Brush Talks

Vol. 6 No. 1 Winter/Spring 2021

A Journal of China

Brush Talks Staff

Founder & Editor
Brian Kuhl (U.S.)

Contributing Editors
Duan Hongwei (段红伟, China)
Yang Zhengxin (杨正昕, U.S.)

Brush Talks publishes compelling nonfiction, along with photographs and occasional poetry, about China. We publish two issues per year and accept unsolicited submissions on a rolling basis. For more information, please visit brushtalks.com.

Cover image: *Viewing Fish at Flower Harbour*, © 1977 Wu Guanzhong
(Fair use terms of wikiart.org)

Brush Talks: A Journal of China

Vol. 6 | No. 1 | Winter/Spring 2021

Because I had only my writing brush and ink slab
to converse with, I call it Brush Talks.

Shen Kuo 沈括

(1031–1095)

Contents

Winter/Spring 2021

Editor's Note

Welcome back to *Brush Talks*, and the first issue of volume six. We continue, in a sense, where we left off in the last issue, with a focus on history. Only this time it comes not from archival material but from the oral tradition and personal history. Author Zhang Juyan gives a compelling narrative of his family's history in the twentieth century, focusing on a distant relative named Feng Hanying. Through Feng's life story, we see the major themes of modern Chinese history play out, beginning with the seminal May Fourth Movement. This year marks the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, which has often regarded the May Fourth Movement two years earlier as a kind of opening salvo in a series of events leading to the Communist victory in 1949.

There are different approaches to history, and of course one example does not make a definitive statement on a policy, a group, an era, and so on. Yet each of the latter undoubtedly has effects on individual people's lives, effects that may be unintended or unpredictable. What is seen as a blessing may become a curse, and vice versa. Reading biography as history can bring a kind of visceral understanding that an entire textbook of facts, theories, and explication does not. At the very least, the story of people's lives contributes to the larger story that we deem History with a capital "H" in much the same way that small streams trickle into tributaries that flow into a major river. And it's always good to learn of the past, as attested by the adage *jian wang zhi lai* (鉴往知来) — which is akin to saying that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

We also continue with Jacob Rawson's series of essays about his travels to China's nine sacred mountains. The latest installment brings us to Mount Wutai in Shanxi. This issue's portfolio, by Roger Camp, peeks into a China that was just beginning to reopen to the world in the early 1980s. And three fine poems appear courtesy of Yang Wenhu and Brenda Yates. Many thanks to all our contributors for sharing their outstanding work with us.

Brian Kuhl

Contributors

Roger Camp is the author of three photography books, including the award-winning *Butterflies in Flight* (Thames & Hudson, 2002) and *Heat* (Charta, 2008). His work has appeared on the covers of numerous journals including the *New England Review*, *Southwest Review*, and *Vassar Review*. His documentary photography has been awarded Europe's prestigious Leica Medal of Excellence. His photographs are represented by the Robin Rice Gallery, NYC. More of his images may be seen on Luminous-Lint.com.

Jacob Rawson is coauthor of the book *Invisible China: A Journey Through Ethnic Borderlands*. After completing a master's degree in Chinese Linguistics at the University of Washington, he set out to climb the nine sacred peaks of China in 2010. His writings on South Korea have appeared in *Fulbright Korea Infusion*. He lives in Washington State with his wife and daughter.

Yang Wenhu (杨文虎) taught high school physics for 37 years and is now retired. He published his first poem in 1992 and joined the Poetry Institute of China in 1997. In addition to writing poetry, he enjoys taking photographs and visiting with friends and family in Yunnan Province, where he lives.

Brenda Yates is a Los Angeles, California, resident and the prize-winning author of *Bodily Knowledge* (Tebot Bach 2015) whose reviews, interviews, poems, and hybrids appear in the *American Journal of Poetry*, the *Shanghai Literary Review*, and *Writers In Kyoto Anthology 4*, among others.

Zhang Juyan (张巨岩) is a professor of communication at the University of Texas at San Antonio. He is originally from a village in Jingyuan, Gansu Province, China. He came to the United States in 2000 and obtained his doctoral degree at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Before he moved to San Antonio, he taught at Monmouth University in New Jersey. His publications are mostly scholarly research papers.

PART OF "FIVE LEOPARD CATS" BY THE XUANDE EMPEROR,

ZHU ZHANJI (朱瞻基), 15TH CENTURY

The Alpine Tundra

by Jacob Rawson

Mount Wutai is the realm of the Brahma Palace,
A jade-tinted lotus standing tall in the vast sky.

—Yongzheng Emperor (18th century)

Mount wutai ("Five Terraces") is a sprawling range of flat-topped platform peaks in northern Shanxi Province. The broad massif is distinct from the rest of the nine sacred Chinese mountains not only for its gentle rolling topography and lack of dramatic cliff features, but also because thirteenth-century Mongol rule brought Tibetan Buddhism to the area and even today the mountain remains a center of worship for Mongolian and Tibetan practitioners.

The small town of Taihuai, nestled between the five terraces at five thousand feet above sea level, has a bit of the feel of a Buddhist theme park. I pay a hefty entrance fee at a highway checkpoint, and then step off the bus in the town's main intersection to find plasma TV sets adorning the walls of posh marble-lined public restrooms and poster boards advertising packaged tours to see the sights of the mountain from the comfort of an air-conditioned van.

On the main street I watch two teenage monks pretending to ignore a group of three city girls in cut-off miniskirts, then in a side alley I peer into a dimly lit internet cafe where a half dozen young monks are shouting excitedly in Mongolian as they take turns gunning each other down with keyboards and mice in their virtual warzone. I pass an empty lot filled with construction materials, and wave to a monk driving a rusted orange bulldozer and then to another who is sitting atop a pickup truck directing a group of laborers.

I step into an old temple complex filled with gray brick altar halls and residence buildings that stretch back to a pine forest at the foot of the mountain

slope. Inside the temple walls a middle-aged monk wearing a stone-gray robe and a bracelet of wooden prayer beads stands behind a table piled high with thick paperback volumes. He welcomes me warmly with a prayer of *A-mi-tuo-fo*, and asks in Chinese if this is my first time visiting Puhua Temple. I begin flipping through the pages of his books, and he grins contentedly.

"Take what you want. They're for everyone to read. Absorb the knowledge, then pass them on." He asks if I am a Christian, but cuts in before I can answer. "We believe that having any faith is better than having none at all." I am relieved he did not give me time to answer.

Another monk wearing the same color of gray robe begins picking books out and placing them into a plastic bag for me. "He'll need these two." He holds up two volumes with Chinese titles that read *A Scientific Treatise on Buddhism* and *Lectures on the Amida Sutra*.

Yet another monk appears. "And these!" He displays *A Beginner's Buddhist Reader*, *Methods for Maintaining Wealth*, *The Key to Life*, *On Releasing the Soul*, *The Fantastic Phenomenon of Cause and Effect*, and *Guidelines for a Disciple*.

Before I can leave, another young monk stuffs a handful of bodhisattva print bookmarks and wooden prayer bracelets into the book bag. I leave a donation and walk away before they can fill my bag further.

From the book stand I enter the main temple hall where wood-carved statues of the eighteen arhats line the walls and a gold-lacquered Buddha statue is flanked by images of Samantabhadra and Manjushri. The latter is the bodhisattva of wisdom and the patron figure of Mount Wutai. Together the three form the Shakyamuni Triad in Mahayana Buddhism, and here the statues sit on giant wooden lotus flowers with fingers pinched in the lotus position.

The gray brick walls, curved tile eaves, and wooden lattice work show none of the Tibetan-influenced prayer wheels, painted support beams, and prayer flags of the other temples I have seen in town. I ask a passing monk if his Chinese Buddhism differs from that of the Tibetan practitioners.

"Buddhism is Buddhism. The sects may be different, but the faith is the same."

Deeper inside the temple complex the dormitory building shows the same intricate wood lattice work, with dragons carved into the wooden and stone pillars. Pasted vertically on two of the wooden pillars are strips of paper covered in a hand brushed couplet that reads as a subtle warning from local government officials: MOUNTAIN PILGRIMS MUST BE FILIAL. WORSHIPING THE BUDDHA SHOULD PRESERVE A PATRIOTIC SPIRIT.

From above the rafters the soft coo of pigeons follows me as I pick my way through to the back of the dormitory complex, passing incense burners and the monastic vegetable patches. In the final room there is a large statue of a reclining Buddha that was built to honor the unique ridgeline behind the temple, which, when viewed from just the right angle, resembles the face, mouth, and torso of the Buddha lying on his back. In 2006 a rare combination of clouds and sunset created a brief glow centered around the portion of the hill that represents the Buddha's face, and large posters lining the temple grounds depict grainy digital images of the spectacle.

As I stand alone in front of the ancient reclining Buddha, the rhythmic sounds of sawing and hammering echo from outside the monastic grounds through the stone temple complex and up the mountain slope of tender yellow alders. Puhua Temple, which was first built during the Tang dynasty and then enlarged, rebuilt, and continually renovated since, is again expanding.

* * * *

THE GREAT WHITE PAGODA rises nearly two hundred feet above the town of Taihuai and the surrounding valley, casting a stupa-shaped shadow over the tiled rooftops below. The structure's outer lime coating gleams bright in the listing afternoon sunlight as I enter the Tayuan Temple complex for a closer look.

As I cross through the outer gates, the worship spaces surrounding the colossal tower immediately feel different from what I saw at Puhua Temple. Worshippers wearing the maroon robes of Tibetan Buddhism speak softly to each other in the Mongolian and Tibetan languages, and many walk clockwise around the

pagoda's base spinning Tibetan prayer wheels and chanting mantras in Tibetan. In this courtyard, I no longer hear spoken Chinese.

I kneel down to inspect an old stone tablet engraved in Chinese, Tibetan, and Mongolian script. The Chinese portion seems to describe the construction of the bronze prayer wheels and is dated during the Guangxu Emperor's reign in the 1880s. As I work out the date while tracing the engraved characters with my finger, an old monk wearing a maroon robe and yellow waist tie approaches, grabs my hand and moves it to the Tibetan side of the tablet. He begins reading aloud in Tibetan until he ends with the only phrase I can understand, the common Tibetan Buddhist mantra *Om mani padme hum* ("Oh jewel in the lotus").

He reads the words slowly until I am able to repeat them back to him. Then, in slow, labored Chinese he says, "Scripture . . . sutra." He begins reading again in Tibetan, pausing to turn to me. "Understand?" He lets out a deep infectious belly laugh that reminds me of the Dalai Lama.

After giving his name as Jahwar and attempting to engage me with further questions in Tibetan, he gives up and returns to his few words of Chinese. "I . . . no Chinese. You . . . no Tibetan." He throws his hands up in mock desperation and chuckles again.

Jahwar reaches into a fold of his robe and pulls out a small notepad, then flips through pages of Tibetan names and phone numbers to a page with writing in three languages. On the lined paper appear the words "Melissa" (in English and Tibetan), "American" (in Chinese), and further writing in Tibetan that he tells me is a prayer. He points proudly to the name, reading each syllable in Tibetan, then explaining in labored Chinese. "*Mah-leh-sah*. American. Twenty-two years old. She can speak Tibetan."

Feeling a bit ashamed at my linguistic incompetence, I promise to Jahwar that I will do my best to learn some phrases in Tibetan. We pose for a picture together, and while he continues to walk clockwise around the base of the pagoda, I run outside the temple complex to a photography booth where five young men are huddled around a laptop computer. I interrupt their game of StarCraft to ask the

owner to print and laminate the digital photo, then return to the temple to catch Jahwar on one of his clockwise circuits and hand him the print.

Two more Tibetan monks come up to inspect the photo and chuckle together. "*A-mi-tuo-fo*!" they say to me in approval.

When I first began talking with him, Jahwar had been thumbing through a rosary necklace of 108 beads to count his prayers. The number is sacred in many Buddhist sects, and is said to represent the number of feelings humans can experience. I ask one of the younger monks who speaks Chinese to translate a question to Jahwar. "What happens when he reaches 108?"

Jahwar laughs, and his giddy response comes back to me through the interpreter. "I start again, of course!"

Two pilgrims stand on top of bamboo mats across the temple yard. In turns, they lower themselves to their knees on padded cushions, then lie down prostrate with hands clasped together in prayer. They will repeat the display of devotion 108 times.

Throughout the stone-paved courtyard, the soft whir of the spinning prayer wheels mixes with the pilgrims' rhythmic chanting in a dulcet cadence. Jahwar joins his open palms and gives me a parting bow, mixing back into the line of pilgrims and disappearing around the far side of the towering pagoda.

* * * *

FROM THE EDGE of town I tramp northward along Provincial Route 205 under a lazy march of bulging cumulus forms. Above the roadway basin, the high ridgelines of the mountain range have their own appendage ridges, and those their own hills that spread again like fingers in neat recursive folds. Dry streambeds and rivulets break the furrows apart into further rocky indentations, and groves of conifers occupy the lower wind-shielded hollows. I choose one of the gently sloping finger ridges that rises from a turn in the highway, and follow along its apex above a rough road of chicken pens, vegetable patches, and a line of bundled-up women filling jugs with water in a communal well house.

In a low glen below my improvised ridgetop trail a sprawling two-story concrete edifice stands out among the modest farmers' huts. I scamper down the slope to peer into the windows at what appear to be plush hotel rooms and tile-lined foyers. A shiny brass sign on the front of the complex reads COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBER PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION BASE in blocky red Chinese characters, but the odd building is empty and silent.

Further along the ridge, an old shepherd with dark sun-parched skin slides his straw hat back to get a better look at me, then nods and taps a bamboo cane against his knee-high rubber boots. His sheep make an agitated fuss when I approach, but he whistles and shoots me a kind smile. The shepherd speaks the local Jin dialect and I struggle to catch one word in ten, but we somehow enjoy each other's company all the same as I catch my breath on the steep hillside.

A small white stupa marks the high point where the ridgeline arches up and then down again, and there are Tibetan prayer flags tied around its peripheral shrubbery where wildflowers speckle the grasses with pinks, purples, blues, and reds. As I rise further, the poplars in the ravine below give way to pines, then to low bushy vegetation, and finally to brown grass and thistles. Ever since I left the highway I have been finding my own way up ridgetops with no road or trail, which gives me an arousing sense of abandon that I have not experienced on other mountains in China.

Six Balikun horses graze lazily on the ridge slope in front of me, their bay coats gleaming in the midday blaze. The adults pay me no heed, but a small foal jumps back before timidly returning to its mother's side. Here on the hillside, there is nothing left of an old homestead but a derelict foundation structure with waist-high walls of stacked stones and a six-foot diameter stone grinding wheel. The ruins leave little clue as to their past inhabitants, and I cannot decide whether they are a decade or a century old.

As I rise the smaller ridge finally fuses with the high ridgeline. At this altitude there are no more trees, bushes, or even thistles. Only mangy dormant grasses remain, pushed up in soft lumps by the harsh cycle of freeze and thaw that contorts the thin topsoil around surface boulders in this alpine tundra. Every few

bounds up the lumpy beige carpet I stop to gasp for air, taking the opportunity to look down at dingy patches of snow that have survived the summer sun in shaded crevices.

There is something of a road here, or rather a steep line of uneven stones that one might mistake for a drivable path but where a four-wheel-drive vehicle could very well be cursed to spend its final days. There is also a small steel trellis supporting weather station equipment, and nearby I hear a man's voice but cannot identify the language. I spot the young man wearing a monk's robe the color of saffron, and when I draw closer he waves and introduces himself in Chinese as Zhaxi, a resident monk at Central Terrace. He tells me he is visiting the North Terrace summit and has walked partway down the mountain to find a cellular signal and make a phone call to his mother. Zhaxi had been speaking on the phone in the Mosuo language, and tells me that he comes from the sacred Lugu Lake in southwest China where the Mosuo people practice Tibetan Buddhism and have become known around the world for their unique matrilineal family structures.

Zhaxi grew up speaking Tibetan as well as his native Mosuo language, but did not start speaking Chinese until he was a teenager. He was raised in monasteries near Lugu Lake from a young age, but tells me that he came to Mount Wutai to improve his Chinese language skills. This surprises me because his spoken Chinese is quite natural, but he brushes off the comment. "I can read the scriptures in Tibetan, but not yet in Chinese."

He tells me that he lives at the Central Terrace monastery with six other Tibetan-speaking monks. Together they are producing Chinese translations of Tibetan sutras. When I ask about his living conditions he chuckles and searches for the words to explain. "The conditions are very simple. I walk down the mountain twice a month to take a shower."

He pulls a small aluminum tin out of his pocket, something he received as a gift from a visitor to the monastery, and asks if I can decipher the label. It appears to be imported German snuff, I tell him. He then holds up a pair of large binoculars covered in Soviet military symbols, and points to Central Terrace. I

peer through the lenses and see the distant temple buildings seemingly hovering in the soft cloud haze.

Zhaxi speaks well of his monastic brothers and says he has learned much in his short time there, but his voice belies a sense that Mount Wutai is where he wants to spend his days. "In a couple of years I plan to move back home, back to Lugu Lake."

I continue up the ridge and just below the summit step to the side of the path to allow a group of elderly nuns from Jiangxi Province to pass. They tell me they have walked all the way from East Terrace, and I count forty-eight of them in their stone-gray tunics as they bob effortlessly up the boulders.

I sit to rest on the stone masonry platform that supports a carved granite monolith marking the North Terrace summit elevation at just over ten thousand feet, the highest point in northern China. A resident monk sells me a stack of Tibetan *longda* prayer papers and a roll of prayer flags, and instructs me to scatter the thin biodegradable papers into the wind to seek blessings from the Buddha. Across the flat summit terrace the *longda* of other pilgrims collect in shallow pools of snow melt. I choose a spot where the flat-topped Central Terrace and West Terrace are just visible in a vista dominated by numinous cloud formations, and toss my colorful stack into the wind. The papers glisten and glow as they flutter back to the earth, turning about in the sharp afternoon rays.

From the North Terrace summit I follow the high ridgeline to the southwest as it dips into a saddle where the lower ridges fan out on both sides. After another hour of hiking along a narrow foot trail I approach a cluster of low buildings next to a small circular pool of water lined with carved stones. This is the Bathing Pool where over the past centuries devotees have reportedly spotted the Manjushri bodhisattva performing his ablutions.

The two resident monks emerge wearing saffron-colored tunics and black leg gaiters. They are quiet and expressionless, but graciously show me into their modest living quarters, a row of small rooms built inside poured concrete arches that evoke the style of Shanxi cave dwellings. They offer me water that was melted from the snow they keep all summer in arched storage caves, and then describe

the winter days of forty degrees below zero with snow drifts twenty feet deep and "wind so strong it would blow you clean off the mountain." The snows begin in October, and the men are stuck on the mountain until June when supply vans can make it through on the rough dirt roads. I ask how they spend the winter months.

"We read and study the sutras to pass the time. Twice a day we open the temple building and make offerings." The temple is only twenty paces from the living quarters, but in the middle of winter the snow drifts and gale force winds make the short trip difficult. I tell them that I am humbled by their dedicated lifestyle.

Outside the living quarters the monks lead me to the ten-foot-deep Bathing Pool. "You can wash your hands and face," offers the elder monk. Not waiting, he brings a used plastic juice bottle out of the temple building, dips it into the pool to fill it with murky water along with quite a few dead insects, and pours the near frozen liquid over my hands and head. He then brings the bottle to his mouth and takes a drink, gesturing for me to do the same. I close my eyes and throw back a protein-rich gulp.

I ask if the men receive many visitors.

"You're the first pilgrim to pass through in days."

Some way down the slope I find a pile of stones the height of a person stacked in the shape of a Tibetan stupa. I wrap the structure with the string of prayer flags I bought on the summit, and as I sit watching them flutter in the breeze I am reminded of a thirteenth-century story about Zen master Huineng.

> *Two monks were arguing about a temple flag waving in the wind. One said, "The flag is moving." The other said, "The wind is moving." The two argued back and forth but could not agree. At long last the master passed by and said, "Gentlemen! It is not the wind that moves. It is not the flag that moves. It is your mind that moves." The two monks were struck with awe.*

Some have cited this story as the philosophical predecessor of "if a tree falls in a forest," which first appeared in its modern form in an American publication in the 1880s. But on this alpine pedestal two miles above sea level there are no trees.

Here on the sere tundra there are only the flapping of prayer flags and the hiss of wind as my mind moves it all.

Soon enough, I will skip down the mountain slopes through a valley of pastures and pines wrapped with red prayer banners while dodging the challenges of a grazing bull. I will brave flashes of lightning and a hail storm and hide out in a nunnery where a friendly old nun with an attractive Beijing drawl will tell me my clothing is not suited for mountaineering. I will emerge from the valley's mouth where a spring bubbles into a clear pool and children shout and wave to me from their cornfield playground, and my sunburnt face and blistered feet will know a profound and elusive kind of happiness.

But for now, I am most suited to sit on this mountain where so many have sought spiritual attunement as my mind moves the flags and my world spins with an adrenaline of my own creation. In a brackish mingling of land and sky, my world is sober and placid. ☯

Commerce: The Cave Temples

by Brenda Yates

Near the Great Wall's westernmost frontier,
a military outpost set down to guard a trade
route between two deserts became another

great invention: a city — that center of multi-
plicity, of voices, customs, art — thriving &
prospering, coming to be called in its 1100+

years, *Oasis Kingdom of Buddha* because . . .
merchants. Yes, in this story, heroes created
a globalism we sometimes have when not

too blind to want success for more than a few
like us. They were Arab, Jew, Chinese, Indian,
Mongol, Persian, Syriac, Tibetan — travelers

traders, pilgrims — exchanging goods, science,
know-how, medicine, belief & worldviews
born of Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, Laozi,

Mani, Muhammad, etc. Etceteras who hand-
carved a thousand temples into the faces
of local cliffs, who painted luminous murals

on ceilings, walls, & who adorned them all
with sculpture, scroll, silk. Then by imperial
command the Jade Gate closed. Trade ceased.

The City? Its grottoes? Abandoned to flood,
earthquake, sandstorm & mystery. A Library
Cave, for instance: sealed circa 1000, reasons

unknown. Until rediscovered centuries later, no-
body knew this place still held May of 868's
Diamond Sutra nor even remembered it was our

world's first printed book. But that's another &
altogether different story with many fewer heroes.

Hanying 翰英

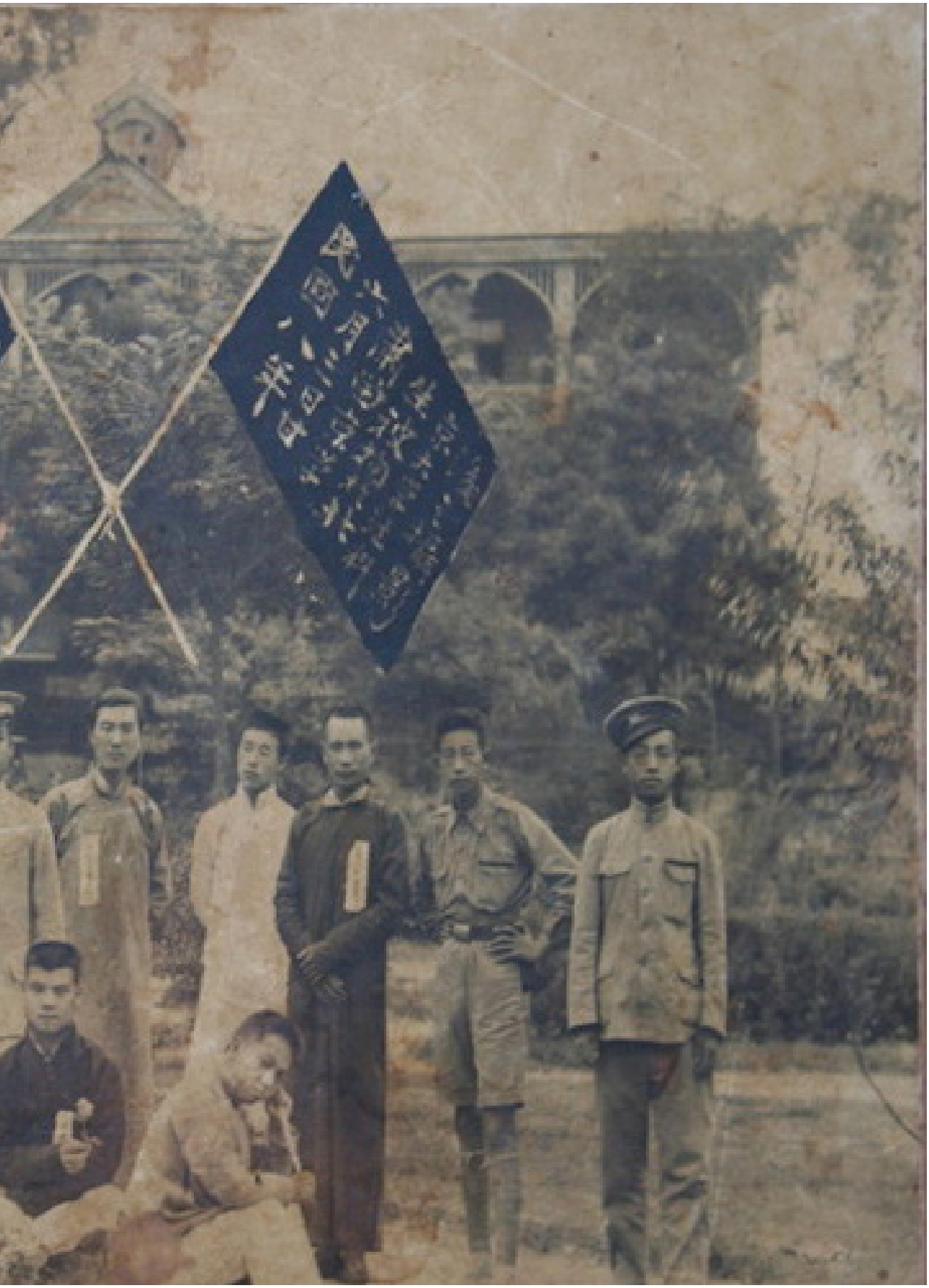
by Zhang Juyan (张巨岩)

On september 28, 2006, the local news website *Baiyin Daily* in Gansu Province carried a story on its homepage, saying that the city's library had found a very precious historical photo. The photo has been kept by a rural schoolteacher. The photo boosted the vanity of both the keeper and finders. The keeper said that one of the people in the photo was his grandfather and that was why he had the photo. Some said it was not his grandfather. The finders from the city library said that the photo "filled the void in the historical record on Baiyin students' participation in the great May Fourth Movement."

The photo has faded into a yellow-brown color. There are twelve young men in it, dressed in all kinds of weird clothes. Some are in traditional long scholar robes, some in Japanese cadet uniforms, and some in shorts and socks. Two wear peaked caps. Five of them bear a slip on their chest that seems to be their names. Two crossed flag shapes are imposed on the background in the photo, likely added by the photo studio. On the flags is some inverted text, stating that "The photo was taken on June 3rd of the 8th year of the Republic after the Gansu students were jailed in the Department of Law of Peking University." That was the year of 1919.

The May Fourth Movement was regarded as the birth event for the Chinese Communist Party. Gansu has long been an impoverished frontier province in northwest China. Big events in China's modern history were seldom related to it. That is why the story said the photo "filled a void" in history. Among the twelve people in the photo, one is identified as Feng Hanying from Xingrenbao of Haiyuan County, Ningxia Province. Ningxia was once part of Gansu. Later it became a province in its own right, and Xinrenbao became part of Ningxia Province. Hence the story claimed that Hanying was the pride of Gansu Province.

Xingrenbao is a very small town sitting on a strip of dry plain dotted with small villages. It is about ten miles from the village where I was born and grew up. When we were kids, we believed that it was the most important place.



FENG HANYING AFTER THE MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT. HE IS THE THIRD FROM THE LEFT IN THE BACK ROW. (AT CENTER IN THE BACK ROW IS MOST LIKELY ZHANG GUOTAO, A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE CCP.)

Farmers called it "the street," which was probably a trace of the bazaar from old days. You could see it from the village, but there were not many opportunities for us to actually go to "the street." A gravel road went through the town, linking Jingyuan and Haiyuan, two counties belonging to Gansu Province and Ningxia Province, respectively. Gravel on the road was blasted to the middle and two sides by vehicles, exposing two white tracks. Several stores and small restaurants stood by the road. In summer, peasants squatted by the roadside to sell small honeydew melons. On chilly spring days, Muslim Huis, wearing white caps, sold skinned headless lambs that were hung on a pole. Hanying's village was not far from "the street."

The story did not identify which one was Hanying, but I immediately recognized him. He was the third from left in the back row. He had the typical Feng clan's long head, big forehead, and thick lips, which were passed on to my siblings and me through my mother. My oldest brother looks very much like him. Hanying was not tall, and in the photo he's wearing a scholar's robe. He looks solemn, holding his two hands together in front of him. I recognized Hanying because I have two old photos that he brought back to China from Europe.

§

IN 2002, I WENT BACK to northwest China to visit my parents. Together we visited my mother's brother, Uncle Hanyun. He was seventy-six years old. For many years he had been a blacksmith. He lived in a village not far from the one where Hanying was born. Hanyun, Hanying, and my mother share the same paternal grandfather.

As we were leaving, Uncle Hanyun took out two old photos from a small box. One photo was Hanying. Another was Hanying's Belgian wife. He said that Hanying had a son in the United States. He wondered if I could help find him. The son should be in his seventies or eighties, if he were alive, he said. He told me that when Hanying returned to China in the 1970s, he vaguely mentioned he had a son in the military. But given the political situation in China at the time, he did

not talk much about it. Only several people in the Feng clan knew that he had a family in Europe.

In the black-and-white photo is an old man in his sixties or seventies. His hair is gray, his face and eyes droop. He wears a suit and stands in a small street, which you can tell is somewhere in the West. Behind him are some stores and banners with Latin characters on them.

This is the old man who had been a legend in our childhood: Somebody who went to Beijing, took part in the May Fourth Movement, and went to Europe!

The Belgian woman's photo is a headshot. She is in her fifties or sixties. She has a chubby face, and her hair is tied into a bun. She is smiling. Even in a black-and-white photo, you can see the color of her eyes are light. She looks very kind.

I told Uncle Hanyun that I would try to find Hanying's son. But I knew it would be futile. There was so little information about Hanying and his life in Europe.

Then in 2011, my cousin Feng Xi contacted my parents for the first time in many years. He was close to eighty years old. In the Feng clan, he is my mother's nephew, but he was older than her. He mailed to my parents a CD he had burned containing photos of people in the Feng clan, including some of Hanying's photos that I had never seen before.

In one photo, Hanying and the Belgian woman stand by a lake with a younger family that appears to have the same structure: an Asian man and a European woman. Hanying and his wife look to be in their seventies, while the younger couple appear to be in their fifties. Two kids stand in front them, perhaps seven or eight years old.

Feng Xi told me that the other Asian-looking man was Hanying's son. The two children were Hanying's grandchildren. They look completely Caucasian.

On the CD there is also a black-and-white headshot of Hanying, probably from when he was in his thirties. This one must have been taken in Europe. His hair is neatly combed. The lines in his eyelids appear to have been slightly modified because he could be mistaken for a European at first sight. His long head makes him appear even more so. Did he actually look like this at the time,

HANYING IN EUROPE

MS. ABEDIN

HANYING AND HIS EUROPEAN FAMILY

or was it part of the photo store's service to make this Asian man better assimilate into European society in those years?

In the third photo, Hanying looks very old. It was taken when he returned to China. He and his Chinese wife, Ms. Wan Jingji, are seated in the front, surrounded by some kids and several adults, who were their nephews and their wives. Feng Xi stands in the middle of the back row. Everybody looks very clean and well washed. At least that was how in those years we country kids imagined what city people looked like. On the top right corner of the photo are four Chinese characters, *jiu bie xiang feng*, meaning that it was taken at a "reunion after a long separation." The photo was taken in Lanzhou and dated July 20, 1971.

It was indeed a long separation. Hanying hadn't seen his Chinese wife Ms. Wan since he left for Europe in 1923. This was their reunion after forty-eight years of separation.

§

HANYING GRADUATED FROM a high school in Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu Province. After graduation, he taught at an elementary school for a short period of time in the county seat of Haiyuan. Then he went to the College of Chemical Technology in Beijing in 1918. China was in chaos at the time. The Qing dynasty had been overthrown by the Nationalists. The new republic was torn apart by warlords. Influenced by the 1917 Russian Bolshevik Revolution, some Chinese intellectuals and students embraced communism. In 1919, to protest the unfair treatment of China by the Treaty of Versailles after the First World War, students took to the streets. This was called the May Fourth Movement.

When we were kids, we heard that "Big Uncle" Hanying had taken part in the May Fourth Movement. It sounded very surreal because the movement was such a big event. How could someone who was from a nearby village have taken part of it? Hanying was arrested along with six other Gansu students in the movement. It seems that the jails were full, or the warlord government was lenient. They were locked up in the Law Department building of Peking University. On June 3, 1919,

HANYING IN EUROPE

HANYIN AND MS. WAN REUNITED IN 1971

(FENG XI, WHO WORKED IN XINJIANG THEN, IS IN THE BACK ROW, CENTER)

some student representatives paid a visit to the jailed students. One of them was Zhang Guotao, then a student leader at Peking University who later became a top Communist leader. That was when the photo found by the Baiyin Library was taken. In the photo, the student representatives were the ones who had a slip of paper on their chest.

Hanying was expelled by the college after he was released, but he stayed in Beijing. In 1920, Gansu students in Beijing started a publication titled *New Gansu*. The first issue reprinted some articles by the Communists. It also carried an article coauthored by Hanying, titled "A Declaration to the People in East Gansu Counties," calling people to rise and fight the exploitation by the warlords.

The magazine carried a letter from Hanying's father, Feng Qi, informing him of the 1920 earthquake in his hometown, Haiyuan. The letter said, "Our hometown suffered most. All of the houses were leveled" and "It snowed after the earthquake; many were frozen to death." The Haiyuan earthquake killed roughly 250,000 people. It was one of the largest earthquakes on record, and many parts of the world felt the shockwave.

Hanying was married before he went to Beijing. The letter from his father informed him that his young wife was killed by the earthquake.

Hanying wrote a number of articles for *New Gansu*, including "An Investigation of the 1920 Catastrophe" and "Why Don't Gansu People Have Enough Food?"

It seems that Hanying had a hard time going back to college in Beijing. He went to the port city Tianjin, where he attended the Tianjin College of Textile Science and Technology. Not long after, he passed an exam and received a government scholarship to study abroad. His destination was a college specializing in cotton textiles in the state of Washington in the United States.

But the plan was aborted. It was said that he lost his money gambling. That was probably why he returned to his hometown Haiyuan in 1922.

§

HANYING'S FATHER FENG QI was a *xiucai*, an educated man who passed a lower level of the imperial examination. Hanying was his only son. He had a daughter named Qingye, which means "green leaf," a very literary name that you can tell was given by a scholar.

Feng Qi was nominated by the Qing government as the governor of Zhongwei County, which is now a part of Ningxia. In those days, to obtain the official paperwork and assume the post, you had to make bribes. Buying and selling official posts were rampant in the late Qing dynasty. One governmental post might be sold to several people. A local story goes that two men showed up for the same county governor post and started a brawl, both holding official paperwork.

Feng Qi did not take the position, probably because he became cynical or he did not have enough money. He stayed in his hometown Xingrenbao and became the head of the town's posse. He was a great marksman and could shoot sparrows in flight. Bandits were everywhere. Landlords armed posses to defend themselves. But after an incident that almost got him killed, Feng Qi quit the posse and let my maternal grandfather lead it. The incident had to do with a missing woman.

A man named Wang from a village called Dalachi found his wife missing. He looked for her for four years but found no traces. One day, Wang went to Tongxin County to do some business. On the way back, he passed by a village called Gaojiagou. Feeling thirsty, he knocked on the door of a yard and asked for some water. The door opened. A woman handed him a bowl of water from behind the half-opened door, which Wang drank. The moment he handed back the bowl, he recognized the woman was his missing wife. Wang was shocked. He asked the woman why she was there. The woman started to cry, saying that she was kidnapped by a Hui man named Mashmar.

Feng Qi's posse happened to be hunting down some bandits in the area. Wang found the posse and reported what happened. Feng Qi told Wang to take his wife back. The posse captured Mashmar and beat him up.

Upon release, Mashmar went to Jinjibao, a military town, which was once the hub of the Muslim uprising in northwest China in the late nineteenth century.

Mashmar complained to a Hui division commander who was stationed there. The commander naturally stood on the Hui man's side. He sent some soldiers to Xingrenbao to arrest Feng Qi. The soldiers tied Feng Qi to a horse's tail and dragged him all the way back to Jinjibao and then locked him up. It was believed that he would be killed.

Feng Qi's nephew rode a horse and ran for two days to the provincial capital Lanzhou to seek help. Hanying was in Lanzhou at the time. He had just finished college in Tianjin and returned to Lanzhou to get paperwork in preparation to go to Europe. Learning the news, Hanying went straight to the Gansu military governor's office building and beat the drum in front of the gate. The drum was placed there so people could beat it to have their grievances known by the governor.

Hanying had high school classmates working for newspapers in the city. They ran stories about the incident in the press. The military governor investigated the incident and sacked the division commander.

Feng Qi was released. He was scared and quit the posse. As bandits became increasingly rampant, he moved to the county seat of Jingyuan, where he hung out with some local scholars. After losing contact with Hanying, he became mentally instable. Eventually he became blind.

All the country landlords in the area learned Feng Qi's lesson. They stopped sending their sons for education, because it meant they might never be able to see their sons again. Seeing Feng Qi's case, my grandfather stopped sending my father, his only son, to school after he finished the fifth grade. He hoped his son would stay on his property, without knowing that he would lose everything in the upcoming land reform.

§

WHEN HANYING RETURNED HOME, his father arranged a marriage for him. The woman was Wan Jingji, daughter of Mr. Wan Baocheng. Wan Baocheng was a *jinshi*, a scholar who passed what was then the highest imperial civil service exam

in the capital and prepared to serve the country. The Qing government sent him to study at Japan's Waseda University in 1906. When he left for Japan, his family left Beijing and moved back to Gansu.

When Mr. Wan returned to China from Japan, he served at the royal court for a number of years. Because his name auspiciously meant "thousands of treasures and accomplishments" (万宝成), he was picked as the master for the enthroning ceremony of Puyi, the last Qing emperor. When the Qing court was overthrown, he became a senator in the republic's parliament in 1913. He stayed in Beijing until his death in 1943.

Mr. Wan's grandfather had been killed by Hui people in the nineteenth-century Muslim uprising. His mother, pregnant, fled with her husband among the refugees before their town was besieged by the Huis. The couple hid in a deserted cave, where the woman gave birth to the boy. It was very cold. When her husband went to build a fire in the stoking hole of the *kang*, he found a piece of cow hide with forty big pieces of silver wrapped in it. The couple used the silver to restart the family business after the Muslim uprising was put down. Mr. Wan had five sons and two daughters. Ms. Wan Jingji was the youngest. She graduated from a high school in Beijing and later moved back to Gansu and married Hanying.

A number of years ago I came across a local publication at my brother's place in Jingyuan. It was titled *Jingyuan Cultural and Historical Materials*, a collection of essays by some old generation Jingyuan literati about the local life before 1949. In it, there is a half-page story by a relative of Ms. Wan about her and Hanying's wedding. He describes their wedding ceremony as the "first modern-style wedding" in the county. The wedding was held in a relative's courtyard, and the ceremony was orderly and not as noisy as the traditional ones. Hanying's father Feng Qi was present. All guests were well educated and well mannered. Men were seated on the left side and women on the right. When the wedding started, all stood up and bowed toward the five-colored national flag, which was followed by the lighting of five hundred firecrackers and *suona* music from a traditional opera. The young couple bowed to the guests. Two guests delivered speeches. One was Mr. Wang, husband of Ms. Wan's sister. Wang talked about equality between

men and women, and said that women should be independent and pursue their careers instead of becoming dependent on men. The other speaker was a Mr. Zan, but the author did not mention what he said. Zan was a transcriber when China's most renowned writer Lu Xun delivered a speech in Xi'an in 1924. In his diary, Lu Xun mentioned receiving a letter from Zan. After 1949, Zan became the principal of the Jingyuan Normal School. He was executed in 1958 in a political movement.

The wedding story mentioned Feng Qi only in passing reference, but the author also said that he saw Feng Qi during the funeral of Ms. Wan's grandmother in the late 1930s. Feng Qi wore a long blue scholar's robe. He looked solemn and showed no smile: "People said that he became depressed because his son never wrote home since he left for France. He often talked to himself."

After the wedding, Hanying and Ms. Wan left Jingyuan. Together the young couple would go to Europe. In the summer of 1923, the newlyweds left Xingrenbao on a mule cart. Hanzao, a loafer cousin who later became an opium addict, drove the cart. They went north, crossed Xiangshan Mountain, and arrived at Zhongwei, a port town by the Yellow River. From there, they would take a raft that transported goods on the river. They would go down the river for seven hundred miles to Baotou, a city in Mongolia. From Baotou, they would take a train to Beijing. Then they would go to the port city of Tianjin and take a ship to Europe.

But when the three arrived in Zhongwei, the water rose in the Yellow River after days of heavy rain. There were no rafts. Hanzao went back to Xingrenbao. Hanying and his wife waited in the town for about ten days.

Hanying became impatient. He started to complain, saying that all his prior trips were smooth. This time he had bad luck all because of the woman. Ms. Wan became furious. She walked to the street and hired a porter, and went straight back to Xingrenbao. Hanying left for Beijing by himself.

The next time Ms. Wan saw her man would be almost fifty years later.

§

HANYING FIRST WENT TO ENGLAND. He stayed there for a number of years, then moved to Paris. A book compiled in 2006 by a Gansu teacher titled *The Most and the Earliest in Gansu Province* had a list of the Gansu students who were the first to study in the West. There is a simple entry for Hanying: "1932, Feng Hanying, Male, Paris University, France, Engineering."

At the time Hanying went to France, the study and work programs by Chinese intellectuals and students were coming to an end. Between the end of 1919 and 1920, about 2,000 young Chinese students went to France. Some of them became communists and later leaders of the People's Republic of China.

But it seems Hanying quit his leftist ideology. He met a Belgian woman in France. The age of their son and grandchildren in the photo that Feng Xi emailed me suggested that they might have married sometime in the mid-1930s.

It was said that Hanying told his father Feng Qi about this foreign woman in a letter in the 1930s, before they lost contact with each other. He asked his father's permission to marry the woman. Feng Qi did not know how to respond, because his son was already married to a woman from a well-respected family. He invited a scholar friend to his home to discuss how to write the letter. The two discussed it the whole day and could not determine what to say. Finally, Feng Qi sighed in sadness and said, "I have sold my son to a foreigner." He probably still had the old Confucian view of non-Chinese as barbarians.

Upon graduation, Hanying worked as an oil analyst for a chemical factory in Paris. He corresponded with his father for a while, but then all contact was cut off by the Japanese invasion of China, the European war, and the ensuing Chinese Civil War. Feng Qi believed his only son must have died in the chaos. He became blind and died in the 1940s. After 1949, the Communists cut off contact with the West. The Feng family had an extremely hard time surviving under the new regime.

After Ms. Wan left Hanying at the river town, she returned to Xingrenbao, then went back to her parents' family in Huining. The Feng family felt embarrassed. They invited her back to Xingrenbao. Feng Xi told me that Ms. Wan lived in the main room in the Feng family's fortress, a high-walled yard built by landlords to

A CARD HANYING BROUGHT BACK TO CHINA

(FOR A GENERAL CHEMISTRY COURSE AT

THE NATIONAL CONSERVATORY OF ARTS AND CRAFTS)

defend themselves from bandits. After a short period of time, she went to the county seat of Haiyuan and became the principal of a girl's elementary school. Two years later, she went to Lanzhou and became a librarian until her retirement.

When Communist China established diplomatic relations with France in 1964, Ms. Wan went to Beijing and managed to contact a visiting French delegation and asked them to help find her lost husband. The French somehow found her man and contacts were re-established.

Ms. Wan wrote to Hanying, asking him to return to China. She told him that the new socialist country was good. His nephew Feng Xi also wrote to him from Xinjiang, telling him that the new China needed scientists and technicians like him.

Feng Xi said to me, "When I was in Xinjiang, I had my uncle's contact information that I had stashed years ago. I copied it when I was a middle school student. One side was in Chinese, the other side was in French. I wrote to him at that address, asking him to return to China. I said to him that the new China needed scientists and technicians. I did not seal the envelope and mailed it, as was taught by a friend who had overseas relatives."

So asking his uncle to return on the grounds of the new nation's needs was his way of dealing with the government that would certainly check all of the mail going in and out of the country. But the disguise might have misled Hanying, who might have had no idea that the writers dared not write what they wanted to say and what the Feng family had experienced.

Feng Xi said, "I received his reply. It was written with a ballpoint pen on a postcard showing an Italian landscape. Because the address I used had 'care of Ms. Abedin,' he explained in his writing that Ms. Abedin was a Belgian. He got to know her when he studied in France. They were just friends. Later I saw a photo he gave to my uncle Hanyao. In that photo were Uncle Hanying and the Belgian woman, his son, and the son's wife. The son had two boys aged six to eight years old. I took a photo of that photo and still have it. Later it was said that he had another son in Taiwan, working on science intelligence, and a daughter in Japan. That was all of the information we had." Feng Xi said that Ms. Abedin might have

died sometime in the late 1960s, and her memorial service was held in Notre-Dame.

The photo Feng Xi mentioned was the one he emailed to me. He also emailed me a photo of the envelope of Hanying's mail. Hanying used the old-style romanization to address Feng Xi and the province of Xinjiang: "Mr. Feng Sheh, Sin Kiang." The Chinese characters he wrote were the traditional ones. You can tell it was a very old person's handwriting.

§

HANYING RETURNED TO CHINA in 1971 at the age of seventy-seven after living in Europe for nearly half a century. When he decided to return to China, he went to the PRC's embassy in Paris. A diplomat asked him, "Mr. Feng, are you sure you want to go back?" Hanying said yes. The officer asked again, "Mr. Feng, are you sure you want to go back?" He then emphatically told him, "You can choose not to go back." Obviously, the officer was well intentioned and strongly insinuated that he should not go back.

Hanying left Paris. The plane first landed in Cairo, where all other passengers got off and he became the only passenger en route to Shanghai. He started to get an ominous feeling that something was not right. That feeling was confirmed by the Red Guards who broke his suitcase at the Hongqiao Airport in Shanghai. He could not find the key fast enough when they inspected it. They did not bother waiting and simply used a bar to pry the lock. His was supposed to then fly to Beijing, and from there he would go through some procedure and be permitted to go to Gansu. But he was somehow allowed to go directly back to Gansu from Shanghai. After staying in Shanghai for a few days, he exchanged some French money for 2,500 yuan and took the train to Lanzhou.

When Ms. Wan learned that Hanying had decided to return to China, she asked Feng Xi's stepbrother Feng Yu to come to Lanzhou where she had been living. Feng Yu was a shepherd in his village at the time. Ms. Wan adopted him so he could look after Hanying when he returned. In those years, to bring a peasant

to the provincial capital and register him as a resident was something almost impossible. It took many years of running around and bribing until he finally got a job at a post office. His work was to plant power poles for the postal system.

The day Hanying arrived, Ms. Wan and Feng Yu went to the train station. They saw an old man in the crowd whose hair was completely white; he wore a white shirt, a Western business suit, and a pair of brown leather shoes. The old man carried nothing except a very flat leather bag. Feng Yu said that they immediately knew that he was Hanying. When I asked why, Feng Yu said it was obvious because in the crowd he was the only one dressed like that.

Feng Yu called a pulled rickshaw. When Hanying saw it, he said, "How come there are still such things in these years? I won't sit on it." Instead, the three took the city bus to the yard where Ms. Wan lived. It had belonged to a Nationalist military officer who was later executed and now was a government property. Ms. Wan worked for the city library and was assigned a room in the yard.

The very night Hanying arrived, public security officers showed up. They interviewed him and asked him many questions. Half a year before, when the government heard the news about his return, public security bureaus in Haiyuan County and Gansu Province investigated every aspect of his life, and they knew everything about him. When the officers left, they took away his passport and never returned it.

The next morning Hanying went to use the bathroom. It was a walled squat-style filthy public toilet shared by the residents in the yard. Hanying stood there, balked, and would not use it. Feng Yu brought some bricks in and created a temporary small stool and Hanying used that.

Now he had to face a completely different life. He had no coupons for food and clothing, which were must-haves in the strictly planned economy in which life's necessities were rationed. Even if you had cash, you could not directly buy food and clothing. Feng Yu went to the government office handling overseas Chinese affairs and got clothing coupons enough for two sets of winter clothes and two summer clothes. As a privilege, Hanying received two bottles of Fen liquor and two cartons of Peony cigarettes.

HANYING (THIRD FROM LEFT) AT A BIRTHDAY PARTY IN EUROPE

My uncle Hanyun, the blacksmith, said, "When he returned to Lanzhou, he still wore the Western suit. He said he felt embarrassed in the street because everybody wore gray and blue Mao suits. So he asked for some cotton coupons from the government and ordered a Mao suit from a clothing factory called 'Red Cotton' and put it on."

One month after Hanying arrived in Lanzhou, the Feng family in the countryside sent a nephew to welcome him back home. Hanying and the nephew first arrived at Jingyuan after a five-hour bus trip. Fifty years before, Hanying and Ms. Wan had held their wedding ceremony in the small town. A truck went to Xingrenbao every two days. They had to stay in a hotel next to the bus station for two nights. When they arrived in Xingrenbao, people in the town learned that "the international student" was back and flocked to the street to see the old man.

"All the stores became empty," Feng Yu said.

When they took a short rest in a small country hotel, a Red Guard in the town showed up and aggressively questioned Hanying. Feng Yu shooed him away.

Hanying first visited a cousin, his aunt's son, who was one of the few he knew. They held each other and started to weep. He learned more about what had happened to the Feng family in the past fifty years. He told the cousin that he had a family in France and left some pictures of his French family there.

Another cousin from a nearby village sent several nephews to invite him to their home. They pulled a wooden barrow and put several woolen sacks in it and carried him to the village. On the way they passed by some peasants who were hoeing grass in the field of a collective farm. When they saw Hanying, they put down their hoes and flocked to him and asked all kinds of questions: what he ate and drank in France and how he lived and traveled. When he said he traveled by driving a car, they didn't believe it. As they left, the peasants talked among themselves, "This old guy was bragging."

In his home village, Hanying went to see the grotto that his grandparents had lived in. He said that on the day he left, there was a white dog leashed by the cave. He remembered there was a stone stele dedicated to some ancient person, and he recited the text on it. The stele was destroyed in the Cultural Revolution. He

asked the nephews who had written the French address on the mail to him, and said that the handwriting was better than his. They told him it was by a middle school English teacher. The teacher, being branded a rightist, had to get the school principal's permission to help write the envelope that would be sent to France.

On the way back to Lanzhou, Hangying was stranded in Jingyuan again. The bus ran every three days. His nephew asked for help from a relative who drove a truck. When the man learned Hanying had recently come back from France, he quickly left in panic. In the fanatical Cultural Revolution, no one wanted to be associated with foreigners.

§

CHINA WAS TORN APART by the Great Cultural Revolution, and the Feng family had been destroyed in the fanatical political movements dating back to 1949. Two were executed, one committed suicide, five were sent to labor camps, and one was starved to death inside the camp.

On the day when Hanying left in 1923, Hanmao, my mother's oldest brother, was only one month old. The infant was brought out of the room so Hanying could have a look at this youngest cousin. When Hanying returned to China in 1971, Hanmao had already committed suicide fifteen years before. He had been a middle school principal and was arrested and tortured in the "Anti–Hu Feng Clique" movement in 1956. He slit his throat with a razor he hid in his quilt.

Hanzao, the loafer cousin, had driven Hanying and his wife Ms. Wan to the Yellow River town of Zhongwei on a mule cart in 1923. In the 1970s, he became bedridden and had dementia. He could barely recognize people. But when he saw Hanying, he held his hand and started to weep.

The Feng clan was scared by this relative who suddenly appeared before them. Many of them had never met him because he left the country so early. They were all under harsh political subjugation. They dared not ask him questions about his life back in Europe. Or they did not even know how to ask the right question. Hanying told them that he stopped corresponding with the family because "Paris

HANYING, MS. WAN, AND MEMBERS OF THE FENG FAMILY

fell." But nobody asked what it meant and how he survived there when "Paris fell."

Hanying could still speak pure Haiyuan dialect after fifty years. That made one of his nephews Feng Yu curious. Feng Yu was more than thirty years old then. He asked a linguistic question: "Uncle, do French people speak like us?"

"Oh," Hanying replied. "Very differently."

Hanying went to visit my uncle Hanyun, the blacksmith. They had never met because the latter was born after Hanying had left China. Hanyun was in extreme poverty and had nothing in his hoop cave. He went to the village, then a production brigade of the People's Commune, and borrowed a quilt so his oldest cousin could sleep at night. There was no chair because peasants mostly sat on the edge of the *kang* or simply squatted on the ground. A nephew made a simple stool so the aged uncle could sit on it. There was no decent food. Hanyun borrowed some lamb from the village.

Ten years before, back in 1960, Hanyun had been arrested and sent to a labor camp in the "Double Anti's Movement" ("anti-bad people and bad matters") in Ningxia. He was accused of three crimes. The first was that he sabotaged the Party's food policy. This happened when a cadre showed up in the village and asked if he had enough food. He said that he was capable of getting by only eating enough to make him half full. The second crime was that he damaged collective property. He was the blacksmith for the collectivized village. His helper swung a sledgehammer onto a corner of an anvil and broke a piece of it. His third crime was having colluded with bandits. In 1950, hundreds of defeated Nationalist soldiers passed by his village and forced him to cook for them. That became his crime. Hanyun was starved and tortured in the camp. Seeing people starved to death every day, he escaped and hid for a whole year in a pit he dug at his home, hiding inside during the day and coming out at night. Among the three hundred and twenty-five people that were rounded up in the county, four were sent back due to illness, Hanyun and another man escaped, and only fifty-eight survived. All others were starved to death.

Before he fled, Hanyun asked his nephew Feng Zhang to escape together. Feng Zhang refused. He wanted to reform himself into a "socialist new man."

In his last moment in the labor camp, he lay there and begged for some parched flour, "Who has *chaomian*? Please put a small pinch in my mouth." No one did. Feng Zhang's body was taken back by his nephew on a donkey cart and placed in a field. The next morning his wife rushed to the field only to find her husband's face had been eaten by foxes. She wrapped him in a quilt and buried him.

Fifty years earlier, when he was a student in Beijing, Hanying had written articles for *New Gansu*, a leftist magazine that Gansu students ran, and asked, "Why don't Gansu people have enough food?" That question was still valid after half a century when he returned.

§

BEFORE HE WENT TO college in Beijing, Hanying taught at an elementary school in Xingrenbao for one year or so. One of his students was called Cao Qiweng, who was a cousin of his through his aunt's family.

On a day at the end of the 1960s, when Hanying was in Paris and had restarted correspondence with his family in China, Cao visited him. Cao was attending an international auditing conference in Austria as a delegate from Taiwan's central bank.

In Paris, Cao met Hanying two times. The first meeting was at a horse racetrack. Cao said to Hanying, "I heard most of our families were either starved to death or were killed by the Communists. But I could not get any information. Next time when you write to China, please also help ask what happened to my family."

Correspondence was out of the question between Taiwan and the mainland at the time, in particular for people like Cao. Earlier, he had sent a letter from Hong Kong to a friend named Hu Zhengduo, a scientist working for a meteorology institute in Lanzhou. Hu was from a village not far from mine. Hu's brother, a posse head, was executed in 1951.

Hu was in great panic upon receiving the letter from Hong Kong. He dared not even open it. He submitted it to the government officials, but that failed to

save him. The next day, he was arrested and sent to a labor camp for one year. After his release, he was given a post at a ceramic factory, selling pottery for the rest of his life. Throughout his life he did not know what was written in that letter.

Cao was no stranger to the Communists. He was from a small village not far from Xingrenbao. Before he fled to Taiwan in 1949, he worked as a Nationalist Party commissioner in Gansu and the executive principal of a school that trained party cadets using the Hitler Youth of the German Nazi Party as a model. He later became the minister of transportation of Gansu Province. But these were fronts. Cao actually worked for Chiang Kai-shek's Central Bureau of Investigation and Statistics, which was one of the two major spy organizations controlled by the Nationalist Party.

Several years ago, I had an opportunity to read an unpublished biography of Cao written by his eldest son. Cao graduated from a normal school in Lanzhou. He was selected and sent to the Nationalist Party's Central Political University in Nanjing, an academy to train party cadets. Upon graduation in 1933, Cao and another young man were sent by Chiang Kai-shek to Xinjiang to establish the Nationalist Party's branch in the province, which was at the time under tight control by the warlord Sheng Shicai. Their mission included assassinating Sheng when the occasion arose. Sheng declared loyalty to Nanjing, and at the same time colluded with Joseph Stalin. Sheng sensed the Nationalist government's attempt and put Cao and his colleague under close surveillance. To intimidate the young men, Sheng once summoned Cao for a meeting. As he talked to Cao, his soldiers dragged two prisoners to just outside the meeting room. Sheng walked out and roared at the prisoners. After they were executed on the spot, Sheng walked back and continued to talk to Cao. When he had been summoned to the meeting, Cao figured he would be killed. He had knelt down and kowtowed toward the east to his parents, drank a cup of wine, and went to the meeting, where he chain-smoked fifty cigarettes. Sheng did not kill the young men but would not let them leave either. Cao eventually fled Xinjiang. He narrowly escaped from Sheng's killers by hiding in a grain mill in a village. To show his gratitude, he later married the mill owner's daughter. He already had a wife then. When he fled to Taiwan in

1949, Cao left both women and their children behind. One lived in a village not far from ours.

My father remembers that he helped deliver some grain to Cao's first wife in 1970: "I was looking after the village's camels in the area at the time. Her son was a teacher in Jingyuan Number One Middle School. They had a hard time finding food. The son left some starter balls for fermenting wheat with a relative in a neighboring village and asked him to trade them for millet. The relative asked me to help deliver the millet to the woman. The camels would pass by the village anyway. So I put the millet sacks on the camels and went to her village. She was a little bit fat, sitting on the *kang*.

"Cao's second wife, Zhang Chengjun, the one he married in Xinjiang, lived in Lanzhou. They had a son. I heard a number of years ago the son founded a company named after his father's literary name Hanzhang, called Hanzhang Corporation. He did business with people in Hong Kong using his father's connections there. Several years ago the son held a memorial for his father in Lanzhou. Several hundred people attended. The policy had changed so much."

When the Communist troops occupied Gansu in 1949, Cao knew what would ensue, because in Xinjiang he witnessed the killing of tens of thousands by Sheng Shicai in imitation of Stalin's purges. He took his family and fled to Xining, Qinghai. He learned that the Qinghai warlord Ma Bufang had leased twelve American planes from Claire Lee Chennault, the former head of the Flying Tigers, and prepared to escape from the province. But when they arrived in Xining, they found no way to get close to the planes. Cao fled back to Jiuquan, Gansu, where a student of his worked at the airport and found one seat on a British plane that had been sent to repatriate British pastor David Howard Adeney. Cao left his family behind and fled to Chongqing by himself. From there he fled to Hong Kong, then to Taiwan, and never returned.

When Cao was a high-ranking Nationalist official in Lanzhou, a relative had visited him. Cao told the relative that the thing he wanted to do most was to go back to his hometown and to look after a flock of sheep in the mountains. He said

he missed very much the white clouds and blue sky there. Cao then sighed, as if saying to himself, "It is impossible anymore."

When Hanying went back to his hometown in 1971, he visited the Cao family. His aunt had married into the family. The Caos had a hard time after 1949. Two people from the clan were sent to labor camps. But no one was shot.

The Feng clan was devastated even before the Communists showed up. Hanying's father was the oldest among three brothers. My maternal grandfather Feng Li was the youngest. The second brother Feng Lin got involved in a family feud that killed him, his youngest son, and his oldest grandson in violent armed clashes before 1949. In the Communist land reform in 1951, his two sons were executed on the same spot at the same time, and his grandchildren were sent to labor camps one after another. His opponent in the family feud became a Communist and he wreaked as much damage as he could on the Feng clan.

§

HANYING HAD CLEARLY BEEN devastated by the tour of his hometown. Feng Yu said that after they returned to Lanzhou, "He cried almost every day. He said he wanted to go back to France." But it was no longer possible because his passport had been taken away.

When Hanying had decided to return to China, he met two Cantonese brothers who had recently escaped from China to Hong Kong and ended up in France. The brothers earnestly said to him, "Don't go back. Mr. Feng. Don't go back. They are doing a crazy Cultural Revolution. It was a hell." But he decided to go. Now he felt the cultural shock.

At night, when he slept, he held a knitted sweater. That was one of the few items in the suitcase he brought back from France. It might have been made by his Belgian wife.

Meat was strictly rationed. A relative living in a Tibetan autonomous county in the southern part of Gansu sent some yak meat and butter to them. Feng Yu said, "He cut steamed *mantou* into slices and toasted it on top of the stove, and

smeared the butter on it with a knife. He cooked bean noodles for himself using a small pot. I never tried it. I don't know what it tasted like."

Every week, Hanying gave Feng Yu five yuan and let him shop around in the several big hotels in Lanzhou to buy meals. In those years, in the provincial capital city there were a limited number of state-owned and state-run food providers. Feng Yu came back with nice food and there was still some money left.

Hanying found a cat and kept her. He fed the cat with canned fish that cost fifty cents a can; the female cat attracted other cats and he fed them all. People in the yard were appalled. They all said, "This old man has money!" People could not afford to buy canned fish for themselves.

Uncle Hanyun went to Lanzhou to visit Hanying before he died. He said he saw their cat sleeping on her own rug, and they had a "small movie" in the apartment building, which must have been a television.

When I asked Feng Xi whether Hanying just wanted a short visit or he came back to China for good, Feng Xi said that Hanying brought a lot of cash with him and he had no plans to return to France. His pension was remitted from France on a regular basis.

My father went to see Hanying twice. The first time he rode a bike and took my mother. They saw him in the village where Hanying was born. My mother had never met Hanying. She was born in 1938, fifteen years after he had left China.

She said, "He used a kind of white handkerchief. But he only used it once. Every time he used it, he threw it away."

That must have been a paper tissue, something that was never seen in the impoverished northwestern countryside.

The next time, my father went by himself. This was during the Mid-Autumn Festival. The villagers killed several sheep, and every family received some. My mother fried a small bowl of lamb and asked my father to bring it to Hanying. He was staying at Uncle Hanyun's village.

My father had always been curious about the world. He must have been very bewildered by Hanying's decision to return to China, when many people were starved and whipped in the country.

My father told me, "I asked him why he returned to China. He said that when he was in France, he read newspaper stories about the intense relations between China and the Soviet Union. Some newspapers even said that the Soviets would occupy China in a week. He said that he had narrowly survived World War II. If there was another war, there would be not any hope to return to the homeland in this life. So he decided to return, at least to have a last look at his hometown. He just took a suitcase and boarded the plane to China."

It seemed that Hanying had the intention to go back to France after a short visit to China. But he made a mistake. My father said, "He said he filed an application at [Communist] China's embassy in Paris, and they approved it. So he rapidly left. When he returned to Lanzhou, his passport was taken away, and now he could not go back to France. He said to us that he still missed France."

At the time Hanying decided to return to China, his Belgian wife had already died. It appeared that he did not tell his children about his plan to go to China. It was said that when his daughter found he was leaving, she rushed to the airport, but he was already going to board the plane.

So Hanying returned to China using a Chinese passport issued by the Chinese embassy, which must have treated him as a compatriot who had somehow drifted to France.

Now Hanying was stranded in China after being stranded in Europe for half a century. My mother said she had heard from her brother Hanyun that Hanying had quarrels with Ms. Wan in Lanzhou, complaining that she asked him to come back by saying how good the new socialist country was. But now neither of them had enough rage or power to part with each other again, as they had fifty years before in the port town by the Yellow River.

My father said, "He had a very good memory. He talked about how Mashmar the Hui man kidnapped a woman, and because of that how his father was taken away by the Hui division commander, and how he and his cousin found people in Lanzhou to get the story into newspapers. He still remembered the news story after nearly fifty years. He recited that story."

Uncle Hanyun was also curious about linguistic questions. He asked Hanying to speak some French because he had never heard anyone speaking the language

HANYING AND MS. WAN

(THE PROPAGANDA SLOGAN IN THE BACKDROP SAYS, “LISTEN TO CHAIRMAN MAO . . .”)

in northwest China's countryside. And his impression of the European language was, "He rolled his tongue: *d-rrrrrrrr*—. It was like calling a donkey."

§

THE GANSU PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT treated Hanying as a subject of the United Front. They arranged tours for him to visit new socialist projects like the dams built on the Yellow River. When they asked him to do some translation work, Hanying declined, citing old age. When they brought him Chairman Mao's work as a gift, he declined as well.

In Lanzhou, Hanying met his old friend Mr. Deng Chungao, one of the young men in the May Fourth Movement photo that the Baiyin Library found. They had been classmates in Lanzhou and Beijing. Deng went to the United States in 1921 and obtained his bachelor's degree from Stanford University and D.Ed. from the University of Chicago in 1927. He returned to Gansu in the 1930s and became the president of a college, which later became Lanzhou University.

Hanying did not mention to anybody that he married in France and had a family there, except for several relatives in the Cao and Feng clans, who kept it secret. We didn't learn it until the 1980s. He left the photos of the Belgian woman to two of his cousins in the Feng clan, who vaguely understood that he had a family back in France and certainly dared not mention it to anybody because that would only make their situation worse. Probably Hanying did not want Ms. Wan to know it, or he was intimidated by what happened to his family.

When I asked the cousins from the Feng family about their talks with Hanying, they all said there were few talks. Hanying was silent most of time and cried a lot. That is what they remembered.

It was said that in the late 1970s he was visited by an "old friend" from France. The visitor stayed in the Lanzhou Hotel for a number of days. This was a luxurious hotel built by the Communist government to cater to the Soviet experts who were sent to assist China's industrialization in the 1950s. It was said that Hanying went to the hotel to see the visitor. Later, when some government officials indirectly

questioned him about his family in France, he realized he was being monitored. Uncle Hanyun said the visitor was very likely his son from France. Hanying received a remittance from France on a regular basis, which might have been his pension or some support from his children.

I asked Feng Xi about this. He was a doctor at an orphanage in Xinjiang when Hanying returned to China. He said, "In 1971, during the Cultural Revolution, somebody in the orphanage put up a banner that said, 'Beat down Feng Xi, a colluder with foreigners.' They knew that I had an uncle in France. It was threatening but I ignored it, because one month before Feng Yu sent me a letter telling me that Uncle Hanying had returned to Lanzhou. The government treated him as a subject for the United Front. The Gansu Provincial Department of the United Front invited him for meetings. They arranged tours for him and paid frequent visits to him.

"One day, the orphanage where I worked was going to send a man to Gansu Province to investigate somebody's political background. So I asked the leader to tell the man to investigate the claim that I colluded with foreigners. The man laughed and said, 'Do you want me to go abroad to investigate?' I said, 'You can just go to the Gansu Provincial Association of Overseas Compatriots or the Department of the United Front.' He looked surprised, but agreed. When he returned from the investigation, he had a smiling face. The military representative in the town also returned Uncle Hanying's letter to me. They intercepted the letters early on and that was why they put up the banner claiming that I colluded with foreigners. I asked for a break to visit Uncle Hanying in Lanzhou. Three or four years later I paid another visit. But I never heard anybody from France had visited him. When Uncle Hanying died, I was in Kashi, Xinjiang. I was not aware of anybody from France visiting him then either. After I moved to Zhangye [Gansu] in 1981, I visited Aunt Jingji [Ms. Wan] almost every year. She never mentioned that somebody from Paris paid a visit. Probably there was no such visitor, or she was not aware of it, or she did not want to talk about it at all."

The Feng clan in the countryside seemed to have received some help from Hanying, but not much. He paid for a nephew's wedding, bought them clothes,

gave them some cash when they visited him in Lanzhou. But most of them were in dire poverty. Feng Zhen, Feng Xi's stepbrother, became a beggar in the 1970s. He had little food or clothes to support his family. The local government did not allow him to beg around because begging "tarnished the image of socialism." Feng Zhen did it anyway. He was arrested. They hung a big wooden board on his neck and paraded him from village to village. He was then sent to a labor camp. When he was released three years later, he had serious kidney disease and died at the age of fifty-two. Feng Zhen was once a normal school student but was forced to drop out. Sometimes he would come to our village to see my parents to "borrow" food. He usually brought one or two of his sons so they could have a meal with us. One was a tall and lean boy, wearing pants with holes and layers of patches. We were in dire poverty as well, but my mother would give him a small sack of potatoes when he left. The Feng people imagined that Hanying received a lot of money from France but that they didn't get much from him because Ms. Wan gave the money to her family.

Feng Yu said Ms. Wan often asked for money from Hanying. Hanying would say, "Why do you need money? I gave you money but you never spend it. You just saved it. What is the point of having money?" The two frequently bickered over money. When Hanying gave Feng Yu money, he lifted the mattress and took it from underneath. There was a lot of it there.

Feng Xi said once when he visited the old couple, Hanying happened to have received a letter from France. It was typed and the envelope was wrapped in plastic. He asked Hanying what the letter said. Hanying said it was from a former colleague in France. The colleague wrote, "It has been a such a long time that you haven't written to us. We figured it must be because you are devastated by the death of your dear great leader Chairman Mao. Or you were extremely saddened by the numerous deaths in the earthquake in Tangshan."

Ms. Wan said, "It is indeed extremely saddening that Chairman Mao died. It is difficult to eat and sleep . . ."

Hanying said, "Well, if you are indeed so sad, you should stop eating and sleeping altogether. But I saw you ate well and slept well."

Mao died in 1976 soon after the Tangshan earthquake in the same year. Feng Xi's visit might have been 1976 or 1977. Hanying died on January 28, 1978, after coughing up blood. Feng Xi, the doctor, was in Xinjiang at the time. He said probably a blood vessel in Hanying's lung broke and blocked his windpipe. He was buried in Lanzhou.

§

THE YEAR HANYING DIED was the same year China started its open-door policy. Fanatical political movements were stopped. People were no longer categorized into different political "elements." I still remember the day my father came back from the county seat and excitedly announced to my mother that there would be no more movements that had tortured them for thirty years. They had been labeled "landlord elements" and the subjects of proletariat dictatorship and were assigned the hardest work in one of the most impoverished places in the country, only because my grandfather was a country landlord. China saw some freedom in the subsequent years. Like my siblings, I went to a residence middle and high school in the county town that was five hours away by bus. I went back to the village only during summer and winter breaks. Six years later, after earning the highest score on the national college entrance exam in Gansu Province, I enrolled in a top university in Beijing. I stayed there for seven years and went to South China, and then came to the United States. In those years we might have occasionally talked about Hanying, but we knew very little about his life after he returned to China. He was a character of the past but still a legendary figure for us.

A number of years ago, I returned to China to visit my parents. We moved them to the county town from their remote village. My brother Juhong also had his home there. One evening, as we walked in the street, he said to me, "You should do something bigger to make more money, like doing some business. Otherwise, after many years, you will come back and become just another Big Uncle." He was referring to Hanying.

I felt hurt. It was the first time I realized Hanying's image in some of us has changed. China had become better off and started to see itself and the world

from a higher perspective, and money became the most important standard to measure your accomplishment. It was also the first time I suddenly realized my life journey overlapped with Hanying's life: We both left an impoverished village for school in a faraway place; we both went to Beijing; we both left China for a Western country; and at certain period of time, we both had to make a hard decision on where to age and where to die. In my college years I took the train that left Gansu and passed by Ningxia and Inner Mongolia, and then continued to Beijing; Hanying took part of that same railway many years ago.

Now I started to wonder whether I had been unconsciously inspired by Hanying since childhood.

§

IN 1981, MS. WAN DONATED one hundred thousand yuan to Lanzhou Children's Palace, a public facility modeled after the Soviet Union for children to engage in extracurricular activities. It was an astronomical amount of money in China at the time, not to mention in impoverished Gansu. When my brother started to teach in the village's elementary school in 1982, his monthly salary was thirty-six yuan, and part of it was given to him in the form of government bonds, which could only be redeemed years later. He would have had to work for three hundred years to earn that much money! I remember my parents and brothers were listening to the radio in the light of a kerosene lamp. They looked excited to accidentally hear in the news about somebody they knew. It was the Gansu People's Radio. Ms. Wan said in her strong Huining accent, "I have saved the money cent by cent." She later donated more money to her hometown's schools. Because of these donations, she was nominated as a member of Gansu Province's Political Consultative Conference.

In 1991, Ms. Wan donated ten thousand yuan to build a library at the middle school in a village right next to Xingrenbao, Hanying's hometown. The small library was named by blending her and Hanying's given names, and called the Yingji Library. She was driven to the village from Lanzhou to cut the ribbon

when the building was completed. The village was less than ten miles from our village, and my parents went to see her during the ceremony. My mother had met her two times when she was a little girl. This was the third time she saw Ms. Wan, who was then more than ninety years old. Ms. Wan said to her, "You have made great contributions." That was a compliment to my mother. Somebody must have told her that my parents had struggled to send several kids to college out of dire poverty.

Ms. Wan died on April 8, 1996. The Feng clan unearthed Hanying's remains in Lanzhou and moved them back to Xingrenbao together with Ms. Wan's coffin. They were buried side by side in the Feng clan's graveyard on the barren mountain to the north of Xingrenbao. Seventy years earlier, the young couple had crossed that mountain on their way to the port town of Zhongwei, and then became separated.

Hangying was buried at the foot of his father Feng Qi's grave. They had not seen each other since 1923. When he left for France, Hanying took three booklets titled *Poetry and Rhyme* that his father had bought. When he returned, he brought them back. The booklets are now kept by the Feng family. ☯

HANYING IN LANZHOU, 1970s

MS. WAN JINGJI IN LANZHOU, 1980s

BOOKLETS THAT HANYING TOOK TO EUROPE AND THEN BROUGHT BACK. ON THE COVER OF ONE OF THE BOOKLETS WAS HIS FATHER'S SIGNATURE.

别离情

杨文虎

又要乘春风
寻觅寒节的足迹
风无言，别也无言
静望中，热泪随风涌

说我如风
动是生命，静已无踪
你怨，烛光为伴
冷暖无人痛
听寒风呼唤，春雨敲窗
怎说我，远去无踪

Emotion of Departure†

by Yang Wenhu

Once again riding the spring breeze
To seek the trace of coldness
The wind is speechless, like the departure
In the silent stare, warm tears gone with the wind

I'm the wind
Movement is the life, stillness is disappeared
You complained that you only have candlelight for company
Nobody cares about warmth and coldness
Listen, the cold wind is calling, the spring rain is knocking the window
How could you say, I am far away

† English translation by Yang Zhengxin.

"GIBBONS AT PLAY" BY THE XUANDE EMPEROR, ZHU ZHANJI (朱瞻基), CA. 1427

Portfolio

Roger Camp

I was invited to join some of the nursing faculty from my college in an exchange with China over Christmas break 1984–1985. To give you an idea of how few Westerners were allowed in the country at the time, we were told on Christmas Eve that there were only twelve other Westerners in the city of Shanghai. We traveled with both a national guide and a local guide, and were restricted to a limited number of hotels and restaurants that our Chinese hosts felt were up to foreigners' standards. Except for military installations and airports, I was given free rein to photograph anywhere. It was a photographer's paradise as people were either pleased to be photographed or simply didn't mind.

I got to spend an entire day on my own in the old city of Beijing when my wife took ill and the national guide had to accompany the group elsewhere. I had no map and no one spoke English. I went to the Forbidden City and got into a long line at the ticket counter. Within a few minutes, someone came and took me out of the line and up to the front. Very few Chinese had seen a Westerner before and they were curious and friendly. I often wore a bright red sweater, which drew lots of attention and admiring glances. It is not an exaggeration to say that jackets came in only two colors at the time, green and blue. The other thing I noticed was that every person, without exception, had black hair. As an American, I took ethnic variety as a given. The only other people that drew stares were some indigenous people in their traditional dress walking in Beijing.

After returning home and reviewing my slides, I noticed a large number of photos I had taken were of individuals. I believe I was responding unconsciously to the feeling of being overwhelmed by humanity. No matter where one went the density of the population was in evidence. I have followed the development and changes in China over the last forty years and feel fortunate to have been able to visit when I did. In some sense, these images have become a historical record of a period that no longer exists.

SUNRISE,
WEST LAKE,
HANGZHOU
1985

BOY BLOWING BALLOON, SUMMER PALACE, BEIJING 1984

INSIDE THE
TREASURE HOUSE,
FORBIDDEN CITY,
BEIJING
1985

MAKEUP MIRROR,
OUTDOOR
PHOTO STUDIO,
TEMPLE OF HEAVEN,
BEIJING
1985

TRAIN STATION,

BEIJING

1985

MAN SMOKING PIPE
IN DOORWAY,
KUNMING
1985

MAN IN
BLUE JACKET,
ALONG THE CANAL,
KUNMING
1985

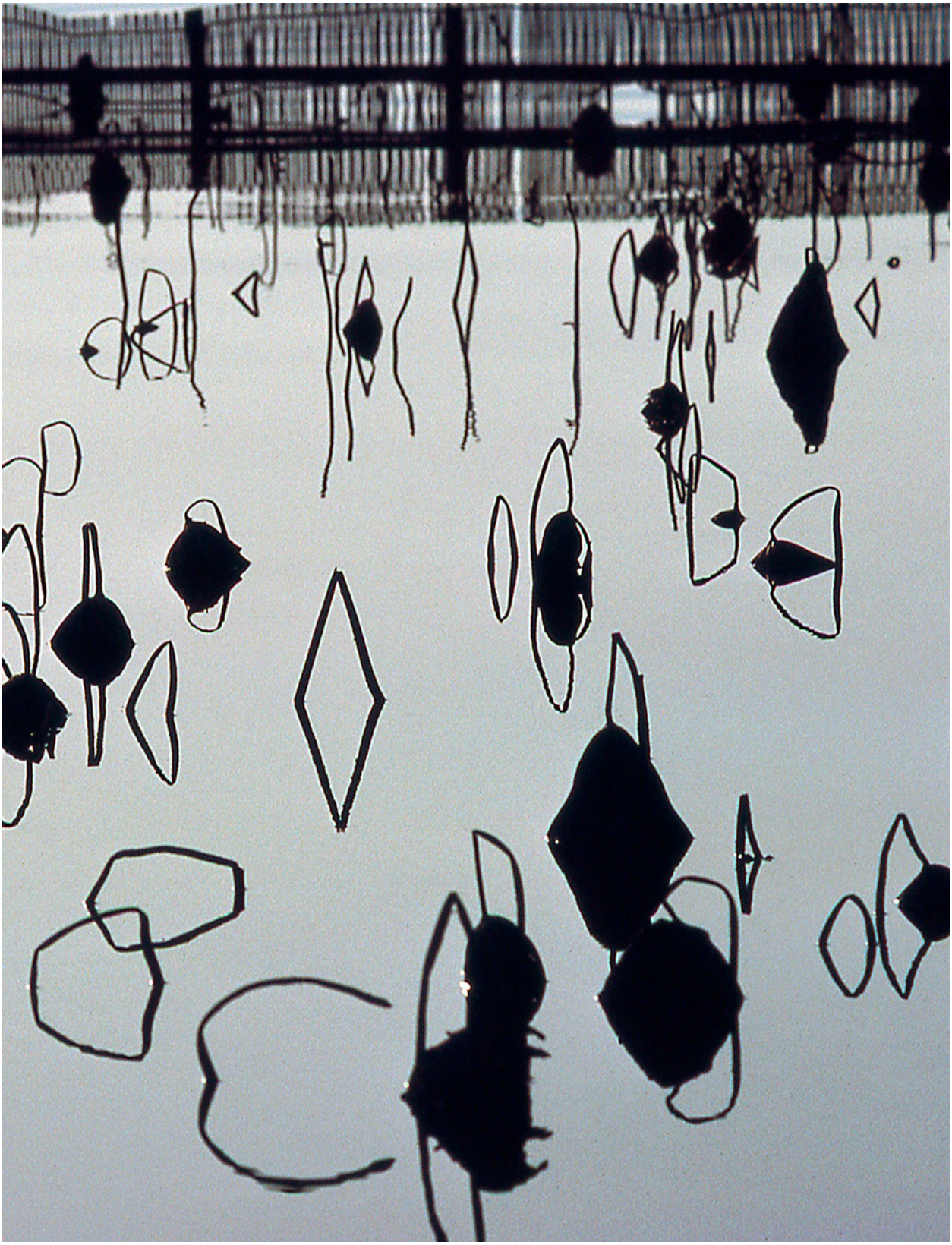
WOMAN
DRYING MEAT AND
ORANGE PEELS,
YANGDI, GUANGXI
1985

MONK SUNNING HIMSELF, JADE BUDDHA TEMPLE, SHANGHAI 1985

PEOPLE ON THE PROW OF THE MARBLE BOAT, SUMMER PALACE, BEIJING 1985

SCHOOL CHILDREN
RUNNING HOME,
CHENGDU
1985

TAIJI QUAN,
SUNRISE, WEST LAKE,
HANGZHOU
1985



FROZEN LILIES, WEST LAKE, HANGZHOU 1985

盼

杨文虎

盼南方飘来一朵白云
哪怕仅载着片言只语
那高悬云头的渴望也会湿润
然而
夏风呼啸，白云无语
思念的柳絮
映出湖面的倩影

Longing†

by Yang Wenhu

Looking forward to a cloud floating from the south
Even if it carries only a few words
The desire on the top of the cloud will be moist
However
Summer wind is whizzing by, the cloud is speechless
The willow catkins of missing
Reflecting the shadow of a lake

† English translation by Yang Zhengxin.