the lord's sacrifice to his ancestors he had seen the man again. He forced himself to be calm. A longing for revenge possessed him.

"All right," he cried. He grabbed the whip. The candlelight, striking against the silver facings of the handle, cast a glowing reflection in the corner. Batjargal stared at it as if it were some precious indication of how he could rid himself of the taint of "sinner."

Then the glow darkened and became a bottomless chasm. The earth sank beneath him and he tumbled into it. But soon the light gleamed again. It seemed to illuminate a broad path. He would no longer be a "sinner." He would gallop freely across the plain on a fine horse.

Once more the candle flame dimmed, and the glow in the corner faded. Waxy tears from the gold-embossed candle filled the silver holder. The candle tilted and fell, and the room was plunged into a frightening darkness. The clock on the wall seemed to tick with trebled agitation. Wanchin called a servant to bring another candle. By then it was a quarter past midnight.

No longer hesitant, Batjargal grasped the silver-handled whip. His hand stifled its gleam. The bright reflection in the corner was gone.

Returning through the darkness, Batjargal bumped into a hitching post. He fell back a step, glared, then beat the post with his whip until he was tired and sweating. Head high, he swaggered on.

But he was still annoyed at his own clumsiness when he got back in the grove. Again he pulled out the silver-handled whip. This time he flailed the pine trees with such vigour that he brought down a shower of needles. "I've had nothing but torments," he thought. "I've always been afraid. I dared not disturb even a blade of grass. But all that's over now. I fear nothing. I'm going to get my revenge."

He felt himself the master of the pine trees, and his mood changed from anger to excitement, and from excitement to joy. Skipping about, he waved the whip and laughed wildly until he thought his throat would split. His eyes reddened, his chest ached.

"Put that whip down," a voice shouted suddenly from behind.

Batjargal's exaltation drained away. Not daring to turn his head, he shoved the whip into his belt. He stood motionless, as if impaled. A heavy hand clutched his shoulder painfully. He looked. It was One-Eyed Dragon, a gunner in the tower above the manor's main gate. The boy relaxed a bit. One-Eyed Dragon, who was bare from the waist up, had hairy arms and chest. His single eye was red-rimmed. He had one large ear and one small. From the larger ear a silver earring dangled. He was drunk.

"What's a little slave like you doing with a whip in the lord's manor?" he demanded roughly.

The boy had always been afraid of him, but now he had courage.

"Let go of me, you one-eyed animal," he retorted. "It's none of your business. This whip is a sign of my authority."

"Hoho. So you dare to swear at me."

"That's going easy on you. If you don't let go of me, I'll give you a taste of Master Wanchin's whip."

Not only didn't the Dragon release him — he fastened his hands around Batjargal's neck and beat his head against a tree till the boy's ears rang.

"In the lord's manor you'll never be anything but a sinner slave," yelled the gunner. "Your only authority is to arrest a Han, a Communist. Understand?"

He flung Batjargal aside and strode away. The gunner had been sent by Wanchin to observe the boy's actions.

Batjargal rose dizzily. There was a big lump on the back of his head. He staggered to his bed of boards beneath the trees. Completely deflated, he crept on to it, softly, despondently, as always.

Two days later, Wanchin sent Batjargal a pistol issued by Colonel Kanagawa. The whip had given him authority. Now, this lethal weapon filled him with a murderous agitation.

It was late at night. All the lights in the manor were out. There was a complete stillness, as though even the pine trees were asleep. Batjargal lay on his bed of boards in the open, gloating over his pistol and whip. He looked at them, fondled them. He sat up abruptly and began polishing the gun.

"Brother, it's so late. Why aren't you sleeping? What are you doing?"

Batjargal recognized the voice of Orchid, but he didn't raise his head from his work even when her footsteps halted behind him. Panting with the effort, he continued rubbing the pistol. When she continued to press him, he retorted brusquely:

"I'm cleaning this gun."

"What for?" She could see something was wrong with him. "Does the master want to go hunting?"

"Must you ask so many questions?"

"You've changed. You're not nearly so friendly as you used to be." The girl grew angry. "How have I wronged you? I've always treated you like a younger brother. You used to say: 'Sister, I'll never forget you.' But you're so irritable with me lately. I don't know what's come over you. I've had enough."

Weeping, she started to walk away. Out of the goodness of her heart she had come to see him at this late hour, and he acted as if she were an enemy.

Batjargal felt a pang. He hurried after her. Kneeling at her feet, he wept quietly.

"What's wrong?" exclaimed the girl, at once softening. "Tell me, I'll try to help. Don't cry, brother.

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*Milkmaids of the Grassland* (woodcut) ►  
by Sa Yin-chang

Sa Yin-chang is a young Mongolian woodcut artist. He graduated from the Woodcut Department, Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1964.





I'm sorry I lost my temper." She raised him to his feet and led him to a seat beneath a tree.

Gradually, the boy recovered his control. He related to Orchid everything that had happened — how Wanchin wanted him to seize a Han, a Communist.

Orchid blanched. "And you've agreed?"

"Yes, sister. Wanchin told me the Hans and Communists killed my father and mother, that's why I agreed. If I do this thing, not only will I avenge them, but I'll be able to get rid of my name of 'sinner.'"

The girl wept. "I'm a Han. My family were peasants for generations. When the Japanese attacked our village, my father and brother went to fight them, and my mother and I fled. On the road my mother died. I fell into the hands of slave dealers. They sold me to Lord Darhan as a household slave. I never heard of any Han peasants killing a Mongol. How could you believe Wanchin? You must think it over. When you do good, I'm happy for you. But if you take a Japanese gun and murder an innocent Han, even your father and mother in the next world — if there is such a place — will never forgive you. Your hands will be stained with blood. No good person will have anything to do with you."

In Orchid's voice there was limitless love and hatred. Batjargal was paralysed. He had never dreamed she was a Han. "Orchid has been better to me than if she were my real sister. She's done everything but pluck her heart out and give it to me. When I've been in pain, it's always Orchid who's come and soothed me. It was she who cut me down when I tried to hang myself. But she'll never forgive me if I become a murderer. And neither will Oyunchichig. All decent people will shun me. How will I live?"

But then another thought possessed him: "The Hans killed my parents." His mind darkened. He jerked up his head and snapped: "I hate Hans. I hate all Hans."

He didn't know that Orchid had already left. By the time he finally went back to bed, the east was turning light and silvery dew was dripping from the pines.

Not long after, a voice shouted outside the grove: "Hey. Master Wanchin wants you."

Batjargal dizzily followed the attendant to Wanchin's parlour. The steward had laid out a feast. He hailed the boy as his "young hero." Leading him to a chair, he pressed a cup of wine into his hand.

"Do a good job, my boy. I've already spoken to Lord Darhan about wiping out your sins. If you do well, and the lord nods his head, I'll announce immediately to all the slaves that you're without taint. I've ordered my men to prepare a sacrificial sheep. As soon as you bring the Communist in, we'll slaughter him and the sheep together in homage to your parents' graves. Won't that be fine?"

"Where were they buried?"

"No hurry about that. I'll tell you sooner or later. I've sent people to spruce them up. When it's time for the sacrifice, I guarantee you'll be satisfied."

Batjargal drained his wine cup. Wanchin refilled it. With a laugh he said:

"For a slave of our manor to become a hero — that certainly will be an honour to Lord Darhan."

Although the boy drank ten cups one after another at the steward's urging, he did not become drunk. But sweat poured from his body like water. Wanchin handed him a bowlful.

"Have all you like," he urged. "If you get drunk you can sleep it off here. Tonight, after a good day's rest, you can do the job with added courage."

Batjargal downed a few more. His head ached. The whole room seemed to be spinning. When he could no longer stand, the steward had servants carry him to a comfortable bed.

Night swallowed the last of the sunset clouds. A red candle was lit in the room. Batjargal was still sleeping soundly when someone shook him awake. He slowly opened his eyes. He was surprised to find himself in such luxurious surroundings. Rubbing his eyes, he started for the door. Someone clutched his arm from behind.

"You'd better get going," a voice said.

"Where to?" the boy replied in confusion.

Hands seized his neck and the voice cried angrily: "Sinner of a slave. You drink my wine, accept my whip and a pistol from Great Japan, and you still don't know what for? If you don't bring in that Communist tonight, I'll strangle you."

Only then did Batjargal recognize Wanchin. The steward's eyes were blazing. The hands around his neck tightened. He couldn't breathe, his face was livid. Wanchin's voice, although right in his ear, sounded a long way off. The steward dragged him to the door and threw him out. He crawled to his feet and staggered off, his mind in a whirl.

The lamps of the village of Aduchin were tiny flickers in the misty night. Late-returning cows mooed in the outskirts. Watchdogs barked. The surrounding sand dunes were still as tombs. Grass rustled softly in the breeze. Beneath the shadow of night, the village lay on the grassland like an exhausted ox.

"I was born and raised on this section of the grassy plain. This is my native home. Since entering the service of the lord, I've come here often to graze his sheep. My footsteps are here, and those of my parents. They always wanted me to be a good person, yet tonight I come to take a man to execution. If he's innocent, I shall be party to a murder. My neighbours will scorn me, hate me. Can this man really be one of those who killed my father and mother? Softly, walk softly. I mustn't let the neighbours hear."

Thus thinking, Batjargal quickly covered the dozen or so *li* from the manor to Aduchin. He sat down on a sand dune and stared dully at the village lights.

Gradually, one by one, the lamps began going out. He rose and descended the sand dune.

Dogs immediately set up a fierce clamour. "Here comes a murdering thief," they seemed to be warning the villagers. Fearful of being discovered, Batjargal dropped to the ground. After resting a moment, he crawled forward, creeping from one poor habitation to the next, listening outside each door. But nowhere did he hear anything of the man he was seeking.

By midnight, all the lights in the village were extinguished. There was no moon. The night was pitch black.

Batjargal was very tired. He crawled beside a low shack and stretched out, face upwards, on the grass, and lay breathing heavily. Faint stars, sprinkling the sky, were like the eyes of angry neighbours,

like the eyes of Orchid. Only one pair of stars twinkled at him smilingly. Those must be Oyunchichig's eyes.

The dogs started barking once more, as a tipsy song rang through the night:

Everyone knows I'm quite a rake,  
But that young girl I just can't take.  
I'm out having meat and wine again,  
Don't wait, my pretty, you wait in vain.

It was the village drunkard, rolling unsteadily along, a pack of dogs yapping at his heels. One of them lunged forward to bite him, and he broke into a run. Suddenly, he stumbled and fell flat on his face. Hauling himself to his feet, he bawled:

"Thief, thief."

He had tripped over Batjargal. Frightened into a cold sweat, the boy jumped up and ran, the pursuing dogs in full cry. The drunkard, even more frightened, fled in the opposite direction.

Running with all his might, Batjargal managed to shake the dogs off outside the village. He threw himself down on a sand dune to catch his breath. Just as he calmed down a bit, he had another scare — he had left his pistol on the grass beside the shack. Hastening back, he retrieved the weapon. Luckily the village was still quiet. The drunkard's shouts had not aroused anyone. Batjargal heaved a sigh of relief.

He was about to move on when he noticed a crack of light in the door of a nearby hut. He crept over and listened. He heard Aunt Liu, the gelder's wife, say in a voice that shook slightly:

"Why isn't that boy Li back from the market yet? Oyunchichig is so sick, Sanjma has been crying her eyes out."

Uncle Liu's reply sounded weak and ill: "Lucky for them they've got Li to help them. Imagine, he sold his clothing to buy medicine for the girl. If it weren't for him, Oyunchichig would have died long ago."

"Keep your voice down. The Japanese are looking for him. They say he's a Communist. If they arrest him, what will we do?"

Urging her husband to rest, Aunt Liu blew out the lamp.

Batjargal felt utterly crushed. Only after a long time was he able to rise. With heavy steps, he dragged himself to Oyunchichig's yurt.

Here he again listened. The stillness frightened him. "You can't die," he cried mentally. "You must wait, you must let me see you again." He rapped on the door with hands as stiff as wood.

"Li must be back," Sanjma said to Baldandorj. "Open the door, quickly."

She lit the lamp as her husband threw the door wide. Crying "Oyunchichig," Batjargal rushed in. The girl's parents were astounded to see that it was not Li, but their daughter's betrothed. Baldandorj grasped the boy's arms, but he was unable to speak. Sanjma wept:

"What wind blows you here, child? Ever since the fair at the lord's manor, Oyunchichig hasn't eaten or drunk anything. She talks in her sleep. For several days she's been unable to leave her bed. Thank heaven for Li's good heart."

Batjargal squatted by the lamp and gazed dully at the girl's pale face. She lay on a straw pallet, as if sleeping peacefully. But she was talking in a very low tone. Straining his ears, Batjargal heard her say: "I'll never forget you." Her expression was glad yet sorrowful. Her slim black brows moved uneasily. She was tormented by both pain and love. The boy sat down softly beside her. Hot tears in his eyes, he exclaimed:

"You're this way because of me. And I've come not because of your illness, but to ... to ..."

Oyunchichig awakened. Opening her eyes wide, she stared at Batjargal and uttered a terrified cry:

"Mama, save me, a Japanese soldier is pointing a pistol at my chest. He wants to kill me. Quickly, mama, save me, save me."

Trembling, the boy leaped to his feet. "She thinks I've become a murderer too."

The mother hastily explained: "She's been badly frightened. The Japanese have been coming to our village every day lately. They say they're searching for a Communist. What makes them think we've got one here? One of the Japanese pointed his gun at her."

It was then Batjargal discovered that the muzzle of the gun concealed in his tunic was sticking out. He quickly pushed it back out of sight before Sanjma could notice. Awkwardly, he said:

“So that’s it.”

At that moment the door swung open and Li came in, his face streaming with perspiration.

“Sorry to have you kept waiting,” he said to the girl’s parents with a smile. “I couldn’t find the medicine I wanted at the local market, so I went to the nearest town. It took a bit of time, because it was a hundred and twenty *li* away. Anyhow, I’ve got the medicine. Now you don’t have to worry. Once sister drinks this, she’ll be all right.”

Oyunchichig was still muttering deliriously. Li noticed the boy standing off to one side. He recognized the young shepherd, singer and horseman.

“Ah, you’re here too, brother,” he hailed him warmly. “Don’t worry, this potion will fix her up in no time. But the doctor says she’ll need plenty of peace and quiet.”

Batjargal stared at him in amazement. “This is the Communist. If my gun doesn’t shed his blood, an evil demon will strangle me. But I’ve seen it with my own eyes — this Communist is a good honest man. He’s helpful and kind. How could a man like this have killed my parents? If I harm him, Oyunchichig will never forgive me.”

The boy hated himself. He couldn’t do such a monstrous thing, he’d rather be choked to death. Of course, he couldn’t voice his thoughts aloud. He’d be ashamed to let Oyunchichig hear him. Li’s friendly manner only made him feel worse. He couldn’t say a word.

Sanjma saw the blisters Li had raised on his feet in the course of his rapid journey. Extremely grateful, she wanted to heat some water so that he could wash his feet. But Li wouldn’t permit it. He insisted on brewing Oyunchichig’s medicine first. He added some white sugar which he had also bought.

Once more the girl revived. When she saw Li, she exclaimed: “You’re back, brother.”

"Try this medicine, sister," he replied. "I got the prescription from a famous lama doctor."

Oyunchichig sat up and drank the brew. "I dreamt a Japanese was pointing his gun at me," she said. "He disappeared and then I saw Batjargal. He said he was no longer a slave and that he was going off somewhere. Oh, yes, I remember, he was going to the Gobi Desert to search for gold."

Li smiled and glanced at Batjargal. He was about to make some bantering remark when the girl added:

"He was carrying a dagger in a sharkskin sheath."

Li laughed. "That dream is quite a coincidence. Do you recognize this fellow?"

The girl turned her head and looked. Batjargal was standing by the wall of the yurt. He had changed. Not only were his clothes different, his expression also was different. "Can he really have stopped being a slave, like in my dream?" Excitedly, she cried:

"Batjargal, Batjargal."

The boy remained silent. He didn't dare look at her. Suddenly he bolted through the door. Oyunchichig's scream was like a wind going past his ears. But nothing could induce him to return.

He ran all the way back to the lord's manor. It was dawn by the time he entered Wanchin's door.

The steward was delighted. He was sure that the boy's early arrival meant success, and he greeted him with a smiling face. Hard as stone, Batjargal tossed the whip and gun on the floor. The whip bounced and coiled like a snake. Next, Batjargal removed the clothes the steward had given him and extended his neck.

"Go ahead and strangle me."

Wanchin's smile faded. He sat down and laughed drily.

"So the Communist won you over. Strangling would be letting you off too easy, you little bastard. Tell me exactly what happened last night."

"Strangle me. There's nothing to tell," the boy shouted.

"Do you take me for a fool? A simple murder machine?"

Wanchin dropped his head and thought. Then he laughed with hypocritical fondness and put the clothes on Batjargal again per-

sonally. He picked up the gun and whip and placed them on the table.

"Catching a Communist isn't easy. You couldn't find him last night — tonight, you can go again. It may take a little time, but once you get your hands on him, you'll be rewarded. I'm too short-tempered. Don't hold it against me." The boy remained stolidly silent. Wanchin moved closer.

"Not a sign of him all night, eh? Do you know where he lives? Maybe you can't take him by yourself. You tell me where he is and I'll send the Japanese and Black Horse Troop to nab him. You'll still get the credit. Tell me, in whose house does he usually stay?"

"I don't know."

"You don't?" Wanchin turned away, his face contorted with rage. But he quickly brought himself under control, and when he looked at the boy again, he wore a false smile.

"Never mind. But be sure to tell me as soon as you find out."

Thunderous booms like collapsing mountains, emanating from Lord Darhan's manor, could be heard in villages dozens of *li* away every night after dark. Everyone knew the sound. The big red-lacquered gates were closing. It meant that the hour was late.

Household slaves quietly entered their quarters and crept timidly on to earthen platform beds, where they crowded together and fell into exhausted slumber.

Simultaneously with the closing of the gates, all lamps went out. Only a single light in Lord Darhan's main building continued to burn, like an avid fiendish eye, casting its reflection on the bronze studs of a tightly closed large red gate. An artificial hill rose in the spacious courtyard. Atop it stood a pavilion, at its foot was a pond. Beside the pond on the slopes of the hill were bronze figures of a man, a horse and a crane. On either side of the crane were two huge bronze incense urns. All of these objects were burnished by the lamp, which also threw a long slanting spear of light that was broken into jagged pieces by the dancing ripples of the pond. The fragrance of incense from the urns had long since been dissipated.

Skirting around the hill, Batjargal paused by the water's edge. Then he turned and walked unsteadily into the pine grove.

He didn't know when he had left Wanchin's door. His only sensation was that he had escaped from hell.

In the grove he halted. The jagged branches of the pines, with their prickling needles, were like demon's claws reaching out to clutch him. The leaning trunks were like grotesque towering cliffs, about to fall and crush him. With a cry of anguish, Batjargal supported himself with one hand against a big tree. He stood for several minutes with hanging head. Then he followed a small path to a corner of the compound wall. There he crept out through a water conduit. Turning north, he hastened towards Black Dragon Bridge.

(To be continued)

*Translated by Sidney Shapiro*

*Tsai Jo-hung*

## Pillar of the South

At the southernmost tip of Hainan Island stands a huge rock carved with the inscription "Pillar of the Southern Heaven." The goddess mentioned here is Nu Kua, traditionally believed to have melted stones to mend the sky after it split asunder.

Black clouds gather over the ocean,  
Wild blasts rend the sky  
And a cold wave strikes again  
With howling hurricanes and blustering billows.  
Never mind these sudden changes in the weather,  
The warm spring and brilliant sun

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Tsai Jo-hung is a well-known contemporary art critic who is also a writer of poems and essays.

Will keep them in check;  
Soon the louring sky will clear,  
Soon dawn will break.

A rock rises  
Indestructible  
From the waves.  
I care not if day and night,  
Year after year,  
Winds rage, waves pound the shore,  
Tides ebb or flow —  
Still I remain unchanged  
Embodying the will of the goddess of old,  
A pillar to prop up the southern sky!

1961

*Translated by Yang Hsien-yi*

## Sisters-in-law

Every other day they squabble, Chou's wife and his sister.

It isn't as if Chou's wife Hsiu-chu is bad to her sister-in-law. Chou's parents are dead, he is a worker in town, and she's taken his sister under her wing like a regular mother hen. And it isn't as if the girl resents her either. Without Hsiu-chu she'd be all on her own; she likes her and treats her as if she were her own elder sister. How odd, then, that they're always squabbling!

Here's Hsiu-chu coming home now. See how capable she looks swinging briskly along, a baby in one arm, a basket on the other and a sack over one shoulder.

She's a strapping woman of about twenty-eight, fairly bursting with energy. Her people were frugal, hard-working middle peasants, and while still a child she learned to make herself useful. Now that

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Hao Jan, born in 1932, has written many short stories including the two collections *Rainbows* and *Honeymoon*. His *Moonlight on the Eastern Wall* and *Spring Rain* were published in *Chinese Literature* No. 11, 1959 and No. 8, 1964.

she has a home of her own she's running it according to her parents' maxims and won't waste so much as a single twig of kindling.

They live in a small courtyard in three rooms facing south. Both house and courtyard wall are newly built, thanks to Hsiu-chu's good management. And the wall is bordered on both sides by straight, lusty willows whose slender branches are just bursting into leaf, making a fringe of green that catches the eye. These willows were planted by Chou's sister Chih-yun, who doesn't care for sewing but likes nothing better than farming or planting trees.

Hsiu-chu steps through the gate and calls towards the house, "Sis!"

"Coming!" answers a voice clear and ringing as a bell. The portière flaps open and out skips a girl of about seventeen — Chih-yun.

She is tall and slim with an oval face, bright eyes, arched eyebrows and two plaits reaching down to her waist. Born in hard times but brought up in good times by a poor peasant family, she's been exposed since her childhood to wind and rain and now, slender as she looks, she works harder than most strong young men. She has a passion for farming and loves the village. After finishing junior middle school she chose to come back here instead of going on with her studies.

Chih-yun runs to take her nephew from Hsiu-chu's arms and kisses his little cheek. Then grabbing her sister-in-law's basket she scolds, "Look at the sweat you're in. Why must you rush so fast all the time? What's the great hurry?"

Hsiu-chu chuckles. "I hurried back to light the fire."

"Why bother when I'm here?"

"It's my day off and you're working. Why should you muck in and cook when you get back from the fields?" She picks up some kindling.

"I've got the lunch ready. When you've rested a bit we can eat."

Over lunch, Hsiu-chu tells Chih-yun her plans for building a pigsty. This spring their team leader wants all commune members to raise more pigs so as to produce more manure and ensure a good harvest. Chih-yun is all for this because the team will benefit by it, and Hsiu-chu is keen because her family will do well out of it.

"Let's share the work, sis," suggests Hsiu-chu. "You go to that West Village kiln to buy bricks this afternoon, while I order some wood from the East Village timber-yard. We'll start building as soon as your brother comes home on leave."

"Let's buy a young sow," says Chih-yun. "She'll give us manure and a litter of piglets too. We'll be able to supply some other households that can't get pigs to raise now."

"If you like," agrees Hsiu-chu after a moment's thought. "Then we'll have some spending money apart from your brother's wages."

The two sisters-in-law meet again in the yard at dusk.

Hsiu-chu is beaming. "That old accountant in the timber-yard didn't make any difficulties," she reports. "We settled it in a jiffy and the planks cost ten cents less than granny in the South Compound paid. The seventy cents we've saved on seven planks will buy pork to stuff dumplings for your brother when he comes home. How about the bricks? I hope they didn't cost too much."

"I didn't buy any," replies Chih-yun with a smile. "They've such a long waiting list."

"Why should that worry you? Let them put down our names, and presently I'll go and see Team Leader Liu there. He'll let us have ours first. Old Liu's my cousin, he'll do me a good turn. Give me the money and I'll go now."

"I put the money in our savings account."

"What ever for?"

"Save it to buy the sow."

"We don't need cash for that. The team leader's promised to let us have one on credit. We'll pay for it next autumn when we sell the litter."

"Our team's short of ready money. It'll be even shorter if we buy the few things it has for sale on credit."

"Everybody does that, not just our family."

"But we have money."

"I want that to buy the bricks."

"We can manage without."

"Manage without? How? Are you a magician?"

“There are plenty of stones in the river bed. If we fetch a few barrows home after work each evening, they’ll do instead of bricks and be even stronger.”

“Do you want to wear me out?”

A moment ago they were on the best of terms, but here they go scrapping again.

Hsiu-chu is really vexed. She’s worked everything out so sensibly and now Chih-yun upsets all her plans. “Of course stones wouldn’t cost anything,” she mutters, “but they come in all shapes and sizes and would be much more trouble to build with than bricks, besides being less good-looking. If we hired a mason we’d have to pay him by the day and give him his meals, which would cost more in the end than buying bricks. As for buying a sow, cash or credit makes no difference — we’ll naturally pay in the end. But since the team leader has agreed to give us credit, even if we don’t buy bricks we can use the money for something else. Everything else about you is fine, Chih-yun, but you just don’t think of your family. You’ve always had it easy. Try managing the house and you’ll understand other people’s difficulties. What do I worry about all day long if not how to keep the house comfortable and well run? I don’t know how we are going to get along if you go on being so pernickety.”

As she muses, muttering, her eyes redden.

Chih-yun doesn’t know whether to laugh or lose her temper. Her plan’s obviously so much better, but Hsiu-chu refuses to see it. “Most of the production teams and plenty of commune members are crying out for bricks,” she reasons. “The Second Team can’t keep their live-stock properly unless they build a stable. The Fifth Team won’t be able to water their new vegetable plot unless they have some bricks to build a well. The Liu family in the west end of the village needs bricks to build a house. All these things are more important than our pigsty. What sort of attitude is that anyway, asking a cousin at the brick kiln to do you a favour at the expense of the production teams and other people? We should be unselfish and put the collective and other people first. Besides, if we save money by doing without bricks we won’t have to buy a sow on credit and the team will have more ready cash. That’ll help pro-

duction and our family won't lose out. I like everything else about you, Hsiu-chu, but you're always trying to take little advantages. That's bad for other people and bad for us too, yet you insist it's good for everyone. You really should have more sense. . . ."

They get tired of bickering finally as the moon comes up.

Slipping out without a word, Chih-yun borrows one wheelbarrow from their right-hand neighbour and another from their left-hand neighbour, and wheels them home one on top of the other. She leaves the newer and lighter of the two in the yard, puts a crate on the older and clumsier one and quietly trundles it off.

Hsiu-chu feeds the baby and sits sulking on the *kang*. When there is a noise in the yard she pays no attention. Next time there is a noise she still doesn't stir. The third time it happens she can't sit still any longer. She steals out in the moonlight and sees something dumped in the yard. Upon investigation this proves to be a heap of stones. Feeling rather contrite, she rolls up her sleeves, grabs the barrow Chih-yun has left and hurries off towards the river.

When Chih-yun comes back the fourth time and finds the other barrow gone, she knows her sister-in-law has calmed down. Cheerfully emptying her crate, she goes off again.

When Hsiu-chu comes back with her barrow and finds the heap of stones higher than before, she knows Chih-yun has fetched another load. She puts on a spurt, loading her crate quickly to the brim to catch up with her sister-in-law.

Back for the fifth time, Chih-yun waits in the yard. As soon as Hsiu-chu comes in she runs to help her unload and then pulls the barrow away. "That's enough. Go on in now and see to your son."

Hsiu-chu wipes her perspiring face. "He's sleeping like a lamb. Let's fetch a few more loads."

"Go in and rest before you wear yourself out."

"I'm not afraid of that. I don't mind hard work. I was just thinking how pleased your brother will be when he finds all this material for the sty ready and sees how well we've managed on our own."

"All the more reason for you to go in and rest. He'll have something to say to me if he finds you worn out."



"You little monkey!" Hsiu-chu stamps her foot. With a peal of laughter she pushes the barrow off.

Day after day the two of them compete to see which can work harder in the fields and which can do the most about the house. The pile of stones in their yard grows steadily. Hsiu-chu is happy, thinking: "This was a bright idea of Chih-yun's. Saving money on bricks means we needn't get into debt over the pig. That's good for us and for the team as well. She's a smart girl, my little sister-in-law." So she goes all out fetching stones. Chih-yun is happy too, thinking: "If we save enough to buy the sow by working a bit harder, we're helping the team. Once the sty's built and she farrows that will help the country too. It's a good thing as well that sis has stopped being selfish." So she works more keenly than ever. But sad to say their good relations only last for three days. On the fourth evening they fall out again.

They are collecting stones as usual that evening. Chih-yun is the first to set off with her barrow, but to her surprise she gets back

after Hsiu-chu. "How did sis manage it?" she wonders. "The trip both ways takes time; so does finding stones in the sandy river bed and loading and unloading the crates." When she inspects the last lot of stones, she finds they are all fine big ones. Where could Hsiu-chu have found these marvellous stones, so easy to push and so easy and strong to build with? Chih-yun hastily picks up the rope for her crate, meaning to find her sister-in-law and the big stones, for then just about one evening's work will see them through.

Before she reaches the gate in comes Hsiu-chu with stones even bigger and smoother than the last lot. She is panting from her exertions but looks very pleased.

Helping her undo the rope, Chih-yun cries eagerly, "You really are clever. I've searched the whole river without finding such big ones. Where did you get them?"

"Used my brain! Spotted them out in the fields this afternoon. The west embankment has crumbled, that's where I got them."

"Goodness gracious! How could you?" Chih-yun stamps her foot in vexation. "You can't do that."

"What's wrong now?"

"That embankment was made to protect the field above it. Now you've taken the stones the soil will be swept away when the river rises."

"Nonsense. It caved in last time the freshets came, I didn't break it up. Let's get these unloaded."

But Chih-yun stops her. "Even if it caved in, you can't take the stones away. Where will the team find new ones when they want to mend it?"

Annoyed by these reproaches, Hsiu-chu retorts, "All right, we won't take any more if you feel that way. But let me get these off."

"These two lots must go back."

"Go back? Are you crazy?"

Trying hard to keep her temper, Chih-yun argues, "Can't you see, sis, that without the embankment that whole plot of land will be washed away in the next flood? The loss would cost much more than a dozen pigsties."

"You talk as if I were trying to sabotage the team's work. Is that your opinion of me?"

“What did the Party secretary say? You must have forgotten completely. It’s not enough for a commune member not to sabotage the work, we should protect the collective. When you saw the embankment had caved in, why didn’t you mend it instead of grabbing the stones? What sort of mentality is that?”

“You tell me.”

“I’m not pinning labels on you, you know yourself. You’ve made it clear these last few days what you’re like. All you care about is your husband, your baby and your home. . . .”

“Is there a law against caring for your home?”

“There may not be a law against it. But it’s certainly disgraceful just to care for your family, not for the collective. You want to make my brother happy, but he’d burst with rage or die of shame if he knew how petty-minded you are.”

This touches Hsiu-chu on the raw. It’s true she’s been thinking of nothing but the pigsty. Far from feeling she shouldn’t take those stones, she’s been rather pleased with herself. Now Chih-yun’s made her blush. She doesn’t argue back for fear the neighbours may gather round, and if word of this got out what a loss of face! But she doesn’t want to give in to Chih-yun either. The girl’s as pig-headed as her brother. When she’s sure she’s right she sticks quietly to her guns and is harder to cope with than someone bawling and shouting. Hsiu-chu doesn’t know what to do. Hiding her face in her hands she bursts out crying and hurries into the house.

Chih-yun stands in the yard at a loss for a while. Then she picks up the big stones on the ground and loads them on top of those in Hsiu-chu’s barrow. Having fastened the crate securely she trundles it out. The double load is fearfully heavy. She clenches her teeth and strains every nerve. Her hands tremble, her legs are shaky and she wobbles from side to side in danger of falling. The barrow creaks as if in protest.

Stars are twinkling, the moon is up. A spring breeze rustles the willows by the road. All else is quiet in the countryside.

The seventeen-year-old girl struggles doggedly along, pushing her heavy load down the shadowy path through the fields. At each step she leaves a deep imprint in the dust. Now she can see the West

Field by the river in the distance. She loves that field. The soil here is fertile and yields a bumper harvest of good cotton every year. The year her family joined the co-op she worked here for the first time as part of the collective, picking cotton. She was next to the chairman of the women's association, who explained to her the advantages of collectivization for the villagers. The first day's work she did last year on her return from middle school was also here. She was pruning the cotton plants with the old Party secretary, who told her what was expected of the new peasants of the age of socialism.

Reaching the edge of the field she unloads her stones and sits limply on the embankment. It's not in such a bad state as Hsiu-chu said. Only one corner has collapsed, and the stones from it have rolled into the river bed. If they're not put back before the river's in spate this plot of land may really be washed away. She looks at the tractor-ploughed furrows sleeping in the moonlight and imagines a sea of snow-white cotton here. The team leader says that once water is brought from the reservoir their river will keep flowing the whole year round and they'll build a little pumping station here. She can almost see the water irrigating their land. She jumps energetically to her feet, lugs the big stones up from the river bed and starts to repair the embankment.

The next day the two sisters-in-law go to work as usual and collect stones again in the evening. Nobody knows either what Hsiu-chu did or what Chih-yun did. No one even knows that the embankment has been repaired, because before the spring sowing no one goes there.

Before long a new-style pigsty is built in the Chou's yard. A few days later the old Party secretary proposes selling the Chou family a sow about to farrow, because the two capable sisters-in-law will take good care of the sow and help to supply the other commune members with piglets.

It will soon be the mid-autumn festival. The five piglets in the Chou family are growing splendidly. Hsiu-chu and Chih-yun are delighted.

Hsiu-chu gets up early and goes to bed late in order to feed the pigs well and make them grow faster. To her the glossy black animals

represent blue cloth, flowered prints, white cotton, a modern alarm clock on the chest of drawers, a wireless hanging on the wall. . . . She looks forward to the day when they sell the piglets and her husband comes home on leave. She'll make a new suit for him, besides dressing up the baby for him to see. He'll realize he has a hard-working wife who is a good manager, just the wife for a worker.

Chih-yun comes in smiling and suggests, "Shall we sell the piglets, sis, at the fair tomorrow?"

"Why not wait until they're bigger?"

"Up in the hills they're dying to get some piglets. The Party secretary says all the families with pigs should hurry up and help them."

"You mean lug them up to the hills?"

"No, the supply co-op will buy the lot."

"All right," says Hsiu-chu after a little thought. "I'll make your brother some new clothes with the money, and some for you and baby too."

Chih-yun likes this idea, for seventeen is the age when girls take an interest in clothes. She's been hankering after a white cotton blouse and a skirt of synthetic silk with a flowered border. "What about you, sis?" she asks.

"We'll see. If there's enough left I'll make something too."

Chih-yun thinks. "No, you make yours first. If there's not enough for us all this time, I'll wait till we sell our next litter. If there's anything to spare I'd like a new hoc."

"Don't be so unselfish. If you're happy, your brother will be happy too when he comes home. And that's good enough for me, whatever I wear."

Chih-yun doesn't want the piglets to get over-heated on the road so that they die in their new owners' hands. So she gets up before dawn the next day and sets off with them loaded into two wicker crates. She and her sister-in-law have agreed to meet outside the department store in the county town, where they can choose their purchases together.

The day is clear and fine. The sun rises a glorious red. The sturdy big-eared sorghum and long-eared millet in the fields are a brilliant green, pearly with dew.

Chih-yun swings along quickly with her load, the carrying pole swaying over her shoulder. It seems to her she isn't carrying five piglets but dozens or hundreds. For in a few years' time these piglets will have produced hundreds more up in the hills.

The sorghum rustles in a nearby field and a short man in his forties peers out from between two tall plants. He has an empty crate for grass on his back, but he stops by the roadside when he sees the girl approaching. As she draws level he peers into her crates, and his eyes light up at the sight of the five piglets. Hurrying after her he asks, "Are you selling these pigs, lass?"

"Yes." Chih-yun keeps going. "I'm taking them to the co-op."

"They're good piglets." He tags after her. "The team's or your own?"

"My family's." She keeps right on.

"Wait a bit, lass. Listen to me."

Chih-yun stops and mops her face, "Well?"

He glances right and left. "Sell them to me."

"I'm taking them to the co-op. They need piglets up in the hills, that's where these are going."

"If you sell them here it'll save us both a long trip."

Chih-yun examines him more carefully and is unfavourably struck by his shifty appearance. If he's cutting grass, why isn't there even a sickle in his empty crate? At a meeting a couple of days before this the propaganda chief warned them to be on their guard against unscrupulous merchants, who were cheating the commune members up in the hills. Her suspicions aroused, she turns to continue on her way.

He quickly intercepts her. "Go on, lass, sell them to me."

She shakes her head emphatically. "No."

He pulls a wad of notes from his pocket and, flipping them between his fingers, offers, "I'll pay you thirty cents more per catty than the co-op. How about it?"

The girl fixes him sternly with her eyes. "I'm not selling to you at any price. Get away." She hurries on.

The man blinks, looking after Chih-yun helplessly.

He is overtaken by Hsiu-chu, her baby on her back. She has quickened her pace at the sight of Chih-yun accosted by a stranger and

hurried up to see what is happening. She eyes the man narrowly and asks, "Why did you stop her?"

He smiles wryly. "I wanted to buy her piglets. She won't sell."

"We're selling them to the co-op," Hsiu-chu explains.

"What difference does it make who you sell them to? I'm offering thirty cents more per catty than the co-op."

The money in his hand makes Hsiu-chu's mouth water. "You mean it? Thirty cents more?"

"Sure. You hand over the pigs, I'll hand over the money."

"Hold on a minute." She shouts, "Wait for me, sis! I've something to tell you."

Chih-yun stops and sets down her crates, panting as she waits.

Hsiu-chu hurries up and puts the baby down, beaming. "Here's a chance in a hundred. Hurry up and sell the piglets to that man."

"We can't do that, sis."

"Thirty cents more per catty, stupid. We're in luck. You'll get your pretty skirt and I'll get a new jacket."

"However much he offers we can't sell. He looks to me like a sharper."

"What does it matter to you what he looks like? We're selling something, not getting something for nothing."

"He'd swindle other people with our piglets."

"Don't be silly, he wants to raise them."

"Would he pay so much just to raise them?"

But Hsiu-chu is obsessed with that pile of notes, the pretty clothes they would buy and the happiness they would bring the whole family. "Don't be so childish, sis," she begs. "Sell them to him and we'll go and do our shopping."

"Don't let money blind you, sis," retorts Chih-yun. "We can't do a thing like that. I refuse to sell them. Let's go."

Unable to convince her, Hsiu-chu grabs at one of the piglets and Chih-yun snatches it back.

The man who has joined them tries to goad them on, "Here, don't do that. Sisters shouldn't quarrel over such a trifle."

"Will you sell them or not?" demands Hsiu-chu heatedly.

"No, I won't. I refuse to sell them."

"There's no living with you."

"Not unless you live decently."

"All right then, let's split up. I'm through with you."

"Splitting up would suit me fine."

"How can you be such an idiot?" Hsiu-chu is frantic. "If you don't want money, what do you want?"

The man chimes in, "Yes, money will buy you whatever you like. If you don't want money, what do you want?"

Chih-yun looks from one to the other and pulls herself up. "What do I want?" She raises her voice. "I'll tell you: I want socialism!"

Livid with anger, Hsiu-chu yells, "Who doesn't want socialism?"

"You don't."

"That's a dirty lie."

"It's not. Just take this business of raising pigs, from building the sty, getting fodder and buying the sow down to selling these piglets now, have you ever stopped to think of socialism? How many times have you let the collective down? Call yourself a socialist peasant? The wife of a worker? I've got to have this out with you. You won't be through with me till you've cleared your head of all those rotten old ideas."

"Certainly we'll have it out."

"After I've sold these pigs I'm going to see my brother."

"I'm not afraid if you do."

Chih-yun calmly picks up the carrying pole and continues along the smooth road in the sunshine.

Hsiu-chu, her baby on her back, starts home. After a few steps she stops and turns round as if wanting to shout to Chih-yun. Thinking better of it, she hurries after her. . . .

*Translated by Gladys Yang*

*Illustration by Lu Yen*

## Her House Has to Wait

Mrs. Chiao had been on the go ever since her husband left first thing in the morning. After washing the bowls and chopsticks she mixed mash for her hens and heated the piglets' swill. When each small belly was as round as a drum she let the pigs loose on the hillside and boiled water to wash the mill, then spread beans between the two stones, took a firm grip on the handle-bar and walked briskly round and round to grind beans in order to make beancurd. She was soon very hot, but instead of stopping to rest she took off her blue-lined jacket, put it on the window-ledge behind her and went on grinding. Before long, big beads of sweat were rolling down from her temples. By the time the sun was overhead she had nearly finished grinding over five measures of beans. Not bad work for a woman in her fifties.

Mrs. Chiao's cottage, halfway up the North Hill, overlooked this hill village. As she turned the mill she kept glancing down below.

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Chang Chun, now 30, started writing stories in 1955, some of which are included in the collection *Building Bridge*.

Not a day had gone by since she moved here in the year of the land reform that she didn't look down to the foot of the hill. To begin with there had been nothing to see but a huddle of tumbledown, smoke-blackened roofs covered with torn matting held down with poles or bricks. A few years later the roofs had turned golden-brown when the peasants thatched them with fresh millet stalks. During the last couple of years they'd changed again from golden-brown to black, all neatly tiled and their ridges plastered with a mixture of lime and soot. There were even lively patterns on some of the ridges.

"It's come true," she told herself. "The year that the Japanese burnt down the village Political Instructor Pao said, 'Let them burn it. If they burn our thatched huts we'll build cottages with tiles; if they burn those we'll build two-storeyed houses.' That's how it is today."

As these thoughts crossed her mind, her eyes strayed to the roof of a tall building below the west slope. To her, that was the finest house in the village. Tiled roofs and a courtyard with plenty of space for firewood, hay, pigs and poultry. This was by no means the first time she had stared so intently at that house. Yet her feelings about it were mixed. Sometimes she wondered, "What has Crooked Li done to deserve a new storeyed house like that? He's nothing but a schemer. His son's no higher than ten cakes of beancurd, yet already there's a bridal chamber waiting for him." Mrs. Chiao glanced at her own thatched two-roomed cottage, unchanged since they moved into it except for two fresh layers of thatch. Of course it was a hundred times better than the cave they'd lived in when they were fighting Japan, but it seemed about a hundred years behind Crooked Li's imposing house. The commune members said, "When it comes to building houses, Old Chiao's at the bottom of the class." Well, whose fault was that? Was she a bad manager? Didn't they work hard enough? No, it wasn't that. Her husband just didn't care about his own family. But she swallowed her indignation as she remembered that recently, after all, her old man had changed. He was keen now to build a new house. He'd searched for three days for beams and finally bought two pieces of wood he needed from

Wolf Den Village. Today he'd got up at dawn and taken his cart in the teeth of a cold wind to fetch them. Just before leaving he'd promised her with a smile that, now they had the beams, they would start work on the foundation tomorrow. Well, heaven be praised! Once their new tiled house was built she'd stop nagging him. Still turning the mill she looked with a smile at the levelled site to the west of their cottage, next to which were piled bricks and wood. "We'll just build the main room this spring," she thought. "Later, when there's time, we can add wings to it. Then who'll care about Crooked Li's house? In a couple of years ours may be better."

Encouraged by this prospect, she put on such a spurt that she was almost running round the mill.

"Hi! That's the spirit!" A deep voice floated down to her from above.

Mrs. Chiao stopped and looked up. The short team leader Chi Kuang-pin was scrambling down the hillside, his jacket over his shoulders.

"What a fright you gave me!" she teased. "I thought it was some god come down to earth."

"I'm flattered." Kuang-pin strode into the yard, shaking his head and grinning. "All I ask in this life is to be a local deity." He rubbed his head with one big hand, loosing a cloud of dust from his thick, tousled hair.

"Are you collecting manure up there?" asked Mrs. Chiao, brushing him off.

"No, spreading manure."

"So you've come for a rest on the sly."

"Have a heart! After sweating for hours the fellows are parched. I've come for some water for them."

"Aha, team leader, that's what's called 'concern for the masses,' isn't it?" she retorted half-mockingly. "Don't accuse me again of running down 'model cadres.'" She let out a peal of laughter.

Kuang-pin was quite taken by surprise. He and Mrs. Chiao's husband were old work mates and had been cadres together since land reform. After coming here practically every day for years to sit on their *kang* and talk over the work, he knew Mrs. Chiao inside

out. Since she married Old Chiao at the age of sixteen she had shared hard times with him; for while he worked as a hired hand for the landlord she had been washerwoman and nurse in his master's household and put up with every kind of humiliation. Proud of Old Chiao's standing in the village after liberation, she had backed him up eagerly in all his work. It was only in the last couple of years, when all other families were building new houses but Old Chiao showed no intention of doing the same, that husband and wife had started falling out. But for the sake of appearances and her reputation as the wife of a cadre she never complained in public, quietly keeping her grievances to herself. She had always had very little to say to Kuang-pin in particular, as if he were responsible in some way for her husband's refusal to build. What accounted now for all her jokes and laughter? Some quick thinking led Kuang-pin to the conclusion that they must be going to start building.

"Are you going to make beancurd for the men who'll lay the foundation of your house, sister?" he asked.

"You've guessed right." Mrs. Chiao winked and seized this chance to demand, "How many people will our good team leader let us have?"

Kuang-pin held up the fingers of both hands. "Is twice five enough?"

"Very generous, I call it." She beamed. To show herself in a good light she added, "But don't give us so many that you hold up the team's work, or there'll be complaints. Don't forget my old man is Party secretary."

"Who's going to complain?" Kuang-pin smiled. "Everybody knows how Old Chiao wears himself out for other people. Look how many families he's helped to build houses these last few years, raising funds or finding the labour. It's only now, when everybody else is snug in a new tiled house, that he starts building for his own family. The others will be only too glad to help."

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*Spring Dressed in Snow* (oil painting) ►  
by Wu Kuan-chung

Wu Kuan-chung is an associate professor of the Central Academy of Fine Arts noted for his landscapes in oils. He has adopted some of the techniques of traditional Chinese painting.





"It's an awkward time though." Reassured by his words, Mrs. Chiao put on a great show of public spirit. "Spring's short and any day now it'll be time to sow. I was all for waiting till autumn. What difference would a few months more make after all these years? But my old man is rushing ahead."

"So that was your idea, was it?" Fully aware of Mrs. Chiao's real feelings, the team leader continued, "That's what Old Chiao has been saying the last few days. I thought he was the one against building in spring."

"A precious pair you are. Every least little bit of credit has to go to the man — we women are beneath your notice. If not for my backing, how could he have done so well helping people right and left, winning a good name and getting all those certificates of merit? Well, credit doesn't always go where it's due."

"Looks as if we'll have to praise you as well in future."

"I'm not fishing for compliments." Mrs. Chiao curled her lip. "But you ought to see things straight. If you don't believe me, ask my old man. In '58, when the big dyke was built, who carried home all those stones he contributed? Who collected the wood he gave to make tables and stools for the school in 1960? I tell you honestly, he knew he'd no right to take those things from the house — he was even afraid I might scold him. When I saw how bad he felt I said, 'All right, take them. You're a Party member, and a Party member should sacrifice himself. You've got to set a good example.' But let's not talk about that now. I don't want to blow my own trumpet." She was rattling on as if she would never stop.

"Well, I must thank you on behalf of the whole village. But have you any water in your pan? Those men are parched." Not wanting to waste any more time, Kuang-pin picked up a bucket and walked unceremoniously into the house. He came out presently with a bucket of boiling water which he quickly carried uphill.

Mrs. Chiao kept hard at work all day. Towards dusk the clean white beancurd was cooked and she had just dished up the yellow millet when Old Chiao arrived back with the donkey cart.

He was nearly sixty, of medium height, rather bent. The beginnings of baldness made his forehead look very high. He had a grizzled beard and his bronzed face was both serious and kindly. He came in with his whip after unloading the cart, and without waiting to sit down asked his wife, "Did anyone come for me?"

"Of course." Mrs. Chiao bustled in, beaming, with a big dish of steaming beancurd. "Don't worry, they wouldn't let you get lost. Have some beancurd while it's hot to warm you up."

"Who came?"

"Hai-chen's son Erh-shou came three times."

"Did you ask what he wanted?"

"Yes, but he wouldn't say." Half-jokingly she added, "He seemed set on seeing you, the rare piece of wood he needs."

"Oh!" His wife's casual remark set Old Chiao thinking. He picked up some beancurd and held it to his mouth, but then put it back on the plate. Looking up he asked, "Did Erh-shou say anything else?"

"Nothing." She shook her head.

Old Chiao's face cleared, but the next instant another doubt crossed his mind. He put down his chopsticks, slipped on his coat and started for the door.

"Where are you off to? We're just going to have supper." Mrs. Chiao tried to bar his way.

"I'll eat when I come back." He hurried out.

Mrs. Chiao quickly got the meal. The custom in these parts is to serve nothing but millet when beancurd is made, but she had broken the rule and made her old man two flapjacks as well as some scrambled eggs. Although he'd neglected his family so long, he was making up for it now. This change of heart should be encouraged. Besides, he was nearly sixty and must be tired out after fetching those beams.

It was dark by the time Mrs. Chiao had everything ready. She lit the oil lamp and laid the table for her husband's supper. After about the time it takes to smoke two pipes, she heard his steps in the yard. But instead of coming in he went round the corner and made a clatter shifting the timber there. She smiled to herself. "How impatient the old rascal is to get started, sorting out the timber at this

time of night. Doesn't he want to rest? Is he made of iron?" She put her head out of the door and called, "What's the hurry? You've done enough for one day. Come and have supper now and then turn in early."

Old Chiao didn't answer. She heard him walk away.

"What's the old rascal up to now?" she wondered. "Is he trying to catch the team leader before he goes to bed to fix up about tomorrow? I forgot to tell him Kuang-pin promised to send ten men. He needn't have gone if he hadn't been in such a hurry."

She couldn't help laughing out loud.

It was late now and the hillside was very quiet.

At last the gate creaked, steps sounded, and Old Chiao came in wiping his steaming head.

"What were you doing?" his wife asked with a smile.

Instead of answering he reached out for a towel to mop his face before taking off his shoes to get on the *kang*. He picked up a bowl and chopsticks and started to eat.

"Did you go to ask the team leader for some men?"

"Hmm." His answer was non-committal.

"Kuang-pin had already agreed. I've mixed the dough, tomorrow we'll have ten extra mouths to feed."

"What d'you mean?" His mouth full, Old Chiao pretended to be mystified.

"Mean?" Her eyes widened. "Didn't you say this morning you'd get men to dig the foundations of our house tomorrow?"

"We're building a silkworm shed for the team." Old Chiao was forced at last to tell her the truth. "These two pieces of timber I bought are just what they needed."

"Say that again!" The smile which had been on Mrs. Chiao's face all day suddenly gave place to a scowl. "Have you been fooling me all along, you old devil?"

"We're building a shed for silkworms." Old Chiao disregarded her outburst and looked up gravely, as if making a report. "Our team has a long-term plan for breeding silkworms. Commune Secretary Cheng's helped us work it out. That mulberry orchard on the hill in front can feed at least twelve trays of silkworms. Twelve

trays mean over a thousand catties of cocoons — think how much that will bring in! And they're giving us over a thousand catties of chemical fertilizer, so that the output of our fields will go up. Our team will be able to save enough to set up a pumping station next year and make sure that the pear orchard in the North Flats doesn't get flooded again or suffer from drought." Ignoring the clatter she was making with the spoons and bowls, he raised his voice and went on, "And I haven't yet told you what it'll mean for the state. Secretary Cheng says the silk can be exported. Think of that! These common mulberry leaves of ours will buy us some big machines."

"Never mind that now. Tell me: when are you going to build our house?"

Old Chiao chuckled and pointed his chopsticks at his wife. "What a short-sighted old woman you are, just out for comfort. Your head's so full of tiled roofs and lacquered chests of drawers that when the rest of our team go all out to pile up a hill of gold you can't even see it."

Tears of rage were streaming from Mrs. Chiao's eyes.

"It's good to pile up a hill of gold for the rest, but can't you find some other way to do it?" she sobbed. "Why must you take our beams? After all I've put up with for the sake of a new house."

"What have you put up with?" Her husband was still smiling. "Don't keep it to yourself or you'll fall ill."

"I won't keep it to myself," she snapped back. "In '58 when you went to those meetings in Chuanfang County to exchange experience and left me to fend for myself, I sweated up and downhill with stones on my back till I'd got enough for a house. But when the team built a dyke with you in charge of the work, because they were short of stones you sent them here to 'steal' the ones your old woman had sweated to get. . . . But what's the use of reminding you of that?"

"Go on," Old Chiao urged gently. "Tell me all that's on your mind. Is there anything else?"

"Yes, there is. In 1960 I scoured East Gully and West Valley to scrape together enough timber. You were setting up some technical night school, making tables and benches. When you couldn't get the wood you wanted, you came sheepishly home to

'borrow' a plank one day and to filch another the next, not caring what it had cost me to get that wood."

Old Chiao threw back his head and chuckled.

"So that's what you had to 'put up with'? I'd say you'd done two good deeds for the team." He explained how much land the dyke protected, how much extra grain it meant; how many skilled foresters had been trained in the night school. Finally he pointed his chopsticks at her again. "But you, you call those good deeds things you had to put up with."

"Maybe they were good deeds," Mrs. Chiao retorted. "But why should I be the only one to sweat blood? When the dyke was built Crooked Li had heaps of stones in his yard, but did you touch them? Now he's built himself a grand nine-roomed tiled house."

"Why must you compare yourself with him? This is the root of your trouble," he put in firmly. "If you go on like this, you'll end up in a mess."

"Don't try to scare me. What's wrong with building a house?"

"Of course, building a house isn't wrong in itself. But I'm afraid there's something wrong with your thinking." He explained mildly, "Why should we build so many new houses? People like Crooked Li who only see the small advantages under their noses aren't people we should copy. Why compare yourself with him? It's as clear as day you've already caught this bug from him, yet you won't admit it."

"What bug have I caught? I'm not like Crooked Li. Besides, that year the Japanese burnt our village Political Instructor Pao promised us, 'If they burn our thatched cottages we'll build tiled houses...'"

"Quite right, he did." Old Chiao chuckled again. "Political Instructor Pao was speaking for the Party. Now the Party has put the responsibility on us Party members in the village, and we've got to shoulder it properly. Aren't I always telling you, 'Once everybody's living in paradise they won't leave us out'? Yet you keep comparing yourself with Crooked Li. Why not compare yourself with families who are hard up? Can't you remember what it was like living in a cave?"

"You're carrying this too far," protested Mrs. Chiao feebly.

"Because you've got to look far ahead. If you're short-sighted you'll go on having to 'put up with' things all your life."

She was glaring at him as the door in the other room banged, and she swallowed back the retort that was on her lips. Hastily wiping the tears from her face, she tried to look as if nothing at all had happened.

Their visitor was the team leader. He burst in grinning and stared knowingly at Mrs. Chiao. "I've come to thank you, sister," he said with a laugh.

"To thank me? What for?"

"I hear you've put off building your house again for the sake of the silkworm shed. Ha, I know this was your idea. This time we must give credit where it's due."

Mrs. Chiao hastily turned her face away and giggled.

"What a precious pair!" She snorted. "You'd get away with anything."

*Translated by Gladys Yang*

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*Going to the Races* (New Year picture) ►  
by Liu Sheng-chan

Liu Sheng-chan, born in 1938, started painting in 1958. He is now working in the cultural centre of Changpei County, Hopei Province.





*Bren Bik*

## On the Grasslands

The horses that our Sambu herds  
Are plump and in good fettle;  
The colts that Sambu's broken in  
Soon show their speed and mettle.

For grazed on pastures lush and green  
His colts grow sleek and strong,  
And watered at a crystal stream  
Like waves they race along.

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Bren Bik is a Mongolian poet born in 1928. His recent works included the collection of poems *Sparks of Life*.

“Give me a horse of his to ride!”  
The envious young men cry.  
“Give me a chance to see his face!”  
The girls in secret sigh.

The wool of Udbal’s sturdy sheep  
Is fine as strands of silk;  
The fleeces of her little lambs  
Are soft and white as milk.

A yurt top woven of such wool  
Withstands the fiercest storm,  
Such sheepskins on the coldest night  
Keep travellers snug and warm.

Girls long for wool like this to weave  
A warm and pretty dress,  
And day and night the young men long  
To meet the shepherdess.

Now herdsmen crowd our commune yard,  
All hurry to the spot  
To greet two model workers back  
From distant Huhehot.

For young and old, folk all admire  
The handsome, nimble pair;  
Sambu springs down from his black horse,  
Udbal from her roan mare.

“You’ve set a fine example, lad!”  
Old men round Sambu crowd,  
While all their wives praise Udbal:  
“You’ve made us women proud.”

Each girl resolves she too will be  
A model shepherdess,  
And gazes at the splendid pair  
Radiant with happiness.

A second Sambu he will be,  
So vows each laughing boy,  
And pushing him to Udbal’s side  
Their hearts leap up with joy.

*Translated by Gladys Yang*

*Ulanbagan*

## How I Came to Write “Uprising of the ‘Sinners’”

I was born in a small village on the southernmost edge of the Kolchin Grassland, Inner Mongolia. Our village had less than ten families, both Hans and Mongolians. They eked out a living through farming and grazing. Most of them were serfs of the local feudal lord. Always hungry, overworked, these families had been cruelly exploited and oppressed for centuries.

When I was born my mother, who was suffering from tuberculosis, had no milk. Our neighbours were a family named Li, poor peasants from Hopei who had settled on the grassland during a famine. When I wailed for hunger Aunt Li fed me at her breast. So although I was not her child, she nursed me till I was old enough to talk. My mother often told me later with tears in her eyes, “You must always remember Aunt Li’s kindness, child, you have part of her blood in you.”

When I was nine years old, poverty and flood forced our family to leave our kind neighbours and settle in Bayantal on the north bank of Sharmuren River in the central part of the Kolchin Grassland. This region was under the rule of Lord Darhan, chief of the seven lords dominating Kolchin. Anyone settling there had to pay him poll-tax; those from other parts of the country had to pay double.



I thought often of Aunt Li. We heard that after the War of Resistance Against Japan broke out, Uncle Li was drafted by the Japanese to do hard labour. After only two months of this, he died of tuberculosis. Aunt Li with her small daughter went to look for her son south of the Great Wall, begging for food on the way. She fell seriously ill and had no choice but to sell her daughter to Lord Darhan as a household slave. This left an indelible impression on my young mind. I hated the feudal system of rule by lords. What happened to Aunt Li and her family taught me whom to hate and whom to love.

One year, the lord in our village held a fair in celebration of sacrifices to his ancestors. Nearly 30,000 serfs were gathered and forced to contribute money and cattle. At the festivities I saw a group of

women household slaves of both Mongolian and Han nationalities serving trays of fruits and cakes to nobles and their wives who insulted and ill-treated them at will. Bruises on their faces and tears in their eyes, the slaves walked through the crowds, not daring look at anyone squarely. Two days later it was said that several of these women slaves, driven to desperation by their masters, had drowned themselves in a well. After that, whenever I passed near the lord's manor I seemed to hear plaintive sobs. I could not help thinking of Aunt Li's young daughter and silently shedding tears.

Tragedies like Aunt Li's were frequent on the Kolchin Grassland. The hundreds of thousands of Han people who settled there became serfs, like the native Mongolians, and lived under the dark rule of the Japanese invaders and the feudal lords. In their adversity the Mongolians and Hans formed a flesh-and-blood relationship. United like brothers, they waged heroic struggles against their oppressors. I was greatly impressed by many stirring events and heroic individuals. These were the inspiration for the characters of Orchid, Uncle Liu, Aunt Liu and Young Blacky in *Uprising of the "Sinners."*

The Japanese imperialists ruled over the Kolchin Grassland for fourteen long years. Killing and burning everywhere, they plundered the Han and Mongolian peoples. Lord Darhan was the invaders' most despotic henchman. At that time nine out of ten people had insufficient clothing. Hunger was rife. When a man died, his body would be wrapped in a piece of ragged sheepskin for burial. But if the Japanese invaders or local lords learned of this, they would have the man's family imprisoned for not paying a sheepskin tax.

My boyhood was spent in the years of the War of Resistance Against Japan. I saw with my own eyes slaves living under the guns and bayonets of Japanese soldiers and the local lord's black whip. They could be bartered and slaughtered freely by the Japanese invaders and local lords, faring worse than the lord's dogs or cattle. A single dog or cow was worth several slaves for the lords.

In their misery the Mongolians turned to religion. Some started for Mount Wutai to seek happiness, kowtowing after every step and turning over a brick they carried. Most of them died of hunger on

the way. Others committed suicide before the Buddhist shrine, hoping that this would bring them a better lot in a future existence.

The chief characters in the novel, Batjargal, Oyunchichig and her parents, are drawn from real people I knew at that time. Generation after generation lived as serfs. Some of them were resigned to their fate, some feared to fight, some were angry but dared not express their wrath. Anyone labelled "sinner" by the local lord was never able to expiate his "sins." Cruel oppression kept the people backward, ignorant, superstitious and poor. Nevertheless, once they awakened politically they became brave and, under the leadership of the great Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao Tse-tung, they fought heroically.

During the War of Resistance Against Japan, the Chinese Communist Party sent some of its best members to call upon the Mongolian and Han peoples on the Kolchin Grassland to break their shackles. An underground Party organization was set up and led them in a revolution against the Japanese invaders and local lords. Ever since childhood I heard many tales about the Party members dispatched to the grassland. All fine Communists, they were brave, alert and noble. Some were captured by Japanese secret agents, but they never surrendered despite cruel torture. They died heroic deaths and will live for ever in the hearts of the Mongolian and Han peoples. The character Li Ta-nien was based on several real men I knew. Certain episodes are also based on actual events which I saw or heard about, such as the burning of the lord's manor, the jail break, and the battle against the flood.

The way I came to write the novel was this: After the War of Resistance Against Japan ended in 1945, I joined the Eighth Route Army at the age of seventeen. People's rule was established throughout Kolchin Grassland. But the next spring Kuomintang reactionaries, supported by the U.S. imperialists and in league with the local lords, launched a savage attack, massacring the Mongolian and Han peoples. In the army, educated by the Party and aided by veteran Han cadres, I raised my political consciousness. Class hatred burned in my heart. Night after night I could not sleep, thinking of the cruel Japanese invaders, Mongolian lords and Kuomintang reaction-

aries. To give an outlet to my strong hatred for the enemies, I told my fellow fighters stories of the many heroic deeds of the Mongolian and Han peoples on Kolchin Grassland in their Party-led revolutionary struggles.

In 1947 I first decided to write these stories down, to let more people know, through the medium of literature, the moving events I had heard about and seen. But at that time I could not even write a decent letter. How could I write a book? Yet I felt that I had to. So writing both in Mongolian and Chinese, I turned out 20,000 words. Unfortunately these were incomprehensible to anybody but myself. A year later not even I could understand them.

Later I was transferred to the rear. In my spare time I read many novels about revolutionary struggles. Meanwhile, the continuous education which the Party gave me, improved me both politically and culturally. My desire to write was strengthened. In 1949 the victory of the revolution throughout the country and the establishment of the People's Republic of China brought complete emancipation to the people of Inner Mongolia. Thanks to the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao, the Mongolian people began a new life. All the more eager to write, I started this novel in October 1949.

It was an arduous but happy process. I did all my writing in my spare time, wearing out several dictionaries. I treasured every moment I could find to work on my novel. Many difficult problems cropped up but I persevered because I was anxious to tell the readers how the Mongolian people under the leadership of our dear Party and Chairman Mao Tse-tung won their revolutionary battle. This was my motive for writing the book. By 1956, seven years later, I had produced several pounds of manuscripts, and from these I managed to turn out a first draft of more than 1,200,000 words (in four parts).

However, the draft had many shortcomings. The characters were not sufficiently vivid, the plot was very confused. I sent the manuscript to the China Youth Publishing House where the editors, after reading it patiently and carefully, gave me many frank comments and helpful suggestions. After I made several revisions, the first part of *Uprising of the "Sinners"* finally appeared in its present form.

## Reportage in Contemporary Chinese Writing

In 1938, when Japanese cavalry attacked Loyang and people were fleeing from the blazing city, a girl was born into a poor family there. Three years after liberation, when she was fourteen, this girl entered the No. 1 Textile Mill in Shensi Province as an apprentice. Brought up by her parents to work hard, with the help of the older hands she soon became an outstanding worker and in 1953 joined the Communist Party. In addition to doing a splendid job herself she never ceased to help her fellow workers, the advanced methods she evolved being passed on to all parts of China. In 1956 she was sent as a delegate to the Eighth Congress of the Party and took part in discussions to formulate the line and directives for the building of a great socialist society.

Such is the story of Chao Meng-tao in Wei Kang-yen's reportage *How the Red Peach Came to Blossom*, a graphic account of what an unknown girl who suffered hardships and was downtrodden in the old society can do in the new. It shows us an ordinary Chinese girl

stepping over the threshold into a new world and advancing at the forefront of the new age.

“Reportage is the light cavalry on our literary front,” say our Chinese writers today. For unlike fiction or drama, reportage describes real persons and events and can present them rapidly to readers. In the course of our socialist construction, heroic characters and heroic deeds are appearing constantly and need to find swift reflection in literature. Our readers are eager to hear about the men and women who bring about unprecedented changes in our great land. Only reportage can satisfy their demand, and this accounts for its rapid development in recent years. A noteworthy phenomenon in contemporary Chinese writing is the increased output of reportage in our newspapers and periodicals.

But if we say that the gigantic development of reportage merely satisfies the need of readers who want to be in touch with the progress of our new life, this is not quite the case. Reportage has had a fairly long history in China. But whereas progressive reportage in the past confined itself to exposing the iniquities, exploitation and oppression in the old society, today’s reportage aims at inspiring our people with examples of the new ideology and new morality and at wiping out ideas left over from feudalism and capitalism. In this way it plays a very important role. The reportage of New China is characterized by a new ideological content and new forms of expression. It has gained in artistic power during the last two years especially, when there appeared many articles depicting the noble qualities of real people with the communist outlook. The story of Chao Meng-tao is one case in point. The story of another girl, Chang Hsiu-ming, is told in *Girls That Carried the Big Banner* by Huang Tsung-ying.

When Huang Tsung-ying went to Little Yu Village in Hopei Province one early summer morning, she found it fresh and sparkling after rain as the peasants set off happily to the fields. It was hard to believe that this was the same village which had been flooded out year after year before liberation and so exploited by the landlords and rich peasants that finally all the villagers left home. After liberation a dyke was built to stop the floods and more than a dozen families

returned to the village. In 1959 the brigade leader proposed opening up a big stretch of waste land south of the village as the only way to shake off their poverty. When seventeen-year-old Hsiu-ming heard this, she promptly responded, "We'll do it." The brigade leader asked, "Do you have the guts?" She answered confidently, "Sure!" She gathered four other girls into a team, and what they lacked in strength they made up for in grit, braving the sandstorms and helping each other until in one year they opened up more than fifty *mou* of waste land. Then this village, which used to rely on the state for grain, not only became self-sufficient but was able for the first time to sell grain to the state. The story of this village's transformation spread all over China and this team was given the proud name of Girls of Iron.

Hsiu-ming and Chao Meng-tao work in different fields but have both been brought up in the new society and have common characteristics. They are fired by high ideals and have immense determination, despising difficulties and fighting against backward ideas. In their whole-hearted devotion to the collective, they typify the new people of our age.

We can find countless similar people everywhere in New China, and this is what supplies our reportage with inexhaustible material. Another example occurs in *Kuo Hsing-fu and His Men* by Lien Yun-shan.

Kuo Hsing-fu is a company commander in the People's Liberation Army who knows how to make his men good soldiers. This reportage describes how a young new recruit Chien Keng-miao grew up under his care. One day the squad was practising hand-grenade throwing and the other men threw their grenades more than forty metres but Chien only managed twelve. He was feeling depressed when Kuo said, "Not bad. Not bad at all. When I joined up I couldn't get as far as ten metres." Later he sought the youngster out to talk about their hard life in the past and encourage him to read the works of Chairman Mao, have a revolutionary ideal and stick to it. During one long march, when Chien fell ill, Kuo made noodles for him and tried to cheer him up. The boy refused the noodles, but holding the bowl Kuo said, "If you won't eat, neither will I. I'll just stay here."

This touched Chien to the heart. Someone else had said the same thing to him when he was a child, in the same tone of voice. Yes, now he remembered. When he was very small and out begging with his mother, he fell ill in a tumbledown temple. His mother begged a bowl of gruel for him, but he didn't want it. Then she said, "Child, if you won't eat I'll hold it here till you do." Now instead of his mother it was the company commander standing before him, but the tone of voice was the same. He held out his hand for the noodles, and tears trickled down his cheeks.

Kuo combined an almost motherly concern for his men with rigorous training, to ensure that each of them became a good fighter. Thanks to him, Chien grew in stature and became a squad leader. He trained his men as Kuo had trained him, until his squad was as good as Kuo's company.

Kuo Hsing-fu was a poor peasant's son who made an intensive study of the works of Mao Tse-tung and became a hero of the People's Liberation Army, an example for other soldiers, whom he helped to develop their good points and overcome their shortcomings. His company of heroes is an epitome of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. From their life we can see the new revolutionary spirit and new relations of men in the army, their truly noble and comradely class solidarity.

Our reportage covers the stirring changes in various fields in China, whether in factories or mining areas, on the grasslands, in villages, the army, schools, shops, offices, or public service trades. People in all walks of life find splendid characters in their own line and are moved by their outlook and conduct. Reportage is not only or not mainly written by professional writers but by men working in many different fields to build a new life, who mirror their own life in literature. They enable us to feel the pulse of the age and come in touch with real flesh-and-blood characters. This is a notable feature of our reportage.

These writings, valuable in themselves, also supply the raw material and general outline for much larger works in the future. In a sense they are part of a widespread literary movement to discover new writers. An impressive quantity of good reportage has come from the hands of non-professional writers. Huang Tsung-ying's *Unusual*

*Girl* is about a middle-school student from the city who determines to help build up the countryside and who settles down in a village. *Ouyang Hai* by Pai Lan describes a soldier who gave his own life to prevent a train smash by pushing a stampeding horse off the track. *Wu Hsing-chun, the Pine on the High Mountains* by Cheng Hsun introduces a demobbed Han soldier, sent to work in a minority area in mountainous Kweichow, who learned the local people's language and customs and worked hard until he became a good friend of the Miao and Tung nationalities. Another piece tells us how the only primary-school graduate in Nanliu Village, Chou Ming-shan, was helped to develop by a veteran Party member and led the peasants to win prosperity. The characters in these writings are in the mainstream of life, the major force propelling our society forward.

I was particularly stirred by *Heroes of Tachai* by Sun Chien. Tachai was a poor village up in the Shansi mountains. Water conservancy works built after liberation transformed the village but in 1963 torrential rain made four houses out of five collapse and swamped more than half of the fields. When Party Secretary Chen Yung-kuei came back from a conference in the county town and saw the results of all their hard work destroyed, he "suddenly felt worn out." But he rallied himself at the thought of the villagers, and gulped down his own tears to encourage them. First he analysed the situation, pointing out that although they had suffered terrible losses they still had their labour power, their cattle and their grain. He urged them to look ahead and aroused their enthusiasm. Then the whole village, having provided shelter for the homeless, set to work building new houses and saving their crops. They toiled like heroes, determined not to ask the state for a single cent or grain of relief or any material. The heavy downpour was followed by two hurricanes, one hailstorm, a severe frost, too much rain in spring and a drought in summer — seven calamities in one year — yet thanks to their collective strength they still reaped a good harvest.

The Tachai spirit, the stiff backbone of the Tachai peasants, epitomizes the socialist spirit of the Chinese people who are going all out to better their conditions by their own efforts. Now everywhere in China people are learning from this spirit, which is not

only seen in Tachai. Sun Chien's description of Chen Yung-kuei gives a good picture of the new type of Chinese peasant. He also gives a good picture of the heroes of Tachai. When we read his account of these dauntless villagers, the writer's love for them shines through his concise, unadorned narrative. He reveals the spirit of our people in their fiery struggle to transform reality, the revolutionary ideals and heroism which are the key of our age and consequently also of our reportage.

Chen Yung-kuei and the other men and women already mentioned are splendid examples for the rest of us, and many readers try to measure up to them. This is the positive significance of this type of writing, which shows us a new morality. Another example is Hsiao Chih's *A Rescue Team Organized by Travellers*. Kaoyang on the central Hopei plain was suddenly threatened by flood. A major who happened to be staying in an inn there urged his fellow travellers, "Let's not sit watching while lives and property are endangered. We should set to work at once with the local people to defend the city." At once an air-force officer stepped forward and said, "I'm a Party member. You can send me where men are needed." Other men and women, including factory workers, commune members, a gunner, government cadres, purchasing agents for trading organizations and students on their way home for the holidays immediately volunteered. The Party members and Youth League members among them set up temporary branches and applied to the county Party committee to be allowed to work at the most critical places on the dyke.

Our reportage shows a great variety of styles. Some pieces give general outlines, other close-up studies; some pay careful attention to detail and construction, others are more like sketches in bold relief. New pieces are being written every day to mirror the rapid progress of our socialist construction and the growth to full stature of the men and women who are bringing about such momentous changes. Closely linked with our daily life, such reportage is very popular, introducing new characters who are the best sons and daughters of our people. Readers contrast their own actions with those of these pioneers and workmates in our common task, and this in-

spires them to make continuous progress, to dedicate their strength to this great age. In this way reportage has truly become a sharp weapon to transform reality and build a new world, and this is why we call it “the light cavalry on our literary front.”

*Yen Chen*

## Khotan

Deep and green flows the Karakash,  
Foaming as if with snow the Yurunkash;\*  
And where these two jade rivers meet  
Stands the quiet town of Khotan.

Small as she is, this frontier town  
Has stood for two thousand years,  
And sparks of fire have illumined  
Her long history.

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Yen Chen is a well-known poet born in Changchow, Kiangsu Province in 1914. His collections of poems include *Welcome Spring*, *Myriad Stars* and *Spring All over the World*.

\*These names mean Black Jade River and White Jade River.

The beauty of her world-famed songs and dances  
Has cast a spell over countless generations;  
Her caravans tinkling with bells  
Carried friendship all the way to far-off Changan.

Holy monks broke their pilgrimage here  
In their quest for Buddhist sutras from distant India;  
Merchants following the Silk Route  
Spread our culture to the Mediterranean shores.

Then for centuries Khotan slept,  
Her walls half buried in sand-drifts;  
Time's footsteps hurried swiftly by  
But she stagnated, sunk in misery.

Until one day the army of liberation  
Crossed the mighty Gobi Desert to Khotan,  
And red flags like bright clouds  
Brought back her youth again.

Overlooking the Tarim Basin,  
Backed by the snowy heights of the Kunlun Mountains,  
Khotan has become a frontier post  
To tame the boundless wastes of Taklamakan.

Canals like shining swords  
Have cut open the arid Gobi;  
Groves of mulberries, dates and elms  
Are step by step winning back the desert sands.

Silk banners flutter by the road,  
Jade sparkles on the river bed,  
And the young wheat waving in the breeze  
Is lovelier than the thickest, finest carpet.

Life in this ancient town has the vigour of youth,  
The red fire of pomegranates, the sweetness of grapes;  
This new page in the history of Khotan  
Is ablaze with a dazzling splendour.

*Translated by Gladys Yang*

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*Winter Is Over in the North* ►  
by Chin Yi-yun

Chin Yi-yun, born in 1938, graduated from the Secondary School of Arts affiliated to the Central Academy of Fine Arts. He is now working for the pictorial *Masses* in Shansi Province.





*Ah Wen*

## New Attraction in Peking Theatres

Peking theatres offer a wide range of shows, and yet a new attraction was recently presented by rank-and-file soldiers of the People's Liberation Army. More than a hundred soldiers from Shenyang in Liaoning Province, Chengtu in Szechuan Province, Lanchow in Kansu Province and the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region performed sixty-odd items including poetry recitations, one-act plays, short song-and-dance operas, instrumental music and ballads. Not originally intended for public performance but made to entertain the troops, these short, spirited items truthfully reflect the life and ideals of ordinary soldiers and their youthful revolutionary enthusiasm so typical of this age. This new performance had distinctive features both in form and in content.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army is not only an army with high political consciousness but also one with high cultural attainments in which collective cultural activities have always had an important place. The vigour and dash of our army life is an expression of revolutionary optimism, while the democratic solidarity

between officers and men, which heightens the militant spirit of both, also has a long tradition in our people's army. Thirty years ago in the Chinese Workers and Peasants' Red Army, the forerunner of the People's Liberation Army, the officers and men often gave performances or sang together, songs enlivened their marches, and their amateur propaganda units used to perform on the march to boost morale. During times of great hardship and difficulties, like the 25,000-*li* Long March in 1934 when the Red Army crossed snowy mountains and swamps to go north and resist Japanese aggression, the soldiers halting for the night often put on shows by torchlight.

In recent years the men of the People's Liberation Army have organized tens of thousands of amateur troupes to perform short original items for their comrades guarding the coast, at frontier posts, on the march or in training camps. Most such groups consist of from three to eight men who being soldiers themselves, sharing the same life with others in the army, know the tastes and outlook of ordinary soldiers and are therefore able to put on popular items which catch the spirit of their actual life. This art comes entirely from life in the army, reflects it truthfully and serves to inspire the troops with greater enthusiasm for the revolution.

As little is needed in the way of scenery or stage properties, these brief items can swiftly reflect new happenings and new personalities and can easily be taken on tour. One of these groups from Sinkiang is composed of one Tajik and four Uighur soldiers, all with a good army record, two of them being crack shots. Each can play a musical



*The People's Soldiers Can Do Anything*

instrument, knows all the most popular Sinkiang songs and dances and can sing and dance himself. One of them, Abdul Jischit, has composed some excellent songs and dances, and the five of them together can put on a good show. One of their song-and-dance dramas, *The People's Soldiers Can Do Anything*, presents five capable fighters who are at the same time cobblers, cooks, stock-farmers, carpenters and carters. The quick rhythm of the singing, the humorous acting and the lively dancing convey the confidence of the people's army in a way that grips and stirs the audience.

Some soldiers from Chengtu gave equally spirited performances in the form of colourful Szechuan folk ballads. This group has travelled thousands of *li* on foot to perform for various units. Once they walked more than a hundred *li* in two days and gave seventeen performances. To be ready to perform in any circumstances, their items are generally short and simple, forcing them to distil from life its most significant and richest content.

Apart from representing their own life and struggle, these soldier performers praise new army heroes as well as the close comradeship among the men and their fearless patriotism. They also put on skits to trounce backward ideas.

Soldiers from a frontier post on the Kunlun Mountains, with rifles in their hands, recited:

Snow peaks soar like a forest of glittering silver light,  
And waterfalls thunder down the bottomless chasms.

They went on to describe the spirit of the men defending this grand border.

We water our horses by a nameless lake  
And use the lake as a mirror to spruce up;  
When we sing, the mountains respond  
And the high peaks give praise to the people's army....

This new type of recitation, voicing the feelings of soldiers, was powerfully moving.



*Two Men Deliver Gifts*

A team from Lanchow presented a one-act comic opera *Fighting for the Basket* to show the comradeship in our army units. A squad leader refuses to let his vice squad leader go out to work with the others because he is unwell. But since the squad leader has just returned from a company meeting, the other insists that he must have a rest. Both try to grab the basket for carrying manure and a comic situation arises. Finally the squad leader who has tried to lock up the vice squad leader is locked up himself, and this turning of the tables brings the house down.

The comic dialogue *Young Artist* performed by a team from Shenyang is based on real life. It takes off a new recruit who has just graduated from an art school and joined the army not to defend the motherland like his fellow soldiers but to collect experience in order to become a famous artist. He has no sense of responsibility for his country, his whole mind being taken up by his own career. However, after being steeled in the furnace of the revolutionary army life and patiently helped by his comrades-in-arms, he overcomes those ideas which run counter to the interest of the collective and becomes a good soldier.

*Fighting for the Basket* and *Young Artist* have few characters and a simple plot which unfolds quickly and dramatically. Items like these, which vividly reflect and single out for praise real happenings and real individuals in the army, educate the soldiers entertained by them with their progressive ideas.

Another distinctive feature of these performances is their affinity to folk art and the successful way in which the amateur artists have adopted folk or national-minority forms from different parts of the country. Not letting themselves be restricted by the traditional forms, they create original items with a topical content to suit the taste of soldiers. The sixty-odd items performed in Peking were based on more than forty different folk or minority art forms, each with its distinctive features. They combined a strong local or national-minority flavour with freshness and verve. For example, *Wan Yi-chou Gives His Life to Save the Bridge*, performed by a team from Chengtu, is based on the Szechuan *ching yin* ballad originally sung by one woman to relate some sentimental tale, usually in a very dull manner. It was given new colour and dignity when sung by eight soldiers with dance movements and an accompaniment of Szechuanese music on gongs and drums. Another short drama *Two Men Deliver Gifts* performed by Sinkiang soldiers drew on the Uighur people's fine tradition of singing and dancing. Two old men from two communes are taking embroidered Uighur caps and cheese as presents to the local garrison troops to express something of their deep friendship for the liberation army. Meeting on the road they wonder if the garrison troops will waive army discipline for once and accept their gifts. They take it in turn to play the part of an officer and one of the old men putting forward strong reasons why the garrison should accept the present. The singing and dancing with which the action unfolds are in the best Uighur tradition.

These army concert groups not only perform for soldiers but recruit new talents from the units they entertain and help them to put on new items. This means that when some important new task comes up or some unit distinguishes itself, the soldiers themselves can present it on the stage in art form. Hence these amateur army performances

are uncommonly realistic, combining rich content, a militant spirit and strong feeling of this age with fresh and varied art forms in their many-sided portrayal of life in the people's army.

*(Sketches by Tung Chen-sheng)*



## Cross-stitch Embroidery of the Miao People

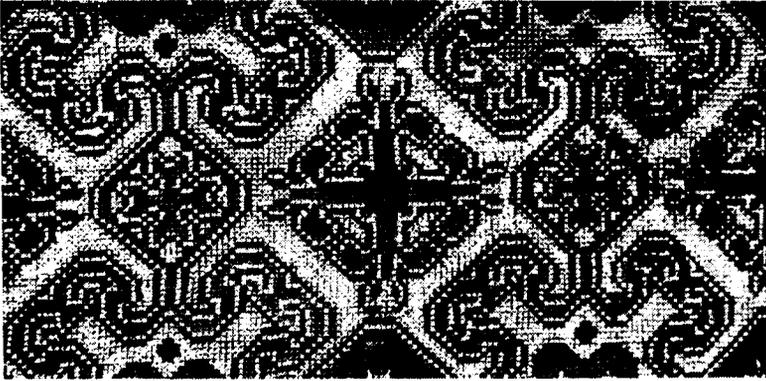
The cross-stitch embroidery of the Miao people has a distinctive place in Chinese folk art and is very popular with other nationalities. Chinese handicraft artists have a high opinion of it.

Rich in imaginative power the Miaos are good dancers and singers as well as talented craftsmen. They number nearly 2,700,000 and live mostly in the beautiful mountainous areas of eastern Kweichow and western Honan. Industrious and fearless, they reclaimed the hard hilly land and made terraced fields. Before the liberation they were cruelly exploited and oppressed, but this failed to crush their creative powers, as can be seen from their cross-stitch embroidery.

The Miaos dress in a most distinctive style, the men in trousers and jackets of blue or black cotton with a belt around the waist, the women in laced skirts and blouses with laced sleeves. On the occa-

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Design for a border

sion of a fair, holiday or festival, wedding, visit to relatives and friends or date with her sweetheart, a Miao girl will put on a dress embroidered by herself to show both her beauty and skill. A ballad vividly expresses the women's love for beauty:

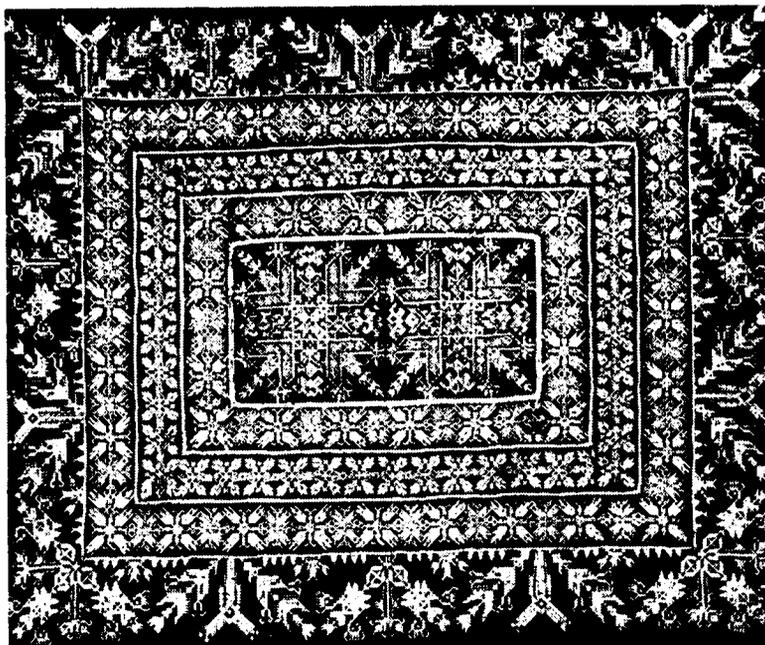
A stupid fellow may grow smart,  
Who is the smartest one of all?  
The young man who climbs the hill,  
Shoots a peacock and presents it to his love.  
She makes herself fine as a peacock,  
Her high-knotted hair like the peacock's crest,  
Her broad flowered sleeves like the peacock's wings,  
Her finely pleated skirt like the peacock's tail—  
A Miao girl is as pretty as a peacock.

A Miao girl starts to learn cross-stitch at seven or eight from her mother or elder sister. Sometimes the elders of her neighbourhood also help in the training. She first learns basic needlework and sews handkerchiefs, shoe borders, aprons or other simple articles of clothing. When she has mastered the technique she does more elaborate work and makes dresses. During slack seasons and in their spare time, Miao women make their own clothes and embroider all sorts of articles for daily use. It takes as long as three or four years and requires patience and diligence to finish a fine piece of work.

Among the various articles embroidered in cross-stitch the most striking are the sashes with their original and attractive colour combinations and great variety of designs, very few of which are identical. This is something rather outstanding. The reason is because the Miaos have a custom of "sash presenting." At a festival celebration or song-and-dance gathering, Miao girls often present sashes they have embroidered to their sweethearts as a pledge of love and also to display their skill in cross-stitch embroidery. Thus each sash has a distinctive design embroidered with loving care.

The cross-stitch is generally regular stitching according to the warp and woof of the cloth. Whether close or sparse, it is mostly rectangular. But the Miaos have many other methods of cross-stitching, producing an infinite variety of exquisite patterns executed with great skill. However complex the patterns on their wrappers, dresses and quilts, the Miao women produce neat, beautifully finished

Design for a back panel



work which demands a high degree of experience and skill. Most of the patterns are square, oblong, triangular, rhomboid or in some other geometrical form. Cross-stitch does not lend itself to realistic natural forms — these have first to be made geometrical. This accounts for the exaggerated forms as well as the highly decorative features and special style of cross-stitch embroidery.

The colours chosen as basic tones are usually dark blue, indigo, black, purple and crimson which give a sense of solidity and provide an effective foil for the motifs embroidered with bright silk thread. The Miao women have a marvellous colour sense and love to mingle vivid glowing colours: green, emerald, rose, violet, red, sky blue, pink, orange, sapphire blue and white. Sometimes they also achieve splendid results by the use of a few darker tints like brown, maroon or ochre to produce variety in simplicity and aesthetically satisfying contrasts. The vivid, rich colouring of their embroidery is something they have learned from nature. Miao girls in their choice of coloured thread often draw inspiration from butterflies and peacocks, clouds and rainbows.

They base their designs on life too. The themes of their designs are rich and varied ranging from wheat, fruit and melons, fish, shrimps and duckweed to the beasts in the mountains, the birds flying in the sky, the flowers blooming in the four seasons, beautiful insects and butterflies, domestic animals and poultry, and trees of every kind. They embroider vivid patterns based on the morning and evening clouds, the rainbow and the gurgling stream. They produce exciting compositions embodying birds, animals, insects, fish, flowers and herbs. Not satisfied with the natural forms of real life, they know how to use artistic generalization and exaggeration to present these in a more concentrated, vivid and typical way imbued with their own distinctive style.

So while drawing their material from nature they are not restricted by it, but use their own imagination and feeling to invest natural objects with fresh interest and romance. That is why each piece of Miao cross-stitch embroidery is so original and makes such a strong appeal.



Design for a border

Before liberation the Miao women, suffering from feudal exploitation and oppression, had no chance to study the fine arts. But generation after generation they inherited and developed the craftsmanship of their predecessors. Though they have never studied drawing, they can sketch the beautiful objects they see from memory and then reproduce them with a thread and needle. The more experienced and gifted among them embroider lifelike representations of leaping fish, flying and singing birds, running beasts, flitting butterflies or a single blade of grass or herb. From their practice they have learned the rules of Chinese art, especially of decorative art. In the complex world of flora and fauna, they make a point of capturing the typical posture and features of different objects, instead of striving to achieve a detailed likeness. For they know that even if they succeeded in turning out an exact replica of the real thing, people would not like it so much. Their designs are stylized imitations of nature, vividly and graphically bringing out the special features of the objects delineated.

Skilled embroiderers do not have to draw a pattern before starting work but stitch by stitch create the design they have in mind. This calls for rich imaginative power and brilliant technique. And this perfect combination of skill and originality is what all Miao women aim at in their cross-stitch embroidery.

Like other nationalities in China, the Miao people have gained a new life politically, economically and culturally after the liberation. Gone for ever are the exploitation, poverty and oppression of the old society. Now all can bring their intelligence into full play. Great

developments in industry and agriculture are raising the living standard of the Miao people, and their new life has given fresh impetus to cross-stitch embroidery too. The Chinese Communist Party has paid great attention to this art which was once a spare-time occupation. Government support has encouraged the best needlewomen to take the initiative in passing on their experience to the younger generation. The government has also sent some professional artists to learn from the Miao embroiderers and to sum up their experience. Thus this art with an old history has gained a new lease of life and is being appreciated by more and more people.

## *Chronicle*

### **Travelling Players**

The Ulan Muchir of the Onneut Banner of the Chaouda League is one of the many groups of travelling players with distinctive features on the Inner Mongolian grassland, whose headquarters is a covered wagon. There are twelve performers all told, Mongolians, Hans and Koreans, none of whom is over thirty. In the past seven years they have toured the grasslands, deserts, villages and herdsmen's settlements of the Onneut Banner of the Chaouda League in the eastern part of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, giving performances and working with the herdsmen in their spare time. Their subjects are drawn from the life of the herdsmen and the new people and incidents which they have seen, which they present in the form of songs and dances, dramas and ballads, short and vivid sketches with a national flavour. They have given more than 800 such shows in addition to more than 100 performances of story-telling in Mongolian. Some 460,000 people have seen this troupe. Each actor is highly versatile — they can play musical instruments, dance, tell stories and perform conjuring

tricks. Although there are so few of them, their repertoire is very rich.

Apart from composing new items and giving performances, they learn folk songs, ballads and folk tales from the old artists in the banner and incorporate the best of these in their programmes. Every year they organize classes too for spare-time artists among the herdsmen, of whom they have helped to train more than 800. During their travels they often join forces with herdsmen to give performances, supplying them with fresh material and enabling them to improve their items.

These travelling players are just what are needed on the grasslands and their success has pioneered the way to enrich the cultural life of the herdsmen.

### **New Plays on the Peking Stage**

During the last year many writers and actors from Peking have been living and working among the workers and peasants. Some of the new plays they have written on the basis of this experience were recently staged in the capital. Two of the most successful were the four-act play *Sisters in a Mountain Village* by the young writer Liu Hou-ming, and *Before Marriage* in four acts and five scenes by the veteran author Lo Pin-chi. The former describes a contingent of middle-school graduates who take part in the afforestation of mountain regions; the latter reflects the class struggle in the countryside through a young couple's marriage problems. Another four-act play *Bright Ribbons of Life* by several playwrights including Fang Kuan-teh, a veteran actor of the Peking People's Art Theatre, presents the fine deeds of Peking trolley-bus conductors and drivers who devote their whole energy to serving the people. The one-act play *Never Rusty* by Lan Yin-hai, a young dramatist of the Peking People's Art Theatre, has as its hero a veteran revolutionary cadre who goes back to work in his village only to find that his wife, an activist during the War of Resistance Against Japan, is now only interested in growing rich. By making her recall their past sufferings and compare the old society with the new, he finally helps her to see her mistake and once more

join in collective work. Other notable new productions include the ballad-opera *Red Flowers Facing the Sun* about progressive women in the city's public services, and the puppet play *Advancing Day by Day* which describes the good moral qualities of small children.

### **Performances by Young Minority Actors from Sinkiang**

In 1958, the Central Dramatic College in Peking started a class to train young actors from Sinkiang, and now, six years later, these professional minority actors have graduated. Most of the 30 students in this class are from families of workers, peasants and herdsmen of the Uighur and Kazakh minorities, a few are from families of government cadres. The Kazakh student Togtasin came from a poor family of herdsmen who had worked for generations for landlords; Abdul Kerim, a Uighur, begged as a boy with his father; another Uighur, Ibragim, the son of a poor peasant, was apprenticed to a master who beat him so cruelly that even today scars can still be seen on his forehead. Since these young people had no schooling before liberation they had to work hard during their six years at the dramatic college. They overcame many difficulties and have become proficient actors able to perform in both Uighur and Chinese, with a repertoire of some 30 plays.

Before their graduation they gave public performances in Peking of *Young Folk in a Remote Region* (see *Chinese Literature* No. 11, 1964) and *After the Bumper Harvest*. The first play describes the different attitudes to work of three young Uighurs on a cattle farm in a Kazakh herding district. The plot is dramatic with good dialogue, and since these actors are familiar with life in Sinkiang they gave a convincing performance and their characterization was truthful and lively. The gay Kazakh music they played helped to highlight the developments in the plot and the changes in the characters' outlook, at the same time giving the play a strong local colour. The second play tells how a Shantung brigade deals with its surplus grain after a record wheat harvest, and shows people's different attitudes towards the state, the

collective and themselves. Maira, who played the heroine Aunt Chao, lived for some time in a Han village before this performance, and this helped her to make a success of her role as a leading village cadre who loves labour and is very close to her people.

### **An Outstanding Film**

*The Red Flowers of Tienshan*, the first coloured feature film depicting the new life of the Kazakh people in Sinkiang under socialism, is an excellent film with vivid local colour which successfully presents the new developments after the Kazakhs' establishment of people's communes in Sinkiang. The heroine, Aiguli, is a slave before liberation who spends a wretched childhood under the lash of her master's whip. After liberation she matures politically thanks to the Party and becomes a brigade leader in the East Wind Commune's cattle farm at the foot of the Tienshan Mountains. However, her path is by no means smooth. The counter-revolutionary Kasim, the brigade's veterinary surgeon, is the son of a reactionary owner of herds and he tries to seize the leadership of the commune. He sabotages the work in all sorts of ways, inciting Aiguli's husband Ashar, who has patriarchal ideas and is only out for his own comfort, to keep Aiguli at home and stop her working for the people. But his cunning manoeuvres are seen through by the Party and the politically conscious masses. Aiguli rallies the people to carry on a fierce and complex struggle against the enemy, until finally they expose the enemy's plot and her repentant husband comes back to her. Under her reliable leadership this farm on the grasslands makes good progress.

This film presents a fine character in Aiguli, a Kazakh Communist who loves the collective and grows to maturity in the stern class struggle. The film's direction is vigorous and incisive. The colour is enchanting and the dramatic plot forcefully expresses the spirit of the Kazakh people who are working whole-heartedly to build socialism. Since all the actors are Kazakhs, the film has a strong national flavour heightened by the magnificent scenes of the snowy peaks of Tienshan, the boundless grasslands and features of life in Sinkiang.

## Works by Art College Graduates

Recently an exhibition was held in the National Art Gallery, Peking, of 681 works by more than 430 graduates from eleven colleges of fine arts in Szechuan, Chekiang, Kwangsi, Shenyang, Nanking and Peking, including sculpture, traditional painting, oils, picture story-books, woodcuts and handicrafts. These works vividly present from various angles the men and women in the forefront of our age and show the tremendous vigour of our heroic workers, peasants and soldiers who are building socialism.

Wang Liang-tien's sculpture *By the Side of Chairman Mao* shows Mao Tse-tung benignly pointing out a passage in a book to a young soldier who is reading eagerly. This expresses the close relationship between our leader and the men in the army. *Old Hero*, a sculpture by Hao Ching-ping, from a poor peasant family, depicts an old peasant holding a sickle and gazing out happily at the abundant harvest, his vitality indicating that he is a hero on the agricultural front.

Chang Wen-ju's traditional painting *A College Lecture* presents a bronzed, honest-looking peasant giving a talk to college students. His strong hands laid forcefully on the desk suggest this peasant scientist's practical nature, and a college lecturer beside him is listening attentively. Wang Yu-chueh's traditional painting *Doctor in a Mountain Village* shows a woman doctor carefully preparing her small clinic up in the hills, and symbolizes the determination of our young intellectuals to settle down and work in remote regions. Another notable traditional painting is Yang Teh-heng's *When the Rice Is Ripe*. This original and neatly executed flower-and-bird painting has cranes flying over a luxuriant sea of golden paddy. Wu Tzu-chiang's oil painting *Day and Night* depicts an old worker inspecting a work site. All these reflect the new spirit of the age and the transformation of nature.

The handicrafts included designs for ceramics, textiles, books, daily utensils, packages, advertisements, furniture and lacquerware, all combining utility with economy and beauty.

Many items on display were the work of minority students of the Mongolian, Korean, Chuang, Pai and Manchu nationalities.

## Congo (B) Song and Dance Troupe in China

Peking audiences had their first chance not long ago to enjoy the performances of the Brazzaville troupe from the Congo. The rich repertoire of the Diaboua Song and Dance Ensemble shows that it is based on the national folk art with its ancient traditions. *Gandza*, a religious ceremonial dance with centuries of history behind it, reflects the life and customs of the Congolese people by means of vigorous and varied rhythms. The *Dance on Stilts* and the *Masked Dance* also have traditional folk features. The stilts are more than ten feet high and a masked man goes through intricate movements following the beat of the drum. *Hamba* is danced by young peasants to ridicule the sycophantic philistines who ape Europeans.

*Nkouezo*, a stirring dance-drama, describes how a colonialist savagely rounds up the peasants to plant rubber trees in fields where they grow bananas, potatoes and pineapples. He beats them with a whip and the barrel of his gun until in desperation they take up weapons. When the colonialist swaggers back to force them to work, the peasants rise up to kill and bury him; then they raise high a bright red flag and dance around it with songs of victory, their swift, forceful rhythms expressing the enthusiasm of a people marching forward. This item made a powerful appeal to the audience.

The talented singer Marie Bella, accompanied by the Congolese *kinsanzi*, sang *Di Jacqueline*, *Di Bolingo* and *Ndzombi* with such vocal range and subtly changing rhythms that the audience was held spell-bound. Then Pierre Badinga sang *Parting* to his own thrilling accompaniment. This song describes the sufferings of a man from Congo (B) living in Congo (L), who is torn from his family by the U.S. imperialists and the Tshombe clique and shut up in a concentration camp. All who hear it cannot fail to realize that men must fight against the reactionary forces to free themselves from slavery.

This performance not only helped the Chinese people to understand the culture and art of the Congo (B) but brought home to them the Congolese people's firm determination in their struggle against imperialism.

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**JUST OFF THE PRESS**

*The Builders* (in English)

by *Liu Ching*

After the land was distributed among the tillers in the Land Reform of the early fifties, two kinds of “builders” appeared in China’s countryside. While the vast majority wanted to build a society that would benefit all the people, to farm together, helping one another, advancing in stages from mutual-aid teams to co-operatives, and on to more advanced forms, quite a few wanted to go it alone, to build up their family fortunes in the old way, looking out only for their personal interests. This novel describes the struggle between these two trends. The author probes deeply into the characters who populate his fascinating book and who are presented in a style that is forceful, warmly human, delightfully humorous, and richly flavourful.

The novel is profusely illustrated with handsome drawings.

580 pages      21 × 13 cm.      cloth cover

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**Just Off the Press**

## LITTLE SOLDIER CHANG KA-TSE

*(in English)*

by **Hsu Kuang-yao**

This short novel tells of the many adventures of an orphan of the War of Resistance Against Japan. When young Ka-tse determines to avenge the death of his grandmother at the hands of the enemy, he sets out in search of the people's fighters. Before long he finds a new home among the men of the Eighth Route Army. Here his sense of mischief, plucky spirit and frank outspokenness quickly win him many friends. In the course of his duty as a scout, and taking part in skirmishes with the enemy, he becomes a seasoned fighter, admired and respected by all.

120 pages

20.3 × 14 cm.

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