CONSTRUCTING THE NATION THROUGH TRADITION: *CHANG'AN HUAPAI* AND THE REVIVAL OF REGIONAL *GUOHUA* SCHOOLS IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have until recently assessed the art of Maoist-era China (1949-1976) solely in terms of visually striking but artistically forgettable Soviet-style oil paintings. These works, rooted in Western academic painting, were imbued with socialist specificity through theatrical figures, specific color palettes, and propagandistic themes. Before socialist realist painting reached its full immersion in Chinese popular landscape during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), traditional Chinese ink painting experienced a brief but fervent revival in the late 1950s and early 1960s that bridged an otherwise abrupt transition between traditional Chinese visual language and the international language of oil painting.

The seminal 1942 Yan'an Talks on Literature and Art marked Mao Zedong's rejection of art for sake of expression, aesthetics, tradition, any other purpose besides politics. The mediums by which art was to serve the Communist Party mattered little as they remained unspecified by the talks. In the 1940s and early 1950s, ink painting or *guohua*, one of the most enduring visual art forms in China, was cast aside because of the Party's belief that the ink tradition was anchored in the feudal aristocratic order and incapable of reaching the masses. Instead, Soviet-style academic art forms were embraced as the appropriate means for the Party to reach the people. By the end of the 1950s, a combination of political factors such as the Sino-Soviet fallout led to the renewed interest in indigenous Chinese culture. Traditional art forms such as ink

painting and woodblock prints were praised by national leaders and arts administrators. At the same time, artists working in these media were given financial and institutional support to further develop their art for national consumption. Artists working in less artistically-developed provinces such as Sichuan, Jiangsu, Heilongjian, and Shaanxi were especially praised for producing works with "regional flavor."

This thesis focuses on the art of Shaanxi province, specifically the Xi'an School of *guohua* painting or the *Chang'an huapai*. Established officially in 1961 after a series of national exhibitions, this regional *guohua* school was one of the most successful Party-supported art movements that aided in the self-conscious construction of a nation-state navigating its tradition in route to modernization. In addition to thoroughly examining the political context for the creation of regional *guohua* schools and the specific factors for the formation of the *Chang'an huapai*, this thesis also examines three main artists of the *Chang'an huapai*. By looking at the life and works of Shi Lu, Zhao Wangyun, and He Haixia in the context of their contributions to the *guohua* school, this examination challenges some existing scholarly opinions regarding the artists. The thesis lastly analyzes the influence of the *Chang'an huapai* in terms of its visual, thematic and theoretical legacy as it bridged the transition from traditional ink painting to the full-fledged adoption of oil painting.

To my parents

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the 2006 exhibition *Shanshui in 20th Century China* held at the Shanghai Museum, curators displayed works that exemplify the continued tradition of Chinese landscape painting and by consequence showed the versatility of the ink medium. Works in the popular gallery containing Maoist-era paintings were easily distinguishable by their overwhelmingly red hues and the presence of industrial structures. Despite embodying telling features of their time and place, these paintings were easily recognizable as Chinese ink paintings or *guohua* (国画).[1] By contrast, in the gallery of post-Cultural Revolution works, the definition of *shanshuihua* (山水画), Chinese landscape painting, was noticeably broadened to include many works in other mediums. The discontinuity seen in these paintings for the most part do not resemble more traditional *shanshui* works in other galleries.

Among the works in the Maoist-era gallery is a relatively innocuous work by Shi Lu (石鲁 1919-1982) that depicts a row of three tractors plowing in unison through the

[1] The term *guohua*, an abbreviated form of *zhongguohua*, in its basic form has been used by the People's Republic of China to categorize any work done in ink on a ground of Chinese paper or silk. It is generally translated as "traditional Chinese painting" but it literally means "national painting." The term distinguishes ink painting from Western oil painting (*xihua* or *youhua*). Prior to the twentieth century, the term was unnecessary because all paintings were Chinese in medium. The origins of the term can be traced to Meiji Japan (1868-1912) that used the term *nihonga* (Japanese painting) in opposition to *yoga* (Western painting). Julia F. Andrews, "Traditional Painting in New China: *Guohua* and the Anti-Rightist Campaign," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49, no. 3 (Aug. 1990), 555-577.

rough orange-colored soil. The work, *Moving the Mountain* [Figure 1], depicts a socialist industrial theme but also alludes to the well-known Han-dynasty fable of an old man moving the mountain with his two sons. This early work by Shi Lu was the only representation of the Xi'an School in the exhibition. Although not a particularly beautiful example, this distinctively Chinese painting shows the innovative qualities of the Xi'an School.

Although previous scholarship has treated the Maoist era (1949-1976) as an unfortunate digression from the modernization efforts of the Republican era, scholars increasingly see a continuity of artistic developments from the Republican era through the Maoist era to the post-Maoist present.[2] The brevity of the Xi'an School corresponds with the last hurrah of ink painting because oil painting and policy took the high road toward the Cultural Revolution. Although ink painting was briefly called upon to narrow the divide between traditional and Western art, its work was largely accomplished by the mid-1960s as oil painting came to be fully integrated in the visual consciousness of the Chinese public. The brief revival of *guohua* from 1956 to 1964 should not be seen as an untimely death but rather a successful transitional development. It should not be measured strictly within the context of ink painting but should rather be seen as a unique experiment that served its time and place.

This thesis will examine this specific period of *guohua* through the lens of the Xi'an School or *Chang'an huapai* (长安画派), specifically the conditions for its

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[2] Julia Andrews argues in the conference paper, "Art to Modernize China: The Maoist Naturalization of Western Painting," that the move toward Western style oil-painting, initiated in the Republican period, was only realized in Maoist China, specifically after the Cultural Revolution. *Paradigms in Flux: New Perspectives on Shifting Grounds in Contemporary China and Chinese Studies*. University of California, San Diego, April 20-22, 2007.

formation and how it served the interests of government in defining a national identity. Recognized officially in 1961 after Xi'an artists held a series of exhibitions in Beijing, Shanghai, and Hangzhou, this regional *guohua* school was one of the most successful governmentally supported art movements that aided in the establishment of the new Communist nation. Similar movements thrived in Nanjing and Sichuan but focused on different media and themes. I will examine how the Xi'an movement emerged within the context of a renaissance of regional art movements.

Due to the arbitrary definition of Chinese art "schools," which should be more appropriately described as a loosely affiliated group of artists, similar in nature to the French Barbizon School (circa 1830-1870), the project will for the purpose of clarity focus primarily on three key artists of the *Chang'an huapai*: Shi Lu, Zhao Wangyun (赵望云 1906-1977), and He Haixia (何海霞 1908-1998). The examination will focus on the phenomenon of the formation of the school or *huapai* (画派). To isolate the formative years of the *Chang'an huapai*, works completed in and around 1961 will be particularly emphasized. This paper will also examine the legacy of the *Chang'an huapai* in its influence on later artists working in painting and other media to show how its short life-span shaped the development of art in China.

1.1 Existing Literature

The Xi'an School has not been thoroughly discussed in English-language scholarship. Among the Xi'an School painters, Shi Lu was the most famous representative. A survey of available texts on Shi Lu reveals that even the leader of this group has received sparse coverage. In terms of English-language scholarship, the most

in-depth examination of Shi Lu is historian Shelly Drake Hawks' 2003 dissertation that includes Shi Lu as one of six artists in her argument. In regards to Shi Lu, Hawks stresses: "Indeed, current opinion in art historical scholarship would not regard all six of the painters I have selected for inclusion as significant masters."[3] Her acknowledgement that Shi Lu is considered a less significant artist and the assessment that art historians have generally not studied his work due to its supposed inferior status is true for the most part.

In most English-language surveys of Chinese art history of the twentieth century, art of Shaanxi province is usually represented by mentions of Shi Lu. The Xi'an School is rarely discussed, with the exception of Julia Andrews, Michael Sullivan, and most recently Wen Fong. Andrews in *Painters and Politics* provides the most extensive English-language examination of the school.[4] In Sullivan's seminal work, *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China*, the art historian treats Shi Lu as a unique artist whose work exists largely in isolation from the movement for which he acquired most notoriety.[5] Similarly, Fong's catalogue of the Robert H. Ellsworth Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art discusses Shi Lu as a "revolutionary" artist for his innovative blend of Chinese and Western techniques. Shi is portrayed as a rebellious romantic whose art reflects his character.[6] Andrews' treatment of the Xi'an School, conversely, treats the group as a legitimate artistic movement. Her opinion perhaps more

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[3] Shelley Drake Hawks. "'Painting by Candlelight' During the Cultural Revolution: Defending Autonomy and Expertise under Maoist Rule (1949-76)" (PhD diss., Brown University, May 2003), 17.
[4] Julia F. Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
[5] Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996).
[6] Wen C. Fong, *Between Two Cultures: Late-Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Paintings from the Robert H. Ellsworth Collection in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 233-34.

closely follows the role of Shi Lu and the Xi'an School in the eyes of Chinese art historians. This paper will treat Shi Lu's works and the works of Zhao Wangyun and He Haixia in the context of the Xi'an School, largely omitting fascinating later works.

As stated earlier, the study of the *Chang'an huapai* as a group phenomenon is lacking among Chinese scholars as much as in the West. Few published sources exist and searches for *Chang'an huapai* on Chinese internet search engines such as Baidu and Google China yield mixed results. Most citations are non-academic and contain questionable information such as the inclusion of Zhang Daqian. I could only successfully locate one book on the subject as most discussions of the school exist within single-artist monographs. In Liang Xinzhe's 2002 book, *Chang'an huapai yanjiu*, the author treats the movement's lifespan in periods of equal increments.[7] Liang broadly defines the lifespan of the *Chang'an huapai* from 1949 to 1966, a sixteen-year period split into two eight-year administrative tenures under Shi and Zhao. Liang also examines the development of the school in three stages: 1949 to 1954 marks the study, exploratory and conception stage; 1955 to 1960 was the creative stage, which includes the artists' trips to India and Egypt. It was during this key period that Shi and Zhao realized that only by developing traditional folk culture could China enter the world's stage. According to Liang, the school's final stage, 1961 to 1966, was the mature stage. This periodization is problematic in emphasizing the latter span of years during which two of the school's founding members were less active.

[7] Liang Xinzhe, *Chang'an huapai yanjiu* (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 2002).

CHAPTER 2

The XI'AN SCHOOL IN THE PUBLIC EYE

In October 1961, artists associated with the Xi'an branch of the Chinese Artists Association (CAA) exhibited their works in Beijing under the exhibition title, "Guohua xiezuo zhan (Studies in *Guohua*)." The name *Chang'an huapai* originated from the coverage of the exhibition by *Renmin Ribao* (人民日报 *People's Daily*) when it published the headline, "Chang'an xin hua (New Works from Chang'an)." [Fig. 2].[8] When the exhibition traveled to Shanghai and Nanjing, the name *Chang'an huapai* had became the official group title. The exposure provided by exhibitions in these major cities sealed the official recognition of the *Chang'an huapai* as a regional *guohua* school.

As the most senior member, Zhao Wangyun served the first Chairman of the Xi'an branch of the CAA. When he was condemned as a rightist in 1957, Shi Lu assumed leadership. Although Zhao's seniority and administrative experience served to organize the key members of the Xi'an *guohua* circle, Shi Lu's stylistic innovations and theoretical contributions established Xi'an on the national level. Both artists were in equal parts administrators, artists, and teachers. Their combined efforts greatly benefited the development of the school. In 1956, CAA Xi'an added four other artists to its

[8] Liang, 251-252. "Chang'an xin hua (New Works from Chang'an)," *People's Daily*, October 15, 1961, p. 8. There is disagreement on the exact source of the term's coinage. Some sources cite the use of "*Chang'an huapai*" to as early as 1957 but the national use of the term began in 1961.

membership, including the *guohua* artist He Haixia. With the added workforce, the Xi'an *Guohua* Research Committee was formed.[9] In 1959, Shi Lu created two important state commissions that propelled Shi Lu to national fame and led to the official recognition of the Xi'an School two years later.

As a group, the Xi'an School was varied in its artists' backgrounds and preferred styles. For example, He Haixia was a painter who had traditional Chinese art training and consequently worked in more conservative styles. Despite his more orthodox paintings, He Haixia was as interested in the innovative works of Shitao (石涛 1642-1707) as was his colleague Shi Lu, with whom he shared his surname.[10]

The artists of this newly recognized *guohua* school were noted for their unusual subject matter and strange techniques. In contrast to the fertile fields and misty mountains rendered by coastal artists, Xi'an School artists painted the arid, sienna- and umber-colored landscape that they saw. The depiction of the region reflected the muddy torrents of the Yellow River. As will be discussed in the works of specific artists, innovative compositions and the interest in figures were other keys features of the Xi'an School.

At the height of the school's success immediately following its recognition in 1961, Xi'an's Chinese painting research studios in terms of its facilities and library were the envy of Beijing artists.[11] The success of the Xi'an School should be largely credited to the innovative vision of its founding members, discussed in Chapter Five. Although

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[9] The six artists of the committee, Shi Lu, Zhao Wangyun, He Haixia, Fang Jizhong , Li Zicheng , and Kang Shiyao, constitute the core of the *Chang'an huapai*.
[10] Julia F. Andrews, "A Shelter from the Storm," in *Between the Thunder and the Rain: Chinese Painting From the Opium War to the Cultural Revolution, 1840-1979*, ed. Andrews and others (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 2000), 192.
[11] Andrews, *Painters*, 288.

the Xi'an artists were generally well-received for their visual boldness, critics of their works disliked them for their "wildness, disorder, and shallow technical foundation."[12] Moreover, the controversy surrounding Shi Lu, as will be discussed in the rest of this chapter, in the context of increasingly radical stance toward the arts dictated the course of the *Chang'an huapai* and its eventual downfall.

2.1 Reception of Exhibition

Much of what scholars know about the *Chang'an huapai* comes from the journal *Meishu* (美术), the official voice of the state-run Chinese art world. For people who could not see Shi's, Zhao's, and He's works in person, the works were widely-disseminate in *Meishu*.

A conference on the works of the Xi'an painters was convened in conjunction with the 1961 exhibition; its proceedings were published in *Meishu*.[13] Six works were given full page spreads in this issue, including the works of Shi Lu, He Haixia, Zhao Wangyun, Fang Jizhong (方济众 1923-1987), Li Zicheng (李梓盛 1919-1987), and Kang Shiyao (康师尧 1921-1985). The reception was generally positive but cautious in embracing the new works. Some of the conference participants cited the criticism of "wildness" in the works of the Xi'an painters, but were unanimous in praising their freshness, innovation, and boldness. They mostly commented on the works of Shi Lu but also discussed those of others. For example, conference participant Li Kuchan (李苦禅) praised He Haixia's use of traditional brushwork even in casual sketches, unlike some

[12] Ibid., 289.
[13] "Xin yi xin qing," *Meishu*, no. 5 (1961): 21-29.

artists who lose their skills when working in nature. Another writer, Yu Feng (郁风), praised the works of the Xi'an artists for their successful combination of classical and contemporary influences such as Huang Binhong (黄宾虹), Qi Baishi (齐白石), and Li Keran (李可染). Yu also noted the artists' unique collaborative work habits in that everyone learns from one another rather than the tradition of younger artists learning from older artists. Despite his praise, Yu found fault in Shi Lu's painting *Yan'an Pagoda Mountain* (延安宝塔山 *Yan'an baotashan*) in its use of Western techniques.[14] Toward the end of the proceedings, Shi Lu defended his work and those of his colleagues by emphasizing that their works are in development and hence called *xi zuo* (习作).

Hawks suggests that the Xi'an artists' deliberate use of the term *xi zuo* was done purposefully to anticipate harsh criticism that they eventually received. The terminology used by the Xi'an artists to refer to their works as studies (*xi zuo*), rather than creations (创作 *chuang zuo*) deserves some attention. This choice of words can be interpreted in different ways. For one, it indicates the experimental and laboratory nature of the school.[15] The school's exploratory mission matches Shi Lu's bold leadership and innovative artistic practices. In addition, the terminology was also a defensive tactic against critics of the Xi'an School who cited its immaturity.[16]

In her assessment of the reception of the 1961 exhibition, Hawks writes, "What surprised attendees was the heterodox formal quality of these paintings."[17] The art works

[14] Ibid., 23.
[15] Andrews, *Painters*, 288.
[16] Hawks, "Painting," 60.
[17] Ibid., 60.

were not only distinctive in their use of reddish-brown palettes suitable for depicting the northern terrain, but their compositions were highly abstract and expressive.

The promotion of *Chang'an huapai* was not strictly limited to arts publications. In the weeks leading up to its prominent 1961 feature, "Chang'an xin hua (New Works from Chang'an)," *People's Daily* published no fewer than four works by Shi Lu, He Haixia, and Fang Jizhong in its arts section, spread throughout the first two weeks of October.[18] The placement of these paintings served to arouse the interest of the readers leading up to the paper's official recognition of the Chang'an artists. Although *Meishu* magazine's readership was primarily the art world, *People's Daily* served to inform and propagate opinion among the general public. The enthusiastic portrayal of *guohua* from Xi'an in the official state newspaper anointed *Chang'an huapai* as an appropriate liaison between the Party and the masses via the medium of traditional art.

2.2 The Tide Turns

The reception of the Xi'an artists proved to be fickle. A letter to the editor from someone by the name of Meng Lanting (孟兰亭)was published the following year in *Meishu*.[19] Meng criticized the art establishment for bestowing so much attention on Shi Lu, whose work Meng considered to possess "no skill," "no brushwork," and "no antique taste." Much like other criticism of the day, Meng concluded his letter by justifying his critique with the Hundred Flowers Campaign slogan, "let a hundred schools of thought

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[18] Works published in *People's Daily*, all on page 8: Shi Lu, *Zhonggua de gua* 种瓜得瓜 (1961.10.5); He Haixia, *Titian* 梯田 (1961.10.6); Fang Jizhong, *Qiu lin lu* 秋林鹿 (1961.10.10); Shi Lu, *Liuyin shenchu dayuchuan* 柳荫深处打鱼船 (1961.10.13).

[19] Meng Lanting, "Lai han zhao deng," *Meishu*, no. 4 (1962): 32.

contend (百家争鸣 *bai jia zheng ming*)." In the next issue of *Meishu*, two additional letters were published in support of Meng's opinion. In one, the author found it problematic to even consider Shi Lu's work *shanshui* painting. He wrote passionately, "I dare to say no matter how intimately Shi Lu's works depict life; how high their intellectual content, as Chinese ink painting they are lacking. Some can not even be categorized as *guohua*." He explained further that although the depiction of socialist figures is important, artists must follow the guidance of traditional art.[20] The second letter written by Chu Yun (除云) from Guangxi plainly stated that Shi Lu's work is not pleasing aesthetically because it is too chaotic and coarse.[21]

Several months into the following year, the magazine announced that it had received over fifty letters in regard to what was becoming a debate on Shi Lu.[22] Most of the letters were supportive of Shi Lu but some echoed criticism similar to the earlier letters. Those in support of Shi Lu cited his "exploratory spirit," saying that although he borrowed from other traditions, his work still retained Chinese qualities. Even those supportive of Shi Lu, however, such as the Shanghai painter Cheng Shifa (程十发 1921-2007), cited Shi's "stiff" handling of the brush and characterized his compositions to "convey a feeling of surprise, but lacking enduring resonance."[23]

Then, in Issue Four of 1963, an article appeared under the name of the Marxist art historian Yan Lichuan (阎丽川 1910-) representing the Party's position on Shi Lu.[24] Again referring to sentiments of the Hundred Flowers Campaign, the article states that

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[20] Shi Wenhua, "He 'daocai:' guanyu zhongguohua de chuanxin yu bimo wenti," *Meishu,* no. 5 (1962): 50.
[21] Ibid, 51.
[22] "Guanyu zhongguohua de chuangxin yu bimo wenti," *Meishu*, no. 1 (1963): 33-36.
[23] Hawks, "Painting," 62.
[24] Yan Lichuan, "Lun 'ye, guai, luan, hei," *Meishu,* no. 4 (1963): 20-23.

although discussion was natural and healthy, critics must address political content along with stylistic concerns. Shi Lu's works may lack harmony, but they are well-intended and sincere. Yan's qualified praise turned to criticism, however, as he also criticized Shi Lu for being "wild, strange, chaotic, and black (野怪乱黑 *ye guai luan hei*)." The article thus removed Shi Lu from the pedestal of a model painter and the Xi'an School from the status of a model *guohua* school.

The damage to Shi Lu's reputation was immediate. Beijing bureaucrat and longtime supporter Wang Zhaowen (王朝闻 1909-2004) had defended Shi Lu in the previous month of *Meishu* in Issue Three of 1963, but Shi's professional and personal status continued to suffer from this time forward. Proven by its legacy, the vitality of the *Chang'an huapai* could not be distinguished from the vitality of its controversial leader. Although comprehensively covering the contributions of others, a timeline of the school in *Chang'an huapai yanjiu* ends in 1982 with the death of Shi Lu.

The vulnerability of Shi Lu's status shows the malleability of the Chinese art bureaucracy at the time. It also shows the power of art. Although arts policy in general promoted art's subservience to its content, the debate surrounding Shi Lu was largely stylistic. The first letter that incited the controversy criticized Shi Lu's lack of antique taste! As reflected in Yan Lichuan's criticism, it seems the works of Shi Lu and others roused too much interest in art for art's sake, which proved to be inconvenient for the growingly radical government as it headed toward the Cultural Revolution.

CHAPTER 3

FACTORS FOR FORMATION

The formation of the *Chang'an huapai* should be examined because of the brevity of its productive stage and its lasting influence. The following chapter will examine factors that culminated in the recognition of this group as a model art movement by the government in the context of the national political climate. Without dismissing the accomplishments of the Xi'an artists, their work, like the work of all artists, came to wide attention when they suited the needs of governing bodies that provided financial support.

3.1 The Nation in Images

In 1958 China embarked on an ambitious and eventually disastrous agricultural and industrialization project known as the Great Leap Forward. In the context of this fervent movement that advocated China's self-reliance through mobilizing communal labor, *guohua* was given the important task of visualizing a new image of China that leaders of the country wished to project to the world. Between 1958 and 1965, leading artists from across China were commissioned to produce works to decorate the buildings of a massive architectural construction project collectively called the Ten Great Buildings (十大建筑 *shida jianzhu*). In fact more than ten buildings were planned and constructed in the capital at this time, but it is generally agreed that the ten buildings are the following:

Great Hall of the People, Museum of Revolutionary History, National Museum of History, Chinese People's Revolutionary Military Museum, National Agricultural Exhibition Hall, Nationalities Cultural Palace, Beijing Train Station, Workers' Stadium, Nationalities Hotel, and Overseas Chinese Hotel.[25]

Ink Painting in the Great Hall of the People

The most famous work to result from this series of commissions was Fu Baoshi's and Guan Shanyue's monumental work, *This Land So Rich in Beauty* (江山如此多娇 *Jianshan ruce duo jiao*) [Fig. 3]. Measuring 5.5 meters tall and 9 meters wide, this ink-and-color-in-paper painting combines traditional ink medium and landscape subject matter with Western monumentality. This work was placed in the strategic location in the grand stairway of the Great Hall of the People, the central governmental building, where it remains today. Originally smaller, the revised larger version had to be made expeditiously in two weeks at the request of Zhou Enlai, who envisioned the painting's function as a photogenic backdrop for state gatherings and meetings with foreign dignitaries.[26]

Even though neither Fu nor Guan had experience painting monumentally sized compositions, the collaborative nature of the two artists' work reiterates the communal ideals of art-making at the time. Unlike a modestly scaled traditional ink painting in scroll format, the work is overwhelmingly large and horizontally mounted on stretchers as is done with oil paintings. Moreover, the work hangs on permanent display in a Western-style building. As Andrews notes, however, although the image of mountains

[25] Andrews, *Painters*, 228.
[26] Ibid., 229.

and atmosphere is familiar in Chinese painting, the use of landscape or natural environment to convey the idea of national greatness was more Western.[27] Although the choice of *guohua* to occupy the most important artistic commission of the era signified the government's newly formed commitment to native art forms, the nationalistic purpose of the work was distinctly influenced by the West.

Shi Lu's Contribution

Within the context of the commissions for the Ten Great Buildings, an artist from relatively remote Xi'an created a stir. The rising star Shi Lu from Xi'an was hailed to create two paintings, one for the Shaanxi room of the Great Hall of the People and the other for the Museum of Revolutionary History. *Watering Horses at Yan River* [Fig. 4] was created for the Shaanxi meeting room and *Fighting in Northern Shaanxi* [Fig. 5] was made for the Museum of Revolutionary History.[28] Thematically, both works combine the revolutionary ideals of socialist realism with the lyricism of ink medium. *Fighting in Northern Shaanxi*, however, attracted more attention during its initial creation and in subsequent years. Compositionally innovative, the work was painted in a square composition in contrast to the long vertical hanging scroll format of traditional ink paintings.

Several years earlier, Shi Lu had painted another large-scaled ink painting, titled *Beyond the Great Wall* [Fig. 6]. This work is one of Shi Lu's more successful early experiments in combining figurative narration of socialist realism with ink landscape. This large painting, like his 1959 commissions, is horizontal in the format of Western

[27] Ibid., 234-5.
[28] Ibid., 236.

easel painting. It also represents Shi Lu's beginning experimentation in the thematic use of landscape that led him eventually to compose his *Fighting in Northern Shaanxi.*

Although *Fighting in Northern Shaanxi* was initially hailed a success, it was condemned thereafter for its unusual depiction of a solitary Mao standing apart from the masses. This simplistic reading of the work fails to appreciate Shi Lu's innovation in creating a conceptually rich glorification of communist ideals. Greater understanding of Shi Lu's artistic ingenuity has proved the condemnation utterly unfounded. It is known that the artist had spent considerable time studying and painting the distinctive topography of the Yan'an area. Paintings such as *Moving the Mountain*, as discussed previously, demonstrate the Xi'an painters' interest in the terrain of Northern China. According Ma Gaihu (马改户), a sculptor who worked with Shi Lu, Shi chose to render Mao's soldiers symbolically and conceptually as grand, unified mountain peaks rather than pedantically and literally depicting them one by one.[29] Shi Lu's individualized conception and commitment to communism failed to be understood by governmental agencies supposedly at the forefront of artistic innovation.

Fighting in Northern Shaanxi is not a typical history painting in that Shi Lu seemed more interested in the emotions of this historical episode than the details of actual events. According to Ma, Shi Lu made many preparatory sketches for this commission, including ones that depicted the expected crowds of figures, but the results were never satisfactory to him or others. For further inspiration, Shi Lu studied masterworks at the nearby Palace Museum. Thereafter, he secluded himself for days to produce the composition of the current painting. Shocked by the simple composition that Shi Lu

[29] Ma Gaihu, "Ji Shi Lu chuangzuo <<Zhuanzhan Shanbei>> de qingkuan," in *Shi Lu huiyi weji: Shi Lu tongzhi shishi san zhounian huiyi wenji* (Xi'an: Zhongguo meishujia xiehui, 1985), 59.

unveiled, Ma asked Shi why he did not paint the battle. Shi Lu replied that he wanted Mao to stand out in the sparse environment. Ma also recalled that Shi kept the figure of Mao the same throughout the painting process despite frequently repainting the mountain peaks.[30]

Further revealing his adherence to developing a personal idiom, Shi Lu attempted this composition in other works during this period. In a painting of ordinary villagers, *View into the Distance* [Fig. 7], Shi placed a small group of figures at the edge of an unusually steep cliff. This work elucidates Shi's primary artistic concern: style rather than content, in that the dramatic cliff represented an unspecified, generic location that served to dramatize the emotional appeal of the painting. Andrews assesses the increasingly personal interpretations by *guohua* artists during a period when the Party sought to assert tradition as a source of national pride. She writes in regards to *Fighting in Nothern Shaanxi*,

> Shi Lu's work, like *This Land So Rich in Beauty*, satisfied the new interpretation of national forms in painting. His landscape subject matter has deep roots in the Chinese aesthetic tradition. His execution, however, is based not on traditional conventions for rendering mountains but on a personal reinvention of *guohua* techniques.[31]

As seen in the Ten Great Buildings commissions, specifically the works of Fu, Guan and Shi, the emphasis on style seems contrary to the artistic foundations laid by Mao's Yan'an Talks (Chapter Four) but in 1959 it suited the new role of *guohua*.

3.2 Oil Painting

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[30] Ibid., 59.
[31] Andrews, *Painters*, 237.

This thesis is concerned primarily with the reinvention of *guohua* in the context of P.R.C. modernization, but the emerging importance of oil painting and its eventual succession of *guohua* began in the early 1960s. Although works such as *This Land So Rich in Beauty* were purposefully made to resemble oil painting in scale and theme, there co-existed attempts to bridge tradition and internationalism through the oil medium. One of the more successful experimentations in sinicizing oil painting was Luo Gongliu's (罗工柳 1916-2004) *Mao Zedong at Jingang Shan* [Fig. 8]. Andrews notes that this work is one of the few examples that demonstrate the sinicization of oil painting, a concept discussed more than it was actualized.[32] This peculiar work combines the brushwork of traditional ink painting with the medium, scale, and subject matter of socialist realism. It further substitutes the contemplative scholar figure with a relaxed Mao peacefully enjoying his cigarette. Painted in 1962, Luo's work shows the return of ink painting in the official Chinese art world. Contrary to demands that ink painting modify itself to look more like oil painting, the style of the traditional Chinese medium once again dominated. The date of this particular work places it as a transitional work from *guohua* movements to the oil-dominated styles of the mid- to late 1960s.

[32] Ibid., 245.

CHAPTER 4

REGIONAL ART ENCOURAGED

An examination of the Xi'an School as a phenomenon among regional art schools must be placed in the context of similar schools. Andrews cites several conditions for the establishment of regional art movements. Among the key factors was the presence of at least one effective local arts leader and correspondingly the strong support for the leaders by the provincial party organization or by a national leader. Also integral to the foundation of a regional school is a local group of capable artists. Lastly, these groups usually worked in traditional Chinese media such as ink painting or woodcuts. This choice was as driven by practicality as for nationalism, as traditional materials were inexpensive and easier to acquire during years of economic hardship.[33]

Andrews also places great emphasis on national ideological changes as a contributing factor of *guohua* schools. She writes,

> ...cautious liberalization proposed by Zhou Enlai in his speeches of 1959 and 1961 was paralleled by greater diversity in the administration and practice of art. The most notable trends of the period—the development of regional schools of art and the limited reappearance of artistic individualism—may be attributed, in part, to this ideological stance.[34]

The short time span between 1959 and 1961, more importantly, signified the administrative decentralization of the Great Leap Forward. In contrast to its detrimental

[33] Ibid., 251.
[34] Ibid., 250.

effects on most other sectors of society, the Great Leap Forward meant more independence for artists. The following section will examine how the key speeches that leaders made before and during this time, in effect summarize arts policies from the Yan'an Talks of 1942 until the 1960s, supported the creation and success of the *Chang'an huapai*.

4.1 Policy Overview

The formation of regional schools like that of Xi'an was the direct result of interpretations of constant policy shifts. In the late 1950s, political activity and specific policies in the arts leading up to the Cultural Revolution created a still-restrictive but incubating atmosphere for regional artists. Coupled with the competency of Xi'an artists and the support of Beijing administrators, state policies created conditions for the *Chang'an huapai*.

In thinking about the works of the Xi'an School and specifically that of Shi Lu, it seems that the unique qualities of their works are less a deliberate attempt to upset the sensibilities of the establishment than Shelly Drake Hawks' dissertation suggests. Instead, as American ink painter and scholar Arnold Chang more accurately states, "When all is said and done about the purpose of art and the audience it should reach, when all the ideological arguments have been decided, the theoretical directives stated, and the Party policies expounded, it still remains for artists to give a visual identity to these abstract concepts."[35] This view takes the stance that art-making is an exercise in problem-solving that does not necessarily dictate end-results. In the case of the new *guohua* schools,

[35] Arnold Chang, *Painting in the People's Republic of China: The Politics of Style* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 29.

although the perimeters were handed down by the government, they were terse and abstract in the range of possible interpretations. Given the context of a frenzied socio-political atmosphere, it seems artists eagerly responded to the perimeters as an artistic challenge and welcomed the camaraderie of peers provided through the context of a centralized institutional structure. At least during this early period, prior to the shift to radicalism, the socialist method of establishing artists from a wide range of backgrounds as equals resulted in some interesting works.

Although the effect of policy on the changing course of art-making cannot be over-emphasized, it should also be pointed out that not all trends were new. Existing experimentations in art that had previously not been in favor were brought forth at appropriate times to serve as models for the implementation of policy shifts. Working under the assumption that artists inevitably retain personal styles and individualized visions despite political mandates, it can be seen why the state in the late 1950s called upon artists of Xi'an to fulfill the mission of creating a new exemplar for art. It can also be seen why the fervor for the Xi'an School died quickly when the discourse surrounding the school began to misalign with the goals of the state.

Yan'an Talks (1942)

To begin an overview of arts policy in the 1950s and 1960s, one must begin in the 1940s with the Yan'an Talks on Literature and Art (延安文艺座谈会 *Yan'an wenyi zuotanhui*) Although the vagueness of this series of speeches given by Mao prevents direct application to the theoretical foundations of the Xi'an School, they serve as the base model for the strong correlation between art and politics in Maoist China. Arnold

Chang further emphasizes of the speeches, "They form the foundation upon which all later art criticism is built, and they serve as the definitive, authoritative statement used in determining the legitimacy of a cultural stand or policy of a given period or regime."[36] Due to the abstract nature of the Yan'an Talks, vastly different stances on art co-existed, all seemingly supportive of Yan'an ideals.

On the most basic level, the language of the speeches emphasizes the subservience of art to politics for the purpose of serving the masses. As the ultimate goal, Mao urged: "What we demand is the unity of politics and art, the unity of content and form, the unity of revolutionary political content and the highest possible perfection of artistic form."[37] The method to achieve this symbiotic ideal is through the popularization of art among the masses, who will eventually raise standards through their own initiative rather than through the standards imposed by the "bourgeoisie." Mao also advocated the seemingly paradoxical ideal that the life of the people is the only source for art, but art must be more vivid than life itself.

Chang points out that the language of the Yan'an Talks does not distinguish between literature and visual arts nor does it distinguish among various visual art media.[38] This shows that Mao treated the visual arts as simply a tool subservient to its political content. Despite the lack of medium specificity, the main points of the talks in emphasizing that art should be inspired by the people for the people has clear implications for the development and the stylistic output of the Xi'an *guohua* painters. In the decade and half between the Yan'an Talks and the birth of the Xi'an School,

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[36] Ibid., 5.
[37] Ibid., 7.
[38] Ibid., 10.

numerous updates to the talks were voiced by key party members that followed the course of politics at large. They constructed a clear path to the recognition of the *Chang'an huapai*.

4.2 Campaigns and their Proponents

Throughout his career, party theorist Zhou Yang (周扬 1908-1989) continuously represented the voice of Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party through its various changes in policy. In July of 1949, he presented a speech to the First All-China Conference of Writers and Artists that elucidated the limited acceptance of art forms during the first decade of the People's Republic of China.[39] Zhou's talk mostly followed the Yan'an Talks but had more specific guidelines for visual arts in contrast to the wholesale approach of the Yan'an Talks. It conspicuously omitted mention of ink painting or calligraphy, which are two of the most revered art forms in dynastic China. This omission hence suggests the Party's deliberate choice to associate traditional literati art forms with China's feudal past. Instead, the Party enthusiastically offered folk art forms and expressed its respect for Soviet styles. At this point, the official doctrine did not overtly negate other styles but passive silence expressed its disapproval.

Hundred Flowers Campaign

The next stage of significant changes in arts policy came in the early stages of the Hundred Flowers Campaign (1956-1957), a brief period in which the Party sought open criticism and debate, and during which unprecedented freedom was given to artists and

[39] Zhou Yang, "The People's New Literature and Art," ed. Ralph Croizier, *China's Cultural Legacy and Communism* (New York, Washington, London: Praeger, 1970), 17-19.

writers. Following the success of rural collectivization, Mao tried to galvanize the country's educated masses to achieve economic development. The Party saw the need to reformulate its strategy through the engagement of its intellectuals. When it was reported by Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi that the country's *guohua* artists were unhappy with their current lack of support, Zhou Yang responded to the situation by announcing: "If we want to let a hundred flowers bloom, the first essential is to preserve and uncover the national heritage."[40] This statement was directly opposite in tone from Zhou's previous statements that relegated *guohua* to disfavor.

In May 1956, Mao Zedong reiterated the metaphor in his announcement of a new campaign: "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend." Recognizing the potential danger of making public statements against the Party, Chinese intellectuals were initially reluctant to make criticism in the first year but eventually began at the strong urging of the Party.

To publicize the campaign, a number of party officials reiterated the official party line in various ways. An important 1956 speech by Lu Dingyi, director of the Party's propaganda department, advocated a relaxation of policy. In particular, the speech promoted the greater use of native forms and methods in arts and science.[41] The tone of the speech attempted to rectify previous prejudice against tradition, such as the earlier opinion voiced by Zhou Yang. In regards to cultural heritage, Lu states:

> Carefully select, cherish, and foster all that is good in it although criticizing its faults and shortcomings in a serious way....Then take music and painting. Not enough attention has been paid to our national heritage in these two spheres of creative activity. Wherever there are such tendencies, they must be corrected.[42]

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[40] Andrews, *Painters*, 180.
[41] Lu Dingyi, "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom," ed. Croizier, 20-21.
[42] Ibid., 20-21.

In September of the same year, Zhou Yang criticized the low quality of artwork produced and called for an elevation of standards. He stated, "The masses are dissatisfied with mediocre, stereotyped and made-to-formula stuff and want our artists and writers to produce a great number of really good works that can deeply move the readers' hearts."[43] The suggestion that the call for the elevation of standards came from the masses demonstrates adherence to the protocol of the Yan'an Talks. According to the new party line, however, other styles would be actively supported and Zhou further called for the integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism, a concept that can be viewed as an extension of the Yan'an Talks in that art must transcend life although at the same time is solely inspired by it.

Anti-Rightist Campaign

The Hundred Flowers Campaign was stopped when the sudden outpouring of criticism astonished Mao, who no longer saw the criticism as "constructive." The following year, the Anti-Rightist Campaign began. Between 300,000 and 700,000 people were deemed "rightists" and removed from their posts.[44] Policy drastically reversed with the new campaign as Zhou Yang now attacked dissident writers in the article "A Great Debate on the Literary Front."[45] Even though the document was ostensibly aimed at literature and not the visual arts, artists of all media would have been cautiously aware of

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[43] Zhou Yang, "The Important Role of Art and Literature in the Building of Socialism," *Chinese Literature*, no. 1 (1959): 179.
[44] John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History* (Cambridge, MA; London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 365.
[45] Zhou Yang, *A Great Debate on the Literary Front*, trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1958).

the newly delineated classifications of artistic creation: those serving the working masses and those serving the bourgeois; correct and incorrect.[46]

Jiang Feng

One of the targeted individuals as a result of the Hundred Flowers and Anti-Rightist Campaigns was Jiang Feng (江丰 1910-1982), a printmaker turned influential bureaucrat who was never keen on *guohua*. Jiang was reluctant to fully support *guohua* despite the mandates of Zhou Yang and Liu Shaoqi. Even well into the campaign, he still insisted on the maintenance of a Soviet-based drawing system in the curriculum for *guohua* artists. The Hundred Flowers Campaign was interpreted by the key voices as a mandate to revive traditional painting. Although Zhou Yang, Qian Junrui, and Cai Ruohong reversed Jiang Feng's previous objection to *guohua*, in actuality the Chinese Artists Association only supported aspects of Chinese tradition that could be harmonized with socialist realism. Jiang was purged in the Anti-Rightist Campaign for his resistance to the Hundred Flowers implementation.[47] Following him in demise was the centralized Soviet-friendly art system.

Even though Jiang was likely targeted from 1956-57 for personal reasons by factions within the Party, his condemnation for reluctance to believe that the Party wished to steer away from Soviet art styles and fully embrace the development of *guohua* is indicative of the direction in which arts policy was moving toward. The personal tragedy of Jiang's political fate meant favorable results for the development of *guohua* leading up to the recognition of the Xi'an School. Hawks writes, "The campaign to discredit Jiang

[46] Chang, 27.
[47] Andrews, *Painters*, 191.

Feng served the interest of traditional painters in that it set the stage for a golden-era of state-patronized production of traditional Chinese painting beginning around 1959."[48] As previously discussed in Chapter Three, the "golden-era" resulted in important works such as *This Land So Rich in Beauty* and *Fighting in Northern Shaanxi.*

Great Leap Forward for Guohua

In late 1957, immediately following the previous two campaigns, it became apparent to the Party that the Stalinist model of industrial growth was not suited to Chinese conditions. The economic inadequacies of the Soviet model coupled with other factors set the stage for a new phase of revolutionary effort to secure more active support from intellectuals.[49] Conflict between the two nations was further exasperated by Nikita Khrushchev's 1958 and 1959 visits to China in which he and Mao failed to get along.[50]

Andrews suggests that additional disputes with India set up conditions conducive to the emergence of *guohua*. She writes,

> Border disputes with India and the Soviet Union began to isolate China, which responded with increasingly strident Chinese nationalism. Indigenous forms of art, such as *guohua* and woodblock prints, thus became politically appropriate for no better reason than that they were Chinese.[51]

In tune with calls for China to be more self-reliant, art forms that had previously been ignored under the criticism of Jiang Feng were "rediscovered again" and given the resources to develop further.

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[48] Hawks, "Painting," 55.
[49] Fairbank, 363.
[50] Fairbank, 379.
[51] Andrews, *Painters*, 203.

Unlike other sectors of society, artists received a surprising boost in the Great Leap Forward. Ideological controls were gradually relaxed as the Party turned its attention to agricultural and industrial developments at the onset of the Great Leap Forward. The Party rhetoric of self-reliance meant for the arts greater promotion of amateur literary and artistic activity among the masses, including its continued support of ink painting. In direct contrast to the opinion he presented in 1949, Zhou Yang delivered a modified stance in a report to the Third Congress of Chinese Literary and Art Workers in July 1960. Although the report is predominately theoretical and ideological in content, certain portions of the document clearly express encouragement for traditional painting. One passage states:

> Our artists in traditional painting, employing traditional methods of expression, depict truthfully and with natural ease the life of the new age and the natural scenery of our motherland, endowing traditional painting with a new lease on life.[52]

Remarkably, Zhou extended his approval to professional-style bird-and-flower paintings:

> ...shouldn't the new-style landscape paintings and flower-and-bird paintings also have a place in our galleries? The people need inspiration and encouragement in their spiritual life, but they also need things that give pleasure and delight.[53]

The acceptance of professional painting styles, which are laden with associations from the feudal past, shows the relatively high degree of artistic tolerance in the early 1960s.

During the Great Leap Forward, it was common practice for professionals in all sectors to engage in manual labor. In addition to requiring artists to perform manual labor in the countryside, some groups of artists contributed directly to industrial production. For example, Shi Lu and Xi'an colleagues designed decorations for

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[52] Zhou Yang, *The Path of Socialist Literature and Art in China* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1960), 23-24.
[53] Ibid, 32.

enamelware.[54] Other artists, particularly *guohua* artists, were praised for selling their paintings cheaply.[55] Articles in *Meishu* that praised artists for their efforts prepared audiences for the official recognition of the Xi'an School as a *guohua* group that worked in tandem with the goals of the state.

Until the late 1950s, traditional ink painting had not been favored since the Republican era. Previous to the Xi'an and other *guohua* schools of the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Lingnan School (circa 1923-1938) had served as an innovative predecessor in term of *guohua* movements. Active in the first half of the twentieth century, its founders, including the brothers Gao Jianfu (高剑夫 1897-1951) and Gao Qifeng (高奇峰 1889-1933) achieved personal lyrical styles that reflected the geography of their Cantonese location. Without a strong link to Communism, however, the Lingnan School all but dispersed in 1949.[56]

The elevation of the Xi'an School to the national stage fits within the context of the Great Leap Forward. The timing for the participants of the Xi'an School proved ideal for their emergence. In the 1950s, Shi Lu, then in his thirties, was ambitious, energetic, and poised to make his mark in the art world. The older Zhao Wangyun, then in his fifties, was more established, and thus appropriately assumed the official leadership position. The timing in these two artists' lives was suitable for them to take on the new challenges of reinventing their painting styles. In assessing the trend of artists who took up the challenge, Shelley Drake Hawks writes, "Only a few well-positioned painters of the middle generation already trained in traditional techniques would take up Jiang

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[54] "Meishu lingxun," *Meishu,* no. 8 (1958): 40.
[55] Andrews, *Painters*, 225.
[56] See Ralph Croizier, *Art and Revolution in Modern China: The Lingnan School of Painting* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

Feng's challenge to fuse Western sketching methods with Chinese ink and brush."[57] She further explains that it was within this context that Shi and Zhao were sent to India and Egypt to produce sketches in Chinese ink. The influence of the trips will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Zhou Enlai

One of the key figures who pushed for tolerance during the Great Leap Forward was Premier Zhou Enlai (周恩来 1898-1976). Zhou has emerged in post-Maoist thinking as an admired diplomatic mediator for his role in domestic affairs and foreign negotiations. In the art world, he is also regarded as a consistent supporter of artistic autonomy and development. Zhou was among those who advocated more support for *guohua* painters during the Hundred Flowers Campaign and continued to express support for artists into the 1960s. The words of this influential premier also held significant authority in the development of *guohua* schools such as Xi'an.

In mid-April, 1959, Zhou Enlai made a speech that advocated more diversity in art. On May 3, Zhou spoke on ten points regarding art production. The last point states: "An art that lacks a unique style will decline."[58] This supportive statement allowed artists to justify innovative approaches and undoubtedly affected the development of regionalism and individualism in subsequent years.

On June 19, 1961, Zhou Enlai clearly expressed his views to a forum of writers and artists. These important remarks were not published until 1979, four years after his death, and begs the question of their potential effect on the art world had they been

[57] Hawks, "Painting," 55.
[58] Andrews, *Painters*, 204.

published sooner.[59] In his remarks published in *Chinese Literature*, he supported Zhou Yang's report of the previous year and in addition spoke against unjustified attacks on individuals and unguided criticism. He stated, "If those who are labeled Rightists are real Rightists, they should be so labeled, but we cannot tag anyone a Rightist at random."[60] Zhou urged the need for open discussions without fear of repercussion and for people to be judged on present actions instead of past crimes and background. He urged less governmental involvement in artistic production by allowing artists to be given more time to refine their work rather than having to adhere to unrealistic quotas. Only if artists were provided adequate support could they elevate the quality of their products. In the last section of his speech, Zhou made a strong argument for the integration of native Chinese and foreign styles. In a portion of the speech not published in *Chinese Literature*, Zhou directly praised the works of Jiangsu painters in addressing the potential of Chinese regional ink painting.[61]

4.3 Nanjing *Guohua* Painters

With praise by Zhou Enlai, the Nanjing painters were the group that received the earliest and most enthusiastic national recognition. The Jiangsu Province *Guohua* Exhibition in December 1958 sealed the recognition of the group. As published in *Meishu* 1959, Issue One, a number of paintings by Jiangsu *guohua* painters were prominently featured along with several accompanying articles and conference speeches. In this case, the group benefited from the leadership of its leading spokesman, Fu Baoshi (傅抱石

[59] Zhou Enlai, "Zhou Enlai on Questions Related to Art and Literature," *Chinese Literature*, no. 6 (1979): 83-95.
[60] Ibid., 85.
[61] Chang, 19.

1904-1965), who garnered national attention for his commission, *The Land So Rich in Beauty*, discussed in the previous chapter. In addition to the benefit of Fu Baoshi's fame, the leader proved to be a wise administrator with awareness for political correctness. An exhibition flyer prepared by the Preparatory Committee of the Jiangsu branch of the CAA, under the direction of Fu Baoshi, purposefully credits rectification, ideological education, and the Great Leap Forward for the improvement of *guohua*.[62]

One of the best received works in the exhibition was a collective painting, titled *People's Commune Dining Hall* [Fig. 9] (1958), by all members of the preparatory committee.[63] Although current scholars regard the work as, "typically uninspiring," its strengths included its refined technical execution and its socialist or collaborative method of creation. An individual work by Qian Songyan (钱松嵒 1899-1985), *On Furong Lake* [Fig. 10] was similar in its minutely detailed depictions of "laudable economic activity."[64] Although the Nanjing painters were supported by the same set of national policies that aided the Xi'an painters, their works are dramatically different in style and subject matter. The differences in the creative vision of the two regional *guohua* schools can be attributed to a variety of factors such as geographical location, backgrounds of the artists, and issues of interpretation.

4.4 Sichuan Printmakers

Although the Xi'an and Nanjing painters shared a common medium, the Xi'an School follow more closely in development and general characteristics of another

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[62] Andrews, *Painters*, 254.
[63] "Jiangsushen zhongguohua zhanzai jing zhanchu," *Meishu*, no. 1 (1959): 8-9. Among the published paintings, two others are communally painted works by the Jiangsu *Guohua* Academy.
[64] Andrews, *Painters*, 254.

regional art group, the Sichuan printmakers, most active 1958 to 1966. One of the surprising elements of the two schools is their formation by artists who were not native to the regions.[65] Most of the Sichuan printmakers were assigned to the region and none of the three major artists of the Xi'an School was native to Shaanxi province. Moreover, both groups were composed of artists of diverse backgrounds and styles. Technically competent, the Sichuan artists devoted much of their attention to depicting Tibetans. Due to China's political tension with Tibet, Sichuan woodblock prints garnered national fame. Works such as Niu Wen's *The East is Red*, depicting Tibetan children singing and dancing to the Communist song, suited the Party's propaganda needs. Like Shi Lu and the Xi'an School, the Sichuan printmakers lent their skills to "practical uses" during the Great Leap Forward by decorating stationary and matchbox covers.[66] Also similar to the Xi'an case, Sichuan benefited from the leadership of one of its artists, Li Shaoyan, who had worked in Yan'an. As seen in Li's *Old Street, New Look* [Fig. 11] and Li Huanmin's *Golden Road* [Fig. 12], the woodblock print medium effectively allowed the artists to capture the rhythm and rich visual textures of Sichuan village life through orderly and skillfully carved lines.[67] Sichuan printmakers' interest in depicting local flavor resonates in the work of the Shaanxi painters in their studies of the Yellow Loess landscape.

4.5 Significance of "Chang'an," Yan'an, and Xi'an

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[66] Ibid., 267.
[67] More discussion can be found in Andrews, *Painters*, 265-77.
Sonja Kelley of Princeton University recently completed a dissertation on the subject, titled "Printmaking in Sichuan after 1949: Regionalism and the Formation of a New National Art in China" (2007).

Although it seems unlikely that one of the most dynamic art movements in Maoist China developed in Xi'an, the city's second-rate status actually made it a fertile place for the development of art. A combination of political, historical and cultural factors poised Xi'an as a fitting place for the development of a regional *guohua* center. Aside from its direct reference to Communist history, the Chang'an region evoked other associations with China's famed and romanticized history.

In the grand narrative of Chinese history, Xi'an had not played a role of great importance since the Tang dynasty. Its artistic legacy rested largely on the abundance of imperial tombs in its vicinities. By evoking the term Chang'an, a name for Xi'an during the city's most illustrious era, the artists of the school affiliated themselves to the artistic legacy of Tang era, especially the historically significant figurative murals in the imperial tombs in the Xi'an vicinity.

Excavated in the 1950s, the Yangshao Neolithic village, Banpo (半坡), brought attention to Xi'an as a site of importance along the Yellow River Valley. Early archaeological research emphasized evidence of Banpo's matriarchal society.[68] Although later research contradicted this Marxist paradigm, the discovery of Banpo accorded with China's nationalistic interest in history at the time. It should be noted that Zhao Wangyun was an advocate of archaeological preservation who had worked on establishing Banpo as a museum for research and tourism.

The term Chang'an was changed to Xi'an by the Ming dynasty. Because Ming is seen as the last "Chinese" dynasty, the reference by Xi'an artists to a pre-Manchu name shows their attempt to build a continuous historical lineage. The interest of *guohua*

[68] Liu, Li. *The Chinese Neolithic: Trajectories to Early States* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 96.

artists in defining "authentic" Chinese history can be seen in Fu Baoshi's bibliographical compilation of Ming dynasty loyalist artists, which includes Shitao.[69] In the context of Communist nationalistic fervor that propelled efforts to rectify a century of reliance and subservience to foreign occupation, it makes particular sense for Xi'an artists to embrace their pre-foreign identity.

Historical importance coupled with Xi'an's religious affiliations further contributed to the cultural significance of Xi'an and evoked the allure of the term Chang'an. Depictions of Shaanxi's rugged landscape often included Mount Hua, one of the five sacred mountains of China and noted for its Daoist temples. Moreover, the city is home to two famous Buddhist pagodas. Although the direct embrace of religious remnants was unacceptable, the artistic and cultural significance of ancient history provided a source of secular pride for a nation-state in the mist of constructing itself.

Due to factors such as its relatively landlocked geography, the economy of Shaanxi province had not advanced in the age of modernism. Culture, consequently, had not followed suit in development in the Xi'an region. In the twentieth century, however, the history of Communist China once again placed Shaanxi province on the map. The rural township of Yan'an took center-stage as the headquarters of the Communist Party prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China. As a result, since 1949, reference to any aspect of Yan'an has been considered suitable artistic subject matter.

Artists in Xi'an were ideally suited to preserve Party history through their well-observed but romanticized depictions of local geography. They lived in close proximity to Yan'an and experienced firsthand the geographical characteristics of the region. Even

[69] Fu Baoshi, *Ming mo minzu yiren zhuan/Ming-mo min-tsu i-jen chuan* (Gaoxiong/Kao-hsiung, Taiwan: Qisheng/Ch'i-sheng, 1972).

though artists like Zhao and Shi had lived significant portions of their lives in Shaanxi, they offered an outsider's perspective for a wide national audience. The three artists in this discussion were all implants of Xi'an and their works showed freshness of interpretation in capturing characteristics of the Shaanbei (陕北) region.[70] Along with capturing the reality of the landscape, the artists also sought to capture an essence of authenticity that is consistent with the perception that the rugged and isolating landscape of the Loess Plateau inevitably shapes its inhabitants' innate characters.

The above chapter has examined the culmination of national directives and regional interpretations that created regional art schools such as the Nanjing painters, Sichuan printmakers, and Xi'an painters.[71] These schools proved mutually beneficial to the government and the artists themselves. The next chapter will discuss in detail how Xi'an artists of the *Chang'an huapai* utilized national support to create works that satisfied the needs of the state and their creative expression. This chapter will specifically examine how artists' backgrounds, experiences, and produced works contributed to the actualization of a stylistically- and thematically-unique Xi'an School of *guohua* painting.

[70] Shaanbei is the northern part of Shaanxi province, which is where Yan'an is located.
[71] Other regional schools existed, as well, such as the Heilongjian printmakers in Beidahuang, China's remote northeastern border region. See Andrews, *Painters*, 277-283.

CHAPTER 5

THE ARTISTS

As in the discussion of other regional art schools, artists themselves cannot be treated lightly in the consideration of the *Chang'an huapai*. Although factors such as history, location, and the convergence of politics enabled the formation of regional *guohua* movements, the specific achievements of individual artists were primarily responsible for the success of any particular regional school. As much as scholars attempt to account for variables that shape artworks, the sum is always more than the total of its parts. The following section examines each of the three major contributors to the *Chang'an huapai* to argue that Shi Lu, Zhao Wangyun, and He Haixia each contributed to the group's success in terms of their prior work experience and artistic experimentation within the group. This discussion acknowledges its limitation in highlighting only three of the many artists who worked in Xi'an.

5.1 Shi Lu

Early Life

If one were to limit the discussion of the *Chang'an huapai* to only one artist, Shi Lu would be the undisputed representative. Born in Sichuan province in 1919, the artist formerly known as Feng Yaheng (冯亚珩) took the pseudonym Shi Lu at age twenty,

thereby marking his artistic and intellectual affiliation by combining the names Shitao and Lu Xun (鲁迅), his two heroes. The blunt combination of Shitao and Lu Xun reveals Shi Lu as an artist of the twentieth century. Shitao was a seventeenth-century individualist artist and Lu Xun was a cultural reformer instrumental in the development of Chinese literature in the twentieth century. Scholar Ye Jian suggests that Shi Lu's birth during the height of the May Fourth Cultural Movement (1915-1921) influenced him to take Lu Xun as an intellectual model.[72] The practice of taking pen names or *hao* (号) is rooted in Chinese literati tradition but is usually limited to changing the given name. Shi's choice to change his surname marks his intellectual affiliation with the May Fourth Movement. Moreover, the change from a three-character name to a two-character name also conveys his modernity. Lu Xun's name, for example, was a full pseudonym like Shi Lu's. As his mature art would show, Shi Lu followed the modern artistic model advocated by Lu Xun, namely reinvigorating native forms to create art for a new China.

Although Shi Lu's affiliation to Lu Xun affirms his commitment to society, Shi Lu's choice to affix himself to the persona of Shitao affirmed his individualistic self-conception. According to art historian Jonathan Hay, Shitao has in the twentieth century attained the status of being considered the most completely "individual" artist among the late seventeenth century Chinese artists known collectively as the Individualists.[73] Shi Lu's reinvented, self-conscious construction of his identity at a critical young age foreshadowed him as an innovative artist.

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[72] Ye Jian, "Art is Valued for its Originality—An Account of the Chinese Eccentric Painter—Shi Lu," in *Shi Lu shuhua ji* (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1990), 91.
[73] Jonathan Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xv.

Born in the town of Wengong in Renshou country to a wealthy family, Shi Lu's background and subsequent rejection of it reveals Shi Lu's independent personality from an early age. Throughout his life, Shi Lu made defiant choices that allowed him to exert his innate creativity. As a youth, Shi Lu followed his brother Feng Jianwu's (冯建吴 1910-1989) footsteps in attaining a traditional literati education in poetry, calligraphy, painting and seal-carving. Shi Lu continued his art training from 1934 to1937 at the Dongfang Art College (东方美术专科学校) in Chengdu established by his brother. At Dongfang, Shi Lu studied both Chinese and Western art. It was during this time that he became particularly interested in Shitao and Zhu Da, two artists celebrated for their individualistic interpretations of the literati tradition. Remnants of these early artistic influences carried over into Shi Lu's mature career. In addition to Shitao's surname, Shi Lu's bird-and-flower paintings echo the economical simplicity of Zhu Da's works. After attaining his art education, Shi Lu studied historical sociology at the Western China Concordian University (华西协和大学文学院) in Chengdu.[74]

Amidst the charged social and political climate following the Japanese invasion, a twenty year-old Shi Lu caught the revolutionary fervor and rejected his wealthy family to join the Communist anti-Japanese campaigns. A biography of Mao Zedong is said to have stirred Shi Lu's interest in the emerging leader.[75] In 1940, he moved to Yan'an to work at the Shaanbei Public College (陕北工学).[76] His artistic output was unspecialized and varied at this time. In Yan'an Shi Lu wrote revolutionary poetry, participated in propaganda operas, and made cartoons called *tudianyin* (土点印) for rural locals. He

[74] Shi Lu, *Shi Lu teji. Han Mo* 47 (Hong Kong: Hanmoxuan chuban youxian gongsi, 1990), E11.
[75] Ibid., E4.
[76] Ibid., E12.

also made woodblock prints and *nianhua* (年画) style paintings and only began specializing in ink painting in 1953.[77] Among Yan'an woodcut artists, Shi was only one of few to have not been a woodcut artist before the war. Throughout his career, Shi exhibited his versatility in adopting new mediums and styles.

Travel

Some of Shi Lu's most unusual and innovative works were created during or inspired by his travels in China and abroad. Consistent with the use of the term *xi zuo* by the Xi'an painters, the sketchy, gestural quality of Shi Lu's sketches imbues them with freshness and openness of interpretation. According to his son, Shi Lu experienced an epiphany of sorts during his travels abroad to India and Egypt in the mid-1950s. By visiting ancient ruins in those countries, Shi Lu gained greater appreciation for ancient Chinese culture. Upon returning, he devoted himself to traditional Chinese painting techniques rather than Soviet art models.[78] His decision to renounce official socialist realist styles suited the development of *guohua* but his unorthodox style eventually created political problems that damaged his reputation.

Shi Lu's interest in unfamiliar locales began early in his teens. In 1935 and 1936, he traveled to Mount Emei at the sacred Buddhist Mountains in Sichuan for outdoor sketching. In the early 1950s, he sketched in Qinghai, Tibet, and Gansu.[79] It was from sketches made on these trips that he created *Beyond the Great Wall* [Fig. 6], a propaganda painting celebrating China's railway expansions through the depiction of

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[77] Andrews, *Painters*, 286.
[78] Ibid., note 247.
[79] Shi Lu, *Shi Lu teji*, E10-13.

minorities giddily anticipating an unseen approaching train. The pictorial success of this work in marrying the techniques of Chinese and Western painting serves its thematic goals.[80]

Although this work escaped the controversy of later works such as *Fighting in Northern Shaanxi*, it is like Shi Lu's other creations in its potential for alternative readings. In response to the expressions of the minority figures in *Beyond the Great Wall*, Arnold Chang writes that they are "awed by the spectacle of modernity but somewhat uncomfortable with the effects it has on their ancient customs."[81] This interpretation seems to reveal a contemporary bias that would have been unlikely the original intention. Rather, because the work was done rather early in Shi Lu's painting career, it shows overly-dramatic bodily expressions that appear awkward. It also shows Shi Lu's early experimentations with narrative and composition. The choice for him to depict a moment before the expected climax of the appearing train is similar to the calm anticipatory mood of *Fighting in Northern Shaanxi*. There are few direct precedents in Chinese art for this narrative choice and as such can only be seen as a successful innovation by Shi Lu.

In the mid-1950s, Shi Lu received opportunities to travel abroad. He was sent to India in 1955 to design the China House in the International Exposition. The following year, he was sent to Egypt along with Zhao Wangyun to attend the International Art

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[80] The painting has been discussed in terms of its depiction of Tibetans in serving party propaganda. Andrews states on page 286 of *Painters and Politics*, "The picture thus propagandizes for success in bridging the physical and psychological boundaries dividing the Han people from the national minorities." Further discussion of Shi Lu's depictions of minorities in this and other paintings can be found in Clare Harris, *In the Image of Tibet: Tibetan Painting after 1959* (London: Reaktion, 1999).

[81] Chang, 35-6.

Conference.[82] Both Zhao and Shi made sketches on these trips and, upon their return from Egypt, an exhibition of their work was held in Beijing.

Shi Lu's travels continued in the following years. In 1957 and 1958, he made frequent trips to Shaannan and Shaanbei to sketch and teach art. In 1964 he traveled northward along the Yellow River and in 1965, he sketched once more in the mountains in southwestern Shaanxi prior to being committed to an institution for schizophrenia.[83] By this time, the most creative stage of the *Chang'an huapai* had ended as both Shi Lu and Zhao Wangyun had both been relieved of their administrative positions in the Chinese Artists Association.

5.2 Zhao Wangyun

Early Life

Born into a peasant family in Hebei in 1906, Zhao Wangyun was the most senior member of the Xi'an School and served as an effective administrator in many projects throughout his career. Orphaned at age eighteen, Zhao apprenticed in the fur trade before discovering his skills as an artist. In 1925 he studied ink painting in Beijing and took the name Zhao Wangyun to replace his childhood name Ba Niu (八妞), thereby symbolically shedding his peasant background. It was also in Beijing that he was first exposed to ideas of the May Fourth Movement that advocated modernization of art to benefit society. Zhao was influenced by the Japanese literary critic, Kuriyagawa Hakuson (1880-1923),

[82] Shi Lu, *Shi Lu teji*, E12-13.
[83] Ibid., E13.

whose works such as *Symbol of Depression (Kumen de xiangzheng)* and *Leave the Ivory Tower* (*Chule xiangya zhi ta*) were translated by Lu Xun.[84]

Zhao was incredibly active throughout his career as an artist, writer, teacher, and administrator.[85] While living in Beijing, he frequently visited the countryside to sketch and regularly exhibited his works. In 1928, he became acquainted with progressive intellectuals like the art theorist Wang Shenran (王森然 1895-1984) and began writing and illustrating for *Dagongbao yishu zhoukan* (大公报艺术周刊 *Dagongbao Arts Weekly*).

In the early 1930s, Zhao began acquiring wide attention when he exhibited his paintings of rural village life in many northeastern cities. He became the travel sketch journalist for *Dagongbao*'s Tianjin branch in 1932 and the following year the newspaper sponsored an exhibition of his works titled *Zhao Wangyun nongcun xieshen* (赵望云农村写生 *Zhao Wangyun's Studies of the Countryside*) accompanied by a catalogue [Fig. 13]. Exposure from this exhibition led to his introduction to the warlord General Feng Yuxiang (冯玉祥 1882-1948), with whom Zhao remained in close contact [Fig. 14]. He traveled to Mount Tai in Shandong at the invitation of Feng and collaborated with him on *Taishan shehui xieshen shi hua shike* (泰山社会写生诗画石刻 *Mount Tai Society Sketches and Poetry Carvings*), a series of forty-eight carvings done by local carvers that

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[84] Ling Hubiao, "Zhao Wangyun shengping jilue," *Duoyun* 13 (Shanghai: Zhongguo huihua yanjiu jikan, 1987), 153. The covers of the books, designed by Tao Yuanqing, can be found in Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-century China* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1998), 184-193. Tao's works reflect the influence of Japanese and Western designs.

[85] For a biographical timeline, see Chen Zhen, *Zhao Wangyun* (Shijiazhuan: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002): 246-263.

depict Zhao's art and Feng's poetry [Fig. 15].[86] Feng wrote verses for the second edition of Zhao's *Dagongbao* catalogue just months after the initial publication. Three more publications followed. In Shandong, Zhao also assumed a number of teaching positions, including some at high schools. The following year, Zhao set out on an expedition from Shaanxi's Tangshan Mountains to Inner Mongolia and produced ninety-nine pictures. The works were once again published by *Dagongbao* and accompanied by Feng's verses, resulting the catalogue *Zhao Wangyun saishan xiesheng ji* (赵望云塞上写生集 *Zhao Wangyun Sketches from the Border*) in 1934.[87] During the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1940) Zhao continued to actively sketch. With the assistance of Feng, he founded and chief-edited the *Kangzhan huakan* (抗战画刊 *Anti-Japanese War Pictorial*). The pictorial ceased publication after thirty issues, signaling the end of one chapter and the beginning of another in Zhao's life.

After working closely with Feng for nearly a decade, Zhao parted ways with him and began life as a professional artist. Through his acquaintance with the well-known traditional painter Zhang Daqian (张大千 1899-1983), Zhao was exposed to classical paintings and began his study of traditional Chinese art.

Life in Xi'an

Zhao moved to Xi'an in 1942 further to commit to his deep affiliation with the Northwest. He continued actively to travel, sketch and exhibit. In 1946 he organized an exhibition in Xi'an that included Xu Beihong (徐悲鸿 1895-1953) and Zhang Daqian.

[86] Examples can be found in Chen, 18-19.
[87] Zhao Wangyun, *Zhao Wangyun saishang xiesheng ji* (Tianjin: Dagongbao, 1934).

He also took Fang Jizhong as student, another member of the *Chang'an huapai* who is known for his paintings of goats. By the end of the year he founded and edited the magazine *Yong hua* (雍华 *China Harmony*)

Immediately after the liberation of Xi'an in 1949, Zhao became heavily involved in the development of art in his adopted city. He represented Xi'an in a conference of arts and literature and assumed the position of vice chairman in the newly formed Northwest Artists Association (西北美术工作者协会 *Xibei meishu gongzuozhe xiehui*). In 1951, he worked to establish the Northwest History Museum (西北历史博物馆 *Xibei lishi bowuguan*), which was the precursor to the Shaanxi History Museum (陕西历史博物馆 *Shaanxi lishi bowuguan*). The year 1953 was important for Zhao; he was not only involved in creation of the Xi'an Banpo Museum but he also became the Chairman of the Chinese Artists Association, Xi'an Branch, which was tied to the formation of the Xi'an *Guohua* Research Association (西安国画研究会 *Xi'an guohua yanjiuhui*). The mid-1950s continued to be a busy time for Zhao as he and Shi Lu were sent to Egypt.

Back in China, Zhao continued actively to work in art administration. In 1957 he founded the Chang'an Art Press (长安美术出版社 *Chang'an meishu chubanshe*), which later became Shaanxi People's Art Press (陕西人民美术出版社 *Shaanxi renmin meishu chubanshe*). Zhao's fate took an unfortunate turn in 1957 when he became a target of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. He was removed from his leadership position at the CAA but was luckily allowed to continue working alongside other Xi'an artists and participate in exhibitions. In 1961, along with other Xi'an artists he exhibited in the nation's capital. It should be noted, however, Zhao's paintings did not appear in *People's Daily* with Shi's

and He's and he was not in attendance at the 1961 conference according to conference proceedings published in *Meishu*.

Figures

Unlike He Haixia, Zhao prominently depicted human subjects in his work, but unlike Shi Lu, he avoided depicting figures in portrait scale. Instead, most of his works portray figures from medium distance and in comparable scale to their environment. From his early sketches of village life in Sichuan to works of the early 1970s, figures have a strong presence, even in compositions heavily dominated by landscape. The work *Wu yuan zhi chun* [Fig. 16] from 1959 exemplifies the centrality of the human presence in a vast landscape of mountains and flowering trees.

Despite Zhao's lifelong occupation with figures, his style can accurately be described as purposely awkward and naïve. They were rarely rendered with facial details and bodies can be better described as stumpy rather than graceful. Rather, it seems Zhao's primary interest was in the rhythm of human presence in the landscape. He was interested in the way a single figure can harmoniously garner nature by its lone presence or how a group of peasants or a herd of cows can seem to "tame" a range of mountains [Fig. 17]. Elements of the landscape were painted in equally naïve style, as seen in examples of large and bluntly painted branches and foliage [Fig. 18].

Egypt

As stated previously, Zhao and Shi were sent by the government to Egypt in August 1956 [Fig. 19].[88] Exhibitions of their works were held in Cairo, Beijing and Xi'an and a catalogue was produced to accompany the exhibitions in China.[89] Affirming the testimony of Shi Lu's son, both Zhao and observer He Haixia considered the trip a turning point for the development of Shi's and Zhao's art.[90] Unlike earlier travel works depicting minority Chinese in border regions, Shi Lu's depiction of distant foreigners did not adhere to socialist realist models. Julia Andrews writes of the travel sketches: "Some sketches are lyrical landscapes that foreshadow his later success in that genre. Some are in the more traditional media of ink and color on Chinese paper, other sketches resemble Western watercolors more than traditional Chinese paintings..."[91] It appears that a certain amount of distance provided by the trip abroad allowed Shi Lu to execute works that fully embrace the tension between the traditional Chinese medium and Western techniques.

A comparison of the two Xi'an artists' sketches of Egypt is also interesting. Although for Shi Lu his paintings in Egypt look different than anything he has done before, for Zhao they were continuous with his 1930s paintings of rural China. His depictions of Egypt are not celebratory but show the wonder of the artist in the new country. The attention to exotic features such as coconut trees and camels shows Zhao's primary interest in geographical characteristics [Figs. 20, 21]. Moreover, Zhao's works are more rooted in traditional landscapes in that the figures are smaller and more generic.

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[88] Andrews, *Painters*, 285.
[89] Chen, 56. Catalogue: *Zhao Wangyun Shi Lu Aiji xiesheng huaxuanji/ Zhao Wangyun Shi Lu Selected Sketches of Egypt* (Xi'an: Chang'an meishu chubanshe, 1957).
[90] Andrews, *Painters*, 287.
[91] Ibid., 287.

The landscape, however, shows a Western use of perspective in rendering receding objects in space to convey realistic spatial depth.

In Shi Lu's works, by contrast, figures are large and clearly emphasized. Shi used ink to model the figures and there is a clear sense of light and shadow that suggests directional lighting, further emphasized by cast shadows. Such devices show a novel use of Chinese ink. Shi Lu will return to these sketches later in life. Patterns and motifs that were once contained in these simple, elegant sketches will spill out into the borders of Shi Lu's post-schizophrenic works of the 1970s.[92] Egyptian textile patterns seen in works such as *Boat of the Desert* [Fig. 22] seem to be in part his inspiration for the strange, heavily-worked patterns that he would later create. There is also a sense of dynamism in his forms created by foreshortening. The painting *On the Nile* [Fig. 23] creates sharp foreshortening by views of the boat's dramatic angle. This painting also demonstrates Shi Lu's innate sense of composition. The dramatic angle of the Egyptian oarsman places the viewer in the same vantage point as the artist, thereby reaching beyond the spatial boundaries of the painting. Shi Lu instinctually avoids a centered, symmetrical composition and the resulting image has more of a sense of movement.

To trace the integration of Western art devices in Shi Lu's work, one needs to look at *Sentry on the Mountain* [Fig. 24], a 1950 work. This early travel sketch of Tibetans already shows a Western use of color ink in the saturated blue of the sky, which is set in sharp contrast to the fluffy white clouds. The modeled faces of the figures further show a Western use of color material. In comparison, the Egyptian sketches of 1956 actually show more refined integration of Western and Chinese techniques. Again,

[92] Shi Lu was institutionalized for schizophrenia in 1965 and 1971. In 1970, he created a series of highly unusual private works that dramatically altered some of his compositions created in India and Egypt.

in *Boat of the Desert*, Shi Lu's use of shadows naturalistically places the camel in space. In other works, the figures' faces are rendered more believably as individuals with well-observed features and the use of subtle tones for modeling [Fig. 25]. The Egyptian sketches also lose the blinding saturated colors of the earlier travel-based works. Despite Western techniques, the sketches reveal their Chinese identity through the insistent use of calligraphic black outlines, particularly evident in the figures' long white robes.

Although trips abroad provided fruitful opportunities for Shi and Zhao, they were by no means arbitrary in purpose. The Chinese government was establishing diplomatic ties with Egypt because both nations were building socialism-based governments. On July 23, 1952, the Egyptian Revolution overturned the monarchy of King Farouk and led to the temporary installation of a government under Muhammad Naguib. Similar to what China would enact in 1979, Egypt in 1955 opened the first family planning clinics to control population growth. Shi Lu and Zhao Wangyun's trip to Egypt coincided with the 1956 adoption of "Arab Socialism" in Egypt which led to sweeping social reforms, including the suffrage of women. This period began a two-decade period of migration into urban areas where economic and educational opportunities were greater. [93]

The socialist urbanization of Egypt finds little visual evidence in the sketches of Shi Lu and Zhao Wangyun. Both artists portrayed unindustrialized scenes punctuated by local people and ancient monuments. In contrast to theme of socialism, these works show a romanticized view of a timeless, traditional culture. People are portrayed with large, shiny "Western" eyes and their long tunics flow elegantly off their bodies. Despite semi-exotic elements, the sketches are surprisingly absent of revolutionary themes and

[93] Excerpt from Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), ACLAnet, http://www.umass.edu/complit/aclanet/EGYPT.html.

styles. The figures are not robust and heroic; instead, they range from sultry to scrawny, and are generally realistic.

Zhao's and Shi's depictions of unindustrialized Egypt led to a minor incident with the Egyptian government. Egyptian officials grew suspicious of Zhao's paintings of village life that depict remnants of the past instead of expected signs of modernism. Chinese representatives responded to the concern by reporting that Zhao depicted similar subject matter in China. Zhao himself explained that he wanted to introduce the natural characteristics of Egypt to Chinese people and showed his work to skeptical Egyptian officials. His explanation apparently pacified their concerns as they provided additional assistance for him to continue working in the countryside for the remainder of the trip.[94]

From the following statement, it is clear that Shi Lu gained a great deal of insight from his trips to India and Egypt:

> ...despite having been colonized, [India] with its economy is entirely operated by foreigners, yet its culture and arts still belong to its citizens, including its music and painting. When we visited Indian universities, their ethnic arts retain a native flavor. Egypt is different; much of its culture has been influenced by France but its artists still seek after their ethnic methods and traditions in architecture and sculpture. They adhere to their own artistic traditions. Look at all these long-lasting ancient cultures, we must learn from them to be as long-lasting. In conclusion, from now on we must have greater belief that cultural heritage, traditional methods and socialism are not in contradiction. The methods of socialism must conform to ethnic methods.[95]

The experience of traveling abroad for both Shi and Zhao clearly affected developments in their work and artistic philosophy. Because this experience was not shared by He Haixia, who was already more orthodox in his background and artistic training, his work remained on the more traditional end of the spectrum.

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[94] Ling, 158.
[95] Liang, 15.

5.3 He Haixia

Early Life

Born in 1908 to a Manchu family in Beijing, He Haixia's background predisposed him to working in more traditional styles. His classical Chinese art training provided the balance to Shi's and Zhao's more eclectic styles. According to Sullivan's *Dictionary of Modern Chinese Artists*, He Haixia's contribution to the Xi'an School is overshadowed by his work as a traditional conservative *guohua* painter.[96] Moreover, information on He Haixia seems selective and anecdotal.[97] At sixteen he apprenticed to a *guohua* artist. In 1926 he entered the official Beijing art scene through participation in the Beijing *Guohua* Research Association. In 1927 he participated in an exhibition of Chinese art in Tokyo. Notably, in 1934, he became Zhang Daqian's student. During the Anti-Japanese War he lived in Beijing in great poverty, supporting himself by selling copies of famous paintings. He's contribution to the Xi'an School, although evident in his body of work, remains unrecognized by scholars and by He himself. According to Andrews, He Haixia in his late life seemed most interested in discussing the immense pleasure he took in making forgeries with Zhang Daqian.[98]

Zhang Daqian and Antiquarian Influences

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[96] Michael Sullivan, *Modern Chinese Artists: a Biographical Dictionary* (Berkeley: University of California, Dictionary, 2006), 50.
[97] For biographical timeline of He Haixia, see He Haixia, *He Haixia (Zhongguo meishujia zuoping congshu)* (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe; Xinhua shudian, 2001), 238-242.
[98] Andrews, *Painters*, 289.

In 1945 He Haixia went to Chengdu to work with the accomplished and versatile *guohua* painter Zhang Daqian, with whom he copied ancient paintings. At this time, Zhang had just completed his copying project of fresco paintings in the caves at Dunhuang. Zhang was in the middle of exhibiting and publishing works produced from the arduous project. The stylistic and thematic influence of the Dunhuang frescos on Zhang Daqian is well-noted by scholars and evident in the antiquarian traits acquired by his works. Because of He's professional ties to Zhang, it is logical that his work acquired similar changes due to his exposure to a combination of traditional ink paintings and indigenous art forms. Unlike Zhang, however, throughout the body of his work He infrequently highlighted human subjects. Although figures populate many of his compositions, they are small and anonymous against much more attentively and emotively depicted landscapes [Figs. 26, 27].

Even into the 1980s and 1990s, He's subject matter and style show close affinity to those of Zhang Daqian. As represented by gold-tipped lotus flowers and vibrantly hued blue-green style works [Figs. 28, 29], the antiquarian style of the versatile master Zhang was equally well executed by He Haixia even late in his life. A 1996 portrait of Zhang Daqian enjoying the fragrance of plum blossoms attests to the professional and personal friendship of the two artists [Fig. 30].

He's training in literati and exposure to indigenous styles of Chinese art provided another element to the foundation of a regional *guohua* school in Shaanxi province. His 1940 work *Listening to Springs at the Foot of a Mountain* [Fig. 31] shows good handling of brushwork in the use of texture strokes and clearly distinguished foliage types. The composition is orderly and asymmetrically composed of a clear foreground, middle

ground and distant ground. A small scholar sits on the banks of a river in the foreground at the bottom of the composition. This work is characteristic of He's early work in lacking a sense of spontaneity and innovation. A native of Beijing, He was said to have copied Song and Yuan works at the Palace Museum. His knowledge of ink painting masterworks provided expertise in this area among his Xi'an colleagues.

Involvement in Xi'an

According to a Chinese monograph on He Haixia, the artist, along with Zhao and Shi, was included in the celebratory title of "The Three Masters of Chang'an" (长安三杰 *Chang'an san jie*). The start of He's career in Xi'an occurred in 1950 when he was assigned a position at the Xi'an Department of Public Health. He became acquainted with Zhao Wangyun and Shi Lu early on and frequently conversed with them about art. With the support of Zhao and Shi, He joined the CAA, Xi'an Branch, in 1956.

Although the three major artists of this examination came together in the late 1950s to the early 1960s, their contributions to the *Chang'an huapai* were unequal. Recent publications on He Haixia noticeably include few works from the 1940s to the 1960s, focusing instead on later works. This bias reflects the artist's preference at the end of his life for his works which are most stylistically associated with Zhang Daqian, who had fled the mainland when the P.R.C was established. It is evident that the inclusion of his works from earlier periods, including his time working with the *Chang'an huapai*, is selective rather than complete.

Even during the period of most intense activity for the Xi'an School (1959-1962), He's work remains fairly traditional and placid in its use of the ink medium. Although

He successfully fused motifs of industrialization against the background of *shanshui* painting, he does not part with traditional brushwork and basic composition. As seen in works such as *Taming the Yellow River* [Fig. 32], symbols of new China like construction cranes, trucks, and suspension bridges fulfilled thematic requirements for ink painters but as a composition looks traditional. He's works were carefully crafted by the use of hemp-fiber and axe-cut texture strokes, rarely dissolving into dramatic or hasty washes. It can also be seen that He was never entirely comfortable with the incursions of political themes in his work. In works after the 1960s, He painted almost exclusively literary subjects such as landscapes and flowers.

A comparison of two Yan'an landscapes [Fig. 33, 34] by He and Shi reveals the diversity of artistic practices among the Xi'an School painters. Although Shi's work focuses on the human interaction with the holy site of Communist Party history, He's work depicting a distant view of Yan'an Mountains was painted from an imaginary elevated angle. The famous pagoda at Yan'an stands prominently in the foreground with the modern bridge in the distant middle-ground. In some ways, He's painting resembles Shi Lu's *Fighting in Northern Shaanxi* in its placement of a stand-in symbol of the Party in the place of Mao, perched at the edge of the cliff and presiding over the vast northern landscape.

CHAPTER 6

SHARED VISION

6.1 Western Directions

The establishment of national identity through tradition is tricky and circular in its logic. The attempt to reform or modernize that which represented the feudal past can only happen with the enzyme of foreign influences. This prerequisite presents a paradox in which China was attempting to shed influences from the West, including Europe and the Soviet Union. The attempts by Shi Lu and others to create innovative works by using a distinctively Chinese medium yielded seemingly awkward results due to the lack of artistic foundation of both Chinese and Western styles in China at the time. Artists found themselves in a unique position, perhaps one of the only periods in Chinese history when talented artists could not acquire either a traditional education or an international one. Yet, in interpreting stylistic ingenuity in modern Chinese art, scholars generally look for possible Western influences. Growing internationalism in the twentieth century, both peaceful and forceful, enabled the exchange and transference of artistic ideas. It makes sense to look to the West as a source of novelty in Chinese painting. In *The Winking Owl*, Ellen Johnston Laing notes the Western components of Shi's *Beyond the Great Wall,*

including its triangular composition, fullness of detail, use of perspective, and modeled forms.[99]

Andrews, however, challenges a direct attribution of Western components in interpreting Shi Lu's work. She writes, "Shi Lu's innovative style, however, is less a synthesis of Western and Chinese norms than a mode of painting oblivious to both..."[100] As evidence, Andrews notes that Shi Lu's figural rendering remained awkward throughout his life.[101] The accuracy of this statement in terms of his woodblock prints is undeniably evident in the early work, *Mao Zedong at the Heroes Reception* [Fig. 35]. Instead of elegantly modeling the figures, Shi Lu's contour lines seem to inscribe the figures in an evenly spaced linear pattern that is distinctively carried out throughout his body of work. As a result, the figures appear stylized and strange rather than heroic.

Even though little of Shi Lu's innovation can be attributed to strictly Chinese or Western influences, several of his informal ink sketches resemble Western figurative studies. The attention to musculature and movement, and the emphasis on male torsos, look very much like charcoal or pen-and-ink studies of Western artists. The same attention to anatomy can be found in more strictly socialist realist works of the period. In Shi Lu's sketches, however, the figures appear less heroic than realistic. In a rarely published early work depicting rural commune workers in the mountains [Fig. 36], the style and subject matter are reminiscent of Gustave Courbet's mid-nineteenth century painting, *The Stonebreakers* [Fig. 37], a seminal realist work that depicts unadorned harsh reality. Although not a depiction of the working class, Shi Lu's stonebreakers lack

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[99] Ellen Johnston Laing, *The Winking Owl: Art in the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 22.
[100] Andrews, *Painters*, 237.
[101] Ibid., 286.

glorification and idealized optimism. Labor portrayed by Shi Lu is difficult and repetitive.

The sketches of Zhao and Shi have obvious Western influences in their use of perspective and handling of material. As noted earlier, Egypt in the 1950s was a changing place. Zhao's and Shi's depictions of Egypt, by contrast, were removed from historical specificity. The works' nostalgia for the past and yearning for exoticism, in eliminating all signs of modernity, gave the works a romanticized quality.[102]

The vaguely Western elements of Shi's and Zhao's work cannot be easily traced in terms of direct exposure but even during periods of relative isolation, the modern Chinese art world was not completely oblivious to art from the outside. A visual inventory of *Meishu* shows the regular inclusion of Western art throughout the 1950s and 1960s. This source, though not the only one available to artists, as art academy textbooks were also widely available, is a good indicator of the type of exposure artists had at the time.

In term of He Haixia, the appearance of Western influences would not be readily apparent until his later works. During the active days of the Xi'an School, He's paintings remained traditional in brushwork. The most significantly Western element of He's work was his use of vibrant color. Instead of guiding Zhao and Shi toward innovation, He served the school through his expertise in traditional techniques. His knowledge of brushwork kept other artists of the *huapai* within the boundaries of *guohua*.

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[102] Briskly rendered travel sketches are more rooted in Western tradition than Chinese tradition. Since the seventeenth century, the popularity of traveling the itinerary of the Grand Tour has led to the practice of travel sketches. Some of the most notable travel paintings were produced by nineteenth-century French artist Eugene Delacroix during his travels to Spain and North Africa.

6.2 Changing Styles

Given political reign to reinvigorate *guohua*, Xi'an artists developed their works according to personal interpretation. Zhao Wangyun's work transformed from decade to decade with the influence of other artists in Xi'an. His 1940s paintings are rather linear with light color washes [Fig. 38]. Although figures are smaller than they are in later work, their landscape environments are equally barren. In terms of mood and character, the landscape and their inhabitants were quite similar in their placidity and modesty. The works almost appear documentary in their approach to the lack of glorification of any particular aspect. It was only in the 1950s that Zhao began to imbue landscape with vitality in distinction from human subjects. Exemplarily portrayed in his 1956 Egypt works, landscape and elements of nature played a bigger role than earlier works even though the human elements have also enlarged in scale. Zhao's portrayal of palm trees and grain stalks are livelier and more dynamically placed in composition and in scale [Fig. 39]. Moreover, the men and women that inhabit these environments are depicted in direct engagement with the land. In one work, a family relaxes on a park bench underneath a canopy of trees [Fig. 40]. In another work, sheep herders similarly take a break from their work underneath the protection of palm trees. These works show the artist's exuberance for the exotic locale but also suggest the importance of the land to humans as they coexist harmoniously with it. Stylistically, more attention is given to the specificity of location though the portrayal of the multi-textured landscape. The heightened dynamism of landscape depiction carried over to Zhao's work in China.

Shi Lu's works prior to the 1950s are almost exclusively prints. Works such as *Argument* [Fig. 41] and *Mao Zedong at the Heroes Reception* [Fig. 35] are indicative of

Shi's woodblock print style. They are composed with multiple figures that are gesturing theatrically, a characteristic likely influenced by Shi's background in Yan'an theater. Shi's transition to painting seems directly linked to his move to Xi'an. Although Shi undoubted painted before 1950, works do not seem to have survived. His paintings in the early 1950s show the influence of printmaking in their heavy handling of ink and group-focused compositions. A comparison of Shi Lu's 1952 painting *Happy Marriage* [Fig. 42] and his 1947 woodblock print *People's Criticism* [Fig. 43] shows similarities in composition. Despite a dramatic difference in their subject matter, both works are composed by a large group of villagers framed by the courtyard wall with heavily-weighted lower-right corners.

Shi Lu's paintings dramatically matured in the mid- to late 1950s with important works such as *Fighting in Northern Shaanxi*. From this point on, Shi Lu shed the confined spaces and saturated colors of his prints and earlier paintings. Instead, his compositions embrace wide-open landscapes, as in the case of *Beyond the Great Wall* and *Moving the Mountain*. Despite their unusual subject matter, these works are still highly conventional in their pictorial conception. Both paintings render their subjects realistically and clearly, the viewer understands every visual element. By the 1960s, however, Shi Lu's work became increasingly abstract and experimental. Paintings such as *Yan River Bank* [Fig. 34] and *After the Rain* [Fig. 44], both done in 1961, shed clear political narrative for more impressionistic portrayals of nature. Elements of nature, such as rain and river, which are usually secondary to human figures, are emphasized instead as visual patterns. The finished results look as though Shi's vision and brush bypassed

the process of artistic convention. Shi Lu's increasingly experimental approach can be at least partially attributed to political support from the central government.

During the most successful period of creativity for the *Chang'an huapai* during which they had the full support of the government, artists of the school worked communally to produce surprising results. Two nearly identical paintings by He Haixia and Shi Lu, both depicting the Yumen Gorge [Figs. 45, 46], show not only compositional experimentation but also communal efforts characteristic of Xi'an artists.[103] He's work was completed before Shi's, thereby showing an example of his subtle influence on the school. The practice of innovation through communal experimentation was not unique to Xi'an artists but also practiced by other regional art schools such as the Nanjing painters. Unlike the Jiangsu artists, however, Xi'an painters rarely made joint works. Artists may have painted similar subjects and compositions but until the Cultural Revolution were usually the sole creators of works.

6.3 Theory

In his examination of the formation of the *Chang'an huapai*, Liang Xinzhe places great emphasis on the aspect of tradition in the creative output of the school. He surmises several reasons for Zhao's and Shi's commitment to the reinvention of *guohua*: years of experience and experimentation, trips abroad to India and Egypt, the influence of Stalinist theories, and research on Chinese traditional culture.[104]

Great emphasis is given to the influence of Zhao and Shi's trips abroad. Notably, Shi Lu concluded from his trips that traditional Chinese culture ought to also include

[103] Andrews, *Painters*, 292-93.
[104] Liang, 15.

Buddhist art. Liang argues that it is from this context that Shi coined the phrase, "yi shou shenxiang chuantong, yi shou shenxiang shenghuo (一手伸向传统，一手伸向生活 One hand extended toward tradition, one hand extended toward life)." This quote reoccurs in Liang's argument that Chinese tradition served as the foundation for the Xi'an artists' innovations.

In analyzing the theoretical foundations for the Xi'an School, it is important to examine the terminology of "tradition," a relatively vague term that begs to be defined. As summarized by Liang, tradition to Shi Lu was not specific to any particular era but derived from the totality of Chinese painting's basic patterns.[105] This assessment of Shi Lu's view on tradition can be accurately used to describe works throughout his life. On the most basic level, his adopted name is a combination of two historical figures from vastly different times in Chinese history. In terms of his paintings, they never reveal close resemblance to any particular master artist or style but rather offer only faint resemblance, often intangible. Moreover, Shi Lu's broad definition of "tradition" took another turn much later in life when the names and identities of personalities from Chinese tradition and Western tradition blended in no apparent order.[106]

6.4 New Girl

Throughout the discussion of the above three artists, the aspect of figural relationship to landscape has been important. A close examination of specific works reveals a notable reinvention of a traditional figural motif. Evident in at least a dozen

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[105] Ibid., 16.
[106] Examples can be found in Shi Dan, *Shi Lu (Zhongguo minghuajia quanji)* (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2003).

works, images of little girls and young women viewed from behind were ubiquitously depicted by Shi [Figs. 34, 44, 47, 48] and more limitedly by He [Fig. 27] and Zhao [Fig. 16]. The innocent, hardworking yet modest young woman acquired the status of folk hero in Communist art and literature. In a work like *After the Rain* [Fig. 44], the young girls arguably hold the same compositional importance as the contemplating scholar in literati painting. Instead of a distinguished gentleman, the figure favored by Xi'an *guohua* artists is a young woman of modest means and rarely depicted in moments of idleness. She is always industriously at work, selflessly contributing to the good of her community. Her back often faces the viewer because she is oblivious to the attention. Despite not knowing her specific identity, the viewer immediately recognizes her long country braids and brightly-colored cotton coats.

At this juncture, romantic portrayals of simple country life were acceptable. It can even be suggested that they never ceased to be acceptable within the realm of Chinese art to counterbalance images of industrialization. Moreover, peasant girls are a subcategory of peasants, which is one of the three acceptable figural archetypes deemed by the Yan'an Talks, along with workers and soldiers.

It should be noted from earlier discussion that criticism of Shi Lu and the Xi'an School targeted style rather than subject matter. Topics such as landscape, particularly with some revolutionary significance, were "safe terrain" for artists. Portrayals of Yan'an were rarely questioned for their devotion to the revolutionary cause. Unlike oil painters who used their medium to depict historical figures and figures with specific identities such as soldiers and soldiers, ink painting served another purpose in the portrayal of figures. The frequent use of human figures, although on smaller scale than

their oil painting comparisons, should be examined in context of the new use of landscape in nationalistic terms. The country girl in the red frock is the counterpart to the androgynous liberated women that will rescue and protect her. She may be compared to the heroines in revolutionary dramas such as Xi'er and Qinghua in *The White-Haired Girl* (白毛女 *Bai mao nü*) and the *Red Detachment of Women* (红色娘子军 *Hongse niangzijun*), two country girls whose dignities were preserved by the Red Army.

CHAPTER 7

LEGACY

From the late 1970s into the 1980s, Xi'an was well-placed in China's art world. Even though artists of a new generation may not have been directly influenced by the *Chang'an huapai*, the visual precedent set by Shi, Zhao, and He had been embedded in the consciousness of Chinese art. Much like early twentieth-century experimentations that fused Chinese and Western modernist styles, the works of the Xi'an artists further advanced the possibilities of the ink medium in bridging traditional Chinese lyricism and Western abstraction.

7.1 Later Artists

The most direct artistic legacy left by the *Chang'an huapai* are the works of artists like Jia Youfu (贾又福 b. 1942) and Chen Ping (陈平 b. 1960). Jia is a native of Hebei and a pupil of Li Keran. As seen in works such as *Taihang Mountains* [Fig. 49], he treats the geography of the Loess Plateau in a manner similar to that of the Xi'an artists. This particular painting commemorates the artist's fifteenth expedition to the area. The depicted mountain range was the battle site for the Eighth Route Army during the Anti-Japanese War. Andrews argues that Jia would have been aware of the work of Shi

Lu and the Xi'an School.[107] His work shares with theirs dramatic composition, busy surface covered with heavy ink and dark, saturated colors.

Another artist undoubted influenced by the Xi'an School was Chen Ping who similarly portrays the style and subject matter of the Xi'an School in his rough brushwork renditions of powerful, northern landscape [Fig. 50].[108]

It should be noted that although artists like Jia and Chen visually assumed the legacy of the *Chang'an huapai*, their artistic intentions are more visually and conceptually significant than ideologically. Changes in context have altered the role of landscape paintings. In post-Maoist China, issues such as regional character and communal work experience were no longer accompanied by the same fervor and conviction. Instead, artists were more interested in setting themselves apart by combining previously established vocabulary with their own interests and needs.

7.2 *Xin Wenrenhua*

The term *Xin wenrenhua* (新文人画) or new literati painting was first used to describe Shi Lu's 1979 Nanjing solo exhibition. It has gained wide usage since then to describe the works of contemporary ink painters working in innovative, international styles.[109] The term was derived from two late twentieth century terms, *hou wenrenhua* (后文人画 post-literati painting) and *xianjin wenrenhua* (现今文人画 new, progressive literati painting), to describe the works of artists like Wu Changshuo (吴昌硕 1844-1927)

[107] Andrews and Shen, 284-85.
[108] Ibid., 285.
[109] Sullivan, *Art and Artists*, 254.

and Qi Baishi (齐白石 1864-1957).[110] The attempt by post-Maoist art theory to link Shi Lu to Republican era artists demonstrates not only the rectification of Shi Lu's status as a valued ink painter but also the continuity of artistic development throughout the twentieth century. The continued use of the term *xin wenrenhua* to describe the works of a new generation elevates Shi Lu a continued icon of artistic autonomy for Chinese ink painters that no longer have to answer to strict stylistic and political restraints.

7.3 Film

In the 1980s, almost two decades after the decline of Xi'an *guohua*, the visual and thematic innovations of the *Chang'an huapai* were carried on in another medium. Filmmakers of the Xi'an Film Academy such as the notable Fifth Generation directors Zhang Yimou (张艺谋 1951-) and Chen Kaige (陈凯歌 1952-) created an international splash in the 1980s for their unique narrative and visual styles. They inherited the Xi'an painters' interest in rural landscape and people and use many of the same visual traits as Xi'an ink painters of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Films such as *Yellow Earth* (黄土地 *Huang tudi*) (1984) [Fig. 51] and *Red Sorghum* (红高粱 *Hong gaoliang*) (1987) [Fig. 52] share with paintings of Zhao and Shi blunt romanticized depictions of the arid northern landscape, saturated reddish-brown hues, and the frankness of depicted rural culture.

[110] Ibid., 253.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

In his brief discussion of Shaanxi artists in *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China*, Michael Sullivan writes,

> Chinese critics have spoken of a distinct Shaanxi School of landscape painting based at the Xi'an Academy, citing as typical examples Zhao Wangyun, Fang Jizhong, and Shi Lu. But the Xi'an tradition—of landscape painting at any rate—died with the Tang Dynasty, and although Zhao Wangyun paints northern landscapes with a feeling for the peasant life he knows so well, his style has no regional character.[111]

By dismissing any stylistic particularities in the works of Xi'an *guohua* artists Sullivan dismisses the existence of the *Chang'an huapai* despite documentations of its phenomenon in the Chinese art world. The above examination has shown through specific artwork and documents that Xi'an artists achieved stylistic and thematic innovations that well-positioned the school on the national level in the context of a politically-motivated revival of *guohua* and regional arts. Despite its brief existence, regional *guohua* schools such as the *Chang'an huapai* aided the art of China to transition from its well-developed traditional ink medium to the beginning of its full integration of Western oil painting.

Rejecting Sullivan's model, which treats the work of individual Xi'an artists in isolation from one another, the above examination traces the development of three main

[111] Ibid., 250.

artists as a group phenomenon. Their culminated artistic efforts served as a liaison between tradition and modernity. From every step of their artistic development, Shi Lu, Zhao Wangyun and He Haixia assumed leadership in different capacities to the livelihood of the school. Although Shi Lu arguably created the most visually innovative and appealing works, his personal development cannot be divorced from the influence of his peers and the context of the bureaucratic art world.

It is evident in the diverse styles of the three artists in the examination that a great deal of variation existed among the Xi'an artists and even within their own works. The importance of the group, therefore, rests on how they interpreted the needs of the state to fit their personal interests given the political context in which they were allowed develop, thrive, and eventually falter. Due to the overwhelming domination of socialist realist oil painting from the mid-1960s to the end of the Cultural Revolution, it is easy to overlook the works of the Xi'an School and other *guohua* movements due to their short existence and seemingly isolated influence. Given limitations of time and resources, this paper only begins to uncover the extent of the *Chang'an huapai*'s influence.

APPENDIX

FIGURES

Figure 1. Shi Lu. *Moving the Mountain*. 1954.

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Figure 2. Picture of *People's Daily* (October 15, 1961) with the headline, "New Works from Chang'an."

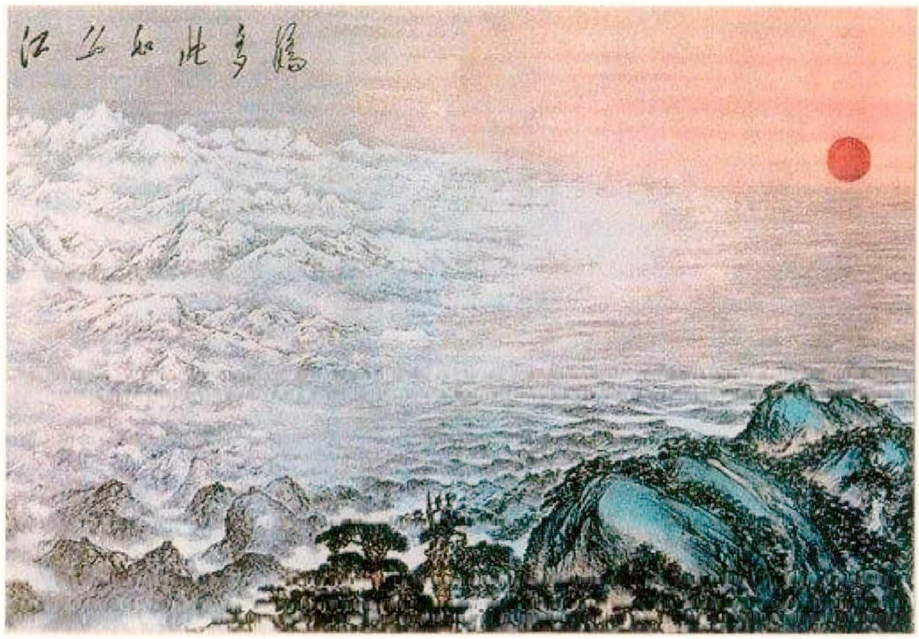

Figure 3. Fu Baoshi and Guan Shanyue. *This Land So Rich in Beauty*. 1958.

Figure 4. Shi Lu. *Watering Horses at Yan River*. 1959.

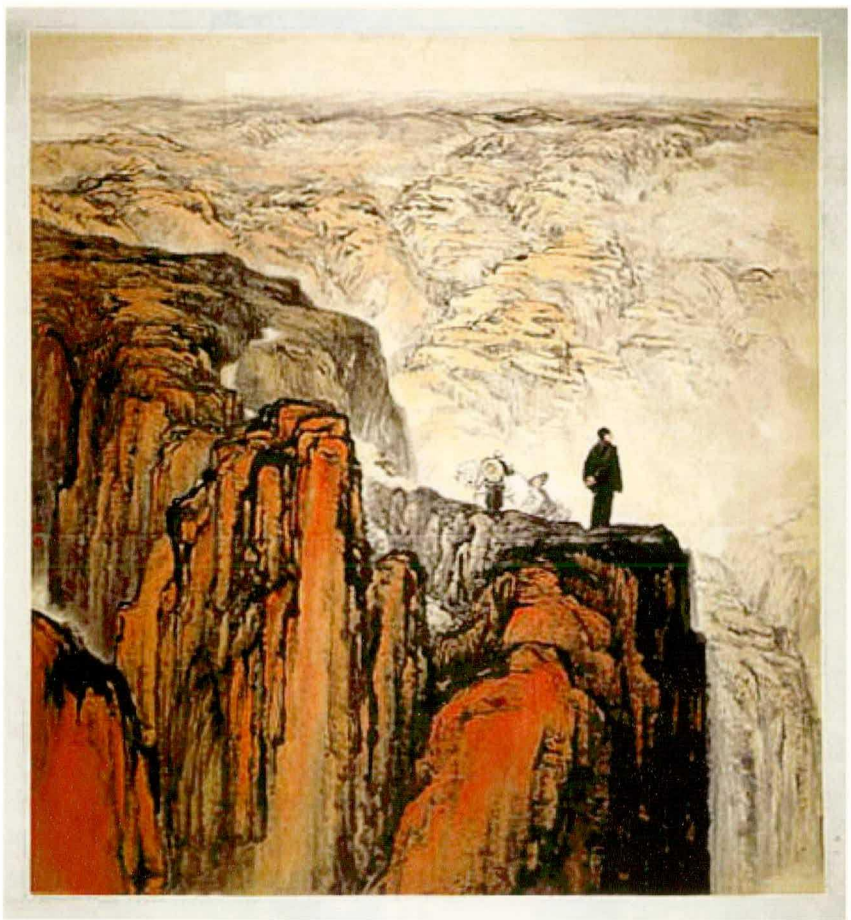

Figure 5. Shi Lu. *Fighting in Northern Shaanxi*. 1959.

Figure 6. Shi Lu. *Beyond the Great Wall*. 1954.

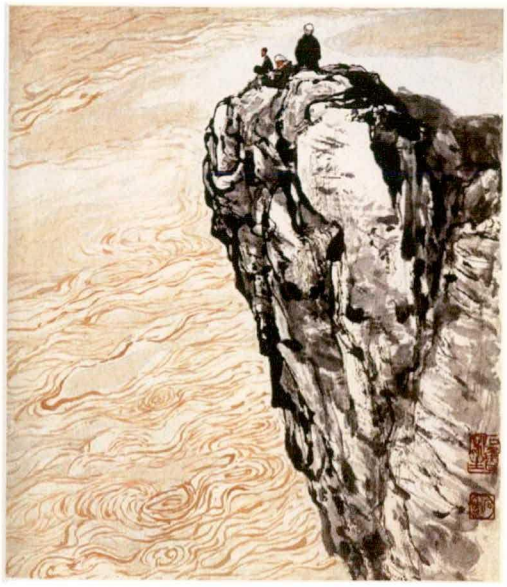

Figure 7. Shi Lu. 1959. *View into the Distance*. 1959.

Figure 8. Luo Gongliu. *Mao Zedong at Jinggang Mountain*. 1961.

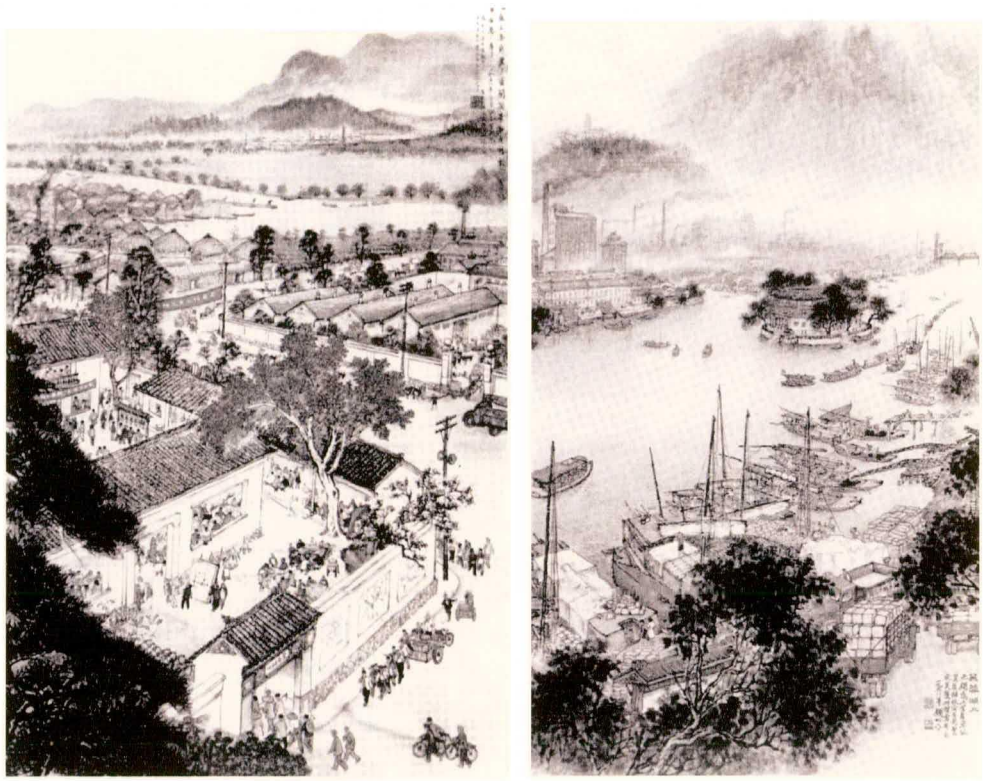

Figure 9. [L] Collective painting. *People's Commune Dining Hall.* 1958.

Figure 10. [R] Qian Songyan. *On Furong Lake.* 1958.

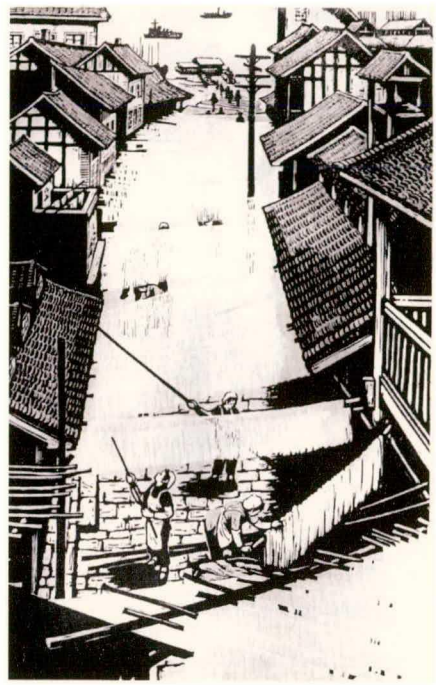

Figure 11. Li Shaoyan. *Old Street, New Look.* 1958.

Figure 12. Li Huanmin. *Golden Road.* 1963.

Figure 13. Images from *Zhao Wangyun Studies of the Countryside.*

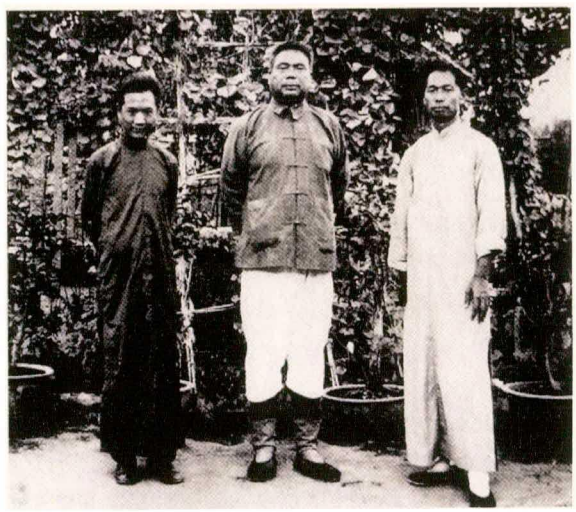

Figure 14. Picture of Feng Yuxiang (middle) and Zhao Wangyun (right).

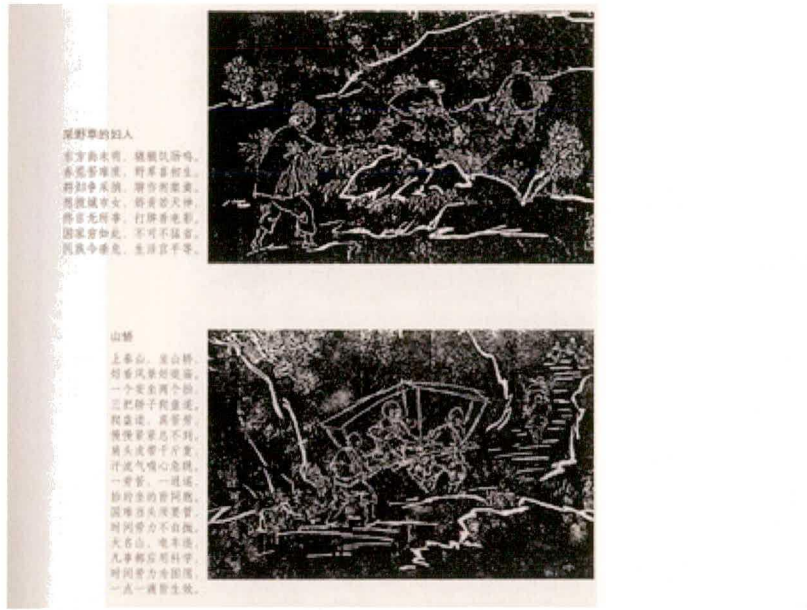

Figure 15. Images from Zhao Wangyun and Feng Yuxiang, *Taishan Society Studies and Poetry Carvings.*

Figure 16. Zhao Wangyun. *Spring in the Plains*. 1959.

Figure 17. [L] Zhao Wangyun. *Northern Mountain Village*. 1960.

Figure 18. [R] Zhao Wangyun. *Late Autumn*. 1962.

Figure 19. Picture of Shi Lu (second from left) and Zhao Wangyun (far right) in Egypt in 1956.

Figure 20. Zhao Wangyun. *Grazing in the Fields*. 1956.

Figure 21. Zhao Wangyun. *Distant View of the Pyramids*. 1956.

Figure 22. Shi Lu. *Boat of the Desert*. 1956.

Figure 23. Shi Lu. *On the Nile*. 1956.

Figure 24. Shi Lu. *Sentry on the Mountain*. 1950.

Figure 25. Shi Lu. *Egyptian*. 1956.

Figure 26. He Haixia. *Misty Rain on the Western Slope*. 1956.

Figure 27. He Haixia. *Spring in the Meadows*. 1959.

Figure 28. He Haixia. *Lotus*. 1994.

Figure 29. He Haixia. *Love our Rivers and Mountains*. 1983.

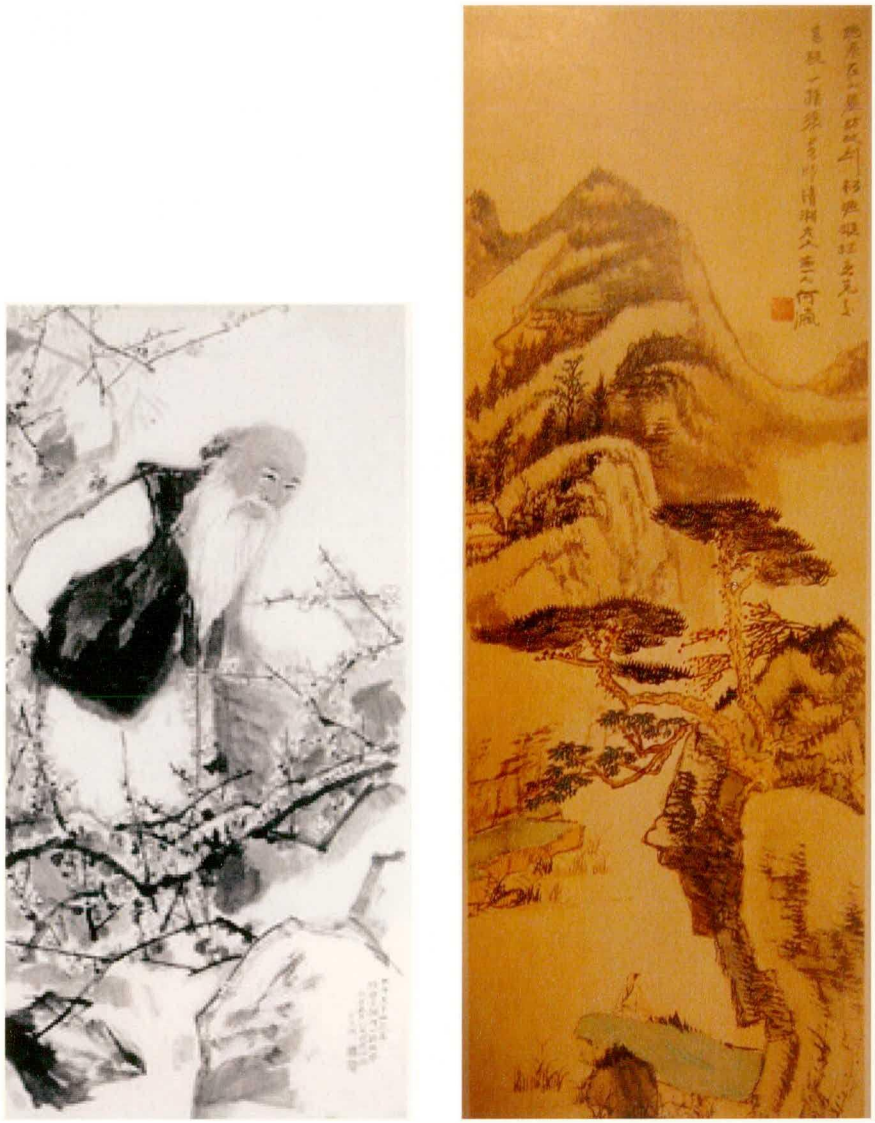

Figure 30. [L] He Haixia. *Dream of Plum Blossoms*. 1996.

Figure 31. [R] He Haixia. *Listening to Streams at the Foot of a Mountain*. 1940.

Figure 32. He Haixia. *Taming the Yellow River*. 1959.

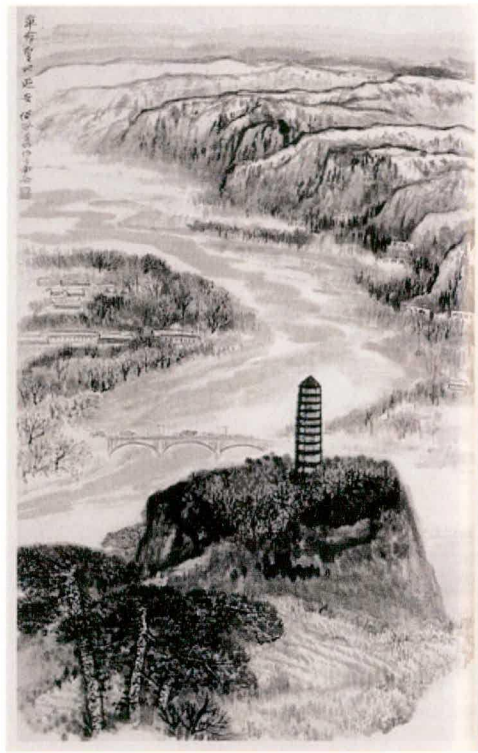

Figure 33. He Haixia. *Revolutionary Holy Place, Yan'an*. 1976.

Figure 34. Shi Lu. *Yan River Bank*. 1961.

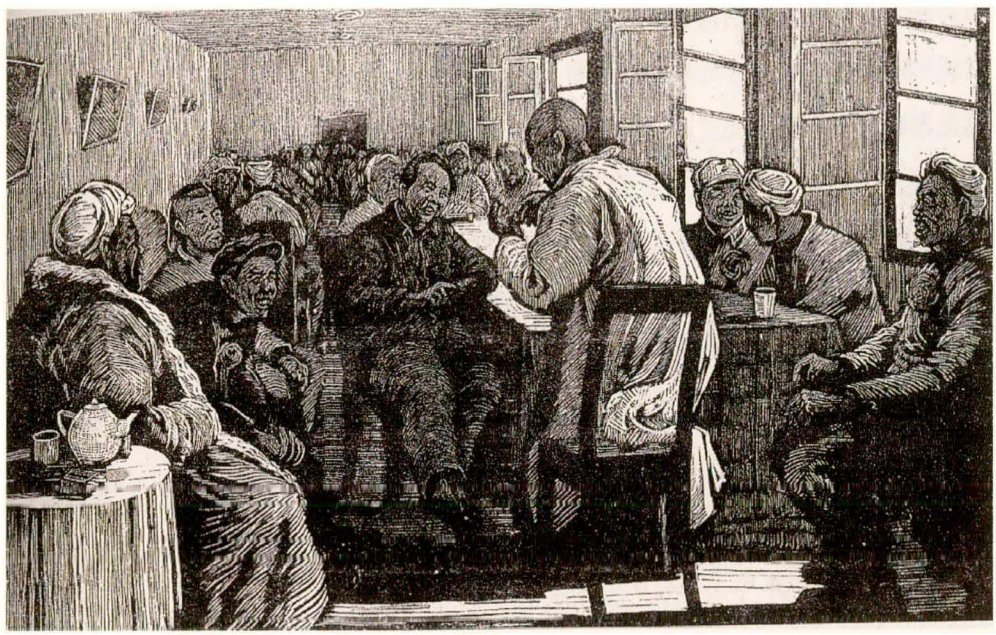

Figure 35. Shi Lu. *Mao Zedong at the Heroes Reception*. 1946.

Figure 36. Shi Lu. *Commune Workers*. 1950.

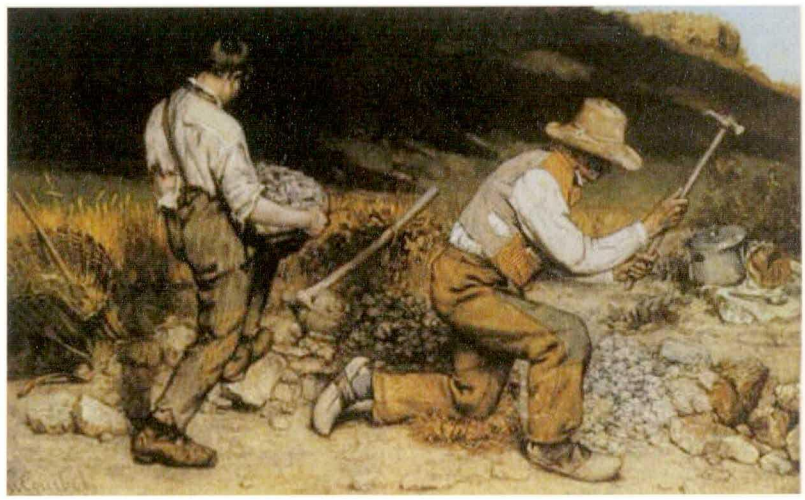

Figure 37. Gustave Courbet. *The Stonebreakers*. 1849.

Figure 38. [L] Zhao Wangyun. *Traveling on the Ancient Road*. 1944.

Figure 39. [L] Zhao Wangyun. *Sugar Cane Harvest*. 1956.

Figure 40. Zhao Wangyun. *Shade Underneath the Fig Tree*. 1956.

Figure 41. Shi Lu. *Argument*. 1949.

Figure 42. Shi Lu. *Happy Marriage*. 1952.

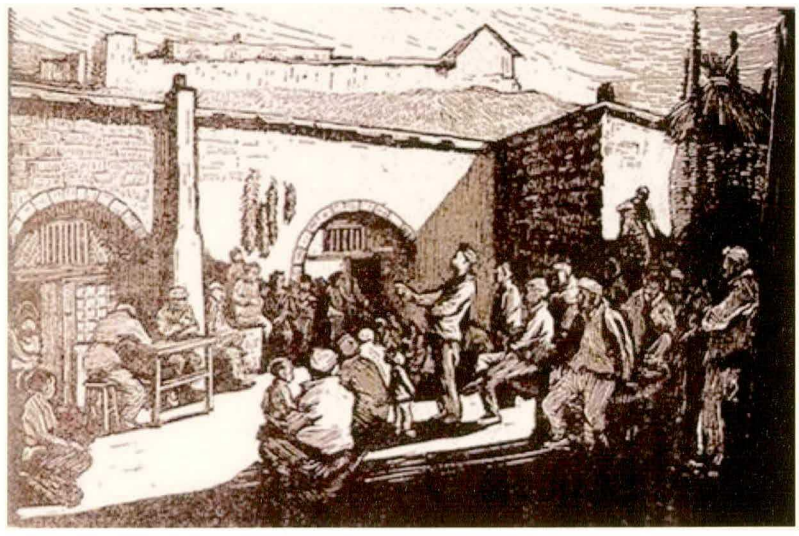

Figure 43. Shi Lu. *People's Criticism*. 1947.

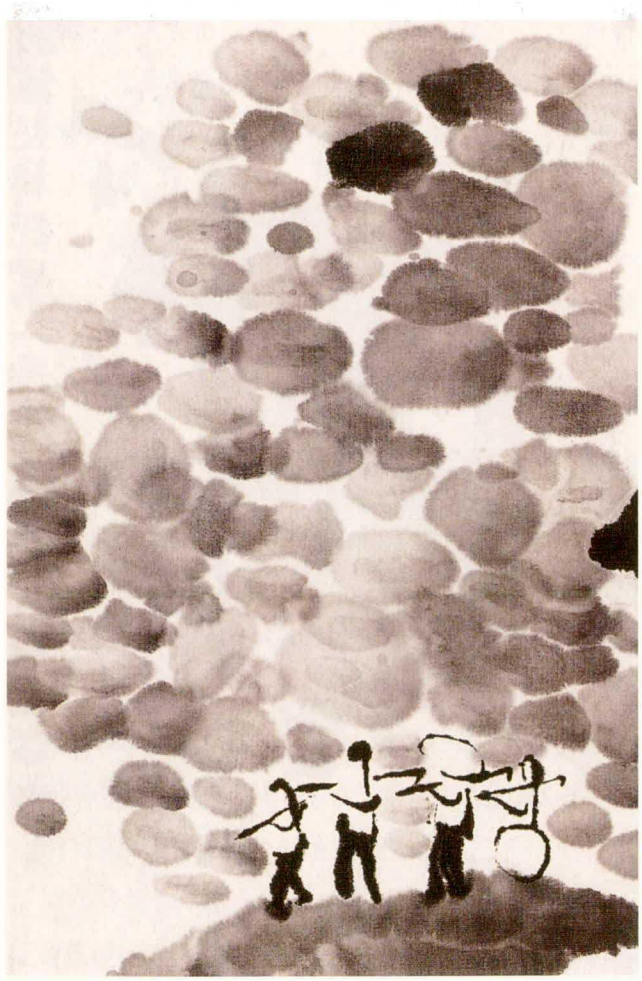

Figure 44. Shi Lu. *After the Rain*. 1961.

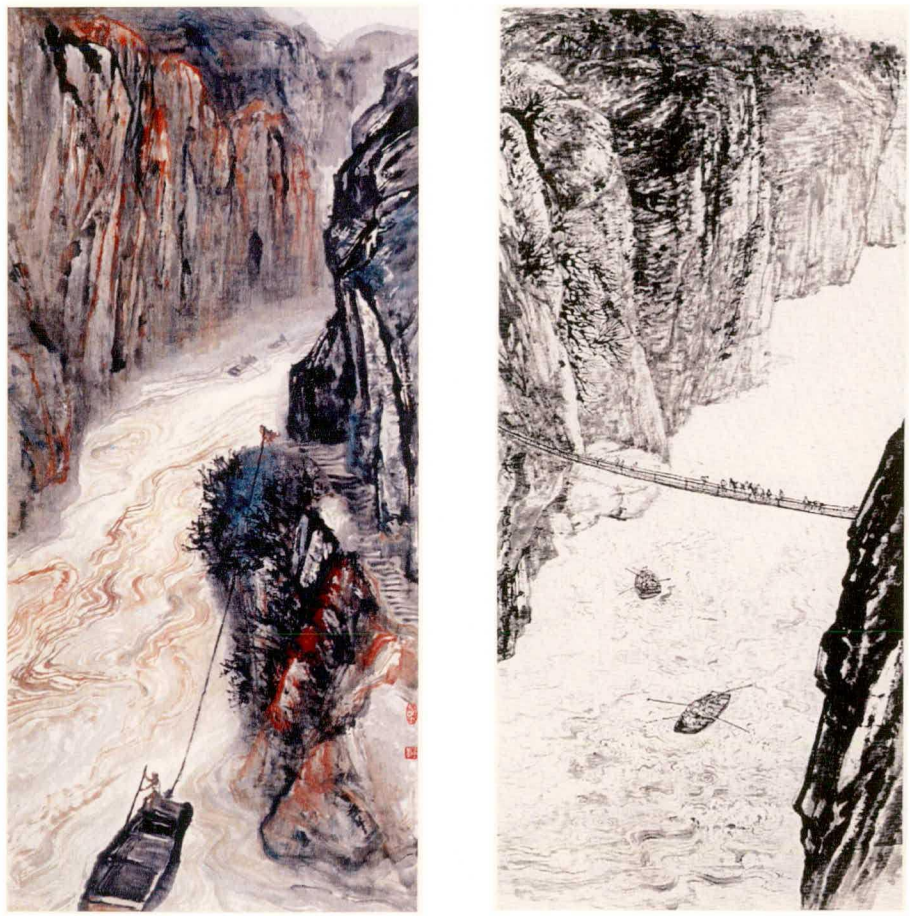

Figure 45. [L] Shi Lu. *Going Upstream at Yumen Gorge*. 1961.

Figure 46. [R] He Haixia. *Yumen Gorge on the Yellow River*. 1959.

Figure 47. [L] Shi Lu. *View in the Rain*. 1963.

Figure 48. [R] Shi Lu. *Girl Hoeing the Field.* 1963.

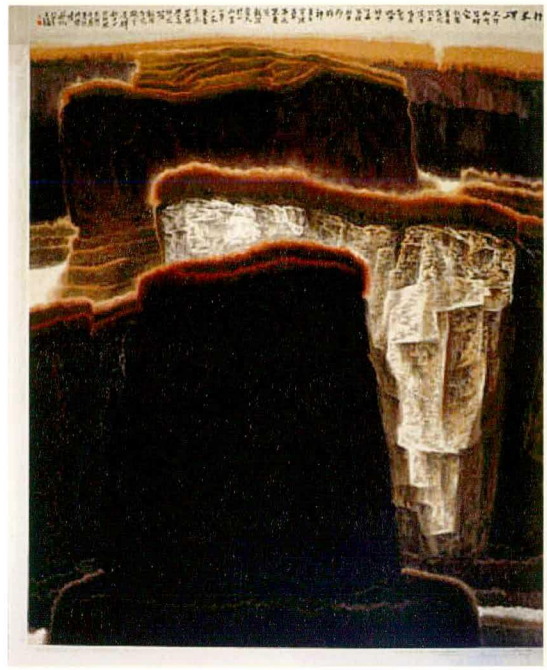

Figure 49. Jia Youfu. *The Taihang Mountains*. 1984.

Figure 50. Chen Ping. *The Countryside*. 1983.

Figure 51. Film still from *Yellow Earth*. 1984. Directed by Chen Kaige.

Figure 52. Film still from *Red Sorghum*. 1987. Directed by Zhang Yimou.

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