



Drawing by Willis Barnstone

The Poems of Mao Tse-tung

Translation, Introduction, Notes by
WILLIS BARNSTONE

In Collaboration with
KO CHING-PO



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Ching kang Mountain

Low on the mountain our flags and banners
and on the peak an echo of bugles and drums.
Around us a thousand circles of enemy armies
yet we are rock.

No one cracks through our forest of walls,
through our fortress of wills joined
as one.

From the front lines at Huangyang the big guns roar
saying the enemy army fled in the night.

Fall 1928

山下旌旗在望，山頭鼓角相聞。敵軍
圍困萬千重，我自巋然不動。早已
森嚴壁壘，更加衆志成城。黃洋界上
礮聲隆，報道敵軍宵遁。

西江月

井岡山

一九二八年秋

Snow

The scene is the north lands.
Thousands of li sealed in ice,
ten thousand li in blowing snow.
From the Long Wall I gaze inside and beyond
and see only vast tundra.
Up and down the Yellow River
the gurgling water is frozen.
Mountains dance like silver snakes,
hills gallop like wax bright elephants
trying to climb over the sky.
On days of sunlight
the planet teases us in her white dress and
rouge.

沁園春

雪

一九三六年二月

北國風光，千里冰封，萬里雪飄。望長
城內外，惟餘莽莽；大河上下，頓失滄
滔。山舞銀蛇，原馳蠟象，原指高原，即
秦晉高原。欲與
天公試比高。須晴日，看紅裝素裹，分
外妖嬈。江山如此多嬌，引無數英

雄競折腰。惜秦皇漢武，略輸文采；唐
宗宋祖，稍遜風騷。一代天驕，成吉思
汗，只識彎弓射大雕。俱往矣，數風流
人物，還看今朝。

Rivers and mountains are beautiful
and made heroes bow and compete to catch the girl—
lovely earth.

Yet the emperors Shih Huang and Wu Ti
were barely able to write.

The first emperors of the Tang and Sung dynasties
were crude.

Genghis Khan, man of his epoch
and favored by heaven,
knew only how to hunt the great eagle.
They are all gone.

Only today are we men of feeling.

February 1936 or August 1945

Capture of Nanking

Rain and a windstorm rage blue and yellow over Chung
the bell mountain
as a million peerless troops cross the Great River.
The peak is a coiled dragon, the city a crouching tiger
more dazzling than before.
The sky is spinning and the earth upside down.
We are elated
yet we must use our courage to chase the hopeless enemy.
We must not stoop to fame like the overlord Hsiang Yu.
If heaven has feeling it will grow old
and watch
our seas turn into mulberry fields.

April 1949

七律

人民解放軍佔領南京 一九四九年四月

鍾山風雨起蒼黃，百萬雄師過大江。
虎踞龍盤今勝昔，天翻地覆慨而慷。
宜將剩勇追窮寇，不可沽名學霸王。
天若有情天亦老，人間正道是滄桑。

were known as the *Pu Sa Man*. They wore gold headgear in their tall coiffures and had many strings of pearls around their necks.

Chingkang Mountain

TITLE An immense mountain in the Lo Hsiao range between Kiangsi and eastern Hunan provinces. In September 1927 Mao Tse-tung led the Red Army here and established his first revolutionary base. He was joined in April 1928 by his principal general, Chu Teh.

a thousand circles of enemy armies Kuomintang troops attacked this base repeatedly in 1927 and 1928. The KMT Army was several times larger than the Red Army.

Huangyang Mao's troops blocked all ways to the base except through the district of Huangyang, left open on purpose. There they ambushed the enemy and broke its offensive.

FORM After the *tzu Hsi Chiang Yueh*, meaning "West River Moon." The phrase is from lines of Li Po (701-62): "Now the moon is still over the West River."

Warlords

TITLE The full title is "War between Chiang and the Kwangsi Group." While Chiang Kai-shek was fighting with other military leaders of Kwangsi, Mao and Chu Teh accomplished their plan of setting up a base in north Fukien province. In the same area the Red Army took Shanghang at dawn on September 21, 1929. Lungyen—Dragon Cliff—was taken earlier in the year.

Pillow of Yellow Barley Yellow Barley or Golden Millet. There is a Tang dynasty story of a poor scholar, Lu Sheng, who meets an immortal, Lu Weng, in an inn in Hantan. Lu Sheng complains of his harsh life and the god lends him a pillow, a pillow on which he can sleep and dream of good fortune. He sleeps and all his ambitions appear to come true: honor, wealth, power, marriage to a beautiful girl, and old age. When he wakes up, the innkeeper, a Taoist friend,

is cooking a meal for him of golden millet. But it is not yet cooked. The *Pillow of Yellow Barley* suggests the ambitious dreams of men.

Ting River Ting means "flat" or "calm."

golden vase of China Mao compares China to a golden vase fragmented by the warlords. He mends the vase—that is, he reunites the land—then he gives its meadows away. He is speaking of land reform and land redistribution.

FORM After the *tzu Ching Ping Lo*, meaning "Pure Joy"; perhaps from a poem by Li Po.

Ninth Day of the Ninth Moon

TITLE The ninth day of the ninth moon, by the lunar calendar, is a holiday. On this day the sun and moon are yang—that is, in their male or maximum position. It is a day of celebration, of feasting. It is customary to go up a hill to avoid epidemics, and to visit the graves of ancestors. The ninth day of the ninth moon, or double ninth day, occurred October 11, 1929, after a successful campaign in western Fukien.

FORM After the *tzu Tsai Sang Tzu*, meaning "Song of Picking Mulberries."

New Year's Day

TITLE The poem was written on New Year's Day by the Western solar, not the Chinese lunar, calendar.

Ninghua, Ching, and Kweihua In 1929 Mao and General Chu Teh led the Red Army eastward from Chingkang Mountain to open up new revolutionary bases in western Fukien and southern Kiangsi provinces. Ninghua, Ching, and Kweihua are names of counties in Fukien province.

Wuyi As Mount Hymettus in Greece is famous for its honey, so Wuyi Mountain in China is famous for its tea.

over the sky.' In this way he described the flying snow, but here I have used it to describe snowy mountains. In summer, when one climbs the Min Mountain, one looks out on far mountains that seem to dance and shine in dazzling whiteness. There was a saying among the people that years ago when the Monkey King (Sun Hsing-che) passed by, all the mountains were of fire. But he borrowed a palm-leaf fan and quenched the flame and that is why the mountains froze and turned white."

Mao takes the image of the dragons of white jade from an eleventh-century poet, Chang Yuan, of Huachow.

TITLE Kunlun is a mountain on the upper reaches of the Khotan River in Sinkiang province. The name is also used for the Karakoram range, which runs from Tibet and Sinkiang into central China and includes mountains such as the Minshan in Chinghai. The title can also be translated simply "Kunlunshan"; *shan* means "mountain" or "mountains" and is added to proper nouns; e.g., Minshan or Min Mountain.

fish and turtles In the first year of Chao Kung, praise for Yu's flood-prevention work is recorded in a saying of Liu Ting-kung: "Without Yu, we would have become fish." The Yangtze and Yellow rivers both have their source in the Kunlun mountains, and in summer, when the snow melts, these rivers flood.

FORM After the *tzu Nien Nu Chiao*, meaning "The Girl Nien Nu." Nien Nu was a famous palace singer of the eighth century.

Liupan the Mountain of Six Circles

Poem written during the Long March.

TITLE Liupan is a high mountain southwest of Kuyuan county in southern Kansu. It is so steep that the road to the summit circles around six times. Toward the end of the Long March, in September 1935, the Red Army entered the area; the First Front Army under Mao captured Liupan in October, and advanced into Shensi province.

Long Wall The Great Wall of China in Chinese is the "Long Wall." See Introduction.

long rope In the Han dynasty (206 B.C.—220 A.D.) General Chung Chun asked the emperor Wu Ti for a long cord, with which he pledged to bind and bring back as captive the king of southern Yueh, who led the invading "barbarians." The reference may be to the Japanese, or to any enemy force.

gray dragon The classical Chinese name for a constellation of seven stars in the eastern sky. According to the Peking edition of Mao's poems, *Nineteen Poems of Mao Tse-tung*, the dragon refers to the invading Japanese army, and these last lines may indicate a determination to go north to battle against the Japanese. In Robert Payne's biography of Mao, however, Mao is quoted as saying that he is not referring to Chiang or any one obstacle. "I meant all the evils—the Japanese, the Kuomintang, the terrible social system." Payne writes further (page 233): "Nor should the red flag be taken to mean only the Communist flag, for there is a deliberate confusion between the red flag and the red banner carried by the ancient Chinese generals. Mao delighted in such confusions in the same way that Tang dynasty poets would deliberately write poems about the border warfare of their time, while pretending to be writing about wars a thousand years earlier." We see the red banner in such classical poems as that by the Tang dynasty poet Tsen Tsan in which he describes winter preparations for an advance against the Huns: "And the wind fails to move our frozen red flag."

FORM After the *tzu Ching Ping Lo*, meaning "Pure Joy"; perhaps from a poem by Li Po. The same *tzu* form is used in the poem "Huichang."

Snow

DATE There is confusion about the dating of this poem. In at least two editions of Mao's poems, February 1936 is given as the date of composition; and Joachim Schickel supports that date in *Mao Tse-tung: 37 Gedichte* (Munich: DTV, 1967, p. 107). Jerome Ch'ên suggests that the poem was written sometime in the winter of 1944-45, before Mao's August 1945 meeting with Chiang Kai-shek to discuss peace and unity. In Robert Payne's biography Mao is quoted as saying that he wrote the poem in August 1945 while taking his first

trip in a plane, between Yen-an and Chungking, for his meeting with Chiang. In this case, the panorama of Chinese landscape, with dancing-serpent snow mountains and elephant hills, may be thought of as seen from the air. Payne claims that the poem was written in reply to another by Mao's friend Liu Ya-tzu (see two poems by Mao to Liu), and that he gave it to Liu August 28, 1945, at the Chungking airport. In the 1958 English-language edition of *Nineteen Poems*, the annotation states that Liu wrote a poem of his own in the same meter and Mao's poem is a reply. It is Mao's best-known poem.

In a recent edition of Mao's poems (*Annotations of Chairman Mao's Poetry*, Hong Kong: Kunlun Publishing Co., 1968, vol. 2) the editor, Chang Syang, returns to February 1936 as the date of composition: "The poem 'Snow' was written in February, four months after the victorious Long March, just after the Red Army arrived at its base in Yen-an. On a certain day during a snowstorm, Chairman Mao went up a high mountain and took in the distant view. He saw the marvelous scene of a thousand li of flying snow over this whole territory."

Liu's son, Professor Liu Wu-chi of Indiana University, has offered the following information for this edition: "I was in Chungking with my father when Mao Tse-tung visited him at his temporary lodging in the campus of Nankai Middle School. I know that Mao showed my father the poem 'Snow' (probably Mao wrote 'Snow' first and my father's poem was a response), and later, in early September 1945, my father had the poem published in the *Hsin Hua* [*New China Daily*], the only Communist newspaper in Chungking. This was also the first time that one of Mao's poems appeared in a major publication. As for my father's meeting Mao at the airport or sending him off, I was not aware of this at the time."

mountains Note by Mao Tse-tung: "These highlands are those of Shensi and Shansi provinces." Joachim Schickel notes that these provinces would not have been seen by Mao in a plane traveling from Yen-an to Chungking and rejects 1945 as the year of composition in part for this reason.

Shih Huang First emperor of the Chin dynasty, who ruled from 247/6 to 210 B.C. See Note 1 of Introduction.

Wu Ti Emperor of the Han dynasty, who ruled from 140 to 87 B.C. The Chinese text carried the names of these emperors: Tai Tsung of the Tang dynasty, who ruled from 627 to 649; Tai Tsu of the Sung dynasty, who ruled from 960 to 976.

were barely able to write; crude These epithets have been translated in various ways to suggest, in a forceful way, the emperors' lack of polish and literary talent.

Genghis Khan The famous Mongol conqueror, who ruled from 1206 to 1227.

FORM After the *tzu Chin Yuan Chun*, meaning "Spring in the Garden of Chin." See note on *FORM* in "Changsha," page 114.

Capture of Nanking

TITLE The full title of this poem is "The Capture of Nanking by the People's Liberation Army (PLA)." Nanking had been the national capital several times. It was at this time the capital of the Kuomintang government.

Chung Chung or Chungshan (Chung Mountain) lies east of Nanking. Chung means "bell," hence "Chung the bell mountain."

Great River The Yangtze.

The peak is a coiled dragon, the city a crouching tiger Classical writers referred to the city as a crouching tiger and the Chung Mountain as a coiled dragon.

the overlord Hsiang Yu In the third century B.C., during the Chin dynasty, Hsiang Yu, also called Pa Wang, defeated a rival, Liu Pang. Wishing to appear generous, however, he allowed Liu Pang to occupy the western part of the empire. Eventually Liu Pang occupied the whole country and defeated Hsiang Yu, who committed suicide.

If heaven has feeling From a poem by the Tang poet Li Ho in which it is said that heaven, upon seeing a parting, will grow old. In the preface to the same poem, Li Ho writes that in the year 233, the emperor Ming Huang gave orders to move some bronze statues of