

MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Spectres of Otto Braun
The Figure of Li De (Otto Braun) in the Chinese TV Drama “Long
March” (2001), Myth, and the Sinicization of Marxism

verfasst von | submitted by

Nathaniel Geoffrey Thomas

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien | Vienna, 2024

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 805

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium Globalgeschichte und Global Studies

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. i.R. Mag. Dr. Susanne Weigelin-
Schwiedrzik

In memory of Judith Plocher Kaaua (1946-2017)

Contents

1	Introduction	9
1.1	Research question and thesis	12
1.2	Structure	15
1.2.1	Chapter 1	15
1.2.2	Chapter 2	15
1.2.3	Chapter 3	16
1.2.4	Chapter 4	17
1.2.5	Chapter 5	17
1.3	“A Manifesto”: A brief introduction to the Long March and its myth	18
1.4	“The seeding-machine”: The TV series itself and TV production in China . . .	19
2	Historical Background	23
2.1	Otto Braun’s identity and role in China	24
2.1.1	Before China	25
2.1.2	Who sent him to China?	28
2.1.3	Role in the Soviet	31
2.2	Historical background for the narrative of <i>Long March</i> (2001)	33
2.2.1	Soviet and Comintern advisors	33
2.2.2	The defeat of 1927 and Communist base areas	34
2.2.3	The encirclement campaigns	35
2.2.4	Did the “bloody battle of Xiang River” happen?	36
2.3	Otto Braun deployed in the Sino-Soviet Split	37
3	Theoretical concepts	40
3.1	Introduction	40
3.2	Myth and the Long March	41
3.2.1	The meanings of myth	41
3.2.2	Political myth, or myth used politically	42
3.2.3	“Political Myth” in the PRC and the Long March	43

Contents

3.2.4	Comparative analysis: The Long March and the Exodus	45
3.2.4.1	Significance as foundational myths	48
3.2.4.2	A “journey to the west of China”, China’s interior and imperial periphery	50
3.2.5	Viewing the multilayered nature of Long March accounts through the lens of the Documentary Hypothesis	52
3.2.5.1	Description of the Documentary Hypothesis	52
3.2.5.2	Application to Long March historiography	53
3.2.5.3	Further considerations on the Exodus parallel and source superscription	58
3.3	The Sinicization of Marxism	59
3.3.1	Buddhism in China as an example of Sinicization	63
3.4	The Long March myth as realized in the 2001 <i>Long March</i> TV series, “Main Melody” and a composer turned screenwriter	65
4	2001’s <i>Long March</i> 《长征》	68
4.1	Plot summary	69
4.1.1	Screenwriter Wang Chaozhu’s symphonic division of the Long March into movements	72
4.2	History and background of production	73
4.2.1	Earlier Long March productions in film and TV	75
4.3	Case studies of specific themes in Long March: Analyses of key scenes	76
4.3.1	Bolshevik leather: Li De’s arc of dominance and reconciliation	77
4.3.1.1	The deleted scene: Li De and his assigned conjugal partner, Xiao Yuehua	81
4.3.2	Hybrid faiths and convictions on the path to Sinicization	83
4.3.3	Hierarchical Authority: Powers of life and death in temple, ancestral hall and party	84
4.3.4	Indigeneity and the Foreign: The discourse on the orange	88
4.3.5	Missionaries of the Internationale	90
4.3.6	A Core Foreign Import into China: Mao discourses with the Lama, a Living Buddha	94
5	Conclusion	101
5.1	Myth in a Time of Spiritual Crisis	102

Contents

5.2	Superscription and the Documentary Hypothesis, or the Impossibility of Escaping Mao	104
5.3	Xi Jinping's "two integrations" against the idea of Marxism as simply one more belief	105

List of Figures

1.1	Actors who have played Otto Braun as of 2020, some in multiple productions, in chronological order.	13
3.1	“Diagram of the 20th century documentary hypothesis: J: Yahwist (10th–9th century BCE), E: Elohist (9th century BCE), Dtr1: early (7th century BCE), Deuteronomist historian Dtr2: later (6th century BCE), Deuteronomist historian, P*: Priestly (6th–5th century BCE), D†: Deuteronomist, R: redactor, DH: Deuteronomistic history (books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings)” (Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Modern_document_hypothesis.svg)	52
4.1	Li De appearing as the first close-up after the black and white historical montage (of scenes shot for the series) opening the first episode (01:33).	77
4.2	Li De points at the map for the Central Committee meeting (ep. 01, 02:01).	78
4.3	Li De has his hand on his pistol and is only stopped by Mao coming in. (ep. 06, 23:25).	79
4.4	Mao tries Li De’s pipe tobacco (ep. 15, 02:43).	80
4.5	Mao and Zhou Enlai are able to convince Li De to wear straw sandals for a time (ep. 15, 03:51).	81
4.6	Li De tries to pull Xiao Yuehua away from Zhou Enlai, with whom she has sought protection. In a moment, Mao will emerge from the background to chastise Li De (deleted scene from episode 8).	82
4.7	Cigarettes, a map, Qu Yuan’s poem and a copy of <i>Anti-Dühring</i> placed face-down to keep its place. The camera will pan to Mao, smoking a cigarette and reading a newspaper (Ep. 1, 04:28).	83
4.8	A Catholic church in the hinterlands provokes thoughts about “belief” 信仰 and religion 宗教 and what distinguishes the two concepts (Ep. 19, 26:48).	91

List of Figures

4.9	The scene of everyone in the leadership (minus Li De) joining arms to sing the Internationale and cross the deadly grasslands in a storm, as it appears behind the title in every episode.	93
4.10	Mao meets with a Tibetan lama (ep. 21, 20:49).	94

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, for her patient and expert guidance during this longer than expected master's thesis journey.

I have so many people to thank, but I would particularly like to acknowledge Daniel Gombos, Sebestyén Hompot, Frank Haokai Jian, Gang Pan, Birgit Schlager, Susan Thomas, Jiayi Zhou, and the participants in Prof. Weigelin-Schwiedrzik's graduate colloquium for their help during times when completing this thesis seemed beyond me.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation for the circumstances that conspired to place me in a Beijing hotel room in 2002 watching Chinese TV for the first time and encountering snatches of 2001's 《长征》 *Long March*. Those long-dormant seeds would grow into this study.

1 Introduction

Speaking of the Long March, one may ask, “What is its significance?” We answer that the Long March is the first of its kind in the annals of history, that it is a manifesto, a propaganda force, a seeding-machine.

—Mao Zedong (December 27, 1935)

These words, originally included in a report at a conference in Wayaobu titled in the *Selected Works* “On Tactics against Japanese Imperialism,” are the concluding words that Mao speaks in voiceover at the end of the 2001 Chinese television drama 《长征》 *Long March*.¹ Mao is in a room in the promised land of the Chinese northwest, writing, with a brush and in his distinctive calligraphy, his 1935 poem on the Long March that would become its most famous description in mainland China. Images from the series crossfade over him, as though his mind is considering and shaping those memories.

The Red Army fears not the trials of the March,
Holding light ten thousand crags and torrents.
The Five Ridges wind like gentle ripples
And the majestic Wumeng roll by, globules of clay.
Warm the steep cliffs lapped by the waters of Golden Sand,
Cold the iron chains spanning the Tatu [Dadu] River.
Minshan’s thousand li of snow joyously crossed,
The three Armies march on, each face glowing.²

¹Along with being the ending quotation for 1976’s Long March medley. “Wayaopao” (the Wade-Giles transliteration present in the English-language *Selected Works*) or “Wayaobao” (the Pinyin form) is in fact a false transliteration of the placename. The correct transliteration of the final character in 瓦窑堡 in this case is *bǔ*, *Wayaobu*.

²In its Foreign Languages Press translation. Mao Tsetung, *Poems* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 19.

These words, spoken and written so shortly after the section of the Red Army Mao commanded had reached the borderlands of Shaanxi and Gansu, definitively launch the Long March into myth.

Almost every work published in English on the Long March will, at some point, touch on the Long March as “myth,” whether as part of disputing its veracity or emphasizing its narrative power. It is important to emphasize at the outset, given the reactions that the word “myth” engenders, that the Long March happened, that the Chinese Revolution happened, that, amidst the winding path to the present where we often have the horrific side of the dialectic of revolution emphasized, the Chinese revolution has brought at least 800 million people out of poverty, overturned the most draconian patriarchal system, brought many to education and fulfillment that they never would have experienced before, and brought peace to China. All this occurs at the same time as a constant revolutionizing in China. Every cadre, and many non-cadre, must constantly adjust to the changing circumstances, taking account of the “overall situation” 顾全大局, one of the many factors that Xi Jinping characterized as part of the “Long March Spirit” in 2016.³

A myth is not the same as a lie. Rather, it is closer to how Mao would describe literature, possibly with an emphasis on his favored medium of poetry: “on a higher plane, more intense, more concentrated, more typical, nearer the ideal, and therefore more universal than actual everyday life.”⁴ The contradictions contained within the usage of the word “myth,” where truth and falsehood propel each other forward in dialectical motion that “works on the myth,” can be confused by the everyday use of the word to mean “falsehood.”

The Long March myth’s *Urtext* for the world would be an American’s, Edgar Snow’s *Red Star over China*, published in 1937 in Britain and rapidly translated into Chinese (and other languages). A figure in Yan’an that Edgar Snow briefly referred to was a mysterious “Li Teh” (李德, Li De), a German Communist, military advisor from the Soviet Union, and the only foreign participant in the Long March.⁵ Snow’s Red Army sources told him of Li Teh’s

³长征精神 (*The Spirit of the Long March*), in 百度百科, accessed 05/13/2024, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%95%BF%E5%BE%81%E7%B2%BE%E7%A5%9E/919848>.

⁴Mao Zedong, “Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art (May 1942) - Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Volume 3,” Marxists Internet Archive, accessed 09/13/2024, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm

⁵Historically, other non-Chinese participants also existed. A Vietnamese Communist, Nguyễn Sơn (1908-1956), known as Hong Shui 洪水 (“Flood”) in Chinese, also participated and became a Major General in the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist armies. Additionally, at least two Koreans (from Korea proper) participated, Bi Shiti (1898-1936) and Wu Ting (Kim Mu Jong, 1905-1951). Finally, there were captured foreign missionaries who went at least part of the way, including the Swiss-British Rudolf Alfred Bosshardt (1897-1993). “80 Years on, Foreigners on the Long March Remembered,” *China Daily: The Long March 80 years on*, Sept. 1, 2016, accessed 08/09/2024, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/80thendoflongmarch/2016-09/01/content_26664363.htm

seizure of power over the Red Army, the grievous defeats to which that seizure led, and the conferences that were required to get Mao back to power.

“Li Teh’s” actual identity would remain a mystery until 1964, when he unmasked himself as the East German cultural functionary Otto Braun (1900-1974). In the main East German newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, he denounced what he saw as China’s lack of socialist democracy, siding with the Soviet arguments in the Sino-Soviet split.

The rough outlines of what Edgar Snow shared gave rise to “the myth of Li De.”⁶ What is this myth? Part of its rough outlines are that the Chinese Soviet Republic in Jiangxi, the largest of the Communist-controlled areas in rural China using this imported Russian word *soviet* and founded in 1931, victoriously confronted four encirclement (围剿) campaigns under the military leadership of its Chairman, Mao Zedong. These four encirclement campaigns were ordered by the leader of Nationalist China, Chiang Kai-shek. Then, Bo Gu 博古, a very young Soviet-trained revolutionary, allied himself with the newly arrived Comintern military advisor, Otto Braun 李德 Li De, to isolate Mao as a leader, forcing a defensive and traditional form of positional warfare on the Soviet’s military forces that caused them to lose the initiative. This necessitated a “strategic retreat” that would become the Long March. In addition to the arduous and heroic efforts of the ordinary member of the Red Army against opposing forces and natural obstacles in this endeavor, “this undimmed ardour and undying hope and amazing revolutionary optimism of those thousands of youths who would not admit defeat either by man or nature or god or death,” the central structuring element of the leadership’s journey on the Long March was a series of Central Committee meetings (often with Red Army leaders present) that charted Li De and Bo Gu’s fall—and Mao’s rise.⁷

However, that was for the world’s consumption. Contrast the 1938 Chinese translation of *Red Star over China*, produced by newly-founded publisher Fu She 复社 (“renewing society”) under the more innocuous title of “Random Notes on a Westward Journey” 西行漫记 to avoid KMT censorship. Additions and subtractions to the text were made in collaboration with Edgar Snow. The translators were a collective of underground Communists and fellow travelers interested in national salvation and resisting the Japanese (among them Hu Yuzhi) in Shanghai. Pictures that later would appear in the English editions were added and precisely the section that dealt with Otto Braun/Li De, “That foreign brain-trust,” was removed,

⁶An earlier account of the March, “My Experiences on the Westward March,” was written by someone who identified himself as a Nationalist doctor captured by the Communists. However, it was apparently actually written by the Communist leader Chen Yun in Moscow and first published in March 1936 in a Communist Party of China journal in Paris. The subterfuge is explained in Chen Yun’s *Collected Works* as making it possible to publish in KMT-controlled areas. Chen Yun 陈云, *Selected Works of Chen Yun: Volume I (1926-1949)*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2001), 53-101

⁷Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China*, Left Book Club Edition (Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1937), 189.

judged to contain far too much information on internal party struggles.⁸ This meant that when the Li De figure does in fact appear in other parts of the 1938 translation, he is simply a barely mentioned Soviet representative.

Nonetheless, starting with brief mentions in 1976 and the translation of Otto Braun's memoirs in 1980, Otto Braun—or, more precisely, Li De, since his Chinese name emphasizes that this is a Chinese depiction—would move to center stage in depictions of the Long March that emphasized the “line struggle” in the Communist leadership. What initially attracted my attention was the discovery that Li De had appeared as a character in at least twenty Chinese films and TV series but had not appeared in the Long March story as presented officially in China before the '80s/90s. He moved from absence to an indispensable role/archetype in these series. This drew my attention to looking at concepts of myth, because this historically present figure had been removed and then reinserted into what had become a “myth” of national foundation with a clear message.

1.1 Research question and thesis

This master's thesis examines Otto Braun's depiction in the 2001 Chinese television drama serial *Long March* and asks why it took until the 1980s for “Li De” to be reintegrated into the retelling of the Long March? For example, why did he not become part of the myth as the Sino-Soviet Split became an established fact, when a negative depiction of a Soviet advisor seems like it would have been appropriate?⁹ What does it tell us about the history of Chinese Communists engaging with origin myths and integrating foreign and domestic beliefs and ideologies? This history stretches from the protracted people's war leading to state power in 1949 to the Sino-Soviet split in the late 1950s and early 1960s to the “long march” through “reform and opening up” beginning in the late 1970s and to the accession to the WTO in the same year the series came out. It is quite likely that Otto Braun is the most frequently depicted white foreigner in Chinese television due to becoming an essential part of the Long

⁸While I do not have access to the 1938 Chinese translation, this is stated by Hu Yuzhi 胡愈之 (1896-1986), in his introduction to the 1979 Chinese edition of *Red Star over China* providing context for both Snow's life and the publication history in the 1930s. Hu Yuzhi was also a prominent Esperantist, China Democratic League leader, and cultural official. The 1979 translation by Dong Leshan 董乐山 promised to be a direct and full translation from the 1937 Gollancz edition. Edgar Snow, *Xixing Manji* 西行漫记 (*Red Star over China*), First Chinese revised edition, trans. Dong Leshan 董乐山 (Beijing: Sanlian Shudian 三联书店, 1979), 3, 6.

⁹The immediate answer is that it would complicate the public discourse on the chronology of the revolutionary Soviet Union becoming revisionist, but Otto Braun being a secret revisionist is one possible framing that immediately would come to mind. This would be similar, then, to how the Soviet Union portrayed Mao in memoirs by Soviet agents in China such as Braun during the Sino-Soviet Split, but the Chinese side did not choose this possibility. This is perhaps related to the Soviet and Chinese treatments of Stalin and Mao.



Figure 1.1: Actors who have played Otto Braun as of 2020, some in multiple productions, in chronological order.

March myth, as explored in this thesis (Figure 1.1).¹⁰

This thesis takes a closer look at the institutionalized practice of television serial dramas that recount stories of the Communist Party leadership, principally through the 2001 series *Long March*. How does that series depict the figure of the Comintern military adviser Li De (Otto Braun), who, after the publication of the complete translation of Snow's *Red Star over China* in 1979 and the (internal, *neibu*) publication in 1980 of the Chinese translation of his memoirs, began to be reconnected to the Jiangxi Soviet and the Long March in the 1980s.

My goal is to situate this reinvigoration of a foreign element in the national political myth of the Long March within the complex “reform and opening up” process of China, itself com-

¹⁰A 2020 web article (“Which actors have played Red Army advisor Li De?”, 都有哪些演员扮演过红军顾问李德?) counts a total of 20 appearances of the Li De character in Chinese television and film, including his first depiction being that of a Uyghur actor in 1995's *Historical Choice* 历史的选择 (along with a Han Chinese actor depicting him in a 2001 TV drama focusing on Zhu De, *Marshal Zhu De* 朱德元帅). The author mistakenly believes the actor in 2001's *Long March* did not reappear in 2010's *Red Cradle* 红色摇篮 because the “Sergei” credited in both has different surnames. <https://new.qq.com/rain/a/20220914A0AMOS00>

pared to a *new* Long March. Introducing Li De drew attention to the foreign and internationalist origins of Marxism-Leninism at the same time as new modes of nationalist justification were being sought for Communist Party rule against the background of the Soviet Union and broader socialist camp's collapse. By elucidating this hitherto generally unnoticed migration of Li De to a central component of the Long March myth, it is possible to gain a sense of how the Party has "superscribed" (Prasenjit Duara) that myth with an approach to integrating foreign and domestic beliefs into a successful hybrid. Significantly, references to Buddhism's thorough sinicization accompany the dramatization of Li De's role, which I will address later.¹¹

In this context, it is useful to consider the insights of Documentary Hypothesis, from the field of Biblical Criticism. This model of identifying the sources and layers that made up the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, gives us a means to recognize how different views and emphases in the Party and society at large make their way into the telling of the myth of the Long March.

This analysis of the Party and its artists' ability to dialectically process domestic and foreign beliefs enables a critique of simplistic depictions of the Communist Party making a complete rupture with its Maoist past. This is even visible in a series like *Long March* made in 2001, at the moment of the most intense market reforms under Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji that led to accession to the World Trade Organization in the same year. I say "even", because in the following year one could have a drama like *Provincial Secretary* (省委书记) focused on restructuring a state-owned enterprise (SOE) and where the heroic cadre's first move when he attains the leadership of the SOE is to lay off all 300,000 people working for it. This is part of a narrative of "all" leaders and led, needing to share in the "necessary sacrifices" for a better future, which can easily be tied into the Long March.¹² The "huge gulf" between Mao and Deng, not to mention the distance from Marx's original analysis of capitalism, "could only be bridged"—as Arrighi wrote of other revolutionary innovators such as Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh and Amílcar Cabral alongside Mao—"through an act of *faith* in the unity of Marxist history" (my emphasis).¹³ This faith is the sort that could see the particular conditions of Russia as Gramsci did and proclaim the Bolshevik Revolution a "revolution against

¹¹Prasenjit Duara, "Superscribing Symbols: The Myth of Guandi, Chinese God of War," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 47, no. 4 (1988): 778–795, accessed 02/15/2023, doi:10.2307/2057852, JSTOR: 2057852, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2057852>.

¹²Weijun Ma, "Chinese Main Melody TV Drama: Hollywoodization and Ideological Persuasion," *Television & New Media* 15, no. 6 (Sept. 2014): 532, accessed 04/22/2023, doi:10.1177/1527476412471436, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1527476412471436>.

¹³Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First Century* (London: Verso, 2008), 19.

[Marx's] *Capital*.”¹⁴ This is the faith we see in the triad of belief (*xin* 信) words promoted by the Chinese government today: *xinyang* 信仰, *xinnian* 信念 and *xinxin* 信心, which are difficult to distinguish in translation. The first, *xinyang*, which emphasizes conviction and faith, is the one that appears most often in the 2001 series under discussion. The second, *xinnian*, places more focus on the content and principles of the belief; its more rational side, so to speak. Finally, the third, *xinxin*, emphasizes the belief and, most importantly, confidence in achieving a desired result. Through this triad of belief words, the Party reaffirms its ideological foundation, skillfully merging past and present, faith and pragmatism, in its pursuit of long-term national goals that rest on a capitalist world order and integration into that.

1.2 Structure

1.2.1 Chapter 1

Chapter 1, this introduction, lays out the research question (1.1) and the structure of the thesis (1.2). It introduces the Long March in its historic and mythic resonances (1.3) and concludes with an introduction to the circumstances and context of producing the 2001 TV series *Long March* (1.4).

1.2.2 Chapter 2

Chapter 2 discusses what we actually know from current historical research on Otto Braun's life before and in China (2.1), along with additional necessary historical background to the narrative found in *Long March* (2.2). While reference will of course need to be made to earlier and later events, particularly those that illustrate the relationship between China and the Soviet Union, this entry into both historical consensus and debates on the Fifth Encirclement Campaign and the Long March is circumscribed by the period of time covered in *Long March*, from roughly April 1934 on the eve of the Nationalists taking the county of Guangchang on the eastern border of Jiangxi to October 1935, when the First Red Army and the Central Committee around Mao arrive in Yan'an. Finally, in section 2.3 we engage with the deployment by the USSR and the GDR of Otto Braun as a participant in the Sino-Soviet Split in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly through the publication of an editorial and his memoirs.

¹⁴Antonio Gramsci, "The Revolution Against 'Capital' (24 December 1917)," accessed 06/02/2023, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/1917/12/revolution-against-capital.htm>.

1.2.3 Chapter 3

Chapter 3 lays out the theoretical approach and methodology of this thesis. The overarching theoretical framework of this thesis is an attention to the category of “political myth” and how that myth is superscribed (Prasenjit Duara) in *Long March*. This particularly involves recognizing the successful superscription of a myth requires the myth’s core to stay the same, that is, as Duara puts it, myths are “simultaneously continuous and discontinuous.”¹⁵ Insights from historical-critical and theological Biblical studies are employed, since those can recognize both the omnipresence of sacred myths, their ritualized relating to the congregation, the promise of another world (society), and the hermeneutics of a winding path to get there. This element of theology recognizing something beyond the status quo is emphasized by Dick Boer.¹⁶ Section 3.1 serves as an introduction.

Section 3.2 discusses Myth and the Long March. Beginning from Roland Boer’s laconic definition of myth as “an important story,” which the Long March certainly is, it moves to Northrop Frye’s focus on myths as forms of explaining a society’s gods, traditional history, customs and class structure, not on the basis of it being true, but what members of a society must know to be part of that society. Frye’s definition makes it clear that myths are already inherently political. This is brought into conversation with Chiara Bottici’s attempt at a definition of political myth, which stipulates as one of the sources of the pathos of political myth, its placement of participants as part of a *drama*. This leads into a discussion how central dramatic presentation is to the myth of the Long March. Indeed, the background of *Long March* screenwriter Wang Chaozhu in musical composition means that he views it as a symphony and comprehensive art work, in line with Claude Lévi-Strauss’s comparisons of myth to its apparent replacement, the polyphonic score.

Finally, an application of the Documentary Hypothesis in historical biblical criticism is discussed as an aid to understanding the interwoven nature of at least three sources for the Long March myth, which I have termed the “Snowist” (S), “Maoist” (M) and “Dengist” (D) sources.

Section 3.3 discusses the Sinicization of Marxism, with reference to the example of Buddhism. While Buddhism is now an integral part of Chinese culture, it is originally a foreign import, and thus serves the makers of the 2001 *Long March* series as a precursor of the Sini-cization of Marxism.

Section 3.4 discusses the Myth as realized in the series, which develops further Wang

¹⁵Duara, “Superscribing Symbols.”

¹⁶Dick Boer, *Deliverance from Slavery: Attempting a Biblical Theology in the Service of Liberation*, Historical Materialism Book Series 110 (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

Chaozhu's fundamentally symphonic conception of how to apply the myth in the period of the "main melody" policy.

1.2.4 Chapter 4

Chapter 4 is the central pillar of this thesis, an analysis of how the TV series *Long March* narrates the "myth" from the Fifth Encirclement Campaign to arriving at the conclusion of the Long March in northwest China. The chapter opens with a plot summary of the 2001 series *Long March* (4.1), along with the symphonic division that its screenwriter, Wang Chaozhu, envisioned.

In section 4.2, I discuss the history and background of the production. This includes earlier Long March production in film and TV that feature Li De, along with the historical context of the US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999 and China joining the World Trade Organization in 2001.

In section 4.3, I go through specific scenes in the series. These include Li De's scenes, scenes of Mao's visual success at the work of hybridization that is Sinicization of Marxism, discussion of the merits of Chinese and American oranges, and a conversation with a Tibetan lama.

1.2.5 Chapter 5

I conclude the thesis, with some observations about the further development of how Li De has been depicted and what we can draw from that. Particularly important is how, in a year of great change upon China's accession to the WTO, two factors in the series in particular attempt to ward off ideas of China becoming a "normal country," that is to say, a capitalist country with a bourgeois political system.

First, as mentioned above, is the fact that popular dramatic engagement with Li De only occurs after the collapse of the Soviet Union, arguing that China can exist as a socialist country without the Soviet Union and the socialist camp in the geopolitical background.

Second, the discussions of belief—a belief that does not fall into dogmatism—both endorses the Marxism that can oversee "reform and opening up" while presaging a phrase that would be emphasized under Xi Jinping's premiership: *chuxin* 初心, something that can be translated as "original intention."

1.3 “A Manifesto”: A brief introduction to the Long March and its myth

The Long March has been characterized—both positively and negatively—as modern China’s founding myth. For example, it appears in the subtitle to Sun Shuyun’s journalistic account retracing the route, which promises to present “the true history of Communist China’s founding myth.”¹⁷

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday expend a great deal of energy “debunking” the Long March in their extremely anti-Mao biography, further indication of its importance. They “reveal” events that have not, in fact, been absent from the “official” narrative since at least the 1980s, such as Mao and other members being carried on stretchers (to allow them to be awake at night and planning).¹⁸ In a typical example of Chang and Halliday’s efforts to discredit Mao, the Long March myth is acknowledged negatively. “Myth” is used as a synonym for falsehood in this conclusion to their chapter on the retreat from Jiangxi: “This rickety bridge did not just carry Mao across the water [the Yudu river], it bore him into legend. His murderous past and that of the CCP regime were about to be left behind. And Mao himself was about to create the most enduring myth in modern Chinese history, and one of the biggest myths of the twentieth century—‘the Long March.’”¹⁹

In Timothy Cheek’s review of Sun Shuyun’s *The Long March: The True History of Communist China’s Founding Myth*, Cheek faults the author for being “absolutely innocent of the vagaries of oral history and personal memory”. He also notes the essential political thrust of Sun Shuyun’s attempt to get at the “true history” of the Long March through her interviews:

Mostly, Sun’s story emphasizes the experience, memory, and voices of ordinary Chinese, many long forgotten and ill-served by the army and party they either joined or endured. ... The reason this [emphasis] is important, Sun says, is that the dark side of the long march that emerges helps to explain what went wrong later under Mao. The errors of later years and the causes of the suffering of the survivors she profiles can be seen in Jiangxi *before* the long march. The implication is clear: *it was rotten from the start*.²⁰

¹⁷Sun Shuyun, *The Long March: The True History of Communist China’s Founding Myth*, 1st Anchor books ed (New York: Anchor Books, 2008).

¹⁸Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (2005); the academic response can be found in Gregor Benton and Lin Chun, eds., *Was Mao Really a Monster? The Academic Response to Chang and Halliday’s Mao, the Unknown Story* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁹Chang and Halliday, *Mao*, 129.

²⁰My emphasis. Timothy Cheek, “Review of *The Long March: The True History of Communist China’s Found-*

The Long March and its spirit are often invoked in Chinese political discourse as an inspirational model for overcoming present hardships and increasing dedication to the Chinese Communist cause. This is to the extent that a brief quotation of part of Mao's poem is enough to signal that that is being referenced. In the 1980s, precisely as a new more historicized and contextualized version of the Long March was promoted, its mythic resonance was used to "brand" China's market reforms as a "new Long March," starting with a speech by Deng Xiaoping before the pivotal Party conference in December 1978.²¹

1.4 "The seeding-machine": The TV series itself and TV production in China

In a directive written in February 1962 on a letter from the Central Conservatorium, Mao Zedong declared that in the realm of culture, China had to "make the past serve the present and foreign things serve China," *gu wei jin yong, yang wei Zhong yong* [古为今用, 洋为中用]. The more traditional expression for "manipulating the past to attack the present" is *jie gu feng jin* [借古讽今].²²

There is power in the depiction and this is of course recognized by the Communist Party of China itself, whose institutions collaborate with Chinese television broadcasting (particularly state-run China Central Television, CCTV) and film (the PLA-controlled August First Film Studio 八一制片厂) to reinscribe this event into popular consciousness. These build on an earlier consciousness developed in films and popular performances during the Mao era, where what existed of TV reached a limited audience. A marked change occurred alongside the post-1978 reforms: this being the extent and popularity of film and TV dramas where the leadership of the Maoist era is depicted in them. Additionally, there have been films and series that focus on Deng Xiaoping after 1978. In fact, when the call for special actors first went out in 1978, one of the first figures to appear on screen was Deng Xiaoping, in a film praising his earlier revolutionary career. An additional feature of "special actors" is that by

ing Myth, by Sun Shuyun," *International Journal* 64, no. 1 (2008): 302–304, accessed 05/20/2022, JSTOR: 40204477, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40204477>

²¹Deng Xiaoping, "Emancipate the Mind, Seek Truth From Facts and Unite As One In Looking to the Future [December 13, 1978]," Marxists Internet Archive, accessed 03/27/2024, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/deng-xiaoping/1978/110.htm>; Zhou Zheng, "A General Looks Back," *Beijing Review*, Oct. 6, 1986, no. 40, 19–25, <https://www.massline.org/PekingReview/PR1986/PR1986-40.pdf>.

²²A better translation of the latter phrase would be "use the past to criticize the present." Geremie Barmé, *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 382.

having the same actor frequently incorporate a figure like Mao or Zhou Enlai or Peng Dehuai or Liu Shaoqi, there is a sort of hyper-connection between the depicted history and the depicting actor, they “become” that historical figure, a form of almost “spirit mediumship” and auratic “image magic.”²³

While much of the academic analysis around cultural production in the 1980s and ’90s examines the loosening of controls, these productions (starting with a series of more military-focused films in the 1980s produced by the August First Film Series, the “Decisive Engagements” 大决战 series) around the leadership were still very much centrally produced, with *Long March* being the product of the Central Documentary Bureau on Party History (中共中央文献研究室). Its conditions of production are related to, but different than, other productions as a whole, being solidly part of the “main melody” framework.

Another element closely related to dramas about the revolutionary leadership is the revival of “Red classics,” literature that told stories of exemplary revolutionaries, its most famous representative in China in fact being Nikolai Ostrovsky’s 1930s novel *How the Steel was Tempered*, a revolutionary *Bildungsroman* focused on a young man named Pavel, adapted into a Chinese television series starring dubbed Ukrainian actors in 2000.²⁴

The difference when it comes to *Long March* is that it is engaging with the very historical figures of the Communist leadership team and that there is no singular original text to betray, with so many elements of *Long March* coming from historical research and memoirs in the ’80s, especially the American journalist Harrison Salisbury’s opus, translated almost immediately back into Chinese.²⁵

Long March’s first episodes were broadcast on June 14, 2001. On December 11 of the same year, China would join the World Trade Organization (WTO). This context is particularly important, a milestone on the road to placing the market in command of production and consumption in China, with promises made to the US-dominated world capitalist order.

The series has 24 episodes which are each around 42 minutes, not counting the opening and closing credits. The series spans the middle of the fifth encirclement campaign to the arrival

²³Haiyan Lee, “Mao’s Two Bodies: On the Curious (Political) Art of Impersonating the Great Helmsman,” in *Red Legacies in China: Cultural Afterlives of the Communist Revolution*, ed. Jie Li and Enhua Zhang, Harvard Contemporary China Series 18 (Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London: Published by the Harvard University Asia Center, distributed by Harvard University Press, 2016), 247.

²⁴Frederik H. Green, “The Cultural Indigenization of a Soviet ‘Red Classic’ Hero: Pavel Korchagin’s Journey through Time and Space,” in *The Making and Remaking of China’s “Red Classics”: Politics, Aesthetics, and Mass Culture*, ed. Rosemary Roberts and Li Li (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017), 136–55.

²⁵Harrison Evans Salisbury, *The Long March: The Untold Story* (London: Macmillan, 1985). For discussion of its role in shaping Chinese opinion, see Geremie Barmé, *Shades of Mao: The Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 29; Hai Feng, “The MaoCrazy West (1993),” in *Shades of Mao: The Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader*, by Geremie Barmé, ed. Geremie Barmé (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 239

in the Shaanxi-Gansu border region and the area around Yan'an. It is part of the genre of (usually historical) series in China that take care in introducing every major character with an onscreen label containing their name(s) and title/position.

The arc in which Otto Braun/Li De plays a major role is from episodes 1 to 10. He is the first face to appear after the introductory montage and voiceover. He and Zhang Guotao are the series' major antagonists. They have their reconcilable henchmen, but they themselves, in the end, are not figures that can be truly reconciled. Despite Li De's absence from most of the remaining fourteen episodes, issues connected with him continue to be addressed. The problems of new foreign ideas, domestic tradition, and the authority to construct a hybrid Chinese socialist approach remain central to those episodes. They are constructed around poles of previous revolutionary attempts (such as the Taiping Rebellion), differences encountered in the national minority-majority regions the Long March passed through, and Communists' attempts to convey the relevance of their foreign Marxist ideas within the Party and outside the Party.

Accompanying the depictions of the leadership are scenes of disputes or line struggles in the party, from which, in the end, Mao's line emerged victorious, particularly against the "left" "Wang Ming line."²⁶ This is particularly true of film representations of the Party leadership before the Zunyi conference. In presenting the Long March and its arguments, a figure that had first appeared in Edgar Snow's *Red Star over China* and afterwards faded into obscurity emerged as a central factor in the narrative: Otto Braun, known as Li De (Li Teh) 李德 in China and in these series.²⁷ The basic story as told by Edgar Snow in 1937, absent some expressions of doubt that Snow has in its explanatory power, is what was revived in China starting in the late 1970s, i.e., that the Comintern had sent Otto Braun as a military advisor to the Red Army in China, where he persisted in focusing on more conventional battles of army against army, rather than utilizing guerilla warfare. He thereby squandered the Red Army's advantages and lost the Chinese Soviet Republic in Jiangxi due to his unwise approach.

²⁶Wang Ming (1904-1974) spent many years in the Soviet Union, including during the period of the Long March, and would end up seeking refuge in the Soviet Union after going there for medical treatment in 1956, where he would write anti-"Maoist" books and articles as the Sino-Soviet Split became public.

²⁷As we shall see, Otto Braun had many names in his underground Communist work in Germany, the Soviet Union and China. In China the name under which he composed several party journal articles was Hua Fu 华夫, but Li De is what Edgar Snow called him and how he is usually referred to in all these dramas, with occasional attempts at saying his German name or a transliteration thereof. The Resolution of the Zunyi conference refers to Braun as "Comrade A" and then makes it clear at the end that "Comrade A" is "Hua Fu," specifically the Hua Fu who wrote the articles. Bo Gu's name, on the other hand, will only be mentioned in more highly-ranked units. Benjamin Yang, "The Zunyi Conference as One Step in Mao's Rise to Power: A Survey of Historical Studies of the Chinese Communist Party," *The China Quarterly*, no. 106 (1986): 235-271, accessed 01/31/2023, JSTOR: 653430, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/653430>

There is something immensely odd about Otto Braun ending up known to at least hundreds of millions of Chinese people as a personification of foreign Soviet meddling in the revolution, based on activity over such a short period of time. He was a small part of the story of the rise of a world historical figure, consigned to be an obstacle. There is also something odd (or worth noting) about Otto Braun and the Comintern becoming more of a focus in visual media beginning in 1996, after the world-historical defeat of the socialist camp.

At the same time, with the collapse of both the “socialist camp” and the Cold War, narrative engagement that made sense of what now seemed like a closed chapter increased apace. China was not spared this engagement, with its valedictory and critical tone, but had to deal with it while still having a Communist party-state in command.

2 Historical Background

However, in justice to Li Teh [Li De], it may be suggested that the actual degree of his responsibility in Kiangsi [Jiangxi] probably tends to be over-emphasized. He is in fact an important part of the defence-mechanism by means of which the Reds rationalize a very adverse experience. He is the arrogant foreigner, the black sheep, the scapegoat: and it is somehow comforting to be able to cast most of the blame on him. Actually it is almost impossible to believe that under any genius of command the Reds could have emerged victorious from the Himalayan obstacles which faced them throughout the year of the Fifth Campaign. In any event, the experience has been a lesson, and one from which the world Communist movement as a whole may benefit. The mistake of giving over to a foreigner the plenary tactical command of a revolutionary army is hardly likely to be repeated.

—Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China*¹

To understand how the creators of historical fiction such as the 2001 *Long March* series shape and use their source material requires attention to historical debates and accounts that exist on the topic, along with ongoing debates at the time of production. This section lays out a condensed presentation of that terrain, particularly on the topics most closely connected to Otto Braun/Li De in the series: the Comintern in China, the Fifth Encirclement campaign, power struggles in the Party, and the conferences during the Long March.

Part of focusing on Otto Braun has meant engaging with Frederick S. (Freddy) Litten's overlooked writing on the topics of Braun, the Jiangxi Soviet and the Long March.² It is Litten's scholarship that makes most clear that we have very little contemporary material

¹Snow, *Red Star over China*, 392.

²Freddy Litten, *Otto Brauns frühes Wirken in China (1932-1935)* (Munich: Osteuropa-Institut München, 1988); Frederick S. Litten, "The CCP and the Fujian Rebellion," *Republican China* 14, no. 1 (Jan. 1989): 57–75, accessed 06/30/2022, doi:10.1080/08932344.1989.11720129, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08932344.1989.11720129>; Frederick S. Litten, "Einstein and the Noulens Affair," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 24, no. 4 (1991): 465–467, accessed 01/08/2022, JSTOR: 4027131, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4027131>; Freddy Litten, "Otto Braun in Deutschland 1900-1928," *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* 27, no. 2 (1991):

to reconstruct major decisions and events of the Long March.³ Litten pursues the question of what happened in the power struggles in the Jiangxi Soviet and the Long March from a position of doubt. His interest in demystifying Braun's role makes clearer to him what questions are not being asked in other writing about the period. Thus, smaller, possibly significant, details come to his attention that might be overlooked when one is solely focused on Mao's growth in importance in the Party.

2.1 Otto Braun's identity and role in China

Following Edgar Snow's description of the mysterious "Li Teh," Otto Braun has been categorized under the stereotype of a German, even Prussian, military officer who wanted to lead the Communist forces in rote positional warfare as opposed to the dynamic guerrilla warfare practiced by Mao.

This does not in fact correspond with the Bavarian Otto Braun's actual experience in the 1920s as a Communist engaged in espionage and covert small unit actions (such as kidnappings and thefts) in Germany. He may have been inflexible and dogmatic, but its source likely lay elsewhere than his brief conscription into the German military in 1918-19. However, when it comes to getting the facts straight about Otto Braun, his own involvement in the general rubric of underground work for around twenty years from 1922-39 means that he consciously made it difficult to get reliable details on him. His life in the GDR from 1954 onward as a senior cadre means that he likely possesses a detailed Stasi file.⁴

171-182, accessed 06/30/2022, https://litten.de/fulltext/braun_d.pdf; Frederick S. Litten, "The Noulens Affair," *The China Quarterly*, no. 138 (1994): 492-512, accessed 01/08/2022, JSTOR: 654954, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/654954>; Frederick S. Litten, "Otto Braun's Curriculum Vitae—Translation and Commentary," *Twentieth-Century China* 23, no. 1 (Nov. 1997): 31-62, accessed 05/02/2021, <http://litten.de/fulltext/braun.pdf>; Frederick S. Litten, "The Myth of the 'Turning Point'—Towards a New Understanding of the Long March," in *Bochumer Jahrbuch zur Ostasienforschung*, vol. 25 (Munich: Iudicium, 2001), 3-42.

³With regards to the Zunyi Conference, central in Party history to Mao Zedong's rise and Li De's "fall," there are two contemporary documents. Chen Yun acknowledged or claimed authorship of the eight-page "Outline Report" of the Zunyi Conference. Deng Xiaoping apparently took minutes, which are not available. There is "Outline Resolution" of uncertain origin, possibly connected to Deng Xiaoping. There seems to be further material that remains hidden to public view, including speeches, or at least their notes, by participants. The two available documents have been translated in an appendices in the 1986 article by Benjamin Yang. Yang also remarks in an exchange with Jerome Ch'en that the 1985 *Documentary Materials of the Zunyi Conference* 遵义会议文献 volume of roughly 140 pages "was, by the way, originally four or five times longer than its present form, heavily curtailed by a certain communist authority." Yang, "The Zunyi Conference as One Step in Mao's Rise to Power"; Jerome Ch'en and Benjamin Yang, "Reflections on the Long March," *The China Quarterly*, no. 111 (1987): 466, accessed 07/16/2023, JSTOR: 653301, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/653301>.

⁴How accessible this is to researchers is another question. While Braun's position as a public figure in the

Any accounting of Braun's life that does not go back to the archives (and likely even then) must rely almost exclusively on Litten's work, since Litten is the only person so far to truly study Braun's life thoroughly, based on archival research. The most significant change in primary sources we have since Litten's work is the publication of the Comintern documents pertaining to China, which contain few revelations, but do provide contemporary documentation of elements such as when exactly Braun headed to and arrived in the Central Soviet Area along with the (poor) working relationships between figures in the Shanghai Comintern office and a few instances of Braun's own reports sent back from the area, along with reports of Braun being among those with a drinking problem in Shanghai.

It does seem that the most recent archival sources regarding Braun are incorporated into the biographical dictionaries available at the German government's Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur (Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Eastern Germany), particularly in its version of the 2008 *Handbuch der deutschen Kommunisten*, unfortunately lacking sources, which are present for its version of the 2009 *Wer war wer in der DDR?*⁵

2.1.1 Before China

Otto Braun was born on September 28, 1900 in Ismaning, immediately northeast of Munich, the third of four children in a Catholic family. His father, Willibald, an accountant at a sauerkraut company, died when he was two. He attended a charitable school beginning in 1906, which is frequently described as an orphanage due to accepting him as a fatherless child, and then in 1913 attended a teacher training school to prepare to be a primary school teacher, following in his mother Amanda's footsteps.⁶

Otto Braun's experience in the first world war was of extremely short duration, given his age and only being conscripted in June of 1918. He does not seem to have left the Munich area. He was demobilized on November 26, 1918. This extremely brief military service is the first biographical clue that much of the legend built up over the years about Braun as a

GDR means that intelligence files pertaining to him are legally available from the post-reunification state, there is a limitation on files obtained through "unofficial collaborators" (inoffizielle Mitarbeiter, IM). What is publicly available online on Otto Braun from these sources is entirely connected to his inglorious tenure as head of the Writers' Union of the GDR.

⁵Braun, Otto | Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur, in *Biographische Datenbanken*, accessed 08/16/2022, <https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/de/recherche/kataloge-datenbanken/biographische-datenbanken/otto-braun>; Kurella, Alfred | Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur, in *Biographische Datenbanken*, accessed 09/14/2024, <https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/de/recherche/kataloge-datenbanken/biographische-datenbanken/alfred-kurella>.

⁶Litten, "Otto Braun in Deutschland 1900-1928," 172.

German officer has to be reconsidered. Significant service in the German military was not a legend that Braun himself built up in written sources, although he may have claimed this in conversations with Chinese comrades. Braun saw no combat and his unit had extremely low morale, with refusal to be deployed anywhere. Braun himself situates his conscription in a period of strikes, unrest and imminent defeat in the war.⁷

The end of this brief period of military conscription coincides with the revolutionary turmoil in Bavaria that began with Germany's defeat. It is also the period of Braun's first engagement in organized politics. Braun writes of going through all the "reading rooms" (*Lesesäle*) that opened upon Germany's defeat, where young intellectuals presented their cases for what Braun says was always presented as a form of socialism, whatever the solution being proposed was ("school constitutions with school councils, settlements according to the model of Rousseau and Kropotkin, money without interest as a cure against capitalism, hundreds of other slogans and recipes presenting themselves as the only path to salvation").⁸

Braun's life was changed when he heard Alfred Kurella speak, himself a newly-converted young Communist, and a fellow cadre that Braun would remain in contact with for the rest of his life. Kurella was trying to build up the Free Socialist Youth. Braun joined the Free Socialist Youth in December 1918, and the KPD in March-April, 1919. His entry into the KPD was essentially at the same point that the brief Bavarian Soviet arises. Braun spent the following months street fighting and was arrested by the Munich authorities, according to accounts in the Communist press and his own writing, both at the time and later.

Litten's research into the records has shown that Braun was attending further training after demobilization in a "war participants class" (*Kriegsteilnehmerklasse*) and that this academic and professional advancement, with his final teaching exams in June of 1919, bears no signs in the records of being hampered by accusations of being a Communist. Braun was either "much less involved in the events than he claims, or he was very successful in obscuring his role."⁹ He was denied his request, citing financial difficulties, for a year's leave from his new teaching duties. Apparently, as far as his mother knew when the police asked her, he left without an approved leave and was "with the Communists" in the north. His move at that time makes sense, given the defeat of the revolution in Bavaria. He would describe his move, in his unpublished revolutionary CV in 1969, as being due to "permanent police persecution."¹⁰

⁷Otto Braun, "In der Münchner FSJ," in *Deutschlands junge Garde: 50 Jahre Arbeiterjugendbewegung*, 1. Aufl., ed. Zentralrat Freie Deutsche Jugend ([Berlin]: Verl. Neues Leben, 1954), 163.

⁸Braun, "In der Münchner FSJ," 163.

⁹Litten, "Otto Braun's Curriculum Vitae—Translation and Commentary," 35; Litten, "Otto Braun in Deutschland 1900-1928," 172.

¹⁰Litten, "Otto Braun's Curriculum Vitae—Translation and Commentary," 33.

The *Handbuch der deutschen Kommunisten* claims that Braun was among those who joined the Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (KAPD) in disappointment over what they viewed as the KPD leadership's non-revolutionary response to the Kapp Putsch in March 1920, but quickly returned to the KPD in the autumn. This is interesting in terms of the perception of Braun as utterly loyal to the party and the Soviet Union through all of its transformations. It wouldn't be farfetched to imagine that he was in and out of the KPD as part of some sort of undercover activity, given how many feigned organizational affiliations he set up in the 1920s in the service of the KPD, generally with the German militarist right-wing as his target. It is also the case that the actions of the KPD leadership around Paul Levi in 1920 involved dissolving the underground intelligence/military activities, so Braun may have taken a sincere action, choosing to leave the KPD for the KAPD. The Comintern encouraged the revival of these activities in August, which resulted in the eventual sidelining of Levi and his more parliamentary politics, with Levi rejoining the SPD.¹¹ After this interruption, KPD activity until 1923 was geared towards an imminent revolution in Germany and Braun enthusiastically joined in this pursuit.

It is in 1922 that Otto Braun first engages in activity that is of direct service to the Soviet state—stealing the documents of a White Russian colonel named E. (von) Freyberg, the representative in Berlin of a White Russian general, Grigory Semyonov, active in Siberia.¹² Braun would later lose some of the documents in a taxi cab and end up arrested, where, under an assumed name, he prominently stood trial as “Oskar.” Here he first played the stool pigeon (leading to denunciations of this “Oskar” in the Communist press) and then pretended to be a right-wing nationalist who believed the White Russian general to be spying for France or Poland. By turning the events and charges into a convincing potential embarrassment for the military, the case received less and less coverage. Finally, he got off with a short sentence.¹³

¹¹Bernd Kaufmann, ed., *Der Nachrichtendienst der KPD: 1919-1937* (Berlin: Dietz, 1993), 26-7.

¹²Freyberg is someone who seems to disappear from history after this, without even a documented first name, let alone a date or place of birth or death. I have come across nothing that seems to reference this figure outside the years 1921-2. In September and October of 1921, Freyberg petitioned the League of Nations for help in releasing the notorious Baron von Ungern-Sternberg from his Siberian captivity under the Bolsheviks, on behalf of Baron von Ungern-Sternberg's wife. Earlier in July, the Soviet government had petitioned the German government to put a stop to this man's functioning in Berlin as the representative of “Ataman Semionoff,” leader of White forces in the Far East. Kaufmann et al. mistakenly give his address in Berlin as Servinusstraße 19, it was Gervinusstraße 19. Kaufmann, *Der Nachrichtendienst der KPD*, 53; “Semionov's Agent in Germany,” *Soviet Russia*, Oct. 1921, no. 4, 178, Google Books: FkpFAAAAYAAJ, <https://archive.org/details/SovietRussiaVol4And5/page/n751/mode/2up?q=freiberg>; *Dossier Concerning Appeal of Colonel Freyberg on Behalf of General, Baron de Ungern-Sternberg, Now a Prisoner of War in Siberia*, Sept. 27–Oct. 27, 1921, accessed 08/11/2022, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/dossier-concerning-appeal-of-colonel-freyberg-on-behalf-of-general-baron-de-ungern-sternberg-now-a-prisoner-of-war-in-siberia>

¹³Litten, “Otto Braun's Curriculum Vitae—Translation and Commentary,” 36; Litten, “Otto Braun in Deutsch-

Next Otto Braun was tasked by the KPD with setting up an “independent” news service in Berlin called *Coruna*, which seems to have presented itself as a right-wing anti-Communist outfit.

His underground work continued. In 1926, police observed him leading military training at an inn near Berlin. He was arrested, with a year and a half of “investigative custody” (*Untersuchungshaft*) before his case came to trial. This led to Otto Braun’s greatest moment of notoriety in the Germany of the 1920s. His lover Olga Benario and a small group of other Communists, carrying unloaded guns, freed him from the Moabit prison in Berlin in 1928 during a requested prisoner visit between Olga Benario and Otto Braun.¹⁴ Especially after the detail of the unloaded guns became known, this event even charmed the bourgeois press across Europe, with numerous papers comparing it to something out of the “Wild West.” It was a propaganda coup for the illegal activities of the KPD.¹⁵ The Social Democratic paper *Vorwärts* observed, however, that this same Otto Braun had been harshly attacked in the *Rote Fahne* around the Freyberg case. Now he was being lauded as a great hero. *Vorwärts* tartly noted that to be a Communist seemed to require a great deal of forgetting and rewriting of history (a critical trope that would become even more common in the subsequent decades).¹⁶

A manhunt in Germany was set up, but after Braun lay low for several weeks in Berlin, he was off to the Soviet Union, where he first joined a small unit in Moscow and then entered the Frunze military academy.

2.1.2 Who sent him to China?

In the 2001 *Long March* drama, and in most secondary literature, Otto Braun is described as being sent to China by the Comintern after his education at the Frunze Military Academy. Otto Braun states this himself in the first two sentences of the first chapter of his memoir.¹⁷ However, Litten has uncovered Braun’s own unpublished CV (dated April 10, 1969), including discussion of his role in China, where Braun’s immediate role is described a little differently:

In Spring 1932, after graduating from the military academy, by order of the intel-

land 1900-1928,” 174-6.

¹⁴This is also the source of the only non-Chinese onscreen depiction of Otto Braun, in the 2004 Brazilian biopic *Olga* (dir. Jayme Monjardim).

¹⁵Litten, “Otto Braun in Deutschland 1900-1928,” 180-1.

¹⁶“Erst Spitzel, dann Heiliger!: Die „Rote Fahne“ kann alles!,” *Vorwärts* (Berlin), Apr. 16, 1928, 3, accessed 08/10/2022, <https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/newspaper/item/BKTD3ZVXSZK2EVT3GVR5J6NS64HN2CZP?query=moabit&hit=15&issuepage=3>.

¹⁷“Im Frühjahr 1932 absolvierte ich die Moskauer Frunze-Militärakademie. Unmittelbar darauf wurde ich vom EKKI (Exekutivkomitee der Kommunistischen Internationale) nach China geschickt.” Otto Braun, *Chinesische Aufzeichnungen: (1932 - 1939)* (Berlin: Dietz, 1973), 8

ligence department of the Soviet General Staff participation in the war of resistance against the Japanese occupiers in Manchuria. In autumn 1932 removal to Shanghai as military advisor of the representative of the ECCI [Executive Committee of the Communist International] to the CC of the CCP. At the request of the CC made available to it and infiltrated to the Central Soviet Area. There assigned to the Revolutionary War Council and to the Main Staff of the Central Army Group of the Chinese Red Army. Eyewitness and participant of the civil war battles in South China, of the Long March, and of the early part of the Anti-Japanese War. In Autumn 1939 return flight to Moscow and exclusion from all military-political and Far Eastern affairs.¹⁸

The key point is that Braun was not initially sent to China as one of the Comintern advisors, but more as part of the Soviet Union's tense interactions with an expansionist Japan. His initial purpose in China put him in contact with the famous Soviet spy Richard Sorge and involved at least one trip to Shanghai, connected to the arrest of the Noulens, a husband and wife acting as Communist agents. He was then seconded to the Shanghai Far East Comintern branch.

Chinese scholarship on Braun's role has reached the same conclusion on his connection to Soviet military intelligence, but Litten's work does not seem to form the basis for any of that scholarship, not even the uncovering of Otto Braun's admission of his route to China in his unpublished CV. Instead, research in published Soviet and Comintern documents are the deciding factors in their conclusion. Wang Xinsheng concluded in 2009 that even with this evidence, it made little practical difference, given the significant overlap of Soviet military intelligence and Comintern activities in China.¹⁹

The reasons for and timing of his actual departure for the central Soviet area in China invites speculation regarding whether he was a second choice for the position and what his relationships with his new Comintern superiors were like. The question of Braun being a possible last-minute substitute is a question that receives more attention in Chinese discussion, possibly as a form of alternate history about what might have happened under a more competent advisor.²⁰

¹⁸Translation is Litten's, with numbers for annotations and endnotes removed. Litten, "Otto Braun's Curriculum Vitae—Translation and Commentary," 34

¹⁹Wang Xinsheng 王新生, "李德来华的身份及任务新探 ("New inquiries into Li De's identity and assignment in coming to China"), *近代史研究*, no. 01 (2009): 141–151+3, accessed 08/22/2022, <http://oversea.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFD2009&filename=JDSY200901009&uniplatform=OVERSEA&v=tLp7rcyVaE-w6itNXNp9C3w-xjjX1JDLw2XDCnEuApbv730UIcptS1RcykPlcQ>.

²⁰Given that Braun claimed that much of his behavior in the Soviet was due to his superior Manfred ("Fred")

Braun, himself, appears to be an unreliable source regarding many details of his life. He seems to have freely mixed the biographies of his two superiors in Shanghai, Manfred Stern and Arthur Ewert, with his own when relaying details of his life story to his interpreter Wu Xiuquan, including being Austrian, having a higher rank in the First World War, being involved in the Russian Revolution (Stern) and having engaged in revolutionary work in Latin America (Ewert).²¹ Whether this was simply part of the tradecraft of espionage or an expression of envy or a mix of both, it contributed to the distance Braun maintained from others, beyond the already existing language barriers.

This mistaken account of Braun's life before China is a feature of the 2006 account by Bai Li 白黎 in his *Li De in the Red Vortex* 《红色漩涡中的李德》.²² While written by someone whose authorial biography indicates they work at the Central Party School, any of these biographical claims about Braun rest solely on trusting Wu Xiuquan's accounts. Wu Xiuquan defended his accounts as true, believing Braun's Russian to be too good for someone who had only spent around four years in the USSR. However, the story attains a higher degree of implausibility when Bai combines the historical record of a 17-year old Braun, very solidly from and located in Bavaria, with Wu's memory of being told by Braun that he was conscripted into the Austro-Hungarian military, which makes no sense. Bai continues stating as fact Wu's memory that Braun was sent to the eastern front, was captured by the Russians, sent to Siberia, and then, on the outbreak of the Russian revolution, joined the Red Army and fought with them, even as a cavalry trooper. These stories that Braun apparently told to Wu do make one wonder whether they were told in response to doubts about the nature or applicability of his military service, to stave off losing the respect of those whom he was supposed to advise in China.²³

Litten could only speculate regarding the different dates provided for Braun's entry into the central Soviet area, selecting Braun's date since it seems to match other elements. With the benefit of the contemporary Comintern documents, we can see the actual date (which corresponds with what Braun provided as the "end of September"): Braun arrived in Ruijin on September 26, 1932, reported by Manfred Stern to the ECCI on October 1.²⁴

Stern's interference (backed up by contemporary Comintern communication), Stern would probably have adopted a similarly imperious and inflexible attitude.

²¹It is tempting with the latter to imagine that his ex-lover Olga Benario's fate in Brazil played some role in Otto Braun's claims, but she only became involved in Brazilian work in 1934.

²²Bai Li 白黎, *Hong se xuan wo zhong de Li De (Otto Braun in the Red Maelstrom)*, 1st ed. (Beijing: Zhong yang wen xian chu ban she, 2006).

²³Litten also speculates in this direction, although he doesn't tie in Ewert to the South American portion of Braun's "biography." Litten, *Otto Brauns frühes Wirken in China (1932-1935)*, 93.

²⁴Mechthild Leutner, ed., *KPD SU(B), Komintern und die Sowjetbewegung in China: Dokumente. Bd. 4 1931 - 1937*, vol. 4, Berliner China-Studien Quellen und Dokumente 3 (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 2006), 533; Litten, *Otto Brauns*

2.1.3 Role in the Soviet

Braun claimed he was sent to the Soviet on the request of the Central Committee. His apparent role was as a military advisor to the Central Committee. Braun was initially kept in seclusion in a house, in order to avoid any spies reporting his presence. Snow claims that the Nationalist general Lo Cho-ying (Luo Zhuoying 罗卓英) called him the “brain trust” of the Red Army after reading some of his writings found in Jiangxi.²⁵ This contrasts with the apparent lack of rumors circulating openly about foreigners in the Jiangxi-Fujian region before the Long March. In June of 1934, the fascinating pro-Nationalist book, *Suppressing Communist-Banditry in China*, published in Shanghai, makes no mention of any foreign Communist orchestrating things in Jiangxi, despite making many arguments about “red imperialism” and having a whole chapter dedicated to “foreign communist activities” in China, extensively discussing the Noulens affair and what the police found in their possession.²⁶

Mao Zedong’s importance at the time, at least as far as the Nationalists perceived it, is not clear. Mao is mentioned only twice on two pages and briefly described in the space of a paragraph, despite recognition that he is the chairman of the Soviet. Its version of the AB (“anti-Bolshevik) purges that occurred in 1930 also identifies those who rose up “against their commander Mao Tse-Tung” as being “Communist only in name, and which at heart are inclined to maintain the old traditional rural economy and social structure.” This shares the Maoist analysis, at that time and later, of the leaders of these rebels being simply “anti-Communist Party” (as this work terms them). Likewise, it shares the growing recognition, also depicted in 2001’s Long March, of a Nationalist political solution being needed alongside the military one, where amnesty was possible, in suppressing the internal “Communist banditry.” Mao himself is described in the following terms:

The Congress voted upon the constitution of a provisional Central Soviet Government of China, with Mao Tse-Tung as President and Shang Ying as Vice-President. Mao Tse-Tung was formerly a student in the University of Peiping, being in 1919 a member of the group for the study of Marxism. He organized the union of coal-mine workers at Pinghsiang which was the centre of Communist activity in Kiangsi and Hunan, and assumed political control of the Red Armies of Hunan, Kiangsi and Fukien for a long time. *He is an orthodox Communist, carrying out strictly the orders of the International, and is opposed to the coalition*

frühes Wirken in China (1932-1935).

²⁵Snow, *Red Star over China*, 376.

²⁶*Suppressing Communist-Banditry in China*. (Shanghai: China United Press, 1934), Chapter VII; Litten, “The Noulens Affair.”

*of the Communist Party with any other political group.*²⁷

At some point Braun became involved in a three-person team, a “troika” (三人团, *sanren-tuan*), with Bo Gu and Zhou Enlai, which is key both in the dramatic depictions and in the historical accounts. In the dramatic depictions, the troika is seen as a failure of inner party democracy and a failure to heed Mao’s objectively correct assessment of the situation. Litten points out that we don’t have non-conflicting evidence for what this three-person team was responsible for and what each person in it had as their individual portfolio. Litten surmises that it was probably set up specifically to organize the evacuation that turned into the Long March and, in his last work on the subject, definitively states that that was its purpose.²⁸

Braun’s apparent overstepping of his responsibilities in China, which he acknowledged in 1939 in his self-criticism to the Comintern, is presented as having been ended at the Zunyi conference. Since Braun’s role had always been based on being an advisor, this may have been a simple, forceful relegation to his formal advisory role, as Litten points out. Afterwards, Braun was given a role in troop education. Edgar Snow, both in *Red Star over China* and the material Snow published in low circulation for Harvard in 1957 (*Random Notes on Red China*), does not present a firm verdict on Braun’s role in losing the Jiangxi Soviet, following interviews with figures such as Zhou Enlai.²⁹ Snow himself opines that perhaps Braun was made a scapegoat, as quoted at the head of this chapter. There may have been a calculation by Party leadership regarding what to emphasize, since the text of *Red Star over China* was looked over by the Communist leadership at Yan’an before its publication.³⁰

It is important to reiterate that there is no evidence of Mao or any other Communists ever bringing up Otto Braun’s behavior with their Soviet counterparts after his return to the Soviet Union in 1939. Mao’s brother, Mao Zemin, also in Moscow, wrote a criticism of Otto Braun (and Bo Gu, along with another less clearly connected Chinese Party member, Li Weihan) in August of 1939 and Braun wrote a self-criticism in September.³¹ He was reassigned to other tasks not related to the “Far East,” which, when the Soviet Union was invaded by Nazi Germany in 1941, would become responsible for reeducating German prisoners of war.³²

²⁷My emphasis. *Suppressing Communist-Banditry in China.*, 81-2

²⁸Litten, “Otto Braun’s Curriculum Vitae—Translation and Commentary,” 43; Litten, “The Myth of the “Turning Point” –Towards a New Understanding of the Long March,” 15.

²⁹Snow, *Red Star over China*; Edgar Snow, *Random Notes on Red China, 1936-1945*, in collab. with John K. Fairbank, Harvard East Asian Monographs 5 (Boston: Harvard University Asia Center, 1957).

³⁰This extended beyond the Mao biography, presented as a lengthy quotation from Mao, which understandably had to match what Mao intended to say, as is typical practice with interview subjects.

³¹Leutner, *KPD(SU(B), Komintern und die Sowjetbewegung in China*, 1366-96.

³²This was later softened, perhaps due to the demands of the war, since Braun mentions that he later was also responsible for political education for Japanese officer POWs. Litten, “Otto Braun’s Curriculum Vitae—Translation and Commentary,” 34.

Similar to the criticism of the “Wang Ming line,” later private or semi-public criticism of Stalin in the wake of Khrushchev’s secret speech in 1956 would focus on those felt to control the relationship.

2.2 Historical background for the narrative of *Long March* (2001)

The 2001 *Long March* series begins in the spring of 1934 as the Nationalists have achieved several victories and ends with the First Army (the section of the whole Red Army around the Central Committee and Mao) reaching Shaanxi in the autumn of 1935. While the plot summary of the series presented in Chapter 4 (4.1) provides much of the series’ narrative, this section will lay out additional historical background and references the reader may wish to consult.

2.2.1 Soviet and Comintern advisors

Soviet and Comintern advisors were present before and at the founding of the Communist Party of China. Advisors and representatives coming from the Soviet Union generally engaged with the Guomindang and its Guangzhou-based aspirant to a Chinese republic. Comintern advisors and representatives generally dealt with the Communist Party. An apparently false narrative is the idea of some sort of deterioration in the quality of the Soviet and Comintern advisors. The approach, however, may have changed. Alexander V. Pantsov places Braun among the later Comintern emissaries in 1933 and 1934 who abandoned their “analytical” function of the situation, which is an interesting contrast to the idea of Braun grabbing control of operations.³³ Pantsov sees this as a shift to becoming simply intelligence operatives.³⁴

³³Alexander V. Pantsov, “Comintern Activists in China: Spies or Theorists?,” in *Foreigners and Foreign Institutions in Republican China*, ed. Anne-Marie Brady and Douglas Brown, Chinese Worlds 30 (London ; New York: Routledge, 2013), 99.

³⁴Surprisingly, Pantsov closes his chapter on this question of the turn from theorist to simple intelligence source with a pathos-filled quotation from Petr P. Vladimirov, the representative in Yan’an from 1942-1945, or more specifically, his alleged diaries from that deployment, published during the Sino-Soviet split: “I cannot give way to my feelings. I proceed from facts.... Facts are my faith in this case.... I am obsessed by facts. Facts are the main thing in one’s work. Facts, first of all, and only then, conclusions and emotions.” These diaries are even more anachronistically a product of the Sino-Soviet Split than the clear influence that situation had on Otto Braun’s memoirs, published as part of the same campaign in the early 1970s. Mao Zedong is constantly belittling the USSR in Vladimirov’s presence. At the same time, Mao “out of caution” forbids those at Yan’an from laughing at the USSR’s failures in the war. Vladimirov has to deal with various people’s schadenfreude over Soviet losses against the Germans. Young people endlessly use

2.2.2 The defeat of 1927 and Communist base areas

Soviet advisors had helped secure the Nationalist Party's commitment to a United Front with the Communists in 1924, heavily premised on Soviet aid and the Nationalist Party's desperate search for allies. Communists assisted what was called the Northern Expedition 北伐 in 1926-7, where Chiang Kai-shek successfully forced the northern warlords that came out of the post-1912 internationally recognized Beiyang government to submit to him. This process, which is relatively complicated and involves two stages along with brief exile for Chiang, has as its most important feature for later history his decision to turn on the Communists and violently suppress them in April 1927 at the end of the first stage of the Northern Expedition. The reason that Chiang gave for this action was to prevent a Communist coup against his leadership. This was not helped by the Comintern emissary, MN Roy, showing a secret order (the Comintern's "May Instructions") that could be interpreted in that light to Wang Jingwei, the leader of the left of the Guomindang at the time and head of the government in Wuhan against Chiang's declaration of a new Central Committee and Executive in Nanjing. Roy hoped that Wang would understand and help to implement the instructions. Wang saw this as an opportunity to ask the USSR for fifteen million yuan for his government, to which the USSR was only willing to offer two million rubles.³⁵ Wang rejected that and was forced to reveal the contents of these instructions to Chiang and his people. Wang was also under pressure from his generally weaker position against Chiang.³⁶ The Communists were, at this stage, concentrated in urban areas, with their greatest numbers in Shanghai. This action, conducted in cooperation with organized criminal elements such as the Green Gang in Shanghai, led to thousands of deaths and pushed the Communist movement underground.

slogans to the detriment of local traditions and culture. Mao simply uses his people as an instrument, with no internationalism. Finally, Vladimirov's alleged faith in facts echoes the implicit self-criticism of the Stalin period that wafted around any 1970s Soviet criticism of the personality cult around Mao and the wild enthusiasms of the Cultural Revolution.

Perhaps the published "diary" is built on a skeleton of a record of a very unpleasant stay in Yan'an during the Rectification Campaign (1942-1945), but almost every page bluntly coincides with the Soviet line on China around 1973. Vladimirov died in 1953 and the diary allegedly passed from his son to the Soviet news agency Novosti. See the review by Michael Lindsay, who, it should be noted, had a personal interest as a fellow foreigner at Yan'an (in the role of a red British aristocratic sympathizer). Lindsay focuses on the errors of fact about borders, demographics, and the concrete situation in China at time. Lindsay notes that it is strange that the Soviet publishers did not engage one of the USSR's "well-qualified China experts" to look through this work before it was published. Pantsov, "Comintern Activists in China: Spies or Theorists?," 103; Petr P. Vladimirov, *Das Sondergebiet Chinas: 1942 - 1945* (Berlin: Dietz, 1976), 88, 112, passim; Michael Lindsay, "The Yenan Years," *Problems of Communism* 25, no. 4 (1976): 77-81, accessed 08/27/2024, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/probscmu25&i=357>

³⁵Unfortunately I have been unable to ascertain the relative value of the currencies in 1927, but it was clearly insufficient.

³⁶Kuisong Yang, "Part I: Uncertain Adversaries, 1917-1948," in *A Short History of Sino-Soviet Relations, 1917-1991*, ed. Zhihua Shen, trans. Hongshan Li, China Connections (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 31-36.

Mao's response to this was organizing the Autumn Harvest Uprising in September of that year. As Mao attempted to establish a "soviet" in Hunan, the Guomindang were able to suppress it, killing tens of thousands. Mao moved further into rural territory, allied with bandits, and established a base area in the Jinggang mountains (Jinggangshan 井冈山). Here he met up with Zhu De, a Communist and a military leader with vital experience. Zhu De would use his experience to help Mao come up with tactics of what came to be called Maoist guerrilla warfare; its memorable summary being: "The enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue."

In 1929 Mao and Zhu moved to Ruijin and established the Jiangxi Soviet, which would last until the strategic retreat that became the Long March in September 1934.

The 1927 counter-revolutionary purge would, as is seen in the series, also throw the Party's Central Committee into increasing disarray, culminating in 1931 in its General Secretary Xiang Zhongfa being arrested by the Nationalists in Shanghai, breaking under questioning, and then being shot. In 1932 and 1933 the Central Committee would migrate from the urban areas, mostly meaning Shanghai, to Ruijin and Mao's Jiangxi Soviet. Thus at the time of the series there is no General Secretary or Chairman of the Party, only the vaguer position of person with chief responsibilities.

This is also how Zhou Enlai ended up in the Soviet. Zhou's presence and his actual political relationship with Mao is the key historical question that the series (and not only this series) has the greatest ambiguity, resting more on the idea that Zhou simply did not know Mao well enough and followed the prejudices of the Central Committee with regards to Mao. Similarly, Zhou participates in an administrative, or at least constantly ameliorating, role in the series when he is part of the troika 三人团.³⁷

2.2.3 The encirclement campaigns

Under the policy that resisting external encroachment, above all from the Japanese, required removing the internal "cancer" that was Communist insurgency, Chiang Kai-shek ordered encirclement campaigns against them. The first four were fought off, with Chiang commanding the fifth himself with direct German military advice. The number of soldiers deployed was also higher than before. Additionally, it was recognized that the defeat of the Jiangxi Soviet needed to be political as well as military. On the political side, the "New Life Movement," "an ideological hodgepodge of classical Confucian tenets, a Christian code of ethics, and military ideals," was specifically created for the Fifth Encirclement Campaign, alongside promises of

³⁷Clearly echoing Zhou Enlai's position during the Cultural Revolution.

amnesty to those who defected to the Nationalists.³⁸ The degree to which the Communists were losing the support of the people of the Soviet, particularly due to conscription of young men, is unclear. Another factor was a further land reform and recategorization of more “poor peasants” into higher economic categories, opening them up to punitive redistributive policies. This element of a possibly poorly implemented land reform and overconscription of the people is touched on very lightly in the series, entirely to indicate that it is no problem (Mao inspecting agriculture and interacting with the peasants, Episode 2, 11:04).

2.2.4 Did the “bloody battle of Xiang River” happen?

The emotional and polemical center of Otto Braun’s mistakes as depicted in the series and in accounts in general is the “bloody battle of the Xiang River” 血战湘江. Here the roughly 80,000 troops that the Red Army had as it left Jiangxi at the Yudu River were reduced to around 30,000. This loss of 50,000 troops is something for which Mao Zedong demands justice. In the series it is further heightened by Li De using that moment to attempt a kangaroo court execution of a relatively low-ranking commander, Commander Zhou. As Litten points out, we must be very aware that various sources quote various numbers and contemporary sources, like US military intelligence, mention a battle, but only the Communists claim these huge losses. This is somewhat strange, since the Nationalists would have trumpeted this victory, but the later Nationalist history of the campaign after moving to Taiwan only claims 3000 casualties on the Communist side. Litten further points out that both Party/military sources and the academics studying these sources are ambiguous about how many were killed, how many were wounded, and how many deserted. That final category of desertions would explain many of the losses, if they indeed happened. Litten notes that in his memoirs, Braun cites Zhou Enlai for a number of approximately 45,000 remaining after the crossing of the Xiang river. Litten speculates that there may have been some deal with Guizhou warlords about crossing the river, but that the Red Army took too long (about a week) and the warlords got nervous with the main Nationalist forces showing up along with the Red Army not keeping out of the warlords’ territories.³⁹

³⁸William Wei, *Counterrevolution in China: The Nationalists in Jiangxi during the Soviet Period*, Michigan Studies on China (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), 76-81.

³⁹Litten, “The Myth of the “Turning Point” –Towards a New Understanding of the Long March,” 17-18.

2.3 Otto Braun deployed in the Sino-Soviet Split

Litten makes the remark that Otto Braun should have accumulated a lot of “*guanxi*” (connections) by the time he was “repatriated” to the GDR from the USSR in 1954, given all the high-ranking GDR figures he knew and had worked closely with. Thus, it becomes noteworthy that he rose no higher than being First Secretary of the Writer’s Association in the GDR from 1961–64, a time of increased cultural “tightening” in East Germany. He was eventually viewed as also being unsuitable for this role, after an informant claimed he commanded no respect among the writers and had no stance of his own.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, Otto Braun was involved in the new editions of the Dietz Verlag publications of Lenin’s Complete Works and in translating Soviet Russian literature into German. His mentor and close friend in the Communist movement, Alfred Kurella, returned that same year and was similarly involved in cultural work, which suggests that either Kurella’s own influence or their grouping as long-term German Communists not yet “repatriated” put them into the same category. Braun and Kurella are both presented in their capsule biographies as petitioning for their “repatriation” to the GDR.⁴¹ Alfred Kurella rose to become the secretary of the Cultural Commission of the SED from 1957–1963, and thus “the highest cultural functionary in the GDR.”⁴² His influence and their friendship seem to have been central to Braun’s life in the GDR, and possibly to his life in the USSR prior to “repatriation.” In Sabine Pamperrien’s work on the Writer’s Association of the GDR, it is indicative of this close relationship that when she briefly touches on Otto Braun’s tenure, she quotes at length a confidential report in which Braun mentions how he had reported to “comrade Alfred Kurella” the “serious situation of the secretariat of the Writer’s association” in a “personal letter.”⁴³

Given the complaints from the Chinese Party that had dogged Braun on his return to the Soviet Union, anything that openly connected Braun to China was something to omit from his biography before the Sino-Soviet split took a very public turn in May 1964. The month that began with criticism of China in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* ended with Braun’s appearance in *Neues Deutschland* on May 25, 1964, with the full-page editorial “In whose name does Mao Tse-tung speak?” (“In wessen Namen spricht Mao Tse-tung?”). A photo at a desk with some Asian souvenirs such as a small statue of a Hindu god revealed to the world that

⁴⁰Sabine Pamperrien, *Versuch am untauglichen Objekt: der Schriftstellerverband der DDR im Dienst der sozialistischen Ideologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), 44–7.

⁴¹Kurella, Alfred | Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur; Braun, Otto | Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur.

⁴²Kurella, Alfred, in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 13 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 1982), 321–323, by Evelyn Lacina, accessed 01/28/2023, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118725564.html#ndbcontent>.

⁴³Pamperrien, *Versuch am untauglichen Objekt*, 46.

“Li Teh” lived.⁴⁴ In the editorial itself, Braun decried how a more militarized form of revolution with its necessities of command and obedience had left its mark on the construction of the People’s Republic in peacetime. He claimed this military legacy manifested itself in the PRC not engaging in the sort of thoroughgoing democratization he claimed the GDR was engaged in. This emphasis echoed an earlier interview upon his accession to the position of First Secretary of the Writers’ Association, where he emphasized the necessity of writers being involved in the GDR’s political and electoral campaigns.⁴⁵

In 1969, Braun followed up the *Neues Deutschland* editorial with an eighteen-part series of articles in *Horizont*, an East German magazine of current affairs, which were turned into a memoir published in 1973. In the articles and memoir, Braun, working with sources that are not made clear to the reader beyond his report to the Comintern in 1939, writes a “final” version of his experiences during the 1930s.

A brief report on Otto Braun’s funeral in *Neues Deutschland* on August 23, 1974 quoted the deputy of the Central Committee’s Department for International Relation Bruno Mahlow’s eulogy: “A central maxim of the Communist Otto Braun was the unbreakable friendship with the Party and the Land of Lenin.”⁴⁶ This eulogistic assessment holds true for how Otto Braun would be interpreted in the Chinese framework of Party history dramas, including 2001’s *Long March*, given that, per the historian Yang Kuisong’s opinion, the best comparison for the group that came to be called the “twenty-eight (and a half) Bolsheviks” or the “returned students” brought an attitude not dissimilar to the group that came to be called the “Whateverists” after Mao’s death: this came not from any particular internal conviction, but from a very harsh schooling in Party line struggle.⁴⁷ The “returned students” had experienced the

⁴⁴Otto Braun, “In wessen Namen spricht Mao Tse-tung?,” *Neues Deutschland* (Berlin), May 27, 1964, 5, accessed 07/01/2022, https://dfg-viewer.de/show?tx_dlf%5Bdouble%5D=0&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=https%3A%2F%2Fcontent.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de%2Fzefys%2FSNP2532889X-19640527-0-0-0-0.xml&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=5&cHash=4d008fd96099da09918e0bd5688080ca.

⁴⁵While electoral campaigns can also occur in one-party states (such as Cuba) using non-partisan forms, the GDR was a Leninist party-state using the “block party” system, with several bourgeois parties proclaiming their representation of specific social classes and sectors while also supporting the building of socialism, as continues to be the case in the PRC and the DPRK. Klaus Beuchler, “Nur wahre Kunst verändert die Menschen,” *Berliner Zeitung: Kulturpolitik* (Berlin), Aug. 1, 1961, 6, accessed 08/11/2022, [https://dfg-viewer.de/show/?set%5Bmets%5D=https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/zefys/SNP26120215-19610801-0-0-0-0.xml&tx_dlf\[page\]=6](https://dfg-viewer.de/show/?set%5Bmets%5D=https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/zefys/SNP26120215-19610801-0-0-0-0.xml&tx_dlf[page]=6)

⁴⁶Mahlow, born in Moscow in 1937 to a German Communist in exile, was the First Secretary of the GDR embassy in Beijing from 1964-1967 and himself a leading member of the Society for German-Soviet Friendship and, from 1985-1989, the deputy chair of the GDR-China Friendship Committee. “Trauerfeier für Genossen Otto Braun,” *Neues Deutschland: Nachrichten und Korrespondenzen* (Berlin), Aug. 23, 1974, 2, accessed 08/11/2022, [https://dfg-viewer.de/show/?set%5Bmets%5D=https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/zefys/SNP2532889X-19740823-0-0-0-0.xml&tx_dlf\[page\]=2](https://dfg-viewer.de/show/?set%5Bmets%5D=https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/zefys/SNP2532889X-19740823-0-0-0-0.xml&tx_dlf[page]=2)

⁴⁷“We will resolutely uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and unswervingly follow whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave”

Soviet Union of the late 1920s as the last of the open Trotskyist opposition in the Party was defeated and suppressed, with their dormitories and faculties being further battlegrounds in the struggle. In this atmosphere one found one's protectors and ideological lodestars and held on for dear life. Returning to China where the bloody counterrevolutionary defeat of the Communists in 1927 had been one of the key topics subject to line struggle, they had developed an almost superstitious hope in the Moscow Center and what the Comintern Executive decreed.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Yang Kuisong 杨奎松, 毛泽东与莫斯科的恩恩怨怨 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2012), 31-3.

3 Theoretical concepts

3.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter laid out the historical facts related to Otto Braun's rise and fall in the Party along with some essentials of the Long March, the more important questions are why any of it matters almost a hundred years later and *why it mattered at the time of the series' release*. A particular concern of this chapter, and this study in general, is exploring how the possibly unreflective use of certain terms and concepts such as (political) myth, faith, religion, and Sinicization ("Chinese characteristics") in studies of Chinese Communist history and the PRC might be more productively engaged.

In section 3.2 I will first lay out what I mean by the term myth and how it connects with the Long March in the form of a myth in historical time, similar to the Exodus narrative in the Bible. I will expand on the particular functions of the Long March in CPC historiography and interpretation by using the theory of political myth, and creatively apply some historical critical and hermeneutic approaches from Biblical criticism to this central political myth of Chinese Communism. This is not an arbitrary choice, because what I am trying to recognize here is that a myth like the Long March cannot merely be a historical question, but that in its re-reading, "re-binding" and re-inscription (the first two etymologically connected to "religion") through adaptations and pedagogy, the Long March and its "spirit" are a living concept in China.¹ As a jumping-off point, I use the musings of Northrop Frye about the ability of energy contained in a myth to transmute, and relate it to Prasenjit Duara's theory of superscription

In section 3.3 I will discuss what the series presents as the major achievement of the *Long March*, the Sinicization of Marxism against the "dogmatism" of Otto Braun and the 28 Bolsheviks. I will utilize a framework of belief/conviction and religion, with references to the

¹Enhua Zhang, "The Long March," in *Words and Their Stories: Essays on the Language of the Chinese Revolution*, ed. Ban Wang, Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section Four, China v. 27 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2011), 33–49.

Sinicization of Buddhism, the success or lack thereof of European Christian missionaries, and the popular faith of the Chinese masses. In doing so, I argue that the series is engaged in a process of re-inscription/superscription, where the earlier tellings of the Long March as the foundational victorious experience of the oldest generation of CPC leaders, has been expanded by the time of the series, as an example of a Dengist source of the myth, into a story about the ability of the Party leadership to successfully adapt foreign ideas while resisting foreign control. Within the historical “Dengist time” this reference has salience for the then contemporary issue of using the (also politically) foreign concept of the market economy in the post-Soviet world system. China had the dual role of pursuing the most astonishing market-driven economic growth in world history, while also perceiving itself as the greatest remaining state professing Marxism-Leninism.

To that end, in section 3.4 I will differentiate between the myth of the Long March Story, and how it is specifically realized in the 2001 *Long March* series through the screenwriter Wang Chaozhu’s description of his creative process and goals, as well as Claude Lévi-Strauss’s claim of the myth form being taken up in and somewhat superseded by the rise of complex polyphonic music such as the symphony, which is something Wang claims the Long March as historical event naturally is.

3.2 Myth and the Long March

3.2.1 The meanings of myth

The biblical scholar Roland Boer has remarked that the simplest (and best) definition of myth is “an important story”.² In Boer’s endnotes, he commends a slightly less broad definition from the literary critic Northrop Frye in his 1982 and 1990 works on the Bible and literature, *The Great Code* and *Words with Power*: “Myth is a form of imaginative and creative thinking” and tells “the important thing for that society to know about their gods, their traditional history, the origins of their custom and class structure.”³ Myth is not some primal constant, but historically determined. It is a form of imagining that has an impact on people crucial for their understanding of belonging to a community and adhering to certain standards and rules defined for this community. According to Frye, myths have a social-ideological function: “They play a leading role in defining a society, in giving it a shared possession of knowledge,

²Roland Boer, *Political Myth: On the Use and Abuse of Biblical Themes*, New Slant (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 9.

³Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, 1st ed (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 35; Northrop Frye, *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of The Bible and Literature [1990]*, ed. Michael Dolzani, vol. 26, *Collected Works of Northrop Frye* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 42.

or what is assumed to be knowledge, peculiar to it. Its proclamation is not so much, ‘This is true’ as, ‘This is what you must know.’ Such a mythology is close to what is meant by the Biblical term *torah*, essential instruction, including the laws, which no one can be excused from learning.”⁴

3.2.2 Political myth, or myth used politically

As Northrop Frye’s description of myth makes clear, myths are already an inherently political matter. However, the use of myth by modern political entities is contested. Any reading of texts related to the history of the Communist Party of China and the People’s Republic of China outside of mainland China will frequently contain reference to “myths,” from the “myth” of the “Long March” to the “myth” of Lei Feng to the “myth” of the “century of humiliation” to the “myth” of China even existing as a modern political unit with a claim to millennia of historical past.

Chiara Bottici, in her work *Political Myth*, attempts to develop a theory of the specificity of political myth. She notes the necessity in moving away from the “Enlightenment’s dichotomy of ‘myth’ versus ‘reality’” and, building instead on Karl Mannheim and Christopher Flood, adopts “a neutral definition” that does not carry within it assumptions either about the nature of beliefs in terms of its reality/unreality or the process of its reception as to whether they are consciously/unconsciously held.⁵ In doing so, such a conception is no longer embroiled at the level of individual psychology, focusing on questions of false consciousness or attributions of specific motivations, but in the field of, per Mannheim, a “sociology of knowledge.”⁶ As such, political myths are then ideas, or mapping devices, oriented in the social and political world, by which “human beings posit and represent the ends of and means of social action.”⁷ Similarly, in relation to history, the discussion is not around real or unreal content. Bottici problematizes an assignment that sees a division between “pure [political] myths” and “pure historical events” and stresses the ability for representations to move between the two, and thus must be analyzed accordingly, with whichever tools are appropriate for the context.⁸

Beyond this essentially social and structural characteristic, Bottici states that for something to “constitute a political myth, two further conditions must also be met.” First, it has to be a narrative, and second, “on the basis of this narrative form, it must be able to ground

⁴Frye, *Words with Power*, 42-43.

⁵Chiara Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 194.

⁶Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 193.

⁷Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 196.

⁸Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 184.

(*begründen*) or to coagulate and reproduce significance.” Bottici makes what she means by this quite clear: “To put it plainly, political myths are narratives that put a drama on stage. And it is from the impression of being part of such drama that the typically strong pathos of political myth derives.”⁹

3.2.3 “Political Myth” in the PRC and the Long March

In relating its story, Chinese Communism, particularly after its retreat to the countryside in a “protracted people’s war” and continuing through its later countrywide victory, uses staging, composition and orchestration to convey its political ideas. This complete work, this *opera*, of speech, music, movement, dance, images, and text (the proscenium of any Chinese stage, and often its wings, draped with slogans and the event’s name) shows many elements at once, like Claude Lévi-Strauss’s claim of a transition from the age of myth to the complicated “many parts at one glance” page of polyphonic composition in the European sixteenth century. Wang Chaozhu 王朝柱, the screenwriter of 2001’s *Long March*, continues this argument and even emphasizes that television is a “comprehensive art” 综合艺术 *zonghe yishu*.¹⁰ In this article for the journal *Chinese Television* 中国电视 when the series was released, Wang explains how his musical training was brought to bear in structuring the drama. Indeed, Wang claims that the Long March as historical event naturally corresponds to the movements of a symphony.

The Long March is “an important story” and thus, to use Roland Boer’s definition, a “myth.” A myth, as emphasized in previous sections, does not mean that the Long March as a historical event is not true. Paul V. Martinson, using Erich Voegelin’s categorizations of myth, discusses the claimed tendency of Chinese myths to be “historiogenic” as opposed to “cosmogonic” as he attempts to understand the impact of Maoism on religious understanding in China.¹¹ A historiogenic myth asks “Why is the social order and its particularity the way it is?”. A cosmogonic myth asks “Why is there something rather than nothing?”. Martinson draws directly on Kazuhiko Sumiya’s comparison of the Long March to the Exodus, noting that the Exodus narrative in the Pentateuch is precisely a historiogenic myth. However, he

⁹Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 196.

¹⁰Wang Chaozhu 王朝柱, “《长征》创作札记 (‘Notes on creating *Long March*’),” 中国电视, no. 10 (2001): 13, accessed 04/14/2022, <http://oversea.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?filename=ZGDD200110001&dbcode=CJFD&dbname=cjfd2001&v=>.

¹¹Paul V. Martinson, “From Reciprocity to Contradiction: Aspects of the Confucian-Maoist Transformation,” in *Transitions and Transformations in the History of Religions: Essays in Honor of Joseph M. Kitagawa*, ed. Frank E. Reynolds and Theodore M. Ludwig (BRILL, 1980), 185–218, accessed 05/18/2024, doi:10.1163/9789004378575_012, https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004378575/B9789004378575_s012.xml.

notes a small wrinkle in that the cosmogonic myth of Pangu and a cosmic egg begins the chain of mythical occurrences that Mao explicitly cites in declaring that nothing like the Long March has ever occurred before in China's long history. Mao also used this typical Chinese idiom expressing historical unprecedentedness, of Pangu's "initiating the heaven and the earth" 开天辟地 *kaitian pidi*, to describe the creation of the Communist Party of China.¹²

In adopting the "political myth" as an analysis, I acknowledge I am using European, Greco-Roman and Christian modes to analyze China and may be accused of giving too little weight to how traditional narratives that could be called myth actually function in the Chinese context. Indeed, "myth" is most frequently translated into Chinese as 神话 *shenhua*, speech about shen, spirits, gods, God, the supernatural, fairies, etc., and that is not what I am writing about. Any Chinese translation of this analytical frame would likely require simply printing the English "myth" repeatedly or the awkward and much more recent (Taiwanese) Chinese transliteration/translation 迷思 *misi*, which is perhaps worse than *shenhua*, since in its characters "confused thought" is expressed, very close to the standard Chinese translation for "superstition," 迷信 *mixin*, "confused belief."

A great difference in Chinese culture historically is that, in contrast to the lands of Christianity and Islam, its majority religious observances under the Chinese imperial system could contain at least three philosophies/traditions in it from around the fifth century CE (Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, the relative latecomer). The plurality that Bottici and others see vanishing with the rise of the Greeks did not disappear in China. The central Chinese Communist action after the 1949 transition was to remove Buddhist and Daoist holy men and women from neighborhood shrines and put them in more centralized monasteries, while taking those neighborhood structures over for public buildings.¹³ Even as Mao repeatedly drew on the full breadth of Chinese traditional thought to think through and illustrate his interpretation of Marxism-Leninism, Marxism-Leninism presented the first successful attempt in Chinese history to liberate society through unified ("totalitarian") belief—the most recent failed attempt before them being the Taiping. Mao's drawing upon Chinese history, sayings, popular narratives and, indeed, myths, is distinctive and also present in any modern Chinese adaptation, as will be clear in the analysis of the TV series.

Is allegory ever utilized in relaying the tradition? Yes, but I have found myth to be far more encompassing than allegory. It is the communal return to pull on threads of an increasingly

¹²The 1991 film that emphatically brought the spotlight back on Chen Duxiu as co-founder of the Communist Party of China used this idiom as its title, likely referencing Mao's remarks. Xiaomei Chen, *Staging Chinese Revolution: Theater, Film, and the Afterlives of Propaganda* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 60.

¹³Vincent Goossaert, "The Concept of Religion in China and the West," *Diogenes* 52, no. 1 (Feb. 1, 2005): 13–20, accessed 01/04/2023, doi:10.1177/0392192105050596, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192105050596>.

elaborated tapestry and viewing how the light of the temporal moment and its concerns falls upon that tapestry, so to speak. There is never a fully “one to one” correlation, which allegory depends upon, when applying myth to the present. Myth retains a dialectical tension between narratives that reinforce the status quo (because the myth has such weight in the community) and narratives that both hold up and abolish what came before. In that process, the urgent needs that procedurally created that myth become manifest (*Arbeit am Mythos*, “work on the myth,” to use Hans Blumenberg’s phrase).¹⁴

3.2.4 Comparative analysis: The Long March and the Exodus

Both the Long March and the biblical account of the Exodus lay out a pattern of a just society, with land reform, violent struggles over political forms, and a demand of fidelity to the idea, respectively, of revolution and revelation. Rabbinical commentary would later hold that in some sense all Jews across time were present at the giving of the law and teachings at Mount Sinai, voicing their assent to YHWH through Moses. Similarly, the comparatively small number of Chinese on the Long March transitions into all citizens joining in on the “new Long March” that is shaping their society under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. Just as all Jews were liberated from bondage in Egypt, all Chinese participate in the Long March, by means of anamnesis, the dynamic remembering of a past event that brings it into the present.

Both would end in victory, with massive divine or revolutionary violence, even if the types of violence are quite different. In the case of the Chinese Communists, this was done most prominently on the communal level through land reform campaigns where Communists organized a community’s retribution against those within it viewed as exploiters, such as landlords and certain bandits, and through a combination of guerrilla and conventional warfare at the scale of the country. The omission of class struggle violence, as opposed to guerrilla and conventional warfare, from official mythologization is one of the profound differences between the pre- and post-reform periods in the People’s Republic of China.

The myth parallel of the Exodus is narrated across the latter four books of the first five books of the Bible (the Torah or Pentateuch), that is, the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Beyond the sanitized depictions in American films such as *The Ten Commandments* and *Prince of Egypt*, these books contain the story of a liberation movement

¹⁴Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 7-8.

from slavery that undergoes natural hardships such crossing rivers and wilderness, leadership challenges, decisions regarding which paths to take, purges (conducted by both God and man), the formation of a political structure, land reform, and charismatic leadership. The primary differences I note are that the Long March narrative never blames the mass of people for any problems and that Moses' (and his priestly brother Aaron's) charismatic leadership ends before entering the "Promised Land."¹⁵

The motif of blaming the people is likely due to the Exodus narrative's final form coming about in an environment of exile and defeat in Babylon in the fifth century BCE. This exile and defeat were not being explained in what seems to have been the typical manner of the Ancient Near East, where the conqueror's gods had proven stronger and the vanquished gods joined or merged with the conquering pantheon. Instead, these final redactors of the narrative took on the novel explanation that their god, YHWH, had given them into the hands of their enemies (a constant phrasing) as a punishment for their sins. If they properly repented, YHWH would even let them return to the land. Thus, the Exodus, and specifically the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, forms both the initial contract (covenant) with Israel and the site of its immediate violation through the Golden Calf, with the Israelites rebelling and doubting constantly, even as they leave Egypt.

Archaeological and textual evidence for the Exodus is essentially nonexistent, leading the mainstream of academic biblical scholarship towards a development of what has come to be called the "peasant revolt" interpretation. Since there is no evidence of large-scale migration or invasion into Bronze Age Canaan, when the Exodus is supposed to have occurred, the idea is that peasants revolted against their oppressors and formed a new society that came to be Israelite society. This process was further accelerated by a new faith coming with a small group from Egypt, led by priests and prophets related to a founding figure named Moses, and providing faith, organization, leadership and a legend of their own trek to these rebelling peasants, sharpening the contradictions against their oppressors that would lead to their successful establishment of a new society. The parallels to the Long March and the Communist Party are even clearer in this theory.¹⁶

¹⁵Blaming the people in the Chinese context is most markedly expressed in recent history by liberal dissidents. This occurred most notably in 1980s works such as the Guomindang dissident in Taiwan Bo Yang's speeches turned essays, *The Ugly Chinaman*, and the immediately controversial CCTV documentary-polemic *River Elegy* (河殇, *heshang*), where the failures of Chinese modernization, whether capitalist or socialist, were attributed to deep historical roots. In the case of *River Elegy*, it was that Chinese society never became a "blue" society like Britain or the US, focused on the ocean and trade, but instead became a "yellow" society, focused on the two great rivers of China and various despotic irrigation projects, echoing the sometime Communist Karl Wittfogel's development of the sketchy concept of "Asiatic despotism" from Marx and Engels.

¹⁶Carol L. Meyers, *Exodus*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University

The Long March myth exists in a greater tension in the Reform period, when the Party has gone after the “foreign gods” of US-dominated global capitalism, yet continues to strongly insist on its loyalty to the original intentions of its founding and display the victorious material benefits of its strategy. Defeat, or “escape from history” (to use Domenico Losurdo’s term for the ex-Communists fleeing from the Soviet Union’s historical defeat), however, lurks within the story, particularly in the 2001 version.¹⁷ What are the Communists’ actual political goals and activity? *Long March* is generally vague on this, with TV series before and after actually making direct references to debt forgiveness and land reform.¹⁸ This is on the more extreme end of the trend noted by Rong Cai with regards to the revival of “red classics” in the ’90s, where the “red classics” with military content re-emerged, but those dealing particularly with land reform and collectivization were ignored.¹⁹

The latter issue of the “premature” death of the charismatic leaders Moses and Aaron in the Exodus narrative contrasts greatly with the story of Mao Zedong, who led the Communist Party to victory in seizing power and then went on to lead the People’s Republic of China from 1949-1976. The death of a charismatic leader before they can make their mark in an institutionalized revolution is a powerful trope. One need only think of Martin Luther King Jr declaring in his last speech in April 1968, supporting the Memphis sanitation workers’ strike, that he had “been to the mountaintop” (where YHWH allowed Moses to view the Promised Land but not enter it, due to his and the people’s sins), but would not be around to enter the “Promised Land” of racial and economic justice. This statement became part of the myth of MLK Jr as a charismatic leader through his assassination, seeming to provide a degree of foreknowledge of his death, or the riskiness of his political position against the edifice of American government and white supremacy.²⁰

In contrast, Mao Zedong became stereotyped by posthumous analysis as the charismatic revolutionist who did not have the temperament to lead his country after seizing power and

Press, 2005), 7-16.

¹⁷Domenico Losurdo, *Flucht aus der Geschichte? die russische Revolution und die chinesische Revolution heute*, 2. Ausg., Edition Marxistische Blätter 105 (Essen: Neue-Impulse-Verl, 2009).

¹⁸Including the 2024 drama series *War of Faith* 《追风者》 starring idol Wang Yibo 王一博, which, after dealing with the travails of central banking in early 1930s Shanghai, ends up with the characters on different sides in the Fifth Encirclement Campaign in the Jiangxi Soviet and actually includes scenes of peasant suffering under debt collectors and the redistributive and retributive justice of the Communists.

¹⁹Rong Cai, “Restaging the Revolution in Contemporary China: Memory of Politics and Politics of Memory,” *The China Quarterly* 215 (Sept. 2013): 637, accessed 02/05/2022, doi:10.1017/S0305741013000763, <http://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/china-quarterly/article/restaging-the-revolution-in-contemporary-china-memory-of-politics-and-politics-of-memory/9D3AEBF86128D792F2C2002A7CA35D87>.

²⁰“American Rhetoric: Martin Luther King, Jr. - I’ve Been to the Mountaintop (April 3 1968),” accessed 06/24/2024, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm>.

instead brought repeated tragedies upon it, the Lenin-Stalin combined problem, as Maurice Meisner suggests. This was most poignantly captured in remarks attributed to the Long March veteran and party leader Chen Yun, who served as a more hesitant architect of Reform and Opening Up, at the pivotal Central Committee work conference in November of 1978: “Had Mao died in 1956, his achievements would have been immortal. Had he died in 1966, he would still have been a great man. But he died in 1976. Alas, what can one say?”²¹

One can see that Mao combines elements both of “prophecies” of future betrayal and the admonitions Moses delivers at the end of his life in the Torah narrative. Beginning in the 1960s, after the failure of the Great Leap Forward combined with the criticism of the USSR, Mao issued baleful pronouncements (prophecies?) about what would happen to China if it decided to abandon the anti-revisionist socialist road and embarked instead upon a revisionist, even capitalist, road.²² His comments combined his “boundless faith” in the masses, in that he believed they would resist this, with a dark vision of elements of the leadership and China’s future system of political economy, including the prediction that China would become fascist.²³

Another element that would seem to separate the two myths of the Exodus and the Long March is the presence of the supernatural. However, this is not quite as clear a division as one might imagine. Particularly in *Long March*, constant reference to the will of the divine (“heaven”) is featured, and, on occasion, we see the traces of ritual commemoration of the figures of the Three Kingdoms and the Liangshan Marshes through statues and temples. Indeed, at one moment, as will be discussed in chapter 4, Mao ponders his next step in front of a statue of Zhuge Liang with his wife He Zizhen by his side.²⁴ He Zizhen even hesitantly offers up a prayer, to Mao’s amusement.

3.2.4.1 Significance as foundational myths

Is it appropriate to apply these “Western” myths to China? Why “use the foreign to analyze China”? After all, Chinese legends include no myth of mass migration of a people forming its ethnogenesis. Nonetheless, I think considering the parallels between the Long March and

²¹Philip Short, *Mao: The Man Who Made China*, New completely revised edition (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 638, 793.

²²The language of correct paths, lines and roads is something understandably shared among many religions and ideologies, to “keep the law” in Hebrew is to “walk the path.”

²³Mao Zedong, “We Must Prevent China From Changing Colour [July 14, 1964],” accessed 06/08/2024, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_24.htm.

²⁴Mao actor and co-director Tang Guoqiang’s previous big role before *Long March* and other Communist Party history films and TV shows was as Zhuge Liang in the 1994 TV series adaptation of *Romance of Three Kingdoms*.

the Exodus story can be fruitful for the following reason.

As mentioned above, there are no migration myths and legends at the root of any Chinese national existence, although specific groups of Chinese, such as the Hakka, may have some level of memory of migration. Throughout Chinese history, peasants have migrated due to famine, drought, or war, and founders of dynasties have moved from the “outside” to the “inside” (consider especially the dynasties with their origin in nomadic tribes, but also the founding of the Ming by a sort of religious banditry). However, I contend that none of these historical experiences formed a national legitimization myth that has persisted to today, especially in comparison to the Long March. To give a contemporary example, some 100 million Chinese were internally displaced refugees during the Sino-Japanese War, but this features as a fact of the time, as part of family and personal histories, not as the sort of a mass migration from one place to another. Indeed, it is speculation on my part, but perhaps the massive number of Chinese refugees (mostly internally displaced) that particularly began after the Japanese invasion of Shanghai in 1937 provided a sense of kinship with the Communists on their Long March.²⁵

When it comes to origin myths, the Chinese have always been in China, descendants of the Dragon and the Yellow Emperor, with the political history of warring states and uniting emperors an additional important factor. The lack of an originating migration myth for the mass of Chinese people, as opposed to a specific dynasty such as the Manchu Qing, in conjunction with Social Darwinist ideas of a powerful migrating people subjugating and displacing a weaker indigenous people, was one of the factors for the popularity among Chinese intellectuals of the Sino-Babylonian origin theory from the 1890s to the late 1910s, replaced with a likely incorrect tracing of some element of Chineseness to the “Peking Man” fossils, discovered in the 1920s, consistent with earlier non-migration senses of origin.²⁶ This should be distinguished from the migration of individuals (and presumably in some cases

²⁵Numbers start at at least 30 million and go up to 80-100 million. For a numbering of at least 30 million displaced people based on those fleeing Jiangsu and Zhejiang after the Japanese invasion, see R. Keith Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness: Refugees during the Sino-Japanese War* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011), 11. Displacement and refugee are a spectrum, since returning to one’s “native place” or other family might place one within a structure that did not require as much external relief and thus less of a record, but one was still displaced. For the larger number of 80-100 million displaced people across the whole country, see Jonathan Goldstein, *Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia: Singapore, Manila, Taipei, Harbin, Shanghai, Rangoon, and Surabaya*, New Perspectives on Modern Jewish History, volume 6 (Berlin ; Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), 129.

²⁶Tze-ki Hon, “From a Hierarchy in Time to a Hierarchy in Space: The Meanings of Sino-Babylonianism in Early Twentieth-Century China,” *Modern China* 36, no. 2 (Mar. 1, 2010): 139–169, accessed 09/29/2024, doi:10.1177/0097700409345126, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700409345126>; Hsiao-pei Yen, “Evolutionary Asiacentrism, Peking Man, and the Origins of Sinocentric Ethno-Nationalism,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 47, no. 4 (Nov. 1, 2014): 585–625, accessed 09/29/2024, doi:10.1007/s10739-014-9381-4, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10739-014-9381-4>.

their households), as in Chinese accounts of the origin of Korean people.²⁷

Thus, the mass migration of the Red Army and its military and political leadership introduces a new narrative structure into Chinese history and is the ethnogenesis of being what one could call, for want of a better term, “Red Chinese.” I hesitate to use the term “Communist Chinese” because that suggests too much formal ideological agreement and study, whereas with “Red” I intend to speak of the building of a “Red” environment that shapes one’s existence and community, regardless of one’s individual allegiance or ideology. I use this term in the sense that terms such as “red classics” and “red songs” also exist.²⁸ This looser “red” identity is particularly evident after the depoliticization of public discourse in Reform and Opening Up, and then further after the suppression of the protest movements culminating in 1989.

3.2.4.2 A “journey to the west of China”, China’s interior and imperial periphery

How Marxism came to China is presaged by the famous journey of a few to retrieve the Buddhist scriptures (取经) in India in the seventh century, fancifully retold in the classic novel *Journey to the West*. As Archie Lee points out, it is an expression of the piety and longing for the Buddhist scriptures. There is no similar longing for the Christian scriptures in the Chinese context. The Chinese people did not ask for the Christian scriptures and did not seek them out themselves. Instead, the scriptures “voluntarily came” to China (自来) (as Lee translates it, that is, no one in China asked for Christianity) starting with the Nestorians in the Tang dynasty (618-907) and then later with Catholics during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). Each of these communities faded from the historical record, until the Jesuits came during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) in the sixteenth century, continuing into the Qing dynasty (1644-1912) until at the beginning of the eighteenth century the Kangxi Emperor required Catholic missionaries to promise “to follow Matteo Ricci’s teachings” to be able to licitly function in China, which they could not due to previous decrees from the Holy See that made compliance with prevalent Chinese customs (particularly around ancestor worship) impossible (to which the Emperor was responding). Chinese Catholic communities

²⁷As in the Chinese account of a Shang dynasty sage named Jizi 箕子 founding Korea. Bret Hinsch, “Myth and the Construction of Foreign Ethnic Identity in Early and Medieval China,” *Asian Ethnicity* 5, no. 1 (Feb. 1, 2004): 99-100. Accessed 09/28/2024, doi:10.1080/1463136032000168916, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1463136032000168916>.

²⁸For a discussion of this category alongside depoliticization and the spread of commercialized mass entertainment, see Qian Gong, *Remaking Red Classics in Post-Mao China: TV Drama as Popular Media*, Media, Culture and Communication in Asia-Pacific Societies (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).

persisted, but on the peripheries of Chinese society.²⁹ The Christian scriptures were finally forced on China at a systemic level through humiliation and defeat by the Western imperialist powers, especially the British and their Protestant missionaries in the course of the nineteenth century. Thus, biblical stories and themes became more broadly known in China, if not particularly embraced, after the British victories in the Opium Wars.³⁰

In the context of the TV series *Long March*, Mao, Zhu De, and Zhou Enlai directly compare their endeavor to that of the *Journey to the West*. Marxism is a foreign belief framework that, like the Buddhist scriptures, has been actively sought out by Chinese people. Although there had been minor interest in Marxism and (non-Marxist) socialism earlier (mostly via studying abroad in Japan), the events of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, proving self-described Marxists could make a revolution, thrilled people like Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, members of the May Fourth “Movement”, who would later go on to found the Communist Party. Additionally, while Soviet political actions in China involved both revolutionary internationalism and the self-interest of the newly-founded and vulnerable polity, there was no bevy of Marxist missionaries that came to China to preach to Chinese people. Instead, specifically placed agents, organizers and intermediaries to link up with the already interested. Many of Marxism’s earliest Chinese adherents went to Europe or the Soviet Union for general study and political training.³¹ They went on their own “Journeys to the West” that deeply marked them.

The 2001 TV series, however, also detourns the necessity of even journeying to a western land to retrieve the scriptures. Given the role of Soviet emissaries in founding the Chinese Party, perhaps this is the continuous work of the Maoist strand, whereby Mao made a virtue out of his inability to learn a foreign language or go abroad (his only trips abroad would be to the USSR in the 1950s). It asks the important question of how those scriptures are adapted to local conditions in China. In 2001’s *Long March*, the task is difficult and there is

²⁹Audrey Seah, “The 1670 Chinese Missal: A Struggle for Indigenization Amidst the Chinese Rites Controversy,” in *China’s Christianity: From Missionary to Indigenous Church*, ed. Anthony E. Clark, Studies in Christian Mission 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 113-17.

³⁰Archie C. C. Lee, “The Bible in Chinese Christianity,” *The Ecumenical Review* 67, no. 1 (2015): 98, accessed 04/15/2024, doi:10.1111/erev.12139, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/erev.12139>.

³¹The organizational role of Soviet emissaries seems more important than their teaching or proselytizing role. Hans J. van de Ven speculates that the first Comintern emissary, Grigori Voitinsky, who arrived in 1920, “played a considerable role perhaps not in Chen Duxiu’s abandonment of republicanism but in his decision to take the initiative in the construction of a Leninist party in China.” Similarly, Voitinsky’s wife along with his Chinese translator, Yang Mingzhai, ran a school in Shanghai to teach Russian and otherwise prepare Chinese students to be sent to Moscow to study. Later, Voitinsky accompanied Chen Duxiu to Guangdong, where Chen had been offered a position with the short-lived anarchist-tinged government there, presumably with the hopes of making use of that for the nascent Soviet government. Hans J. Van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920-1927*, in collab. with University of California, Berkeley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 61-2.

no supernatural aid. The closest thing comparable to this supernatural aid is the knowledge of the motive, force, and laws of history that Marxism provides and achieving the support of the masses, the Party's "living Buddha." The Marxism they will have "comes out of China's mountains and valleys" (to use Mao's expression). It is a mass movement in China that spreads the message of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

3.2.5 Viewing the multilayered nature of Long March accounts through the lens of the Documentary Hypothesis

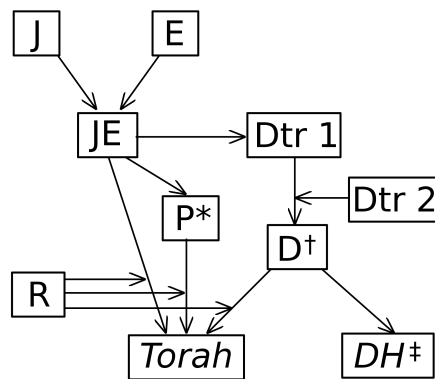


Figure 3.1: "Diagram of the 20th century documentary hypothesis: J: Yahwist (10th–9th century BCE), E: Elohist (9th century BCE), Dtr1: early (7th century BCE), Deuteronomist historian Dtr2: later (6th century BCE), Deuteronomist historian, P*: Priestly (6th–5th century BCE), D†: Deuteronomist, R: redactor, DH: Deuteronomistic history (books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings)" (Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Modern_document_hypothesis.svg)

3.2.5.1 Description of the Documentary Hypothesis

The Documentary Hypothesis has its origins in millennia of Jewish and Christian scholars noticing repetitions and contradictory scenes in the Torah, the first five books in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), also known by its Greek name, the Pentateuch. In traditional Jewish belief, carried on by Christianity, the Pentateuch was believed to be completely written by Moses. This was claimed even if it included a description of Moses' death. Further anachronisms in names, events, expressions and references became apparent to attentive readers, including Spinoza, that argued against Moses' authorship. In the eighteenth century, the first scholars noticed that the names used for God,

specifically “Elohim” and “YHWH”, seemed to indicate different authorship of “doublet” stories, such as two stories in which Abraham pretends that his wife Sarah is his sister, although that is not the only thing that distinguishes “E” (Elohim) and “J” (YHWH) sources. In the nineteenth century, the categorization of the sources that came to be called “P” (Priestly) and “D” (Deuteronomic) appears. (Figure 3.1).³²

The assignment of these sources since the nineteenth century continues to be a central part of the field of Biblical criticism, even if no longer absolutely dominant in the scholarship. Scholars are loath to give characterizations of the sources, since one cannot securely know anything about them, including their relative chronology. What it shows is that the current version of the Pentateuch that we have comes from four earlier independent texts and each has specific features and concerns. “J” and “E” seem mostly distinguished by differing uses of the name of God as mentioned above. These two are likely the earliest. “P” focuses on temple ordinances and has extended narratives related to leadership conflict due to incorrectly presenting sacrifices or, especially, not being ordained by God to present sacrifices. “D” is the latest source and places immense emphasis on a final speech and ritual by Moses in which the Israelites are told of and swear to the “blessings” and “curses” of their covenant with YHWH, written from a perspective of those curses having come to pass, along with a centralizing focus on the only appropriate worship being at the Jerusalem Temple.³³

3.2.5.2 Application to Long March historiography

What made me first consider the approach of taking the Documentary Hypothesis as a productive theoretical reference for analyzing the *Long March* TV series is the fact that Li De appears (in a partitioned manner that I will discuss), disappears and reappears. In the case of Long March accounts and the *Long March* drama series in particular, one can conceive of at least three sources/layers: the “Snowist” (S) source, the “Maoist” (M) source and the “Dengist” (D) source. The key aspect of the Documentary Hypothesis is that the compilers did not delete contradictory sources. This apparent “inability” has long puzzled readers, especially those who religiously believe the text must be a coherent and unified whole (i.e., “the word of God”). Similarly, the legitimacy of the Chinese Revolution and Mao in particular lend legitimacy to the present-day Communist Party of China. The key difference (and it is

³²For an excellent introduction to the Documentary Hypothesis and the question of authorship in the Hebrew Bible, see Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, First Simon & Schuster trade paperback edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019), Chapter 1; For detailed comparisons of some of these doublets, see Joel S. Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis*, The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

³³Marc Zvi Brettler, *How to Read the Jewish Bible* (Oxford New York: Oxford university press, 2007), 34-5.

a large one) is that these sources operate on the level of themes and importance assigned to elements in the 2001 *Long March series*, not repetitions of the same scene, as occurs in the Biblical text of the Pentateuch. In many ways my bringing the Documentary Hypothesis into the discussion is an expansion of Prasenjit Duara's theory of "superscription," using the notion of sources to emphasize the clear political periods and conflicts that have shaped the Long March myth. This particularly involves recognizing the successful superscription of a myth requires the myth's core to stay the same, that is, as Duara puts it, myths are "simultaneously continuous and discontinuous."³⁴

For example, the Zunyi Conference is an absolutely central conference for Mao becoming leader of the Party, triumphing over Bo Gu and Li De. This starts from the Snowist and Maoist accounts and must continue to have that weight in Chinese depictions, but whether that was "de jure" or "de facto" leadership is what changes, with the *Long March series*' narrator carefully describing the exact position given to Mao (episode 10, 14:43).

Snowist ("S") source Otto Braun (as "Li Teh") appears in Snow's account, along with a brief description of the conflict Braun had with Mao. The "Snowist" source focuses on the amazing story of these "red bandits" as a sympathetic American reporter wanted to see them.³⁵ In *Red Star over China*, Snow divides his narrative of the Long March, featuring only stray references to Li De, from a much later five page section of the book where he narrates Li De's poor leadership from the Fifth Encirclement campaign to the Long March until the Zunyi Conference, entitled "That Red Brain-trust."³⁶ It also focused on providing strong portraits of many figures that Snow encountered in Yan'an, including much of the leadership of the Party and Army, along with grassroots Party members.

Maoist ("M") source The "Maoist" sources minimize Braun, starting with the 1938 Chinese translation removing Snow's chapter dedicated to Braun ("That foreign brain trust"). This was done to avoid revealing inner party conflict to the outside (Chinese-speaking) world, according to translator Hu Yuzhi. Through the resolution on questions in party history in 1945, the "Maoist" source would abstract the exact conflict going on in the leadership of the

³⁴Duara, "Superscribing Symbols."

³⁵Kenneth Shewmaker notes that this perspective (the "persuading encounter," as he puts it) became very common in the Yan'an period, with almost all the Americans who made it to Yan'an returning with a positive perspective of the Chinese Communists. His book remains a useful source for how Snow and the Americans who came after him formed their impression. Kenneth E. Shewmaker, *Americans and Chinese Communists, 1927-1945: A Persuading Encounter* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971)

³⁶It was thus easy to cut the latter section on Li De from the 1938 Chinese translation, as translator Hu Yuzhi confirmed in the introduction to a later fuller edition, since it was seen to expose too much internal Party strife. Snow, *Red Star over China*, 181-208, 389-92; Snow, *Xixing manji* 西行漫记, 3,6.

Long March, attributing it more generally to Wang Ming, who was in Moscow at the time, and the “Wang Ming line.” This is a general feature of the Maoist party histories, as Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik points out: however many names one sees, it is very difficult to sort out the chronology and biography of the person behind a given name. Only Mao stands out as a “character” and has a “story.”³⁷

Additionally, Mao always stands on the correct side of the line struggles in the Party, in a manner that Weigelin-Schwiedrzik compares to Mao position in the party being that of a “Seer” (*Seher*), foreseeing the correct line to take.³⁸ Finally, even if a rewriting of party history was not achieved, the knowledge of it that Mao and those in party leadership had granted such importance retreated in the face of the Lin Biao-edited *Quotations from Chairman Mao*. It promised a direct access to revolutionary legitimacy for the younger generation by memorizing Mao’s words and applying them in their lives and environments, as opposed to learning the details of Party history, bundled up with respect for a previous generation that gone through the rigors of revolutionary armed struggle.³⁹

Dengist (“D”) source The “Dengist” source would find its central thread in emphasizing previous events more or even narrating new events that placed a priority on respect for the “collective leadership” of the Communist Party of China, especially those who participated in the Long March, along with the Long March as a pivotal turning point in the Sinicization of Marxism. Its summation is the 1981 resolution on Party and PRC history, which must, however, be read in its broader meaning beyond the affirmation of the historical summation of 1945, which took place after the Yan’an Rectification Campaign and Mao’s placement at the absolute center of the party with a burgeoning cult of personality. Its broader meaning is a glorification of the collective leadership of the Communist Party of China *against* the backdrop of Mao’s cult of personality and movements to “overthrow” the “capitalist roaders” in the party (which, as Weigelin-Schwiedrzik points out, was damaging when those figures had been presented as role models, such as Liu Shaoqi). However, as Weigelin-Schwiedrzik notes, at the level of historiography, the pre-1945 Party history never received a Cultural Revolution reinterpretation from those around figures like Yao Wenyuan and Zhang Chunqiao (of what was later termed the “gang of four”), even if there were indications that that was in planning.⁴⁰

³⁷Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, *Parteigeschichtsschreibung in der VR China: Typen, Methoden, Themen und Funktionen*, Veröffentlichungen des Ostasien-Instituts der Ruhr-Universität Bochum 29 (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1984), 62.

³⁸Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, *Parteigeschichtsschreibung in der VR China*, 74.

³⁹Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, *Parteigeschichtsschreibung in der VR China*, 106.

⁴⁰Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, *Parteigeschichtsschreibung in der VR China*, 67.

The memory of the pre-Liberation struggle was deeply important to the new leaders around Deng Xiaoping. Privately, Deng reportedly even played down the Luding Chain Bridge crossing and the bravery required to cross it: “Well, that’s the way it’s presented in our propaganda. We needed that to *express* the fighting spirit of our forces. In fact, it was a very easy military operation. There wasn’t really much to it. The other side were just some troops of the warlord who were armed with old muskets and it really wasn’t that much of a feat, but we felt we had to *dramatize* it” (my emphases).⁴¹ However, they were in no less need of that mythicized Party history. As Weigelin-Schwiedrzik points out, the “gerontocracy” alongside Deng who took power after Mao and the overthrow of Hua Guofeng were in favor of economic reforms and technological development, but they were not, themselves, the “technocracy” in China. Their authority, at least initially, rested precisely on those stories of revolutionary heroism and the aura they had from being generational comrades of Mao. Thus they had a profound interest in both relating party history and relativizing Mao’s contribution through memorializing the contributions of others, including themselves.⁴²

Both the “Maoist” and “Dengist” sources had greater intent, to use Frye’s comments on allegory as the dominance of the conceptual over the mythical, to indicate that *this* event meant the following and *that* event meant that, than the “Snowist” source.⁴³ The “voice of God” narration that occurs throughout the series at pivotal moments is there as essential commentary so that the viewer correctly understands what they are seeing. However, the mythical, which comes across most strongly in the “Snowist” source, is the desire to tell an engaging and epic tale, to bring the audience to emotional reactions. When scenes return to the emotional and lyrical, such as crossing the Luding chain bridge, Mao’s comfortable and assured interactions with peasants, and peasants leading daring guerrilla raids where, in passing, they also pick up newspapers for Mao, we retreat from the realm of direct allegory to the present and back to the palimpsest of earlier and charged myth (see discussion below of Prasenjit Duara’s theory of superscription). This is the life of the “Maoist” and “Dengist” sources outside of the 1945 and 1981 Resolutions.

⁴¹This was how Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter’s National Security Advisor, reported Deng Xiaoping’s remarks to him in a 2005 speech at Stanford, where Brzezinski related how he was invited to China in the early 1980s after leaving office, went on parts of the Long March route (reluctantly granted by his Chinese hosts), and spent much of his time with Deng Xiaoping discussing the Long March. Zbigniew Brzezinski, “America and the New Asia” (Stanford Institute for International Studies, Asia-Pacific Research Center, Mar. 9, 2005), 3, accessed 10/06/2024, https://fsi-live.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/evnts/media/Brzezinski_New_Asia_03_2005.pdf.

⁴²Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, *Parteigeschichtsschreibung in der VR China*, 107.

⁴³Myths are not as “socially nomadic” as folk tales, nor as rooted in one specific place or hero as legends. Frye, *Words with Power*, 42 Allegory, per Frye, is a response to the paradoxical or “indecent” elements of myth, smoothing it out and making it subordinate to a “conceptual language” and its standard as a form of commentary. Frye, *The Great Code*, 10

This focus on the epic story above its direct allegory is why Harrison Salisbury, elderly American newsman, could still feel himself to be in the “Snowist” tradition as he collated his information and wrote his epic of the Long March under “Dengist” supervision in the 1980s. Salisbury was motivated, as he writes in his introduction, to write that “full epic of this exciting expedition” that Edgar Snow had said would be written “someday” in *Red Star over China* back in 1937, and which Snow “had once hoped to write [...], but for many reasons never did.”⁴⁴ Wang Chaozhu, the screenwriter, would emphatically claim that his screenplay rectified Salisbury’s use of evocative phrase “conspiracy of the litters,” bringing Mao’s “thought work” with Wang Jia/xiang and Zhang Wentian on the Long March before the Zunyi Conference back to the direct Dengist allegories of “democratic centralism” and “collective leadership.”⁴⁵ However, even as “Dengist” source is clearly at work allegorizing in the series, the earlier mythic resonances of what Mao also mentions in the series, his “monkey” trickster nature, can only be “superscribed,” and he cannot be fully turned into an “organization man.” Mao in the series is recognized in a dialectical fullness that Wang Chaozhu distinguishes as the “suppressed Mao (受压的毛泽东)” and the “Mao in power (有权的毛泽东).”⁴⁶

This element of the “suppressed Mao” and the “Mao in power” receives a particularly noteworthy superscription of the Dengist source on the Maoist source, when Mao has a “tactical misstep” at the Battle of Tucheng in Episode 11 shortly after the Zunyi conference, something that Wang says “must” be depicted.” This relativizes Mao, as the Dengist source would prefer, and presents the Mao who can honestly assess a defeat, lay out the reasons for it, and self-criticize (as opposed to Li De in this series). However, by Episode 13, “Mao in power,” by force of personality, is yelling at the Central Committee about how military decisions like whether to engage in a specific battle are being decided by a “show of hands” instead of being based on his military expertise (he is against engaging in battle, perhaps an element of Dengist “bide your time and hide your strength” thinking on display). After seeing that he won’t win the argument, he threatens to resign and leaves. He is chastised for this behavior by his wife He Zizhen at home. He is soon able to have the Central Committee authorize a new “troika” for military matters, comprising Mao, Wang Jiaxiang and Zhou Enlai, with Zhou “in command,” even as Zhou immediately assumes “Comrade Zedong” would be in command. Mao insists the “spirit of the Zunyi conference” be respected (14:40).

⁴⁴Salisbury, *The Long March*, 2.

⁴⁵Salisbury, *The Long March*, Chapter 7, “The Conspiracy of the Litters”; Wang Chaozhu 王朝柱, “《长征》创作札记 (‘Notes on creating *Long March*’),” 10.

⁴⁶Wang Chaozhu 王朝柱, “《长征》创作札记 (‘Notes on creating *Long March*’),” 11.

3.2.5.3 Further considerations on the Exodus parallel and source superscription

Of course, the Long March took place in the documented twentieth century, while very little of the Torah or its Exodus narrative has any historical evidence. It was possible to speak to veterans of the Long March until very recently. However, even in the midst of the hyperdocumented twentieth century, there are historical events and processes that are obscured from at least public knowledge. The leadership struggles on the Long March are a primary example. Perhaps this is part of a “necessary” mythicization. Otto Braun’s negative position in these leadership struggles is perhaps also part of a necessary collection of traitors that modern nation-formation seems to acquire. Adrian Hastings, in arguing for the centrality of the Biblical narrative of Israel to the development of European nationhood, writes of how many national myths share the feature of an unwitting traitor, people who never expected they were betraying “the national cause” in any way: the “time-serving bishop serving a foreign master,” for example.⁴⁷ Otto Braun/Li De fits perfectly into this archetype and this is recognized by his entry on Baidu’s encyclopedia: “Although Li De came to the Soviet area with good intentions (良好愿望) to assist the Chinese Revolution, his erroneous leadership caused significant losses to the Red Army, resulting in the failure of the Fifth Anti-Encirclement Campaign and forcing the Red Army to retreat.”⁴⁸

The parallels to the Exodus have been noted in many popular accounts of the Long March, including Sun Shuyun’s 2008 attempt at a revisionist history. Few, however, have actually sat with the idea and teased out what it might mean. One who has is the Japanese Weber scholar Kazuhiko Sumiya, who, in his discussion, used an interesting translation of a Weberian concept: “emissary-prophecy” 使命预言 *shimei yogen*.⁴⁹ Sumiya’s use of the concept connects to the notion of a prophecy that is an ethical claim on the system, and notes that it comes from outside. The struggle to adapt that “outside something” into a form that serves the myth is what the 2001 TV series *Long March* addresses significantly.

The “emissary-prophecy” comes from an outside prophet who has a mission, and makes a claim on the ethics of those being addressed. This is distinct from the prophet of the exemplary life, allegedly a central part of religious life in countries like China and India. Through the impositions of Western imperial power, new thoughts came into China that shook up the society and placed new ethical claims on it. The syncretic Christian Taiping rebellion of

⁴⁷ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 190–191.

⁴⁸ 李德, in 百度百科 (*Baidu Encyclopedia*), accessed 09/14/2024, <https://baike.baidu.hk/item/%E6%9D%8E%E5%BE%B7/3426004>.

⁴⁹ Kazuhiko Sumiya, “The Long March and the Exodus: “The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung” and the Contemporary Significance of “Emissary Prophecy,”” in *China and Ourselves: Explorations and Revisions by a New Generation*, ed. R. Bruce Douglass and Ross Terrill (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 189–223.

the 1850s and 1860s was a direct attempt to Sinicize the core of the Western belief system, even as capitalism and a form of rationalism seemed to truly be at its core. Sumiya's account does not mention Otto Braun, a typical omission for the 1949-1979 period, but Braun clearly fits into this sort of analysis. Even as Mao is one with the mission and the charisma (an additional Weberian word), Braun is the "missionary" of Marxism, tracing the route of Marxism from Germany to the Soviet Union to China, and claiming a version that is at least more "orthodox" than what he sees Mao preaching and practicing.

Frye writes of how myths continue to hold power after an end of direct belief in them, claiming that "[a]fter the Temples of Jupiter and Venus were demolished and prayers and rituals no longer associated with them, they continued to live with undiminished energy in literature."⁵⁰ The "energy" contained in them continues to fuel new writings on and over a myth, similar to Prasenjit Duara's theory of superscription, where he used the development of the historical late Han general Guan Yu into Guan Di, the Chinese God of War, as his case study. Indeed, respecting and not erasing what came before is paramount, for that is what gives anything newly written "on" the myth its power: "The obliteration of rival interpretations of a myth is self-defeating because a superscription depends on the symbolic resonance for its effectiveness. Just as a word in poetry draws its power from its many half-hidden associations, a myth at any one time represents a palimpsest of layered meanings from which the superscribed version draws its strength."⁵¹

One can see the power of retaining, layering, and braiding together a narrative told by different sources into a (more or less) cohesive whole when applying the Documentary Hypothesis, and how the redactions serve the evolving "superscription."

3.3 The Sinicization of Marxism

The concept of Sinicization (sometimes translated as Sinification), *zhongguohua* 中国化, is intimately wrapped up in its Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought form with the correct application of that ideology to concrete conditions and circumstances—and, thus, with a fight against what is called dogmatism (*jiatiaozhuyi*, 教条主义). Adapting Marxism to the concrete conditions of countries that did not share western Europe's level of development originated with Russian Bolsheviks taking the Marxism mostly exemplified by the Social Democratic Party of German (SPD) and its dominant theorist Karl Kautsky, and applying it to "unripe" Russian conditions under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, engaging in what

⁵⁰Frye, *Words with Power*, 36.

⁵¹Duara, "Superscribing Symbols," 780.

Antonio Gramsci at the time called, positively, “a revolution against [Marx’s] *Capital*.”⁵² This “revolution against *Capital*”, the 1917 October Revolution, was the true beginning of Chinese intellectuals taking Marxism seriously as an ideological and organizational tool that could deliver China from what was later diagnosed (at least as popularized by Mao) as its “semi-colonial, semi-feudal” condition. China, for the first half of the twentieth century, existed as a patchwork of territories that were variously under governments proclaiming themselves the legitimate (or revolutionary) Chinese government, warlords, separatist movements, or direct foreign control, the latter usually in cities on rivers or the coast. Outside of urban centers, feudal and patriarchal forms of life often dominated.

These Chinese political activists of all stripes were seeking paths to modernize and revolutionize Chinese society and resist the imperialist powers’ demands and impositions on China. Many tended towards some form of anarchism, partly because Marxism seemed to address itself to a developed capitalist society. The 1917 victory of the Bolsheviks in most of the Russian Empire, a country that also lacked capitalist development, showed both the ability of this specific brand of revolutionary to capture power and that, despite the context of Russian underdevelopment, Marxist analysis could be utilized to guide their actions.

What does 中国化 *zhongguohua* actually mean? What makes something Chinese or not Chinese? Jon Solomon provides a high-level theoretical summary of the contestations of 中国化, “a process of epistemological adaptation or filtering that ostensibly occurs in the transfer or translation of foreign concepts, religions, discourses, institutions, and practices into and out of the ‘Chinese’ social space.”⁵³ As Nick Knight writes of Mao’s intellectual activity in the late 1930s, “Mao was determined to find a formula by which Marxism, a theory of history of European origins but claiming universal applicability, could be applied in China without abandoning its universality.”⁵⁴ “Politically, it pointed the way to the possibility of a genuinely universal Marxism in its insistence that a Marxism that refused to incorporate local voices into its structure reintroduced in a radical form the Eurocentric hegemony that was built into its historical origins.”⁵⁵ Mao spoke of the process as a specific political goal of Chinese Communists in October 1938:

⁵²Gramsci, “The Revolution Against ‘Capital’ (24 December 1917).”

⁵³Jon Solomon, “Sinicized Marxism as a Symptom of the Postcolonial Condition: Arif Dirlik, Mao Zedong, Xu Guangwei, and the Modern Regime of Translation,” in *‘Capital’ in the East: Reflections on Marx*, ed. Achin Chakraborty et al. (Singapore: Springer, 2019), 22, accessed 06/14/2024, doi:10.1007/978-981-32-9468-4_1, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-32-9468-4_1.

⁵⁴Nick Knight, *Marxist Philosophy in China: From Qu Qiubai to Mao Zedong 1923-1945* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 102.

⁵⁵Arif Dirlik, “Mao Zedong and “Chinese Marxism”, in *Marxism beyond Marxism*, ed. Saree Makdisi, Cesare Casarino, and Rebecca E. Karl (New York: Routledge, 1996), 144.

For the Chinese Communists who are part of the great Chinese nation, flesh of its flesh and blood of its blood, any talk about Marxism in isolation from China's characteristics is merely Marxism in the abstract, Marxism in a vacuum. Hence to apply Marxism concretely in China so that its every manifestation has an indubitably Chinese character, i.e., to apply Marxism in the light of China's specific characteristics, becomes a problem which it is urgent for the whole Party to understand and solve. Foreign stereotypes must be abolished, there must be less singing of empty, abstract tunes, and dogmatism must be laid to rest, they must be replaced by the fresh, lively Chinese style and spirit which the common people of China love. To separate internationalist content from national form is the practice of those who do not understand the first thing about internationalism.⁵⁶

This would be later summed up during the rectification period in Yan'an by Mao describing the twenty years since the founding of the Party in 1921 as "The twenty years of the Communist Party of China have been twenty years in which the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism has become more and more integrated with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution."⁵⁷ In the original Chinese, "become more and more" is *riyi* "increasing day by day" (日益), which provides an even greater sense of the historical progression envisioned.⁵⁸ As Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik demonstrates through her comparison of party history texts, this formulation of Mao's, combining Marxism's universal truth with the concrete realities of China, is a typical feature of party historians defining what the content of the history of the Communist Party of China is and what learns from it.⁵⁹ In "Reform our Study" Mao recommends the Stalin-steered *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik), Short Course* as the main text for Chinese Communists to become familiar with Marxism-Leninism. This suggestion of a history as the main source for learning a political ideology and philosophy is no accident. As Weigelin-Schwiedrzik points out in elucidating the his-

⁵⁶Mao Zedong, "The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War," Oct. 1938, accessed 06/14/2024, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_10.htm.

⁵⁷Mao Zedong, "Reform Our Study [May 1941]," Marxists Internet Archive, accessed 10/04/2024, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_02.htm.

⁵⁸Mao Zedong, "改造我们的学习 (一九四一年五月十九日) (Reform our Study)," Marxists Internet Archive, accessed 10/05/2024, <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/maozedong/marxist.org-chinese-mao-19410519.htm>.

⁵⁹It is Weigelin-Schwiedrzik's translation of the phrase with "täglich zunehmend" that also made me realize the English translation had omitted this further temporal quality. Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, *Parteigeschichtsschreibung in der VR China*, 164-5. This temporal and protracted process as expressed by the phrase "more and more integrated every day" *riyi jiehe* 日益结合 is also explicitly discussed by Party historian Ma Jibin in the material translated by Weigelin-Schwiedrzik in the appendices. Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, *Parteigeschichtsschreibung in der VR China*, 135.

torical philosophy behind party historiography in China, in service of an atheist philosophy, history can take prime place as the replacement of God or gods.⁶⁰

Hwa Yol Jung and Petee Jung provide a paragraph summary of the “core characteristics of the Chinese mentality” based on what they see as agreement among H.G. Creel, Fung Yu-lan, Chang Wing-tsit, Hajime Nakamura, D.T. Suzuki and Marcel Granet: a practical humanism oriented towards the social and the hierarchically gradated social relationships among them, continued through *li* (礼, ritual) and *ren* (仁, benevolence).⁶¹ Of course, Mao’s reference has a class, or at least populist, basis: “the fresh, lively Chinese style and spirit which the *common* people of China love.” It is also worth noting that, in English, the term Sinicization is often used to discuss the adaptation and acculturation of non-Han ruling groups to elite Han culture, such as the various Turkic/Nomadic dynasties and peripheral kingdoms, along with the Mongol Yuan dynasty and, especially, the Manchu Qing dynasty. Therefore, it can be confused with the Chinese term 汉化, *hanhua* “Han-ization”. However, this term is not used by the Communist Party of China in dealing with foreign ideas and concepts.⁶²

This distinction is crucial when considering the application of Marxism within China. The Communist Party’s focus on *zhongguohua* emphasizes a broader and more inclusive process of adaptation, one that transcends mere ethnic assimilation and delves into the realm of ideological and practical integration. It aims to synthesize Marxist principles with the unique cultural, historical, and socio-economic conditions of China. This approach allows for a form of Marxism that is not a mere import but a distinctly Chinese creation, tailored to address the specific challenges and opportunities present within Chinese society. Consequently, the Chinese Communist Party’s effort to Sinicize Marxism can be seen as a dynamic and ongoing process of cultural translation and contextualization, ensuring that Marxist theory remains relevant and effective in guiding China’s revolutionary and developmental paths. This process also serves as a counter-narrative to Western-centric interpretations of Marxism, asserting China’s agency in shaping its ideological trajectory and highlighting the adaptability of Marxist thought to non-Western contexts. This is similar in many respects to the Chinese experience with Buddhism, where a similar process has occurred on a more grassroots level and over a far longer duration, and which I turn to next.

⁶⁰Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, *Parteigeschichtsschreibung in der VR China*, 94.

⁶¹Hwa Tol Jung and Petee Jung, “The Hermeneutics of Political Ideology and Cultural Change: Maoism as the Sinicization of Marxism,” *Cultural Hermeneutics* 3, no. 2 (July 1975): 173, accessed 06/14/2024, doi:10.1177/019145377500300205, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/019145377500300205>.

⁶²The term *hanhua* may have some use in Party discussion of ethnic minority policy or other topics, but that is beyond the scope of this study.

3.3.1 Buddhism in China as an example of Sinicization

Buddhism is not an indigenous Chinese religion. However, by the sixth century CE, it was a central part of Chinese society. Its exact entry into China is obscure.⁶³ One feature is that local people were receptive to Buddhism, or “primed” for it. Whether it was Indian or Central Asian Buddhists, the Buddhists who engaged with their Chinese interlocutors translated texts that they felt would interest this section of the Chinese literati. In Buddhist history, these early “proto-Buddhists” are placed as part of the philosophical movement of 玄学, *xuanxue* “dark/mysterious learning”. *Xuanxue* was searching for answers to ontological questions such as the relationship between being and non-being, along with substance (体, *ti*) and function (用, *yong*).⁶⁴ Its (not necessarily antagonistic) opposite school was 名教, *mingjiao*, the “doctrine of names”, focusing on “social duties, ritual, law” and attempting more clear definitions of the roles and duties signified by particular Chinese characters.⁶⁵ It was entirely possible to pursue both approaches.

With regards to the early twentieth century, we have a much clearer record of what the Chinese intellectuals and activists who would later become Marxists were looking for. According to Zürcher, Buddhism’s entry into China was very uncoordinated and unsupervised.⁶⁶ This contrasts with the Jesuits, as Zürcher was making clear in his original comparison when he explained the failure of the Jesuits and Catholicism in China. However, it also contrasts with the Communists. Yet, there is some resonance with Archie Lee’s point about Christianity coming without being asked to China (自来, “voluntarily came”), since Soviet emissaries were in China to aid and instruct in party organization along with getting a United Front with the KMT off the ground.⁶⁷ However, they were not there to preach Marxism, but to organize. New Chinese Marxists could do that themselves.

While Chinese Buddhism is a recognized major stream of Buddhism, there have been Chinese Buddhists who have viewed its Sinicization as a dilution of its Buddhist distinctiveness in the face of acculturation with Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese Folk Religion.⁶⁸ The

⁶³Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*, 3rd ed, Sinica Leidensia v. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 3.

⁶⁴The latter would prove to be a very important distinction for the Chinese relation to adopting things from outside, from the West, from the capitalist countries, etc., starting with the late Qing official Zhang Zhidong’s application of the distinction to the military, and continues to this day. Jung and Jung, “The Hermeneutics of Political Ideology and Cultural Change,” 178.

⁶⁵Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, 86-87.

⁶⁶Stephen F. Teiser, “Foreword,” in *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*, 3rd ed, by Erik Zürcher, Sinica Leidensia v. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), xxv-xxvi.

⁶⁷Lee, “The Bible in Chinese Christianity.”

⁶⁸Fenggang Yang, “Sinicization or Chinafication?: Cultural Assimilation vs. Political Domestication of Christianity in China and Beyond,” in *The Sinicization of Chinese Religions: From Above and Below*, ed. Richard

Chinese Buddhist practice *geyi*, 格义, explaining Buddhist concepts with traditional Chinese terms and references from thought systems such as Daoism, that Zürcher discusses, contributed to this perception.⁶⁹ Practices such as *geyi* could be seen as a forerunner to Mao's frequent use of Chinese thought and art to explain Marxism.

Troubling the comparison somewhat, in terms of a positive assessment of Sinicization, is that the early practice of *geyi*, connecting Buddhism to Daoist and Confucian categories, meant that early Buddhism in China was inaccurately conveying Indian Buddhist thought, at least until the translation of far more Buddhist scripture in the Sui and Tang Dynasties and the rise of Chinese Buddhist schools and sects founded on that more complete knowledge.⁷⁰ This is pointed out by Liu Libo in a comparison of the Sinicization of Buddhism and Marxism. There are several points to be made here, although Liu does not express these in his comparison with Marxism.⁷¹

First, things move much faster in the twentieth century, so that the initially hazy impression of Marxism that the early members of the Communist Party in China had was soon fortified, albeit dogmatized, by study in the USSR and Europe. Second, the Marxism of Reform and Opening emphasized two threads that were certainly in dialectical tension: A) Marxism must be made Chinese by adaptation to and enrichment from Chinese conditions and Chinese forms of thought; and B) By emphasizing productive forces, Marxism was to be returned to a more "orthodox" and cold recognition that "development is a hard truth" (to paraphrase Deng). This was in opposition to Mao's "voluntaristic" Marxism that rejected, as much as possible within Marxist thought, historical and economic "determinism."⁷² Thus, noting that Buddhism's earlier form was somewhat inaccurate could be a veiled criticism of Mao.

Just as Buddhism is now Chinese and only a small minority would declare that Chinese Buddhism is not "real" Buddhism, Marxism-Leninism is now Chinese, especially in a world

Madsen (BRILL, May 28, 2021), 12, accessed 06/14/2024, doi:10.1163/9789004465183_003, <https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004465183/BP000002.xml>.

⁶⁹Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, 12.

⁷⁰Liu Libo 刘力波, "佛教中国化对马克思主义中国化的历史启示," 青海社会科学, no. 6 (2009): 146, accessed 06/15/2024, <http://www.cqvip.com/qk/82728x/200906/32592701.html>.

⁷¹Instead, he focuses on how Chinese culture, although open, doesn't simply accept everything foreign. Rather, in a demonstration of China's millennia-long continuous culture, it absorbs and adapts the foreign.

⁷²Whether Mao's Marxism was "voluntaristic" (at least during the Cultural Revolution) and whether Marxism itself is "deterministic" is beyond the scope of this paper, but is used more to indicate the sense that those promoting "productive forces" at the time characterized it in trying to figure out the "driving force of history." See, for example, Lin Chun's regrets in promoting a "productive forces" line at the time that she now believes led to "extreme determinism" and a return to capitalism in China. Isabella Weber, *How China Escaped Shock Therapy: The Market Reform Debate*, Routledge Studies on the Chinese Economy (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, N.Y: Routledge, 2021), 158. See also, with associated endnotes, Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, *Parteigeschichtsschreibung in der VR China*, 99.

where it is the largest, wealthiest and most powerful Marxist-Leninist country to survive. The process of Sinicization firmly moved away from the Stalinist formulation of “national in form, socialist in content,” to a more dialectical interaction between them. As Mao emphasized, how can local context and socialist political action truly be separated? Marxism is universal, but useless without awareness of and application to specific, concrete circumstances. Sinicization underscores the dynamic and fluid nature of cultural and ideological integration. Just as Chinese Buddhism evolved by intertwining with indigenous philosophical and religious traditions, creating a distinctly Chinese form of Buddhism, Marxism in China has undergone a similar transformation. It has adapted to the unique historical, social, and cultural context of China, resulting in a version of Marxism that is deeply embedded in Chinese identity and governance. This evolution reflects a broader pattern within Chinese history, where foreign ideas are assimilated and reinterpreted through a Chinese lens, leading to a synthesis that respects the core tenets of the original ideology while making it relevant and functional within Chinese society.

3.4 The Long March myth as realized in the 2001 *Long March* TV series, “Main Melody” and a composer turned screenwriter

In 1987, as a response to both the popularity of commercial foreign and domestic films, the Party promoted the concept of “main melody” or “leitmotif” films with a slogan to “highlight the main melody and encourage diversity” (*hongyang zhuxuanlü, tichang duoyanghua*; 弘扬主旋律, 提倡多样化).⁷³ Another reported version of the slogan uses *tuchu* 突出 (“stress, give prominence to”) instead of *hongyang* 弘扬 (“highlight, promote, carry forward”).⁷⁴ While “main melody” can be perceived as simply a category of Chinese media production that intentionally conveys government-approved messages, the musical metaphor provides a way to openly discuss anticipating and shaping the audience response, including for series based on established historical narratives, such as *Long March*. The work produced under this slo-

⁷³Hongmei Yu, “Visual Spectacular, Revolutionary Epic, and Personal Voice: The Narration of History in Chinese Main Melody Films,” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 25, no. 2 (2013): 169, accessed 04/22/2023, JSTOR: 43492536, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43492536>.

⁷⁴Tim Tausch, “Die Popularisierung des Politischen und die Aktualisierung nationaler Mythen im Main-Melody-Film,” in *Politiken des Populären: Medien – Kultur – Wissenschaft*, ed. Ivo Ritzer and Harald Steinwender, Neue Perspektiven der Medienästhetik (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2019), 142, accessed 04/22/2023, doi:10.1007/978-3-658-22923-8_7, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-22923-8_7.

gan was intended to satisfy the audience aesthetically and emotionally while also conveying political messages. It differed from the propaganda of the Maoist period by being produced in the context of a wave of official and unofficial imports from outside the PRC.

In that context, it can only hope to be a main melody and not the only melody, but a melody that is still shaped by Mao's thoughts back at the Yan'an Forum on Art and Literature. Indeed, the compositional metaphor with its importance of technique and processing was, in a fashion, in Mao's original draft. As Bonnie McDougall notes, Mao's original formulation at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, as expressed in the 1943 text, is that literature is "more *organized*, more typical, more ideal, and hence, more universal than life," which was replaced in the *Selected Works* with "on a higher plane, more intense." This is, as McDougall points out, "a specific, concrete term implying reliance on structure and technique in literary creation," while Mao's later edit may have "wanted to de-emphasize again the importance of technique or processing in literature."⁷⁵

The relationship of music and China's Communist history is very close. First is the introduction and adaptation of Western musical and compositional norms into China, including the concept of choral song. Second is the retreat to the countryside and the engagement and appropriation of peasant folk songs. This occurs in its most concentrated form in the northwest around the Communist "capital" of Yan'an and lends a northwestern flavor to many of the "red songs." Song and dance are used to spread the revolutionary message. The music of the Chinese revolution, solidly supporting this political myth, was a hybrid of native Chinese musical traditions, as developed by May 4th intellectuals, with European classical music, American and British missionary hymns, and (especially after 1949) Soviet popular political music. The memory of the Cultural Revolution, for example, is often contained in memory of its music, and the singing of "red songs" has been a central part of proclaiming an ambiguous loyalty to the pre-1978 goals of the revolution, where its exact connection to a current political program is hard to disentangle from patriotic "Red" nostalgia.⁷⁶

Wang Chaozhu compares the way he structured *Long March* to a symphony and speaks of his training in music. It is worth considering here, in conjunction with the concept of "political myth" and how it is structured, what Bottici skeptically mentions as an interesting claim from Claude Lévi-Strauss:

⁷⁵Bonnie S. McDougall and Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art": A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary*, Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, no. 39 (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies; University of Michigan, 1980), 20, 70, 95.

⁷⁶For an outline up to 1945, see Hong-yu Gong, "Music, Nationalism and the Search for Modernity in China, 1911–1949," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 10, no. 2 (2008): 38–69, accessed 04/23/2024, https://www.nzasia.org.nz/uploads/1/3/2/1/132180707/4_gong_3.pdf.

If we consider that Lévi-Strauss's theory of myth was also concerned with outlining the universal structures of the human mind rather than with defining the specificity of myth, it comes as no surprise that he maintained that there was a close "similarity" and "contiguity" between myth and music—a theory for which he was strongly criticized. By similarity he meant the closeness of structure between the two, and by contiguity the fact that the point at which myth decreased in significance in Western thinking—that is, during the Renaissance and the seventeenth century—corresponded to the emergence of the great musical styles.⁷⁷

What myth gave way to, in Lévi-Strauss's theory, was the novel, although he emphasized that it did not fully disappear. Lévi-Strauss's clearest description of this structural similarity came in a lecture for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation on the topic of myth and music, where he claims that in anglophone countries ("though also in France") critics viewed the connection as arbitrary. His main point is that in reading a myth, you would read it similarly to an orchestral score, in that it would not be a completely continuous sequence. You would have many layers across the orchestral parts on each single page. "Each page is a totality."⁷⁸ Something similar could be attributed to the imagistic poem Mao produced shortly after the Long March quoted at the beginning of this paper, further emphasized in the scene by crossfading over various images as Mao writes the poem with a brush.

⁷⁷Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 103.

⁷⁸Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Myth and Music," in *Myth and Meaning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Dec. 15, 1978), 44–54, accessed 05/01/2023, doi:10.3138/9781442654112-007, <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.3138/9781442654112-007/html?lang=en>.

4 2001's *Long March* 《长征》

The living Lenin was infinitely more vigorous and interesting than the Lenin of fiction, drama, and film, but the living Lenin did so many things in the course of a single day, and so much of what he did was identical with other people's work; besides, very few people ever saw Lenin, and after his death no one could ever see him again. In these respects, the Lenin of fiction, drama, and film is superior to the living Lenin.

- Mao Zedong, Yan'an Forum on Art and Literature, 1942 (1943 text, omitted from the *Selected Works*).¹

The overarching question of this thesis is why Li De, that Soviet advisor otherwise known as Otto Braun, reappeared in the mainstream visual retelling of the Long March starting in the 1990s and what that tells us about the Party's ability to integrate Marxism-Leninism's foreign ideology with domestic Chinese realities. With 2001's *Long March*, we see Li De written into the myth in the most popular medium, television, in what, to date, is the canonical serial TV drama on the Long March's leadership struggles.

Long March's first episodes were broadcast on June 14, 2001. On December 11 of the same year, China would join the World Trade Organization (WTO) after years of negotiation by prime minister Zhu Rongji. This context is particularly important, a milestone on the road to placing the market in command of production and consumption in China, with promises made to the US-dominated world capitalist order.

Through presenting the history and background of the production, along with relevant scenes and themes from the series, I will demonstrate how the show foregrounds Li De as a foreign element, using him as an example of how the Party successfully integrates foreign and domestic ideas. The character of Li De gives complexity to the situation in 1934 and serves as the catharsis for its resolution. As noted earlier, leadership conflicts that started in Jiangxi had not generally been part of the Maoist narrative before Reform and Opening, certainly not with much personalization of the opposition to Mao Zedong and his "line" beyond the "Wang Ming line."

¹McDougall and Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art"*, 70, 95.

4.1 Plot summary

The Chinese TV series *Long March* 《长征》 (2001) is a 24-episode serial drama broadcast on Chinese Central Television (CCTV) in June 2001. It begins in the Jiangxi Soviet (Chinese Soviet Republic) in its capital of Ruijin, portraying events between the Nationalist attack on Guangchang, in the north of the Soviet, in April 1934 during the Fifth Encirclement Campaign, to October 1935 and the arrival of Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and other members of the Central Committee along with their armies in Wuqi 吴起 in northern Shaanxi province. While sketching the daunting natural and military challenges facing the Red Army and their heroic response to them, as in earlier depictions from the Maoist era, this series focuses on the struggles among the party leadership and Mao's rise to being the central figure in the Party. Mao begins the series as the relatively powerless Chairman of the Jiangxi Soviet, having been removed from military command despite his successful leadership of the resistance during the four previous Encirclement campaigns.

The first ten episodes illustrate Mao's marginalization by Bo Gu, the extremely young Moscow-trained "returned student" who holds the de facto leadership position of "person with overall responsibility," and the German military advisor sent by the Comintern, Li De (Otto Braun). While Bo Gu and Li De are members of the three-person leadership group (三人团, "Troika," "Triumvirate") alongside Zhou Enlai, Zhou's role is presented as simply administering and, almost more importantly, ameliorating the decisions of the other two. This is why the series makes it clear, particularly with regards to Bo Gu and Li De's scheme to transfer Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai to the Soviet Union for "medical treatment" that the Comintern did not agree with their plans and rejected them. Additionally, this allegation that Zhou Enlai was also to be sent to the Soviet Union removes some of his culpability as part of the "Troika."²

The first ten episodes culminate in Li De's removal from his de facto decision-making position at the Zunyi Conference in Guizhou in January 1935, along with the dissolution of the Troika.³ Meetings punctuate the entire series and its Long March as part of deciding,

²There is no mention of any plan to send Zhou Enlai to the Soviet Union for medical treatment in the communications with the Comintern Executive listed under Zhou Enlai in the Index of Names in Leutner, *KPdSU(B), Komintern und die Sowjetbewegung in China*. However, Mao's health is mentioned repeatedly, including by Zhou Enlai, although it is unclear who originated the idea to send him to the Soviet Union. The Comintern Executive strongly objects to the plan, given Mao's popularity and political influence in the Jiangxi Soviet, considering it an absolute last resort. They also seem to take at face value that this is a question of Mao's health and available treatment options, bolstered with the objection that transporting a seriously ill senior Communist to the USSR from the Jiangxi Soviet would be a very risky endeavor given the chance of discovery. See, for example, the Comintern Executive's response to Li Zhusheng (Slavin) on April 3, 1934 and to Arthur Ewert on April 9. Leutner, *KPdSU(B), Komintern und die Sowjetbewegung in China*, 722-4.

³The series accurately reflects the ambiguous titles in use during this period, with positions such as "Chair-

quite literally, what path to take. By episode 7 we have the meeting at Tongdao, hastily called in an attempt to change the route. Mao's position is supported by the entire Central Committee, with neither Li De nor Bo Gu able to formulate an objection to arguments that their plan of continuing to head into Hunan to meet with the Fourth and Sixth Front Armies would be walking into an ambush by Chiang's numerous forces.

In episode 8, we're given the Liping Conference, most of which is devoted to Mao attacking Li De, who is absent due to illness, and Bo Gu's worshipful, meek and obedient attitude towards Li De. The series uses this section between the Liping and Zunyi Conferences to show changes in Central Committee sentiment and actions that favor Mao's opposition.

The Zunyi Conference (episode 10) in Guizhou in January 1934 abolishes the Troika, removing Li De's de facto decision-making authority and adding Mao to the standing committee on military affairs, where he is to assist Zhou in making those decisions. This is essentially the conclusion of the Li De arc. The Zunyi Conference combines moments of the actors directly speaking and montages with voiceover relating the result.

The next seven episodes (11-17) feature the Red Army under Mao. They've thrown off dogmatic submission to foreign advice, and escape the clutches of Chiang Kai-shek in the face of daunting rivers and mountains often populated by ethnic groups, such as the Yi, who assume the mostly Han Communists to be the same as the Han leadership of the Nationalists. The series takes care, as its screenwriter Wang Chaozhu emphasized in his 2001 article about creating the series, not to present the aftermath of the decision at the Zunyi Conference as smoothly progressing to victory (where Mao "commands like a god") but showing that Mao himself needs to figure out how to correctly lead by showing the defeat at Tucheng. Nonetheless, there are immediate improvements. Mao ends up establishing a new Troika of sorts to more efficiently make military decisions.⁴

These seven episodes feature the most famous elements of the Long March that appeared in previous portrayals. (The famed march through the deadly grasslands is covered later, in Episodes 21-23.) We have a river crossing and the famous doubling back over the Red (Chi) River, a key moment of Mao's tactical brilliance. Episode 17 features the taking of the Luding chain bridge, depicted in many paintings and illustrations. These episodes most directly highlight Mao's brilliance at the level of guerrilla strategies, with space given to commanders and soldiers for heroic implementation, showing how Mao leads the Nationalist

man" or "General Secretary" of the Central Committee absent after General Secretary Xiang Zhongfa's arrest and execution by the Nationalists in 1931. Thomas Kampen, *Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and the Evolution of the Chinese Communist Leadership* (Denmark : Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2000), 45-46, accessed 01/07/2022, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&AN=463029>.

⁴Wang Chaozhu 王朝柱, "《长征》创作札记 ("Notes on creating *Long March*")," 13.

forces on a wild goose chase in China's southwest. Additionally, as a desperate effort is made to cross a river in Episode 11, the question of managing ethnic differences as revolutionaries comes to the fore.

This is also shown to be the cause of past revolutionary failures. Shi Dakai, a leader ("wing prince") of the syncretic Christian Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) against the Qing dynasty, is alleged by a biased Qing history to have failed to cross the river in his flight due to wanting to stop and celebrate the birth of his son as a member of the royal house of a pretender Chinese dynasty rebelling against the legitimate dynasty. As the Communists engage in their desperate local investigation of how to cross the same river, they discover from an aged local informant that Shi Dakai's true mistake was not making an alliance with the Yi people in the region. This becomes a central theme of the remaining episodes, with Mao and the other leadership encountering the Yi, Tibetans and a Living Buddha Lama, along with eating a meal with an *ahong* (imam) from the Hui people upon arriving in the "divine land" 神州 (an ancient poetic term for China), as the *ahong* refers to it, where they will establish the liberated base area in northwestern China around Yan'an.

Another leadership conflict is introduced in the final six episodes (18-24). Mao's First Front Red Army meets up with the Fourth Front Army under Zhang Guotao. These episodes allow for the full reconciliation of Bo Gu (and a fellow Central Committee member and minor opponent, Kai Feng) and shine a conciliatory light even upon Li De, as they all side with and defend Mao against Zhang Guotao. Zhang Guotao's attempts to change the direction of the Red Army, to make himself Chairman, and even to establish a new Central Committee are all witnessed in the final episodes of the series, but that arc is not concluded.

Episodes 21-23 feature the grueling trek north through the deadly and high altitude Songpan grasslands in order to bypass areas the Nationalists could easily attack. In these episodes, those crossing the grassland are shown engaging in great sacrifice and care for each other, culminating in everyone linking arms and singing the Internationale as they cross a particularly difficult final stretch under heavy rain. Running under the overall structure of the TV series is a subplot concerning the Nationalist and warlord alliance. The level of conflict among Communists shown throughout the series is matched by the scheming and division among Nationalist regional factions and power bases as Chiang Kai-shek attempts to catch the fleeing Red Army. Throughout the series, Chiang is repeatedly confronted by the schemes of the warlords, particularly their desire to move the Red Army through agreed-upon transit corridors so that Chiang would have no reason to interfere in the warlords' power bases. The subplot of Chiang and the Nationalists ends with Chiang berating his generals and sitting alone in semi-darkness in his office. The map that Chiang was using to track the Red Army

is no longer needed. He orders it to be taken down; it falls dramatically from on high, covering the camera lens. It is worth noting that a number of the depicted officers and warlords allied with Chiang found advisory roles in provincial governments in the PRC or were imprisoned for a period of thought reform after 1949. Regardless of their final loyalties, choosing to highlight the self-interest of so many Nationalist figures allows any mention of Communist negotiation with these figures for safe, or at least speedy, passage to be something that simply reflects exploitation of the personal goals and ambitions of these figures rather than compromises of principle on the part of the Communists.⁵

Finally, casting the accomplished actor Chen Daoming as Chiang Kai-shek allows him to instill the character with gravitas and nuance, even as soundtrack cues indicating a villain introduce him at times. With Chen anchoring the role, we get a sense of a clever and resourceful leader who is let down, at the ideological and organizational level, by the system at whose pinnacle he has found himself.

The final Episode (24) of the series is set in the loess cave dwellings of the northwest, where the Communists would establish their liberated base areas around Yan'an. Here Mao writes his well-known eponymous poem on the Long March and images from the travails and successes enacted in the series are crossfaded over his head as he does so. We hear, as mentioned in the Introduction, Mao's famous declaration on the significance of the Long March: "We answer that the Long March is the first of its kind in the annals of history, that it is a manifesto, a propaganda force, a seeding-machine." This is followed by the voiceover emphasizing the importance of the principle of collective leadership in the Party and how that principle carries down to today (2001).

4.1.1 Screenwriter Wang Chaozhu's symphonic division of the Long March into movements

Screenwriter Wang Chaozhu divides the *Long March* series into symphonic movements based on the Long March itself being almost a "natural" 浑然天成 symphony. Below are his divisions.

First Movement (Overture): The episodes from the loss of the town of Guangchang to the

⁵This is interesting in conjunction with discussion of the concept of "line struggle" in party history since as Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik points out, the "line struggle," for both the correct and incorrect line, places a political power struggle on a higher plane, where the participants are not "self-interested, power-hungry and arbitrary." At the same time their position as acting subjects in party history is limited, unlike enemies such as the Nationalists, who in *Long March* are granted (somewhere between the party histories and more emotive historical novels mentioned by Weigelin-Schwiedrzik), quite a full range of varied motivations and actions. Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, *Parteilichschreibung in der VR China*, 65.

Nationalists in Episode 1 to the “bloody battle” of the Xiang River (Xiangjiang) in Episode 5 is the tragic first movement, the overture, with “ten thousand bugles sounding.”

Second Movement (Adagio): As the soldier of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, reduced from 80,000 to 30,000, with little food and ammunition, ponder how they could have reached this point from a previous position of “invincibility,” they also wonder who might be able to rescue them from this disaster. They brave the early winter as they pass through Tongdao, Liping, Houchang and over the Wu River into Zunyi, Guizhou in Episode 9. This is the “mournful yet profound” second movement, the adagio.

Third Movement (Allegro): After Mao's returning to a position of command at the Zunyi Conference in Episode 10, we have the battle of Tucheng (Wang does not note in his description here that it wasn't a victory, but mentions it later in his article, on p. 13), crossing the Red River four times to evade and confuse the KMT (四渡赤水), going south to cross the Wu River, a feigned attack in Kunming in order to make a surprise attack on Guiyang, going north to cross the Golden Sand River (金沙江), fighting to cross the Dadu River with the flying crossing of the Luding chain bridge and crossing the snowy mountains to meet with the Fourth Red Army in Episode 19. The Red Army finally got out of a “passive” position and into an “active” position, winning a string of victories. This is the third movement, the faster allegro giving the listener the feeling of confidently propelling forward.

Fourth Movement (Finale): The meeting of the First (under Mao and the Central Committee) and Fourth (under Zhang Guotao) Red Army in Episode 19 brings us to Zhang Guotao's conspiracy to take over the Central Committee, disagreements about the direction to go, and thus the First Red Army having little support in crossing the deadly marsh grassland plateaus north, running out of food. This fourth movement echoes the somber tone of the first movement. However, the movement ends with a victory at Lazikou and on entering northern Shaanxi in Episode 24, we hear the bright and cheerful strains of the Shaanbei folk music (Wang Chaozhu specifically mentions it being the traditional melody form, 信天游 *xintianyou*) that would become inextricably linked with the revolution, along with Mao writing his poem “Long March.”⁶

4.2 History and background of production

The recognizable outlines of the 2001 Long March TV series existed in Wang Chaozhu's earlier 1996 film version, with many of the same actors and the same title. The series was broadcast in the summer of 2001, in celebration of the anniversary of the 1921 founding of

⁶Wang Chaozhu 王朝柱, “《长征》创作札记 (“Notes on creating *Long March*”),” 9.

the Communist Party of China. In December 2001, China entered the WTO after years of negotiation, mostly with the US. Roughly two years earlier, the US had bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade on May 8, 1999. This accident (as the US claimed it to be) occurred in the closing days of Yugoslavia, or at least an entity laying claim to the title if not its politics, another death of an “actually existing socialism” alongside that of the Soviet Union.

The series has been rebroadcast on Chinese television ever since, notably in 2014-15 for the eightieth anniversary of the Long March. The version viewed for this thesis is a rebroadcast on CCTV4 in 2017. The subtitles have been reformatted and are in Chinese and English. Additionally, the aspect ratio is widescreen (16:9) as opposed to its original 4:3 aspect ratio, meaning that parts of the original image at the top and bottom are cut off. Finally, there is at least one scene missing from the series as it currently exists, while abrupt cuts and fades to black along with obvious redubbing indicate the likely presence of other edits and cuts. Therefore, this thesis cannot claim to be an analysis of the series in its original broadcast form, even if most of its content can be assumed to be essentially the same.⁷

This thesis focuses on Long March's momentous shift of bringing a foreigner and his role in inner-party conflict to the forefront of dramatic representations of the leadership during the Long March. Long March productions that do not focus on Party leaders as dramatic characters in the drama are an entirely different topic, with a much longer history. This is a drama where every historical character that appears on screen is named through onscreen text, often with their rank at the time, allowing Chinese viewers to immediately bring associations from outside of the drama to bear on the character.

Foreignness as a problematic aspect of Chinese revolutionary history was not unique to Long March. Long March was broadcast a few months after the drama *The Sun Rises in the East* 日出东方, which, as Xiaomei Chen argues, foregrounds a Chen Duxiu who is initially adamantly opposed to blindly following Soviet models and Comintern advisors.⁸ “By representing Chen as the anti-Soviet and anti-Stalinist hero, the television series appealed to the neonationalist sentiments of some members of the Chinese audience at the beginning of the twenty-first century when confronted with a new fear of foreign domination of China in a global economy.”⁹ As in the first ten episodes of Long March, with its scenes picturing Li De's efforts to control things, the first ten episodes of *Sun Rises in the East* narrate the interventions and meddling of the Comintern. In the year of joining an international capitalist

⁷The only deleted scene that I have found is the scene of Li De chasing his assigned female partner, who is rescued at that moment by Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. This scene would have appeared shortly before the conference at Liping in episode 8.

⁸Chen, *Staging Chinese Revolution*, 90.

⁹Chen, *Staging Chinese Revolution*, 93.

organization, memories had surfaced of the Communist Party of China's membership in an international (Communist) organization—and the detrimental effect that had on their ability to lead a successful Chinese revolution.

What distinguishes this 2001 TV series is that it brought the element of foreign meddling to the central “myth” of the Chinese revolution, that of the Long March, instead of to the hazier stories of the founding of the CPC, which, in the Maoist period, had focused on the figure of Mao Zedong as the correct “red thread (line)” throughout the line struggles in the Party.¹⁰

4.2.1 Earlier Long March productions in film and TV

However, the introduction of Li De as a plot element must be historicized. This series was in fact the fourth production for film and TV to feature Li De, but none of the previous productions had the reach of this 2001 series.¹¹

Indeed, the first production to feature Li De, the eight episode series *History's Choice* (历史的选择, 1994), in which Li De was portrayed by a Uyghur actor, does not even officially exist, absent from any Chinese media database, such as Douban, even though it is completely viewable on the Chinese video streaming platform Youku.¹²

This may indicate that it was never officially released at the time and was later digitized from someone's personal copy, given that beyond its absence from media database websites, it is only referenced by a few articles, including one praising its depiction of Lin Biao.¹³ In 1996 a seven-episode series about the Zunyi Conference (遵义会议) was produced, as well

¹⁰As touched on earlier, line struggle is a concept in the Communist Party of China that disagreements within the party dialectically sharpen into two positions, or lines. One is ultimately the correct proletarian line and the other is the incorrect bourgeois line. This became a public and constant discourse during the Cultural Revolution, but its usefulness as a concept was disavowed by the Party in its 1981 resolution. Yoshihiro Ishikawa and Craig A. Smith, “Line Struggle,” in *Afterlives of Chinese Communism: Political Concepts from Mao to Xi*, 1st ed., ed. Christian Sorace, Ivan Franceschini, and Nicholas Loubere (ANU Press, June 25, 2019), accessed 09/13/2023, doi:10.22459/ACC.2019.19, <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n5354/pdf/ch19.pdf>.

¹¹This can be illustrated through comparison of how many viewers record these films and series as “watched” on the Chinese media review and discussion site *Douban*, even if those who bother to mark their viewings are a relatively small number. By that marker, *History's Choice* 《历史的选择》(1994), as discussed below, does not exist. *Zunyi Conference* 《遵义会议》(1996) has 42 people who have marked it as watched. The 1996 film *Long March* 《长征》 has 3005 people who have marked it as watched. The 2001 *Long March* series has 12,285 people who have marked it as watched (all as of September 6, 2024).

¹²https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDA5Mzc0ODQ1Ng==.html

¹³好古书生讲历史 (“Antiquity-loving bookish scholar discusses history”), “在电视剧《历史的选择》中，林彪与毛主席有这样的对话 (“In the Television Drama *History's Choice*, Lin Biao and Chairman Mao Have This Kind of Dialogue”),” accessed 11/10/2022, https://page.om.qq.com/page/Ouum_MZQ0C2GK8zF_neuHnvQ0?source=cp_1009.

as the three-hour movie *Long March* (长征), which is directly related to the 2001 series that is the subject of this thesis. It stars many of the same actors, has the same screenwriter, and shares many similar scenes.¹⁴

The 1996 film, which could be described as a sort of prototype or *Vorlage*, includes no plot strand devoted to the Nationalists themselves, something that the length of the TV series could afford. Strikingly, while adding this Nationalist sub-plot, the 2001 TV series does away with any mention of German advisory roles among the Nationalists by figures such as von Seeckt, while in the 1996 film, Li De does speak about that fact. This cinematic decision perhaps simplifies one of the emphases of the 2001 series, which is that the Communists allowed a non-Chinese, with little knowledge of Chinese conditions, to lead their forces to defeat—until Mao wrested control.

In contrast, the 2014 TV series *Leaders* (领袖), in its portrayal of the last phase of the Jiangxi Soviet and early part of the Long March up to the Zunyi Conference, foregrounds this strange situation of German military advisors facing off with Chinese armies. It conveys how mistaken the Communists were to rely upon foreign advisors by focusing on Li De's shortcomings. At the same time, it presents von Seeckt as a perfect guest who is entirely fluent in both the Chinese language and Chinese social etiquette, and carefully keeps to his advisory role. The Dark Bolshevik Mirror that is Li De cannot do this.

4.3 Case studies of specific themes in Long March: Analyses of key scenes

In the following section, I analyze specific scenes that draw out themes I have discussed above, particularly Sinicization and myth. The latter is reflected both in the placement of elements in the narrative and in the question of belief/faith 信仰 versus religion 宗教 and their intersections. I will also note where, in my opinion, the screenwriter is drawing on the “Snowist,” “Maoist” and “Dengist” sources. “Dengist” sources have a further subdivision

¹⁴Xiaomei Chen's focus on modern theatrical plays 话剧 that cover revolutionary history provides a glimpse into what is a far more daring medium, perhaps due to its smaller audience and ephemeral nature (although some performances have also been recorded). Of particular interest is her analysis of Meng Bing's 孟冰 plays, where, for example, in the 2011 play *Who Dominates the World*—a play that received wide official approval—he portrays two Communists present at and around the founding of the Party. The Dutchman Maring (Henk Sneevliet) and Liu Renjing, who later became Trotskyists, argue for the legitimacy of Trotskyism as a stream of the international Communist movement in spectral appearances. This is of a piece with Meng's interest in recovering marginalized voices in Chinese revolutionary history and presenting them in dialogue, including Chen Duxiu, whose relationship to the Trotskyist current was more tenuous. Thus, it is almost certain that plays (and novels) before 1994 did engage with the Li De narrative in some depth, but a comparison is beyond the scope of this thesis. Chen, *Staging Chinese Revolution*, 126–129.

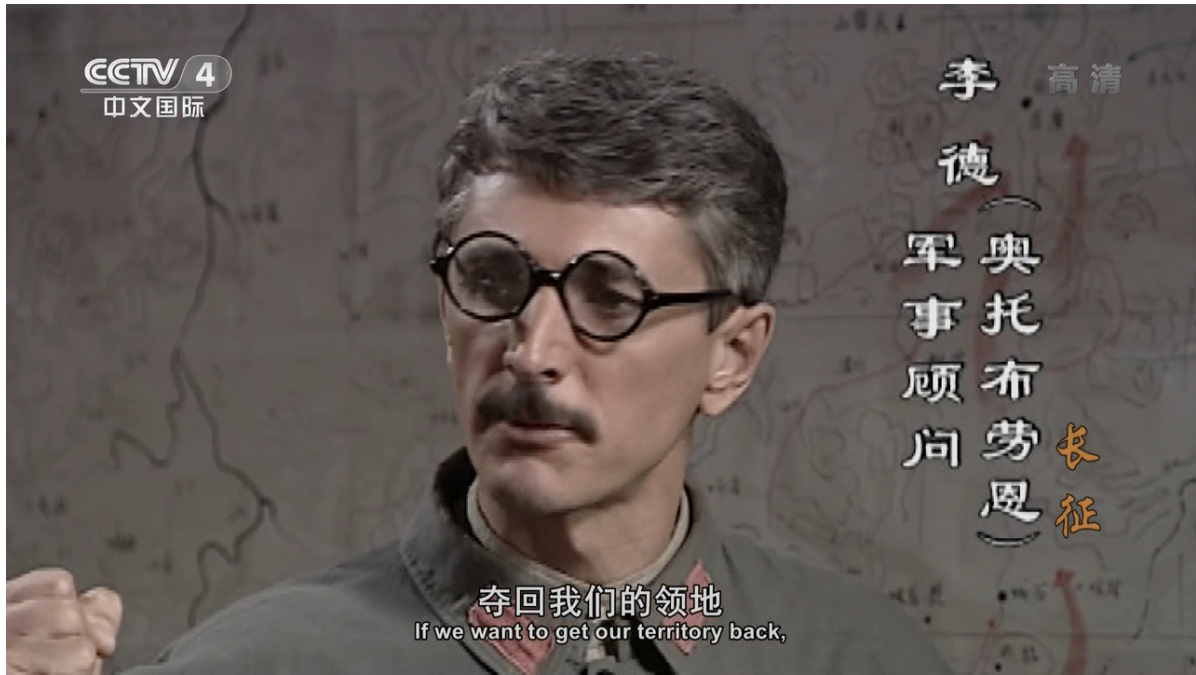


Figure 4.1: Li De appearing as the first close-up after the black and white historical montage (of scenes shot for the series) opening the first episode (01:33).

into “Jiangist” sources, reflecting the increasingly marketized and globalized politics pursued by the Jiang Zemin administration. The series is a production resting particularly on two sources: the diminishing of Mao’s role against that of the collective leadership, expressed in the Dengist source, that makes the rhythm and punctuation of the Long March hang on meetings of the Central Committee and a concern with religion and faith that the rise of new religious movements along with spiritual malaise after the repression of open political discussion in 1989 forced the Jiang administration to confront. However, the centrality of Mao, along with the “red thread” of Mao being the possessor of the correct line, central to the Maoist source cannot be avoided.

4.3.1 Bolshevik leather: Li De’s arc of dominance and reconciliation

Analyzing Li De’s depiction and meaning in the series is a work of analyzing several scenes in order to establish his arc. He is, after all, the first close-up along with the first speaking character to appear after a montage of black and white shots with “voice of God” narration serving as the introduction (figure 4.1). He is speaking forcefully, dominating the despondent meeting in response to further setbacks (Figure 4.2).

Another element is Li De’s wearing of a leather jacket in many scenes. Although not



Figure 4.2: Li De points at the map for the Central Committee meeting (ep. 01, 02:01).

appearing in the opening scene, his leather jacket brings to mind the Bolshevik leather trend, especially among the early Bolshevik security force, the Cheka, responsible for the “Red Terror” (1917-1922) and is only echoed among the Chinese comrades by Deng Fa, head of security. The rise of the leather jackets among the Bolsheviks can easily be attributed to the militarization of public life amidst the end of the First World War and the years of civil war after the October Revolution.¹⁵ Thus it is not that dissimilar from the Chinese Communists increasing merging of Sun Yat-sen jacket (the “Mao suit”), with its origins in Prussian military uniform via Japan, with the uniform of the Red Army and its persistence into the PRC.

This connection to the Red Terror is particularly striking in a scene in which Li De wants to summarily execute the commander of a unit after the disastrous crossing of the Xiang River (ep. 06, 22:30, Figure 4.3). This scene occurs after Mao says he has to “seek justice” (讨个公道) from those responsible for the disaster. The cut to the next scene demonstrates Li De’s method of “seeking justice,” which is violent, unjust and most prominently about avoiding responsibility. It shocks everyone around him, including Bo Gu, who is forced to interpret for Li De after his regular interpreter, Wu Xiuquan, angrily refuses to open his mouth. Mao showing up shortly after Li De grabs his sidearm and appears ready to personally administer

¹⁵Mike Carey, “‘A Man of Throbbing Vitality’: Leon Trotsky and the ‘Leatherites’,” European studies blog, British Library, June 9, 2017, accessed 01/17/2022, <https://blogs.bl.uk/european/2017/06/leon-trotsky-and-the-leatherites.html>.



Figure 4.3: Li De has his hand on his pistol and is only stopped by Mao coming in. (ep. 06, 23:25).

“justice” allows Mao to both criticize Li De’s lack of willingness to take responsibility and for Mao to rescue the commander by reminding those assembled that he is still the Chairman of the Soviet Republic and that he will handle (处理) this. Mao uses Li De’s readiness to execute a commander because of the losses of his unit to ask what should happen to those who commanded the entire strategy. Li De bluntly states that a foreigner should not be held responsible for any losses, which is treated as appropriately disturbing through reaction shots and a musical cue.

The leather jacket could be viewed as a further marker of the historical Braun’s association with underground work for the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), but also simply as a marker of Braun’s connection to those early days of the Soviet Union, especially if one follows the false narrative of Braun’s involvement in the Russian revolution that his interpreter Wu Xiuquan insisted on, at least in his memoir.¹⁶ Given Li De’s demeanor and dress throughout the series, is Li De’s behavior in this scene intended as any sort of reference to the hasty (in)justice of some revolutionary tribunals or simply meant to reference irresponsible and cruel commanders who use military justice to unjustly punish subordinates for their mistakes? While the latter seems more likely, one must consider the large amount of me-

¹⁶Litten notes that other Chinese sources give more correct biographies of Braun and this false biography seems particular to Wu Xiuquan. Litten, *Otto Brauns frühes Wirken in China (1932-1935)*, 93-4



Figure 4.4: Mao tries Li De's pipe tobacco (ep. 15, 02:43).

dia connected to the Soviet Union and its darker side that were certainly available in China throughout the 1990s, and thus the possibility of the former.

Li De's stubborn insistence on continuing to wear his increasingly torn leather boots after his demotion at Zunyi and subsequent transfer to the ordinary rank and file, to the detriment of his feet, rather than switch to the straw sandals worn by the ordinary Red Army soldiers, is gently overcome by Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong in Episode 15 (2:14). This scene also involves Mao trying Li De's pipe tobacco after Li De refuses a Meili-brand cigarette from Mao (Figure 4.4). Li De says, in Chinese, that his tobacco is better, "it's stronger" (劲儿大). Mao ends up in a coughing fit, declaring that everyone has their own tastes 各有所好, perhaps similar to the unadapted Marxism-Leninism that Li De carries with him. Additionally, while Mao is deeply associated with cigarettes, Stalin is associated with his pipe. By accepting the straw sandals, at least while his uselessly broken leather boots are repaired, Li De accepts some of the discipline and local conditions of the Red Army at the ordinary level (figure 4.5). In the end, he sides with Mao against his rival Zhang Guotao, agreeing matter of factly with Mao that Zhang's plan to head south is suicide and heading north is their only hope.



Figure 4.5: Mao and Zhou Enlai are able to convince Li De to wear straw sandals for a time (ep. 15, 03:51).

4.3.1.1 The deleted scene: Li De and his assigned conjugal partner, Xiao Yuehua

By retelling the story of Xiao Yuehua, the woman who as a member of the Party was pressured by party leadership, or at least Bo Gu) into being the “foreign expert” Li De’s conjugal partner, a story that is both horrific and prurient along with damaging to the Party’s reputation gets aired out. However, since we begin the series in the midst of the Fifth Encirclement Campaign and after Li De’s arrival, we are not entirely clear on how this situation came about, unlike, for example, 2014’s *Leaders* (*Lingxiu*), where Bo Gu’s position in “settling in” Li De is much clearer, and would seem to echo scenes of feudal forced marriage in Chinese media. The focus on Bo Gu, in his formal position of greatest authority in the Party, allows the blame to be more individualized than corporate, echoing the Maoist source locating the problems in the Wang Ming line. However, all versions of *Long March* available online that I have seen omit a two minute long scene in which Li De, in shirt and underwear, chases Xiao Yuehua in order to have sex with her, until he is stopped by Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai (Figure 4.6).¹⁷

The most obvious reason for its omission is that it was too sexually suggestive, along with that sexually suggestive content being placed in close proximity to Mao Zedong and Zhou

¹⁷https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNTA0NjAzMjUwOA==.html



Figure 4.6: Li De tries to pull Xiao Yuehua away from Zhou Enlai, with whom she has sought protection. In a moment, Mao will emerge from the background to chastise Li De (deleted scene from episode 8).

Enlai. If one searches for discussions of Otto Braun/Li De in Chinese, many of them will focus on his relations with and abandonment of two Chinese women: Xiao Yuehua and an actress he met later in Yan'an, Li Lilian 李丽莲, whom he apparently tried to bring back with him to the USSR, but was not permitted (or she herself tried to accompany Braun and was not permitted).

What remains in the series are the scenes in Episode 1 (38:51) with Li De berating Xiao Yuehua for burning the bread he has her make (another sign of his inability to adapt to China) and the scene of the reconciliation in Episode 15 (1:23), where Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong assure a pregnant Xiao Yuehua that none of the consequences of Li De's demotion will affect her or the child she is pregnant with by Li De. Mao attributes Xiao Yuehua's fear of that possibility to the results of fierce sectarian 宗派主义 *zongpaizhuyi* struggles in the Party when discussing this with Zhou Enlai. Additionally, we have the scene of the other women on the Long March helping Xiao Yuehua cross the deadly marshes in episode 22 (2:50), along with Bo Gu and his party ally Kai Feng trying to catch fish in the marsh to give to Xiao Yuehua due to the rigors of the march and her pregnancy (14:55).



Figure 4.7: Cigarettes, a map, Qu Yuan's poem and a copy of *Anti-Dühring* placed facedown to keep its place. The camera will pan to Mao, smoking a cigarette and reading a newspaper (Ep. 1, 04:28).

4.3.2 Hybrid faiths and convictions on the path to Sinicization

Successful hybridity is presented in its pithiest fashion through the introduction of Mao Zedong in the first episode of *Long March*, where the camera approaches him through a wooden double entryway with one door open. We, as the camera behind Mao's little son, are entering Mao's homestead inside the Cloudy Mountain Temple 云山寺 after the despondent meeting dominated by Li De. It's the homestead to which Mao has been further rusticated—beyond the rustication of ruling a countryside soviet—to “eat, shit and sleep” 吃饭拉屎睡觉, as Mao says. He is outside at a rough wooden table, smoking his trademark cigarettes while consulting a map. A copy of Qu Yuan's ancient lament over the fall of the state of Chu (the Communist poet Guo Moruo had made it patriotic) up in one corner and Engels' *Anti-Dühring* lying face down, keeping the place where Mao was before he broke off to consider current and local conditions while looking at the map and a newspaper (4:28) (Figures ??, ?? and ??).¹⁸ The series theme song, with its plaintive romance for the Red Army, plays in the background. Mao's son Maomao comes up to demand Mao give him a ride, showing Mao as

¹⁸Monica E M Zikpi, “Revolution and Continuity in Guo Moruo's Representations of Qu Yuan,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 36 (2014): 175–200, accessed 10/21/2022, JSTOR: 43490204, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43490204>.

dedicated family man and foreshadowing to the Chinese viewer Maomao's sad fate when he is left behind as the Red Army retreats into what became the "Long March."

The screenwriter of Long March, Wang Chaozhu 王朝柱, in his article on his creative process for the series, distinguished the Long March spirit from a "spiritual opium 精神鸦片 that feeds our hunger," declaring it to be, on the contrary, "a spiritual battle flag 精神灵旗 that guides the direction of the revolution."¹⁹ "Opium," with all its heightened resonance in the Chinese context, is a reference to Marx's famous statement about religion being the opium of the people. Wang's distinction between "spiritual opium" and "spiritual flag" shows a concern with faith and conviction (contained in the Chinese 信仰 *xinyang*) as a feature of both religion and ideology. It is important to recognize the common ground on which religion and ideology exist.²⁰ As will be discussed in 4.3.3, this is a particular concern of the Jiangist subsource, reflecting the rise of new religious movements that were threatening to Party control in the 1990s as the series and its movie *Vorlage* were made. Additionally, the Sinicization of Marxism hinted at by placing Qu Yuan's ancient Chinese text and Engel's book together on Mao's table in this opening scene is first explicitly addressed by Mao in *Long March* in episode 6 (02:46), described below, when they lodge themselves and their soldiers in an ancestral hall (how that came about is not part of the scene).

4.3.3 Hierarchical Authority: Powers of life and death in temple, ancestral hall and party

This scene, episode 6 (02:46), shows how a seemingly abstruse and speculative question about the origins of religious practice in China can be directly tied to a question of authority and disciplinary procedures in the Party, which is a particular concern of the Maoist and Dengist sources, with the Maoist source locating the "red thread" of having the correct line in Mao himself. The Dengist source is required to work with this, due to sharing the negative Maoist assessment of the collective leadership before Mao's ascent, while also wanting to locate that "red thread" of correct line in the Central Committee *around* Mao and thus continuing *after* Mao. In this scene, Mao has still not dislodged Li De and Bo Gu, but interacts with his fellow Party leaders Luo Fu and Wang Jiaxiang, who are the leading representatives of the Moscow-

¹⁹Wang Chaozhu 王朝柱, "《长征》创作札记 ("Notes on creating *Long March*")," 10. The importance of the dialogue in Chinese dramas that Zhong Xueping observes means that the screenwriter is a particularly important figure. Zhong Xueping, *Mainstream Culture Refocused: Television Drama, Society, and the Production of Meaning in Reform-Era China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 22-23.

²⁰"The 'three belief crisis' (*sanxin weiji*) dating from the early 1980s was: a crisis of belief (*xinren*) in the leadership of the Communist Party; a crisis of belief (*xinxin*) in the socialist system; and a crisis of belief (*xinyang*) in the Communist ideal." Barmé, *Shades of Mao*, 155.

trained “returned students” who have come over to Mao’s ideas.

Mao asks Luo Fu and Wang Jiaxiang, “What do you think came first in our China, ancestral halls 祠堂 or temples 庙宇?” Luo Fu and Wang are initially nonplussed, with Luo Fu finally half-asking, “You know?” to which Mao replies, “I don’t know. When I say I don’t know, I don’t know. I’m not able to say empty words.” After pausing for a bit, Mao continues, “One thing that’s clear is that ancestors are venerated 敬 in ancestral halls and offerings are made 供奉 to divine beings 神灵 in temples.”²¹ The English subtitler equates these as worship, but what Mao goes on to say is that despite their different practices and habitus, the owners of these sacred sites share similar power relationships with those who believe in the site’s efficacy and importance, and those owners make sure to emphasize that. Both the clan leader and the priests and monks set up one idol of a god after another 立了一个又一个神的偶像 (*lile yige you yige de ouxiang*) for/over against the common people. Using *li* 立 is different than 造 *zao*, but this phrasing could perhaps be a reference to a post-1976 official phrasing for the process of the “cult of personality in China, “god/idol-making movement” 造神运动, at least according to Geremie Barmé.²²

Mao begins to speak about how the clan leader in his home village of Shaoshan assumed the power of life and death over people (phrased even more directly in Chinese as the power to kill people).²³ Wang Jiaxiang says that you must rebel against that and follows up by saying that he heard that Mao rebelled against the clan leader. Mao says that if you don’t rebel against them, the common people will have a poor life. Luo Fu then turns to Wang Jiaxiang and says, “Mao always tells these stories and only tells us the first layer.” This, perhaps unintentionally, echoes what Otto Braun criticized Mao for in his memoirs, using aphorisms, contradictory or not, suited to the moment.²⁴ This is also something that is required in understanding Wang Chaozhu’s script.

Mao continues then by saying that “in some sense” 从某种意义上说 the clan leader in the ancestral hall is a sort of founder of the religion (of that ancestral hall) with a direct line

²¹Kazuhiko Sumiya’s focus on the religious aspect of Mao’s report on Hunan peasants makes it clear that the screenwriters are drawing these lines from that 1927 report. Sumiya, “The Long March and the Exodus: “The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung” and the Contemporary Significance of “Emissary Prophecy,” 199.

²²Barmé, *Shades of Mao*, 5.

²³Here Mao is speaking in the context of what Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer describe as an “operative distinction” in what they term, as a whole, “Chinese religion,” between “ascriptive communities” and “congregations,” which had voluntary and individual participation. “Ascriptive communities,” where “adhesion is compulsory for all households,” would be what was normally encountered at the village level in the form of a lineage cult, as with clans and ancestral halls, with all their incumbent duties, fees and penalties (the other main types of “ascriptive communities” were territorial and corporate). Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 24-25.

²⁴Braun, *Chinesische Aufzeichnungen*, 18.

of authority to heaven, “to the top,” a heaven-linked hierarchy, or as Mao calls it in Chinese, a *tongtian jiaozhu* 通天教主.²⁵ In order to seize that power, to “become the king and become the hegemon” 称王称霸, they “wave a great banner as a tiger skin” 拉大旗作虎皮, that is they use the banner of their cause to intimidate the common people, to fool them, to present lies as truth. While this can have a more general meaning of pretending to the authority of a great cause, the English subtitles reflect its more usual Chinese usage connected to the revolutionary cause, with the translator choosing to express this as “in the name of revolution”.²⁶ Luo Fu states that this is the core of the problem Mao has been speaking about. Luo Fu, in a scene set in 1934, says that based on the lessons of the experiences of the Soviet Union and their own Party’s experiences in the last few years, solving these problems is not easy. In the context of the when the series takes place, that is the late twenties and thirties, during the last phases of any publicly organized opposition to Stalin in the Party in the USSR. In the context of when the series was made, it is the whole history of the Communist movement, with the Cultural Revolution as the height of this behavior, echoing the Dengist source and the 1981 Resolution on Party History.

Wang Jiexiang says (5:12) that in his opinion, “our Communist Party must set up a convention 规矩 so that no one takes advantage of the power in their hands to frighten comrades or present falsehoods as truths, scaring comrades, fooling the common people.”²⁷ Here the shadow of the Cultural Revolution and other campaigns (such as the anti-rightist campaigns, even if administered by Deng) falls over Wang Jiexiang’s words, as it must in all modern dramas focused on revolutionaries in the pre-1949 period. This expresses a chief concern of the “Dengist” source, collective leadership and from there a more stable “convention” of how things are done in the Party. This then cuts to Ye Jianying reporting casualties and crises from the Xiang River crossing to Bo Gu and Li De. Bo Gu listens and agrees with Ye Jianying that there is no time to count and report casualties as Li De suggests. This causes Li De to

²⁵I have not tracked down a reference to Mao using this phrase, which is surprising since many phrasings, especially the memorable ones, used by Mao the character have their root somewhere in Mao’s writing. A similar sentiment and phrasing I have found is “They are always right, they are the Number One authority under Heaven, ‘imperial envoys’ who rush everywhere” in his “Reform our study” (May 1941). However, “Number One authority under Heaven” is actually translating “老子天下第一” *laozi tianxia diyi* and “imperial envoys” is translating “钦差大臣,” *qinchai dachen*. Mao Zedong, “Reform Our Study [May 1941]”; Mao Zedong, “改造我们的学习（一九四一年五月十九日）（Reform our Study）”

²⁶See, for example, the definition of 拉大旗作虎皮 in the 汉语大词典 *Hanyu Dacidian* which explicitly ties it to revolution and uses Lu Xun as a source of an originating quotation. See also 拉大旗作虎皮, in 百度百科 (*Baidu Encyclopedia*), accessed 10/05/2024, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%8B%89%E5%A4%A7%E6%97%97%E4%BD%9C%E8%99%8E%E7%9A%AE/1311435>.

²⁷This sort of behavior is essentially the definition of “waving a great banner as a tiger skin” in the *Hanyu Dacidian*.

start berating and insulting Bo Gu, his closest ally and enabler in the Red Army.²⁸

In the drama itself, the foreshadowing in the translator's choice of "in the name of the revolution" is fulfilled two episodes later in the eighth episode. The connection is made explicit when Mao, at the Liping conference, accuses the absent and ill Li De of trying to become that "heaven-connected hierarch seizing all power" 他自己也成了包打天下的通天教主 (12:03). The Party is an organization and an institution, as the ancestral hall and temple are, in which a faith leader with a direct line to heaven, so to speak, has power of life and death over its followers. The drama sets the Chinese revolution in dialogue with religion, declaring that the Party and Marxism share similarities with belief and faith, including sharing this dangerous power. This reflects an increasing openness to religion in the Jiang Zemin era, and hence that Jiangist "subsource," while also reflecting the backlash against new religious movements and their claims to authority on which the Party claimed authority around the year 2000. Its most drastic example is the growth of the Falun Gong sect out of the "Qigong fever" starting in the late '80s and its repression after a protest surrounding the central governmental residences of Zhongnanhai in 1999.²⁹

The language that Mao uses to attack Li De's claims to authority are soaked in Chinese

²⁸The shadow of the Cultural Revolution and "establishing conventions" in the Party around struggle has an interesting link to the maneuvering around the unresolved Party conflict that concludes the series: Zhang Guotao's attempt to set up a new Central Committee. In episode 20 (32:35) Luo Fu suggests to Mao that he, Luo Fu, give up his new position at the head of the Party (the result of the Zunyi Conference) to Zhang Guotao if it will keep Party unity. Mao states that Zhang Guotao wants military control, not political, and would not be satisfied with that position, but would still be able to cause all sorts of problems, like changing the policy and line of the Party. Luo Fu despairs at how "we Communist Party members" could be fighting for power in this way. Mao responds with a couplet in literary Chinese: "No party outside the Party, [is] imperial thought / No factions inside the Party, thousands of oddities and hundreds of monsters [arise]" ("党外无党，帝王思想；党内无派，千奇百怪。"). He follows this up with an explanation that Communists are still influenced by traditional ways of governance and the thought of exploiting classes. What Mao is quoting is a satirical poem by Chen Duxiu, mocking the Nationalist Party's anti-democratic attitude and claims about itself, the *Nationalist Party Four Character Classic* 《国民党四字经》. Here it seems to be in service of promoting a 2001-era Communist Party that truly respects the eight United Front minor parties and recognizes, at least informally, that different factions and opinions exist, and thus part of a Dengist/Jiangist source. Historically, Mao did in fact quote this line from Chen Duxiu (referring to it as something "some people" said about the Nationalist Party), but he did it on August 12, 1966 at the concluding speech of the Party's Eight Congress as his reasoning for why line struggle needed to come out into the open as part of the recently declared Cultural Revolution. We thus seem to have a late Maoist source running up against a Dengist source and competing for interpretative supremacy. Mao Zedong, "在八届十一中全会闭幕式上的讲话（一九六六年八月十二日）" ("Speech at the Closing Ceremony of the 11th Plenary Session of the 8th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China - August 12, 1966"), Marxists Internet Archive, accessed 09/14/2024, <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/maozedong/1968/5-206.htm>; "党外无党，帝王思想，党内无派，千奇百怪。是陈独秀的诗句吗？" ("No Party Outside the Party, Imperial Thought; No Faction Within the Party, Thousands of Oddities and Hundreds of Monsters." Is This a Verse by Chen Duxiu?), Baidu Zhidao, accessed 09/14/2024, <https://zhidao.baidu.com/question/171054245.html>

²⁹For an account of this process, see David A. Palmer, *Qigong Fever: Body, Science, and Utopia in China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

religions. In particular, his callback to the concept of the clan elder in the ancestral hall functioning as a religious authority with a direct link to heaven 通天教主 is a strong critique of Li De. The first part, 通天, is very important. In “storming heaven,” to use Marx’s language with regards to the revolutionary attempt of the Paris Commune [citation], the Bolsheviks had set up a new “heaven” as the center of world revolution in the Soviet Union and especially in Moscow. Otto Braun’s language in his memoir is particularly emphatic in criticizing what he claims as Li Lisan’s open and Mao’s covert line that China was the new center of world revolution. Instead, Braun states, particularly at that time as the only socialist country in the world, protecting the Soviet Union “from adventurist plans as well as the attacks of the enemy” was their “sacred international duty” (*heilige internationale Pflicht*), again a form of religious language.³⁰

In the same remarks at Liping in episode eight, Mao makes it clear that even if Li De is the Buddha sent from the Communist International and Mao is Sun Wukong, Buddha let Sun Wukong fulfill (fully develop) himself on the journey to the west. The comparison of what was initially termed the “retreat to the west,” the “Long March,” to the “journey to the west” is interesting, especially with Mao fully identifying in this moment with Wukong and the monkey (trickster) aspects of his personality. Unlike other Communists like Zhou Enlai who had to go to Germany, it could be said that the “sutras” that Mao finds are in China’s remote mountain valleys, overcoming “eighty-one tribulations” through the guidance of his “living Buddha,” the people. While this is also religious, its reference to the popular and adventurous *Journey to the West* reflects the Snowist sources ability to convey a set of beliefs in a “revolutionary romantic” fashion, as Mao had discussed at the Yan’an Forum in 1943. Screenwriter Wang Chaozhu presents this along with the first stage of investigating reality through “revolutionary realism” as essential components of his writing process. Additionally, he wants these character studies, such as Mao’s affinity for Sun Wukong and a “monkey spirit,” to be front and center in the audience’s perception, even as it adopts the mode of an epic.³¹

4.3.4 Indigeneity and the Foreign: The discourse on the orange

The three party leaders who are frequently carried along on cots due to injury and fatigue are Mao Zedong, Luo Fu, and Wang Jiaxiang, the latter being permanently on a cot due to

³⁰Braun apparently disregards the Mongolian People’s Republic in this passage. Braun, *Chinesische Aufzeichnungen*, 19.

³¹Wang Chaozhu 王朝柱, “《长征》创作札记 (‘Notes on creating *Long March*’),” 12.

severe internal injuries. This traveling together allowed them to form a bloc historically and in these dramatic reconstructions. Screenwriter Wang Chaozhu dismisses the “conspiracy of the litters” hermeneutic, popularized by Harrison Salisbury, in his 2001 article on the series.³² He strove to balance the growing relationship between Mao Zedong, Luo Fu, and Wang Jiaxiang with the staging of the Central Committee debates along the road in terms of plot. That is to say, it is extremely important in the series that collective leadership is maintained, even as Mao, after Zunyi, goes about forming his new troika with Zhou Enlai and Wang Jiaxiang. In his *Xinhua* eulogy, Chen Yun repeatedly stressed this aspect of collective leadership: “Comrade Mao Zedong made a unique contribution; that is, he trained a generation of cadres, including ourselves.”³³

What, then, is the purpose in the series in depicting the growing relationship between Mao, Luo Fu and Wang Jiaxiang during the Long March? It is of particular use in discussing how Mao balances his apparent preference for indigeneity with his adoption of a foreign belief system, Marxism-Leninism. Luo Fu (indeed, so shaped by what is foreign that this nom de guerre is short for his, Zhang Wentian's, Russian name) and Wang Jiaxiang, as Chinese Marxists who received their Marxist formation abroad, serve as useful sounding boards as Mao pursues this argument.

In episode 7 (35:00) Luo Fu, who even spent time at Berkeley in California, offers oranges to Mao at a rest stop after passing through Dao County with its apparently famous tangerines. Mao starts by praising the local (feng shui) conditions that have made the tangerine good (后皇嘉树橘徕服兮). Luo Fu quotes or creatively paraphrases the 4th/3rd century BCE poet and statesman Qu Yuan in a praise to the tangerine tree when Qin defeated Chu. Mao responds that at this similarly crucial moment of the Red Army eluding the Nationalists, he hopes that they won't have to jump into a river to commit suicide like Qu Yuan. Mao asks Luo Fu to tell him honestly whether Chinese tangerines or American oranges are better. Luo Fu asks Mao if he wants to hear his honest opinion, since Luo Fu has heard that Mao always prefers Chinese things. Mao makes clear that that is not his perspective, and that Luo Fu can give his honest opinion. The dowager empress Cixi 老佛爷 and the Qing general turned usurping president of the Republic Yuan Shikai were “great heads” 大头 in China, but Mao would always support Marx and Engels and have nothing good to say about Cixi and Yuan. Zeng Guofan was from Hunan, but Sun Yat-sen was from Guangdong, and Mao would always support Sun and oppose Zeng.

Here Mao's position in the drama opposes attempts to fully amalgamate the Communist

³²Wang Chaozhu 王朝柱, “《长征》创作札记 (“Notes on creating *Long March*”),” 13.

³³Barmé, *Shades of Mao*, 57.

Party, as a governing party, with the concerns of previous dynasties such as the Qing. The series thereby alludes to and critiques the 1990s fascination with Zeng Guofan alongside the attempted Qing reforms. This new trend of a more positive attitude to reforms that were seen as having the possibility of preventing revolution stood against Party identification with violent rebellions such as the Taiping that Zeng suppressed. In addition, it was an implicit critique that rested on imagining alternate histories that did not occur. It is made very clear that while Chiang wants himself to be Zeng and Mao to be the fleeing Taiping prince Shi Dakai, Mao and Communism, for all their continuities in Chinese history, are also fully new things in China that will succeed where previous efforts have failed.

Luo Fu asks again what Mao would say if he pronounced the American oranges superior, and Mao first answers that it would simply prove Darwin's theory of evolution true. The drama cuts to a scene of Dr. Nelson Fu 傅连暉 reexamining and bandaging up Wang Jiaxiang's wounds, its depiction of a Christian convert trained in Western medicine who is also a Communist and an important part of the Red Army, possibly intended to emphasize Mao's point. As the rebandaging occurs, Wang Jiaxiang remembers a story he first heard as a child, that of Guan Yu having the poison from an arrow scraped from his wound as he continued to drink tea and chat with his men, further emphasizing the intertwining of Western modernity and Chinese tradition.

The scene ends with Wang Jiaxiang receiving a telegram from Zhou Enlai. The drama cuts back to Mao, continuing on the topic of what the superiority of the American orange would prove: it would correspond to the old Chinese adage that "the color *qing* is made out of indigo but is more vivid than (victorious over) indigo" 青出于蓝而胜于蓝, used to mean that the student surpasses the teacher. Implicitly, a China that "learned from the Soviet Union" has now surpassed it in its application of Marxism at the time of making the series. This implicit point is almost made explicit when Mao goes on to attack the "dogmatists" who do not believe Marxism can come out of China's mountain valleys. Mao adds, if that's not possible, we certainly cannot develop Marxism further (episode 7, 39:55).

4.3.5 Missionaries of the Internationale

In episode 19 (26:49), Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Luo Fu look at the Catholic church at Maogong where the Fourth Army under Zhang Guotao has encamped (Figure 4.8). All are in a good mood. Zhou Enlai introduces the situation and then asks what their thoughts (感想) are in response to the church:



Figure 4.8: A Catholic church in the hinterlands provokes thoughts about “belief” 信仰 and religion 宗教 and what distinguishes the two concepts (Ep. 19, 26:48).

Zhou: What do you all think about it?

Mao: The God created by the Europeans (欧洲人创造了上帝), although it has more than 2000 years of history, has been spread to China as a religion for only a few hundred years. But these foreigners (洋人) spreading God's will (上帝旨意) even cause these Tibetan compatriots who believe in lamas to hear and believe in God's will. One is compelled to say that it is a miracle (不能不说是一个奇迹).

This dialogue, including what is said later, emphasizes a fundamental element of Marxist belief: constant change. It also emphasizes a practical and encouraging belief. If this belief from across the ocean has only been in China for a few centuries and already gained so many followers, then the foreign belief that is Marxism has a chance here and its spread is even more formidable than Christianity. The spread of the belief to Sichuan is also remarked upon by Zhu De, who says that “not a few” in his home province “have heard and believed in God's will.” Zhou remarks on the “the strength of faith (信仰的力量)” and Mao makes the connection between the discussion of Christianity and Marxism explicit in an attack on dogmatism while pointing at features on the church:

Mao: Can we not say that faith is the spiritual pillar of human life? Once it is

artificially deified/mystified (人为的神化), then it becomes a religion.

Zhou: What the chairman says makes sense.

Mao: In this sense, the dogmatists in our Party are deifying/mystifying Marxism. If things develop like this in the long term (长此发展下去), then there is a possibility scientific Marxism will turn into theology (神学)!

After this Mao walks past the camera and offscreen. Zhu De affirms his assessment.

Zhu: It is very possible. Once dogmatism regards Marxism as a doctrine to worship, then the revolution will be bound to fail.

Zhou: Ah, I think we'd better stop discussing religious problems today. When we win the revolution, we should again invite the Chairman to discuss the relationship of faith (信仰) and religion (宗教) with us.

In the context of the events of the series, we understand those attacked to be the dogmatists around Li De and Bo Gu who face off against Mao, the so-called "28 Bolsheviks" or "returned students" faction. Beyond that we see a possibly anachronistic reverential treatment of Mao's status relative to the rest of the leadership. However, in the context of the series broadcast date of 2001, who is being attacked? It would seem that it could easily attack those on the left of the Party (those who continued to favor greater direct planning in the economy and mass campaigns, for example) along with those on the right of the Party (such as those in favor of letting the market decide everything and giving up the Party's monopoly on power, imitating a Western liberal democratic model).

This depiction of what can also be called "dogmatism" (a genealogy in China that, via the red thread, goes back at least to Mao's "Oppose Book Worship" in 1930) applies both to trying to apply unsuitable foreign lessons to local conditions and to using one's revolutionary rank or theoretical knowledge to shut down internal debate between party members.³⁴ Like Mao's concept of contradictions within the people and contradictions with the enemy, between non-antagonistic and antagonistic contradictions, dogmatism is a subtle, subjective, and easily abused criterion, even as the criterion can lead to better practice.³⁵

³⁴Mao writes in his 1961 "Preface" to "Oppose Book Worship" that that they use to call "dogmatism" "book worship." Mao Zedong, "Oppose Book Worship [May 1930]," Marxists Internet Archive, accessed 10/10/2024, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-6/mswv6_11.htm; Mao Zedong, "Preface to 'Oppose Book Worship' [March 11, 1961]," Marxists Internet Archive, accessed 10/10/2024, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_60.htm.

³⁵Mao Zedong, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People [February 27, 1957]," Marxists Internet Archive, accessed 10/10/2024, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_58.htm.



Figure 4.9: The scene of everyone in the leadership (minus Li De) joining arms to sing the Internationale and cross the deadly grasslands in a storm, as it appears behind the title in every episode.

Returning to Mao's acknowledgment of the achievement of European missionaries even reaching "lama-worshipping Tibetans," throughout the series we see how the Red Army comes bearing a new culture to China's mountains and valleys through scenes of interactions with locals. The Red Army not only knows the Tang Dynasty poetry, but also the Russian poetry of Pushkin, a fact highlighted to eager local educated youth in episode 10 (3:05) by Liu Ying, a female cadre doing recruitment in Zunyi while the conference is going on. They are the army of modernity and a new hybrid culture, drawing much of their leadership from the attendees of provincial modern schools.

Finally, this series presents the Internationale being sung as a sort of battle hymn to cross the deadly grasslands (episode 22, 30:22), as opposed to earlier placements (in 1959 and 1996) where it is a song performed by a young woman, representing accounts of the early Chinese Communist and veteran of the work-study program in France, Cai Chang 蔡畅 (1900-1990), doing the same crossing those marshes (Figure 4.9). The encouragement and longing expressed in this song connects the foreign and domestic at a deep level. The switch to its use as a battle hymn illustrates an even more significant embracing of the foreign to achieve local goals. While Bo Gu links arms with the others to cross the marshy river in a storm, Li De, the personification of "the foreign" in this series, is not similarly reintegrated at that



Figure 4.10: Mao meets with a Tibetan lama (ep. 21, 20:49).

moment.

4.3.6 A Core Foreign Import into China: Mao discourses with the Lama, a Living Buddha

Mao's conversation with a Tibetan lama in episode 21 (20:32) both affirms Marxism's foreign origins while declaring that it can save China. Indeed, as will be discussed below, the question of origins, conditions, causes and fate (缘) are at the core of the conversation (Figure 4.10).³⁶ It also declares, in a more roundabout fashion, that it can be successfully Sinicized like Buddhism. Buddhism is the most prominent example of a foreign import becoming a central component of Chinese life, generally believed to have arrived from India at the end of the Han Dynasty (2nd century). Also, like Buddhism mostly disappearing from India, Marxism has survived in China while disappearing in the country (USSR) that brought it to China. In the scene, Mao seems obliquely to refer to this by saying that Indians shouldn't be judged for abandoning a good belief system like Buddhism in the 13th century.

When the Communists reach Qinghai, Mao meets a Lama, identified by an on-screen label as "Living Buddha Lobsang" 洛桑活佛. This figure seems to be based on the living buddha

³⁶缘 *yuan* is, like many characters, very polysemous on its own.

Getag Tulku (格达活佛, 1902/3-1950), whose longer name included the typical Tibetan name “Lobsang,” who supported the Red Army during its time in Tibet and its peripheries. However, the ambiguity of the onscreen figure’s name along with Getag Tulku’s memorialized encounter with Zhu De suggests a looser association with the historical figure. Additionally, the lama appears far older than a man in his early thirties, the age that Getag Tulku would have been at the time. This Lama, loosely representing a historical figure that supported the Red Army, engages in conversation with Mao.³⁷

This fictionalized scene is featured in both the 1996 film and the 2001 TV series. It is key to Wang Chaozhu’s telling of the broader story. The lama, presented as someone very much contained within the Buddhist realm, begins by asking Mao what he believes in, since he recognizes in Mao’s facial features 面像 that Mao has an “affinity with the Buddha” 佛缘 *foyuan*. This “affinity with the Buddha” or “Buddhic bond” is defined by Gareth Fisher as “a pre-fated bond” that people can share because of their “special relationship to the Buddha.”³⁸ Another possibility that the series may be entertaining, given that one character even declares that Mao is a “living Buddha” is that Mao is on his own path to becoming a bodhisattva. This is a not uncommon belief in post-Mao China, with Buddhist lay preachers using it as part of their critique of the morals of post-Mao Chinese society.³⁹

That Mao could be seen as being on that path is supported by a far more spare definition of *foyuan* as “the causes that allow one to become a Buddha.”⁴⁰ Further, the Lama frequently exclaims “Shanzai, shanzai!” (“Excellent, excellent!”) 善哉善哉, translating the Sanskrit term *sādhu sādhu* or the Tibetan *legs so legs so*. It is “[a]n expression of praise...apparently usually said by the Buddha in response to the question raised by an interlocutor arhat or bodhisattva in a sutra” or at least, when said once, a “response to a perspicacious question

³⁷In Carole McGranahan’s discussion of the story of Getag Tulku, she begins from her own encounter with peripheral legend-making among the Tibetan diaspora in Kathmandu in 1994, where the story is told that Getag Tulku provided Tibetan clothing to a desperate Mao and those under his command on the Long March, so that Mao and the others could sneak out of Qinghai and make their way north, without being spotted by the Muslim warlord Ma Bufang. While McGranahan is aware of a Chinese series commemorating Getag Tulku’s life and his encounter with Zhu De, she does not seem to be aware of *Long March* (neither the 1996 film nor the 2001 series) and their playing with this legend. McGranahan engages with what this sort of “compassion” shown for Mao could mean, both among Tibetans in Tibet and Tibetans in the diaspora. Carole McGranahan, “Mao in Tibetan Disguise: History, Ethnography, and Excess,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2, no. 1 (Mar. 2012): 213–245, accessed 03/20/2023, doi:10.14318/hau2.1.011, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.14318/hau2.1.011>

³⁸For more discussion of this concept, see Fisher’s chapter on “Buddhic Bonds.” Gareth Fisher, *From Comrades to Bodhisattvas: Moral Dimensions of Lay Buddhist Practice in Contemporary China*, Topics in Contemporary Buddhism (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014), 83.

³⁹I have also seen posters in Chinese homes calling Mao a bodhisattva. Fisher, *From Comrades to Bodhisattvas*, 2

⁴⁰佛缘 (Foyuan), in *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2017-03-31, ed. Charles Muller, by Stefan Grace, <http://buddhism-dict.net/ddb>.

from a disciple.”⁴¹ In the series itself, this “inculturation” (to use the Catholic missionary term) of the Communist cause leads to the declaration by Mao’s folk-religion-filled bodyguard that Mao is a “living Buddha” (which Mao denies) along with the grief-filled declaration of Mao standing alongside Zhou and Zhu that “the people are our living buddha” after this bodyguard sacrifices himself in a daring and suicidal attack on a Nationalist cliff redoubt.⁴²

Avoiding the implications of *foyuan* with regards to past lives, Mao tells of his Buddhist upbringing, his devout mother, and then becoming a Confucian, momentarily leaving off his Marxism.

What are Mao’s origins? What are Buddhism’s origins? What are Marxism’s origins? Mao next emphasizes the concept of “dependent origins,” 缘起 *yuanqi*, within Buddhist thought, asking the Lama if there are not twelve “dependent origins” in Buddhism (its traditional number). This term also translated “dependent arising”, and is explained in the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism as follows:

Conditioned genesis, dependent co-arising, interdependent arising (Skt. *pratītya-samutpāda*; Pāli *paṭicca-samuppāda*). Also written in Chinese as 緣生 and 因緣生. Everything arises from conditions; there is nothing that arises out of nothing; there is nothing that arises of itself; and things do not come into existence through the power of an external Creator. Thus, there is nothing that is self-contained, independent, or which has its own separate and independent nature. It is the condition of relationship to something else resulting in arising or production. In the meaning of causal production, all phenomena are given rise to due to the mutual relationships of countless causes (*hetu*: 因) and conditions (Skt. *pratyaya*: 緣) and are not independently existent. If all causes and conditions did not exist, no effects could come into existence. This is a basic Buddhist teaching common to all Buddhist sub-schools. Theoretically this shows the impossibility of a singular, eternal or truly substantial existence. In terms of practice, the aim is, in making this cause and effect relationship clear, to release one from the phenomenal world (of suffering) by removing these causes and conditions.⁴³

⁴¹ 善哉 (Shanzai), in *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2021-12-10, ed. Charles Muller, by Charles Muller, <http://buddhism-dict.net/ddb>; 善哉善哉 (Shanzai Shanzai), in *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2010-05-07, ed. Charles Muller, by Charles Muller, <http://buddhism-dict.net/ddb>.

⁴² Indeed, the Washington DC-based organization International Campaign for Tibet titled a 2007 report *The Communist Party as Living Buddha*, taking its title from what the Party Secretary of Tibet at the time, Zhang Qingli, had labeled the Party. International Campaign for Tibet, “The Communist Party as Living Buddha,” International Campaign for Tibet, Apr. 25, 2007, accessed 09/18/2023, <https://savetibet.org/the-communist-party-as-living-buddha/>.

⁴³ 缘起 (Yuanqi), in *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2010-07-16, ed. Charles Muller, by Charles Muller, <http://buddhism-dict.net/ddb>.

This is not a dialectical philosophy by itself, but the similarities of interdependence and condition of relationships with the Hegelian-Marxist dialectic are apparent. The similarity to Marxism in practice is also revealed in the final sentence, to end suffering “by removing these causes and conditions,” albeit with Marxism very much remaining in the “phenomenal world.” These similarities are not coincidental as, as J.W. Freiberg writes in discussing Mao’s engagement with that other philosophical-religious treasure-house of China, Daoism: “The appearance of independent dialectical traditions can be readily understood if one views a society as a complexly mediated system of class relations, which is at once an operating everyday social order, and a self-destructive system generating its own contradictions.”⁴⁴ Thus Mao tells the Lama that both he and the Lama are disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha (the “historical Buddha,” Siddharta Gautama) because they both try to get at the root of things, for which he uses the phrase 追根溯源 (“getting to the root, pursuing to the source”). At the same time, as the series is extremely interested in the question of Sinicization, there is also the emphasis of a return to the source, that the Buddhism Mao followed was Shakyamuni’s Buddhism, the Confucianism was Confucius’s Confucianism, and the Marxism is Marx’s Marxism. However, these sources cannot but be in dialectical contradiction with other conditions.

The series is characterized by this contradiction. The impulse is that of Reform and Opening, indeed, of Reformation more broadly, since what did the heads of the Christian Reformation declare upon confronting the new social conditions of early capitalism but that were *returning* to the true teachings of the early Church, to Sola Scriptura?⁴⁵ Here the series’ target is the Soviet legacy of Marxism-Leninism, its legitimate applicability under persistent attack since the end of the Cultural Revolution and all the more so since the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc. We are reminded that Marxism comes from Germany and that Zhou Enlai went to Berlin to study Marxism at its source, to “retrieve the scriptures” 取经.⁴⁶ Education in Moscow is only associated with the anti-Mao bloc that Bo Gu is trying to

⁴⁴J. W. Freiberg, “The Dialectic in China: Maoist and Daoist,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 9, no. 1 (Mar. 1977): 2, accessed 07/28/2023, doi:10.1080/14672715.1977.10406395, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14672715.1977.10406395>.

⁴⁵Without going into the complicated relationship between the early Christians and the formation of what would become the New Testament canon, possibly invalidating *sola scriptura* as a true link to the practice of the early church.

⁴⁶It should be noted that this phrase, taken from the monk Tripitaka’s journey to India to copy Buddhist sutras to repair what he saw as defects in Chinese reception and to whom Mao compares Zhou, can simply mean learning from others’ experiences. One could, for example, “retrieve the scriptures” through work experience at another factory. However, Mao’s comparison is very tied into traveling to Marxism’s “point of origin” and thus would seem closer to notions of retrieving the original purity, along with the conversation’s focus on the concept of origin. However, another common use of *qujing* is the post-reform practice of officials learning from others’ experiences, such as in another province or even another country. It

form of people who studied in the Soviet Union, and never brought up in connection with a figure like Deng Xiaoping's appearances or mentions in the series.. This series is both enmeshed in retelling the history, but also very shy about the Soviet origins, hence the series' reluctance to utter Stalin's name.

In the 1996 film, this dialogue between the Lama and Mao is introduced by the Lama having learned that Mao had believed (信过) in Buddhism. Mao emphasizes, as he does in the 2001 television series, that he believed in the Buddhism that came from Shakyamuni in India. He then responds, as he does in the 2001 TV version, that he then believed in Confucianism (referencing his student days). However, when asked in the 1996 version what he believes in now, Mao answers that he doesn't believe in a teaching/religion. Marxism is a discontinuity in this regard. In the 2001 TV series, in contrast, Marxism is "just" one more belief. Mao goes on, in the 1996 film, to describe his belief in Marxism, using the verb *xinfeng* 信奉, with connotations of practice and commitment (such as making offerings), to say, "I believe in Marx. He is my, Mao Zedong's, teacher". The lama makes a sort of disappointed pause and looks down, asking, "Mr Mao is Chinese, why does he believe in a German, Marx?" Mao answers that he believes in Marx because Marx can solve China's problems.

The lama, undeterred, asks Mao which he thinks is better, Buddhism or Marx? Mao answers definitively (unlike in 2001), "Marxism is not a religion." Mao smiles and continues, "But we respect religious freedom. For example, Buddhism. Buddhism comes from India ...", continuing with the same argument about Indians giving up Buddhism, to which the Lama replies, 言之有理, *yanzhi youli*, "[Your] words make sense". The Lama asks, as he does in the TV series, what Mao will do if Marx cannot "free all living creatures from suffering" 普渡众生. Mao confidently replies that he firmly believes (坚信) that Marxism is the path to save China 救中国之道. The Lama seems impressed by the degree of Mao's faith and, as in the 2001 version, says after audibly reacting (哦呀) that Mao is not merely a 智者 *zhizhe*, but also a 慧着 *huizhe*. The meaning here is that Mao has "perfect knowledge" per a Chinese Buddhist term, *zhihui*, calqued from the Sanskrit. In both, Mao puts up his hand to halt the Lama as the Lama proceeds to say what he sees in China's future, Mao interrupting with "It will not belong to the reactionary clique" in the 1996 version and "It will definitely have religious freedom" in the 2001 version.

The interruption is interesting in itself. First, it may reflect a general opposition to having

is striking that a study of this process of *qujing* uses the the German ultralow-energy building policy as its case study. Yu Zhou, "Qujing (取经) as Policy Mobility with Chinese Characteristics: A Case Study of Ultralow-Energy Building Policy in China," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 53, no. 2 (Mar. 1, 2021): 410–427, accessed 09/25/2023, doi:10.1177/0308518X20960736, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X20960736>.

one's future told. While the Lama is a highly-respected individual, the production period (of both versions) comes in the midst of anti-superstition campaigns that include fortune tellers as one of their targets.⁴⁷ Second, any accurate prediction would be far more difficult and winding than the tone of this conversation cinematically allows.

With Mao's reference to the end of Buddhism in India centuries before, we have a significant analogy hidden in the conversation, one that is brought closer to the surface by the Lama asking what Mao will do if Marxism cannot "free all living creatures from suffering." This explicit negative hypothetical is striking, even if Mao replies to it only with complete faith in Marxism. Perhaps his successors in the nineties cannot reply with such faith. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist camp means the situation is now in flux. As Buddhism came from India, Marxism came from the Soviet Union, and now the Soviets have abandoned Marxism as the Indians abandoned Buddhism. The implicit challenge is the question of why China should hold on to Marxism now that its teacher/place of origin has abandoned the teaching. The answer here is that just as China (including Tibet in this definition) Sinicized Buddhism, so China has and must continue to Sinicize Marxism. This approach is useful for assessing what Sinicizing Marxism means, since "Chinese characteristics" is often taken as a quality to be applied sarcastically. Yet, only the sectarian few would characterize Chinese Buddhism as a "fake" Buddhism compared to, say, Theravada Buddhism, as opposed to believing, for example, that it obscures the central Buddhist truths.

This reference to the collapse of the Soviet Union is only something that can be inferred, but the explicit discussion of Marxism's origins is worth noting in contrast. Marxism for the series is not a product of the Soviet Union but of Germany. It is a German teaching, sharing in prestige with other German achievements, such as those in engineering and research.⁴⁸ Here, Li De's existence as a German transformed by the Soviet Union forms a sort of negative potential counter-narrative to the journey of Marxism to China and its adaptation to Chinese conditions. Mao compares Zhou Enlai traveling to Germany, the "homeland of Marxism," in the early 1920s to Tripitaka traveling to India, the homeland of Buddhism. However, Zhou may have done that to be more organizationally linked up with the Comintern and their

⁴⁷Emily Baum, "Enchantment in an Age of Reform: Fortune-Telling Fever in Post-Mao China, 1980s–1990s," *Past & Present* 251, no. 1 (May 2021): 229–261, accessed 02/06/2023, doi:10.1093/pastj/gtaa019, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=30h&AN=150212041&site=ehost-live>.

⁴⁸See the film *Black Cannon Incident* 《黑袍事件》 (1985) for a more satirical and bitter take on Marxism as German innovation, along with any "Sinicization" simply making it worse. In the film, a German machine of ambiguous purpose, antiquated enough to "only be gotten rid of in Africa" by the German company ("Nur in Afrika werden wir die los!"), breaks down in a Chinese factory due to the German-language instructions not being read properly, starting with the fact that the machine needs lubrication. Jerome Silbergeld, *China into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema*, Envisioning Asia (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 245.

western headquarters in Berlin as opposed to any such “Marxological” purpose. Additionally, while Lenin is referenced, there is little mention of “Marxism-Leninism” in the series, with this conversation adding to that emphasis on a return to Marx. Indeed, Mao’s emphasis to the Lama that the Buddhism he followed is that which Siddharta Gautama founded in India, beyond emphasizing Buddhism’s initial foreignness, also emphasizes this notion of a “return to the source.” This again is the paradoxical thread of the orthodox Marxism of the Dengist source with regard to productive forces, emphasizing again and again the determinist, even pre-Bolshevik, Marxism of the German SPD-centered Second International with regards to the historical necessity of a market-based (primitive) accumulation capital, while also emphasizing the absolute necessity of making a break with orthodox Marxism by adapting it to Chinese conditions and characteristics.

5 Conclusion

The Long March, including Otto Braun/Li De, has continued to be depicted numerous times since 2001. Various changes have occurred, such as a re-emphasis on Mao Zedong as the “core” of the collective leadership after that status was announced for Xi Jinping in 2016. This, of course, is contrary to the explicit narration of 2001’s *Long March* and its emphasis on the collective leadership, but perhaps not so contrary to its implicit dramatic form, where Mao takes a central role, even as attention is paid to Zhou Enlai and Zhu De. These three Communist leaders taken together are most memorialized in the context of the Long March and part of the initial efforts to broaden the aura from Mao to a leadership group after Mao’s death.

This is only one example of how Party history dramas engage with a constant dialectic of rupture and continuity, legitimating Party governance that has as its great watershed the beginning of “Reform and Opening” in 1978. These developments needed to be continually reflected by their incorporation into narratives of the political myth. Party dramas and films function about the leadership function as a more popularized form of the party history textbook, particularly dramas with their length and amount of dialogue.

One adaptation that fully takes on the notion of editing that mythic narrative until 1949 is 2021’s *Waves Against the Sand* 大浪淘沙, where in a sort of docudrama fashion, young party historians digitally edit the narrative (reenactments) of the Communist Party up until 1949 in film editing software while posting on social media and visiting Red holy sites as part of commemorating the centennial. Li De appears here, too. The future of networked, streaming dramas that are watched on the go in clipped segments and re-edits and on fast forward in today’s China is intertwined with the nineties’ legacy of weighty party dramas. In this evolving media landscape, the reimagining of historical narratives like the Long March reflects both a continuity of ideological emphasis and the adaptive nature of storytelling in China’s digital age, where past events are reframed to align with present political currents and the shifting consumption patterns of modern audiences.

5.1 Myth in a Time of Spiritual Crisis

The most striking element of Long March is its overt discussion of faith 信仰 and religion 宗教. It is explicitly brought up multiple times, as discussed in previous chapters. It is the processing of and commenting on the myth that is the Long March, the myth that is so central to continued belief in the legitimacy, righteousness and viability of the Chinese Communist revolution and the continued sovereign role of the Communist Party of China in implementing seemingly non-socialist market reforms in the midst of a world in which the capitalist countries led by the US won. If the Communists in the Jiangxi Soviet could make it out of encirclement by Chiang Kai-shek, the People's Republic of China, in its "new Long March," as Deng referred to it from at least December 1978, could survive the devil's bargain it had made with the US against the other member of the "strategic triangle," the Soviet Union, which had led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist camp, drastically reducing its main successor state, Russia, and its position as a world power.¹ From a position of more cold-eyed realism, the Chinese reformers around and under Deng faced a similar problem to "reform Communists" across the Soviet camp and beyond it when the Soviet Union collapsed. The global pole that they had oriented much of their understanding of the world around was suddenly only present in a greatly diminished and discontinuous form, subject to massive American "shock therapy" in a dismantling of its economic, political and social system. They assumed that the Soviet Union would continue to last for a very long time and did not realize how little time it had left.²

To return to the question posed at the beginning of this thesis, "Why did Li De return?", the shock of a reality without the Soviet Union is what likely begins to explain the first visual depiction of Otto Braun/Li De only appearing in 1994, two years after the end of the Soviet Union. Its production context was in the shadow of this collapse and amid a harsh reexamination of this past.³ Li De made no official appearances during the Sino-Soviet Split, as the

¹For a realist analysis arguing for an understanding of global geopolitics through the lens of a "strategic triangle" of the US, China and USSR/Russia, see Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, "International Relations and China's Position in the Socialist Camp," in *Revolutionary Transformations: The People's Republic of China in the 1950s*, ed. Anja Blanke, Julia C. Strauss, and Klaus Mühlhahn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 22–43, doi:10.1017/9781009304146.003.

²Whether that was due to systemic fragility or particularly poor reform leadership in the USSR under Gorbachev is another question. It is clear that the Soviet Union's conditions were quite different from China's in the 1980s, most prominently in the USSR's lack of a poor peasant base that could be swiftly induced into the factories, construction sites and other sites of urban migrant labor (proletarianized except for whatever small land deed they had after decollectivization), instead having collective farmers with a full welfare state. Vladislav Zubok, "The Soviet Union and China in the 1980s: Reconciliation and Divorce," *Cold War History* 17, no. 2 (Apr. 3, 2017): 131–132, accessed 05/29/2023, doi:10.1080/14682745.2017.1315923, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2017.1315923>

³A contemporary example of the effect of the Soviet collapse is how Jiang Wen's 1994 film of childhood mem-

increasing ideological and geopolitical polarization between the PRC and the USSR meant that the Chinese side went over entirely to presenting itself as the legitimate successors of Stalin's politics against the Soviet Union's "revisionism." Since the Maoist leadership presented itself both externally and internally as continuing to uphold Stalin against the USSR, presenting the story of a Comintern advisor who was sent at a time when the Soviet Union was not "revisionist" would perhaps have complicated the story.

What, then, if the Soviet Union did not exist anymore, was the target of the 2001 *Long March*'s negative depiction of a foreign German Comintern advisor? Its most central aim was to address one of the greatest weaknesses in the Dengist and (even more so) Jiangist forms of the Communist Party of China—the sense that Reform and Opening had led to a subordination of the Chinese political project to global and specifically American dictates, highlighted by Chinese prime minister Zhu Rongji's negotiations with the US to join the World Trade Organization over several years. There is a case to be made, however, that the Chinese leadership had not fully submitted to the dictates of the US-led world. Isabella Weber's work has revealed to a great extent how through a combination of planning and chance, the Chinese leadership under Deng actually did manage to avoid "shock therapy" in its transition from a planned economy to the market.⁴ Their approach of what Weber calls "experimental gradualism," epitomized by such phrases under Deng such as "making the path by walking it" and "crossing the river by feeling the stones under one's feet" confronted the more rigid and established theoretical certainties of Western economists, from Milton Friedman to dissident Eastern Europeans in exile, almost all of whom had lost hope in any socialist system being reformable.⁵ Through their negotiation between foreign experts and the imposition of the foreign, we can see a role for why Li De only appeared in the 1990s.

An additional threat to Party leadership was what referred to as "peaceful evolution," which was echoed as a hopeful promise by Western observers of China, who saw market liberalization as inevitably followed by political liberalization. In fact, Jiang Zemin, in his own reported conversation with a Buddhist monk, made it clear that they didn't want to see

ories among relatively elite Beijing children during the very late Cultural Revolution, *Bright Sunny Days* 《阳光灿烂的日子》, was given the English title *In the Heat of the Sun*, starting with its showing at a festival in Taiwan. This was both to avoid a title that was "too positive" about the Cultural Revolution, while also being, as Daniel Vukovich puts it, "a profit-oriented allusion to Russian director Nikita Mikhalkov's Oscar-winning *Burnt by the Sun* (1994), a film literally about Stalinist terror and the great purges in 1936." Daniel F. Vukovich, *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the P.R.C.*, Postcolonial Politics 5 (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2012), 122

⁴As Adrian Wood remembers, the Chinese Communists and the World Bank, in their bureaucratization, size, and dedication, were perfectly suited to each other as they began to interact in 1979, but the Chinese Communists always insisted on an arms-length approach, which Wood, at least in hindsight, considers key to their success. Weber, *How China Escaped Shock Therapy*, 121-2.

⁵Weber, *How China Escaped Shock Therapy*, 145-6.

“peaceful evolution” coming from religion either.⁶ This element along with the popularity of religious movements in the nineties, along with “new religious movements” such as Falun Gong, likely contributes to the series’ intense focus on belief (conviction) and religion.

5.2 Superscription and the Documentary Hypothesis, or the Impossibility of Escaping Mao

The spiritual crisis that the collapse of Maoism and the onset of Reform and Opening brought on struggled on a popular level with the affirmation and negation of Mao and the Chinese Revolution. This context of “broken narratives” brought Chinese revolutionary history closer to a situation in which they could only “superscribe” or produce work that commented on the past, not negating it. This is also the puzzle of the compilers of the first five books of the Torah/Pentateuch, where we can only hypothesize about the conditions of its production. Did the compilers not see that stories essentially repeated and contradicted each other? Why did they seem to operate on a principle of leaving nothing out? It is difficult for Biblical scholars to assign definitive social and historical causes or clear chronology to the four texts they have hypothesized. The Documentary Hypothesis was a way for these scholars to deal with all the problems they faced while attempting to read the Pentateuch as a coherent text: “redundancy, contradiction, discontinuity, and inconsistency of terminology and style.”⁷ In adapting the analogy of the “Documentary Hypothesis” and its disparate sources to a different work and context, that of *Long March* and twentieth century Chinese history, however, we can say far more about the sources, their authors, and their motivations.

In the Chinese case, the Dengist leadership could not negate the revolutionary legacy, which is, after all, essential to their legitimacy. Thus superscription became essential. While they could, at least from above, deliver a final negative verdict on the Cultural Revolution as “ten wasted years,” the events of the Great Leap Forward, for example, are contextualized with a ten year span from 1956-1966 in which “the Party accumulated precious experience in building socialism,” even if the Great Leap Forward contributed to “serious losses to our

⁶Jiang Zemin encountered a Buddhist monk while touring the ancient White Horse Temple in Luoyang in 1991 and discussed with him the Party’s support of religious freedom, overlaps with Party beliefs, and the necessity to confront Party and government corruption, which was what had motivated the monk to leave his hometown of Guiyang. The article about it, written “from memory,” had a great influence on discussions of religious freedom in China, particularly among Buddhists. Jiang Jiang and Jinglin Gao, “An unexpected conversation between Jiang Zemin and a Buddhist monk 3 decades ago,” Dec. 17, 2022, accessed 02/06/2023, <https://www.gingerriver.com/p/an-unexpected-conversation-between>

⁷Baruch J. Schwartz, “The Documentary Hypothesis,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Pentateuch*, ed. Joel Baden and Jeffrey Stackert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 165.

country and people.”⁸ The post-1978 leadership’s proclaimed experience here was rectifying the errors of that campaign, for which, however, they implicitly had some responsibility as leading cadre. Similarly, in *Long March*, the leadership of the Communist Party are all present as they witness Li De and Bo Gu’s errors, which they will gain experience in rectifying. This is particularly the case with Zhou Enlai, who the series makes very clear is part of the “Troika” with Bo Gu and Li De, but emphasis is placed on his administrative and ameliorating role, with clear analogies to his position during the Cultural Revolution.

“Mao Zedong Thought,” which had been proclaimed to guide the Party at least since the 1945 Party history resolution (and was formed as a concept during the Yan’an Rectification Campaign), was mobilized by the winners in the Party struggle around Deng to explicitly be the “collective wisdom” of the Party and not necessarily the lines Mao had held, particularly beginning in the late 1950s.⁹ In this way, “chief responsibility” for that “cultural revolution” lay with Mao Zedong and the positions he had taken, as the resolution said. Despite being made the Party’s “collective wisdom,” Mao Zedong Thought still needed to continue to be attached to Mao’s personal aura. Thus future depictions of revolutionary history could only write new sources on top of what had come before and the leader who had come before.

5.3 Xi Jinping’s “two integrations” against the idea of Marxism as simply one more belief

The greatest ideological change since the release of the series in 2001 is a (re)turn to a vision of Marxism (with Chinese characteristics) combined with “excellent traditional Chinese culture” as a unifying and totalizing ideology, which other beliefs must serve on the ideological plane and not simply respect as the “law of the land.” This is the essence of General Secretary Xi Jinping’s “two integrations” 两个结合.¹⁰ An initial interpretation of “excellent/fine

⁸Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (CCP CC), collab., Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China (June 1981-06-27), <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121344>.

⁹This first appeared “as an official speech convention” in a speech by another leading Long March veteran, Ye Jianying, on October 1st, 1979, and was raised to fully official status by appearing in the 1981 resolution on party history. Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, *Parteigeschichtsschreibung in der VR China*, 69

¹⁰Theoretical Study Group Under the Executive Council of the Institute of Party History and Literature of the CPC Central Committee, “The “Two Integrations”: The Only Path and Strongest Assurance for Our Success,” *Qiushi: CPC Central Committee Bimonthly*, July/August 2023, accessed 09/15/2024, http://en.qstheory.cn/2023-09/13/c_918762.htm; Hongjia Yang, “Xi Jinping Invests in Ideological Legitimacy Amid Slowing Economic Growth,” Asia Society Policy Institute, Aug. 23, 2023, accessed 09/15/2024, <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/xi-jinping-invests-ideological-legitimacy-amid-slowing-economic-growth>.

Chinese traditional culture” 优秀传统文化 may take this as a general, perhaps chauvinistic, praise of traditional Chinese culture, but the modifier *youxiu*, 优秀 (excellent/fine), is there to emphasize the Communist Party’s role as arbiter of “traditional culture” as it is applied in modern Chinese society. As one of the academics in the educational 2023 miniseries *When Marx met Confucius* (discussed below) states, the retrograde parts will sink down into the silt of the river of history. While there is argument about the current Party’s encouragement of patriarchal norms, traditional patriarchy, for example, would certainly be a part of traditional culture that many would not consider excellent.

Official Chinese Marxism has been presented as the completion, or at least the newest and as of now most complete expression of Chinese thought. The 2023 five episode educational series *When Marx met Confucius* brings actors playing Marx and Confucius into a studio dialogue, accompanied by a rotating ensemble of Marxist academics and a studio audience of smartly dressed young people with scripted questions. It implicitly highlights one issue with 2001’s *Long March*’s emphasis on connecting Buddhism with Marxism, which is that it places Marxism in the realm of private belief, whereas Confucianism and its focus on the social at least accords in that regard with Marxism. By drawing on Kang Youwei’s thoughts at the end of the Qing reinterpreting a form of Confucian utopianism through emphasis on the “great unity” 大同, the educational series can also tie that vision into the “utopianism” of Marxism. It also emphasizes historical foreigners dating back to the Tang, such as Persians and Japanese, who “became” Chinese and the influence of foreign civilizations on China, including Islamic civilization.

“Becoming Chinese” becomes equated with integrating one’s worldview with “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” This is a rupture on at least the ideological level with Jiang Zemin’s administration expanding Communist Party membership to social classes that would seem to be antagonistic to being a member of a Marxist-Leninist party, such as capitalists, and accepting that antagonism to some degree. Thus, there was an emphasis in a series like 2001’s *Long March* on the necessity of accepting people with different personal philosophies as long as they could be obedient to the political structure.¹¹ The series comes close to presenting Marxism as simply one more belief. The shift exemplified in *When Marx met Confucius* of seeking a dialectical synthesis (at best) with Confucianism places a claim on a traditional Chinese ideology with an ambition to regulate society as a whole, not “merely” the karmic destinies of believers in Buddhism. Moments that counter that impression exist in the series, such as the Red Army succeeding where the Taiping failed, but the series is a

¹¹It should be noted that this did not mean that someone with open religious faith could join the Party in most circumstances.

clear product of the “Three Represents” slogan. The slogan expressed an approach of “representing” all major “social” forces of society in order to increase “productive forces,” which were indeed increasing at historically unprecedented rates.

As the productive forces seem to be slowing down in the 2020s and with the ninetieth anniversary of the Long March approaching with its accompanying dramatic adaptations, greater emphasis will likely have to be put on the difficulty of the Long March and the ever-progressing “new Long March”—disciplined and loyal coping with difficulty being the core of the “Long March Spirit.” Here we may also see that viewers are encouraged to embrace the “original intention” (初心 *chuxin*)—that term that had its greatest emphasis early in the Xi Jinping administration—that the Long March participants demonstrate. How these adaptations will engage with Li De and the Sinicization of Marxism-Leninism in an age of geopolitical upheaval and multipolarity “unseen in a century” (to use a phrase of Xi Jinping’s) remains to be seen.

Bibliography

China Daily: The Long March 80 years on. “80 Years on, Foreigners on the Long March Remembered.” Sept. 1, 2016. Accessed 08/09/2024. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/80thendoflongmarch/2016-09/01/content_26664363.htm.

“American Rhetoric: Martin Luther King, Jr. - I’ve Been to the Mountaintop (April 3 1968).” Accessed 06/24/2024. <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm>.

Arrighi, Giovanni. *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First Century*. London: Verso, 2008.

Baden, Joel S. *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis*. The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

Bai Li 白黎. *Hong se xuan wo zhong de Li De (Otto Braun in the Red Maelstrom)*. 1st ed. Beijing: Zhong yang wen xian chu ban she, 2006.

Barmé, Geremie. *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

– . *Shades of Mao: The Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996.

Baum, Emily. “Enchantment in an Age of Reform: Fortune-Telling Fever in Post-Mao China, 1980s–1990s.” *Past & Present* 251, no. 1 (May 2021): 229–261. Accessed 02/06/2023. doi:10.1093/pastj/gtaa019. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=30h&AN=150212041&site=ehost-live>.

Benton, Gregor, and Lin Chun, eds. *Was Mao Really a Monster? The Academic Response to Chang and Halliday’s Mao, the Unknown Story*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2010.

Beuchler, Klaus. “Nur wahre Kunst verändert die Menschen.” *Berliner Zeitung: Kulturpolitik* (Berlin), Aug. 1, 1961, 6. Accessed 08/11/2022. [https://dfg-viewer.de/show/?set%5Bmets%5D=https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/zefys/SNP26120215-19610801-0-0-0-0.xml&tx_dlf\[page\]=6](https://dfg-viewer.de/show/?set%5Bmets%5D=https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/zefys/SNP26120215-19610801-0-0-0-0.xml&tx_dlf[page]=6).

Bibliography

- Boer, Dick. *Deliverance from Slavery: Attempting a Biblical Theology in the Service of Liberation*. Historical Materialism Book Series 110. Leiden: Brill, 2016.
- Boer, Roland. *Political Myth: On the Use and Abuse of Biblical Themes*. New Slant. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Bottici, Chiara. *A Philosophy of Political Myth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Braun, Otto. *Chinesische Aufzeichnungen: (1932 - 1939)*. Berlin: Dietz, 1973.
- . “In der Münchner FSJ.” In *Deutschlands junge Garde: 50 Jahre Arbeiterjugendbewegung*, 1. Aufl., ed. by Zentralrat Freie Deutsche Jugend, 163–8. [Berlin]: Verl. Neues Leben, 1954.
 - . “In wessen Namen spricht Mao Tse-tung?” *Neues Deutschland* (Berlin), May 27, 1964, 5. Accessed 07/01/2022. https://dfg-viewer.de/show?tx_dlf%5Bdouble%5D=0&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=https%3A%2F%2Fcontent.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de%2Fzefys%2FSNP2532889X-19640527-0-0-0-0.xml&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=5&cHash=4d008fd96099da09918e0bd5688080ca.
- Braun, Otto | *Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur*. In *Biographische Datenbanken*. Accessed 08/16/2022. <https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/de/recherche/kataloge-datenbanken/biographische-datenbanken/otto-braun>.
- Brettler, Marc Zvi. *How to Read the Jewish Bible*. Oxford New York: Oxford university press, 2007.
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew. “America and the New Asia.” Stanford Institute for International Studies, Asia-Pacific Research Center, Mar. 9, 2005. Accessed 10/06/2024. https://fsi-live.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/evnts/media/Brzezinski_New_Asia_03_2005.pdf.
- Cai, Rong. “Restaging the Revolution in Contemporary China: Memory of Politics and Politics of Memory.” *The China Quarterly* 215 (Sept. 2013): 663–681. Accessed 02/05/2022. doi:10.1017/S0305741013000763. <http://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/china-quarterly/article/restaging-the-revolution-in-contemporary-china-memory-of-politics-and-politics-of-memory/9D3AEBF86128D792F2C2002A7CA35D87>.
- Carey, Mike. “‘A Man of Throbbing Vitality’: Leon Trotsky and the ‘Leatherites’.” European studies blog, British Library. June 9, 2017. Accessed 01/17/2022. <https://blogs.bl.uk/european/2017/06/leon-trotsky-and-the-leatherites.html>.
- Ch'en, Jerome, and Benjamin Yang. “Reflections on the Long March.” *The China Quarterly*, no. 111 (1987): 450–468. Accessed 07/16/2023. JSTOR: 653301. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/653301>.

Bibliography

- Chang, Jung, and Jon Halliday. *Mao: The Unknown Story*. 2005.
- Cheek, Timothy. "Review of *The Long March: The True History of Communist China's Founding Myth*, by Sun Shuyun." *International Journal* 64, no. 1 (2008): 302–304. Accessed 05/20/2022. JSTOR: 40204477. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40204477>.
- Chen, Xiaomei. *Staging Chinese Revolution: Theater, Film, and the Afterlives of Propaganda*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.
- Chen Yun 陈云. *Selected Works of Chen Yun: Volume I (1926-1949)*. 2nd ed. 3 vols. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2001.
- Deng Xiaoping. "Emancipate the Mind, Seek Truth From Facts and Unite As One In Looking to the Future [December 13, 1978]." Marxists Internet Archive. Accessed 03/27/2024. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/deng-xiaoping/1978/110.htm>.
- Dirlik, Arif. "Mao Zedong and "Chinese Marxism"." In *Marxism beyond Marxism*, ed. by Saree Makdisi, Cesare Casarino, and Rebecca E. Karl, 119–148. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Dossier Concerning Appeal of Colonel Freyberg on Behalf of General, Baron de Ungern-Sternberg, Now a Prisoner of War in Siberia.*, Sept. 27–Oct. 27, 1921. Accessed 08/11/2022. <https://archives.ungeneva.org/dossier-concerning-appeal-of-colonel-freyberg-on-behalf-of-general-baron-de-ungern-sternberg-now-a-prisoner-of-war-in-siberia>.
- Duara, Prasenjit. "Superscribing Symbols: The Myth of Guandi, Chinese God of War." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 47, no. 4 (1988): 778–795. Accessed 02/15/2023. doi:10.2307/2057852. JSTOR: 2057852. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2057852>.
- Vorwärts (Berlin). "Erst Spitzel, dann Heiliger!: Die „Rote Fahne“ kann alles!" Apr. 16, 1928, 3. Accessed 08/10/2022. <https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/newspaper/item/BKTD3ZVXSZK2EVT3GVR5J6NS64HN2CZP?query=moabit&hit=15&issuepage=3>.
- Fisher, Gareth. *From Comrades to Bodhisattvas: Moral Dimensions of Lay Buddhist Practice in Contemporary China*. Topics in Contemporary Buddhism. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014.
- Freiberg, J. W. "The Dialectic in China: Maoist and Daoist." *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 9, no. 1 (Mar. 1977): 2–19. Accessed 07/28/2023. doi:10.1080/14672715.1977.10406395. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14672715.1977.10406395>.
- Friedman, Richard Elliott. *Who Wrote the Bible?* First Simon & Schuster trade paperback edition. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019.

Bibliography

- Frye, Northrop. *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*. 1st ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982.
- . *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of The Bible and Literature* [1990]. Ed. by Michael Dolzani. Vol. 26. Collected Works of Northrop Frye. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- Goldstein, Jonathan. *Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia: Singapore, Manila, Taipei, Harbin, Shanghai, Rangoon, and Surabaya*. New Perspectives on Modern Jewish History, volume 6. Berlin ; Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015.
- Gong, Hong-yu. “Music, Nationalism and the Search for Modernity in China, 1911–1949.” *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 10, no. 2 (2008): 38–69. Accessed 04/23/2024. https://www.nzasia.org.nz/uploads/1/3/2/1/132180707/4_gong_3.pdf.
- Gong, Qian. *Remaking Red Classics in Post-Mao China: TV Drama as Popular Media*. Media, Culture and Communication in Asia-Pacific Societies. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020.
- Goossaert, Vincent. “The Concept of Religion in China and the West.” *Diogenes* 52, no. 1 (Feb. 1, 2005): 13–20. Accessed 01/04/2023. doi:10.1177/0392192105050596. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192105050596>.
- Goossaert, Vincent, and David A. Palmer. *The Religious Question in Modern China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Gramsci, Antonio. “The Revolution Against ‘Capital’ (24 December 1917).” Accessed 06/02/2023. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/1917/12/revolution-against-capital.htm>.
- Green, Frederik H. “The Cultural Indigenization of a Soviet ‘Red Classic’ Hero: Pavel Korchagin’s Journey through Time and Space.” In *The Making and Remaking of China’s “Red Classics”: Politics, Aesthetics, and Mass Culture*, ed. by Rosemary Roberts and Li Li, 136–55. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017.
- Hai Feng. “The MaoCrazy West (1993).” In *Shades of Mao: The Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader*, by Geremie Barmé, ed. by Geremie Barmé, 238–43. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996.
- Hastings, Adrian. *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Hinsch, Bret. “Myth and the Construction of Foreign Ethnic Identity in Early and Medieval China.” *Asian Ethnicity* 5, no. 1 (Feb. 1, 2004): 81–103. Accessed 09/28/2024. doi:10.1080/1463136032000168916. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1463136032000168916>.

Bibliography

- Hon, Tze-ki. "From a Hierarchy in Time to a Hierarchy in Space: The Meanings of Sino-Babylonianism in Early Twentieth-Century China." *Modern China* 36, no. 2 (Mar. 1, 2010): 139–169. Accessed 09/29/2024. doi:10.1177/0097700409345126. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700409345126>.
- International Campaign for Tibet. "The Communist Party as Living Buddha." International Campaign for Tibet. Apr. 25, 2007. Accessed 09/18/2023. <https://savetibet.org/the-communist-party-as-living-buddha/>.
- Ishikawa, Yoshihiro, and Craig A. Smith. "Line Struggle." In *Afterlives of Chinese Communism: Political Concepts from Mao to Xi*, 1st ed., ed. by Christian Sorace, Ivan Franceschini, and Nicholas Loubere. ANU Press, June 25, 2019. Accessed 09/13/2023. doi:10.22459/ACC.2019.19. <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n5354/pdf/ch19.pdf>.
- Jiang, Jiang, and Jinglin Gao. "An unexpected conversation between Jiang Zemin and a Buddhist monk 3 decades ago." Dec. 17, 2022. Accessed 02/06/2023. <https://www.gingerriver.com/p/an-unexpected-conversation-between>.
- Jung, Hwa Tol, and Petee Jung. "The Hermeneutics of Political Ideology and Cultural Change: Maoism as the Sinicization of Marxism." *Cultural Hermeneutics* 3, no. 2 (July 1975): 165–198. Accessed 06/14/2024. doi:10.1177/019145377500300205. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/019145377500300205>.
- Kampen, Thomas. *Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and the Evolution of the Chinese Communist Leadership*. Denmark : Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2000. Accessed 01/07/2022. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&AN=463029>.
- Kaufmann, Bernd, ed. *Der Nachrichtendienst der KPD: 1919-1937*. Berlin: Dietz, 1993.
- Knight, Nick. *Marxist Philosophy in China: From Qu Qiubai to Mao Zedong 1923-1945*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2005.
- Kurella, Alfred. In *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 13:321–323. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 1982, by Evelyn Lacina. Accessed 01/28/2023. <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118725564.html#ndbcontent>.
- Kurella, Alfred | Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur. In *Biographische Datenbanken*. Accessed 09/14/2024. <https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/de/recherche/kataloge-datenbanken/biographische-datenbanken/alfred-kurella>.

Bibliography

- Lee, Archie C. C. "The Bible in Chinese Christianity." *The Ecumenical Review* 67, no. 1 (2015): 96–106. Accessed 04/15/2024. doi:10.1111/erev.12139. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/erev.12139>.
- Lee, Haiyan. "Mao's Two Bodies: On the Curious (Political) Art of Impersonating the Great Helmsman." In *Red Legacies in China: Cultural Afterlives of the Communist Revolution*, ed. by Jie Li and Enhua Zhang, 245–70. Harvard Contemporary China Series 18. Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London: Published by the Harvard University Asia Center, distributed by Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Leutner, Mechthild, ed. *KPdSU(B), Komintern und die Sowjetbewegung in China: Dokumente. Bd. 4 1931 - 1937*. Vol. 4. Berliner China-Studien Quellen und Dokumente 3. Münster: Lit-Verlag, 2006.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. "Myth and Music." In *Myth and Meaning*, 44–54. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Dec. 15, 1978. Accessed 05/01/2023. doi:10.3138/9781442654112-007. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.3138/9781442654112-007/html?lang=en>.
- Lindsay, Michael. "The Yenan Years." *Problems of Communism* 25, no. 4 (1976): 77–81. Accessed 08/27/2024. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/probscmu25&i=357>.
- Litten, Freddy. "Otto Braun in Deutschland 1900-1928." *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* 27, no. 2 (1991): 171–182. Accessed 06/30/2022. https://litten.de/fulltext/braun_d.pdf.
- . *Otto Brauns frühes Wirken in China (1932-1935)*. Munich: Osteuropa-Institut München, 1988.
- Litten, Frederick S. "Einstein and the Noulens Affair." *The British Journal for the History of Science* 24, no. 4 (1991): 465–467. Accessed 01/08/2022. JSTOR: 4027131. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4027131>.
- . "Otto Braun's Curriculum Vitae—Translation and Commentary." *Twentieth-Century China* 23, no. 1 (Nov. 1997): 31–62. Accessed 05/02/2021. <http://litten.de/fulltext/braun.pdf>.
- . "The CCP and the Fujian Rebellion." *Republican China* 14, no. 1 (Jan. 1989): 57–75. Accessed 06/30/2022. doi:10.1080/08932344.1989.11720129. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08932344.1989.11720129>.

Bibliography

- . "The Myth of the "Turning Point" –Towards a New Understanding of the Long March." In *Bochumer Jahrbuch zur Ostasienforschung*, 25:3–42. Munich: Iudicium, 2001.
- . "The Noulens Affair." *The China Quarterly*, no. 138 (1994): 492–512. Accessed 01/08/2022. JSTOR: 654954. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/654954>.
- Liu Libo 刘力波. "佛教中国化对马克思主义中国化的历史启示." *青海社会科学*, no. 6 (2009): 144–148. Accessed 06/15/2024. <http://www.cqvip.com/qk/82728x/200906/32592701.html>.
- Losurdo, Domenico. *Flucht aus der Geschichte? die russische Revolution und die chinesische Revolution heute*. 2. Ausg. Edition Marxistische Blätter 105. Essen: Neue-Impulse-Verl, 2009.
- Ma, Weijun. "Chinese Main Melody TV Drama: Hollywoodization and Ideological Persuasion." *Television & New Media* 15, no. 6 (Sept. 2014): 523–537. Accessed 04/22/2023. doi:10.1177/1527476412471436. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1527476412471436>.
- Mao Tsetung. *Poems*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976.
- Mao Zedong. "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People [February 27, 1957]." Marxists Internet Archive. Accessed 10/10/2024. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_58.htm.
- . "Oppose Book Worship [May 1930]." Marxists Internet Archive. Accessed 10/10/2024. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-6/mswv6_11.htm.
- . "Preface to 'Oppose Book Worship' [March 11, 1961]." Marxists Internet Archive. Accessed 10/10/2024. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_60.htm.
- . "Reform Our Study [May 1941]." Marxists Internet Archive. Accessed 10/04/2024. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_02.htm.
- . "Talks at the Yen'an Forum on Literature and Art (May 1942) - Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Volume 3." Marxists Internet Archive. Accessed 09/13/2024. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm.
- . "The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War." Oct. 1938. Accessed 06/14/2024. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_10.htm.

Bibliography

- . “We Must Prevent China From Changing Colour [July 14, 1964].” Accessed 06/08/2024. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_24.htm.
 - . “在八届十一中全会闭幕式上的讲话(一九六六年八月十二日) (”Speech at the Closing Ceremony of the 11th Plenary Session of the 8th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China - August 12, 1966”).” Marxists Internet Archive. Accessed 09/14/2024. <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/maozedong/1968/5-206.htm>.
 - . “改造我们的学习 (一九四一年五月十九日) (Reform our Study).” Marxists Internet Archive. Accessed 10/05/2024. <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/maozedong/marxist.org-chinese-mao-19410519.htm>.
- Martinson, Paul V. “From Reciprocity to Contradiction: Aspects of the Confucian-Maoist Transformation.” In *Transitions and Transformations in the History of Religions: Essays in Honor of Joseph M. Kitagawa*, ed. by Frank E. Reynolds and Theodore M. Ludwig, 185–218. BRILL, 1980. Accessed 05/18/2024. doi:10.1163/9789004378575_012. https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004378575/B9789004378575_s012.xml.
- McDougall, Bonnie S., and Mao Zedong. *Mao Zedong’s “Talks at the Yan’an Conference on Literature and Art”: A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary*. Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, no. 39. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies; University of Michigan, 1980.
- McGranahan, Carole. “Mao in Tibetan Disguise: History, Ethnography, and Excess.” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2, no. 1 (Mar. 2012): 213–245. Accessed 03/20/2023. doi:10.14318/hau2.1.011. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.14318/hau2.1.011>.
- Meyers, Carol L. *Exodus*. New Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Palmer, David A. *Qigong Fever: Body, Science, and Utopia in China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.
- Pamperrien, Sabine. *Versuch am untauglichen Objekt: der Schriftstellerverband der DDR im Dienst der sozialistischen Ideologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004.
- Pantsov, Alexander V. “Comintern Activists in China: Spies or Theorists?” In *Foreigners and Foreign Institutions in Republican China*, ed. by Anne-Marie Brady and Douglas Brown, 93–108. Chinese Worlds 30. London ; New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Salisbury, Harrison Evans. *The Long March: The Untold Story*. London: Macmillan, 1985.

Bibliography

- Schoppa, R. Keith. *In a Sea of Bitterness: Refugees during the Sino-Japanese War*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Schwartz, Baruch J. "The Documentary Hypothesis." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Pentateuch*, ed. by Joel Baden and Jeffrey Stackert, 165–87. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Seah, Audrey. "The 1670 Chinese Missal: A Struggle for Indigenization Amidst the Chinese Rites Controversy." In *China's Christianity: From Missionary to Indigenous Church*, ed. by Anthony E. Clark, 86–120. Studies in Christian Mission 50. Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- Soviet Russia. "Semionov's Agent in Germany." Oct. 1921, no. 4, 178. Google Books: FkpFAAAAYAAJ. <https://archive.org/details/SovietRussiaVol14And5/page/n751/mode/2up?q=freiberg>.
- Shewmaker, Kenneth E. *Americans and Chinese Communists, 1927-1945: A Persuading Encounter*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971.
- Short, Philip. *Mao: The Man Who Made China*. New completely revised edition. London: I.B. Tauris, 2017.
- Silbergeld, Jerome. *China into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. Envisioning Asia. London: Reaktion Books, 1999.
- Snow, Edgar. *Random Notes on Red China, 1936-1945*. In collab. with John K. Fairbank. Harvard East Asian Monographs 5. Boston: Harvard University Asia Center, 1957.
- . *Red Star over China*. Left Book Club Edition. Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1937.
 - . *Xixing Manji* 西行漫记 (*Red Star over China*). First Chinese revised edition. Trans. by Dong Leshan 董乐山. Beijing: Sanlian Shudian 三联书店, 1979.
- Solomon, Jon. "Sinicized Marxism as a Symptom of the Postcolonial Condition: Arif Dirlik, Mao Zedong, Xu Guangwei, and the Modern Regime of Translation." In *'Capital' in the East: Reflections on Marx*, ed. by Achin Chakraborty et al., 3–26. Singapore: Springer, 2019. Accessed 06/14/2024. doi:10.1007/978-981-32-9468-4_1. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-32-9468-4_1.
- Sumiya, Kazuhiko. "The Long March and the Exodus: "The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung" and the Contemporary Significance of "Emissary Prophecy"." In *China and Ourselves: Explorations and Revisions by a New Generation*, ed. by R. Bruce Douglass and Ross Terrill, 189–223. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971.

Bibliography

- Sun, Shuyun. *The Long March: The True History of Communist China's Founding Myth*. 1st Anchor books ed. New York: Anchor Books, 2008.
- Suppressing Communist-Banditry in China*. Shanghai: China United Press, 1934.
- Teiser, Stephen F. "Foreword." In *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*, 3rd ed, by Erik Zürcher, xii–xxviii. Sinica Leidensia v. 11. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Theoretical Study Group Under the Executive Council of the Institute of Party History and Literature of the CPC Central Committee. "The "Two Integrations": The Only Path and Strongest Assurance for Our Success." *Qiushi: CPC Central Committee Bimonthly*, July/August 2023. Accessed 09/15/2024. http://en.qsttheory.cn/2023-09/13/c_918762.htm.
- Neues Deutschland: Nachrichten und Korrespondenzen* (Berlin). "Trauerfeier für Genossen Otto Braun." Aug. 23, 1974, 2. Accessed 08/11/2022. [https://dfg-viewer.de/show/?set%5Bmets%5D=https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/zefys/SNP2532889X-19740823-0-0-0-0.xml&tx_dlf\[page\]=2](https://dfg-viewer.de/show/?set%5Bmets%5D=https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/zefys/SNP2532889X-19740823-0-0-0-0.xml&tx_dlf[page]=2).
- Trausch, Tim. "Die Popularisierung des Politischen und die Aktualisierung nationaler Mythen im Main-Melody-Film." In *Politiken des Populären: Medien – Kultur – Wissenschaft*, ed. by Ivo Ritzer and Harald Steinwender, 141–161. Neue Perspektiven der Medienästhetik. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2019. Accessed 04/22/2023. doi:10.1007/978-3-658-22923-8_7. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-22923-8_7.
- Van de Ven, Hans J. *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920-1927*. In collab. with University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Vladimirov, Petr P. *Das Sondergebiet Chinas: 1942 - 1945*. Berlin: Dietz, 1976.
- Vukovich, Daniel F. *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the P.R.C. Post-colonial Politics* 5. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Wang Chaozhu 王朝柱. "《长征》创作札记 ("Notes on creating *Long March*")." 中国电视, no. 10 (2001): 9–14. Accessed 04/14/2022. <http://oversea.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?filename=ZGDD200110001&dbcode=CJFD&dbname=cjfd2001&v=>.
- Wang Xinsheng 王新生. "李德来华的身份及任务新探 ("New inquiries into Li De's identity and assignment in coming to China")." 近代史研究, no. 01 (2009): 141–151+3. Accessed 08/22/2022. <http://oversea.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFD2009&filename=JDSY200901009&uniplatform=OVERSEA&v=tLp7rcyVaE-w6itNXNp9C3w-xjjX1JDLw2XDCnEuApbv730UIcptSlRcykPlcQ>.

Bibliography

- Weber, Isabella. *How China Escaped Shock Therapy: The Market Reform Debate*. Routledge Studies on the Chinese Economy. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, N.Y: Routledge, 2021.
- Wei, William. *Counterrevolution in China: The Nationalists in Jiangxi during the Soviet Period*. Michigan Studies on China. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985.
- Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, Susanne. "International Relations and China's Position in the Socialist Camp." In *Revolutionary Transformations: The People's Republic of China in the 1950s*, ed. by Anja Blanke, Julia C. Strauss, and Klaus Mühlhahn, 22–43. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. doi:10.1017/9781009304146.003.
- . *Parteigeschichtsschreibung in der VR China: Typen, Methoden, Themen und Funktionen*. Veröffentlichungen des Ostasien-Instituts der Ruhr-Universität Bochum 29. Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1984.
- Yang, Benjamin. "The Zunyi Conference as One Step in Mao's Rise to Power: A Survey of Historical Studies of the Chinese Communist Party." *The China Quarterly*, no. 106 (1986): 235–271. Accessed 01/31/2023. JSTOR: 653430. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/653430>.
- Yang, Fenggang. "Sinicization or Chinafication?: Cultural Assimilation vs. Political Domestication of Christianity in China and Beyond." In *The Sinicization of Chinese Religions: From Above and Below*, ed. by Richard Madsen, 16–43. BRILL, May 28, 2021. Accessed 06/14/2024. doi:10.1163/9789004465183_003. <https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004465183/BP000002.xml>.
- Yang, Hongjia. "Xi Jinping Invests in Ideological Legitimacy Amid Slowing Economic Growth." Asia Society Policy Institute. Aug. 23, 2023. Accessed 09/15/2024. <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/xi-jinping-invests-ideological-legitimacy-amid-slowing-economic-growth>.
- Yang, Kuisong. "Part I: Uncertain Adversaries, 1917-1948." In *A Short History of Sino-Soviet Relations, 1917-1991*, ed. by Zhihua Shen, trans. by Hongshan Li, 1–105. China Connections. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
- Yang Kuisong 杨奎松. 毛泽东与莫斯科的恩恩怨怨. Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2012.
- Yen, Hsiao-peí. "Evolutionary Asiacentrism, Peking Man, and the Origins of Sinocentric Ethno-Nationalism." *Journal of the History of Biology* 47, no. 4 (Nov. 1, 2014): 585–625. Accessed 09/29/2024. doi:10.1007/s10739-014-9381-4. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10739-014-9381-4>.

Bibliography

- Yu, Hongmei. "Visual Spectacular, Revolutionary Epic, and Personal Voice: The Narration of History in Chinese Main Melody Films." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 25, no. 2 (2013): 166–218. Accessed 04/22/2023. JSTOR: 43492536. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43492536>.
- Zhang, Enhua. "The Long March." In *Words and Their Stories: Essays on the Language of the Chinese Revolution*, ed. by Ban Wang, 33–49. Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section Four, China v. 27. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2011.
- Zhong Xueping. *Mainstream Culture Refocused: Television Drama, Society, and the Production of Meaning in Reform-Era China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010.
- Zhou, Yu. "Qujing (取经) as Policy Mobility with Chinese Characteristics: A Case Study of Ultralow-Energy Building Policy in China." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 53, no. 2 (Mar. 1, 2021): 410–427. Accessed 09/25/2023. doi:10.1177/0308518X20960736. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X20960736>.
- Zhou Zheng. "A General Looks Back." *Beijing Review*, Oct. 6, 1986, no. 40, 19–25. <https://www.massline.org/PekingReview/PR1986/PR1986-40.pdf>.
- Zikpi, Monica E M. "Revolution and Continuity in Guo Moruo's Representations of Qu Yuan." *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 36 (2014): 175–200. Accessed 10/21/2022. JSTOR: 43490204. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43490204>.
- Zubok, Vladislav. "The Soviet Union and China in the 1980s: Reconciliation and Divorce." *Cold War History* 17, no. 2 (Apr. 3, 2017): 121–141. Accessed 05/29/2023. doi:10.1080/14682745.2017.1315923. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2017.1315923>.
- Zürcher, Erik. *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*. 3rd ed. Sinica Leidensia v. 11. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- 佛緣 (Foyuan). In *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2017-03-31, ed. by Charles Muller, by Stefan Grace. <http://buddhism-dict.net/ddb>.
- “党外无党, 帝王思想, 党内无派, 千奇百怪。是陈独秀的诗句吗? (”No Party Outside the Party, Imperial Thought; No Faction Within the Party, Thousands of Oddities and Hundreds of Monsters.” Is This a Verse by Chen Duxiu?)” Baidu Zhidao. Accessed 09/14/2024. <https://zhidao.baidu.com/question/171054245.html>.
- 善哉 (Shanzai). In *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2021-12-10, ed. by Charles Muller, by Charles Muller. <http://buddhism-dict.net/ddb>.
- 善哉善哉 (Shanzai Shanzai). In *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2010-05-07, ed. by Charles Muller, by Charles Muller. <http://buddhism-dict.net/ddb>.

Bibliography

- 好古书生讲历史 (“Antiquity-loving bookish scholar discusses history”). “在电视剧《历史的选择》中，林彪与毛主席有这样的对话 (“In the Television Drama *History's Choice*, Lin Biao and Chairman Mao Have This Kind of Dialogue”).” Accessed 11/10/2022. https://page.om.qq.com/page/0uum_MZQ0C2GK8zF_neuHnvQ0?source=cp_1009.
- 拉大旗作虎皮. In 百度百科 (*Baidu Encyclopedia*). Accessed 10/05/2024. <https://baike.baidu.hk/item/%E6%8B%89%E5%A4%A7%E6%97%97%E4%BD%9C%E8%99%8E%E7%9A%AE/1311435>.
- 李德. In 百度百科 (*Baidu Encyclopedia*). Accessed 09/14/2024. <https://baike.baidu.hk/item/%E6%9D%8E%E5%BE%B7/3426004>.
- 緣起 (Yuanqi). In *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2010-07-16, ed. by Charles Muller, by Charles Muller. <http://buddhism-dict.net/ddb>.
- 长征精神 (*The Spirit of the Long March*). In 百度百科. Accessed 05/13/2024. <https://baike.baidu.hk/item/%E9%95%BF%E5%BE%81%E7%B2%BE%E7%A5%9E/919848>.

Abstract

This thesis examines the portrayal of Comintern military advisor to the Chinese Red Army Otto Braun (Li De) in the 2001 Chinese television drama "Long March" 《长征》 and explores why Braun was only reintegrated into the narrative of the Long March in China in the 1980s, despite his appearance in Edgar Snow's seminal "Red Star over China" in 1936. It situates Braun's reappearance within the broader context of China's "reform and opening up," highlighting how the 2001 "Long March" TV drama uses the figure of Braun to address the Party's reception of the foreign and its Sinicization of Marxism as part of a national myth analogous to the Exodus. By analogy to the Documentary Hypothesis from Biblical criticism, this thesis analyzes how multiple ideological perspectives were layered into the retelling of the Long March, demonstrating that the Party's narrative has continually evolved, merging faith in its past with the pragmatic adaptation to global capitalism. Through Braun's reintegration, the thesis reveals how the CCP manages historical memory to maintain legitimacy in an era of transformation.

这篇论文探讨了共产国际对中国红军的军事顾问李德（奥托·布劳恩）在 2001 年中国电视剧《长征》中的形象，并研究了为什么直到 20 世纪 80 年代，李德才重新被纳入中国的长征叙事中，尽管他早在 1936 年就出现在埃德加·斯诺的开创性著作《西行漫记》中。论文将李德的重新出现置于中国“改革开放”的更广泛背景下，强调了 2001 年电视剧《长征》如何通过李德这一人物，来回应党对外来因素的接受及其将马克思主义中国化的过程，作为类似于出埃及记的国家神话的一部分。通过类比圣经批评中的“底本学说”，本文分析了多种意识形态视角如何被融入长征故事的重新讲述中，揭示了党的叙事是如何不断演变的，将对过去的信仰与对全球资本主义的务实适应相结合。通过李德的重新引入，本文揭示了中国共产党的管理历史记忆，以在变革时代保持其合法性。

Abstract

Diese Arbeit untersucht die Darstellung des Militärberaters der Komintern für die chinesische Rote Armee, Otto Braun (Li De), in der chinesischen Fernsehserie *Langer Marsch* 《长征》 von 2001 und erforscht, warum Braun erst in den 1980er Jahren wieder in die Erzählung des Langen Marsches in China integriert wurde, obwohl er bereits 1936 in Edgar Snows bahnbrechendem Werk *Roter Stern über China* auftauchte. Die Arbeit verortet Brauns Wiedereinführung in den weiteren Kontext von Chinas „Reform und Öffnung“ und hebt hervor, wie die TV-Serie *Langer Marsch* von 2001 die Figur Braun nutzt, um die Rezeption des Fremden durch die Partei und die Sinisierung des Marxismus als Teil eines nationalen Mythos darzustellen, der eine Analogie zum Exodus bildet. In Anlehnung an die neuere Urkundenhypothese aus der Bibelkritik analysiert die Arbeit, wie verschiedene ideologische Perspektiven in die Nacherzählung des Langen Marsches eingewoben wurden. Dies zeigt, dass sich die Erzählung der Partei kontinuierlich weiterentwickelt und den Glauben an die eigene Vergangenheit mit der pragmatischen Anpassung an den globalen Kapitalismus verbindet. Durch die Wiedereinführung Brauns wird offenbart, wie die KPCh das historische Gedächtnis verwaltet, um ihre Legitimität in einer Zeit des Wandels zu bewahren.