

Chinese Art

8. The Twentieth Century - Republic

Pinyin spelling mostly approximates to English pronunciation apart from, notably,
Q = "ch" in cheap. X = "sh" in sham. Zh = "j" in jasmine. Z = "ds" hands. C = "ts" as in tsar.

Names are given with surnames first

Contents

Traditional Chinese Art	3
Qi Baishi (1864-1957)	4
Li Kuchan (1899-1983)	9
The Shanghai School.....	10
<i>Wu Changshuo (1844-1927)</i>	11
<i>Pan Tianshou (1897-1971)</i>	12
Huang Binhong (1865-1955).....	14
Fu Baoshi (1904-1965)	16
Synthesis with Western Art	18
The Lingnan School.....	19
Xu Beihong (1895 – 1953)	23
Liu Haisu (1896-1994).....	27
Lin Fengmian (1900-1991)	32
“Out of the Studios and onto the Streets!”	38
Woodcut Movement.....	38
<i>Li Hua (1907-1994)</i>	40
Japanese Invasion.....	41
<i>Jiang Zhaohe (1904-1986)</i>	44
Chinese Minorities	47
References	56

Art mirrored the two prevailing, and contrasting, views in China in the first decades of the twentieth century. The corruption and incompetence of the alien Manchu Qing administration and its growing reliance on foreign loans, together with an expansion of foreigners on Chinese soil, prompted a belief that salvation would come with the reassertion of traditional Chinese practice and culture. Conversely, the backwardness of the nation in the face of Western science and technology, clearly evident during the latter half of the 19th century, and the alarming defeat by Japan provoked the idea that China must depart from her traditions and modernise.

Traditional Chinese Art

Beijing remained conservative despite the fall of the Manchu regime. Scholar-officials were fearful of change. Traditionalists in Beijing were buoyed by the availability of works by old masters of the Song, Yuan, Ming and early Qing periods. The style of the Wangs of the Orthodox School of the early Qing [Part 6] was revived by the Hu Society formed by Jin Cheng. The Ming Loyalists who had been persecuted at the start of the Qing dynasty were also popular.

Chen Hengke (also known as Chen Shizeng, 1876-1923), son of a well-known poet in Jiangxi, had studied in Japan where he had seen works of Zhu Da and Shitao [Part 6], largely neglected in China, which inspired art executed with simple and rapid brushwork.



Chen Hengke, *Studio by Water*, 1921, album leaf

Chen Hengke taught at the Beijing College of Art and promoted the styles of Song and Yuan masters among his students: his landscape below recalls the Yuan masters. Although deeply concerned about the preservation of traditional Chinese art, Hengke also produced cartoon-like works of street characters. The example shown of ordinary folk attending an art exhibition is appropriate: Chen Hengke was instrumental in setting up China's first public art museum. Naturally enough, Chen's patrons are viewing traditional Chinese paintings.



Chen Hengke, *Autumn Mountains after Rain*, 1918



Chen Hengke, *Viewing Pictures*, 1917

Qi Baishi (1864-1957)

Qi Baishi painted a wide range of unpretentious subjects - flowers, birds, shrimps, crabs and frogs, fruit and insects - with great liveliness and strong colour.



Qi Baishi, *Lotus Flowers and Wild Duck*, 1920s

Baishi came from a peasant family in Hunan. As a child he often helped in the fields, looking after grazing buffalo and collecting wood. In 1877 he was apprenticed to a local carpenter and then to a wood carver. He liked to draw the figures which appeared in local operas;

"I was quite well known in my village now. Most people asked me to paint pictures of gods such as the Jade Emperor, Lao Zi, God of the Kitchen, Yama, the Dragon God ... Although I didn't like drawing these things, I did it for the money."

His work drew the attention and help of painting teachers and scholar-officials. In 1900 he moved to a remote mountain retreat in Hunan and made five journeys to distant parts of China. He studied nature in the mountains, but his work was not simply about verisimilitude. Qi said;

"the good painter must first imbue the picture of things that he has seen with his own eyes. Only then can he grasp hold of the brush and will with certainty beget the spirit of objects depicted in his work ... Good painters seek their picture of the world on the border of the similar and dissimilar. He who paints too much likeness succumbs to vulgarity [this part of quote was applied by Hejzlar to Qi's friend Xu Beihong below], but the painter with too much dissimilarity deceives the world."



Qi Baishi, *Lychee and Insect*, 1943



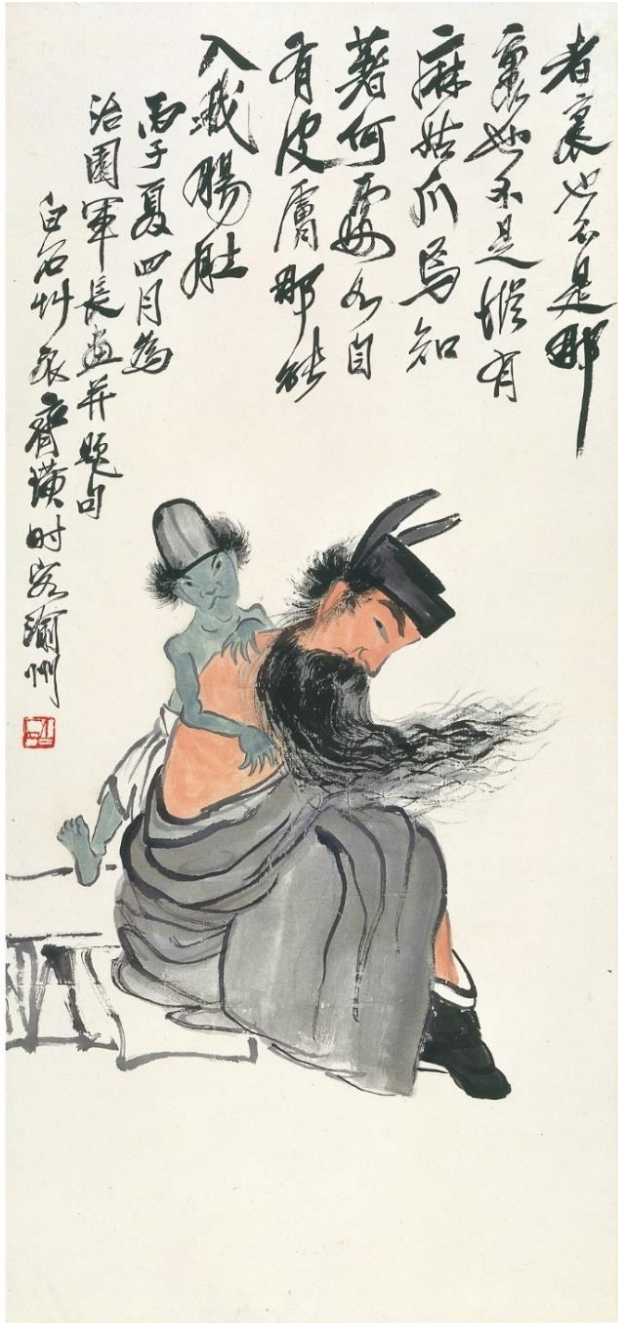
Qi Baishi, *Bamboo Shoots and Partridges*, 1946

When war affected Hunan in 1917 Baishi barely escaped with his life, and then had to flee Beijing for a year to hide in a mountain retreat, surrounded by war and looting, where he nearly died of hunger. Back in the city, Qi Baishi was welcomed by Chen Hengke and Beijing art societies. The energy, freedom and simplicity of Zhu Da appealed to him above all, and to this he added the colour developed in the Shanghai School.



Qi Baishi, *Flowers and Birds*, 1928

Indeed, Qi Baishi's style owes much to Wu Changshuo of the Shanghai School [below] but most of his compositions are simpler and more spacious. *A Ghost Scratches Zhong Kui's Back*, is an example, as are many of Qi Baishi's landscapes.



Qi Baishi, *A Ghost Scratches Zhong Kui's Back*, 1936



Qi Baishi, *Fishing Alone*, 1940s

His similarity in style to Wu Changshuo but with a quieter composition can be seen in Qi Baishi's *Chrysanthemums and Bees*: the stillness of the air seems to be carrying the scent to the bees. Bees were one of his favourite subjects and he was considered to have captured their spirit so well that it was easy to imagine hearing them humming in flight. Qi Baishi received many accolades, becoming in 1953 the first National Artist of China and being awarded 1956 World Peace Prize. His final works are more dramatic. The images are shown from a short distance, filling the frame, and with striking contrasts. The lotuses of his penultimate year, below, are rendered in cool blue and grey with splashes of bright red.



Qi Baishi, *Chrysanthemums and Bees*, 1948



Qi Baishi, *Lotus*, 1956



Li Kuchan, *Eagles*, 1940s

Li Kuchan (1899-1983)

Li Kuchan was from a poor peasant family in Shandong. Li went to Beijing in 1919 under a new initiative to offer art tuition more widely. In 1918 Cai Yuanpei, Minister of Education (more on him below), realising that hundreds of young men and women were longing to study art but could not afford it, set up the *After-Hours Painting Research Society* under the *Diligent Work and Frugal Study Association* – essentially evening classes, but with top painters as instructors. Li went to Beijing to study with the Society, pulling a rickshaw in the daytime to earn the money to pay the fees. He was taught initially by a Czech professor, then Qi Baishi, who later regarded Li Kuchan as his best pupil. From Qi Baishi Li Kuchan learned how to create playful but natural depictions of flowers and birds, having studied them carefully. Kuchan exaggerated certain features for power or humour. His large birds recall those of Zhu Da but are modelled more simply. Li Kuchan kept eagles and cormorants at his home and frequently visited the zoo.



Li Kuchan, *Cormorants*, 1930s



Li Kuchan, *Cormorants*, 1960s

Li Kuchan's birds were typically shown at close range with only minimal background, the focal point was the facial expression of the bird, especially the eyes and beak. The first of the *Cormorant* paintings includes a dedication to his teacher Qi Baishi, to which one bird directs our attention with a look of humility and reverence. In the second, one bird, apparently impatient, seems to be asking the look-out, whose wings flutter with slight agitation; "have you seen these damn fish yet?"

His smaller birds are often protected by foliage and flowers, like the kingfisher amid the bamboo and flowers. Li Kuchan's birds would become political statements later in the century.



Li Kuchan, *Kingfisher and Lotuses*, 1950s

The Shanghai School

Shanghai remained the cultural and economic capital of China as it had been in the second half of the 19th century: indeed, more so as foreign interest and presence increased. The Shanghai School, already firmly established under the Qing, continued to thrive. More than a third of the 500 works in the catalogue of the second National Exhibition of Art in 1937 were in the tradition of the Shanghai masters.



Wu Changshuo, *Peony and Rock*, 1923

Wu Changshuo (1844-1927)

Wu Changshuo's gentry family in Zhejiang suffered greatly during the Taiping Rebellion. Although he passed the civil service exams, he was not offered a post. He earned a living through literature and calligraphy – a master of the stone drum seal script [examples in Part 7]. Wu learned painting from Ren Yi, but it was not until he was in his fifties that he took painting seriously. He was appointed district prefect in Jiangsu at the age of 53 but resigned after only a month, sickened by the hypocrisy of his colleagues and their oppression of ordinary people. Perhaps this prompted Changshuo to concentrate on painting. Despite his late start he was very influential and had many pupils. There was a saying “Wu in the South and Qi in the North” – he and Qi Baishi played dominant roles in their respective art worlds. Wu was the leading flower and plant specialist among Shanghai artists in the early decades of the 20th century.



Wu Changshuo, *Chrysanthemums and Rock*, 1913



Wu Changshuo, *Spring Offerings*, 1919

From 1910 Wu developed his favourite themes of flowers and rocks. “The flowers seem scarcely to be growing in the earth; they are placed instead in front of the rock or above it ... The rock serves to stabilise the composition and give it weight, as a foil to the lighter more fragile plant ... Wu’s pictures are to be seen not as images from nature but as arrangements of plants and rocks in abstract space.” (Cahill). *Spring Offerings* includes symbols of long life. Wu’s poem reads:

*The narcissus is long-lived and the lingzhi mushroom never fades,
At year's end their appearance consoles my loneliness.
The gnarled rock, set down by Heaven,
Is like the Kunlunnu tribesman who waits upon the singing girl clad in red silk.*

Changshuo was said to have lived simply and in some poverty. He sold his paintings only at the end of his career, despite longstanding and high demand from Japanese. In his poetry Wu expressed his hatred of oppression and destruction of war, and by association the Japanese.

Pan Tianshou (1897-1971)

Pan Tianshou enrolled in the Provincial Teacher's College in Hangzhou at the age of 19, and moved to Shanghai in 1923 to teach Chinese painting. There he met Wu Changshuo and the two were close friends. In 1929 Tianshou moved back to Hangzhou and spent the rest of his life teaching in the Academy. Pan's style emerged in the 1940s, and some spoke of "Li (Kuchan) in the North and Pan in the South", as the subjects and style of the pair make some works hard to tell apart.



Pan Tianshou, *Vulture on a Rock*, 1963



Pan Tianshou, *Eagle, Rock and Flowers*, 1950s



Pan Tianshou, *Misty Rain and Croak of Frogs*, 1948

Pan's paintings of large birds on rocks are similar to those of Li Kuchan. Usually his works in this vein are dominated by a slab of rock, usually with a blank face much like those of Hongren [Part 6]. All manner of creatures might appear perched on the upper left. Pan Tianshou's colourful and vibrant flower paintings are what associate him with the Shanghai School. However, these are usually more precise, livelier and more beautifully composed than much of the output of the School.



Pan Tianshou, *Wild Flowers of Yandang Mountain*, 1963



Pan Tianshou, *Mount Yandang Scenery*, 1963

Some artists who maintained Chinese traditions are not part of the Shanghai School. The first is a gifted landscapist who spent most of his career teaching, writing and painting in Shanghai and Beijing, and brought the Anhui School of landscape painting back to life

Huang Binhong (1865-1955)

Huang Binhong, born in Zhejiang, was the son of a prosperous merchant and art enthusiast. His father's business collapsed in the late 19th century and the family returned to their native land of Anhui, where the landscape was an inspiration: "*The Yellow Mountains [Huangshan] were my teacher*", Binhong said. He revived landscape painting, believing in direct experience of nature and landscape. Huang described his method; "*Brushwork must resemble the determined struggle of the porters on crowded city streets. They are all hastily jostling and forcing their way, yet do not knock into one another, never damage the cargo hung from their yokes nor make any unnecessary steps or movements. In fact, they do not get into one another's way.*" Sullivan notes: "*Huang captured the flavour of his homeland, he sketched everywhere he went making notes of light and colours like an impressionist.*"



Huang Binhong, *Boating Amid Streams and Valleys*, 1930s



Huang Binhong, *Secluded Studio*, 1946

These two landscapes show the deft, impressionist nature of Huang's work. Huang painted coastal scenes and pavilions in the mountains on small square pictures. An example is *Waiting for the Ferry* painted during one of Binhong's sketching tours in Sichuan. From the age of 80 onwards his handling of ink became daring, his forms almost fantastic. These landscapes have tempestuous surfaces with dark thick modelling inks – Huang called them 'bitter' landscapes – but the white areas of water and mist and the calming touches of blue on the distant mountains contrast with the writhing surface.

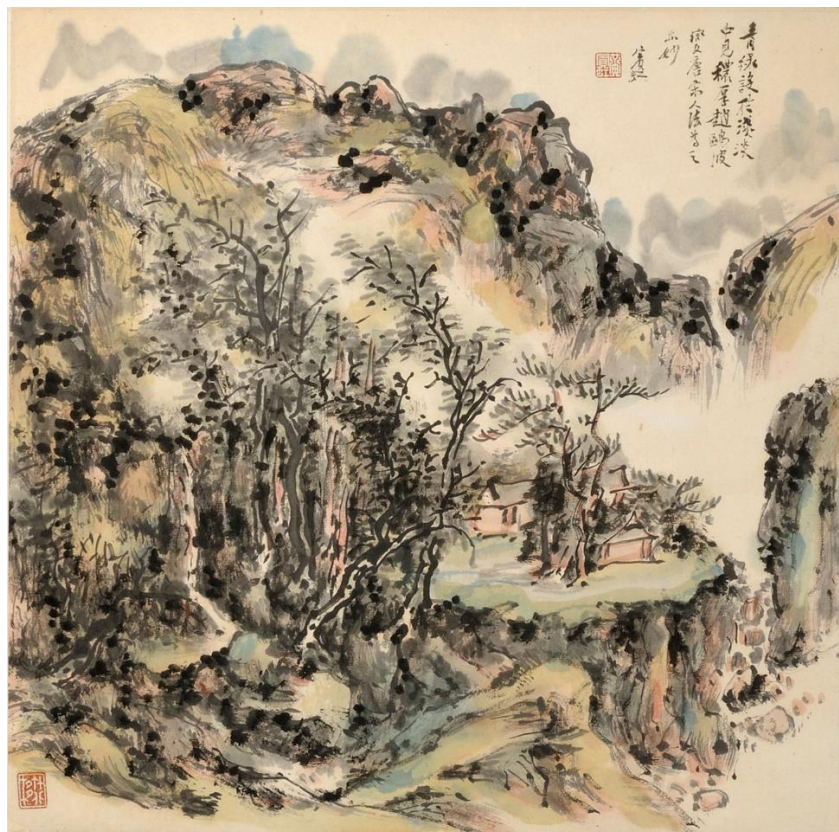


Huang Binhong, *Waiting for the Ferry in the Shade of Pine Trees*, early 1930s

As well as bitter landscapes, in old age Huang Binhong painted smaller pictures full of colour, with contrasts of warm and cold tones. Sienna, cobalt and green form “unbroken cover over nearly whole areas of the picture although individual patches stand out slightly reminiscent of Cezanne (Heizlar)”



Huang Binhong, *Yellow Mountain*, 1955



Huang Binhong, *Landscape with Waterfall*, 1954

Fu Baoshi (1904-1965)

Fu Baoshi came from the family of a poor umbrella-repairer in Nanchang, Jiangxi. As a boy he was apprenticed to a ceramics shop but in his spare time studied calligraphy, painting and seal-carving. He went to college in Nanjing, staying there to teach. In 1933 with the help of Xu Beihong (below) Fu went to the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. Although he studied Western and Japanese art in Tokyo, he painted traditional Chinese pictures. Fu painted figures, landscapes and figures in landscapes. His best work was done in the 1940s. His splendid elongated women might have been painted in the Six Dynasties [Part 1]. The long faces and bushy eyebrows of scholars and poets echo Chen Hongshou [Part 5].

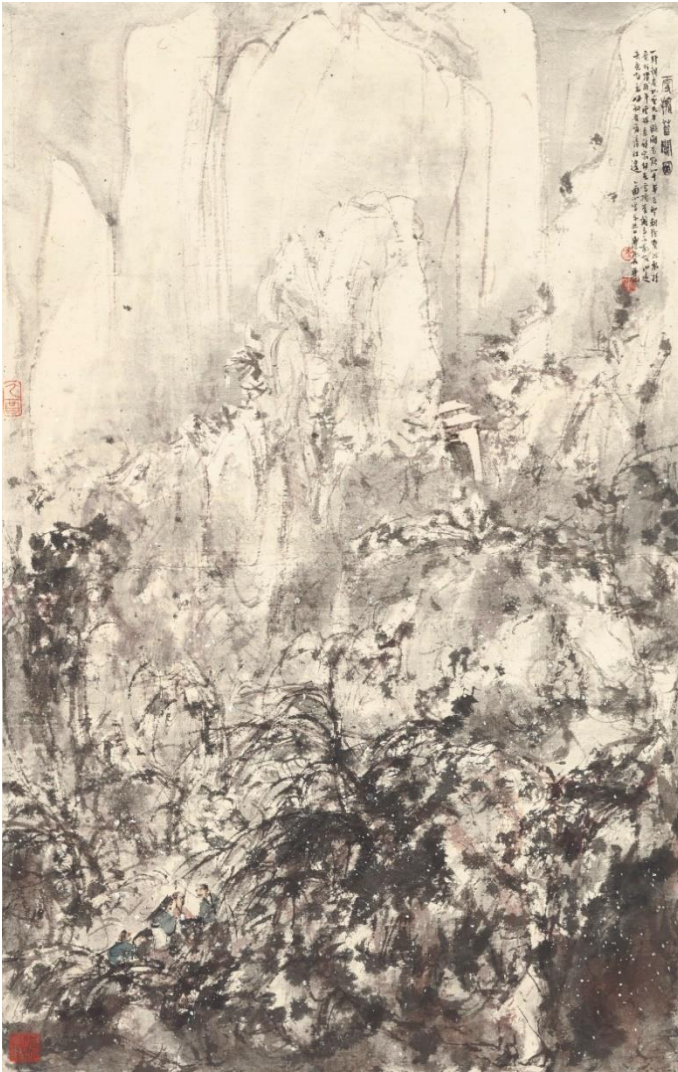


Fu Baoshi, *Goddesses of the Xiang River*,
1940s



Fu Baoshi, *Scholars and Pine*, 1945

Landscapes are the works for which Fu is remembered. He saw Shitao's paintings in Tokyo and spent many years studying the artist. Fu Baoshi's landscapes are typically high mountains in light strokes and soft colour washes, a little like Northern Song monumentality. His dots and brushstrokes are similar to Shitao's and produce a lively surface. Figures often feature in Fu Baoshi's landscapes, but they are usually small and have to be hunted down; *Scholars Trekking* (below) being an example. Some of his works, like *Mountains in Sichuan*, are painted on paper with a roughened surface which produced interesting ink effects because of uneven absorbency.



Fu Baoshi, *Scholars Trekking in Snow Mountains*, 1945



Fu Baoshi, *Mountains in Sichuan*, 1940s

Fu spent much of his career as painter, teacher and historian of Chinese painting on the staff of National Central University in Nanjing, including the war years when the school fled to safe havens. Like Huang Binhong, Baoshi painted waterfall scenes – usually towering affairs. Typically, these paintings have a group of scholars appearing somewhere in the middle third of the scroll. The early example below depicts a small cascade. Later paintings show a wide crashing falls. One of Fu Baoshi's last waterfall paintings places the observers at the top and bottom of a gorge and shows the water in various forms.



Fu Baoshi, *Appreciating the Waterfall*, 1944



Fu Baoshi, *Gazing at the Waterfall*, 1964

Synthesis with Western Art

The artists who continued traditional Chinese art partly reflected a re-awakening pride in Chinese culture. However, many felt that traditional culture was an obstacle to the modernisation needed in China. They pointed to the spectacular success of the Meiji Restoration in Japan where Western technology and practice had transformed a small nation into a power that had inflicted humiliating defeats on China at sea and on land in 1894, and had reprised those with crushing victories against Russia in 1904-5.

In 1902 Western-style drawing was compulsory in Chinese schools. There were no qualified Chinese teachers - Japanese instructors were employed at first - so two teacher training colleges were opened. As well as fine artists, these schools hoped to produce commercial and graphic designers. More newspapers and magazines were being published but were almost entirely without pictures. Students were also sent to the Tokyo School of Fine Arts in Japan, where advanced instruction in oil-painting techniques was available. Japanese influence was felt in China through the Lingnan School.

The Lingnan School

Japanese artists combined the traditional features of smooth surfaces and decorative effects with Western realism to create *nihonga*. The Gao brothers, along with Chen Shuren, brought the style to China, and dedicated themselves to creating a new Chinese art by a synthesis of West and East. They also brought conventional Japanese themes; monkeys and birds in the trees silhouetted against the moon and lions and tigers as symbols of patriotic vigour. Qifeng's lion is portrayed with Western realism, including foreshortening, but also conveys the powerful, snarling essence of the beast as a Chinese artist should.



Chen Shuren, *Willows in the Moonlight*, 1930



Gao Qifeng, *Roaring Lion*, 1927

Gao Jianfu (1879-1951) studied under professional painter Ju Lian from age of 13, serving a seven-year apprenticeship and painting mainly birds and flowers, grasses and insects in the careful, realistic and bright colours of his master. In 1903 Jianfu went to teach in Canton and met Yamamoto Baigai, one of the many Japanese teachers in China, who encouraged Jianfu to go to Tokyo to study. After returning home for the summer holiday, Jianfu returned to Japan taking his brother with him. Jianfu's belief that a painting should incorporate Western and Chinese techniques is shown in *Autumn Pumpkin* composed as if looking through camera viewfinder, with the pumpkin cut off. Shading adds weight to the realistically-depicted fruit, but the leaves and vines are rendered with typically Chinese brushstrokes.



Gao Jianfu, *Autumn Pumpkin*, 1920s



Gao Jianfu, *Wine House at Dusk*, 1920s

Jianfu argued that art should reflect life and should be unrestricted in subject matter and technique: "I think we should not only take in elements of Western painting. If there are good points in Indian painting, Egyptian painting, Persian painting, or masterpieces of other countries, we should embrace all of them, too, as nourishment for our Chinese painting." Many of his works depict landscapes in an expressive splashed ink style, which Gao used in sunsets and rain-drenched scenes. Aeroplanes, motor cars and tanks - images of modern technology - appear in this style in the 1920s and 1930s: *Flying in the Rain* and *Two Monsters of the Modern World* are examples [unavailable].

Jianfu returned from Japan in 1908 and after staying in Canton went to Shanghai in 1912. He launched *The True Record* magazine promoting modern Chinese art and covering politics, industry and society, illustrated with photographs and reproductions. The magazine ran for less than a year was the first journal to bring art to the literate public. In 1923 the brothers opened their *Spring Awakening Art Academy* in Canton and were able to promote their own Chinese version of *nihonga*. Jianfu was tireless in organising exhibitions and art associations.

Gao Qifeng (1889-1933) used striking colour and the splashed ink style adopted by his brother, and was an outstanding painter of birds, animals (as we saw with the *Roaring Lion*) and plants.



Gao Qifeng, *Birds on a Pine Branch*, 1920s



Gao Qifeng, *Sincere Heart*, 1928

Gao Qifeng called for an artistic revolution to save the depressed art world in China and amid his lecture notes said: *“the student of art must try to adopt a much loftier viewpoint and imagine himself charged with an altruistic mission which requires him to consider his fellow men’s miseries and afflictions as his own. A painter should work hard on the production of such pictures as will effect a betterment of man’s nature and bring about an improvement of society in general. I shall retain what was exquisite in the art of Chinese painting and, at the same time, adopt the best methods of composition which the art school of the world has to offer, thereby blending the East and the West into a harmonious whole.”* Gao Qifeng taught in the brothers’ academy until his early death from tuberculosis.

Chen Shuren (1884-1948) met Gao Jianfu in Ju Lian’s studio, sometime during the latter’s apprenticeship, and the pair remained friends thereafter. Chen was more politically conscious and worked for an anti-Manchu paper in Hong Kong. He became a member and close associate of Canton’s revolutionaries under Sun Yatsen. Chen spent 1906-12 in Kyoto and 1913-16 in Tokyo, but then devoted himself to politics. Sun Yatsen sent him to Canada in 1917 to head the Canadian branch of the KMT (Kuomintang). He stayed in politics after his return from Canada in 1922 and remained an amateur painter, less confined by style or doctrine than the Gao brothers.



Gao Qifeng, *Monkey*, 1922



Chen Shuren, *Loquats and Birds*, 1920s

After an initial Japanese phase when he produced Lingnan-style works, such as *Loquats and Birds*, he painted landscapes from nature. Chen Shuren sketched in the open air, and the results are strikingly modern: “his easy, assured brushwork suggests the work of an amateur painter not to convey a message or demonstrate a theory but simply because he enjoyed it (Sullivan). Chen Shuren’s poems are plain and straightforward, elegant and sincere – qualities that mark his later landscapes (Laurence Tam in Kao)”.



Chen Shuren, *Majestic Mountains*, 1945



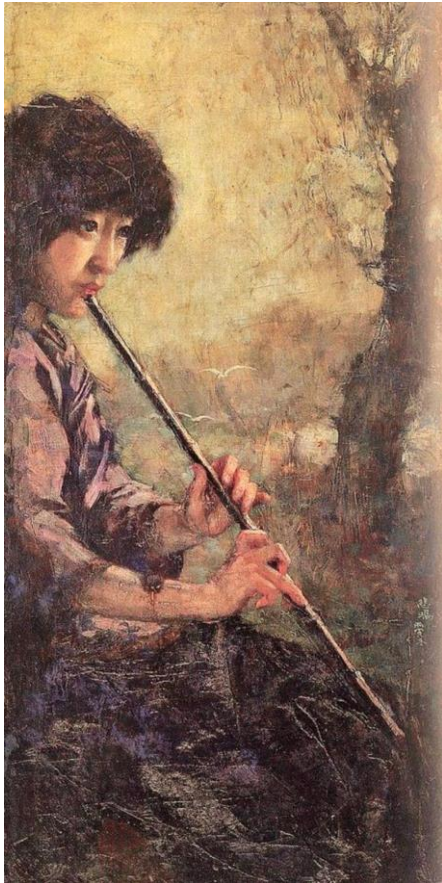
Chen Shuren, *Autumn Scenery*, 1943

The Lingnan School helped artists think about synthesis, and revived the art of painting by a keen observation of nature and not just by copying old masters. New subjects were introduced. However, support for the School was blighted by waves of anti-Japanese feeling sparked in China by the “21 Demands”, made by Japan in 1915. These demanded that China cede Manchuria and give Japan complete control over finances and the police. Anti-Japanese feeling was intensified by the *May Fourth Movement* provoked when the Treaty of Versailles awarded Japan the former German Concessions in China, instead of returning them to the nation as promised by the Western powers. China had helped the Allies during World War I, sending more than 300,000 men to work in the factories of Britain and France whose native workers were serving in the trenches, so this betrayal caused sharp grievances and led to demonstrations across the country. Just as important in the demise of the Lingnan School was the feeling that artists who wanted to see Western art should do so directly instead of learning a diluted version in Japan. Under the innovative Minister of Education, Cai Yuanpei, opportunities to travel to Europe and study art became available.

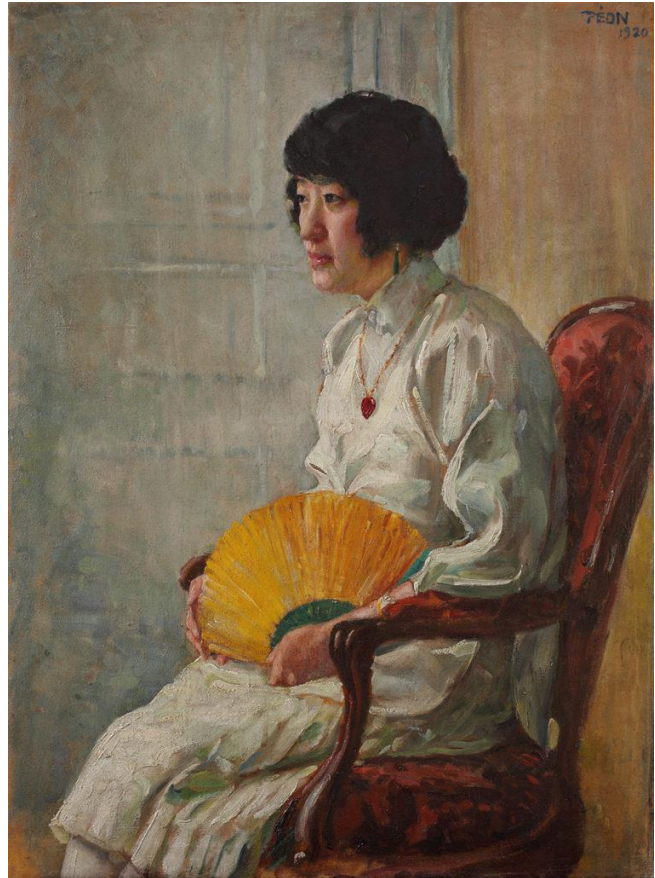
Cai Yuanpei had studied philosophy in Berlin and Leipzig from 1907 to 1912, and had seen the work of Vlaminck, Kandinsky and Picasso. He asserted that artistic values were universal, crossing national and cultural frontiers. Although a shocking view – most older educated Chinese regarded Western culture as barbaric - it fired young artists to go abroad to study. Magazines in China had information on modern Western art but the reproductions were poor. There were so many things which could never really be understood or appreciated other than at first hand. Under Cai’s *Diligent Work and Frugal Study Association* many students studied in Europe.

Xu Beihong (1895 – 1953)

Xu Beihong was the first person to study art in Paris and Berlin on a government scholarship. Xu was born in a village roughly halfway between Shanghai and Nanjing. His father was a small farmer and a decent artist. Xu and his father became itinerant portrait painters when Xu was in his teens. By 17 he was supporting his father by teaching art at the Yixing Girl’s Normal School but when his father died in 1914 set off to make his mark in Shanghai. He owed his start to Gao Jianfu who in 1915 spotted him producing cheap fan paintings for the Shanghai art market. As a result, Xu was enrolled at the Jesuit art school teaching Western art just outside Shanghai. He studied in the Liu Haisu’s school for two years, though he would never admit later in life that he had been a pupil of Liu. He was appointed to teach in Beijing University in 1918 and was one of the first to admit that China’s art needed to be rejuvenated. Xu studied in Paris in the winter of 1920/21 but suffered so much from hunger and cold that his health was permanently damaged. He went to Berlin for two years where living was cheaper, then returned to Paris, studying with the conservative Dagnan-Bouveret.



Xu Beihong, *The Sound of the Flute*, 1926 (oil)



Xu Beihong, *Portrait of a Woman with Fan*, 1920 (oil)

Xu painted oils in the conventional salon style (under the name of Ju Peon, see the signature top-right on *Portrait of a Woman*) and was much in demand for portraits. He adapted French academic history painting to Chinese topics.



Xu Beihong, *Tian Heng and his Five Hundred Retainers*, 1928-30 (oil)

Tian Heng illustrates a famous instance of loyalty in Chinese history. Tian Heng was adamant in refusing to serve the founder of the Han Dynasty. Tian realises he cannot really refuse the emperor and announces to his followers that he is leaving. They know he means to kill himself; consternation is written on their faces. Xu Beihong includes his self-portrait; the young man in yellow robe over white shirt and trousers. *Awaiting the Deliverer* is drawn from an ancient Chinese text regarding the common people's desire for a just ruler; a relevant comment on China's predicament at the time.



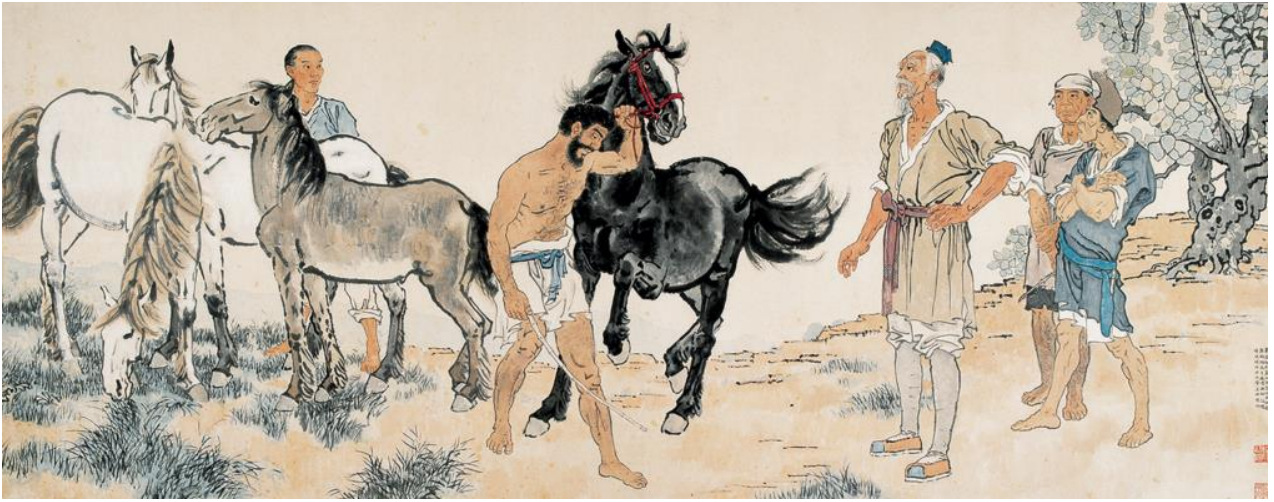
Xu Beihong, *Awaiting the Deliverer*, 1930-3 (oil)

The marketing of his work in China was difficult and Xu depended more on his position as teacher in art academies and as a portrait painter in the Western manner to earn his living. After his return to his homeland Xu Beihong experimented in combining Chinese traditional brush techniques with the realistic drawing he had learned in Paris. He painted many subjects - birds, plants, landscapes – but his most famous was horses. They became so central to his reputation, that other works were forgotten and before moving on to four-legged friends, here is one example of his neglected art of the two-legged. As Kao mentions; “his concern for reality and compassion for the suffering of the people moved him to depict the deprived members of society.”

He was genuinely concerned for ordinary people. The demand for Xu Beihong's work was much stronger outside China. He exploited that to sell paintings abroad to raise money for Chinese refugees.



Xu Beihong, *Poor Sichuan Woman*, 1938



Xu Beihong, *Jiufang Gao, Horse Judge*, 1931



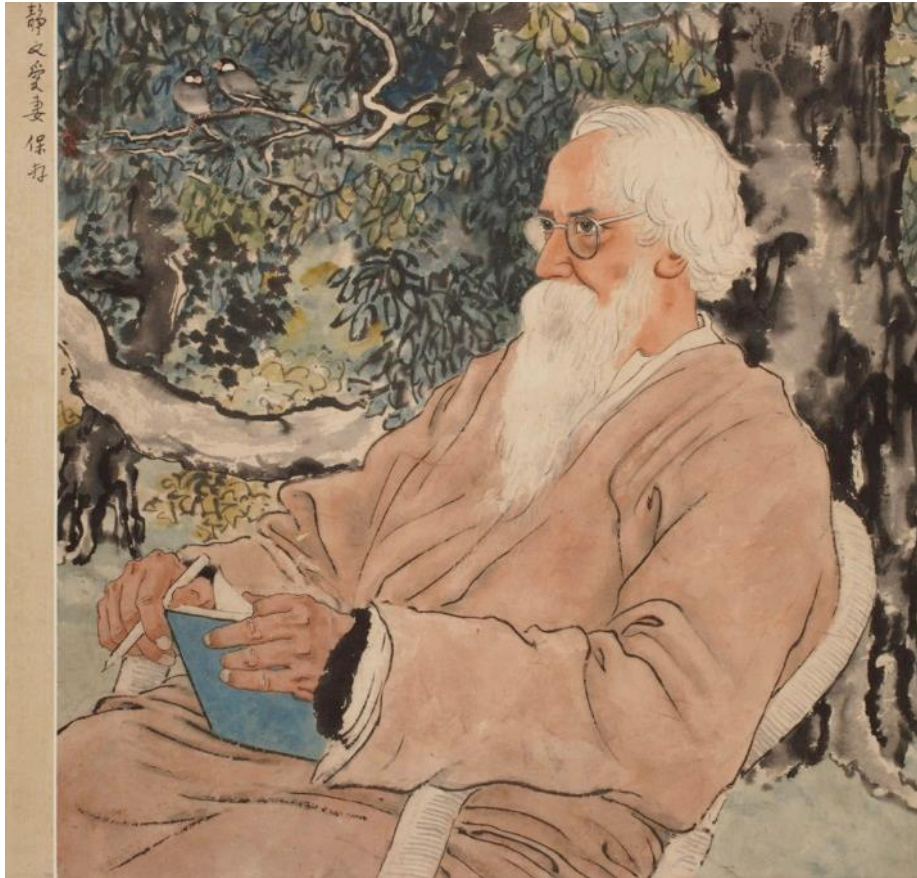
Xu Beihong, *Galloping Horse*, 1943



Xu Beihong, *Grazing Horse*, 1932

Horses appear in another Xu history painting, this time produced with a Chinese brush, but with European academic realism. Jiufang Gao was a woodcutter of the Warring States period whose gift for judging horses was legendary. Xu Beihong's more famous horse paintings are solely in ink, a formula which was "incessantly repeated" comments Sullivan, who goes on to describe a slightly damaging episode. Xu Beihong's marriage to Jiang Biwei began to fall apart in 1930 but they did not divorce until 1943, when Xu Beihong re-married. Biwei arranged an exhibition in Chongqing of her collection, which included 35 of her ex-husband's horse paintings. The assembly-line like similarity of the works shocked some observers.

Grazing Horse was painted for Qi Baishi's son. Qi Baishi was Beihong's closest friend and they sometimes collaborated on paintings. Xu Beihong took a collection of his paintings to Singapore for sale to raise money for China's refugee aid fund and then set off for India, where he met Gandhi and Tagore, who modernised Bengali art and sat for one of Xu Beihong's most successful portraits, in ink and colour.



Xu Beihong, *Portrait of Rabindranath Tagore*, 1940

Xu Beihong became the acknowledged master in China in realism and became a model artist under the Communist regime. He gave his students a high example in technique, believing that Western academic drawing was the foundation of painting (Ingres would have been his idol). However, *“only rarely do his paintings give a sense of inner vision or revelation. He was not passionate like Liu Haisu and Ling Fengmian [below] and there is little drama in his work (Sullivan)”*. Xu Beihong was single-minded. When he came to the West his eyes were closed to all European painting after about 1880 and he never opened them. Living in the Paris of Matisse and Picasso he ignored them and was hostile to anything avant-garde: *“Renoir is vulgar, Cezanne is shallow, Matisse is inferior”*, he said. Xu believed that what his students needed was not wholesale modernism but a solid foundation in Western technique, and perhaps in China in the 1930s that went far enough.

Liu Haisu (1896-1994)

Liu Haisu was born into comfortable circumstances in Wuxing, Jiangsu. At ten he was enrolled in a small art school run by Zhou Xiang. Liu Haisu first saw Western art in reproductions when he visited Shanghai in 1909 and copied them with home-made paints. He was basically self-taught. While his fellow students were learning to paint scenery and backdrops, Liu was discovering Velazquez and Goya in a bookshop. Impatient with Zhou Xiang's approach, Haisu opened his own art school in 1912 in Shanghai. He was only 17 and barely more than a beginner, but attracted 18 students who he taught in primitive conditions. He introduced life drawing into their classes. The nude figure studies were attacked and Liu was branded a “traitor in art”. He had a seal carved reading this and often affixed it to his paintings. In 1924 officials banned figure studies and in 1926, Sun Chuanfang, Warlord of the Five Provinces forbade the painting and drawing of nudes in all art schools. Liu protested in the press, Sun lost his temper and tried to arrest Liu who hid in the French Quarter. A compromise was reached. Liu was fined because of his disgraceful personality and insulting behaviour, so Sun's honour was satisfied and the use of nude models resumed.

By 1915 the school had grown and was recognised as the Shanghai Painting and Art Institute (the *Shanghai Meizhuan*). The teaching expanded too. Women were admitted in 1920 and by 1925 Liu's course included Chinese painting, Western painting, two years of art, music and handicrafts as well as three years of Normal School training. The School "was the true birthplace of modern art in China, owing largely to Liu Haisu's courage, energy, gifts as an organiser and total freedom from prejudice against any particular school of painting (Sullivan)." Liu formed the *Heavenly Horse Painting Society* – a horse flying through the air symbolising the energy and freedom of the group [the sculpture of horse in Part 1 might have served as an emblem]. They ran annual exhibitions in Shanghai from 1920 to 1929, by which time many of the leaders had gone to Europe). The school remained in service until 1942.

Liu went to Japan in 1918 for a year and was present at the official opening of the Imperial Fine Arts Academy in Tokyo. He held his first one-man show in Beijing in 1921 and lectured at Beijing University on Impressionism and Post-impressionism. By 1923 he settled in Shanghai. Liu was a natural oil painter – full of vigour - revealing what would be a lifelong passion for van Gogh of whom he said "his world is like a sort of raging fire; it is a world of the natural force of inner life."



Liu Haisu, *Qianmen Gate in Beijing*, 1922

In the 1930s Liu's style and technique had advanced. His colour was richer and warmer, and his brushstrokes more expressive. *A Church in Paris* shows this new scheme in contrast to that of *Qianmen Gate*.

In 1936 he wrote a vigorous defence of Cezanne, Matisse and van Gogh attacking those – the chief target being Xu Beihong – who had condemned them. The rivalry between Liu and Xu dated back to the 1920s when they competed for the directorship of the Beijing Academy which Xu won. Thereafter, as mentioned before Xu refused to acknowledge that had been a pupil in Liu Haisu's school. Their views on art were profoundly different. Liu believed in modernism while Xu was blind to it. Although Liu was much taken by Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, he passionately believed in an artist's freedom to paint as he or she chose.



Liu Haisu, *A Church in Paris*, 1931

His Chinese scrolls reflect the influence of his two idols, Dong Qichang and Shitao. Sometimes Liu Haisu uses Western composition in his landscapes. The U-shape formed by trees and bridge in *The Grave of Yanzi* is one example, which also shows Western perspective in the diminishing size of the three trees.

In 1939 Liu set off for SE Asia with paintings for an exhibition to raise money for the Chinese Red Cross. He painted in Java and Bali - *Balinese Girls* (1940) is among his best works [unavailable]. The 1950s and 1960s saw intense activity, with a number of post-impressionist canvases. Liu Haisu also brought this approach to ink scrolls of birds and animals. In *Wild Geese*, the airborne bird is impressively animated and beautifully foreshortened. The *Panda* is lively despite being rendered in few strokes.

Later in life Liu Haisu paid many visits to Mount Huang, and the landscapes he painted are among his most famous works.



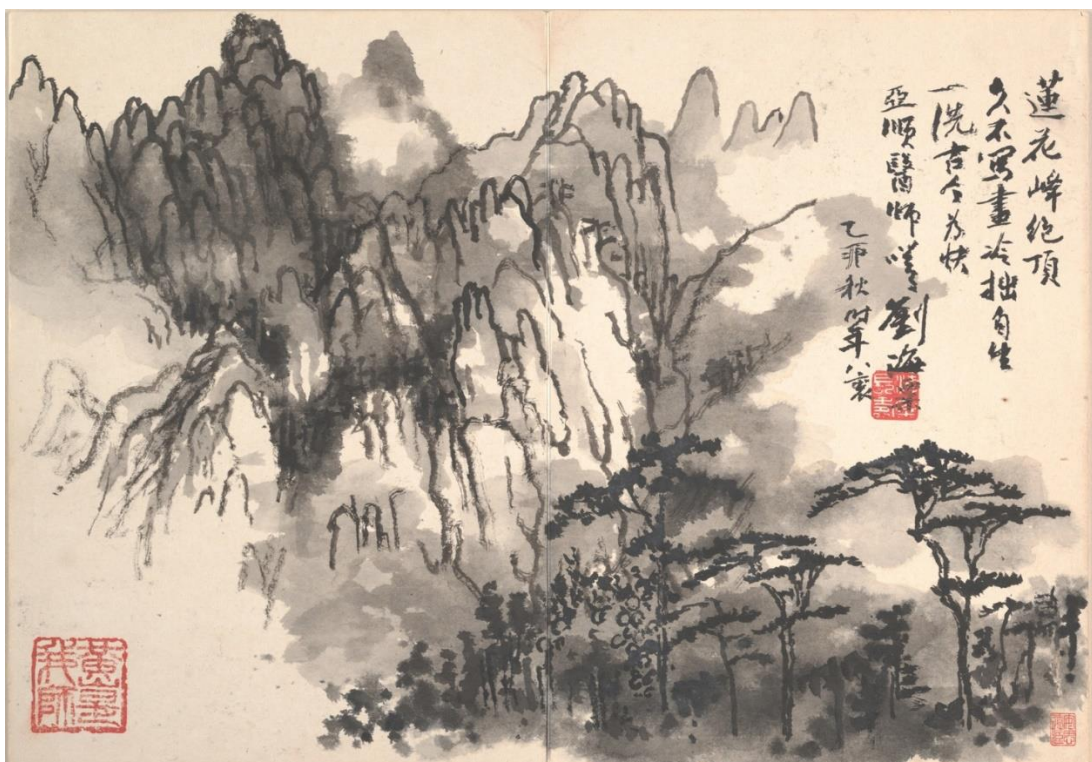
Liu Haisu, *The Grave of Yangzi*, 1924



Liu Haisu, *Wild Geese at the Lake Shore*, 1960



Liu Haisu, *Panda*, 1976



Liu Haisu, *Lotus Peak*, 1975

Although a fan of direct observation of nature, he thought the artist's subjective experience and self-expression must take precedence. He liked the forceful elements and strong colour in Western art. These aspects underpin the splashed-ink and splashed-colour style which he developed in later life. Liu pours ink and water onto the paper allowing them to run into various shapes and tones. The structure is provided later by the addition of vigorous strokes and pine trees at strategic positions.



Liu Haisu, *Pines in Misty Huangshan*, 1981

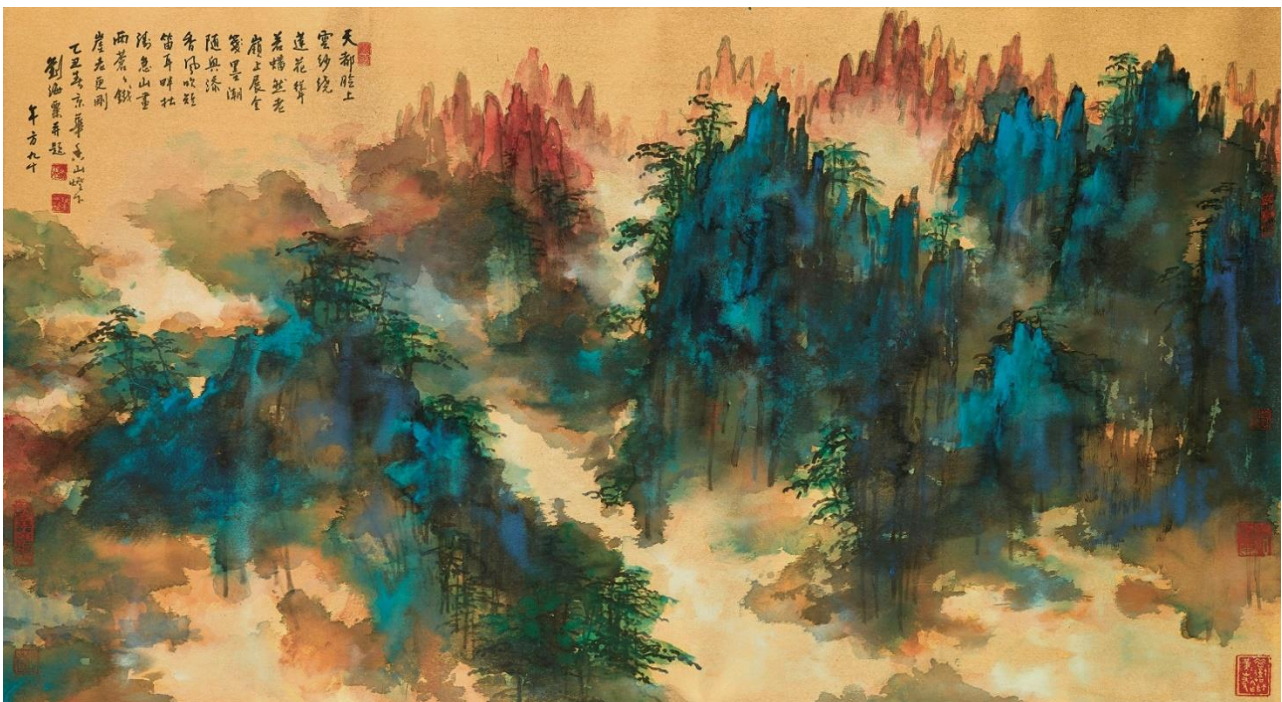
In contrast to the subtle atmosphere of his splashed-ink landscapes those done in splashed colour are “an exuberant celebration of the natural beauty of Huangshan.” The inscription on the *Golden Landscape* explains this was Haisu’s 9th visit to the Yellow Mountains.



Liu Haisu, *Golden Landscape*, 1983



Liu Haisu, *Mount Huang*, 1982



Liu Haisu, *Mount Huang*, 1985

His late paintings cannot be labelled as Western or Chinese technique or synthesis, but simply the personal style of Liu Haisu. He was a powerful artist and, partly because of that, and partly also because he allowed freedom in a painter's approach, he was not so good teaching students. Nevertheless, Liu Haisu is a major figure in the modern movement.

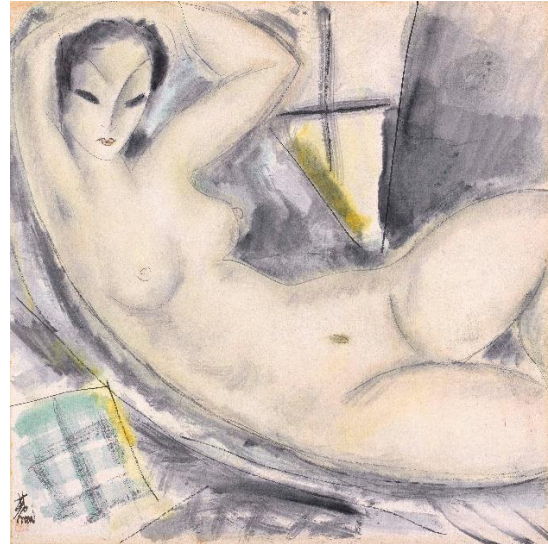
Lin Fengmian (1900-1991)

Lin Fengmian was born in the town of Meixian in Guangdong. His grandfather, a stonemason, wanted Fengmian to be an artisan, not a painter like Fengmian's father. But Fengmian showed an aptitude for painting and persisted. In old age he reflected; "*Looking back, I daren't say that I ever equalled my grandfather's industry and frugality, but the painting brush in my hand and the chisel in his are just the same. I can work all day, and I love it. I cannot thank my grandfather enough for instilling that habit into me.*" After middle school Lin managed to get to Shanghai in 1918, by coincidence, lodging in a hostel for students selected to go to France under Cai's programme. He went to France under the scheme in 1919, studying first in Dijon and then at the *Ecole Beau Arts* in Paris.

His first teacher in Dijon told Lin to get out of the studio and into museums to study oriental art. He spent days at *Musee Guimet* and learned far more about Chinese art than other Chinese art students in Paris. Chinese artists' time in Europe was exhilarating but also bewildering. Lin said he was *"almost in despair"; "I cannot understand why there are so many styles in Paris."* He was drawn to Matisse and Modigliani. Fengmian thought Matisse expressed feeling through *"the rhythmic movement of the line, allied to harmonious colour, but looked on painting as a source of pleasure to painter and viewer, as a 'mental soother' – a very Chinese view."* On his return to China in 1927 Lin continued to work in those styles. His nude women are painted in a delicate sweeping gesture. His robed girls, nearly always sitting on the floor, tending to their hair or with a lute across their knees, have the same luscious delicacy.



Lin Fengmian, *Nude*, 20th century



Lin Fengmian, *Nude*, 20th century



Lin Fengmian, *Lady with Mirror*, 1930s



Lin Fengmian, *Lady in Blue*, 1940s

These were works for which there was virtually no demand in China, so Lin Fengmian was just as dependent on a teaching post as Xu Beihong. After an attempt to modernise the Beijing Academy was frustrated by conservative painters, Fengmian was persuaded by Cai Yuanpei to head the Hangzhou Academy opened in March 1928. During his ten years as director of the Hangzhou Academy he launched the modern movement and gave it firm foundations – not just the study of Western and Chinese techniques but freedom and self-expression; *"these were to be the guiding principles of the school"*.

Lin virtually abandoned oils for the Chinese brush and gouache or watercolour with which ideas and feelings could be expressed swiftly; closer to the ideals of the Chinese scholar. He told his students:

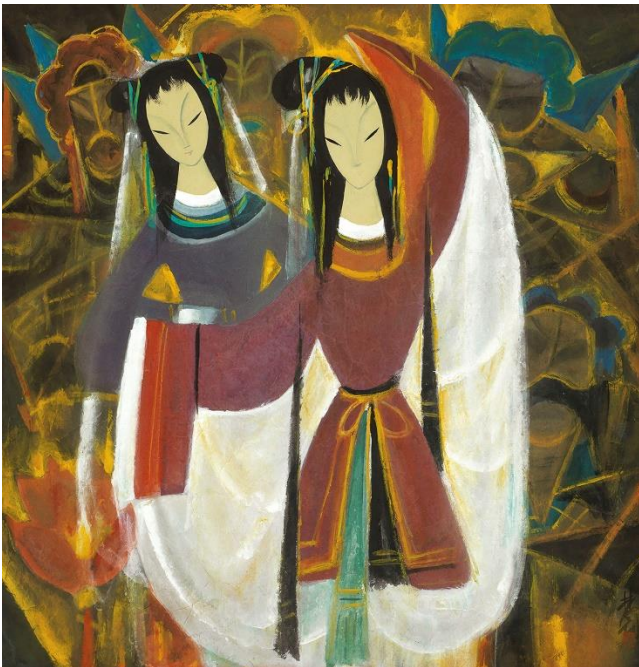
“a real artist can be likened to a beautiful butterfly ... In order to fly, he must first weave a cocoon around himself ... The cocoon is the diverse techniques which the artist acquires strenuously in his early years and the influences he receives.”



Lin Fengmian, *Opera Figures*, 1940s



Lin Fengmian, *Lotus*, 20th century



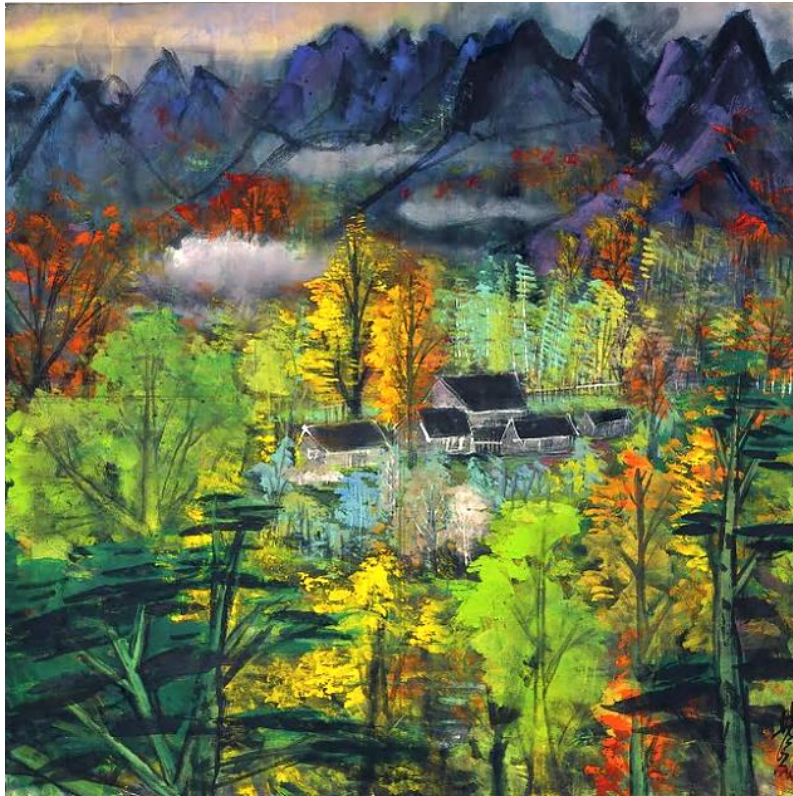
Lin Fengmian, *Lotus Lantern*, 1940s



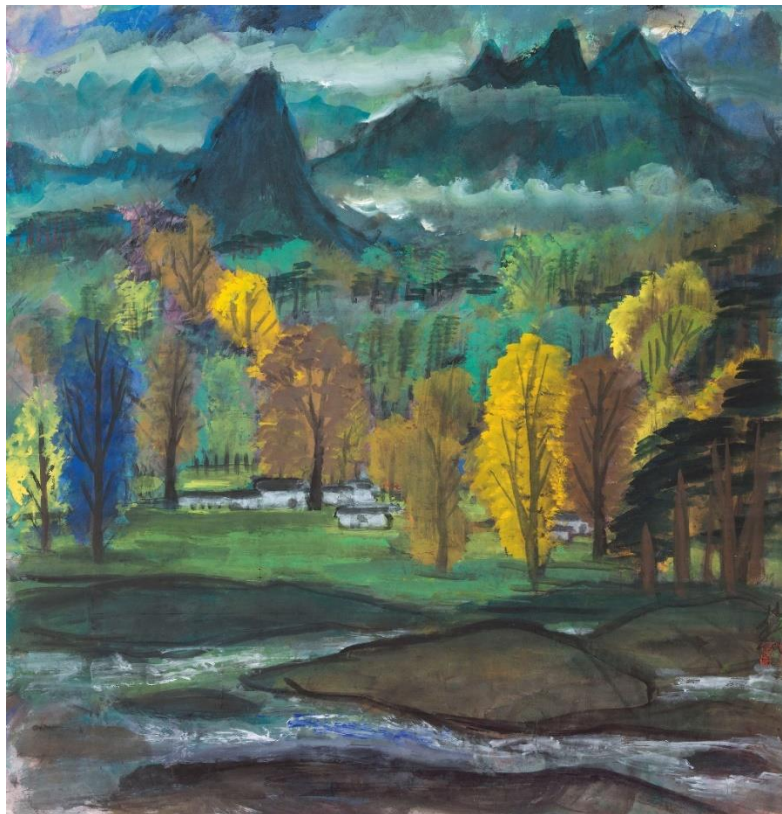
Lin Fengmian, *Sunflowers*, 1930s

Lin's own cocoon, built from the movements of the 20th century in the West, especially Fauvism and Expressionism, and Chinese art from objects in Paris – paintings, ceramics, lacquerware, stone, puppets and other folk craft, can be seen in his paintings of opera characters and flowers. He grasped the fundamental spirit of Chinese art: the quest for the inner essence of things.

Landscapes seem to have been the most important medium for expression for Lin. Some are vibrant, revelling in the wonders of nature, especially autumn colours, and show the influence of Matisse. Others, particularly those painted during the Japanese occupation and later are less colourful.

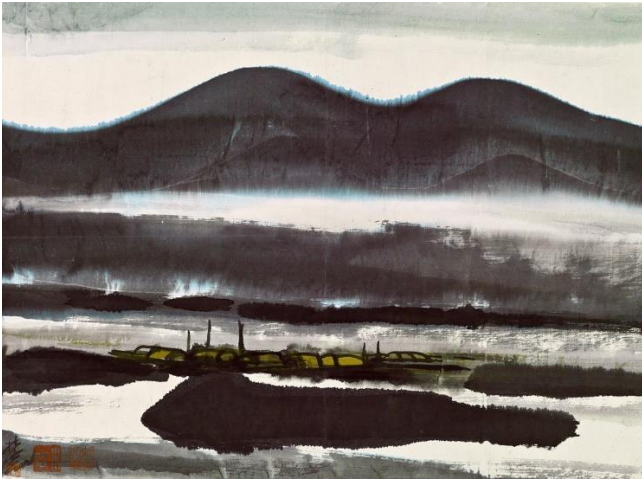


Lin Fengmian, *Autumn Landscape*, 1977-8

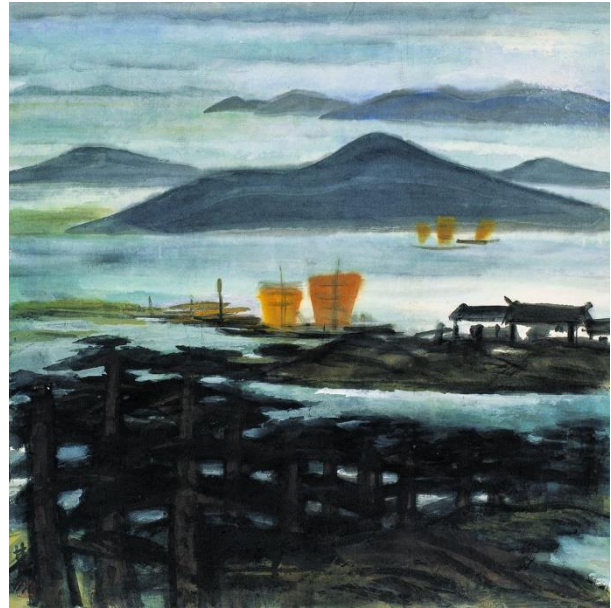


Lin Fengmian, *Autumn Forest*, 1940s

Fengmian lost his teaching job when art schools were reorganised in 1952, and he lived as a recluse enjoying particularly mountains, rivers and the work of boat people. Most of his scenes have a sombre atmosphere, perhaps expressing the simple, but arduous life of China's river folk.



Lin Fengmian, *Landscape with Fishing Boats*, 1960s

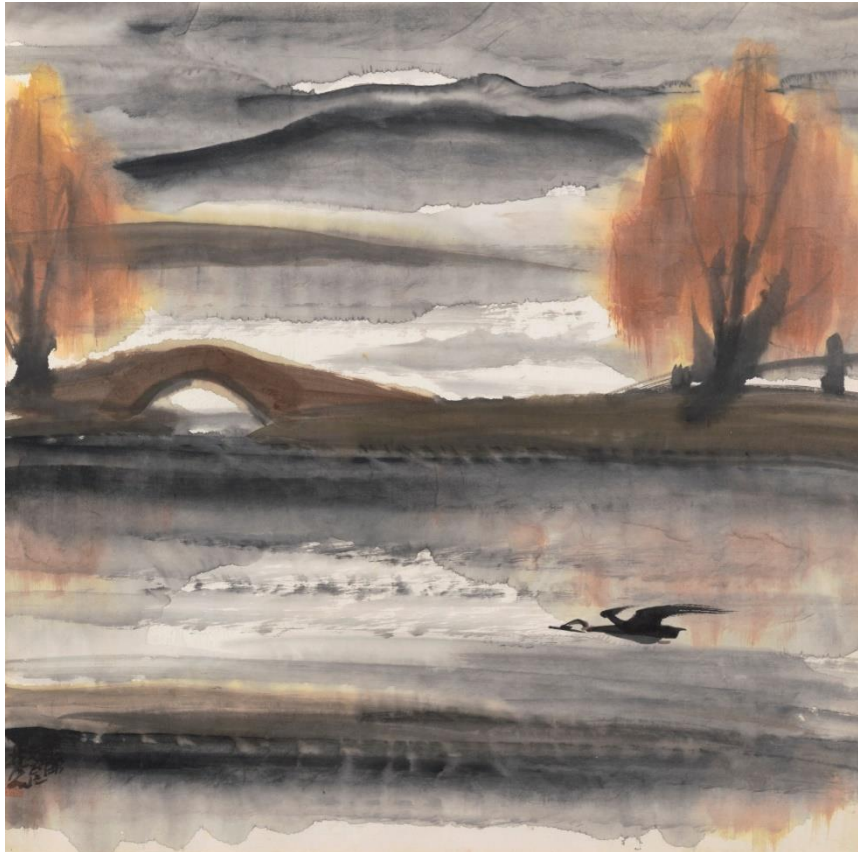


Lin Fengmian, *Boats on a River*, 1960s

Later in life, especially under the Communist regime, Sullivan considered, “*There is always in Lin Fengmian a strain of melancholy, a longing to escape from the dirt and corruption of the world of men and hide himself in a quiet and lonely place.*” His simple landscapes with birds express this melancholy most obviously. Yet some of these works, such as *Birds in Flight*, suggest the joy of escape and freedom. Looking at that painting it is easy to imagine the birds singing gayly as they migrate to warmer climes.



Lin Fengmian, *Reeds and Wild Geese*, 1970s



Lin Fengmian, *Flying Duck by the Bridge*, 1970s



Lin Fengmian, *Birds in Flight*, 1970s

Despite the complicated make-up of his artistic cocoon, Lin Fengmian never stopped practising Chinese painting, usually in a novel square format. However, he was not fussy about the choice of medium his students adopted. The crux of his art was the expression of feelings and sentiments.

“Out of the Studios and onto the Streets!”

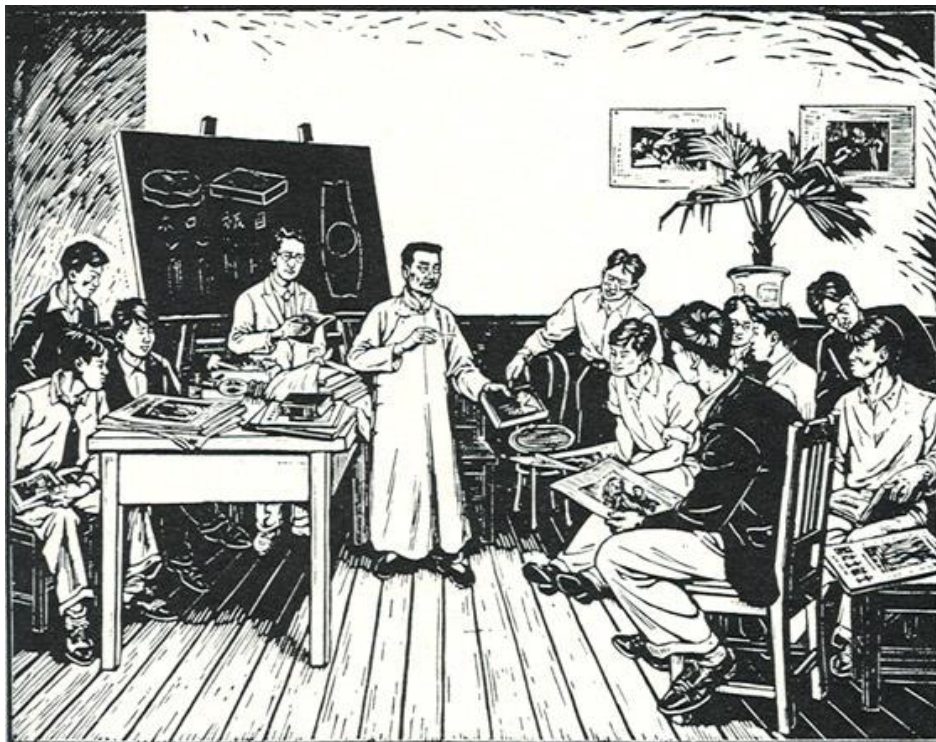
“We see one after another the same monotonous succession of birds on branches, tigers, eagles on rocks, lotus flowers drawn with very little variation in the manner of ancients. We look in vain for an expression of the perplexing and troubling scene around us.”

Thus wrote a critic, complaining that Chinese painters were out of touch with modern life, which was beset by corruption, high and myriad taxes and other unfair practices. The forming of the republic had been problematic. The leader of the party gaining the most seats in the 1911 elections to the National Assembly was assassinated soon after the results emerged. China fractured into a weak central government in Beijing with the provinces controlled by warlords. The government remained in power through shifting alliances with them.

The demonstrations of the *May Fourth Movement* in major cities attracted the support of students, workers and patriotic merchants. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), formed in 1921 with Moscow’s backing and financial support, originated in this groundswell of protest against the reactionary administration of the Nationalist Party (KMT). Moscow’s line was not straightforward, however. Stalin wanted a unified China as a counter to Japan. In early 1923, realising the fledgling CCP was too weak, Stalin decided to back and finance the KMT as the government in China. Stalin, in opposition to Trotsky who favoured the continuation of the Chinese revolution, instructed the CCP to end their resistance and cooperate with the KMT. The result was that the KMT gained in strength and confidence and soon decided to rid the country of communists. In April 1927 Chiang Kai-shek sent a thousand armed men into Shanghai and machine-gunned workers. Over five days 5000 labourers, unionists and students were executed. Later that year, massacres occurred in Changsha, Wuhan, Nanchang and Guangzhou, where leftists were drowned in bundles of a dozen in the river. This was the start of several years in which communists were hunted down and killed, and eventually prompted the Long March.

Woodcut Movement

It was against this violent background that the woodcut movement was begun by Lu Xun, a leading figure of modern Chinese literature whose short stories depicted life in late-Qing and early-Republican China. Lu Xun realised that while revolutionary writers had found a mass audience for vernacular literature, art remained only for the educated classes. Lu Xun thought woodcuts a cheap and valuable tool in mass education. He and his followers wanted realistic art which revealed the truth about the cruelty and corruption of the rulers and the suffering of the masses.



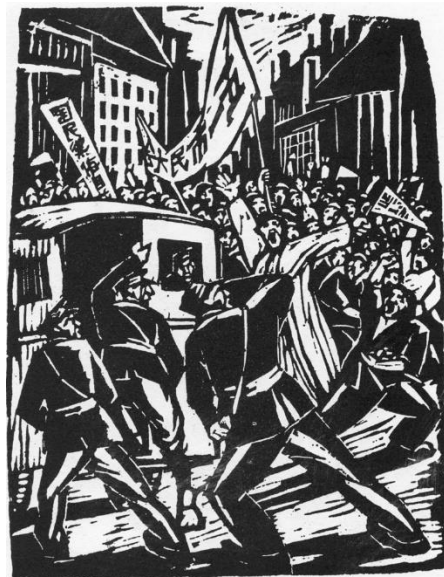
Li Hua, *Lu Xun and Uchiyama Kakechi Conduct a Woodcut Class in Shanghai, 1931*

Lu Xun was working in the National University at Canton when the KMT executed 40 dissident students. He resigned in protest and took refuge in the Japanese Concession of Shanghai. He had many Japanese friends, one of the closest being Uchiyama Kanzo whose bookshop was a meeting place for the Shanghai literati. In 1930 the pair put on an exhibition of 70 prints. A third exhibition for which they changed the description from prints to woodcuts was very successful. People poured in and were so excited that they wanted to make woodcuts too. Li Xun arranged a workshop and Uchiyama supplied the tools. Woodcut prints for propaganda (as distinct from book illustrations) were not new in China. In the 19th century anti-Christian and anti-Western prints were common showing sheep and goats (homophones for foreign) and pigs (homophone for lord and, hence, Jesus) decapitated or riddled with arrows. However, Lu Xun favoured and promoted the styles of Kathe Kollwitz and Frans Masereel, who championed the common man, and some Soviet printmakers. The Soviets preferred detailed pictures with fine lines to establish form and shadow. The print produced by Li Hua (above) commemorating the woodcut workshop arranged by Lu Xun has hints of this as well as European features such as a vanishing point.

Ironically given Uchiyama's largesse, the first subject for woodcuts was the expression of anti-Japanese sentiment. Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and established a puppet state. Incessant fighting followed. Shanghai was attacked by Japanese forces in 1932 and so were the northern provinces. Woodcuts showing these incidents were prolific and usually in the much simpler style adopted by Frans Masereel in his *25 Images of Man's Passion* (1918).



Jiang Feng, *Japanese Invasion of Shen Yang*, woodcut print, 1931



Zheng Yefu, *Fight!*, woodcut print, 1933



Hu Yichuan, *To the Front*, woodcut print, 1932

Li Hua (1907-1994)

Li Hua was a painter from Canton but became the best of the woodcut artists. He was not a Communist, but was strongly against the corruption and rule of the KMT government. Li Hua admired as a child the fine quality and liveliness of illustrations in English textbooks. In the 1920s he discovered English wood-engraving and understood how art could stem from “*the suffering and remorse produced from the expression of the life force*”.

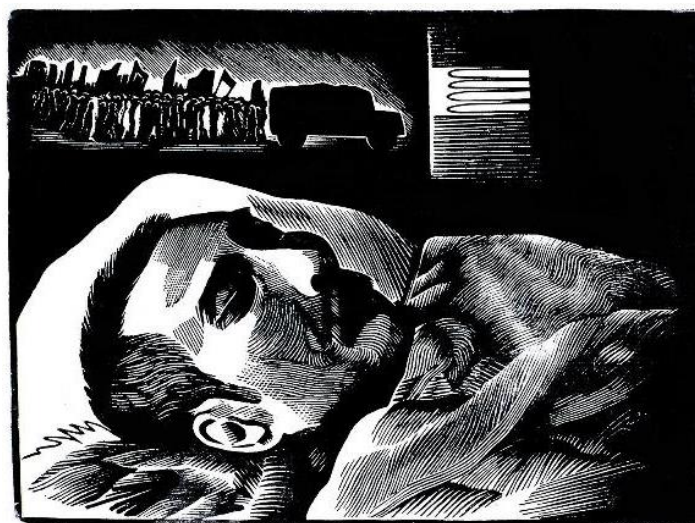
That idea is captured in one of his strongest images, *Roar, China!* In contrast to Hua’s depiction of the woodcut class, this work was in the simpler style of Kathe Kollwitz (for example *Sacrifice*, 1922) The man, bound and blindfolded, but still virile, shouts his anger while reaching for the knife with which he will free himself. The work explains that the liberation of the nation was in the hands of ordinary, poor but courageous Chinese people.

Li Hua later became an official war artist, covering the fronts in south China. His talents as a watercolourist and landscape painter were long smothered by the demands of war, then civil war then reconstruction, but finally flowered in the 1980s.



Li Hua, *Roar, China!* Woodcut print, 1935

The KMT sought to stamp out dissent. The young wood-engravers took enormous risks, many were executed, some jailed. In spite of the KMT ban more wood-engraving societies were formed. Lu Xun lamented the deaths of young artists. He remained in Shanghai, as unionist, students and workers were driven by Chiang Kai-shek to flee, some in the footsteps of the Long March. Lu Xun died from tuberculosis in October 1936. Had Lu lived another 2 months he would have heard of the leader of the KMT being kidnapped by his generals in Xian, and forced to combine with the Communists in a second United Front against Japan. Zhou Enlai and other CCP leaders favoured rescuing China from Japanese aggression (as well as gaining a respite from Chiang Kai-shek’s unrelenting attacks) in cooperation with the KMT; a policy with which Moscow agreed. A few months later the KMT released wood-engravers from prison and the Woodcut Movement gained a new lease of life as a patriotic anti-Japanese crusade.



Huang Xinbo, *In Memory of Lu Xun*, woodcut print, 1936

Japanese Invasion

Japan invaded mainland China in 1937. Beijing was occupied in summer 1937 and Shanghai was taken over by December (except for the international settlements). Nanjing was captured and appalling atrocities inflicted there; 300,000 people were killed in 10 days. After such brutality Japan expected China to surrender, but the massacre heightened resistance. In the first weeks of the war, students mobilised to produce propaganda pictures. Not all of them were woodcuts. Tang Yihe's *Propagating Resistance against Japan, 7 July 1937* is a draft done in oil for a larger painting which was not completed because of shortage of materials during the war. Eager students are shown marching through the city recruiting from the local population. Wall paintings were produced and in August 1937 the Cartoonists' Propaganda Corps was organised in Shanghai; striking posters were made, and cartoons published.



Tang Yihe, *Propagating Resistance against Japan, 7 July 1937*, 1940

The summer of 1937 saw universities and art schools emptied as thousands of professors, teachers and students set out for the west as they sought safety from the Japanese occupier. Successful exhibitions of woodcuts were held all over Free China. Many showed the suffering of the refugees and the struggles of those left behind.



Li Hua, *Fleeing Refugees*, woodcut print, 1944



Li Hua, *When the Requisitioning Officers Leave*, woodcut print, 1946



Yan Han, *Defending the Grain*, 1944, woodcut print from the book *War Stories*



Yan Han, *Fighting Soldiers*, 1944, woodcut print from the book *War Stories*

Yan Han (1916 – 2011) was born to a poor village family in Donghai county, Jiangsu. He entered the Hangzhou art academy in 1935, studying Western painting under a French-trained Chinese cubist Fang Ganmin and Chinese painting under Pan Tianshou. Yan Han abandoned his studies in 1938 to join the Communist group at Yan'an. There he was assigned to the woodcut team and accompanied the fighting forces. While behind enemy lines he discovered that the Japanese used Buddhist Judges of Hell pictures for propaganda, so started a series of the ever-popular traditional New Year prints but with different designs stressing opposition to the Japanese.



Yan Han, *Army and People Cooperate*, New Year picture print, 1944

With the evacuation of eastern China Chiang Kai-Shek retreated and set up his headquarters in Chongqing, which became known as the capital of Free China. However, instructors and students fleeing from the east went to the beautiful city of Guilin and opened an art academy which operated for seven years. Guilin was remote from both the KMT and Communists, and was free and civilised; "The Paris of Free China". Many art exhibitions were held there in 1938-1944. Eventually, as Japanese forces advanced, Guilin had to be evacuated, depicted in a striking woodcut print by Cai Dizhi.



Cai Dizhi, *Refugees Flocking to Guilin Station*, 1945

Not everyone was able to flee from the Japanese occupation and some remained in Occupied Areas. Woodcut prints were produced and circulated secretly, often also smuggled out to Free China.



Huang Xinbo, *In Enemy-occupied Territory*, woodcut print, 1938

Anti-Japanese art was not limited to woodcut prints. In Beijing the Japanese authorities deliberately promoted Confucian culture, which they claimed had been betrayed by the KMT and threatened by the Communists, so traditional Chinese painting and artists had an opportunity to flourish. Qi Baishi was most unwilling. He refused callers to his house, commissions from the Japanese and even the monthly coal ration because it was granted by the Japanese-controlled Academy of Fine Arts. He depicted the Japanese as voracious crabs and painted *Rat steals the Lamp-Oil*, 1940s (a theme he painted often) with the inscription:

*Groups of rats,
Why so many?
Why so noisy?
You ate my fruit
And you ate my grain
The candles have burned short, and dawn is
about breaking,
The night watchman has struck his last report in
the depth of winter*

Jiang Zhaohe (1904-1986)

Jiang Zhaohe was one of the most important figure painting professors of the 1940s and 1950s. He was the son of a poor scholar and teacher in Luxian, Sichuan. By the time he was 11, his father was a jobless opium smoker and his mother had committed suicide. Zhaohe had a knack for catching a likeness and sold portraits in ink, charcoal or coal-dust for \$2-5. When he had saved \$80 he went to seek his fortune in Shanghai. He struggled, making portraits of customers in the *Sincere Department Store*. His break came when he showed *Rickshaw Coolie* at the National Art Exhibition of 1929. A popular print was made of it and he was mentored by Xu Beihong. Jiang taught in the National Central university for two years but when the post vanished he went back to Shanghai where Liu Haisu invited him to teach drawing in his Salon.

He painted in a realistic manner but in the Chinese medium. Ink is used in a Western fashion and the faces are modelled in ink and colour. He found his subjects among the poor - peddlers, craftsmen and street musicians, as had Zhou Chen over 400 hundred years previously [Part 4]. Jiang Zhaohe said;

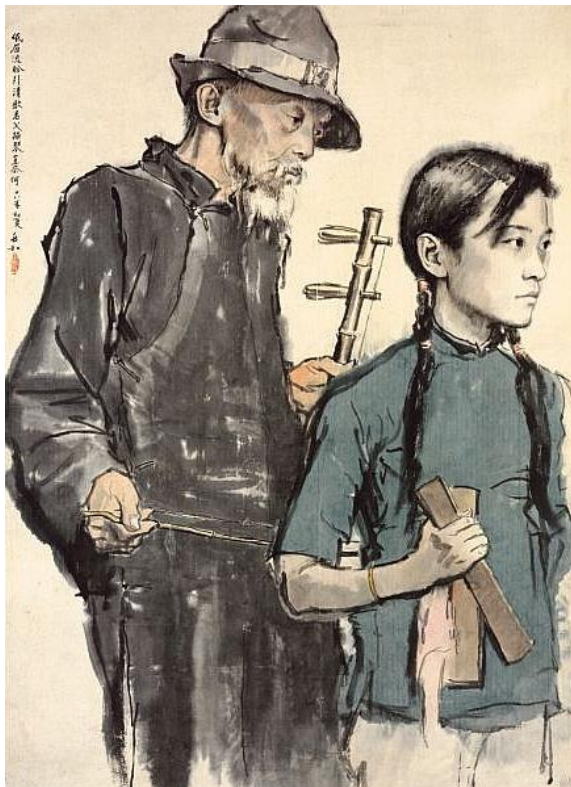
“Those who know me are not many, those who love me are few, those who understand my paintings are the poor, and those with whom I sympathise are the people who starve to death on the streets ... Unfortunately, the victims of disaster are everywhere, roaming from place to place. The old and the weak, in particular, suffer most bitterly from poverty and sickness, but no one cares about them. Since they cannot earn a living, how can they know that there can be paradise and happiness on earth?”



Jiang Zhaohu, *Rickshaw Boy*, 1937



Jiang Zhaohu, *Old Woman*, 1938



Jian Zhaohu, *Street Singers*, 1939



Jiang Zhaohu, *Elderly Man*, 1940

Jiang wanted for some time to record the sufferings under Japanese occupation and after spending two years in slums, began in 1941 in secret *Liumin tu* (*Refugees*) a huge work, 2 metres high and 26 metres long. Completed in 1943 the scroll was put on show in the Imperial Ancestral Temple in Taimiao, and retitled *Portraits of the Mass*.

Within a few hours Japanese military police burst in and closed the exhibition. The scroll was “borrowed” by the Japanese. What was left of it was discovered in 1953 in a warehouse in Shanghai, the second half lost and the surviving half badly damaged. Zhaohe vividly describes a hundred refugees trying to escape Japanese bombing. Suffering and despair, the dying and the dead are rendered with a quietness that is tragic.



Jiang Zhaohé, *Portraits of the Mass (Liumin tu, Refugees)*, 1941-1943



Jiang continued to depict the life of the poor during the ensuing civil war when with rampant inflation conditions were perhaps even worse. During his last years he produced portraits of great literary figures from China's past but he no longer painted the victims of society – under Mao, of course, there weren't any.

Chinese Minorities

As the Communist forces were driven further west by KMT attacks, soldiers found themselves travelling through the lands of the Miao tribe: “That’s it – we’ve walked ourselves out of China” said one, cites Han Suyin in his biography of Zhou Enlai. They had no idea the Miao were one of China’s fifty or so national minorities. Artists were as ignorant as the soldiers. The wild beauty of the distant provinces and their exotic inhabitants was a revelation, a glimpse of the beauty and vast size of China.



Pang Xunqin, *Miao Girls*, 1940



Pang Xunqin, *When Oranges are Ripe*, 1942



Pang Xunqin, *Dance*, 1944



Pan Xunqin, *The Letter*, c 1945

Pang Xunqin (1906 – 1985), a native of Changshu in Jiangsu Province who had abandoned medicine for art, studied in Paris in 1925-30. He was commissioned to travel among the Miao tribe and record their costumes and life. Over many months Pang painted watercolours and also collected embroideries and clothes. The tribe initially was hostile until they realised Pang was not a tax collector. Realistic depictions of minority people would recur in Chinese art. Pang also stayed for a while at Guanxian, the head of the ancient irrigation scheme for the Chengdu plain, and painted two landscapes depicting the temple and the huge boulder-filled baskets used to construct the dam [unavailable]. He also produced a picture of a young peasant girl thinking of her husband away fighting, having just received a letter from him.

Wu Zuoren (1908 – 1997) painted in both Western and Chinese styles. He is best known for his paintings of the western Chinese steppes and upper plains. A two-year trip through Xikang, Qinghai and Tibet in the 1940s was an experience which became a mainstay of his repertoire in later years.



Wu Zuoren, *Girl Carrying Water*, 1946, oil



Wu Zuoren, *Tibetan Girl*, 1944, oil



Wu Zuoren, *A Market in Snow-covered Ganzhi*, 1944, oil

Wu Zouren mounted an art exhibition in Kangding in 1945 and 1946 - surely the first seen in the remote town. He was a tireless traveller by truck, horse, and yak caravan. Later in life he was famous for painting the animals that inhabit the region. He painted these in the traditional Chinese manner; the white plains a wonderful contrast to the animals. Examples from later in his career are shown here. He also painted pandas – a subject commemorated on a set of stamps.



Wu Zuoren, *Camels*, 1974



Wu Zuoren, *Charging Yaks*, 1978



Wu Zuoren, *Camel Train*, 1990

"Nowhere was the enlarging of artists' horizons by the war shown more clearly than in their discovery of Dunhuang, and no artist did more to put this treasure-house of ancient Buddhist wall-painting 'on the map' than Zhang Daqian" (Sullivan). For 2 years and 7 months **Zhang Daqian (1899-1983)** and his assistants, including Tibetan Buddhist painters, laboured at the site. They catalogued and made exact copies of the most important frescos, originally painted by Tang masters; 276 full-size copies on silk and paper were produced. These were exhibited at Chongqing in 1943 which led to the foundation of the *Dunhuang Research Institute*.

Daqian had a reputation as a forger but was an impressive painter. He was born to a comfortably well-off family in Sichuan. Held prisoner by local bandits for 100 days in 1916, he was then sent to join his brother in Kyoto to study painting. During the 1920s and 1930s Zhang lived with his brother, mainly in Shanghai but also in the garden in Suzhou once used by master Wen Zhengming. When the family business collapsed in 1927, he supported himself with his brush.



Zhang Daqian, copies of murals at Mogao and Yulin Caves, Dunhuang, 1941-1943



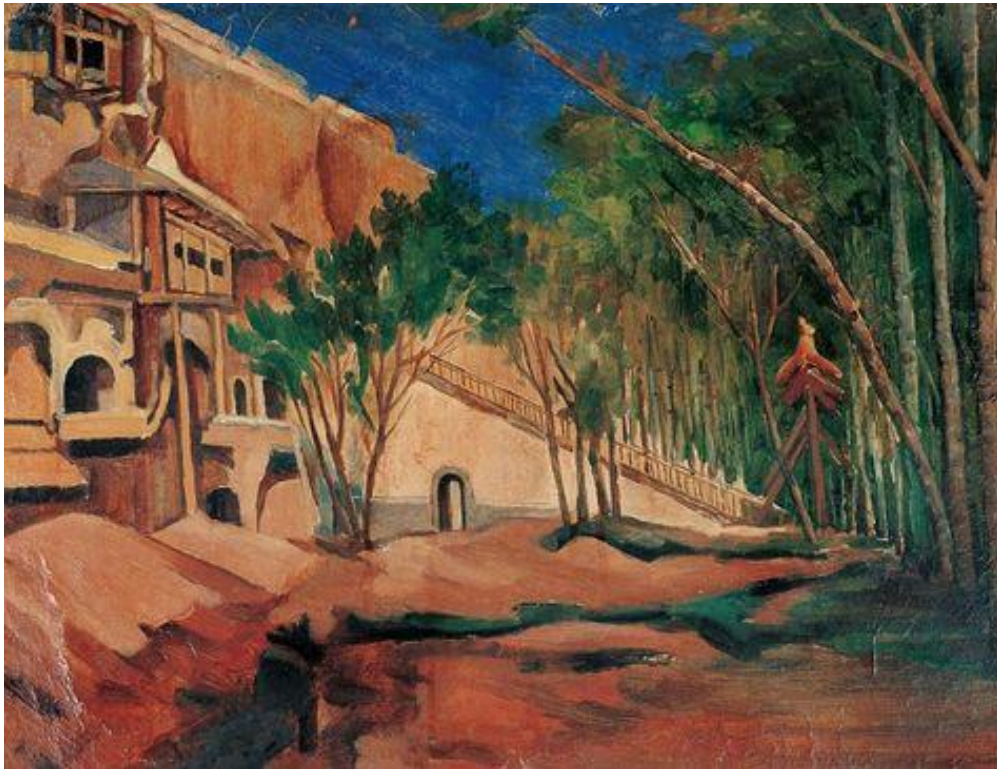
The Mogao Caves at the edge of the Gobi Desert in Northwest China (Photo: Sun Zhijun. Dunhuang Academy)



Zhang Daqian, *Aachensee Lake*, 1968

Zhang Daqian travelled widely after 1949 and took some of his copies of the Dunhuang murals with him, a fortunate decision in light of later events. He went abroad to India before living for spells in Argentina, Brazil - “*where in typical extravagant fashion he created a huge Chinese garden*” – and California. He settled in Taipei in 1977. In his last years he produced some of his most spectacular works; splashed ink and strong mineral colour paintings, which with the addition of a few details and accents become landscapes. His best example of this type is shown above. *Ten Thousand Miles of the Yangtze*, 1967 is considered a masterpiece of modern Chinese painting, as is his *Panorama of Mount Lu* on which he was working when he died in Taipei [both unavailable].

Chang Shuhong was the first director of the National Dunhuang Art Research Institute set up after Zhang Daqian’s exhibition. He did some oil paintings of the Dunhuang landscape and set to work with students on the caves. He was very poor and life was hard, but slowly copies, photographs and records accumulated. During the Cultural Revolution, in the summer of 1966, the Red Guard descended upon him and ransacked the library, studios and storerooms. They destroyed everything they could, except the original wall paintings and sculpture in the caves. In the space of a few hours 23 years of work was lost.



Chang Shuhong, *Dunhuang Landscape*, c 1945, oil

Dong Xiwen (1914 – 1973), is best known for a work painted in the 1950s [Part 9], but his art was much more sophisticated than would be inferred from that. Xiwen came from a prosperous and well-educated family. His father was an enthusiast of Chinese antiquities and often took his son to look at art. Dong studied for a year at a private Suzhou art academy and then went to Hangzhou in 1934. He spent six months at Hanoi Art Academy where he was exposed to French culture. He saw the Chongqing exhibition of copies of Dunhuang murals and was fascinated. Afterwards he and his wife were at Dunhuang until 1946 studying and copying the murals. The style of these – decorative with simple figures - influenced some of Xiwen’s compositions, notably *Kazak Shepherdess*, painted during his travels after his Dunhuang work. While he was in the West Dong Xiwen also used a European style.



Dong Xiwen, *Kazak Shepherdess*, 1948



Dong Xiwen, *Xinjiang Transport Corps*, 1944, oil

After Pearl Harbour the US supplied funds and weapons to the KMT and CCP to fight the Japanese in China, on strict conditions that the United Front was preserved. The end of World War II in 1945 ended the Japanese occupation. Stalin and Chiang Kai-shek signed a treaty recognising Russian aspirations in Manchuria and ceding the warm-water port of Dalian. The US expected the CCP and KMT to come to terms. Of course, that was unrealistic. Within 6 hours of the news of the Japanese surrender, the CCP armies (renamed the People's Liberation Army - PLA) were given their marching orders to fight the KMT.

Artists turned their attention to anti-KMT propaganda, calling on Chinese people to join the fight against the Nationalists and portraying the dreadful conditions and corruption under Chiang Kai-shek. Li Hua used figures from Kathe Kollwitz's *Peasant War* cycle of 1903.

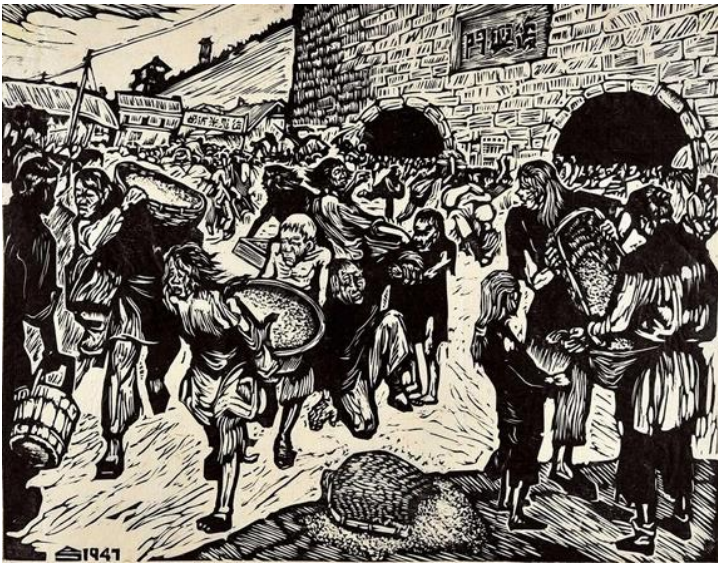


Li Hua, *Arise*, 1947, woodcut

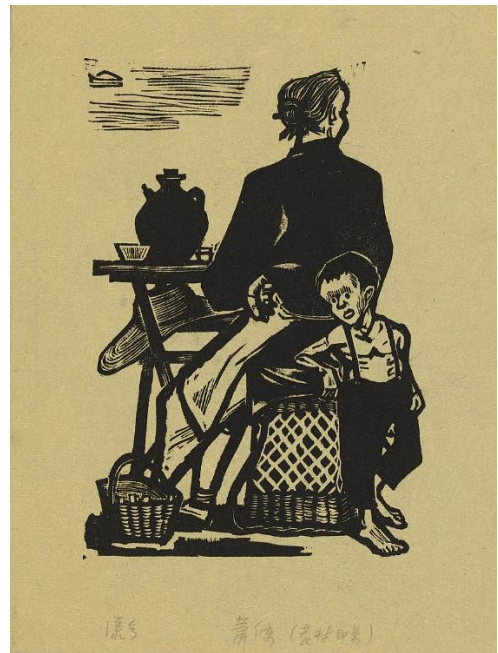


Li Hua, *Struggles*, 1946, woodcut

Zhang Yangxi produced a series of woodcuts exposing the social evils in KMT-controlled areas during the civil war to expose the social evils there. His *Human Market in Chengdu* shows a woman being sold as a wet nurse. Others depict the hunger and scarcity of food.



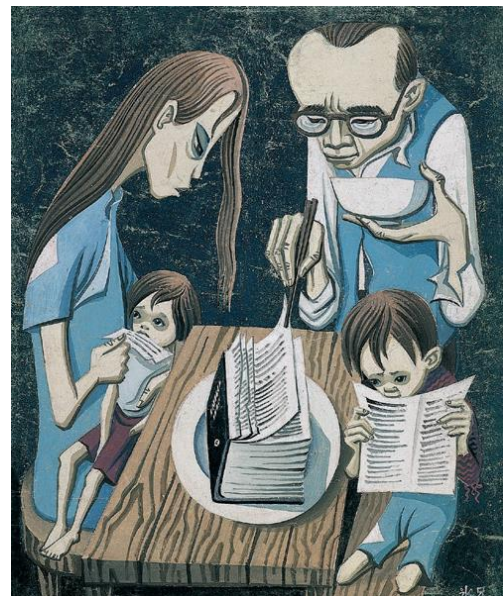
Zhang Yangxi, *Scramble for Rice*, 1947, woodcut



Zhang Yangxi, *Bleakness of the Countryside*, 1940s

Chiang Kai-shek flew his forces into major cities and cloistered them there. That left the countryside to the CCP where their influence and strength grew. Conditions in the cities were dreadful, goods were hoarded by Nationalist officials. KMT forces, even with US tanks and weapons, were reluctant to venture often into the countryside. The PLA used guerrilla tactics to defeat them. Indeed, the CCP intentionally evacuated Yan'an so that KMT forces could take it. Chiang made much of capturing the CCP HQ but over the next couple of years, guerrilla attacks and feints forced troops out of the city and led to the complete defeat of the Nationalist occupiers.

With McCarthyism underway in the US, President Truman reluctantly was forced to support the KMT. But US advisors in China were well aware of the iniquities of Chiang's rule and the inevitable failure of his strategy in attempting to hold cities. The US ambassador: "There is increasing demoralisation, a fatalistic feeling that collapse is inevitable"; President Truman: "There isn't anything that could be done. I wasn't going to waste a single American life to save him [Chiang]". Three and a half billion dollars of materiel and money had been funnelled to Chiang and more was to come, but by the summer of 1948 95% of Northern China was under the administration of the Communists. Only a few cities remained to be captured, among them Beijing. The Nationalist commander there, disenchanted with Chiang, handed over the city to the Communists at Christmas 1948. "The professors and students of the universities formed welcome parties to greet the PLA which marched into Beijing in excellent order". As well they might, having had, as Liao Bingxiong's cartoon suggested, suffered in starvation conditions.



Liao Bingxiong, *The Professor's Meal*, 1945, print

A month later Chiang prepared to flee. His generals negotiated with the Communists and in May Chiang Kai-shek left for Taiwan. After decades of fighting and turmoil, exploitation and starvation the ravaged land of China finally had an opportunity for peace and recovery.

References

Chang Jung and Halliday Jon, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Vintage 2007.

Clunas, Craig, *Art in China, Oxford History of Art*, Oxford University Press, 1997.

Crankshaw, Edward, *The New Cold War: Moscow v. Peking*, Pelican Books, 1965.

Hejzlar Josef, *Chinese Watercolours*, Galley Press, 1987.

Kao, Mayching (editor), *Twentieth-Century Chinese Painting*, Oxford University Press, 1988

Lu Xun, *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China: The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun*, Penguin Classics, 2009.

Sullivan, Michael, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, University of California Press, 1996.

Sullivan, Michael, *The Arts of China (Fourth Edition)*, University of California Press, 1999.

Suyin, Han, *Eldest Son: Zhou Enlai and the Making of Modern China, 1898-1976*, Hill and Wang, 1994.

Tregear, Mary, *Chinese Art*, Thames and Hudson, 1980.