

CHINESE LITERATURE



Monthly

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1965

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Published by Foreign Languages Press
Pai Wan Chuang, Peking (37), China
Printed in the People's Republic of China

Serfs

The following is a story treatment of the film *Serfs* which has been recently released and shown all over the country. The author Huang Tsung-chiang, born in Peking in 1921, is an actor himself and has written several scripts for films including *The Spirit of the Sea* and *Our Land So Fair*. On p. 85 in this issue we publish an article by the Tibetan actor Wangdui who played the part of Jampa in *Serfs*.

The towering Himalayas.

Like some huge dragon they soar through the sea of clouds. Snowdrifts crumbling seem like falling dragon scales.

The choppy waves of the turbulent Yalutsangpo flow on and on towards the unknown.

Singing:

Hard to see the peak of the towering Himalayas,
Hard to find the source of the mighty Yalutsangpo;
The weary days drag on,
Spring sowing, autumn harvest, another year gone!
But where is the fruit of men's toil?
The Tibetan serfs know nothing but misery.

A woman's clear soprano is accompanied by a wordless lament all around.

The fields on both sides of the river are a rolling sea of barley.

A harvest procession sweeps along like a swirling wind. The lama heading it smears *tsamba** on a wine cup and hands this to a finely dressed noble on horseback, who takes it and pours a libation.

*A kind of barley flour, which is the staple food in Tibet.

Ragged serfs in the fields bend to reap with sickles. The barley falls in swaths. A strong young serf stripped to the waist raises his head. Above him the serf-owner's mansion looms like a mountain.

So many official mansions, serf-owners' estates, temples and forts massive as hills!

A band of serfs, men and women, toil up one fort. Bent low under heavy sacks of grain, they climb the winding steps to the high flat roof and empty their grain through a skylight.

The grain falls down, down, down into a seemingly bottomless granary.

An old woman is gleaning the bare fields. She puts a grain of barley into her mouth and grinds it with toothless gums.

Before dawn. A newly born baby, wrapped in a tattered rug, is crying on the ground.

A yak munching fodder in front lows plaintively.

Fitful moonlight falls on the low stone wall by which are stacked cakes of dried yak-dung. The floor is strewn with the warm ashes of burnt yak-dung, and among these stands a smoke-blackened copper kettle. A bent old woman is carefully stirring the embers and crooning, "Granny's here. Granny's here." She gathers up some ashes and approaches the baby, who is lying on a pile of ashes. She covers it gently with the warm ashes she has brought.

"Don't cry, you've been reborn as a human being," she murmurs. "There's nothing cosier than the ashes of yak-dung."

"Born?" demands a strident voice.

The old woman looks up quickly and bows. "Yes, sir."

The steward Tsering swaggering outside the wall orders:

"Come and register it as soon as it's light. Bring the birth tax."

"Yes, sir."

"Boy or girl?"

"A boy."

"Four taels then."

"Yes, sir."

"Single eyelids or double?"

"Single."

"Eight taels."

"Yes, sir."

"His mother?"

"She's gone to the fields."

"His father?"

"Didn't the master send for him?..." Her voice falters and she looks fearfully at the steward.

A scornful smile crosses his face.

It is barely light. In the yard of the serf-owner's house a tall man is stretched motionless on the ground, his wrists tied to the whipping-post below the steps. Not far from him lies a bloody whip with shreds of flesh clinging to it. A monstrous crow is pecking at the whip.

Serfs with lowered heads are hard at work in the yard, combing wool, weaving rugs and making tea... In the corner closest to the whipping-post a grey-headed old woman is spinning like an automaton.

The steward, his hands clasped behind his back, lounges over to inspect them. He walks up to the prostrate figure and kicks it over. The man's wide-opened eyes are fixed in a stare.

Coughing is heard from the house. The steward hurries to the steps and says deferentially: "You are up early, sir."

Namchal stalks out, his gown unbuttoned, wearing slippers. Acknowledging this greeting casually, he sees the man on the ground.

The prisoner's wrists are twisted by the rope and his head is raised so that his wide-open eyes seem to be staring defiantly at the serf-owner.

Namchal exclaims in surprise.

"He's dead," says the steward.

"You dared to oppose me," fumes Namchal at the dead man.

"You were lucky not to have your tongue cut off."

Having walked down the steps to a tub of water, he plunges in a be-ringed hand to grasp the thick black ox-hide whip coiled there. Pulling it out, he glares at the dead man. The steward, assuming he wants to whip the corpse, turns it over with his foot.

But Namchal drawls, "Tell his wife to pay the debt their family owes me and the burial tax. If she doesn't —" his voice is calm, "she must bring back the whip herself."

The whip flung down on the stable floor seems to shake the earth. Faint, deep sobs seem to be coming from the ground.

An old woman and a young one are prostrated motionless on the ground, their hair trailing in the dust.

The baby is sleeping soundly in the ashes.

The yak slowly munches the straw in front of it.

The baby starts crying.

The two women remain motionless.

The child's mother slowly gets up and holds him to her breast. Her eyes, all their tears apparently shed, are fixed on the whip on the ground.

The baby clutches at his mother's breast.

Holding the whip tight to her breast, the mother walks off alone.

Serfs silently gleaning the fields watch her pass by.

She walks on, oblivious.

She reaches the serf-owner's mansion and, crossing the empty yard, catches sight of her husband's blood-stained corpse. In horror she rushes to it.

The steps are deserted and the dark passage beyond the open door is studded with all kinds of instruments of torture, like fangs ready to devour the motionless young woman.

The dungeon door is flung open.

Dishevelled and limp, she is dragged by thugs into the dungeon.

In the dungeon are two long chains to which several prisoners are fettered.

After chaining her up the thugs leave. The steward stands outside, a whip still in his hands. The massive door creaks as he shuts it.

She lies without moving, her eyes tightly closed.

The old woman chained next to her stares blankly at her for a while, and then reaches out to feel if she is still breathing. She draws back her hand quickly, exclaiming, "Lord Buddha, she's gone to heaven!"

She prays in a low voice.

In the stable Granny hugs the infant to her and prays, from time to time murmuring, "You must grow up, child, you must grow up. . . ."

Some lambs gambolling over the grassland only bring out their utter loneliness.

A ragged boy of ten trudges along alone.

"Jampa!" calls an eager voice. A girl of about the same age runs towards him, a lamb in her arms. "The master caught us and brought us back. He's put my dad in fetters again."

The boy looks at her in silence.

"You're taller than I am now," she remarks. "Why won't you say anything?"

"Jampa!" cries Granny in the distance.

Watching the old woman approach, the girl reminds Jampa, "Your Granny's calling you."

The boy still gazes silently ahead.

The girl puts her lamb down rather crossly and complains, "What's come over you, Jampa? You used to be so fond of talking and singing, your Granny called you her little warbler."

The boy walks away singing in a pure treble voice:

I have a mouth
And want to talk,
But Granny tells me
Too much talking killed my dad;
I have a mouth
And want to eat my fill,
But from dawn till dusk
I can't get a bowl of *tsamba*.
I have a mouth
And want to sing,
But as I roam the grassland
My heart is sad.
Ah....

At the end of this song he clamps his lips together again and walks on.

"Your song...." The girl doesn't know what to say and starts humming the tune instead.

In a tent by the road an old blacksmith is working at his forge. His feet are shackled. A boy slightly older than Jampa squats beside him, busily working the bellows.

"So, Blacksmith, you're back," says Granny.

"Yes, I'm back. In fetters again." He smiles bitterly.

Granny is carrying a shabby *hata*, a tarnished prayer-wheel and a greasy leather bag with butter in it. She hobbles after her grandson and the blacksmith's daughter Namgang. Her hair is whiter now, her back more bent, and her lips keep moving. Gazing at the blacksmith's fetters, she hastily murmurs a prayer. "You musn't run away again," she warns him.

"I won't. No matter where you go, it's all the same," he answers stolidly.

His son Kalzang puts in, "When I grow up, I'll run away."

The blacksmith glances at him with a mixture of approval and helplessness. "Where will you go?"

"I don't know."

Granny looks round for Jampa and finds him taking some scorched *tsamba* from Namgang's bowl. He looks so famished that Namgang, although the younger of the two, holds out her bowl to him like an elder sister and watches with concern as he gulps down the food. Granny hurries forward to stop him, scolding, "Jampa!"

"Never eat anything, son, from a blacksmith's bowl," says the blacksmith quietly. "We blacksmiths are born with black bones. Whoever touches us will have bad luck."

Jampa stares in surprise at Namgang.

Namgang, still holding out the bowl, hangs her head.

Granny, a little embarrassed, tells the blacksmith, "We all have empty bowls, whether white or black." To Jampa: "Come on, let's go to the temple."

"Jampa!" calls Namgang softly. "When you get to the temple don't forget to pray to White Sgrol-ma for me. She's so beautiful, she must be very kind. I'm sure she can see everything, she has so many eyes..."

Jampa walks off in silence with Granny.

Namgang looks at the rags on her soft, fair-skinned arms and asks in dismay, "Are our bones really black, dad?"

The blacksmith lowers his head. His grizzled hair is tousled and his cheeks are covered with a stubble. Eyeing the sores the fetters have made on his ankles, he mutters, "Yes. They started white, but fetters have turned them black ... after generations."

Sound of horses, a cloud of dust. The old blacksmith looks up and makes Namgang bow down beside him.

Some horses canter up. Namchal appears out of the dust. Behind him ride his stewards and two or three thugs who serve as his body-guard. Bringing up the rear are some ordinary house serfs with a sunshade, thermos flask, dried meat and offerings for the temple. They are running as hard as they can to keep up with the horses. The last of these carries the serf-owner's son on his back.



Namgang and her father

The blacksmith bows low and Namgang hangs her head. But Kalzang picks up his father's hammer and smashes it down on the anvil.

No one pays any attention. The sound is lost in the clatter of hooves and pad of running feet.

The dust envelops Granny and Jampa, who are bowing beside the road. Jampa glances up at the young master, a boy of about his own age, on the serf's back.

The young master tugs the serf's hair and brandishes a whip. "Old horse!" he yells. "Old horse..."

When the procession has passed, Granny straightens up stiffly and stares after them, muttering a prayer.

The roof of the temple halfway up the hill flashes golden.

Golden beasts on the flat temple roof encircle the golden wheel of the Law. Lamas in tall hats stand on a height beside it blowing conch shells.

Namchal leads his son up the steps to a high terrace, where he bows and presents a *bata* crying, "Greetings, Living Buddha."

A hand lights on the heads of father and son and puts *batas* round their necks. A grave yet unassuming voice replies, "Greetings, uncle and cousin." They rise to face the Living Buddha.

The Living Buddha Thubtan is a dignified middle-aged man, rendered more striking by a mole between his eyebrows. As he invites Namchal to enter the temple, thunder rumbles faintly above the toll of bells.

"Thunder!" Namchal halts and looks cheerfully at the sky. Recollecting the presence of the Living Buddha, he bows his head and says, "The Living Buddha's prayers are truly efficacious..."

The Living Buddha smiles but makes no reply.

"Give us a spring rain," continues Namchal, "and our granaries will be full of grain." He walks to the edge of the terrace to gaze into the distance.

Far-stretching fields. Sunlight falling through inky clouds casts flickering bands of light on the ground so that the earth seems to be trembling.

"Such fertile land!" exclaims Namchal. Remembering his son beside him, he adds, "Handed down from father to son..." He looks back from the horizon to the temple before him.

Below a crowd of ragged serfs swarm like ants outside the temple gate. They raise clasped hands to heaven and prostrate themselves.

Granny kneels on the temple steps, kowtowing. She rises, raises clasped hands to the sky and then kneels to prostrate herself and kowtow again. The stones are worn smooth after long years of rubbing, and hollowed out in some places by the pilgrims' hands and knees. Granny prostrates herself again and again.

Jampa kneels behind her, listlessly turning the prayer-wheel.

In front of the temple gate two rows of prayer-wheels, large and small, stretch into the distance. The ragged men and women bow their heads in prayer as they set the prayer-wheels rotating one after another. The wheels spin round and round...

Granny is still kowtowing but Jampa lies on the ground, too hungry to move.

A number of barefoot, ragged young lamas pass behind them with buckets of water. Some are only four or five years old, too small to

carry a bucket. They toil painfully after the others, carrying one bucket between two.

Jampa's eye falls on the bag of butter Granny has put down. He scrapes the greasy cover and licks his fingers. When he reaches out again to scoop out some butter, she seizes his hand and protests in a quavering voice:

"Jampa, that butter is for Lord Buddha's lamps...."

The front hall of the temple is crowded with worshippers who in turn present *batas* and offerings to the lama in charge. When it comes to Granny's turn, she offers her *bata* and butter most devoutly and then leads Jampa into a side chapel.

On both sides of the chapel entrance are round wall pictures illustrating transmigration. They show naked men and women suffering the torments of hell.

Granny solemnly reminds Jampa, "These are the sufferings of transmigration! If any man sins in his lifetime...." She mutters a prayer.

Although Jampa is used to such pictures he shrinks back, nearly bumping into a hideous clay statue of a Buddha brandishing a broken arm.

Granny, hardened to these surroundings, leads the boy inside the chapel. The air here is heavy with the smoke of incense, and the Buddhist image in the centre appears kindly and beneficent. In front of it are offerings of butter in the form of the "Eight Treasures" of Buddhism. Granny prostrates herself. Rising again, she sees Jampa standing avidly by a big lamp, his fingers straying towards the butter on its edge. This lamp, large as a tub, is filled with butter and gives off a brilliant light. She pulls Jampa to the back of the chapel, where according to Buddhist ritual they pass from right to left in front of endless butter lamps, large and small. These lamps shed a flickering light on the countless images in the smoke-blackened chapel.

They enter an annex where work is still in progress. An old lama in one corner is engraving an image.

Granny greets him eagerly, "Father Gedun!"

"So it's you," rejoins the old lama cheerfully. Still moulding the clay in his hands, he approaches them. He is very shabbily dressed, with tousled hair and a grimy face.

“Aren’t you going to greet Father Gedun?” Granny asks Jampa. “He’s the one who chose your name for you.”

Jampa is too hungry to speak.

Gedun smiles broadly. “Well, Jampa!”

He puts the clay in the boy’s hand. “Let’s see you mould another lama. You’ve got the knack of it.”

Jampa listlessly models the clay.

Without really looking, Gedun approves, “That’s a clever boy. . . .” He turns to Granny. “You really ought to give this boy to Buddha to be a lama.”

Granny trembles, fearful yet eager. “May the Lord Buddha forgive me! He’s all I have.”

Jampa wanders off and Granny, following him with her eyes, remarks, “You should see the way he pulls the plough. Like a little ox.”

“I know, I know.” Gedun sympathizes but he argues, “Men don’t live for this life but for the life to come. . . .” He shakes his head, looking round at the images he is making, most of them still ungilded, some nothing but skeletons surrounded by scaffolding. He looks at the clay piled on the floor, the hemp paper and barley stalks. . . . His eyes finally come to rest on the tall scaffolding reaching to the ceiling in the centre of the hall.

“I’m going to make a golden image there of the Uryyan Padma, the lotus-born superior teacher.” He points with trembling fingers, his eyes flashing at the thought of his future masterpiece. “Then I will have atoned fully for my sins.”

Impressed by his earnestness Granny stares at the scaffolding. Waking up to the fact that her grandson has disappeared, she calls, “Jampa!” There is no answer, but she lets him alone and goes on talking quietly with the old lama.

Jampa walks into a little chapel near by. One of the images here is White Sgrol-ma.

White Sgrol-ma is a beautiful goddess, seated gracefully, with flowing draperies. It seems from her anxious expression that she is grieving over the world of men. Between her arched eyebrows and on the palms of her delicate hands are additional eyes, but they do not appear to see.

Staring at her in silence, Jampa hears Namgang’s request: “Don’t forget to pray to White Sgrol-ma for me. She’s so beautiful, she

must be very kind. I'm sure she can see everything, she has so many eyes." Incense smoke wreathes the air. Jampa fancies that the beautiful goddess is gazing compassionately at him and stretching out her snow-white arm to offer him the various offerings before her. He accepts eagerly and eats.

Jampa discovers with a start that it is clay, not butter, in his mouth and hands, and the clay goddess is sitting motionless. He clasps his hands and looks up in silent supplication, his muddy lips and hands trembling. Summoning up all his courage, he reaches into a vat-shaped lamp, puts out the flames and scoops up a handful of butter. At once a huge hairy fist clamps down on his hand. Running footsteps are heard and Granny quavers, "Jampa!"

The dark courtyard in front. Jampa is scared out of his wits. His hand streaked with clay and butter is held up by an irate lama. The throng of priests and laity in the courtyard are watching in suspense. The priest in charge stands high on the steps with his heavy iron rod. He strikes it on the steps and roars, "He put out Buddha's lamp and stole the offerings. Have his tongue and hand cut off!"

Granny kneels on the steps, kowtowing desperately. "Punish me instead," she pleads. "I'm the one to blame."

The lama with the rod kicks Granny over.

Thunder is still rumbling in the distance. A murmur goes up, "The Living Buddha is here." All fall silent, their heads bowed respectfully. The Living Buddha Thubtan appears on the steps, accompanied by Namchal.

"He's my serf," says Namchal. "I've not been strict enough with him. I'll take him home and punish him."

Young Namchal, Old Namchal's son, who has been watching, leaps up and down excitedly, exclaiming, "Cut off his hand! Cut off his tongue!"

The Living Buddha glances at him disdainfully and declares, "All living creatures are but ants. The sea of suffering is boundless but Buddha is bountiful. Let him go."

Murmurs of thanks from the crowd. Women cry, "Great is the Living Buddha's compassion and mercy."

The fist clutching Jampa's small hand lets go of him and he falls senseless on the steps. The old lama Gedun hurries over, tears running down his cheeks, and kneels by Jampa. "Hurry up and thank

the Living Buddha for his kindness.” He and Granny take Jampa’s arms and kowtow repeatedly.

A peal of thunder adds to the awesomeness of the Living Buddha as he raises his voice and cries: “You have angered the gods by stealing their offerings. Heaven will punish you and make you dumb. All your life long, you’ll have to atone for your sins.”

Granny bows repeatedly. “Atone for our sins.”

Afraid that the Living Buddha may change his mind, Gedun urges her, “Go quickly now.”

Granny struggles to her feet and with bent head leads Jampa away. The thunder seems to be crashing over their heads.

Granny hurries the boy through a chapel. The repulsive Guardians of the Law watch them go.

Rain pours down as the old woman and her grandson slip out of the temple as if pursued by thunder and hurry barefoot along the muddy road.

Jampa falls unconscious in the stable. Thunder and rain. The pictures of transmigration on the temple wall seem to be whirling round him. A flash of lightning illumines a sinner having his tongue cut out.

Another peal of thunder, and the fierce spirit brandishing a broken arm emerges from the picture. The broken arm’s hand is clutching some muddy butter. From behind sounds the Living Buddha’s warning, “You’ll have to atone for your sins.”

Jampa tosses about, his lips trembling, but makes no sound. Granny wipes the beads of sweat on his forehead and tries to soothe him.

The rains stops but the roof of the stable is still leaking.

Granny murmurs a prayer and promises, “Granny will atone for your sins, child.” She picks up a *hata* soiled by rain and unties the yak.

Namgang comes along.

“You look after him, Namgang,” says Granny, “while I go to the temple.” She hobbles off with the yak.

Namgang looks sadly after her before going in to sit by Jampa. She greets him softly and wipes the rain from his face.

“Have something to eat.” She offers him a ball of *tsamba*.

Jampa’s eyes are closed, his lips tremble.

“Speak to me, Jampa. It’s Namgang,” she cries in dismay.

Among the worshippers offering gifts in the temple, Granny receives an amulet from a lama and after bowing repeatedly carries it off.

The yak she leaves behind cries plaintively. She pretends not to hear, clutching the amulet to her breast as she walks away.

The yaks in the fields wear red tassels for the spring sowing which has begun. Cuckoos are calling. Snatches of a wordless lament float through the air.

Granny crosses the fields, looking neither to the right nor to the left with her unseeing eyes, but clutching the amulet tightly and murmuring prayers. She toils painfully, step by step, to the river bank. But there she falls never to get up again, her long white hair streaming on the sand. Not far off is the hide of a dead dog. The river slowly lapping over the shore washes the amulet away.

All this time the lament has sounded, now faint now clear.

At daybreak on the flat roof of Namchal's new mansion barefooted serfs are tamping the roof. They chant dolefully while they work.

The steward pushes Jampa into the yard. The boy's face is blank, he stares vacantly ahead. Namgang follows at a distance. The steward shoves Jampa through the door and sees his young master being dressed by some women serfs.

Young Namchal draws, "Isn't he the one who stole butter from the temple?"

"I've brought you a pony, young master," says the steward.

"A pony?" Young Namchal brightens up. Without waiting to have his clothes buttoned, he grabs hold of Jampa to get on his back.

Jampa tugs away, so that the other boy falls over and starts howling. The steward seizes Jampa and bangs his head against a tree.

Namgang hiding outside weeps bitterly and presses her face against the wall, unable to endure this sight.

The eyes of sorrowful, lovely White Sgrol-ma stare blankly.

Namgang raises clasped hands and prays to her through her tears.

A trembling hand strokes her head. She looks up to see the grizzled old lama Gedun. They gaze at each other in silence.

Jampa runs through a meadow with his young master on his back. He grits his teeth, the sweat pours off his face. Young Namchal, flourishing a willow branch, goads him on.

The meadow is high on a hill. The clouds above the opposite bank of the river seem to be racing with them. Jampa runs for all he is worth towards the horizon. When he reaches the edge of the cliff above the turbulent river, Young Namchal takes fright and jumps off his back, falling over and starting to cry.

Jampa stands there without a word, his eyes fixed on the other boy. Young Namchal crawls away, panting, "All right, just you wait."

He scrambles up and dashes away, half running and half rolling down the steep hillside.

Jampa walks to the edge of the cliff to look down on the billowing waves far below. In his eyes is the calmness of despair.

"Jampa!" A clear, familiar girl's voice floats up from the valley. He turns round.

The sheep in the meadow below seem like white pebbles. Namgang rushes to the foot of the hill. When she sees Jampa looking at her, she is at a loss for words and starts singing.

Jampa stands motionless on the edge of the cliff.

The lambs look up at the shepherdess who has left them.

Namgang climbs up the hill, clutching at the bushes on either side. By the time she can see to the top of the cliff Jampa has disappeared. She hurries on, panting and singing. A branch catches her tattered jacket but she feels nothing.

Reaching the top, she finds Jampa with his head on his arms in the grass.

She goes slowly over and asks breathlessly, "What were you trying to do?"

Jampa says nothing.

"Why don't you answer me? You're really dumb now!" She bends over and shakes him. "Say something."

Jampa sits up. "Say something? Yes, they want me to say 'old master,' 'young master.' I won't do it!" He bites his lower lip.

Namgang doesn't know what to say and starts humming again. Suddenly she sees a warning in Jampa's eyes. She turns to find the steward with his whip swaggering before them.

Jampa is fastened to the whipping-post where his father was beaten to death. His skin is mangled and torn. The steward wipes his perspiring face with his sleeve, and tosses the wet whip into a vat of water which turned red with blood. Namchal stands watching on

the steps with his son beside him holding a leather thong. The serfs in the yard are all hard at work as usual. The old woman with dishevelled white hair stares from sightless eyes and spins like an automaton.

His eyes bloodshot, Namchal takes the thong from his son and walks down the steps. The steward yanks Jampa's head up by the hair and Namchal lashes out at the boy's face. "You won't ask for pardon!" he bellows. "You won't whimper. I'll make carrion of you."

Jampa bites his lips, keeps his eyes shut and will not utter a sound.

Namgang rushes in and kneels before Namchal. "Have pity, sir," she cries. "He can't speak. He's dumb."

"Dumb?"

"Yes. It's Buddha's punishment for stealing the butter in the temple."

Jampa opens his eyes to look at her in gratitude and anguish. He stops biting his lips and the blood gushes from them. "The brute!" swears Namchal. The steward lets go of Jampa's hair and his head strikes the ground.

The stable.

Jampa has been thrown on a heap of straw.

A black colt is nuzzling his head.

Namgang peeps anxiously over the low wall and climbs over to kneel beside Jampa, whose face is clotted with blood. She tears off a strip of her jacket and wets it in the trough to wipe the blood from his face. She can see where he has bitten through his lips.

Jampa slowly opens his eyes.

She calls his name softly.

His lips tremble convulsively but he clamps them together and refuses to speak. Fresh blood wells from his wound.

Namgang weeps silently. The wordless lament whirls through the stable and fills both their hearts.

The cracked old spinning-wheel that was never still gradually slows down and stops.

Late at night in the yard. The old spinning woman is curled up by her wheel. Even in her sleep her hand still moves as if tending the spindle. She has lost practically all her white hair.

The steward appears with his whip. He is older now and wearing glasses. When he cracks his whip the old woman sits up with a start and, her eyes still closed, goes on spinning.

The steward makes a tour of the yard. The serfs bend over their tasks. As he approaches the stable, a powerful black stallion looks out at him. "Dumb fool!" shouts the steward. "Why aren't you grazing the horses?" He goes off.

In the stable a tall young man in rags is leaning over the trough. He straightens up. There is an ingenuous look about his thick eyebrows and big eyes. His mouth is scarred. He untethers the black stallion.

The morning star is still in the sky as Jampa briskly leads the stallion to pasture. Behind follow other horses of different colours. Jampa holds the reins loosely, not caring when they sag to the ground. While the horses graze, he walks to the edge of the cliff at the end of the meadow. In the east the ruddy light of dawn is straining to pierce the darkness of the night. He is buffeted by the strong wind from the river.

The shepherdess' song rings from the valley. Her voice has grown richer and surer.

Dear brother, you need not speak,
Just listen to the song I am singing for you.
No river flows between us,
Only the unseen torrent of men's fury;
No mountain stands between us,
Only the unseen gulf of cruelty;
May my song wing like a bird to your ears,
May it float to you like a cloud;
For its sake you must live on!
Ah...

Dawn reddens part of the sky.
The rising sun lights up the quiet green valley.
The river bank is dotted with white sheep.
The bushes on the cliff face have grown thicker.
There are no boats on the river below.
Jampa has disappeared from the skyline.
The shepherdess eludes us too, and only her song can be heard.
Jampa is lying by the cliff, his head resting on his hand, as if gazing at the invisible song.

As the last notes die away, Namgang appears with the light of dawn at the edge of the cliff. This girl with the “black bones” has grown very lovely. No rags can conceal her beauty or intrinsic purity. There is something about her reminiscent of White Sgrol-ma, without those superfluous eyes.

She runs lightly over to Jampa and sits beside him, saying eagerly, “Jampa! I’ve been looking for you to tell you something. Yesterday a mule-driver passed my brother’s place. . . .”

A flash-back.

A man leads a heavily loaded mule up to the blacksmith’s tent and greets him. He asks for a drink of water.

The young blacksmith Kalzang comes out. He is just like his father except that his face is smooth and still wears its old stubborn expression. Like his father, too, his feet are shackled. He stares at the mule-driver in surprise and asks, “You’ll drink the black water of a blacksmith?”

“Any water in this mug will become pure. It’s been used by the *Chingdrolmagmi*, the Buddhist troops. . . .” He produces an enamel mug with the words on it: “March into Tibet to strengthen our national defence.”

Namgang comes over. “*Chingdrolmagmi?*”

Mule-driver: “That means Liberation Army.”

Namgang: “All soldiers are a bad lot.” She goes to get water.

Mule-driver: “No, no. I’ve ranged from Tangla to the Himalayas, from Ali to Loyul, over the whole of Tibet. I know the parts where the Hans live as well. But I’ve never come across an army like this. . . .” He looks at the blacksmith’s shackles. “The Liberation Army is out to smash all our chains.”

The blacksmith is dumbfounded.

The mule-driver tells him, “They’ve already reached the county seat not far from here.”

Kalzang’s heart beats faster.

Namgang brings a pitcher and fills the mule-driver’s mug with water. He drinks appreciatively and says, “Wherever they pass, the people say. . . .”

Up on the cliff Namgang takes up the story. “People say: A red, red sun has risen in the east. A great, great Buddha is standing in the



Jampa

sun. He can see everything, even the roof of the world here, where the people are living in hell. As soon as this Buddha points his finger, his Buddhist troops set out, crossing rivers and mountains to free the people from their misery. Every Buddhist soldier wears a five-pointed red star on his cap...”

Namgang speaks as if confiding some marvellous secret and Jampa listens raptly. The red sun rising in the east bathes the cliff top in an unearthly radiance. At the horizon sounds the confident music of a march.

A Tantric Buddhist temple. Ghostly, flickering lamps light up a picture. In the middle is a five-pointed star surrounded by magic signs. A tall lama with closed eyes, muttering imprecations, stabs at the five-pointed star with needles.

Young Namchal, seated on a hassock, is craning his neck to watch. He looks very like his father in former years, but his eyes are even more malevolent. Near him sits the chief lama with the iron rod.

In the Living Buddha's private suite. Thubtan is entertaining the Living Buddha Chhoiphel who has come to visit him. Thubtan looks

distinguished and benign. Tall, white-headed Chhoiphel is talking earnestly in ringing tones.

"I heard about the Red Army when I was a young man, and now I've seen the Liberation Army. It really is an army of humanity and righteousness.... The Communists don't believe in religion, but when they build roads and come across a shrine they walk around it for fear of damaging it...." Thubtan nods without any comment. Chhoiphel asks:

"Why didn't you go, Your Holiness, to the meeting to welcome the Liberation Army at the county seat on the ninth?"

"I wasn't well," replies Thubtan, bowing, "I offered prayers for the army morning and evening in the temple."

Chhoiphel nods. "I'm glad to hear that. I was afraid you might have been misled by the lies of wicked men. That's why I came on my way back from Lhasa to see you."

"It's very kind of you."

"All my life I've seen our men fighting and killing each other, as well as foreign invasions. At last I've been blessed to see the whole of our country united, rich and strong...." He goes on eagerly, "But there are scoundrels in high places who are trying to destroy the Liberation Army on the plateau. They will never succeed!"

Inside the temple. Namchal and his two companions are saying their prayers.

The temple door creaks, making them turn round with a start. Reassured, they rise to greet the Living Buddha.

Thubtan walks slowly across the empty hall, his shadow flickering on the wall. There are no images in this chapel, only a few "mandala" or magic circles used in sorcery and hassocks. The walls are covered with dark, blurred paintings of many-headed, many-armed gods in lewd postures.

As the Living Buddha Thubtan approaches them he demands:

"Did you hear what the old Living Buddha Chhoiphel says now that he's come back from Lhasa? Wherever the Liberation Army goes, it respects the temples, takes nothing from the people, treats everybody alike, and wins praise from all."

Namchal turns pale.

Thubtan turns to Namchal. "Tomorrow you'll have to go on our behalf to pay them a courtesy call."

Namchal is flabbergasted.

Thubtan slowly explains, "We must carry the fight into the hearts of the people."

Light dawns on Namchal. "You're right. I've always told my serfs that the Communist Party eats children and burns old people alive."

The Living Buddha shakes his head over this stupidity. "We've got to change our tune now. You must get this into their heads: Those who eat *tsamba* and those who eat rice belong to two different families. Buddhists and unbelievers can never agree. Calamity will overtake anyone who comes under their wicked influence." He knits his brows sternly.

Far off conches blare, bells toll and scriptures are chanted.

Night. Jampa lies in the stable, where a patch of sky shows over the broken wall. The stars appear very close. Jampa's eyes are wide open and he seems to hear stirring yet fearful music. It mingles with the toll of bells and blare of conch shells.

Kalzang appears without warning beyond the wall. He vaults over easily despite his shackled feet and drops to the ground. Still gasping for breath he whispers to Jampa, "I've seen it! Before sunset I hurried over to the county seat."

Flash-back to dusk. The blacksmith strides swiftly along though his feet are shackled. Stopping to catch his breath, he gazes into the distance.

He sees troops clearly outlined against the setting sun as they march past. Far off sounds the *March of the Liberation Army*.

Night. A unit of the Liberation Army crosses a chain bridge. The blacksmith hurries after them, keeping at a discreet distance.

A few soldiers come up to him.

Kalzang tells Jampa, "When they came over, for some reason I was afraid. . . . Thought they might beat me up. I've been beaten often enough by Tibetan soldiers. . . . They clasped my hand. I couldn't understand what they said, but that's the first time in my life men have gripped my hand like that."

A soldier squats down to finger Kalzang's chains and tries to break them.

Kalzang's trembling voice: "That scared me again — I ran." Kalzang staggers into a clump of trees and looks back.

The soldiers are watching in silent sympathy. Behind them their contingent is marching forward. The chain bridge sways.

In the stable Kalzang demands excitedly, "Why was I afraid? Why should I hide? Isn't that the army out to break our chains? I tell you what. . . ." He clenches his fist and stares at his fetters.

Jampa seizes Kalzang's hand and signs to him. Steps are heard. Kalzang jumps over the wall.

Jampa listens intently. The steps stop outside the stable and the steward barks: "Dumb fool! Get up! Groom the horse. As soon as it's light the master is going to call on the Liberation Army." The footsteps recede.

Kalzang on the other side of the wall stares in perplexity at Jampa.

Next morning, Jampa leads the glossy black stallion to the gate of the house. He is wearing clothes slightly better than his usual rags, but his feet are still bare. He adjusts the stallion's harness outside the gate.

A hall with carved and painted beams. Namchal sits like a puppet on a couch under a brocade canopy embroidered with a dragon. His wife, concubines and women slaves are dressing him in the ceremonial robes of the last century. Behind him hangs a portrait of his father in identical costume.

A woman slave gently shakes the brass kettle and pours butter-tea into a silver bowl. Namchal's favourite concubine lifts the bowl to his lips. He shakes his head impatiently. She says jokingly, "Didn't you tell us the Liberation Army eats people, master?"

Namchal snorts.

The woman is rather frightened. "The Communists. . . ."

"They won't communize you!" He pushes aside the women and stands up in his stockinged feet. He stamps, and they hurry to put on his ceremonial boots.

At the gate Jampa is stolidly holding the stallion. He bends one knee. Namchal steps on his back to mount. The ceremonial boots glitter against the horse's glossy flanks.

A cortège leaves Namchal's mansion. The steward follows his master on a white horse. Then come three thugs on dappled mounts. In the rear are Jampa and some other serfs, carrying the things their master may need on this journey. They run hard to keep up with the riders.

The horses trot through the flowering meadows.

Jampa's bare, horny feet run close behind the horses.

Namchal is too short and fat, and also too cowardly, to make a good horseman. His tall hat jogs up and down.

They canter down the slope where the blacksmith lives. Kalzang standing before his forge exchanges a hurried glance with Jampa and then watches them make off into the distance.

They reach the foot of the hill. The black stallion pulls up abruptly. When Namchal whips it it rears up and throws him — one of Namchal's boots is left sticking in the stirrup.

The steward hastily dismounts to help him up, dusts off his clothes and puts his boot on again. "Vicious brute!" swears Namchal. The steward offers him his white horse. "Try riding this." The white horse snorts indignantly and Namchal notes with alarm that there is rough going ahead. "I'll ride. . . ." His eye falls on Jampa, the tallest and strongest of the serfs he has brought. Namchal points his be-ringed finger at Jampa.

Jampa toils painfully up the steep hill, gritting his teeth, with Namchal on his back. The steward, leading his horse, follows behind. The sweat is standing out on Jampa's head. The rings on Namchal's fingers sparkle before him. They seem to be re-enacting a scene from their boyhood.

They reach the top of the hill. Not far below flows the river, spanned by a chain bridge. Jampa staggers and lurches down, unable to pull up.

The river and chain bridge are whirling before Jampa's eyes. Suddenly the bridge seems to snap and its links fly off with the foam in all directions. Jampa trips, falls, and rolls down the slope till a boulder stops him. He lies on his back halfway down the hillside.

Namchal picks himself up from the ground, bellowing with rage. Before he can fly into one of his passions the steward hurries up and

tugs at his coat, pointing ahead and whispering, "Here they come." Namchal looks up in dismay. The steward and thugs pick up his hat which has rolled away and dust him off again. The other serfs, overtaking them, want to help Jampa up but are angrily stopped by the steward. They stand to one side watching. As soon as Namchal's costume has been adjusted he takes a *bata* from the steward and walks forward.

The serfs stand some way apart, bowing from the waist. They see coming up the hill two officers and several soldiers of the Liberation Army, accompanied by a Tibetan official. After they have exchanged *batas* and greetings with Namchal, the latter signs to them to lead the way; but the foremost officer in a green serge uniform has noticed Jampa sprawled out on the hillside and he asks what the trouble is. Namchal mutters something unintelligible and respectfully urges them to lead the way. Instead the officer walks over to Jampa.

Jampa's forehead is bleeding and when he opens his eyes he sees nothing but a medley of bubbles and chains. Then he makes out an unfamiliar face, more kindly eyes than he has ever seen, and a cap with a five-pointed red star. Round him are other unfamiliar but sympathetic faces and a whole cluster of five-pointed red stars. . . . Jampa trembles, dazzled by all the stars twinkling through the bubbles and chains.

When next Jampa opens his eyes, he is amazed to see a girl wearing another five-pointed red star. Looking down at him with a smile, she addresses him softly in Tibetan with a curious accent: "*Trashiiteleg, Trashiiteleg.*"

Jampa cannot understand what has happened. He is lying on a camp bed in a tent. An army doctor whom he thinks is a good fairy is bandaging his head.

"*Trashiiteleg* is 'good luck' in Chinese. Can you say it in Chinese?" asks another "fairy" from the foot of the bed. Jampa looks in search of her voice. His feet are sticking out from the end of the camp bed, and a nurse who seems a mere child is bending down to dress his bare, badly cut feet. He draws his legs back in alarm. The "fairy" smiles, wondering how to reassure him.

Just then a soldier brings in a new pair of shoes. His face set, gritting his teeth, he fixes burning eyes on Jampa and without a word slips the shoes on his bare feet.

The young nurse is still trying to make contact with the patient. With a smile she rattles off some common Tibetan names: "Trashii? Wangdui? Tsering? Kalzang?... What's your name? Do tell us...."

Jampa's eyes flash and his lips quiver.

A familiar, strident voice reaches his ears. "You're too good. This fellow's possessed by an evil spirit. Our master told me to come for him...." The steward's legs can be seen outside the tent.

Outside the tent. The steward, holding the black stallion, watches with a wry smile as the doctor and nurses help Jampa out of the tent.

In front of a larger tent near by is a rug with hassocks and refreshments, where the Liberation Army officers are chatting with Namchal and some Tibetan officials. When the commanding officer sees Jampa he gets up and walks over to him beside the stallion. The officer signs to him to mount the horse, but this passes Jampa's comprehension. Thinking that the officer wants to mount, he kneels submissively and bends for him to step on his back.

After a moment's bewilderment the officer understands. He helps Jampa to stand up, too upset to speak. Deeply moved, they gaze at each other. Then the officer holds the stirrup and takes Jampa's arm while the soldier who gave him the shoes also helps Jampa into the saddle. The soldier fits Jampa's feet — in the first pair of shoes he has ever worn — into the stirrups. The steward, who had meant to ride the stallion himself, stands by gaping in astonishment as the officer takes the reins from him and puts them in Jampa's hands. Once again the two men's eyes meet. To Jampa it is like a dream. His eyes fill with tears of gratitude and for once his face reveals the depths of his misery and longing.

The steward pulls himself together. Bowing to the officer with a laugh, he leads the horse away.

Namchal watches motionless from his hassock near by with a sadistic glint in his eyes.

The officers, doctor, nurses and the soldier who gave Jampa the shoes stand by the chain bridge in silence to see him off.

Jampa turns his head and tears well up from his usually phlegmatic eyes. All he can see through a mist of tears are the five-pointed red stars receding into the distance.

The quiet grassland. Flowers in the sunshine.

Kalzang stands by his forge looking down the road travelled by his friend that morning. Far off, a horse comes into sight.

The steward is seated arrogantly in the saddle. Jampa's hands are tied to a rope fastened to the saddle and he plods silently behind. The steward says with a malicious smile, "Our master told me to rid you of that evil spirit." He spurs the horse into a gallop, so that Jampa is flung down and dragged along the ground.

Clouds of dust. Jampa's new shoes are torn off one after another.

The blacksmith sees this from the slope and waits there in a fury. When the black stallion reaches him he leaps out and pulls the steward to the ground. Locked together, they roll over and over. The blacksmith's brawny hands close round the steward's throat. The latter shows the whites of his eyes and draws a knife. Kalzang snatches it and stabs him in the chest, spattering his own face with blood. Without a sound, eyes distended, the steward lies still.

Without stopping to wipe off the blood, Kalzang races to where Jampa lies unconscious beside the black stallion, which has halted and is nuzzling uneasily at his head. The blacksmith pushes the horse aside and with his bloody knife cuts the rope binding Jampa.

The stallion raises its head and whinnies gladly.

Namchal is riding the white horse, his thugs on their dappled mounts beside him. He reins in when they find first one shoe and then another dropped by the track.

Namchal smiles sardonically and cracks his whip.

Thunder of hooves.

Jampa lies in a stupor in Kalzang's tent, the clang of a hammer on iron ringing in his ears. He opens his eyes and sees the blacksmith's face streaming with sweat as he tries to smash his shackles. Jampa understands all that has happened. Seeing that his friend is exhausted and cramped for space, he sits up and takes the hammer.

The blacksmith stretches out his legs and lies flat on his back. Jampa raises the hammer and smashes it down on the chain. Kalzang's legs are bleeding but the chain is yielding.

Kalzang's whole body is jarred at every blow. Ignoring the pain, he looks up and cries hoarsely, "Break them! Break the chains handed down from one generation to another..."

The sound of hammering.

Swift thunder of hooves.

Horses speed over the meadow gay with flowers.

Jampa keeps hammering.

Suddenly Kalzang tears the chair apart, leaving half of it on the ground, half attached to one ankle. Able to move freely now he leaps up, but Jampa has to steady him. He pushes Jampa aside and takes two strides, panting and exultant. Stooping to pick up the broken chain, he hands it to his friend saying:

"Quick, go and find my sister. She'll understand everything when she sees this. I'll wait for you both under that tree where they hung my dad."

Jampa hurries out of the tent with the broken chain.

Jampa vaults on to the black stallion in front of the tent and looks anxiously round. In the dusk Namchal's white horse can just be seen. Jampa gallops quickly off.

The black stallion gallops into the valley.

The black stallion gallops into the sheepfold.

Namgang looks up in alarm from her milking and sees Jampa behind her flock holding high the broken chain. She exclaims, "So my brother?..." She rushes through the flock.

Jampa lifts her on to the horse and they gallop off.

Night is closing in. The black stallion clatters up a hillside path. A big tree looms ahead, its branches tossing. Below it stands Kalzang.

Suddenly the fugitives are cut off by the white and dappled horses which charge out of the darkness.

Jampa wheels the stallion and rides back.

One of the thugs draws a gun. Another on the white horse yells, "The master says catch him alive!"

Kalzang watches from under the tree clenching his fists, trembling convulsively but powerless to help.

It is pitch dark now and the black stallion flies on through the shades of night.

Jampa reins in abruptly at the edge of the cliff. Their mount neighs apprehensively and strains back. Their pursuers are gaining on them.

Namgang cries fearfully, "Jampa, Buddha will forgive us if we die together." The thought of dying together gives her courage. Her black eyes flash and she clings tightly to Jampa, as if entrusting herself body and soul to him. She buries her head on his shoulder, her long black hair covering his chest.

Jampa grits his teeth and pulls on the reins. The black stallion heads towards the white horse, but Jampa swiftly pulls it round to face the edge of the cliff. He tugs at the reins and pounds the stallion with his fist. Whinnying wildly, it leaps into space. The shock of the fall pulls Jampa and Namgang apart as they hurtle down into the river. Waves and foam are thrown high in the air.

Up on the hill Kalzang beats his breast and stamps in desperation but dares not utter a sound. He clings to the gnarled old tree to keep

Jampa and Namgang at the edge of the cliff



from falling. Then he staggers off towards the open country and is soon swallowed up in the infinite night. A wordless lament shakes the earth.

Gradually blood-red rays of sunlight flicker over the horizon, lighting up the burly figure of the blacksmith as he trudges over the vast, desolate grassland.

The river flows quietly at dawn, as if nothing had happened. A plaintive melody floats off with the waves.

Not far away downstream, the black stallion struggles up the sandy bank and rests there panting with exhaustion.

Its saddle is askew but has not come off. One of Jampa's feet has caught in a stirrup so that he has been dragged ashore. He lies there more dead than alive.

Thugs carry Jampa off. He is locked into a cage. The crowd around look on in fearful silence. Jampa is brave as a lion, defying death.

The Living Buddha's chapel.

The white-haired Living Buddha Chhoiphel bitterly reproaches Namchal, "How could you do such a thing? The Communist Party and the Liberation Army..." Too angry to continue, he pounds his cane on the ground.

"I carried out the law handed down by our ancestors," protests Namchal. "He's lucky that I haven't flayed him alive or burned him. Since the Communists' arrival some people have forgotten their ancestors."

The old Living Buddha strikes his cane on the ground, almost choking with anger at this unlooked-for insult. He glances for support at his host, the Living Buddha Thubtan, but the latter is busily telling his beads, deliberately keeping out of this dispute.

Swallowing his indignation, Chhoiphel says, "I'm an old man now. At last I've lived to see peace in our region... I don't know what some people are plotting. I'm going back to my little village in the mountains." He bows to Thubtan in farewell.

Thubtan says genially, "You are tired, Your Holiness. Have a good rest. Some other day I'd like to call on the Liberation Army with you. Leave these trifles to me."

Chhoiphel scrutinizes him and nods helplessly, leaving the matter to him. He hobbles out, leaning on his cane and muttering, "Lord Buddha says that all creatures are born equal, all creatures are born equal. . . ." The sound of his cane recedes.

"The old bastard!" swears Namchal behind his back.

Thubtan continues telling his beads for a while and then remarks incisively, "When one bird takes wing, the others follow suit. Punishment must be meted out to the unruly. But we mustn't go too far. Things have changed, men have lost faith. These are abnormal times. . . ." He flicks his beads again.

Namchal retorts resentfully, "The life of a dumb brute isn't worth anything, is it?"

"All serfs are brutes — but a dumb one is more useful." An idea strikes Thubtan as he says this. He continues with a smile, "It is heaven's will that I should take him under my wing."

In front of the main hall stand many lamas and laymen. Jampa, freed from his bonds, is kneeling at the foot of the steps. Thubtan stands above and declaims:

"The sea of suffering is boundless. Return good for evil and malice will change into mercy, mercy will help to rectify a man. . . . Being dumb, you cannot chant prayers. All you need do is to keep the lamps filled and lit to show your gratitude to Buddha." He puts his hand on Jampa's head.

Murmurs of appreciation from the crowd.

The old lama Gedun who has been standing to one side falls on his knees and exclaims fervently, "Great is the Living Buddha's compassion and mercy." He kowtows.

The Living Buddha continues to make clear his point, "He fell under the spell of the evil spirit from the east. This is something which all lamas and laymen must watch out against." This said, he strides away.

Another approving murmur from the crowd. The old people prostrate themselves first in gratitude, and soon all are reverently kneeling.

When everyone else has left, Jampa lies in a daze at the foot of the steps and for a long time does not raise his head.

The tattered old lama Gedun limps up to him, peering round shortsightedly, weak and frail as a guttering lamp in the wind.

“The Living Buddha has been kind enough to make you my apprentice,” he tells Jampa. “I’ve never had anyone to help me before, and I’m losing my eyesight working with these colours. If you don’t mind my being so old and poor, I won’t mind your being dumb. Just spend the rest of your life with me making gold images and we shall atone for all our sins.” He tries to help Jampa up.

Jampa looks at Gedun with gratitude and bewilderment in his unhappy eyes. But something makes him turn his gaze up into space.

From here he can see the top of the cliff looming high against the sky.

The far-stretching river.

A small craft floating downstream.

A girl is helping an old man to steer the boat.

Namgang, dripping wet, lies exhausted in the boat, despair in her eyes.

The girl looks encouragingly at Namgang and sings softly in a voice like Namgang’s own:

Ah...

I have seen the *Chingdrolmagmi*!

Snowy mountains, green pines,

You are no match for them!

Ah!...

Hope returns to Namgang’s bewildered eyes. The blue sky above seems to quiver.

At dusk Kalzang is trudging through the trackless forest over rotten boughs and dead leaves.

He meets an old woman in rags, a sack on her back.

“Aunty!” he cries eagerly. “Can you tell me where the *Chingdrolmagmi* are?”

The old woman is rather deaf, but at the word *Chingdrolmagmi* her eyes light up. “The *Chingdrolmagmi*? They’ve given me a farming loan and seeds. Seeds!” She pats the sack on her back.

“Where are the *Chingdrolmagmi*, aunty?”

She sizes him up, sees the broken chain round one of his ankles and says slowly, “You poor lad...” She leads Kalzang round some

trees and parts the branches to point outside the forest. Not far off is a newly built road.

“Look there, a road. A road!” To her a road is like a miracle. “That’s a rainbow road, a golden bridge. Follow this bridge to happiness, and you’ll find the people who’ve brought us happiness....”

In the sunset, the road through the green woods sparkles like a golden belt stretching into the infinite distance.

Trailing his broken chain, Kalzang steps on to this road.

Brawny hands are kneading clay.

In a dark corner of a Buddhist chapel is Jampa, his head shaved like a monk and wearing a ragged robe. More haggard and apathetic than before, he is working on an image. On the scaffolding behind him in the middle of the hall, Gedun is modelling a huge clay image which reaches to the ceiling.

As Jampa stoops to stir the clay, a broken chain falls from under his robe into the clay. He retrieves it slowly and stares at it.

He remembers how he waved this chain on high, how he held Namgang on the black stallion, how he struggled to escape from the dark, shining river.

Through the gloom a figure runs up stretching out strong hands. This man leads a horse up a slope and then gives the reins to Jampa and grips his hands. It is the Liberation Army officer who helped him to mount the horse.

There is a radiant smile on the officer’s face. The five-pointed red star on his cap is bright and sparkling. It lights up the flowering earth.

Jampa and Namgang seem to be flying on horseback through the sky.

Without warning the earth quakes and reproachful cries are heard all around, “You have sinned! You have sinned!” The black stallion stumbles and falls into a swamp. Namgang sinks out of sight, and Jampa is left alone floundering in the mud.

Jampa covers his face and sinks down by the clay in the chapel.

Old Gedun helps him up and wrests the broken chain from his hands. After looking furtively round, he hides the chain in the belly of the image Jampa is making and covers it from sight. While doing this he warns Jampa:

“The Living Buddha told me that if you were possessed by evil spirits again, you would never escape retribution.”

Jampa stands numbly in his clay-stained robe.

The forge is red.

In a temporary smithy by the road, Kalzang, his cheeks ruddy, swings a hammer. The jacket of his faded army uniform is unbuttoned and he is smiling broadly. He picks up a pile of mattocks he has repaired, puts them over his shoulder and goes out.

Kalzang has galoshes on his feet, always bare before, and he bounds along the new highway till he comes to the road-building team of Liberation Army soldiers and Tibetans. He hands them the mended picks.

The officer whom Jampa met is working with the rest. Grinning at the blacksmith, he takes a pick from him.

These simple occurrences seem to Kalzang too good to be true and he beams with smiles. He keeps one pick and sets to work with it, turning up the clay from which the snow has not yet melted.

Some different clay is moulded by powerful hands.

This clay is moulded into drapery and pendants.

Colours and gold paint are added.

The white of the Buddhist image's eyes are rubbed clean.

Jampa has finished an image of White Sgrol-ma, a goddess with a sorrowful face and downcast eyes. You might almost take it for a statue of Namgang.

By the light of the temple lamps, Jampa, more haggard than ever, gazes fixedly at the lifelike image he has made.

The wordless song drifts through the air again. White Sgrol-ma suddenly seems to raise her eyes and move her lips.

Jampa gazes intently.

But, no, the goddess has not moved. She is only a clay image with a sorrowful face and downcast eyes.

The real “miracles” take place outside in the sunshine in actual life. Namgang raises her head from the board on which she is writing the characters she has learned. No longer in rags, she is wearing neat Tibetan clothes and her hair is coiled under a blue cotton cap. All this is commonplace enough, yet it seems like some magic transformation in a fairy tale. Namgang is prettier than ever now that her cheeks

have filled out and her eyes are brighter. But a trace of sorrow still lingers on her face.

She and her companions are seated at one end of a field in front of a blackboard. Their farming tools are not far away. Broad fields with deeply turned furrows stretch behind them, and a tractor has stopped in the distance.

A young Tibetan teacher, her hair in two short plaits, is writing Tibetan words on the blackboard and getting the class to read them. They are common Tibetan names to hold the interest of these beginners. Namgang joins the others in chanting them aloud with infinite concentration:

“Drolma — Jangchan — Trashii — Wangdui — Jampa —”

The others read on, but Namgang suddenly falters. All she hears through the rising and falling chant is the one name: Jampa, Jampa, Jampa.

Jampa's capable hands have put the finishing touches to a whole row of images.

He and his master are kneeling now in the hand of the huge Buddha, engraving its massive fingers. Gedun screws up his eyes painfully and wipes them with the back of one hand. He sighs before resuming work on a finger.

Jampa crosses the chapel slowly with lowered head past all the gods he has made. He does not even look up now at White Sgrolma who has lost her splendour. Time has passed, to be sure, but the lines of care on his stolid face are hardly in keeping with his years.

Stepping out of the gloomy chapel he is dazzled by the starlight outside. He looks up at the night sky studded with stars which seem to be winking at him, close beside him. The wordless lament rings out again, mingling with the sound of bells, conches and chanted scriptures.

Jampa covers his face, and all the sounds are hushed.

Suddenly a cry of anguish from the chapel rends the silence of the night. He rushes back.

In the chapel, old Gedun is lying at the feet of the great Buddha. A case containing the colours has fallen beside him and its colours are staining the ground in all directions.

As Jampa runs to help the old lama up, Gedun croaks fearfully, "I can't see. I can't see..."

In a panic, Jampa picks up the case and holds his wet, mottled hand in front of his master.

Although he strains his eyes painfully, the old lama cannot see it. He calms down presently, however, and strange smile appears on his face. In a cheerful tone, which yet makes your blood run cold, he declares:

"I've atoned for my sins. I've put the finishing touch to Buddha's eyes..."

Tears flow slowly from his vacant, sightless eyes.

The ceremony for the completion of the image of Buddha. Clamour of drums, bells and incantations. Someone tears the comb off a cock and catches the blood in a silver bowl. This bowl is lifted up to the Buddha's eyes and a silver needle steeped in the blood smears the black glass pupils coated with white, showing the pupils.

Trumpets raised high blare to the sky. The huge Buddhist drum thunders.

Treasures are placed in the Buddha's back. Lamas carrying grain, precious stones, scriptures and so forth pass them up to the lama in charge, who places them in the cavity left in the Buddha's back. Jampa devoutly passes up a dish with a liver and kidney made of metal.

Ceaseless drumming, gonging and chanting of scriptures. Led by the Living Buddha, the priests and laymen worship the great image. Blind Gedun totters behind the rest and kneels, his face upturned, as if he could see.

The incense smoke wreathes up to the Buddha's face and clings between the two gleaming glass eyes.

In the Living Buddha's bedroom is a small image similar to the big new Buddha. A small radio transmitter in its opened belly is tapping out a message, which a lama with bent head is hastily transcribing.

The Living Buddha Thubtan and Namchal are seated under an old-fashioned paraffin lamp, waiting eagerly for the news. The lamp comes from India and dates from the reign of Queen Victoria.

Thubtan seems a little on edge. He opens a tin of cigarettes and offers one to Namchal. These are State Express cigarettes produced

in India, popular among the top circles in Tibet. The matches Thubtan picks up are Indian too with an English trade mark. The design on the box shows a tiger watching a deer drinking from a stream. Thubtan strikes a match.

Lamas with tapers go all round the temple lighting the lamps.

Blind Gedun carries a lamp too. When he comes to the chapel with all his images, he sets his lamp down and kneels devoutly to pray.

The chief lama and a band of men are on the rugged hillside behind the temple. Looking down, they see that the temple is brightly lit.

The chief lama looks up at the sky and starts chanting mystic chants.

An engine roars in the dark sky and a parachute drops on the hillside.

The chest dropped by parachute lands on a big rock and bursts open. Guns spill out.

The lamps in the temple are out and the courtyards are infernally dark. Jampa walks with bent head past Gedun's burnt out lamp towards the chapel. The big door is closed but a gleam of light shines brightly through a crack. Jampa goes over to investigate.

There are flickering lights inside and he can see the chief lama and his men passing guns up behind the big Buddhist image and hiding them in the cavity for treasures.

Jampa steps back in amazement and realizes that someone is behind him. He turns to confront the Living Buddha.

Thubtan draws, "Dumb fool, uh..." He thinks for a moment and then smiles. "You're lucky to be dumb. You must look after this chapel well. Take care of the golden image you've made."

Jampa stares in silence at the ground.

The Living Buddha steps forward. "Don't forget who gave you a second chance.... You sinned. You must atone for your sins."

The chapel is empty with no trace of what has happened. Jampa stares woodenly at the great image.

"Jampa, Jampa! Are you in here?" Gedun gropes his way in. "What's the strange sound I keep hearing?..."

Jampa takes two steps towards him and his lips quiver.

Gedun, lost in thought, asks himself, "Is it Buddha summoning me?"

Jampa looks at him and closes his mouth.

Gedun wheels round. "Jampa, Jampa! Are you in here?"

Jampa stares at him without moving.

Gedun decides that Jampa is not there and heaves a long sigh. Falling to his knees before the image he pleads, "Lord Buddha, have mercy on my apprentice. Although I can't see, I know he hasn't fully atoned for his sins..."

Jampa gazes in distress at the great Buddha.

The transmitter in the little Buddha taps out a message. Thubtan and Namchal sit near by watching contentedly.

The small Buddha rattles away more loudly.

Pine torches flare on the grassland as a contingent of the Tibetan rebels swear an oath of allegiance before their banner "The Lions of the Snowy Mountains."

A weird ceremony takes place before the image of Buddha. A group of armed lamas, calling themselves the "Religion Protection Army" pledge their loyalty. The lamas yell savagely and flourish their guns.

A shell hits the earth and sends out sulphurous smoke. On the mountain opposite the Potala Palace in Lhasa a group of rebels bowing low in surrender pour out of an old fort, holding their guns above their heads.

The little Buddha in the Living Buddha's bedroom rattles out a frenzied lament.

Beads of sweat stand out on the head of the lama taking down the message.

Namchal in army uniform frantically paces to and fro and yells at Thubtan, "We can't get through to Lhasa. Can't get through..."

Thubtan is still seated under the paraffin lamp trying to keep calm and holding the cigarette tin tight. He says gravely, "Contact Karimpong in India."

"Confound them, why did they cave in so quickly?" Namchal is like an ant on a hot pan. He tugs at the Living Buddha and demands, "Shall we fight? Or clear out? Eh?..."

Thubtan scornfully shakes off Namchal's hand and stands up.

A lama hurries in and whispers to him.



Jampa and the blacksmith's daughter Namgang

Young Namchal steps on Jampa's back





Jampa breaks the young blacksmith's shackles

Thubtan strides out to the passage to intercept the Living Buddha Chhoiphel who is being helped in.

“What brings Your Holiness here at this time?” he asks.

“Those rebels!” pants Chhoiphel. “They’re no true Buddhists.”

Thubtan is taken aback.

Tears streaming down his face, Chhoiphel goes on, “They are bad people! The ‘Religion Protection Army’ raped nuns and burned the holy canons. They even stripped the gold off the image of the Buddha.... I barely escaped with my life.... Tell me, has the Communist Party done us any wrong all these years?...”

Realizing that this tirade is not directed against him, Thubtan nods in pretended agreement.

Chhoiphel clasps his hands and bows before the image of the Buddha. “Ah, Buddha! These renegades are no true Buddhists. They’ve betrayed their country, their people and the Buddhist teaching.”

In the bedroom, Namchal in his uniform collapses on to the couch and mutters hopelessly, “We’re done for, done for....”

“No, we’re not!” declares Thubtan stubbornly in the doorway. After a moment’s reflection he adds, “You take your men and pull out. I’ll stay here.”

Namchal stares in dismay.

“Everyone knows that I’m their active supporter. Doesn’t even that old bastard come to me for shelter?...” He smiles malevolently. “When you get abroad, just tell our friends that in Tibet there are still true Buddhists like the Living Buddha Thubtan.” He glances confidently at the ceiling and then turns to order, “Take away all the men you aren’t too sure of.”

Namchal leads other horsemen up a steep track. He is riding a dappled horse. This ragged contingent includes monks, laymen, thugs, house serfs and slaves forced to carry heavy loads.

The chief lama has abandoned his heavy iron rod. But his rifle looks very like his old rod. He shouts to urge the slaves on, and belabours their heads and shoulders with the butt of his rifle. One man shields himself with the sheepskin sack on his back. It is slit by the rifle and grain starts pouring out. A few steps further on the man raises his head — it is Jampa. He looks back at the hills of his home lost in the mist.

Galloping. Cavalry of the Liberation Army reach the temple. The Living Buddhas Thubtan and Chhoiphel lead all the lamas to greet them at the temple gate. Thubtan looks as if he has been longing for this day. He stands waiting, a *bata* raised high. But as the party approaches, he suddenly blenches.

Confronting him is a Liberation Army officer with the insignia of a second lieutenant. It is the former blacksmith Kalzang, who broke his chain and ran away.

They eye each other in silence for a while.

Old Chhoiphel behind looks on in bewilderment and whispers, "Living Buddha!"

Mastering himself, Thubtan says in an artificial yet very nervous voice, "Greetings! You're one of us. Welcome home..." He presents the *bata* with hands that tremble.

Namchal's house is sealed up.

This is the temporary office of the work-team. Soldiers and local cadres keep going in and out. Second-lieutenant Kalzang is making an urgent telephone call.

"Can't you hear? I want the county Party secretary..."

"Report!" cries a soldierly voice. This is followed by hearty laughter. The officer whom Jampa once met is standing in the doorway dressed like the local cadres.

Smiling, Kalzang puts down the receiver and rises to greet him.

"How goes it, work-team leader? So many folk at your door!" The county Party secretary points outside.

"I've something to report to you. The Living Buddha has got some old men and women to come to the door here to chant sutras..."

"To chant sutras?"

"That's right. They all claim that the Living Buddha is a good man. A good man!"

"And what did you do to him?" The county Party secretary asks anxiously.

"I didn't touch a hair of his head. In the old days I'd have —" Kalzang breaks off, his grave face relaxing into a smile. "I explained the policy to him in detail, but he shifted the whole blame on to Namchal, saying he's always supported the Communist Party... But apart from anything else, the day of the ceremony in the temple a lot of local people and lamas heard an aeroplane go over, and some

woodcutters in the hills saw a parachute come down. More than that no one knows. When Namchal ran off he took some poor lamas with him. . . .” He finds it hard to formulate his suspicions clearly.

“Come on, let’s talk it over with the local people.” The Party secretary starts to the door. Then he remembers something. “Oh, why hasn’t she come in?”

“Who?”

“I’ve brought you a Tibetan cadre.”

“That’s fine. Just what I need.”

They leave the room.

Outside the house they see some old people kneeling and chanting sutras. Gedun Lama is kneeling against the threshold in front, showing the whites of his sightless eyes. Kalzang sees a larger crowd round the courtyard gate and hears eager exclamations. He walks over with misgivings.

“Brother!” Namgang breaks through the crowd and rushes towards him.

They embrace eagerly yet on the verge of tears, while all around are still.

“Who, who’s that?” asks old Gedun.

Namgang recognizes him and goes over. “It’s me, Father Gedun, Namgang.”

Gedun’s eyes widen and he dares not move.

“Don’t be afraid, father. It’s Namgang, not a ghost. . . . Do you know who saved me?”

Gedun clasps his hands. “May Buddha bless you!”

The old folk around them intone prayers.

An old woman turning a prayer-wheel cries, “The Living Buddha saved Jampa’s life, but that wicked Namchal has taken him off with him.”

Gedun says earnestly, “The Living Buddha is a good man.”

“A good man! A good man!” Cries of praise mingle with the incantations.

Namgang has only a general idea of what has happened here. Hardly able to control her emotion, she clings to the whipping-post where Jampa was punished as a boy, and tears fill her eyes.

The Party secretary comes up to her.

Night. A snowy ridge. Namchal on his dappled horse leads his band over the mountains. Gunfire can be heard not far away.

Among the slaves is Jampa, carrying a different load. He looks up at the stars in the sky. The bursts of gunfire embolden the serfs like stirring music at the horizon. To Jampa the stars seem very close. He glances round with flashing eyes and then flings down his pack and dashes down the hillside. The slaves near him drop their burdens and follow suit. They have not gone far when the chief lama and his men cut them off and fire their carbines. Some of the slaves fall. Jampa and the rest are forced to go back.

The chief lama's gown is torn, his amulet lost. He stands, a menacing figure, on the slope. Suddenly Namchal's horse comes rolling down and nearly knocks him over. Looking up, he sees Namchal standing frantically above him, a pistol in his hand. With a yell, the serf-owner flops down in the snow.

With lowered head, Jampa climbs. His old Buddhist robe is so tattered that he is nearly naked.

When Namchal sees this powerful figure approaching, he rolls his bloodshot eyes and scrambles up out of the snow, clutching his pistol.

Liberation Army cavalry gallop through the valley.

Tibetans old and young have gathered at the pass to see them off. Some point the way, others weep or clasp their hands in prayer.

One old woman's tears are falling like rain as with trembling hands she puts a *bata* over the neck of one horse. The rider is little more than a boy, yet obviously utterly fearless. He looks down at the old woman and without a word unbuttons his army jacket and lovingly folds the *bata* over his chest. Then he gallops off with the others out of the valley.

On the summit of the snow-covered mountain, gunfire sounds closer.

Namchal levels his pistol at Jampa, who bows his head and carries his former master on his back up the snowy mountainside. There is no one else in sight. Namchal cries hysterically, "Hurry up! We're nearly at the border..."

Another sharp burst of gunfire. Namchal's lips tremble. "The Liberation Army men are coming!"

Jampa raises his head. The stars seem even closer, the music even louder. He puts on a spurt and, reaching the top, looks down on to a dense forest of towering trees. Namchal on his back yelps with fear as Jampa topples him off. Grappling together, they roll down the slope.

They roll down the snowy slope into the forest and struggle almost simultaneously to their feet. Namchal's pistol falls from his hand, and the two men struggle with each other. At last Namchal seizes the pistol. He is just about to fire at Jampa when a Liberation Army man comes bounding down towards them. Jampa and the fighter exchange a rapid glance, but before the latter can speak Namchal fires at him and the soldier falls to the ground. Jampa charges towards Namchal but falls before he can reach him. As Namchal turns to fire again he is hit himself and drops dead, his mouth gaping, his vicious eyes staring.

Jampa turns and sees that the wounded soldier has risen to his feet with his rifle and is smiling at him. The next moment he falls to the ground.

Jampa rushes over to support the fighter and gazes at him.

It is the young soldier who was given a *bata* by the old Tibetan woman at the pass. He still seems no more than a boy, warm-hearted and fearless. Opening his eyes to look at his Tibetan brother, he painfully pulls out the precious *bata*, already stained with his blood. He hands the blood-stained *bata* to Jampa and dies.

Jampa cries in distress, "*Chingdrolmagmi!*"

Song:

Ah...

I have seen the *Chingdrolmagmi!*

Snowy mountains, green pines,

Are no match for him.

I give him a *bata* white as a fleecy cloud,

He gives me one stained with his blood.

Chingdrolmagmi, dear brother!

Chingdrolmagmi, dear brother!

Dawn lights up the snowy mountains. The majestic Himalayan pines seem to tower into the sky.

Jampa clasps the red *bata* to his heart. His tears pour down.

Higher up, cavalymen of the Liberation Army in white capes ride down the silver mountainside through the primeval forest.

Night. An army truck drives down the highway, circles round a shrine and pulls up.

Jampa jumps down from the truck. The driver leans out and waves to him before setting off again.

Jampa waves back in silence. He looks up at the chain bridge. This is where he once lay unconscious, where he first met the *Ching-drolmagmi*. After standing there for a moment he takes the path home.

The temple comes into sight like a dark stronghold wrapped in swirling mist, stubbornly resisting the bright shafts of the dawn.

Jampa goes into the chapel with the images he helped to make. He climbs up to the sealed cavity in the back of the great Buddha. First he taps the door gently, then he pounds and tears at it till his hands are bleeding. At last he gets it open.

The treasures he brought to it are no longer here. In their place are a dark heap of rifles and cartridge cases. With his bleeding hands he picks up an armful of rifles and slides down to the ground.

“Who’s there?” calls a hoarse voice. The Living Buddha Thubtan pads over stealthily from the chapel door. His eyes widen, “Dumb fool, eh? You!” He hisses, “You have sinned. You have sinned.”

The Living Buddha shrinks back, a murderous glint in his eyes. He snatches an ancient holy sword from a pile stacked behind him and charges, slashing at Jampa’s head.

Jampa whirls round and the sword catches him on the side of his forehead. He collapses.

“That’ll shut your mouth!” exclaims Thubtan viciously. He throws down the sword, thinking to flee, but his eye lights on a sacred picture hanging between two pillars. He tears it down, sets fire to it with one of the lamps, and uses it to set light to the other pictures as he rushes out.

The temple is a sea of flames.

The local people and Liberation Army men rush towards it.

Kalzang and Namgang give a lead in putting out the fire.

Blind old Gedun kneels in one corner, praying to heaven.

Two soldiers march Thubtan along and inform Kalzang, "He was making for the mountains."

The Living Buddha protests, "This blacksmith, this soldier, set fire to my temple. You're destroying religion." He seizes Kalzang and shouts, "Villagers, this blacksmith and Liberation Army man is trying to burn your Living Buddha."

Some of the villagers stop putting out the fire and eye Kalzang suspiciously. Namgang hurries over to protect her brother. "No, villagers..." She casts about in vain for some evidence to convince them.

A hoarse cry sounds from the blazing chapel.

Kalzang shakes off the Living Buddha's arm and rushes to the chapel. The leaping flames make it difficult to approach.

Jampa staggers out of the blazing chapel. Bleeding all over and covered with tongues of flame, he is still clutching the rifles. When he catches sight of Thubtan, he drops the rifles and points furiously at him. Confronted by those powerful, accusing hands, Thubtan turns pale and lowers his head.

In the burned out chapel with its gutted images another fire blazes up — the wrath of the people. Countless serfs who have stooped all their lives are shaking their angry fists. Formerly submissive people rend the air with their slogans: "Down with traitors!"

The masses have flocked here of their own accord. All the weapons hidden in the great image have been brought out and dumped in front of the blackened Buddha. The vast lotus throne is serving as a temporary platform. There sits the Living Buddha Chhoiphel beside the serf and lama representatives. The county Party secretary and Kalzang are there too. Thubtan hangs his head and bends low, standing at the edge of the platform. Countless serfs and poor lamas crowd round. Kalzang calls for order to let Gedun Lama speak.

Tears are flowing from the blind man's eyes and he stretches out trembling hands. "What can I say?" he cries. "I'm blind. I'm dumb too! All my life ... all my life." He raises both hands as if to feel the great Buddha he moulded, and sobs. Then, for the first time in his life, he shouts, "Give me back my life!" He gropes frantically to find the Living Buddha.

A one-armed serf below the platform holds up his cut off arm, dried and shrivelled. "Give me back my hand!" he yells.

Others join in, shouting, "Give me back my parents!"

"Give me back my brother!" The crowd is seething. Liberation Army soldiers surround Thubtan to stop the people from tearing him to pieces.

The old Living Buddha Chhoiphel on the platform brandishes his cane to deal Thubtan a blow, but the Party secretary catches hold of it and prevents him. Kalzang raises his hand and cries through tears, "Villagers! . . ."

A roar of anger rends the sky.

The angry roar carries to the Living Buddha's bedroom where Jampa, his head bandaged, is lying in bed. A faint groan escapes his quivering lips. He struggles to speak.

Namgang is sitting beside him holding his hand.

A mighty shout, loud as thunder, reaches his ears. "Long live the Communist Party!"

Namgang calls softly, "Jampa, did you hear that? . . . The times have changed. The dumb can talk now."

As more slogans are shouted, Jampa opens his eyes. Namgang cries, "Jampa!"

Jampa gazes at her and can hardly believe his eyes.

Is this the old playmate who staunched his blood and tended his wound?

Is it the girl on the cliff with the long black hair?

Is it the White Sgrol-ma he made, who has come to life?

Jampa's face is young again. He gazes in emotion at Namgang who is smiling through her tears.

"I'll talk," he says finally. "I have so much to say. . . ." He turns to look at Chairman Mao's picture on the wall.

He says, "Chairman Mao!"

Song:

However high the Himalayas
They must have a top;
However long the Yalutsangpo

It must have a source;
However great our sufferings
They must have an end!

Translated by Gladys Yang



Stormy Seas

Assistant Captain Yang Ting-shan, a handsome young fellow with a full face and big eyes, hung the binoculars around the neck of Captain Kao Cheng, who was taking over the watch, and went nimbly down the steep iron stairs of the bridge.

Although the southern seas were free of ice and snow in early winter, at night the forward speed of the ship whipped up a chill breeze that bit through serge uniforms. The frost on the handrails was also cold. To a man new to the sea the fishy smell of the air was nauseating, but Yang inhaled it deeply like a peasant savouring the earthy aroma of the soil. He pulled open an iron cabin door marked "Assistant Captain" in luminous paint.

As he turned on the light, a table, a single berth and a small bookcase sprang from the darkness. Against the far wall stood a clothes locker with a mirror on the door. The mirror faced the cabin entrance, and when the light went on it reflected Yang's uniformed figure and

Chi Ping, a second lieutenant in the Chinese Navy, writes in his spare time and is now doing scripts for his unit's theatrical troupe. This story is based on the author's own experience.

the first lieutenant's tabs on his collar. He advanced two steps and the image grew larger. Yang inspected it carefully. The full face was sunken, the big eyes were bloodshot, there was a growth of stubble on the chin. In half a month of one practice problem after another the shuffle of many feet back and forth had polished the deck bright. In that half month Yang hadn't eaten a single uninterrupted meal or had a solid night's sleep. It was the first time in half a month he'd even had time to take a real look at himself in the mirror.

But half a month of hard work mid wind and wave had brought excellent results. In all of the numerous practice problems, both theoretical and practical, their ship had won top grades. No wonder the flotilla commander had smiled when announcing the scores at yesterday's meeting.

A tight-lipped smile with a few small creases at the corners of the mouth appeared in the mirror. Exactly how the commander had looked yesterday. Pleased with his imitation, Yang grimaced at himself in the glass like a mischievous boy.

Why had the commander's smile made Yang so happy? He had his reasons. Ordinarily, a conversation with a junior officer of another ship in the flotilla might run like this:

"How did your ship do in the test?"

"Not bad." The other fellow would hold up a hand and waggle his fingers. "Five points. Full score."

"What kind of five? A smiling five or a frowning?"

"Frowning. And you?"

"The same."

They were referring to the flotilla commander's expression when he announced the scores. These were reached by averaging the showings of all the men on each ship. Of course some individuals had lower marks than others, and when he saw these the commander knit his brows. But a man's ten fingers weren't all the same length, were they? And the commander was terribly strict. He spotted every little fault, even if it was no bigger than a sesame seed. To get a "frowning" five under those circumstances was hard enough. This time they had won a "smiler." A real accomplishment.

Take the final test yesterday morning for example — gunnery practice. Originally Captain Kao was in charge. While the forward turret gun was firing, suddenly the flotilla commander yelled: "The captain has been wounded." Yang had to take over. That was bad

enough, but soon the commander shouted again: "Forward turret gun put out of action." Fine, all their preparations had been in vain. It was enough to drive a man frantic. But they went on with the practice steadily, got the proscribed number of shells off in the allotted time and "wiped out" the "enemy." The commander who frowned so easily smiled broadly for the first time in six months.

What made him so fond of frowning? Most people said it was just a habit. He did it when checking their work, when considering a problem, even when talking. But there were frowns and frowns. A secret was involved. The commander had a scar on his left eyebrow, a memento of the War of Resistance Against Japan. It was scarcely visible. You missed it if you didn't look closely.

Yang had been his messenger during the war. He knew that the scar was the cause of the perpetual frown. The test of whether he was really displeased was not the frown but the scar. When that scar turned red and shiny it meant the commander was in a fury. Only Yang and the commander's wife knew this.

The scar had bulged scarlet quite often this past half year, several times on account of Yang. Why? Yang had given the matter a lot of thought, examining his actions, but he hadn't been able to determine the cause. He decided after the manoeuvres were over and they returned to port he would find a chance to ask the commander.

Yang yawned and his eyelids drooped. The figure in the glass grew hazy. He was very sleepy. Tomorrow when the ship reached port there'd be a meeting, a summing up, then a thorough cleaning from stem to stern. Another whirl of activities. He'd better get some sleep.

He threw himself down on the bunk without removing his shoes or turning off the light, and immediately fell fast asleep.

The next thing he knew — he couldn't tell how long he'd been sleeping — someone was calling him: "Assistant Captain, get up."

Abruptly sitting erect, he reached for his cap. "Any emergency?" he queried automatically. "Emergency" meant something of major importance, like enemy activity.

"No."

Yang retracted the hand he had extended for the cap and rubbed his eyes. He saw that the man standing before him was Chiang Shui-tao, the assistant navigator. "What's up?" he asked.

"The flotilla commander wants you."

“Isn’t Captain Kao topside?”

“He is.”

All the training plans had been completed, the ships were returning to base, and Captain Kao was topside. Why should the commander be summoning him? To discuss the cruise and announce their next assignment? That could wait until tomorrow. Not to order a mock night battle, surely? The commander liked to test the men under difficult circumstances when every one was worn out. But he hadn’t said anything about such a manoeuvre.

“Any idea what the commander wants?” he asked.

Chiang spread his hands and shook his head. The honest fellow had recently been raised from the ranks. He obviously didn’t know the answer.

Yang hopped out of bed, put on his cap, smoothed his uniform and buttoned his collar. As he started for the door, Chiang said quickly:

“Better wear your raincoat, Assistant Captain. There’s a strong wind and the waves are high. The weather forecast says we’ll have a storm in an hour.”

Only then did Yang notice the drops on Chiang’s own raincoat and the sea-foam on his shoulders. The pillow and quilt on the bunk from which he had just risen had slipped into a corner, and the books at the head of his bed were sliding back and forth like kids on a seesaw. His experience told him this meant the waves outside were running six degrees at least. He took his raincoat off the wall and draped it over his shoulders.

When he pulled open the heavy waterproof door the gale whipped phosphorescent foam into the cabin. Yang spat out the salty spray and asked:

“Where are we heading in these high seas?”

“Shipwreck Rock.”

“What?”

“Shipwreck Rock. We’ll be there soon.”

Another gust covered them with spray. Yang shivered. Quickly he donned his raincoat. Both hands gripping the rail outside the cabins, he made his way across the slippery deck to the bridge.

There he discovered why the flotilla commander had summoned him.

It was very quiet on the bridge. The noise of the wind and waves was blocked out by a large plate-glass window in front. To the left

was a chart table with a canvas awning that made it look rather like a jeep. A large nautical map was spread across the entire table. An adjustable shaded spotlight was focused down upon the chart so that the two men leaning over it could not be seen clearly.

But it wasn't necessary for Yang to see them. He knew who they were instinctively. The tall powerful man on the far side of the table was Captain Kao, famed for his "foghorn voice." At one thunderous shout from him the whole bridge rattled. Leaning forward, his towering frame occupied almost two-thirds of the table. He was nodding in agreement as he listened to his companion speak.

The other man was Flotilla Commander Yen Ming, Kao's respected chief for many years. Yen looked positively frail next to the burly Kao. But oddly enough, in spite of the gruelling half month they had just put in at sea, rigorous days that made Kao's voice go hoarse and thinned his face, the flotilla commander, who had been busier than any of them, looked as spruce as ever.

Hearing Yang's voice, Yen stopped talking and turned around. His back was to the light and Yang couldn't see his expression, but he was conscious of the commander's flashing eyes.

"You've sent for me, commander?"

Yen nodded. "Have a good sleep?"

"Pretty good."

"What do you think of this training cruise?"

"Not bad," Yang replied cautiously, trying to read the commander's face.

"Not bad at all," the commander exclaimed warmly. "The comrades learned a lot in half a month, more than three months' practice in port would have given them, wouldn't you say?"

Yang nodded.

"Technique improved very rapidly, but more important is a better understanding of the whole concept of battle. All of the men's movements were close to actual battle requirements. Don't you agree?"

Again Yang nodded. "Out with it, whatever you're up to," he thought. "Don't beat around the bush."

At last the commander came to the point. "Do you know why I've sent for you?"

"No."

"Have you tried to guess?"

"No."

"Well, try."

"I've no idea."

"Haven't you, really?" The commander glanced at him with studied casualness.

Yang's face suddenly burned. Fortunately it wasn't very light on the bridge, so his reaction was not visible. "Do you want to test me again?" he asked.

"You see, you were able to guess after all," the commander replied. "Yesterday, when you took over from the captain in the firing practice, you did quite well. Now I'd like to see you run the ship."

"Right now?"

"Right now." The commander pointed at the black void beyond the plate-glass window. "Ahead is Shipwreck Rock. Take command."

"Me?"

"You."

"Right. With you and the captain here supervising, I'll give it a try." Yang retained his calm with an effort.

"I didn't say anything about trying. This is a test of ability. What kind of test would it be if the captain and I stood by to supervise?" The commander looked at the silent Yang. "What's the matter? Don't you dare?"

"Of course, of course," Yang hastily replied. A sudden dryness of the throat made his voice a bit hoarse. He poured himself a drink of water from the thermos on the small table to the right. His hands shook so that only half the water went into the bowl. The rest spilled on the floor, splashing his trouser legs. "Heavy seas," he muttered. He drained the bowl rapidly.

"Turn over the watch to him, Captain," he heard the commander say, "then go and get some sleep."

"Right," Captain Kao replied cheerily. He handed Yang his binoculars. "It's dark and blowing up a gale, old fellow," he said. "We'll have a storm in about an hour. Be careful passing Shipwreck Rock." He clattered down the iron stairs.

Yang looked at young Chiang. "Where's the navigation officer?"

"Resting."

"And the navigator?"

"He's resting too."

"Then who'll chart the course?" Yang asked, perturbed.

"I will," Chiang replied slowly. He looked upset. The navigator on duty was the captain's staff officer and assistant, a check on the accuracy of his navigation. He probably was worried that his skill wasn't sufficient to be of much help.

"While your fate was being planned, you were fast asleep," Yang berated himself mentally. He should have known. The commander was always probing for soft spots. Fourteen years ago, when Yang quit being a cowherd and put on his military uniform for the first time, Yen Ming was his army battalion leader. One dark night — just as dark as this — an urgent message had to be delivered to a command post twenty *li* away. There were five other experienced messengers available, but Yen had picked him. "Don't you dare?" That day too Yen had put the question to him, leaving him equally flabbergasted.

Marching, battles, flying bullets were an everyday affair, then. You had to act fast, learn fast. Yen had given him his own automatic, and Yang had slipped through three enemy blockade lines and delivered the message in time. He had been absolutely fearless.

But today he was responsible for a China-made battleship. Just producing the necessary steel alone was enough to keep a small steel mill busy for some time, to say nothing of the fact that the lives of the ship's entire complement were in his hands.

Yang turned his head. In the darkness his gaze met that of the commander. A silent dialogue took place between those two pairs of eyes.

"What's wrong?"

"It's a tough assignment."

"Scared?"

Yang swallowed back the excuses that had risen to his lips. Wrenching his gaze away, he blurted, for want of something better to say: "We're nearing Shipwreck Rock."

The commander made no reply. He sat down on a canvas chair beside the chart table and lit a cigarette.

There was no way out. To Chiang, who was busily preparing his navigator's instruments, Yang said: "It's a dark night and the seas are high. Pretty soon we'll have a storm to add to the festivities. What's more, we have to run a complicated course. We're shouldering a heavy burden. The least little mistake and we'll be in serious trouble."

He was facing Chiang, but he was watching the commander out of the corner of his eye. He didn't hear a word of Chiang's answer.



The commander, puffing idly on his cigarette, was concealed in a cloud of smoke. But when Yang mentioned "the least little mistake," the scar over the commander's left eye suddenly distended. Yang knew he had caught his attention.

The warship ploughed on through the waves. Soon Chiang announced: "We've entered Shipwreck Rock Channel."

"Right." Out of force of habit, Yang turned to the commander, "Shall we increase our speed?"

The canvas chair was empty. The commander had left the bridge.

Yang nearly cried aloud in dismay. But he steadied himself instantly. He picked up the speaking tube.

"Up three revolutions on both engines."

There was no response from the wheel-house. Only a low murmur of voices could be heard through the tube.

"Who's the helmsman down there?" Yang shouted.

"I am." The voice was that of the chief of the wheel-house crew.

"What are you dreaming about? Didn't you hear my order?" Yang always disliked inefficiency, and now it infuriated him. "Don't you know we're about to pass Shipwreck Rock?"

"I ... yes, sir." The crew chief had been about to explain, but then thought better of it. He sounded aggrieved. The wheel-house was completely silent.

“Stay on your toes.” When the helmsman offered no argument, Yang cooled down a bit. He repeated his order: “Rev up three on both.”

“Right. Up three revolutions on both engines.” Bells rang and the voice from below reported: “Up three on both.”

The warship sped towards Shipwreck Rock.

After leaving the bridge, Commander Yen inspected every post from stern to bow. “We’re approaching Shipwreck Rock,” he reminded the bow lookout. “Keep alert. If you see anything unusual, report it at once.” He went to his cabin, turned on his desk light and removed his raincoat. Sitting down in an easy chair, he closed his eyes and relaxed.

Yesterday evening the weather forecast predicted a storm before dawn. The piece of shrapnel in his left shoulder had already given him the same “forecast” three days before. Yen had lost too much blood in the battle where he received the shrapnel wound, and the doctor had been afraid to operate. Yen had laughed and said: “Leave it there. When it hurts it will remind me of the American imperialists. They supplied Chiang Kai-shek with the shells.” It was very painful now, and he knew a storm was imminent.

At the thought of the storm, Yen leaped to his feet, grabbed his raincoat and started for the door, his pain forgotten. Yang was on the bridge, about to guide the ship past Shipwreck Rock. Shipwreck Rock — the very name was enough to make mariners shiver.

Originally known as Wolf Tooth Rock, it wasn’t very conspicuous even on large navigational charts. Were it an ordinary obstacle, you could simply detour around it. The sea was big enough. The problem was that it was right in the middle of the navigation lane. Ships had to go by it. But if you passed it too close, you were liable to hit it. If you swung too wide, you ran aground on the shoals. And you had to pass it fast. The water poured swiftly through the channel between the rock and the shoals. Travelling against the current, if your ship didn’t advance at a rapid speed, it would be swept back.

Year after year, more shipwrecks were noted on the navigational charts, and these marks made the narrow passage narrower still, the dangers to navigation more acute. Shipmasters preferred going miles out of their way to avoid the rock. One old foreign captain, a man

with years of experience, decided he would take the risk. He started well enough, but as he drew closer and closer to the huge jagged pile, he lost his nerve. He pulled away too soon and drove his ship upon the shoals. The tug that came to pull him off also went aground to keep him company. That was when the rock got its new name.

The commander didn't know how the old captain felt, but his own emotions when he passed the rock for the first time he would never forget. Ever since Marshal Lin Piao called on all the armed forces to toughen up, the navy had been using Shipwreck Rock as one of its severer navigational tests. After considerable practice, a number of ships had passed it. Yen went by it two years before, but that was in broad daylight and after half a month of preparation. Even so, they had just squeaked by. When he came down from the bridge that day his clothes had been soaked with perspiration. Today, they would be making the run at night. He remembered Yang's words: "The least little mistake. . . ." Yen reached the cabin door in a few strides and grasped the knob.

Then he smiled. He had set the problem himself. How could he call a retreat at this critical juncture? He released the door knob, tossed his raincoat on the desk, and again reclined in his easy chair.

The decision to let Yang pilot the ship past the rock had been made only an hour before. It was an arduous task for a man who was new to the post of assistant captain. But the commander had no doubt that Yang could do it, otherwise he would not have permitted him to take the risk. Besides, the commander had another reason.

Fourteen years ago, when Yang stood before him in his new uniform, the boy kept licking his lips as he answered Yen's questions. At the time Yen had frowned and thought: "Hm, an ignorant kid." Yang had been with him ever since. Starting as a messenger in the army, Yang had been transferred with him to the navy in 1953, where he rose successively from gun layer to gun crew leader, to chief gunner, to assistant captain. Like other youngsters forged in the crucible of the revolution, Yang, with the guidance of the Party, had been developing along the correct path. He liked to study, he worked hard. He had been a first-rate soldier, and today was a first-rate officer. He rose from chief gunner to assistant captain in little over a year. He learned everything with astonishing rapidity.

But lately, Yang had picked up a favourite phrase: "Up to the standards of the manual." Speed, quality, level of accomplishment —

all had to be "up to the standards of the manual." If, in any respect, he was not "up to the standards of the manual," he sweated and strained until he was. Then he smiled, completely satisfied. Why not? Weren't these the standards set by his superiors?

Commander Yen felt there was something wrong as soon as he noticed this. He observed that Yang was keeping strictly to the book. Anything that the "manual" didn't require, he didn't learn. Or where it did require something, he never learned it any better than the "manual" demanded. Yen saw that the problem was serious. That was what made his scar bulge so often in Yang's presence.

"One of these days I'll make you understand that the reason we practise day and night is not just for the sake of being up to the standards of the manual," the commander had vowed.

The ship lurched sharply. Yen's cup slid off the table. Fortunately the cup was plastic, so it didn't break. An unlocked drawer flew open, dumping its contents on the floor. The seas were much heavier. Yen leaped from his chair and rushed out, not bothering to take his raincoat.

The night was dark, the wind was strong. Black clouds scudded past the mast tops. You could have wrung water from the air. Familiar with the whims of the deep, the commander recognized these signs as the prelude to a storm.

He mounted softly to the bridge. Yang was standing with eyes fixed on the sea ahead. For better clarity, he had opened the window partly and was leaning halfway out. Assistant Navigator Chiang was busy with his instruments — checking the compass, measuring on the chart with his slide rule, marking the ship's position and reporting to Yang: "One point too far to starboard," "Still one point off," "Right on course."

Yang kept correcting their position accordingly with orders to the wheel-house: "One point to port," "Two points to port," "Steady."

As Chiang raised his head, he saw Yen. He opened his mouth to hail him, but the commander quickly silenced him with a gesture. Indicating that Chiang should go on with his work, the commander took a stand quietly in a dark corner.

The ship was now in the centre of the passage, running against a swiftly flowing ebb tide. Trembling with the effort, she strained through the roaring, spume-tossed, phosphorescent waves.

"How much time have we got before the storm breaks?" asked Yang, without turning his head.

"Forty minutes," Chiang replied.

"It will take us at least half an hour to get through at this rate. That's shaving it too close." Yang seemed to be talking to himself as much as to the navigator. "And it looks as if the storm will strike ahead of schedule. We'll have to speed up."

"That's what I think," approved Chiang.

"Both engines up four," Yang said into the speaking tube.

There was no acknowledgement of the order, but bells rang and the warship put on speed. A huge wave smashed upon the prow. The entire vessel shuddered. Spume flew up to the bridge and splattered against the glass like bursting fireworks. A few drops sailed through the open window into the commander's eyes, making them smart. He reached for the handkerchief in his pocket but stopped midway, afraid that the move would distract the pilot.

A black mass looming up out of the water grew nearer and nearer. The open sea before the vessel shrank. Shipwreck Rock lay ahead. The commander knew that this was the crucial moment — the moment when the old foreign captain had lost his nerve. What would Yang do? Would he panic too? Should he remind him? These questions raced through the commander's mind, but he kept his lips closed, his jaws clenched. The scar over his left eyebrow stood out so sharply it looked ready to burst.

Yang stood like a cast-iron image. He didn't turn his head, he didn't blink an eye. The sight before him seemed to have no affect. Higher and higher, more and more massive towered the rock. Waves broke against it in thunderous booming rhythm, with a force that shook the air. In the flickering glow of the phosphorescent spume, Yang could see the jagged points of Shipwreck Rock, pointing at the warship like so many arrow-heads, while the vessel, like a fearless warrior, swept forward, chest extended and head high.

The gap between the ship and the rock became smaller and smaller.

"Veer off, veer off," the commander said to himself. Practically at the same moment, he heard Yang order: "Ten points to port."

"Right," the voice of the wheel-house crew chief came through the speaking tube. "Ten points to port."



The ship heeled over, slipping neatly by the arrow-heads. Gradually, the dark shadow of the rock retreated along the starboard rail. Soon it was left far astern.

The warship had safely passed Shipwreck Rock.

Yang had exercised his command in a practised and competent manner, completely up to standard in every way. The commander unlocked his tightly clamped lips and heaved a long sigh.

A flash of lightning, ripping across the sky, lit up the figure of the young assistant captain. How dignified, how alert he looked. Yen remembered the short skinny boy who kept licking his lips fourteen years before. He was tall now, strong, a real man. He had lost a lot of weight in the past half month, and stubble covered his chin.

Yang obviously was very tired. "I've been pushing him too hard," thought the commander. "I'll have to let up a bit."

Again lightning flashed. Large drops began pattering down on the canvas awning of the bridge. The unreliable storm had arrived ahead of time after all. Commander Yen changed his mind. "That's wrong," he thought. "I'll have to push him harder still. He's got to learn as fast as possible to be able to take the warship into battle through the worst of storms. I was right to make demands on him fourteen years ago, and I'm right to do it now. Although we hear no cannons and see no smoke today, the imperialists are liable to start a war at any time. We must be prepared to defend our socialist land."

The rain fell more heavily. Assistant Navigator Chiang got a raincoat and draped it over Yen's shoulders. The commander didn't even notice it. Taking out a handkerchief, he walked up to Yang and wiped the drops off his hair like a loving father. Yang gazed at him in surprise.

"Go down and rest. I'll take over," Yen said casually, offering him the handkerchief.

Yang didn't take it. "You haven't given me a score yet, commander," he retorted cheekily. "What about it? Do I pass?"

"Quit gabbing and get out of here," growled Yen. He shoved the handkerchief back in his pocket.

As he was passing the wheel-house, Yang thought he'd better drop in and tick off the crew chief a bit more for not responding promptly to orders. But when the door was opened, he stared in astonishment. He couldn't utter a word of his intended lecture.

The little wheel-house was jammed. In addition to the crew chief, who was handling the wheel, and the speed controller, Captain Kao was also there. Standing beside the helmsman, he was leaning with his face outside the open window, concentrating on the sea ahead. Spray and rain had soaked the front of his jacket, but he seemed unaware. On the table behind the wheel was another nautical chart showing Shipwreck Rock. It too marked with the course the ship followed to pass it. The navigation officer and the navigator were still busily working over the chart, their faces streaked with perspiration. They plainly hadn't been resting at all. Yang understood.

Another flash of lightning gilded the sea, the warship and the interior of the little wheel-house with silver. Warmth surged into

Yang's heart. As if illuminated by the flash, many things suddenly became clear. Yang was moved, ashamed, stimulated, and filled with determination.

He didn't go into the wheel-house, but hurried back to the bridge. There were a million things he had to say to the commander.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustrations by Chang Teh-yu



A Clash of Temperaments

When Aunt Pepper acquired a daughter-in-law, the village gossips got busy. "A hot-tempered mother-in-law and an outspoken bride," they said. "A needle against a sharp wheat spike. They're sure to clash."

The words soon reached Aunt Pepper's ears. "I like a young person who speaks her mind," she retorted. "She says what she thinks and laughs freely. I couldn't spend a day with the reserved mumbling type."

In her forties, Aunt Pepper was very healthy. According to the old timers, she had married Blacky Wang when she was eighteen. He died of exhaustion three years later, working as a hired hand for the landlord, and left her with a few months old baby boy. She had wept and carried on terribly. A lone widow, how could she manage? She had thought of suicide, but she couldn't bear to part with her suckling infant. She lived on, though there seemed no end to bitter hardship. She grew silent, wooden, like an image.

Li Ching is a young worker at a tractor station of a people's commune in Hsinyi County, Kiangsu Province. He writes in his spare time.

But the abrasives of reality gradually sharpened her. If anyone tried to insult her, she fought back loudly and vigorously. In the old society that was a widow's best defence.

Although this earned her the nickname of Pepper, she wasn't one of those noisy, quarrelsome women. She had a quick tongue, but she was always reasonable. She neither took advantage of people nor allowed herself to be pushed around.

The founding of the People's Republic brought her a new life. By the time the co-ops, and then the communes, were established in the countryside, Aunt Pepper was not badly off. Her son was already a young man. But Young Blacky's disposition was quite different from her own.

"You're just like your father," she would say. "Not a word or a smile out of you all day. How can you stand it?"

Young Blacky would chuckle. He was a cadre in the commune administration, and when he worked he did it strenuously. But he wasn't much of a talker.

A few days before Aunt Pepper had heard a rumour that Young Blacky had a sweetheart — a girl in Hsiaowang Village famed for her aggressive nature. Today when he came home, the first thing she said as he entered the door was:

"I know you're close-mouthed, but I never thought when you found a sweetheart you'd hide it from your own mother."

The young fellow chuckled. "So you know, ma?"

"Your ma's got long ears."

Young Blacky sat down at the table and ate. His mother watched with a smile. She wondered how a taciturn boy like her son could win a high-spirited girl.

"They say your Hsiaowang girl is very wilful. Is that true?" she asked.

Her son grinned. With a mouthful of steamed muffin, he replied: "You'll find out when I bring her home, ma."

When the bride moved in, Aunt Pepper was delighted with her.

The girl was very pretty. Neither tall nor short, she wore her black hair in braids that swung as she walked. Her cheeks were apple red. Beneath long arched brows a pair of large shining eyes you could practically see yourself in shone with intelligence.

She was just the kind of direct girl the widow liked. After greeting Aunt Pepper she asked what work the team was doing, and requested that the team leader assign her a job. Aunt Pepper laughed.

“You don’t even know how much land our team has. Spend a few days getting familiar. Then it will be time enough to go to work.”

The girl smiled and helped her mother-in-law with the cooking.

“Ma, where do we keep our fuel stalks?” she asked, raising her long eyebrows.

“You’ve just come. Even if I told you, you wouldn’t know — in the thatched hut by the east threshing ground.”

The bride hurried out. In a few minutes she returned with an armful of stalks.

“How did you find them?”

“I asked that mama across the way.”

“So you called her mama, did you?” Aunt Pepper laughed. “She’s a relative of ours. Though she’s younger than me, she’s of an older generation. You’d better call her grandma.”

She and the bride both laughed. They began to make steamed muffins, working busily together. “Ma,” said the girl, “you sit down and feed the fire.” She washed her hands and kneaded the snow-white dough, then put one after another of the muffins in the steamer.

Aunt Pepper had led a hard life. Never had anyone shown her such affection. Her heart warmed, tears glittered in her eyes. She smiled.

“Everyone says you’re a headstrong girl, that we two will be like a needle and a sharp wheat spike. We’ll show them whether we can get along or not.”

Before the bride had crossed the threshold a score of days complaints began to pour in.

“You’d better control that daughter-in-law of yours, Aunt Pepper. She swore at me.”

“Tell your girl not to be poking her nose into so many things. She’s no cadre.”

“Now see here, Aunt Pepper...”

But the widow was not an old-fashioned mother-in-law who berated her son’s wife without investigating and apologized to anyone who

uttered a word against her. She glanced at the aggrieved face of the caller and said coldly:

“Our bride isn’t the kind who swears at anyone for no reason at all — I don’t care what you say. You must have been up to something. And you still have the nerve to come to me about it.”

Knowing that reason was not on her side, the caller, at the sight of Aunt Pepper’s expression, could only walk away.

One day, “Grandma” Wang, who lived opposite, dropped in. Aunt Pepper could guess pretty well what was on her mind the moment she entered the door. The woman had always been shiftless and lazy. Even now as a member of the production team she liked to loaf. But when the work-points were calculated she always raised a rumpus, demanding a high score. Aunt Pepper had no use for people like that. But since in terms of family relationship the woman was technically her aunt, she had never been “peppery” with her.

Clapping her hands agitatedly the woman exclaimed: “You must speak to the girl, niece.” With the dignity befitting a member of the older generation she said: “The child has just arrived, no one wants to quarrel with her. But she stamps on people’s noses and insults them to their face.”

Aunt Pepper smiled. “How has she insulted you, aunt?”

“Today, the team leader told me to shuck corn. I did nothing wrong, but your daughter-in-law shamed me in front of everybody,” the woman cried indignantly. She looked at the widow as if to say: “Don’t you understand what I’m getting at?”

The widow understood all right. She controlled her temper. Her reply was soothing, but it contained a hidden barb.

“Very well. If she’s done anything to be sorry for, she’ll know it herself. I’ll talk to her when she comes home.”

The woman could see from the widow’s face that if she remained much longer there’d be trouble, so she hastily departed. At the door she paused and added provocatively:

“You’re no fool, niece. If you don’t put that child in her place, there’ll be no holding her. She’ll come after you, too.”

These words made Aunt Pepper think. Although she herself was hot-tempered, she had never been arrogant, or stamped on anybody’s nose. She was careful to preserve the face of members of the older generation in all of her dealings with them. If daughter-in-law

should some day attack her, how could she save her own face? She decided she'd better give the girl some advice.

Daughter-in-law finished her work. Wearing a close-fitting tunic and trousers, her long black braids piled on the top of her head, she trotted home, singing a tune and waving her small sickle in rhythm. She had boundless energy and was brimming with youth. Any place she went was enkindled by her vitality. At the sight of the girl, Aunt Pepper forgot her doubts. She asked with a smile:

"Did you quarrel with Grandma Wang today?"

The girl put some muffins in the steamer and closed the lid. Her eyes grew larger and a flush rose to her cheeks.

"Has she complained about me?"

"She certainly has."

"The team leader told her to sit in the field and shuck corn. She must have made at least eight trips home in the course of the day, and was gone for a long time on each trip. She shucked very little corn, but when the work-points were being calculated she brazenly asked for the highest rating. If everyone thought like her, we'd never get to socialism."

Shocked, Aunt Pepper vigorously poked up the fire. Daughter-in-law had done the right thing. How could she criticize her?

"Did you swear at her?" she asked.

"I told her if she wanted a lot of points she ought to do more work. Then she began screaming at me."

Again Aunt Pepper was shocked. Finally, in a soft voice she said: "If I scold you, daughter-in-law, you mustn't be angry."

"Go ahead, ma. I'm listening." In the month since she'd arrived, this was the first time she had been formally addressed as "daughter-in-law." And she had never heard the widow speak so carefully. The girl was surprised.

"What she did was wrong, and you were right to mention it. I would have done the same."

The girl smiled.

"But, although I have a bad temper, I've always remembered people's station in life, and tried not to make anybody lose face. As long as a person doesn't attack me, I won't humiliate her. What's more, it all depends on the situation. You can't treat the older generation the same as the younger."

She looked at the girl as if to say: "Take me, for instance. A mother-in-law is, after all, a mother-in-law."

Daughter-in-law had a quick mind. She caught on immediately. Her long brows rose and she burst into laughter. And her loud clear mirth seemed to say: "What's so special about a mother-in-law? If you do anything wrong, I won't let you get away with it either."

With the coming of the autumn harvest, the production team was very busy. The millet had to be reaped, the sorghum had to be cut, the corn had to be gathered. Aunt Pepper had a household of three to manage. With her son away from home a good deal of the time and her daughter-in-law working in the fields all day, the team cadres felt they couldn't very well give her any assignments. But daughter-in-law saw that the crops were ripe and that everybody was rushing to get them in during this period of clear skies — there had been several days of rain. She didn't think it right for her mother-in-law not to take part.

"Our team is really hustling, ma," she said.

"Hurry and eat. The food and soup are hot. Eat quickly and go back." With a pair of chopsticks she offered the girl a taste of a vegetable dish.

"We're awfully short-handed, ma, with so much to harvest," the girl said in a slightly louder voice, looking at her mother-in-law.

"It's a fact. At harvest time, one person has to do the work of two."

The widow didn't seem to get any of her hints. The girl had no choice but to speak directly.

"Ma, you ought to be working in the fields too."

"Silly child," Aunt Pepper said with a reproachful laugh. "That's easy enough to say. Do you think I'm resting here? I've the chickens and ducks to feed, and all the household chores. It's not easy."

Raising her brows the girl said hotly: "Ma, all you think of is our chickens and ducks. Why don't you think of our team's crops? Grain is the most precious of treasures. We've got to gather it all in the next few days. If we should suddenly get an autumn rainfall, those crops would rot in the fields. Wouldn't that make your heart ache?"

Her cheeks were red, as if they were frost-bitten, she was breathing hard and her nostrils flared.

Aunt Pepper had grown wiser with age. Had this been a few years ago she would have exploded. But now she thought: The child is right. Doesn't Young Blacky often say, "If the river has no water the streams dry up?" Only if our production team does well can the life of each family improve. Of course the harvest is important.

Repressing her anger, she said: "There's no use losing your temper. Your ma isn't the backward kind. I'll be out in the fields tomorrow."

Nevertheless, she wasn't pleased. "Why do I work so hard around the house if not for you and Blacky?" she thought. "Besides, I'm your mother-in-law. Is that any way to talk to a mother-in-law?"

The next three days Aunt Pepper worked with the team, but her heart wasn't in it. Although she knew her daughter-in-law was right, she felt she had to find some way to reassert her prestige. Otherwise the girl wouldn't respect her.

Then the team got ready to pick cotton, and Aunt Pepper's spirits soared.

For she was the best cotton-picker in the village. No one had ever been able to keep up with her. Her hands were swift, her walk was steady. She picked quick and clean. Everyone praised her skill. "On heavy work maybe I can't compete with you youngsters," she thought, "but cotton picking needs finesse. Three daughters-in-law put together are no match for me. I'll show you that your mother-in-law isn't backward."

She didn't know, however, that her daughter-in-law had been famed for her picking in Hsiaowang Village.

The day they were to gather the cotton Aunt Pepper got up before dawn. She put on her work clothes and wrapped leggings, which she hadn't worn for years, around her trouser legs from ankles to knees as a protection against the sharp twigs.

The girl also was ready. Coming from her room, she called: "Let's pick cotton, ma."

"Let's go."

Aunt Pepper emerged from her own room. At the sight of her leggings, the girl chortled with laughter.

"You really look heroic, ma."



“Old arms and legs can’t move very fast. I hope my picking won’t hold you back,” the widow replied, her face hardening.

“You’re too modest, ma. I’ve heard all about you. You’re a first-rate picker,” the girl said teasingly.

“Only so-so,” Aunt Peper retorted. But there was pride in her voice.

Again the girl laughed. On the way, the widow kept glancing at her, as if to say: “I’ll show you a thing or two today.” And her daughter-in-law looked back at her, as if to say: “I’ve got you all picked out. You’re the one I’ve got to beat.”

The other members of the team, especially the women, whispered together: “Today it’s really going to be needle against wheat spike. We’ll soon find out which is the sharper.”

In autumn the cotton fields are a deep purple, and the snow-white bolls on the evenly spaced plants nod a welcome in the breeze.

Aunt Peper couldn’t wait to start. She strode into the field, stooped forward and went to work. While her left hand held up

the end of her apron, her right hand darted high and low, up and down. Cotton bolls sailed into her apron as if drawn by suction.

Her daughter-in-law was quite unflurried. Keeping pace with Aunt Pepper in another lane, she chatted and laughed with the girls. Soon the two were far ahead of the others.

The girls clapped their hands and cried approvingly: "See, Aunt Pepper has met her match today."

The widow heard this and looked at the girl out of the corner of her eye. Head down, daughter-in-law was moving both hands swiftly among the leaves. Her skill and agility were startling. Aunt Pepper hadn't met such an opponent in years. Would she be beaten by this girl in front of everybody? The thought had never occurred to her.

Aunt Pepper worked faster. After a while she again glanced at her daughter-in-law. To her surprise although she was doing her utmost the girl was still keeping up with her. The widow began to tire. Her legs and back ached. Her face was perspiring, her breathing was uneven. But daughter-in-law was sticking right with her, both hands flying effortlessly.

Suddenly, Aunt Pepper heard the other women laughing. She looked around. Her daughter-in-law was no longer behind her. She looked ahead. *Aiya*, the minx had already reached the end of the row. The widow's face burned like fire. She had a feeling that was hard to describe. She stood stockstill, unable to speak. Gazing at the girl she thought: "After all, I'm your mother-in-law. How can you make such a show of me?"

A couple of mischievous girls hooted in unison: "One, two — Aunt Pepper. One, two — step on the gas."

It was more than the widow could bear. Flinging down the end of her apron and dumping the cotton to the ground, she turned to the team leader and said: "I've got a belly ache. I'm going home." Without waiting for his reply, she walked away.

She practically ran all the way back to the house. "Daughter-in-law, I never thought you'd behave like that," she said to herself. "Slapping my face in front of everybody. Have you no respect for your mother-in-law at all?"

This time when daughter-in-law came home she wasn't singing and she didn't smile. Her face was frosty as she entered the door.

Aunt Pepper was seated on the doorstep. She had removed her apron. Her leggings were hanging loose. Her expression was cloudy.

Daughter-in-law walked up and greeted her boldly. There was a bit of tartness in her voice.

“Well?” the widow said coldly.

“What made you quit halfway?”

“I had a belly ache.”

“I don’t believe it.” Daughter-in-law’s eyebrows rose. “Where’s your sense of responsibility? Young Blacky’s a cadre. You ought to set a good example in the fields, but instead —”

“Instead I’m a backward old mossback,” Aunt Pepper flared.

By coincidence, Young Blacky happened to return from the commune office at that moment. He immediately sized up the situation. He signalled to his bride to go to their room. When she had left, he approached his mother.

“How are you, ma?”

“Your ma is dead. She’s been aggravated into her grave.”

Young Blacky chuckled. He knew his mother took time to cool off when she flew into one of her rages. He went to his room.

When his bride saw him enter, she demanded irritably: “What are you smiling about? I’m ready to burst.”

“Ho. A person bursting in this room, another dead of aggravation in the next. What’s going on anyhow?”

The girl told him what had happened. In conclusion she said: “Now isn’t that infuriating, I ask you? All she thinks of is showing off. She expects me to do less work just because she’s my mother-in-law. And when I don’t go along with her, she dumps out her cotton and quits.”

Young Blacky laughed. “Of course you’re right. But ma comes from the old society. Do you expect her to change her ideas and habits overnight? It’s up to us to explain things to her. Losing your temper only makes matters worse. Sometimes you’re hasty to a fault.”

It isn’t how much you say that counts, it’s how well you put it. Young Blacky’s words made everything suddenly clear to his bride. She laughed, and a rosy hue came to her cheeks.

After Young Blacky left, the girl saw that Aunt Pepper still looked downcast. She went up to her and cried with a smile: "Ma."

"What?"

"Let's cook supper."

"I'm not hungry."

The girl laughed. She remained standing before the widow. When Aunt Pepper still didn't raise her head, she asked softly:

"What shall we make for supper, ma?"

"Anything you like."

"I say pancakes," the girl proposed. "We can make up a big batch that will last for several days. It will save us the trouble of cooking at night after harvesting all day in the fields."

Since her mother-in-law voiced no objection, she went into the millshed next door. Soon she came out with a large bowl of batter. By then it was nearly dark.

Both women got busy. Daughter-in-law took the more tiring job of plying the piston bellows to blow up the charcoal fire. Aunt Pepper spread the batter on the griddle.

The girl pumped the bellows and the flames danced. Soon the griddle was purple hot. The widow's pancake sizzled and curled up at the edges. When it turned golden, Aunt Pepper whisked it off deftly.

"You're really an artist, ma," cried the girl.

"Others are much better."

"Your pancakes are thin as paper."

Only then did the widow look at the girl. Her heart softened. That's how she was. She couldn't remain angry when her children spoke nicely to her. "Such a good daughter-in-law," she berated herself. "Why should I be short with her?"

But when she remembered that scene in the cotton field, she again was strongly annoyed. The girl seemed to read her mind.

"Ma," she said, "I was wrong today. I shouldn't have spoken to you the way I did."

Warmth flowed into the older woman's heart.

"I hope you'll excuse me, ma. I'm young and don't have much sense."

Aunt Pepper's nose tingled. "I don't blame you, child. The fault was mine."

Daughter-in-law plied the piston bellows with might and main, and the flames sputtered higher. The griddle turned a cherry red. Aunt Pepper busily spread batter, which sizzled as it touched the glowing surface.

"I hear our family had a hard time in the old days, ma."

"We did indeed." Aunt Pepper sighed. "A lone widow and a fatherless child, it was one long struggle."

"We'd still be living that kind of life if it weren't for the Communist Party."

"That's right. We owe everything to the Party and Chairman Mao."

"When the river has no water, the streams go dry. Only doing a good job of our communes gives us real security."

"That's what Young Blacky always says."

"What do you think is the best way for our production team to get a good output?"

The widow laughed. "The answer to that is easy. By everybody pitching in and working hard."

"What do you mean — pitching in?"

"Think less of yourself and more of the collective whole. Be on friendly terms with everybody and take the lead on all jobs."

"Right, right," daughter-in-law applauded. "But you left one thing out."

"What's that?"

"Learn from and help each other. Close unity on every job, with all going forward together."

At last the widow understood. "Clever minx, she's been leading up to this to teach me something."

"Ma, do you know what a competition is for?"

"Of course," Aunt Pepper snapped. "To see who can beat whom."

"Wrong," the girl laughed. Quietly and slowly she said: "Our competitions are different from those in the old society. In order to improve production and strengthen our commune, we must all try to learn from anyone who does anything better than we. Nobody should consider it a loss of face."

As her daughter-in-law explained, a window seemed to open in Aunt Pepper's heart and light came streaming in. She could see now that she had behaved badly in the cotton field that day. A warm flush suffused her cheeks.

The following morning the widow got up early. She tied on her apron, wound her leggings, and went out with her daughter-in-law to pick cotton.

On the way she looked at the girl as if to ask: "Saucy minx, how can you pick so fast? Today, I'm going to learn your trick if it kills me."

And the girl looked back at her mother-in-law as if to reply: "You certainly make progress fast, ma. That's something I can learn from you."

And the other women in the team whispered among themselves: "What's Aunt Pepper doing here again today? Probably she wants a return match with her daughter-in-law."

As they worked their way deep into the field, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law were again side by side, but even closer together than the day before. Bending at the waist, the girl began to edge ahead. The widow leaned over to her.

"Not so fast, minx."

The girl stared at her uncomprehendingly. "What do you mean?"

Aunt Pepper blushed. "I want you to show me how you pick cotton."

The girl laughed happily. She moved closer to her mother-in-law and demonstrated. She picked with both hands. To make sure she picked clean, she wore thimbles on two fingers of each hand. The end of the apron she held with her teeth. This left both hands free to work. Naturally, two hands are quicker than one.

Aunt Pepper tried the method. It felt very awkward. She couldn't make her hands co-ordinate.

"Don't rush, ma," said daughter-in-law. "You're not used to picking with both hands yet. Practise slowly till you get the hang of it."

The other women, seeing them talking so fondly head to head, were amazed. "What are those two up to?" they asked.

The widow stood erect and called: "Hey, all of you come over here. Learn the advanced way our daughter-in-law picks cotton."

"What's so advanced about it?"

Noisily, the women gathered round. The girl demonstrated, while Aunt Pepper explained. Then the other women tried it. All agreed that it was a good method. The problem was that they weren't

accustomed to it. A couple of girls got very upset at their own clumsiness.

“A new-born baby doesn’t even know how to drink its mother’s milk the first time it tries. You’ve got to put in some hard practice before you can learn our daughter-in-law’s ‘two-handed cotton pick.’”

Everyone laughed.

“Ma is good at coining new phrases,” the girl said.

Again they all burst into laughter, including the widow. It seemed to Aunt Pepper that she had never laughed so happily and wholeheartedly in her life.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro

Illustration by Yang Yung-ching

Hunting (traditional painting) by Uldzhit ►

Uldzhit, a Mongolian painter in the traditional style, was born in 1928. He started doing art work when he was serving in the People’s Liberation Army. After he was demobbed, he studied in the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Peking from 1953 to 1955. He is at present vice-chairman of the Mongolian branch of the Chinese Artists’ Union and editor-in-chief of the *Mongolian Pictorial*.



Selections from the Classics

Tang Dynasty “Yueh-fu” Songs

Songs by Chang Chieh

The Old Peasant

In the hills lives a poor old peasant
Farming a few small patches of hilly land;
Sparse his crops, many the taxes, and he goes hungry
While grain in the state granaries turns to dust;
At the year's end his home is bare but for plough and hoe,
He takes his son up the mountain to gather acorns;
But the West River merchant has hundreds of bushels of pearls
And the dog on his boat gorges every day on meat.

Building the Great Wall

Building the Great Wall

Tens of thousands of men raise rammers,
Tamping the earth hard, testing it with awls,
While officers crack whips to goad them on.
One whole year in this sandy waste,
In short jackets, with no water to quench their thirst,
They are worn out but cannot down tools,
And all are dead before the tamping ends.
Sons reared to be the masters of their homes
Have turned to dust at the foot of our prince's wall.

Toil and Care

Toil and care, care and toil:
There's little happiness for a poor couple.
This year he's shipping tribute rice for others,
Last year he fished by the river;
My mother-in-law is old, our boy still young,
I must take the silk myself to pay the tax;
Flax and mulberries darken other people's fields,
My man sweats alone in vain.
May the oxen's hooves grow round, the sheep's horns straight
And my husband stay at home — then I'll be content.

The Riverside Village

Deep the southern pool, thick and even the young reeds,
The rice is sown in fields with no boundaries
Where every pebble shows clear below the water
And mud from the reeds besmears the peasant's clothes.
He cuts sedge from the end of the field to thatch his roof,
Back home tethers the buffalo and sleeps alone;
Soaking in water has blistered his hands and feet
And gad-flies buzz around him.
Now that mulberries are dark, silkworms newly dormant,
Women leave the fields gather mulberries.
Deadly the sultry heat south of the Yangtse
But fresh the colour of paddy transplanted in rain.
One long year of back-breaking toil
Then harvest comes and each household makes ready to feast.

The Cowherd's Song

I lead my buffaloes far away
For thick grow the crops round our village;
In the meadow a hungry crow pecks at their backs
And won't let me play on the ridge.
My herd scatters through grassy meadows,
The white calf lowing sometimes towards the reeds,
And I blow on a leaf to a friend across the dike
Who cracks his long whip in reply.
Browse well, all you buffaloes, and keep out of mischief
Or officers will come and cut off your horns.

Songs by Wang Chien

'The Silkworms

Silkworms near their time
Spin on the mat their lustrous silk cocoons;
Sun and wind fill the high, roomy shed,
No need to dry stalks* in the yard.
Holy silkworms, make haste and work hard,
At New Year we shall sacrifice to the sacred mulberries:
May we have a clear sky and no rain,
No rats below, no flies above!
The bride bows to you and prays for plump cocoons,
Women sprinkle peach water and men beat drums;
In three days the mat is raised from the balls of snow
And the first cocoons are sent to the county head.
Already the village is urged to speed up the weaving,
But by whom will this silk be worn?

The Boatman's Song

Pity me, born by a river port,
Conscripted to two boats.
Hard days are many, good days few,
Like a sea-gull I sleep on the waves and trudge on sand.

*To which the silkworms attach themselves to spin cocoons.

Towed upstream against the wind the boat weighs a hundred tons,
But the last stage and the next are poles apart;
At midnight we reach the dike in snow and sleet,
Out we're driven again as soon as we return.
Cold at night, wet through below our short coir capes,
Lungs bursting, feet bleeding — the pain is hard to bear.
Dawn breaks, but who will listen to our tale of woe?
Together we strain forward — yo-heave-ho!
A thatched hut may be worthless,
But what man can leave the home of his parents?
Would I could change this water into land,
Then boatmen need no longer curse their fate.

A Peasant Family

The men sound pleased, the womenfolk look happy,
Each airs his views but nobody complains;
The fifth month is hot but cool the wind from the wheat,
Clack, clack, whirrs the loom under the eaves.
No one takes the wild silkworms' cocoons
And new moths are fluttering among the leaves;
Now the wheat is harvested, the silk half woven,
So they know they have enough to pay the state;
They cannot hope for much to eat or wear
But are lucky not to have to sell the ox in town;
Peasants want no fine food and clothing,
Content if they never see the yamen gate.

Seafaring Folk

Seafaring folk have no home but live on the sea,
Dive for pearls and ride elephants to pay the annual tax;
Angry waves surge to the sky, mountains bar their way,
But the treasuries in the palace are kept filled.

The Imperial Guard

A notorious young man of Changan
Robbed a merchant downstairs and then got drunk upstairs,
Came off guard at dawn in the Palace of Brilliant Light
And fled to the pine forest on Mount Wuling;
He had murdered a hundred men and deserved to die,
But was pardoned for his “valour” in storming a town;
When news of this amnesty spread through the capital
He took his old name again in the register
And, coming out, rejoined the Imperial Guard,
Swaggering in front of the palace and shooting birds.

*Translated by Yang Hsien-yi
and Gladys Yang*

About the authors: Chang Chieh and Wang Chien lived in the middle of the Tang dynasty (618-907), at a time when it was beginning to decline. The central government was weakened by the disaffection of powerful military governors

in the outlying regions and the seizure of authority by the eunuchs at court. The officials and big land-owners took advantage of this unstable state of affairs to intensify their exploitation of the people and concentrate more land in their own hands, with the result that production declined and class contradictions grew sharper. Since the frontier defences were weakened by this internal confusion, foreign hordes began to invade the empire and the sharp clashes between different nationalities added to the misery of the people. Men with any sense of justice naturally sympathized with the hard-pressed people and felt anxiety over the country's future. So there appeared many outstanding realist poets, some of whom used the form of Han dynasty *yueh-fu*, or folk songs set to music, to write about new topics and voice their discontent with the situation. The great poet Po Chu-yi called these poems the "new *yueh-fu*," and this new poetic school won a proud name in the history of Chinese poetry.

Apart from Po Chu-yi himself (See *Chinese Literature* No. 7, 1961) and his friend Yuan Chen, the two most outstanding poets in the new *yueh-fu* school were Chang Chieh and Wang Chien, whose names came to be linked together.

There are few records about these two men. Chang Chieh (c.768-c.830) was from Soochow. In 799 he passed the palace examination, but he never gained any important post, remaining a minor official. His poverty is touched on in the lines "In Changan I am often ill and short of funds, but the doctors in the pharmacies demand exorbitant sums." His friend Wang Chien (c.768-c.830) came from Yinchuan, present-day Hsuehchang in Honan, and was also a minor official for many years, thirteen of them spent in an army post at the frontier. His *Lament for Myself* says, "Four official posts, always in the seventh rank; two marriages but now still single." From this it appears that his life was not too happy. The situation of both poets made it easy for them to draw close to the common people and understand the wretched conditions of the toiling masses, enabling them to produce fairly critical poems which reflected reality.

Their poems had much in common both in content and style. Both had the gift of creating vivid, concrete images and arresting lines. Because of their desire to "right the wrongs of the time" and their sympathy for the people's sufferings, they forcefully exposed and attacked the iniquities of that age. From Chang Chieh's *The Old Peasant* and *Building the Great Wall* and Wang Chien's *The Boatman's Song*, *Seafaring Folk* and *The Silkworms*, which we present in this issue, we can see the struggles and hardships of the common people under the yoke of the feudal rulers.

Elsewhere these two poets boldly expose the decadence and rapacity of the ruling class. Chang Chieh's *Search for Immortality* is a biting satire on those in high places who searched for elixirs to prolong their life; *The Chu Palace* reveals the shameless extravagance of the court, and *The Cowherd's Song* in this issue makes skillful use of a historical allusion to lash at the despotism of certain officials. Wang Chien's *The Imperial Guard*, also in this issue, is an even sharper exposure of

the way in which nobles took advantage of their position to ride roughshod over the people.

Both poets made a distinctive contribution to poetry by the vivid realism of their imagery. The people they described are thoroughly lifelike. In Wang Chien's *The Boatman's Song* the boatman says, "Like a sea-gull I sleep on the waves and trudge on sand," while the woodcutter in Chang Chieh's *The Woodcutter's Song* with his bamboo pole sagging under its load of fuel is also described to the life.

Another fine feature of these new *yueh-fu* is their graphic descriptions of the folk customs and life in the villages, which are interwoven with the poor peasants' longing for peace and security.

The simplicity, conciseness and sometimes earthy quality of the language make these poems read like folk poetry. That is why the famous eleventh-century Sung prose writer Wang An-shih said of them, "They look commonplace but are in fact most distinctive; for although they seem effortlessly written, great pains were actually taken over them."

Wangdui

How I Acted the Part of Jampa

As its title shows, *Serfs* is a film about the wretched life of serfs in Tibet when the feudal chiefs treated them as “cattle which can speak” and ground them down by every cruel means. But after the liberation of Tibet, they gradually woke up to the truth, and stood up and started a new life, becoming the masters of their own fate. I was a serf myself. Now I am one of the first generation of actors in Tibet and one of the first Tibetans to play in films. To me, this is something tremendous! When I was given the chief part in this film I looked on it as an important job entrusted to me by my serf brothers, so I determined to do my best in it.

But it was not an easy job. As a serf, I never had any education, and it's only in the past few years that I've learned to read and write a little. Just reading the script was difficult for me, but thanks to the help of the directors and cameramen I was able to read through the whole scenario quite quickly. Then I tried to analyse Jampa's character and work out how his ideas developed and changed in his childhood and youth, what his attitude would be towards important events and the other main characters. Little by little his picture took shape in my mind.

The other comrades helped me also to read about a dozen accusations made by serfs at the time of the democratic reforms in Tibet, as well as some historical material about the reactionary rule in old Tibet. I came to understand the vicious serf system better too by talking with former serfs and going to an exhibition showing how cruelly the rebels oppressed the serfs. All these things gave me a clear class education, helping me to understand the true nature of the reactionary ruling class in Tibet. My class consciousness and political enthusiasm were raised.

When I tried to imagine Jampa's life from the script, I remembered the old days and was very upset to think of my own wretched life. Lying on the river bank in Lhasa, looking up at the deep blue sky, I'd go on thinking for hours. At night I often lay sleepless, staring at the ceiling. A whole series of cruel happenings, full of blood and tears, humiliation and anger, unfolded before my eyes. Sometimes I could hardly tell whether I was putting myself in Jampa's place or reliving my own life....

I never knew my father. He went out as a mule-driver for his master before I was born, and whether he was beaten to death or died of starvation nobody could tell. My mother was a serf of Tsedrag Monastery in Loka. Her tasks were as endless as the hairs on a yak, but all we ever had was a pile of debts. The chief lama threatened her, "If you can't pay your debts, come on your knees with a leather whip and you'll get one blow for every cent you owe." Then my mother ran away with me to be a slave.

When I was five I was like Jampa in the film, crawling on the ground and ridden as a horse by the young master, who was about my age. I still have a scar on my forehead made when he hit me with a stone; but I dared not cry even when the blood gushed out. At the back of my head I've another scar — my punishment for digging up a potato from the fields when I was famished. All my ancestors had been serfs, and I was a serf from the day that I was born. When I was thirteen, I had to go to my feudal master's house to be his slave. Then I left my mother, to do a grown man's job. In the daytime I climbed the mountains to cut firewood; at night I stayed in the stable to feed the horses. Even if I fell ill, I could not rest. Once I had a high fever but the steward drove me out with his whip though the ground was covered with snow, sneering, "This will cure your fever." When I was fifteen my mother died of overwork and starvation.

Although she lived only across the hill from me, we seemed as far apart as heaven and earth. I couldn't even have a last glimpse of my mother.

Before I was seventeen, I sweated day after day under my master's whip. Then I ran away to work as a monk-servant in the Draipung Monastery in Lhasa. A monk-servant was a serf dressed as a lama. I still couldn't escape from the infernal serf system. After leaving one living hell I fell into another dark dungeon.

Jampa is a serf too as a boy. After he sees the People's Liberation Army he runs away with the blacksmith Kalzang to join it, but he is caught. The Living Buddha Thubtan tries to win over and enslave the people with religion and forces Jampa to become a lama. Because it had been very like that with me, I often felt that Jampa and I were the same person, that he lived in my heart and body. In many scenes I didn't seem to be acting a play but acting out my life all over again.

What struck me first about Jampa was that he never spoke but pretended to be dumb. He used silence to show his revolt. He was a serf with a blazing fire inside him, but he kept it hidden and gave no sign of his thoughts and feelings except through the look in his eyes.

I decided Jampa's eyes were the windows of his mind. I would have to use them to take the place of speech. But first I must have a correct idea of just what was going on in his mind. The director helped me to put myself in Jampa's place and understand his state of mind in every scene, even when he just appeared for a moment.

Playing the role of Jampa after he grows up, my acting started in the stable. The first shot is a close-up of him drinking some water. When the steward shouts to him, Jampa turns his head. The steward demands from the door, "Why aren't you grazing the horses?" Then he leaves, holding his nose because of the stench. And Jampa bites his lips. This movement shows the pent-up hatred in his heart.

When I was a serf I looked after horses too. One day I caught cold cutting firewood up in the mountains, and when I came back at night I had to feed the horses. Towards midnight I was running a high fever and was hungry and thirsty. I'd nothing to eat, so I got up to fetch some water. My master, who was in bed, shouted at me, "Why aren't you looking after the horses?" I hated him so much I swore to myself, "The bastard, lying down himself!" But I dared not utter a word because a serf had no right to answer back. If I'd made any retort I'd have had my eyes gouged out or my tongue

cut off. So I could understand Jampa's biting his lips — he was trying to suppress his anger.

Before we shot the scene in which Jampa grazes the horses on the cliff, I had a question in my mind. Jampa climbed the cliff as a child, he used to graze the horses there, and when he tried to escape and was being chased he went to the cliff again. What made him so fond of the place? I asked the director and he said, "When he goes up there he feels free."

"Why should he feel free?" I asked.

"Do you think a man leading the most wretched life has no pleasure at all?" he answered.

After a little thought I agreed with him. When I herded sheep for my master, however hungry and cold I was, the further I went from his house the lighter my heart would grow. When I lay on the grass far from my master gazing at the blue sky and the distant mountains, I felt free for a while and happy, until the thought of my mother on the other side of the mountain wrung my heart. A son can't help but think tenderly of his mother. So I transplanted this feeling to the scene when Jampa lies on the cliff and hears Namgang singing. I tried to show his longing for the girl through my feeling for my mother.

One thing puzzled me after Jampa became a lama. Once he'd seen the People's Liberation Army he tried to run away from his master, and surely he'd have gone on trying? That's how it was with me after my mother died. I thought of nothing but running away, and finally I succeeded. How was it that after Jampa became a lama he stopped wanting to escape? He seems to give up hope, as if he's done for. Even after discovering the hidden rifles in the image of the Buddha, he still sticks around quite woodenly. Why?

I found the answer finally in my own life and the life of all the other serfs I knew so well.

The reason is that as Jampa suffers incredible bodily hardships as a serf, he tries to seek a little respite in the monastic life, which, wrapped in primitive superstitions, gradually benumbs his senses. In other words he is enslaved spiritually by these superstitions.

Another reason is that he is deceived by the Living Buddha Thubtan. When Jampa is small he is caught stealing the Buddha's offerings. Then the hypocritical Living Buddha "forgives" him so that he doesn't have his hands cut off or his tongue pulled out. After he

grows up and is caught trying to escape, the Living Buddha “rescues” him again. Jampa can’t see through the Living Buddha’s plot, so he feels grateful to him and thinks him a good man. Forced to be a monk, he stays on in the monastery. This is how most serfs at that time would have acted.

The third reason is that he still understands very little about the People’s Liberation Army. When he goes with his master to the army, they dress his wounds, give him shoes and help him on the horse. . . . This is his first contact with the People’s Liberation Army men, but he doesn’t meet them again and so he can hardly understand them.

In my own case too, I didn’t join the People’s Liberation Army directly after the peaceful liberation of Tibet. At first I waited to see whether these soldiers were really good or not; later I wasn’t sure that they would accept me. And there was another problem: if the People’s Liberation Army didn’t stay in Tibet, what would happen to me after it was gone? It was only after I’d worked these problems out that I made up my mind to run away to the People’s Liberation Army. But it took me so much time to come to the decision! I think Jampa’s ideas should have been rather the same.

Still, I mustn’t present Jampa as a meek lamb. His feeling of revolt all this time doesn’t come out very clearly, but hatred and the determination to find freedom should underlie all his actions, expressed differently under different circumstances. For instance, after he becomes a lama he still longs for the People’s Liberation Army and for Namgang, the girl he loves. This is a sort of revolt too.

Jampa has a wretched childhood and grows up to a life of back-breaking toil under the steward’s lash. His hatred grows, but he knows it is useless to revolt on his own. The cruel reality before his eyes almost makes him lose hope of escaping from slavery. But coming into touch with the Communist Party and the Liberation Army changes his ideas and his life. Finally he succeeds in breaking his shackles and winning a new life. Jampa’s awakening and emancipation are closely linked with the People’s Liberation Army, and this is absolutely true to life. For thanks to the leadership of the Communist Party hundreds of thousands of Tibetan serfs awakened and poured out the hatred smouldering in their hearts for centuries, destroying the iniquitous serf system. I think Jampa’s awakening

is very important in depicting his character and bringing out the main theme.

On the cliff Namgang takes Jampa's hand and tells him the legendary stories of the People's Liberation Army, as if passing on some marvellous secret. "... A red, red sun has risen in the east. A great, great Buddha is standing in the sun. He can see everything, even the roof of the world here, where the people are living in hell. As soon as this Buddha points his finger, his Buddhist troops set out, crossing rivers and mountains to free the people from their misery. Every Buddhist soldier wears a five-pointed red star on his cap..." This is the first time Jampa has heard of the People's Liberation Army. I don't understand this strange term at first. What I do hear is "Buddhist troops," because the word "Buddha" is so familiar to Jampa. When I listen to Namgang I think, "How wonderful it would be if there were really such men." I feel very eager to see them but then I lose hope, thinking this is only a legend, something which can never happen. I say to myself, "Dear Namgang, I know you're saying this to comfort me." I smile rather bitterly to thank her for her kindness.

The second time Jampa hears of the People's Liberation Army is when Kalzang comes to the stable. Kalzang is my closest friend, and if he has seen the People's Liberation Army with his own eyes I have to believe him. At this moment my thoughts are, "What? You've seen the Liberation Army? Are these the Buddhist troops Namgang told me about?" I begin to believe in them. Then Kalzang tells me how one soldier touched his shackles and looked at him with sympathy, and when he cries, "Jampa!" I know he means "Let's run away and join the Liberation Army." I'm still wondering, "Can this really be true?" Although I'm still dubious, I'm beginning to be convinced.

I'm getting really interested when the steward comes along and shouts, "Dumb fool! Get up! Groom the horse. As soon as it's light the master is going to call on the Liberation Army." Now I have heard this name again from someone else. I decide I must see the People's Liberation Army for myself to find out what it's really like.

When Jampa carries his master on his back to visit the People's Liberation Army he falls down in a faint. He wakes up in the army doctor's tent where the first thing he sees is a five-pointed red star.

This is a very short scene and I wasn't told what to do, but I had to figure out what Jampa was thinking. When he comes to and sees the tent his first thought should be, "Is this a dream?" The sight of the red star reminds him of what Namgang told him. "Could these be the Buddhist troops come to rescue me?" I struggle up, feeling someone touch my feet, and see on my feet a pair of new shoes. All this seems some illusion or dream, until the steward appears. That brings me back with a jolt to reality and I remember what the steward told me the night before, "Groom the horse. The master is going to call on the Liberation Army." Then I know that these are the People's Liberation Army men about whom Namgang and Kalzang told me.

When the nurses help me out, I think, "Even my own parents never treated me so kindly. Would they keep me here?" I lower my head in thought and Kalzang's plan of running away comes to my mind.

When I look up again there's a horse in front of me and an officer walking towards it. First I notice the five-pointed red star on his cap and then his uniform. I realize that this is an officer of the People's Liberation Army, and he seems very friendly. I think, "These are the Buddhist troops all right." When he points to the horse, I imagine he wants to mount it. I think, "I resent my master using me as a stool to mount, but I'll gladly stoop for the People's Liberation Army. You've bandaged my wounds and given me new shoes; there's no other way I can thank you." At once I crouch down. When nothing happens I'm surprised and wonder, "Why hasn't he mounted?" I feel a hand on my arm helping me up. I look up and see it is the officer. With tears in his eyes he is giving me the reins. I understand that he means me to mount the horse, as the reins are always put in the hand of the rider.

When the officer helps me up, my mind is in a whirl. I think, "How wonderful if I could stay here." The horse starts off. In the script Jampa keeps turning back his head, and I agree that this is what he would do. He wants to stay but isn't sure whether they would keep him, and he wants to remember this place so that he can come back and find them. He's worried, too, in case they may have gone by the time he comes back. So his thoughts are a tangle.

These three scenes I have just mentioned show Jampa beginning to be awakened. He starts by feeling rebellious; next his rebellion

shows itself in action, and his revolt takes a different form as he plans to run away.

Another important scene is that in which Jampa is dragged behind the horse. Though it isn't long, I couldn't let slip this opportunity to show his character. I knew I mustn't forget the logical stages in his mental development, so when I played in this scene I was thinking, "Today I'm being dragged behind your horse. If I die, you won't be able to torture me any more. If I don't die, I shall try to escape."

Jampa's attempt to escape fails and he is seized and put in a wooden cage. For this we used a real cage. I seethed with fury and hatred each time I saw it. I suffered enough myself as a serf, but this wooden cage helped me to understand the hatred of my class brothers. So many serfs had been killed in this cage. If Tibet hadn't been liberated, I might have been killed in it too.

Three times Jampa carries his master on his back, and three times he throws him down. This may seem repetitious, but those three actions show his different ideas on three occasions, his different ways of expressing his revolt.

The first time is in his childhood, when he throws down the young master who is also a child. This is an instinctive revolt.

The second time is when his master goes to call on the Liberation Army. Both he and Namchal are grown up now, but Jampa has been through so many hardships that his youthful fire is damped. I felt this should be different from the first throwing. Should he do it on purpose or by accident because he is worn out? With the help of the director I worked it out. His master is a dead weight on his back; he remembers how he was ridden on as a child and is furious at having to serve as a horse again; tired out and angry, he faints. Apart from his weakness I felt there was defiance too, but this time the revolt was hidden and less obvious.

The third time he throws his master is when Namchal is holding a pistol to his temple and forcing Jampa to carry him out of the country. Jampa deliberately goes very slowly. As they near the frontier, the Liberation Army men come after them and gunfire is heard. His master orders him to go more quickly: in a few yards they will reach the border. I know that Jampa would rather die than cross the frontier, not that he has a high level of political consciousness or that he is thinking of his motherland, China, but because he doesn't want to leave his home, because he doesn't want his enemy to escape.

He seizes his chance to throw Namchal when the pistol in his master's panic-stricken hand has swung away from his head. In this scene his revolt is conscious.

In this scene I carry my deadly enemy on my back and wonder how I can kill him. When gunfire is heard I know the Liberation Army men are catching up. That gives me the strength and courage to throw my master. He drags me down with him and we struggle for the pistol on the ground. I grab hold of one of his legs and he seizes my throat. . . . As he picks up the pistol and aims it at me, a shot rings out and he is the one who falls. Then I spring forward and kick him with all my might.

We shot this scene out on the mountains, so that it seemed very real. I completely forgot I was acting and was carried away by my anger until the director shouted to me to stop. But not until we took off our costumes and make-up to have dinner did I realize that I had mistaken the actor playing Namchal for a real serf-owner and had kicked him too hard. I felt very bad and told him how sorry I was. Still rubbing the small of his back, he said that was all right — he could understand how I had felt at the time.

After the death of the young People's Liberation Army soldier, Jampa with tears in his eyes takes up the *bata* stained with the martyr's blood and lays it over his body. In the script Jampa spreads the *bata* across the soldier's breast, but while acting this scene I felt that was not enough to express all that was in my heart. So I raised the *bata* high and slowly covered him from head to foot. The director, fully understanding, didn't stop me though this meant that the shot was much longer than originally planned. I am very grateful to the director for letting me express a Tibetan's feeling for his Han class brothers in this way.

After this scene Jampa goes back to the temple to take out the hidden guns. Why should he do such a thing?

After the young soldier lays down his life for Jampa, Jampa has complete faith in the Liberation Army and all his doubts melt away. He also understands why the Living Buddha Thubtan is hiding those guns. I run back in a rage to the temple and open up the image to get out the guns, meaning to report this to the Liberation Army. Then Thubtan attacks me and I fall unconscious. From his first encounter with the Liberation Army to the moment when he brings out the guns, Jampa feels in turn hope, doubt, trust and gratitude.

When he first sees the Liberation Army men they give him hope, but he can't join them. After becoming a lama he thinks of running away, but he has misgivings. After the young soldier saves his life, however, he comes to trust the Liberation Army completely and wants to show his gratitude. I worked out Jampa's mental development on the base of the feelings which led up, as I have mentioned, to my deciding to join the People's Liberation Army.

The ending of the film has been revised. In the first version Jampa simply tells Namgang "I want to speak . . ." First he pretends to be dumb rather than say "master" and "young master," but in the end he starts to speak again to express a serf's awakening. Still we weren't satisfied. Now, after revision, the first thing Jampa says is, "Chairman Mao!" This fits his character and also expresses my feeling as an actor. The emotion in this exclamation is something which only those of us who were serfs before can fully understand.

I have explained how I acted the part of Jampa, but we only found the right way after much groping. I thought at first that Jampa should serve as a mirror to reflect the wickedness of the barbarous serf system. But based on my own experience I couldn't quite understand Jampa's sense of revolt or how it was that such a down-trodden serf could still hope for happiness. So when we started rehearsing I played a completely different Jampa, who took all injustice apathetically and was a slave trampled on and drowned in sorrow. When Namgang and Kalzang spoke of the Buddhist troops, I didn't believe them; when I saw the Liberation Army I showed no emotion; and I couldn't show my love for Namgang or feel any joy when I saw her.

Actually a character like that is untypical and untrue to the history of the serfs in Tibet who fought for their freedom and the destruction of the serf system. The director spotted this in time and helped me to correct it. I had to think seriously and hard about these problems again and again.

First, did the serfs have a spirit of revolt? Yes, they did. How did they show it? What form did their struggle take? Well, in Jampa's case he pretended to be dumb; in my own case, I escaped. These were the only forms of resistance open to unarmed serfs under those circumstances. In their instinctive revolt the serfs showed their loathing for their masters and their indomitable spirit. Jampa pretends to be dumb rather than say "master" and "young master," and he also tries to escape. But escape was no simple matter for a

serf. If caught, he would pay for it with his life and even in his next life would not be born a man. This was the case when a serf ran away to another serf-owner, while running away to the Liberation Army was even more serious. After the peaceful liberation of Tibet, our masters deceived us and said, "The Liberation Army men are devils. If their shadows cross yours, you will go to hell when you die." So a serf who dared to run away was revolting not only against the serf-owners, the ruling-class, but also against superstition, defying the centuries-old superstitious beliefs. In addition to risking his life, he ran the risk of being reborn a beast in his next existence.

The script writer summed up this feeling of revolt among hundreds of thousands of serfs. But at first my level was too low to understand it.

The second problem was: Did the serfs hope for happiness? Yes, they did. When we look at the serfs as a whole, we can see this. I knew many serfs who married and loved each other quietly but deeply. In my own case I had a flute, and though it only gave me brief moments of pleasure it proved that I too was in search of happiness, however fleeting. This helped me to understand the love between Jampa and Namgang.

After these two problems were solved, what I had thought were insoluble contradictions — a strong sense of revolt and cruel oppression, and a longing for happiness and deep suffering — were unified in Jampa's character, making it less simple. His hatred and love were thrown into vivid contrast, making his class feelings stand out in powerful relief.

I was a serf for seventeen years and a working lama for eight. Some of Jampa's experience was the same as my own, other parts were things I had seen or heard about. I should surely have been able to understand a serf's mentality and to understand myself. However, the facts show that I didn't fully understand. Not until the director helped me with the thought of Chairman Mao Tse-tung to take a class standpoint in studying the life and struggles of Jampa, my class brothers and myself. After careful study and analysis I looked at the facts again, and then I reached a truer understanding of the feeling of revolt in Jampa and myself, of the ceaseless struggle of my countless class brothers and sisters against the serf system, and of the positive significance of this theme. My personal experience without the guidance of correct political ideas was not enough to

enable me to see through superficial phenomena and grasp the essence. When I seized on superficial things to reflect life and depict characters, I produced a Jampa who was simply crushed and broken in spirit. I had to first understand his thoughts and feelings, then I had to go deeper to create a character of a serf that was better and more typical than in real life. By trying to do this I gradually improved my understanding, and then by using my new understanding I succeeded in depicting Jampa on the screen. If film-goers find this character typical, it is thanks to the way in which I acquired a deeper understanding.

Fishing Boats (coloured woodcut) ▶

by Shen Jou-chien

Born in Chaoan County, Fukien Province in 1919, Shen Jou-chien started to do cultural work in the Communist-led New Fourth Army in 1938. He is skilled in several branches of the graphic arts: woodcuts, water colours and *gouache*. He is now vice-chairman of the Shanghai branch of the Union of Chinese Artists.



Portraying the New People of Our Age

The North China Art Exhibition held in the Museum of Chinese Art in October 1964, was the first of a series of exhibitions to display the works of artists all over China during the last two years. It presented more than 500 works — traditional paintings, New-Year pictures, serial pictures for story books, posters, woodcuts, oil paintings, cartoons and sculpture — from the provinces of Shansi and Hopei, the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region and the Peking municipality. These intensely realistic works with their rich local colour breathe the spirit of this age and reflect various aspects of the Chinese people's life and struggles during the socialist revolution and socialist construction.

On the base of their own experiences and feelings, the artists have created typical images to express the thoughts and feelings of workers, peasants and soldiers — the masters of our age. This is the most striking feature of this exhibition.

The oil painting *Six Hundred Million in This Sacred Land All Equal Yao and Shun* successfully conveys the kindness, optimism, far-sighted-



Maintenance Men

ness and deep understanding of the masses of Chairman Mao Tse-tung, great leader of the Chinese people. The title of the painting is a line from a poem by Chairman Mao, meaning that the people of the socialist new China are as good as the legendary sage kings Yao and Shun. On the canvas more than fifty men and women of different nationalities and ages surround Chairman Mao, magnificently symbolizing the Chinese people led by him from victory to victory. Their clothes and postures differ and each has a distinct personality, yet all are united in this happy, stirring scene.

Men of Iron, another oil painting, shows oil workers going to work before dawn. The oil-field is an impressive sight in a flurry of snowflakes with sparks flying from the derrick as five young workers stride into the teeth of the wind. Their cheerful confidence as they press forward is typical of China's staunch working class.

Iron Dyke, a traditional painting, depicts the Hopei people's heroic fight against a flood last year, and the masses' triumph over natural



calamities. The surging flood water is confronted by an "iron dyke" of workers, peasants and soldiers. A tall worker standing upright at their head holds high a lantern, symbolizing the firm leadership of the Party in the fight against the flood. Instead of applying heavy washes of ink to bring out the darkness of the night, the artist has concentrated on the men's spirit. The wall they make with interlocking arms expresses their iron will and determination to overcome every difficulty.

The new characters on the industrial and agricultural fronts and in social service work are originally and vividly presented in the three oils *We Are Marching Along the Highway*, *Millions of Serfs Stand Up* and *Vanguards in Construction*, as well as in the traditional paintings *Before the Furnace*, *Maintenance Men*, *New Team Leader* and *The Conductress*. The steel worker with a smile of victory on

his face in the red light of the furnace, the surveyor braving snowstorms to prospect the country's natural resources, the Tibetan girl doing her bit for national construction after liberation, the new team leader, the conductress taking a pride in her commonplace task — all these men and women in different posts are advancing towards the same goal. These splendid positive characters are a powerful tribute to the militant revolutionary spirit, hard work and self-reliance of the Chinese people engaged in socialist construction.

Our art reflects real life. Naturally, progressive characters are chosen by our artists as their subjects. *Heroes on Their Way to the Conference*, a New-Year picture, presents Li Shun-ta, Chen Yung-kuei and other well-known peasant labour heroes on the train that is taking them to a conference. The atmosphere is lively and conveys their revolutionary friendship. On the luggage rack are maize cobs, wheat and apples, the fruit of their enthusiastic toil. Outside is the clear September sky of north China and the wind from the fields

is ruffling the green curtains of the clean bright carriage. The happy mood of the characters harmonizes with their surroundings.

The heroism of the Mongolian sisters Lung-mei and Yu-jung who saved their flock in a snowstorm is known throughout the country. The oil painting *Young Sisters of the Grassland* presents a stormy night with an angry wind whipping up the snow into a billowing sea of light blue, the colour blue predominating in the picture. Eleven-year-old Lung-mei is firmly standing up to the storm, her face stern and composed. Nine-year-old Yu-jung has just been blown off her feet, but she is scrambling up pluckily and picking her hat out of the snow. Behind the two sisters runs the dark flock. This canvas shows the two girls standing up to a hard test and growing up by conquering difficulties.

Chairman Mao Tse-tung's poems have inspired many of our artists and two traditional paintings have lines from them as titles. *Of a Sudden Comes Word of the Tiger's Defeat on Earth* is based on a poem written in 1957 to commemorate the revolutionary martyrs Yang Kai-hui and Liu Chih-hsun, one killed by the reactionaries in 1930, the other dying for the revolution in 1933. The painting shows a joyful festival night with the sky brilliantly lit by fireworks on the National Day after the victory of the revolution. People are singing and dancing under streaming red flags, while in their midst towers the Monument to the People's Heroes. The artist's bold, unconventional brushwork and thick, gorgeous colours catch the spirit of the age. The other work is derived from the poem *Loushan Pass* written in February 1935 and is entitled *There the Hills Are Blue Like the Sea, And the Dying Sun Like Blood*. After the Tsunyi Conference in 1935 during the Long March, the Red Army under the leadership of Chairman Mao Tse-tung won a battle at Loushan Pass. The picture shows cavalymen pressing on along a rugged mountain path as the setting sun dyes the cloud-capped peaks red as blood and red flags far and near are unfurling in the wind. The whole magnificent scene reminds us that "the Red Army fears not the trials of a distant march."

The most outstanding woodcuts, with rich contents, came from the province of Shansi and were largely the work of new artists who have the merit of concentrating on new people and new ideas. For instance, *Peaches and Pears All over the Mountains* portrays the aspirations of a village teacher in an original and poetic way. The teacher is leaning against her office door while her pupils do their exercises



Peaches and Pears All over the Mountains

on the playground under the peach trees, and the scene appeals deeply to the imagination. *Spring North of the Great Wall* depicts the people's firm resolve to conquer sandstorms and transform nature. *Selecting Seeds* presents a young intellectual who is keenly experimenting in order to harvest better crops.

For many years our artists have been searching for a fresh vivid national style that will be popular with the Chinese people. The oils, sculptures and cartoons exhibited showed the progress made in this

field. *Six Hundred Million in This Sacred Land All Equal Yao and Shun* is a successful attempt at evolving a Chinese style in oil painting. In the first place, the artist has depicted important events in the Chinese people's life and tried to embody in these works the feelings and aspirations of our people. He has also paid attention to finding a style and form to suit the general taste. The relation between light and shade is played down, although not to the extent of affecting the sense of dimension, while emphasis is laid on line drawing, but not the bare delineation of outlines. In composition, character portrayal and use of colour, efforts have been made to heighten the atmosphere and mood so that content and form are in harmony. Oil painting was introduced here from abroad and has a relatively short history in China, but at last our oil painters are in a position to make this genre of art take root in our country and be appreciated by the broad masses of our people.

Thanks to the care and support of the Party and the efforts of our artists themselves, many regions which were once rather barren in the field of art are making rapid progress and sizable new forces are emerging. This was very evident at this exhibition. Inner Mongolia is an outstanding example. In 1962, only seven works from Inner Mongolia were selected for the national art exhibition. This time there were 91, nearly half of them done by more than 30 artists of the Mongolian, Manchu and Tahir nationalities. Most of the woodcuts and New-Year pictures from Shansi are also the work of young artists, who are rapidly maturing. They have not only expanded the ranks of our artists but infused new blood and new life into our art. The steady emergence of these new forces demonstrates the vitality of our socialist art.

Tzu Pien

The Great Wall on the South Coast

The curtain rises on a small fishing harbour in south China. It is the eve of National Day in 1962. The sunset has not yet faded from the sky but the bright festival lights are already lit and the fishermen's songs and laughter can be heard in the distance. Something happens, however, to disturb the general peace and joy in this five-act play *The Great Wall on the South Coast*, written by Chao Huan and produced by the Army Repertory Company of Canton.

Ou Ying-tsai, leader of the militia company and head of the local transport depot, has just helped the other fishermen unload their last crate of sharks when his wife Ah-luo brings their baby girl to look for him. She wants him to go back with her to her mother's house on Chihhsing Island to enjoy the festival with the whole family. However, Ou Ying-tsai is a demobbed soldier who knows that extra vigilance is required of the army and militia stationed on the coast especially during festivals, because across the sea are the U. S. imperialists and Chiang Kai-shek's reactionary clique.

Because Ah-luo feels that all is serene and there is no need to worry, the husband and wife fall out, one concerned above everything else with the country's safety, the other with her family's feelings. Finally Ah-luo goes off in a huff and takes her baby home to Chihhsing Island.



Ah-luo

The fishermen are celebrating the festival when the county Party secretary comes to check up on the local militia's preparedness for all eventualities. A conch-shell is blown and the militiamen from various posts quickly gather. The only one who fails to show up is Lin Wang-kao, a tea-shop attendant who used to be a beggar. Now that he has a good job he has forgotten the hardships of the past and fallen in love with a girl called Yang Mei-ti, who is an enemy agent. This evening she pulls the wool over his eyes and slips off by boat with Wei Tai-li, a thug working for the local despot One-

eyed Wang, to smuggle him out of the harbour. They meet a group of secret agents sent by the U.S.-Chiang bandits to sneak ashore and open up a way for enemy guerrillas. This "Shark Brigade" is led by Commander Ho Chung with One-eyed Wang as his deputy commander. Wei and Yang Mei-ti help the reactionaries to land on Chihhsing Island disguised as men of the People's Liberation Army.

The bandits do not realize that they are walking into a trap laid by the people. Early in the morning of the festival militiamen catch the enemy scout. This comes as a fearful shock to Lin Wang-kao, who begins to understand the error of his ways. When Ou Ying-tsai learns of the enemy plan to invade the mainland he loses no time in leading his men to the island. The people there are enjoying the festival and Ah-luo, lacking in vigilance as she is, warmly welcomes the enemy agents who are looking for fishing boats to go to the mainland. She takes them home. Luckily her alert, experienced mother sees through the enemy's disguise and detains them until they show their true colours and Ah-luo realizes her mistake. Ou Ying-tsai arrives with the militia just in time to rescue Ah-luo and the baby, but while fighting with Ho Chung and One-eyed Wang he falls into the sea and is swept to Three Cups of Wine Cliff. There he remains

calm in face of the enemy and succeeds in making them fight among themselves. Then the searching party of the militiamen closes in and surround them and Ho Chung surrenders with his men, while One-eyed Wang who goes on resisting is killed.

This play warns us that after years of peace some people tend to lose their vigilance and fail to see the enemy before them. If we want to thwart the enemy's dream of coming back, we must have a high sense of responsibility towards the revolution and remain very vigilant.

"When we say that all the people have become soldiers," says the Party secretary, "we don't mean that everything is fine once each militiaman has got a gun. The main thing is that each of us has a gun in his mind too, and we must see to it that this gun never grows rusty."

The play does not deal with this theme through long passages of moralizing or thrilling situations, but it succeeds in bringing home to us the urgent need to be on our guard. And the struggle against the enemy is subtly interwoven with the clash of ideas among our own people. Some of the militiamen are unforgettable figures, and the enemy is depicted as no mere weakling.

Uncle Red Guard, who served in the Red Guard thirty-five years ago during the First Revolutionary Civil War, is a good example of a veteran who has retained his strong revolutionary spirit. He knows from experience the importance of having guns. He says, "This summer those Yanks and Chiang Kai-shek bandits kicked up quite a row but didn't dare come — because they were afraid of our guns. There's one thing they're even more afraid of, and that is Chairman Mao's call to us to make every man a soldier... We relied on guns to free our country, and now we're relying on them to defend our country."

Ah-luo's mother, who has found happiness after liberation, has been praised for "making the whole family militiamen." Her household is very close to the People's Liberation Army. When she sees through the Kuomintang reactionaries' disguise, she curses the class enemies whom she hates, swearing, "Even down in hell they won't escape us." She defends the national flag at the risk of her own life, and in the final act, when she hears that the enemy have fled to Three Cups of Wine Cliff, this dauntless old revolutionary seizes a harpoon and calls her children to launch their boat.



Ou Ying-tsai

Then there is Ou Ying-tsai, whose thoughts and actions are subordinated to the need to defend his motherland and socialism. This is evident in all his fine qualities: selflessness, heroism, resourcefulness in a crisis, and the way he puts the interest of the state before his own family. After patiently helping Lin Wang-kao to see his mistake, Ou gives him back his gun with this sound advice: "Look, your gun's rusty. You should have given it a thorough polishing long ago. You can't wipe out the enemy if your gun's rusty. And if your mind's rusty you won't see clearly but mistake a fox for an honest man and treat the true things your comrades say as nonsense."

By overcoming difficult problems in their struggles against the enemy, the militiamen mature and grow in moral stature, embodying the spirit of a revolutionary people who have grown up in the course of socialist construction. And the activities of the characters in the play show how complex are our struggles today. In this respect the play is at once realistic and revealing.

The Lean Horse

Since liberation the Chinese peasants who form the vast majority of China's population have been transformed little by little in the course of agricultural collectivization. Their human relationships and outlook have also undergone great and often very complex changes. It is only natural, then, that in modern Chinese literature works about the peasantry loom very large, and this is equally true of the theatre. *The Lean Horse*, an original comedy in seven scenes, is one of many such plays. Intensely realistic and imbued with vivid local colour, it gives a lively picture of life in the countryside of Honan Province during the socialist revolution and socialist construction. The successful staging of this play by the Honan Repertory Company has been welcomed by the peasants of many villages and has created quite a stir in various large cities too, including Peking.

The play is based on a tale by Li Chun, the noted short story writer, who lives in the Honan countryside and has written about many new types of villagers. In 1959 he wrote a short story entitled *Two Lean Horses* which he later rewrote as a film script *The Dragon Horse*. Liu Sha and other young playwrights of the Honan Repertory Company



Han Mang-chung

make this into a play, revising some of the action and dialogue to suit the theatre.

The play is set in an obscure village in Honan. Since the district is poor and has few resources, the production brigade has virtually no capital and must start everything from scratch. To increase production they need more live-stock, but how to acquire it is a knotty problem. So when Han Mang-chung, a poor peasant on the brigade committee, sees a distempered horse going cheap at the fair, he takes a keen interest in it. He gets a vet to examine the horse and is told that it can probably be cured. He thereupon makes the bold decision to buy it. After careful treatment and feeding it grows strong enough to draw a cart or plough and proves a most

useful investment.

This simple story vividly reveals the Chinese peasants' bold faith in their ability to overcome difficulties and change their former poverty and backwardness by relying on their own efforts in building up the countryside. Judged superficially, this story has no great dramatic conflict or gripping plot, dealing with simple events which happen every day in our villages; but because the writers have delved deep into life they have succeeded in producing a series of sharp contradictions.

At the beginning of the play the poor peasant Han Mang-chung and the rich middle peasant Liang Tou, two men working in the same brigade but belonging to two different classes, are both eager to buy the horse. Han wants it for the brigade to help the collective, and is willing to take the consequences if the purchase turns out badly. Liang Tou, stockman of the brigade, wants the horse as a means to enrich his family, and resorts to all sorts of tricks to get hold of it. So this is actually a fight between two different social forces.

There are clashes between other characters too. The brigade leader Chang Shui has considerable political experience and he supports

Han, helping him in every way to overcome obstacles. But the deputy brigade leader Li Shih-san is timid and afraid of responsibility. He lets himself be deceived by Liang Tou and unconsciously supports Liang Tou against Han. Han's wife Hsiu-chen is a rather selfish village woman who cannot appreciate her husband's whole-hearted love for the collective and whose complaints sometimes lead to a family quarrel. Moreover, Liang Tou's wife Tsui-hsiang, who helps her husband to make a profit at the expense of the collective, cunningly persuades Hsiu-chen to attack Han. The clashes of ideas and temperament among these characters blend to form the dramatic conflicts in this play.

Han, the hero, is a character of typical significance in the new Chinese countryside. As a poor peasant with high political consciousness he naturally puts the interests of the collective first in all he says or does, determined to take the socialist road and improve life in the spirit of self-reliance. Like all progressive poor and lower middle peasants, he gives his first loyalty to the collective. This integrity and selflessness are what make such new Chinese peasants so admirable. And Han, a simple peasant, has the quality of greatness because his character is based on countless peasants of this type in real life.

Han's character is depicted in depth and made artistically convincing, his personality being brought out through his clashes with other characters who have different views or temperaments. Han is open-minded, kindly and humorous, but as a cadre he is bold and uncompromising. When he brings the lean horse back to the village, some conservative peasants complain and make sarcastic remarks but Han keeps his temper. Because he has bought the horse not for himself but for the collective, he can listen patiently to the brigade members' complaints without feeling bitter. When Liang Tou tries to get the horse by a trick, however, Han will not yield an inch but boldly attacks Liang's wrong ideas and exposes his theft of fodder. There is nothing mean or underhand about Han.

Han clashes with the deputy brigade leader, too, over this horse. Li is against buying it. "If we buy it and it dies after we get it back, who'll take the blame?" he demands. "I can't take a responsibility like that." At once Han shoulders the responsibility himself. "I'll answer for buying the horse. If anything goes wrong I'll take the whole blame." He is speaking here for all the new peasants who have stood up and become the masters of their land. After the horse is



Liang Tou

bought Li still shirks responsibility and wants to sell it. "It's not just a question of a horse," declares Han. "This stands for our determination and our hopes. If we can nurse it back to health so that it can draw a plough by itself, it will be as good as two oxen. One horse will lead to two, and two to three. . . . When we've plenty of draught animals, our brigade will prosper. This horse will pull us into socialism." The strong contrast between the two men's attitudes to buying the horse and looking after it brings out Han's character more vividly.

Different characters react differently to the dramatic conflicts which develop. Han is normally quiet, easy-going and unaffected. When his wife nags because he spends so much time on the horse, he does his best to soothe her while sticking to what he considers the right course. He is firm yet gentle, humorous yet principled in most of his conversations with his wife. But when she shows a complete disregard for the collective by giving the horse to Liang Tou to look after and says, "If the horse dies in his hands you won't get the blame," Han retorts angrily, "How can you say such a thing? You talk as if you were not originally a poor peasant and now a member of the commune!" This expresses his strong class feeling. He cannot bear anyone to show indifference to the brigade's interest, especially one of the poor peasants, the very foundation of the commune.

The telling details used to depict the personality and temperament of progressive characters in specific circumstances heighten the ideological and artistic qualities of these typical characters. By this means the various facets of these characters are brought out together with their progressive views, and their progressive views are fully revealed. Thus characters, incidents and ideas form one convincing and dramatic whole.

The humour in this play depends less upon comic situations than upon deep insight into the thoughts and feelings of the characters,

as well as witty repartee. The comedy is at its best in Han's clashes with Liang Tou, the deputy brigade leader and his own wife. The treatment of different contradictions varies, but all add to the comic effect. The playwrights satirize Liang Tou and his wife, two "master minds" in the old society but helpless fools in the new one. Deputy Brigade Leader Li prides himself on his caution, whereas compared with Han he is a slow-coach whose wrong judgements hold up the progress of the collective. As Hsiu-chen is the selfish wife of an unselfish man, the unity and affection which underlie their clashes and contradictions make for amusing situations. As for Han himself, his devotion to the collective sometimes makes him behave in a laughable way and this provides the comic element in his character.

Liu Sha and the other members of the Honan Repertory Company have lived so long in the Honan villages that they are very familiar with country life and they drew on their own experience to improve this play with the help of Li Chun, the author of the story. They also revised it several times on the basis of the opinions of the Honan peasants who watched their performances. It is thus no accident that this play reflects life in the countryside truthfully and vividly, and this accounts for its success on the stage.

Chronicle

Two Stirring Operas

The Red Lantern staged by the Chinese Peking Opera Theatre and *Sister Chiang* produced by the art ensemble of the Political Department of the Chinese Air Force have recently created quite a stir in Peking.

The Red Lantern was one of the best items in the 1964 Festival of Peking Opera with Contemporary Themes. It tells the story of a railway worker's family in the northeast during the War of Resistance Against Japan. As part of the underground resistance they try to pass a secret code to the local guerrillas; and after the worker and his mother are killed, his daughter carries out their task. During the festival the Chinese Peking Opera Theatre collected opinions from all sides about this popular opera so as to make further improvements. When staged again this time it was an even greater success, because the main characters are now more vividly depicted and the whole plot has been tightened. The actors have also introduced innovations in their singing and gestures in order to bring out the characters' heroism more fully. The chief parts were played by the well-known Peking opera actors Chien Hao-liang, Liu Chang-yu, Kao Yu-chien and Yuan Shih-hai.

Sister Chiang was adapted from the novel *Red Crag*, the story of the heroic exploits of underground Party members and revolutionaries imprisoned in the U.S.-Chiang Kai-shek concentration camp (SACO) in Chungking on the eve of the collapse of the Kuomintang reactionary regime. They waged a resolute struggle against the U.S. and Kuomintang agents, exposing their persecution of the revolutionaries.

Sister Chiang successfully presents a resourceful and courageous woman Communist who serves the people with absolute loyalty and finally gives her life for the revolution.

This new opera has aroused exceptional interest on account of its vivid national style and the originality of its music. Traditional modes of expression from the Szechuan, Kiangsi, *pingchu* and Peking operas were boldly used in the singing and the acting, while the orchestra consisted entirely of Chinese instruments.

Japanese and Cuban Ballet in Peking

Both the Japanese Matsuyama Ballet Company and the Cuban State Ballet Company visited China for the second time last October, and their performances in Peking were again enthusiastically received.

The Matsuyama company has been working for fifteen years to develop a distinctive Japanese style of ballet by integrating this dance form, which originated in Europe, with traditional Japanese dances. Using themes from Japanese history and folk legends, they have created new ballets to express the struggles of the Japanese people for freedom in the past and present. *Gion Matsuri* which they presented this time is one successful example. It describes how in 1533 the Japanese artisans, peasants and townfolk in the capital united and put up a resolute struggle to revive a traditional festival which had been prohibited by the authorities. In this performance the Japanese dancers succeeded in combining certain conventions of the traditional ballet with modes of expression from their own national dances to bring out the thoughts and feelings of the characters. They used the Japanese *No* music as well as some folk tunes, and all the dancers wore national costume. When the distinguished ballerina Mikiko Matsuyama visited China in 1958 she made a deep impression on Chinese audiences with her performance of Hsi-erh in the ballet based on the Chinese opera *The White-haired Girl*. This time she took the heroine's role in *Gion Matsuri* and gave a superb, profoundly revealing interpretation of this brave peasant girl Ayame. Her performance aroused great interest among Chinese ballet circles and the general public. The Matsuyama company also staged *The Red War-coat*, *Spring Tide* and some Japanese folk dances.

The Cuban State Ballet Company headed by Fernando Alonso and Alicia Alonso also made a very deep impression on the Chinese audience. Their revolutionary national ballet *The Awakening*, with its distinctive style, well-knit plot and spirited, militant dances, showed the Cuban people's unyielding struggle for freedom and liberation. This company also showed the classical ballet *Coppelia*, the comic ballet *Vain Precautions*, various Cuban folk dances and a *Pas de Quatre*. The celebrated Cuban ballerina Alicia Alonso, who has absorbed good points from different schools to create her own original style, gave a fresh and delightful rendering in *Coppelia* of an innocent girl full of life and vitality.

All-China Exhibition of Handicrafts

Recently Peihai Park in Peking showed an exhibition of handicrafts from all over China. There was a very wide selection of exhibits. The embroidery, for example, included work in different styles from Soochow, Hunan, Canton, Chengtu and elsewhere. There were also lacquerware and inlaid lacquerware; ivory, jade, stone and wood carvings; objects woven from bamboo, rattan, palm and grass; a new type of handicraft made of sea shells; and "pictures" made of feathers, wheat-stalks and bark.

Many of the exhibits reflected life today. Box wood carving is very popular in southeast China and one of these exhibits showed an old revolutionary telling a story to nine children who were listening intently, their rapt expressions shown to the life. Another carving presented three cheerful peasant women carrying straw hats and other articles they had woven to the fair. These wood carvings are meticulously done. The ivory section also had some excellent carvings based on modern life, such as a young peasant woman, and a village girl feeding chicks. One of the porcelain exhibits from Shihwan near Canton was entitled *Arise!* and presented a powerful African, one arm raised and calling his people to fight for freedom and independence. The clay *Goose-feather Brigade* from Peking showed the militia attacking the enemy during one of China's revolutionary struggles. A woman was steering a boat through a rapid torrent while a man took aim with his gun, and the expressions of both conjured up the grim war years.

A 2000 Years Old Copper Coffin Unearthed

Recently in Yunnan Province, near Lake Erhhai in the Tali Pai Autonomous *Chou*, a national minority tomb was excavated and found to contain a copper coffin dating from the second century B.C. This coffin was about four metres under the ground inside a wooden coffin made of sturdy planks 2.5 m. × 30 cm. which had not yet rotted. The copper coffin, 2 m. long, 0.62 m. wide and 0.64 m. high, is made of five plates and the lid consists of two plates set at an angle forming a ridge. The plates are held together by buckles and small copper nails. The whole coffin is ornamented with engravings and at both ends there are tigers, pigs, eagles and hawks sketched crudely yet vividly. This is the first copper coffin of this type ever found in China.

In the tomb were discovered more than 90 objects made of copper and bronze, including vessels in the shape of oxen, horses, sheep, pigs and dogs, a spear with an eagle-head haft, swords, halberds, pickaxes, spades and other farming implements. There was also a bronze model of a house and bronze musical instruments, goblets, dishes, spoons and chopsticks, all simple yet distinctive and realistic.

IN PREPARATION

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.

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Published by: **Foreign Languages Press**, Peking, China

Distributed by: **Guozi Shudian**, China Publications Centre, Peking

Order from local dealer or from the Mail-order Dept.

Guozi Shudian, P. O. Box 399, Peking, China

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英文月刊1965年第1期

本刊代号2-916