BOOK REVIEW
Brian DeMare, *Tiger, Tyrant, Bandit, Businessman: Echoes of Counterrevolution from New China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022)

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Those who experienced the Chinese Communist Party's rise to power were mostly rural residents, and the majority of them were "liberated" after the CCP's decisive military triumph over the Nationalists. There has, however, been comparatively little research on what the arrival of the CCP meant to the hundreds of millions of villagers who inhabited China's vast "newly liberated areas," including the wide range of "reactionaries" who were subjected to the new state's coercive force.[2] Brian DeMare's *Land Wars*, the subject of a recent PRC History Review roundtable, conveyed the transformative nature of land reform in rural China as a whole;[3] now, in *Tiger, Tyrant, Bandit, Businessman*, he moves from nation to county in scope, and explores not only land reform, but the larger sequence of campaigns through which state power was extended to the rural grassroots. This is the first book-length study in English of the consolidation of CCP power after 1949 in a mostly rural area, which alone makes it an important work; but it is also novel in other ways, most notably in being structured as a sequence of highly readable narratives based on the casefiles of people who came into conflict with the new order.

The setting is Poyang County, a largely rural part of northeast Jiangxi that abuts and is named after China's largest freshwater lake. The major sources are the four casefiles around which the book is structured, which were produced in the early years of the PRC by the public security system.[4] For contextual information, DeMare relies on the Poyang County Gazetteer, as well as on the work of Gao Mobo, a Poyang native who, as many readers of the *PRC History Review* will be aware, has written a pair of highly regarded studies of his home village.[5] The four casefile-based chapters that form the main body of the book are preceded by an introductory chapter which provides context about Poyang County and the broader historical background, from the basic structure of imperial government through the fall of the Qing and the two phases of the Civil War. But the bulk of the chapter concerns the establishment of "New China," particularly the CCP's unprecedented extension of state power to the rural grassroots. The many terms, concepts, and institutions introduced by the CCP, from "New China" and "liberation" to "evil tyrants" and "People's Tribunals", all first appear in italics, signalling their novelty and setting the stage for a broader argument about linguistic innovation and imposition as a major feature of the Chinese revolution. I shall return to this and other broader issues in the second part of this review.

The first casefile concerns perhaps the single largest element of the CCP's establishment of its monopoly on violence after the defeat of the Nationalists: the suppression of armed outlaws in the countryside, or "bandits" as they have usually been called. As this chapter reveals, this was no straightforward matter, for in the mountains of northern Poyang were based powerful and long-established armed groups that were able and willing to use deadly violence against agents of the new government. This chapter also introduces the reader to the world of what the CCP called "reactionary secret societies"—in this case the Big Swords—which prior to the establishment of the PRC had often functioned to protect communities against the depredations of bandits, but whose leaders now saw a greater threat in the new government, with its desire to extract grain and overturn the existing social order.

The second casefile also proceeds from an instance of deadly violence against agents of the new government, this time on a smaller scale, and carried out not by bandits but by a farmer and local strongman. "Big Tiger", as he was known, was an important figure in the clan-based power structure in his corner of Poyang, and he remained a free man for a full year and a half after he carried out the murder of Comrade Zhou, an outsider who had come in the summer of 1949 to requisition grain and instigate class struggle. Through this case, DeMare traces how the CCP gradually dismantled existing structures of power in the countryside. This process was carried out, at least in Big Tiger's case, in ways that demonstrated a serious commitment to legal process and responsiveness to public opinion. At the same time, however, the Party's commitment to legal process and public opinion was generally subordinated to its basic narrative about the nature of pre-revolutionary society and of the process of "liberation"; if either facts or public opinion were at odds with this narrative, they could be adjusted or ignored, as they were in the case of Big Tiger.

The third case is perhaps the most remarkable story, featuring a jailbreak by, among others, the father of someone working in the County Public Security Bureau, an apparent journey to the underworld and back, and a landlord working undercover for the new regime. As indicated by its title, "The Case of the Bodhisattva Society," local religious beliefs and practices form an important element of this chapter, and, as elsewhere in the book, DeMare does a splendid job of introducing necessary background information without overwhelming the reader or distracting from the plot. At the end of this case, as of each chapter, DeMare includes a section in which he reflects on the challenges and limitations of the material, and points to some of the broader conclusions that he thinks can be drawn. As DeMare reveals, many dramatic details in the narrative of this chapter are based entirely on accounts written by public security officers, and are not corroborated by any witness statements—which, as problematic as they are, at least provide some kind of access to voices other than those of state agents. As a result, he suggests, the case tells us "more about the cops than the criminals" (102): those working in the public security system had strong incentives to understand and present themselves as having defeated a coherent and well-organized counterrevolutionary network, even if what they were facing may have been a more spontaneous association defending local interests.

If "The Case of the Bodhisattva Society" tells us most about how those working in the newly established public security system wanted to present the forces they were battling against, the final case, that of Merchant Zha, speaks above all to the ability of local (in this case township-level) cadres to enlist the coercive powers of the new state through the deployment of what DeMare refers to as "the weaponized words that were everywhere in New China" (128). Merchant Zha, an outsider who thought he had done everything by the book when renting an oil press, became embroiled in a conflict with the township cadres who wanted to confiscate the press' raw materials. When Zha fought back by appeal to the Party's policies on industry and commerce, the township cadres outdid him by having over 200 local residents testify that he was an out-and-out counterrevolutionary who had made money as an army recruiter for the Nationalists and had provided intelligence to the "Ninth Route Army," a notorious armed organization led by a former Nationalist general that had terrorized Communists in Jiangxi in 1949. It is a fascinating case that leaves the reader with much to think about concerning how politically explosive accusations were made and investigated in the early PRC.

As DeMare explains in the conclusion, the four cases taken together "reveal the methodological arrival of state power at the grassroots level" (133), and offer the reader the opportunity of "peering into [a] world long lost" (135). They do so, moreover, in a way that is exceptionally accessible, making this book ideal for assignment to undergraduates (who will also benefit from the very helpful section on further reading that follows the conclusion). In sum, *Tiger, Tyrant, Bandit, Businessman* portrays the establishment of CCP power in one part of rural China in vivid detail, while also introducing non-specialist readers to the main features of rural Chinese society before and during the revolution. Although the setting, Poyang County, is a key part of the stories DeMare tells, these stories shed light on institutions, processes, dynamics, and experiences

that had direct parallels throughout China, above all in the hundreds counties that were "liberated" after CCP victory in the civil war and that, like Poyang, were overwhelmingly rural and ethnically Han. Moreover, DeMare's directness about the challenges he faced in the process from often messy and incomplete archival files to historical narrative, and about what can and cannot be known from the casefiles, makes the book an excellent object lesson in historical detective-work. It is a book that deserves to be widely read by all those interested in the Chinese revolution, whether specialists, students, or members of the public.

The book also makes a broader argument concerning the role of language and labelling in the Chinese revolution, and in the remainder of this review, I would like to outline how I understand this argument, to raise some related questions of empirical detail and translation, and to ask some broader questions about the relationship between our normative commitments and the kind of history we write. At various points in the book, DeMare identifies the "weaponization" of language, manifested particularly through the use of labels like "counterrevolutionary" and "tyrant", as an important feature of the Chinese revolution (51-52, 65, 77-78, 120, 128-29). Although he emphasizes that such practices were not invented by the CCP, noting that the Nationalists had systematically referred to the Communists as "bandits" (24, 129), it is nevertheless a major theme of the book that under the CCP, these practices developed to previously unseen levels. As he puts it in the conclusion of Merchant Zha's case:

> In the upheavals of China's revolution, reality could become entirely divorced from the weaponized words that were everywhere in New China…
> The Communists didn't invent any of this. The Nationalists had their fair share of false accusations, made deadly through weaponized words. Didn't they dismissively refer to their political rivals as bandits? The practice, however, was perfected in the People's Republic. These incidents of slander are most associated with later mass campaigns, especially the Cultural Revolution… [b]ut the previous cases all suggest that gaps between labels and reality, as well as false accusations, were essential to the revolutionary experience. (128-29)

Similar ideas, reminiscent of Philip Huang's distinction between "representational and objective realities" in the Chinese revolution,[6] were present in *Land Wars,* and DeMare's reliance on a fairly unproblematized distinction between "ideology" and "reality" has been criticized in these pages by Aminda Smith and Harlan Chambers.[7] In this book, DeMare writes not of "ideology" generally, but more specifically "labels"; as he puts it at the end of the first case, "the Communists made sure to label every citizen", and "all too often, the label mattered more than the reality" (52, cf. 78). I would be interested to hear the author's thoughts on ways of theorizing this phenomenon that would enable comparison across space and time. At one point, DeMare suggests that the "weaponization of daily language started with the Nationalists" (51), but if this means the use of labels to delegitimize certain groups and justify their harsh treatment, then what is the reason to think it started with the Nationalists rather than earlier? If the phenomenon is distinctively modern, then what makes it so, and how do the practices of the PRC state compare to other modern states with transformative ambitions? These are of course complicated questions that would require multiple books to answer, but I would be interested to hear the author's thoughts about possible directions.

I would also like to raise some questions about one of the examples in the book, concerning the CCP's labelling of politically unaffiliated bandits as "counterrevolutionaries." DeMare writes that the CCP "vilified" such people "uniformly as not only bandits, but also *counterrevolutionary* Nationalist loyalists" (24). This, he argues at the end of the chapter, had serious consequences, for "a *bandit* wasn't simply an outlaw who needed to be brought to justice, but a *counterrevolutionary* threat that had to be exterminated" (51). And on the next page: "those classed as counterrevolutionaries" were "enemies of the new regime who had to be eliminated if the masses were ever to find liberation" (52).[8] This phrasing seems to to overstate the harshness of the CCP's policies towards those it labelled as counterrevolutionaries, while

understating the harshness of the treatment implied by the use of the term "bandit" （匪 or 土匪). The majority of people labelled counterrevolutionaries were not killed, but subjected to a regime of either custodial or non-custodial "reform" (改造). This process was certainly more coercive, violent, and unjust than how the Party portrayed it, but was it tantamount to being the target of "elimination" or "extermination"?[9] At the same time, the standard term for the suppression of bandits—which the CCP also adopted—contains a verb that could arguably be translated as "eliminate" or "exterminate" (剿, in 剿匪).[10] Moreover, the category "bandit" itself emerged in the late Qing, and was used during the Republican era, specifically to justify harsh suppression, including execution, outside of normal legal procedures.[11] Was it, then, really so much worse to be labelled a "counterrevolutionary" by the CCP than it was to be labelled a "bandit" by previous governments? And if it was, could this have been a result of the greater capacity of the PRC state, together with the contingent facts about the subsequent course of PRC history, rather than there being anything inherently more exclusionary or destructive about CCP's practices of categorization and labelling?

This leads me to a more technical concern, namely that more fine-grained conceptual and terminological discussions are not helped by the decision to include Chinese fairly sporadically, and only in the endnotes. The choice to exclude *pinyin* from the main text is certainly understandable as a means of making the text more readable for non-specialists, but the absence of a glossary seems unfortunate, especially for a volume that is so effective in conveying the importance of new language. Most of the terms introduced ("New China", "liberation", "People's Tribunals", etc.) leave little room for alternative translations, but this is not always the case. Consider the following sentence: "Using one of the Communists' favored words for describing the Nationalist regime, [Big Tiger] delegitimized his old government post by calling it *fake*" (67). "Fake" is DeMare's rendition of the character "伪," which in CCP usage preceded institutions or positions connected to authorities deemed illegitimate, including the GMD under Jiang Jieshi. This leads to formulations like "fake government", "fake neighborhood chief" (67), "fake military officer" (84) and "fake township soldiers" (164) to describe entities and positions that were clearly *real*, which, at least to this reader, gives the impression that Party vocabulary was an absurd imposition on reality.[12] But the most widely used character dictionary of the Mao era, the *Xinhua Zidian*, lists two distinct meanings for this character: one that corresponds to "fake" (假, 不真实), and a second one closer to "illegitimate" (不合法的; the example given is 伪政府).[13] This specifically political meaning was not a CCP innovation: there are examples dating back to the Jin 晋 and Tang dynasties,[14] and is also reflected in its usage during the Republican era when referring to the Manchukuo authorities and the Wang Jingwei government (this usage is usually translated into English as "puppet").[15] I wonder whether there would have been a way of conveying these complexities without sacrificing the accessibility of the text, and whether the inclusion of a glossary might have been beneficial—not only for specialists, but also students who are studying both Chinese history and language.

Focusing too closely on matters of word choice and translation may risk losing sight of the larger issues concerning the encounter between rural society and the CCP that this book so vividly depicts, but at the same time, the importance of language is to some extent determined for us by the CCP's own concern with it. We have to decide how to deal with standardized, value-laden terms like "liberation" that permeate the documents we rely on, and in doing so, cannot avoid communicating something about where we stand with respect to the judgments implicit in them. DeMare chooses not to put such terms in scare-quotes, but does sometimes include phrasing around them to indicate that they do not reflect his own beliefs: "when the Communists brought *their* liberation to Poyang County" (57), or "the Communists *loudly boasted* that their liberation of the countryside cast off the legacies of imperial and Nationalist rule and created a New China" (xiii) (emphasis mine). Some reviewers of DeMare's first two books have objected to what they perceive as the author's basically cynical view of the revolution, and in the case of *Land Wars*, to the lack of explicit reflection on the author's own position in crafting his historical narrative.[16] As in *Land Wars*—the subtitle

of which is "the story of China's agrarian revolution"— DeMare works with an understanding of history as source-based storytelling. As he puts it in the conclusion, "history lives at the intersection of our sources and our narrative instincts," and what is needed to get started is "a document and a story to tell" (135). But what are the forces that shape the "narrative instincts" of any given historian, and to what extent is it the historian's responsibility to try to be explicit about them? I realize this requires returning to some of the themes covered in his response to the roundtable on *Land Wars*, but I would be very interested in further reflection by the author on the forces that have contributed to shaping his own "narrative instincts," and more broadly, how he thinks our normative commitments—whether political, moral, or even aesthetic—influence the kind of history we write.

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[1] I am grateful to Dayton Lekner, Puck Engman, and Harriet Evans for very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this review.

[2] Important exceptions are the relevant sections of local studies by historians and anthropologists that have been written over the decades, such as C.K. Yang, *A Chinese Village in Early Communist Transition* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1959), 131-45; Gregory Ruf, *Cadres and Kin: Making a Socialist Village in West China, 1921-1991* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 62-89; and Jacob Eyferth, *Eating Rice from Bamboo Roots* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 122-28. A previously unimaginable level of empirical detail concerning the CCP's initial campaigns is being achieved in recent Chinese scholarship based on county-level archives; see, for example, Cao Shuji 曹树基, Li Wankun 李婉琨, and Zheng Binbin 郑彬彬, '江津县减租退押运动研究' [Research on the Movement to Reduce Rents and Return Deposits in Jiangjin County], *Lishixue Bao*, no. 4 (2013): 798–813.An important English-language work on the consolidation of CCP power in a mostly rural area is Jeremy Brown, "From Resisting Communists to Resisting America: Civil War and Korean War in Southwest China, 1950–1951", *in Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China*, ed. Jeremy Brown and Paul. G. Pickowicz (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 105–29.

[3] *The PRC History Review*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (January 2021): 1-22.

[4] For more information on these sources, see Liu Shigu, "Using Local Public Security Archives from the 1950s—Poyang County, Jiangxi," in *Fieldwork in Modern Chinese History: A Research Guide*, ed. Thomas D. DuBois and Jan Kiely (New York: Routledge, 2020), 282–88.

[5] Gao Mobo, *Gao Village: Modern Life in Rural China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995); *Gao Village Revisited: The Life of Rural People in Contemporary China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

[6] Philip C. C. Huang, 'Rural Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution: Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution', *Modern China* 21, no. 1 (January 1995): 105–43.

[7] Aminda Smith, "Land Reform: Histories and Narratives", *The PRC History Review*, vol. 6 no. 1 (January 2021), 1; Harlan Chambers, "Revolution and its Narrative Battlefronts", *The PRC History Review*, vol. 6 no. 1 (January 2021), 7-8.

[8] A similar impression is given by a passage in the next chapter: "Big Tiger was nothing more than a 'counterrevolutionary element' and a 'public enemy of the people.' Incendiary charges, laced with the dehumanizing labels reserved for those who simply had to be executed" (66). Here, DeMare also introduces the complex notion of "dehumanization"; this concept is certainly applicable to much CCP discourse about non-People (see Michael Schoenhals, "Demonising Discourse in Mao Zedong's China: People vs Non-People', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 3 (September 2007): 465–82), but it is less clear how it applies here. The phrase "element" may sound dehumanizing in English, but it would be hard to argue that it has this implication in the CCP's usage, since it also appears in conjunction with positive terms like "activist" (积极分子) or "intellectual" (知识分子).

[9] In terms of the CCP's internal language during the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries, the targets of the campaign were either "killed, locked up, or put under surveillance" (杀、关、管). Mao later estimated that 700,000 had been killed, 1.2 million locked up, and another 1.2 million placed under surveillance (see Yang Kuisong, 'Reconsidering the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries', *The China Quarterly*, no. 193 (2008), 120.

[10] E.g. "西南剿匪稳步进展，四月份歼匪八万五千余" [The elimination of bandits in the southwest is proceeding steadily; in April, over 85 thousand were destroyed], *Renmin Ribao*, 1950.5.22, p1. The article goes on to specify that of the over 85 thousand "destroyed", about 14 thousand were executed, 42 thousand were captured, and 30 thousand surrendered and "made a fresh start" (自新).

[11] This process has been independently traced in articles that were published in the same year: Xiaoqun Xu, "The Rule of Law without Due Process: Punishing Robbers and Bandits in Early Twentieth-Century China", *Modern China* 33, no. 2 (April 2007), 230-257; and Zhang Ning, "Catégories judiciaires et pratiques d'exception:"banditisme" et peine de mort en Chine," in *La Chine et la démocratie*, edited by Mireille Delmas-Marty and Pierre-Etienne Will, 195–213 (Paris: Fayard, 2007). I am grateful to Puck Engman for calling my attention to Zhang Ning's article.

[12] A further complication is that DeMare also writes about what the CCP called "fake peasant associations" set up by landlords (92, 175); here the original is "假", which does correspond directly to "fake". But this is less incongruous, because the underlying claim was that these were not really "peasant associations" at all, unlike in the case of governments and official positions, where the claim was that they were *illegitimate*, not that they weren't real.

[13] Xinhua Cishu She 新华辞书社 (ed.), 新华字典 [*Xinhua Character Dictionary*] (Beijing, Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1962), 480. On the importance of this dictionary, the first edition of which was published in 1953, see Jennifer Altehenger, "Post-1949 Dictionaries," in Jack W. Chen, Anatoly Detwyler, Xiao Liu, Christopher M. B. Nugent, and Bruce Rusk (eds.), *Literary Information in China: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 96-104.

[14] See the entry in the Taiwanese Ministry of Education's *Chongbian Guoyu Cidian*, under the second adjectival meaning ("illegally occupied, not legitimate 竊據的，不合法的"), available at: https://dict.revised.moe.edu.tw/dictView.jsp?ID=11448&q=1&word=偽.

[15] E.g. "日人努力造成偽獨立國—以溥儀任偽總統，藏式毅為偽總理" [The Japanese have worked hard to establish a puppet state—Pu Yi is puppet president, Zang Shiyi is puppet prime minister], *Zhongyang Ribao*, 1931.1.19, p1; 汪逆偽組織將成泡影，敵人認為無用" [Traitor Wang's puppet organizations will fall apart, as the enemy finds them to be useless], *Dagongbao*, 1939.10.6, p2.

[16] Aminda Smith, "Land Reform: Histories and Narratives", *The PRC History Review*, vol. 6 no. 1 (January 2021), 1; Harlan Chambers, "Revolution and its Narrative Battlefronts", *The PRC History Review*, vol. 6 no. 1 (January 2021), 7-8; Emily Wilcox, "Review of *Mao's Cultural Army: Drama Troupes in China's Rural Revolution*", *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 78 no. 1 (February 2019), 171-72.

Response

Brian DeMare, Tulane University

I consider myself incredibly fortunate to find myself working in the robust and collegial field of PRC history. Watching the discipline evolve over the past twenty plus years, and doing my small part to shape our shared project, has been a continually rewarding experience.[1] I thank Yidi Wu for her ongoing role in organizing the journal's book reviews, and the journal's editorial board for helping to create our community of scholars. My greatest thanks go to Mark Czellér for his thoughtful and engaging review.[2]

This is my final book on rural revolution, so it seems appropriate to take a moment to reflect on the distant origins of the project. I first visited the northern Jiangxi countryside two decades ago, and my memories of that trip are among my most cherished, especially my encounters with villagers who were eager to share their stories. In one picturesque hamlet, I met an energetic man in his late twenties who happily showed me around his beloved hometown. He had two unforgettable quirks. First, he continually picked his nose during our entire time together, a habit that I found oddly endearing. Second, he ended nearly every sentence with an emphatic and rhetorical "我说得对不对?" He told me many stories about his village, some of which strained credibility, but his passion for local history was such that I could only respond with my own emphatic "你说得对!"[3]

I met many northern Jiangxi villagers during my time in the countryside, and I often thought of them as I worked on this book. Perhaps foolishly given the never-ending market for thick red biographies, I longed to write a book without even mentioning Mao Zedong.[4] Instead, I wanted to bring the voices and experiences of the 老百姓 who lived through Mao's revolution to the page. These rural citizens had their own quirks and stories, and their lives were on the line when the revolution came to their hometowns. Reading Mark's insightful discussions of the four casefiles, I cannot help but feel that the book succeeds in bringing unknown characters and events to the page for a wide audience of readers. But as Mark's analysis makes clear, the book's unique approach and the choices I made while crafting the four casefiles invite questions.

Many of the decisions I made while writing the book were motivated by my hope to get as many readers as possible interested in rural China. And so as Mark notes, I kept the use of *pinyin* to a bare minimum in the four casefiles. Interested readers will find plenty of *pinyin* in the notes, and Mark is certainly correct that many of these readers would have benefited from a glossary.[5] A glossary would make it easier to focus on issues of translation, many of which arose as I worked on the casefiles. Mark highlights my translation of 伪 as "fake," which lacks the political specificity of "illegitimate." At first, I thought that my translation choice reflected the recent dominance of "fake" as a weaponized term in the United States, used by politicians to delegitimize political opponents. But I recently discovered that I have been translating 伪 as "fake" since at least 2013, when I was writing what would become my first book.[6] Perhaps the answer lies in how culture influences our linguistic choices: to my ears "fake" captures the dismissive delegitimization intended by its users.[7] But my interpretation of 伪 shines a light on the subjective nature of translation, a topic I hope colleagues will raise with their students when discussing the four casefiles.

As Mark notes, one of the themes winding through not just this book but much of my scholarship is the dangers inherent in class labels, especially when they

became divorced from economic relations in the countryside. I fully agree with his assessment that the bandit label was indeed more dangerous than the counterrevolutionary label. Mark is also correct that the use of labels to delegitimize or dehumanize was nothing new. In *Tiger, Tyrant, Bandit, Businessman* I primarily focused on commonalities between Communist and Nationalist practice, but their shared use of rhetoric had clear precedents in imperial China: Qing magistrates and PRC county-chiefs had much in common. All men and all outsiders to Poyang, they used the law to order the countryside, and the charge of banditry was a death sentence. But while magistrates and county-chiefs all used politically charged rhetoric, they operated in wildly divergent political contexts. Magistrates, all-powerful in their yamen courts, could only dream of the expansive authority held by county-chiefs and their bureaucratic networks.[8]

As for the difficult questions that Mark raises about the use of narrative in the book: I did my best to limit the casefile narratives to only what I could find in the documents. I was tempted, I must admit, to allow myself a bit of creativity, especially when the silences in the archival files were particularly maddening. To cite one example, I pondered using evidence from divorce cases to give voice to Miss Zhao, Big Tiger's paramour in the book's second casefile.

But in the end, I was determined to keep the book focused on the documents. As Mark notes, however, the very act of narration is complicated by terms like liberation, which come laden with diverging meanings. I am going to disagree, however, with Mark's reading of my use of the term liberation. The Communists' understanding of liberation was not a universal liberation, but a very specific concept of liberation that centered on empowering the masses and attacking class enemies. The party, furthermore, celebrated their concept of liberation in everything from daily language to revolutionary operas. And why not? It was an appealing concept, one that still has many fans today.

This is why I emphasize how many rural folk had every reason to welcome Communist liberation. Some had reason to be afraid, including criminals in need of punishment and landlords who didn't farm while others went hungry. I hope the book makes clear that those who abused their neighbors were deserving of justice. Readers should also recognize that the old land holding system was in dire need of reform, and that changing the land holding system required overcoming fierce local resistance. The book is filled with tales of banditry, scheming elites, and murder. The story of regime change in Poyang underlines the fact that the revolution was no dinner party.[9]

It was Mao, of course, who famously declared that revolution was not a dinner party. Before I can speak to my narrative instincts, I should first note that I am writing in the shadow of Mao's own grand story of revolution. His is a heroic tale of peasant liberation that William Hinton and others have mined for their own captivating stories. So perhaps my first goal has been to complicate Mao's grand narrative of liberation through struggle, noting both the success and failure of rural revolution. The result is a decidedly messy story. At a recent book talk, one of my interlocutors noted that it was possible to read the four casefiles from a multiplicity of angles, and I hope that readers will embrace the complicated and contradictory nature of the book.

Writing *Tiger, Tyrant, Bandit, Businessman* I did my best to center the voices and experiences I encountered in the archive. In retrospect, I suppose my narrative instinct was to focus on place, movement, and character. I did my best to bring Poyang to life, and here I will again note how important the work of Mobo Gao, one of Poyang's most accomplished sons, has been to my research.[10] But I also spent many hours looking over maps and local histories. Poyang's distinctive terrain (山环东北，水汇西南) should be considered a character of the book in its own right. And because Poyang citizens were often on the move, I made sure to include maps to help trace their journeys as they navigated regime change and mass movements.

Bringing the characters I found in the archive to the page was the most rewarding aspect of the project. Golden Cao, the bandit who came down from the mountains and spilled his guts to the Communists. Filial Zhou, the bereaved son searching for justice. Kuang Number Four, the peasant who made the

mistake of trusting an outsider. And Merchant Zha, who never caught a break. They might be historical nobodies compared to Mao Zedong, but each of them lived through what must have seemed to be an unimaginable upheaval. Colleagues, please consider inviting them into your classrooms so that your students can carry out their own investigations into grassroots revolution, while also learning the difficulty of uncovering history in the archive.

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[1] This is the third time that I have had the honor of having a book at the center of a review and response with *The PRC History Review*. See my conversation with Liang Luo about *Mao's Cultural Army* in *The PRC History Review Book Review Series* No. 7 (July 2019) and the *Land Wars* roundtable in *The PRC History Review* Vol. 6, No. 2 (March 2021).

[2] I am thrilled to have Mark, a historian who has thought seriously about rural revolution and the problems of class statuses in the countryside, provide his perceptive take on the book. See Mark Czellér, "Filial Affection as Political Failing: The Children of Rural Class Enemies under the Maoist Emotional Regime," *Modern China* (2023).

[3] I remember these details so vividly in part because I transcribed my long-ago trip in what was then a cutting-edge travel blog. Luckily, I "blogged" one of the stories I heard from my energetic tour guide, which I will share with readers here. This one, like many of the stories I heard in the countryside, concerned the village's encounters with visiting Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. Showing off a large stone tablet that had been partly smashed by Red Guards, he carefully explained that the tablet once had two carvings, a still extant dragon (representing male) on the left and a now destroyed phoenix (representing female) on the right. The Red Guards, all misogynistic sexists, had only destroyed the phoenix side of the tablet.

[4] In this regard the book is a failure: Mao Zedong is mentioned by name a half-dozen times, oddly enough the same number of times he appears in this essay.

[5] I workshopped the book with dozens of students, and their suggestions had a profound impact on the book. But not a single reader raised the idea of a glossary. I now suspect that this reflects the decline in Chinese language study over the past decade, part of a wider trend that does not bode well for anyone reading this footnote.

[6] See my discussion of the Forward Drama Troupe and the "fake" Party Center in Brian DeMare, *Mao's Cultural Army: Drama Troupes in China's Rural Revolution* (Cambridge, 2015), 42-45.

[7] That this issue might be due to the differences between American and British English did not occur to me until I read Mark's excellent translation of Li Fangchun's article on the relationship between Chinese philosophy and the study of the revolution. I much enjoyed this article, as it perfectly captured what it was like to study rural revolution at UCLA in the late nineties, including the moment when Fangchun "met professor Lynn Hunt in the lift" and discussed *Fanshen*. See Li Fangchun, "'Xin' and 'Li': Chinese Philosophy and the Study of Revolutionary History," trans. Mark Czellér, *Revisiting the Revolution* No. 2 (April 23, 2023). This article can be found here: http://prchistory.org/li-fangchun-xin-and-li-chinese-philosophy-and-the-study-of-revolutionary-history/

[8] Earlier versions of the book contained much more content on imperial times, but I feared losing readers as I waxed poetic about the fall of the Song dynasty and other milestones in Poyang's history. I don't regret my editorial choices, but I must recognize that the modern focus of the book obscures some critical long-term trends in rural administration.

[9] Also not a dinner party: writing about rural revolution, which necessarily involves discussion of mass death, mass torture, and mass sexual assault. Years ago, while I was writing *Land Wars*, I came across an archival file concerning the process of struggle in a Sichuan village. There, work teams had tied up landlords, strung them upside down, and poured chili-infused water into their noses. For a moment, thinking myself incredibly clever, I happily wondered what I would do of my discovery of Sichuanese waterboarding. I then felt profoundly ill and disillusioned with my research. Which is to say, writing about these years of mass torture and mass liberation has been exceedingly difficult. I know that I will continue to discuss these matters for years and hopefully decades, but I am also happy to pass off the joys of archival research to Mark and a new generation of scholars.

[10] See Mobo C. F. Gao, *Gao Village: Modern Life in Rural China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995) and *Gao Village Revisited: The Life of Rural*

People in Contemporary China (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).