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**Reinventing China: Mao's Ideas on National Form**

Wei Li

*Nanjing Normal University*

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**Abstract:** This paper explores Mao Zedong's conceptualization of "national form" during the 1930s-1940s as a reinvention of imagining China. Mao takes premodern and indigenous China as the Other in translating the theory of "class-nation" of the twentieth century international communist movement into a discursive practice for creating a new nation. Sinicization (中国化) or "making Chinese," therefore, is not merely the representation of national language and culture of China, but the performative discourse that reinvents the "Chinese nation" via affective (aesthetic) politics. Such aesthetic, emotive, and affective "form" reconstructs time and space, and symbolically produces the subject of revolution. This reconstructed China thorough Mao's "national form" is an integral part of the world in a rhizome-like relationship with the West.

**Wei LI**

### **Reinventing China: Mao's Ideas on National Reform**

As China has rapidly moved toward the world's center stage, ideas about the Chinese experience, Chinese path ("the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics" in Chinese official terms), Beijing Consensus, and ultimately the China Model, promoted largely by the Chinese state, have gained traction across the world. Chinese exceptionalism and singularity are presented as a corrective to Western dominance. Among academic discussions, Mao's theory and practice, known as "Chinese Marxism" or the "Sinicization of Marxism," has received new attention as an indigenous resource of Chinese exceptionalism. To criticize European and American centralism, Jameson advanced the theory of the "National Allegory" and the "Cultural Revolution" of the Third World. His theory has been applauded in China as an affirmation of the particularity of China, and, by the same token, a recognition of Maoism as a theory of anti-capitalist modernity. Moreover, under the critical rubrics of postcolonialism, Mao's "national form" is touted as the epitome of Eastern countries obtaining their own subjectivities. Nevertheless, we should note the structural, historical and contextual differences between Jameson's appropriation of Mao and Mao's own theory and practice. Liu Kang alerts us to the problems of this kind of "traveling theory" between so-called Jamesonism in China and Jameson's own Maoist imagination. Jameson's selective misreading of Mao conceals serious flaws inherent in Jameson's theory. Likewise, Chinese Jamesonism does the same damage ("The Destiny"). With regard to Mao and the China Question, a Chinese exceptionalism, wedded to Eurocentrism, may kill off possibilities to reimagine China theoretically. In addition, postcolonial theory, which is opposed to any kind of nationalism, may not help us rethink what East Asian nationalist movements can offer us (Ahmad 95). Therefore, questions such as "Can Maoist revolutionary legacy be understood as a vision of alternative modernity?" and "To what extent is Mao's Chinese Marxism exceptional within the historical context of international communism?" resurface in the latest debates. These questions call for a further historical and genealogical analysis of Mao's construction of China.

While Mao conceived of his theoretical premises in his *On Practice* and *On Contradiction* in 1937, he broached the "national form" in 1938 from literary and aesthetic perspectives. Although "national form" as a crucial notion in Mao's theory has received inadequate attention in the West, in China it has always been a major issue of debate. The idea of "national form" as pertains to premodern tradition, as a response to the Japanese invasion and the "new life movement" launched by the Chiang Kai-shek government, or as a rallying cry for autonomy from the Comintern led by Stalin, has increasingly come under fire. As Mao emphasized, only through the mediation of "national form" could Marxism materialize. The "national form" should be deemed as a certain form constituting an "imagined community" with its distinct subjectivity, time, and space. Moreover, only by this form can abstract Marxist theories be represented in history with its revolutionary agents and activities. However, it cannot be said these ideas are indigenous to Chinese tradition. Among various versions of cultural exceptionalism such as "Confucian China" and "poetic China," Mao's "national form" is probably the least viable with regard to the Chinese indigenous tradition. Paradoxically, it is precisely this kind of unrealistic "national form" that served ultimately as a catalyst to Marxism's realization in China, as the most important part of China's identity today. Mao's "national form" occurred in the complicated context of anti-colonialism, nationalism, and class struggle. It is not simply a nationalist movement, nor a socialist movement. Moreover, it is not merely an integration of Marxist theory with a national tradition. It is a vastly complex discursive practice of discontinuity, rupture, limit, threshold, series, and transformation, as Foucault puts it (21). The discursive formations of "nation" and "class" in Chinese Revolution are equally significant intertextual events.

Marx criticizes nationalism as parochial (266) and Benedict Anderson believes that it is beyond Marxism (3). However, Marxism and nationalism are not so separate. Ernest Gellner interprets class revolution from the perspective of nationalism: "When a nation became a class, a visible and unequally distributed category in an otherwise mobile system, did it become politically conscious and activist. Only when a class happened to be (more or less) a 'nation' did it turn from being a class-in-itself into a class-for-itself, or a nation-for-itself. Neither nations nor classes seem to be political catalysts: only nation-classes or class-nations are such" (121).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the conceptions about nation-classes or class-nations enabled a theoretical understanding of the nationalist movement intertwined with the Marxist movement. Prasenjit Duara views class as a trope that constructs a particular and powerful representation of the nation. His view derives from his analysis of modern Chinese history. Duara

notes that early Chinese communists imagined the nation in terms of class. And he declares that during the course of modern Chinese history, the class has lost its ability in identity construction, and that class-based representations of the nation would hardly ever return (12-13). However, when Duara deconstructs linear and progressive history with the nation as the subject, he inevitably simplifies the narrative by conflating transformation, contention, and consolidations in the complex discursive formation of class and nation. While Marxism entered China and prompted the conception of "national form" in the context of Chinese nationalism, it resembles a Deleuzian rhizome, taken from a kind of root system found in nature that is non-linear, non-hierarchical, and decentralized. What has created a straight and clear linear historical illusion is the complex discursive formation (Foucault) on the class-nation.

Since antiquity, the notion of China (or so-called Chineseness) has been constantly modified, transformed, and reinvented. With the colonial expansion to East Asia in the late nineteenth century, and under the influence of nationalism, China acquired the meaning of a modern nation. However, there was still no consensus on the specific meaning of China. The Republican Revolution (1911), which changed the slogan "Anti-Manchu Revolution" into "Five Ethnic Republics," did not bring the national crisis to an end. The anxiety about "what is China" reemerged in the 1930s. At the end of 1936, in an impoverished, communist-occupied rural area of Northwestern China, Mao began to consider the issue of a cultural struggle during a respite in the military war. After a series of theoretical and cultural preparations, in 1938 he revised his speech to the high-ranking Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadres, "The Position of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War," dictating that Chinese Marxism should be in a "Chinese style and Chinese taste" (中国作风和中国气派), "so that it has Chinese characteristics in every performance." Mao made it clear that his purpose was to "make Marxism Chinese," or facilitate the "Sinicization of Marxism" (261). Mao's canonic speech inaugurated the campaign of making Marxism Chinese, which intimately catapulted the Chinese Marxism bearing his own name, that is, Mao Zedong Thought, to the ideological shrine of the CCP in 1945. Nevertheless, what is truly at stake here is that neither the "Chinese style" nor "Chinese characteristics" were self-evident, even though they in Mao's view serve as prerequisite for the making of Chinese Marxism. It is of critical significance and interest for us to interrogate the discursive formation of these concepts in China during the 1930s in order to understand the complex process of Sinicization of Marxism.

Roughly at the same time in China under Chiang Kai-shek's reign, there were two main formulations of China or Chineseness. One was "premodern China" against the modern West. The other was "cultural China," highlighting the China/West dichotomy. In Wang Hui's view, Mao rejected the view of the May Fourth intellectuals, who attempted to build a "China without Chineseness" by way of breaking down "Chineseness" under the rubrics of modernity/tradition, and consequently joining the western order of temporality. From the postcolonial China Studies point of view, the May Fourth "China without Chineseness" was little more than a replica of western colonialist discourse. By analyzing the translingual practice from Arthur Smith's Chinese characters to Lu Xun's novels, Lydia Liu presented that the missionaries' national nature theory was the main source of Lu Xun's idea on national character, and the western modernity discourse thus shaped the imagination of China (45-76). In the 1930's, Chinese left-wing critics also accused such views as attempts to culturally colonize China. However, such a view was actually short-lived (Ye). The China Question underwent drastic changes during WWI and WWII.

Hobsbawm describes how the collapse of the great multinational empires of central and eastern Europe and the Russian revolution made it desirable for the Allies to play the Wilson card against the Bolshevik card (131). Under such circumstances, nationalism movements in the Third World were more complicated. The so-called nonresistant modernization was rare. More instances of resistance occurred, either driven by nationalism, or under various guises and tortuous means. Moreover, resistance was not merely waged by Marxist parties. In the 1930s, the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party, or KMT) and many intellectuals also trumpeted national self-confidence and cultural nationalism. In 1934, Chiang Kai-shek launched the "New Life Movement," calling for "national rejuvenation" and incorporating Confucianism with the KMT party-state. Non-Marxist intellectuals (who were in the mainstream during the KMT reign) also favored "national rejuvenation" and advocated a nationalist notion of "Chinese characteristics," believing China can "stand side by side with other countries in the cultural arena" (Wang X.). It should be noted that the CCP, at that time, while promoting "national form," assaulted this kind of KMT "Chinese exceptionalism" as being "variants of colonialist discourse," which was opposed to modern internationalism.

Mao did not advocate synchronicity between the East and the West. He leveled criticism at both the East and the West from the perspective of disempowered poor nations in the colonial context. In Mao's judgment, "Capitalism is doomed. Only when the people of the world form a united front with the oppressed nations can there be a way out" ("On New" 167). Mao called for resistance of the poor, oppressed nations against imperialism. He no longer saw China under the rubrics of the East/West, China/West dichotomies. Rather, he viewed Chinese revolution as an integral part of the worldwide revolution and resistance. Under such rubrics, "China" and "the world" belonged to each other and Eurocentrism could be transcended by the New China as the center of the New World. China was conceived of as neither a "local" within the West-dominated world, nor an Orient parallel to Occident, a China alongside the West. Instead, Mao wanted to create a new center that transcended the colonialism embedded in "premodern China" as well as "cultural China" discourses, which, as Mao assailed bluntly, were nothing more than "colonial China." Yoshimi Takeuchi, renowned Japanese scholar of modern Chinese culture, showed a keen interest in Mao's formulations, seeing Mao's "nation," by way of resistance, as promising a subjectivity renouncing colonialist constraint, hence avoiding Japanese-style replication of western models or westernization (147-51).

Mao refused to follow the so-called Europeanization as intellectuals in the May Fourth Movement did. Meanwhile, he did not replicate the Soviet Russia mode. Though his idea about the "national form" closely related to Stalin's views of the nation and nationality, differences between them about what a nation is or how to solve national problems are far greater than similarities. Stalin considered nationalism as a bourgeois ideology. He contended that the marginalized bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations would naturally rise up, but their nationalist movement would suppress the workers' liberalization movements. The bourgeoisie in those countries would frame the "national problems" as of common interest to both the proletariat and the bourgeois, but this was brusquely dismissed by Stalin as deceptive propaganda, for he believed that it would relinquish class interests of the proletariat and intellectually enslave workers (Marxism 20). Theoretically, Stalin rejected "national spirits" in his attack against nationalism, and insisted on natural attributes of the nation: "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture" (11).

Stalin's definition of the nation is anti-culturalist. Roland Boer states that Stalin may have sought to challenge the culturist definitions and their amorphous term of "national culture." Stalin attacked national spirits because he believed cultural-national autonomy could not materialize in backward nations, which confined their people to backwardness with their traditions and customs. Therefore, it was only by drawing backward nations into the orbit of advanced culture that the national problems could be solved. Stalin's principal objective was to unite the multiethnic groups in the Soviet Union under the Soviet Communist Party. He wanted to "eliminate by all means the national and ethnic barriers standing among the proletariats" ("Social" 10).

Stalin's view greatly affected communist movements in small and poor nations. Ironically, when Stalin attempted to upgrade backward nations with socialism, socialists in these backward nations hoped their nationalist goals would be supported by the socialist movement. Qu Qiubai, one of the early leaders of the CCP, listened to Stalin's report on "national issues" at the 10th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in Moscow, 1921. Qu had a strong interest in Soviet Russia's goal of "assisting the small and poor nations to skip capitalism and reach communism" (190) and considered it to be a way to solve the "Chinese problem" and to achieve national rejuvenation. By advocating the "popularization" of literary forms and literary language, Qu tried to launch a grassroots cultural movement of poor nations to surpass Western civilization. He was concerned with the question of the "proletarian leadership in the cultural movement" and devoted himself to promoting the "cultural revolution" after he was ousted from the CCP's leadership as a result of the catastrophic defeat of the Chinese communist revolution in 1928.

Among those attending the fourth Comintern Conference in Moscow were Qu Qiubai, the CCP's young leader, and Antonio Gramsci, the aspiring leader of the Italian Communist Party. Both shared a remarkably similar view of revolution starting from the cultural terrain, despite the lack of any evidence for their possible meetings in Moscow, let alone exchanges of views. Facing the national crisis in Italy, which was in some measures akin to that of China, Gramsci discovered the idea of hegemony as a possible solution to the national problems. Moreover, Gramsci seriously explored the national question in the communist movement. He did not agree with Stalin's view of the nation. He considered it meaningless to simply blame nationalism, and did not think geographical boundaries mattered much. Gramsci's nation is closer to the nation-state in the political and cultural sense. He emphasized that "The state must contain ethical and cultural significance" (526). He criticized the Risorgimento in the late nineteenth century as a passive revolution, because it ignored the peasant

question in the South. "Only laborers and their intellectuals can dialectically continue the Italian tradition," Gramsci insisted. To mobilize the peasants, Gramsci highlighted the role "form" would play in the formation of the collective will: "Such a procedure stimulates the artistic imagination of those who have to be convinced, and gives political passions a more concrete form" (316). The purpose of this "form" is political. The formalized imagination, or fantasy, which Gramsci refers to as a creation of a concrete phantasm, acts on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse an organized collective will. This "form" is not to determine what the "national" is, on the basis of the existing national life or national tradition, but to conjure up, as it were, a "fantasy" with the "collective will of the organization." Of course, Gramsci, imprisoned by Mussolini till his death, had no way to live up to his ideals.

Although Mao was under the influence of Stalin when he considered the national question, his view of "national form" was closer to that of Qu and Gramsci than to Stalin. In other words, Qu's ideas had had a much stronger and more direct impact on Mao. Qu was thinking deeply about cultural revolution in Jiangxi's CCP-controlled rural area after being purged from the CCP's central leadership, while at roughly the same time, Mao was also ousted by the Soviet-designated new CCP leadership in Jiangxi and had quite a bit of time to think and write. It is highly likely Qu and Mao had extensive exchanges of ideas then, though the actual Qu-Mao contacts have not been extensively investigated. Mao also talked about "popularization" and offered a new understanding of this conception. He described "popularization" as a process in which writers and artists' thoughts and feelings should be integrated with those of the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers ("Talks" 115). Mao attached great importance to the issue of language. In his opinion, language meant a kind of (aesthetic) taste or style related to "thoughts and feelings."

Liu Kang uses "aesthetic ideology" to decode Mao's "national form" in his pathbreaking study that includes a rigorous exploration of the Qu-Mao lineage. Liu argues that the "national form" of the so-called "Chinese style" has become the essence or content of the Sinicization of Marxism and denotes a question of ideological representation and emotional (aesthetic) issues. And as such, the issue of "national form" and the "Sinicization of Marxism" should be interrogated in terms of emotional, affective, and aesthetic dimensions of political practice. It must be emphasized that the "national form" as "emotional mobilization" cannot be regarded as just something to adapt to or express the emotions of people at the bottom. The internal resource of "national form" is not just an emotional representation, rather, it is an emotional re-creation or reinvention.

When talking about how "national form" makes Chinese Marxism an emotional (aesthetic) issue, Liu contends that national form as mediation has a twofold objective: it is Mao's resolution of the transformation or concretization of Marxism; and it represents Chinese Marxism in both a discursive and political sense. It is constative and performative, simultaneously making statements and constituting practices of a specific kind. The second objective is especially complex. It dictates that national form must represent itself as a concrete resolution, or vice versa, that the representation of a resolution constitutes the resolution itself. Alternatively stated, the resolution of the Sinicization of Marxism lies in the representation of Marxism through a national form. Hence, a national form "becomes the very substance or content of the Sinicization of Marxism" ("Knowledge").

When discussing the subjectivity of "women," Judith Butler draws on Foucault's view of how discourse of judicial power creates a reproducible subject. She also quotes Austin in order to analyze the performative function of woman in shaping gender (Butler 4). The form producing a nation's subjectivity should also be understood in a performative way. Sinicization is not a representation of national life, language and characteristics, but an aesthetic (emotional) construction appealing to body politics and reinvention of national performative discourse. In the process of discursive practice, Sinicization of Marxism is not to break the national barriers, but to transform it from foreign and abstract language into vernacular language of the populace, i.e. peasantry, by giving it a "national form" with specific affect, and thereby creating a "reality" that can be reproduced.

The concept of the "national form" does not emphasize indigenous continuity. When initially promoted by Mao, the so-called "Chinese characteristics" had an ambiguous meaning, a phrase full of contradictions regarding national tradition. The "national form" had little to do with the 文、诗、词、赋 (Wen, Shi, Ci, and Fu Chinese literary forms) recorded in Chinese canons. In addition, the selection of Chinese characteristics was determined through repeated deliberation and selection by administrative orders. Some of the Yan'an cohort of "cultural workers," such as Xiang Linbing, Chen Boda, Ai Siqi, and Xiao San, believed that "folk forms" such as folk tales, local ditties, librettos, drum songs, and Lian Hua Lao (popular songs sung to the accompaniment of castanets), should be fully used (Xu, 7-11 21-27 193-96). Opponents retorted that the old folk forms contain slavish remnants that cannot be

eliminated through the implantation of new content. Moreover, it is questionable whether the folk form could be equated with the "national form" (Wang S. 615-16).

As a non-CCP, maverick Marxist literary theorist outside the Yan'an area, Hu Feng viewed the issue differently. He believed that although the "folk forms" manifested some aspects of national life, they were overall imbued with the ideology of the dominant feudalist ruling class. Therefore, to harbor illusions towards the folk forms was theoretically blind, neglecting the feudalist structural determinants underlying these forms for the sake of some emotional appeal ("On National" 253-54). Instead, Hu Feng advocated transforming "folk forms" with the class consciousness and subjectivity of the progressive intellectuals (Suzuki). Hu's idea coincides with Lukacs' emphasis on "class consciousness." However, Mao did not agree with this prudent attitude of overcoming "form" through subjectivity. Mao emphasized the power of literature and art, which he believed would "wake up the people, inspire them, promote them to unite and fight" ("Talks" 128). He underscored the voluntarism embedded in literature and arts: "If there is no such literature and art, then this task cannot be completed, nor can it be completed effectively and quickly" (128). For Mao, the importance of the "national form" is not about whether it reflects a national character. Rather, it is a performative discourse that has the function of "arousing" and "inspiring" the populace. Mao neither defined the nation by regional or national cultural tradition, nor, as Hu Feng did, differentiated class and nation. What Mao tried to establish was a concept of "the greatest majority of the Chinese people" as the foundation of the nation. This concept in fact came close to the Gramscian idea of the popular-national. "National form," in a nutshell, is a popular movement of the total aggregate of the "the people" rather than that which was purely defined by class.

"Folk forms," on the other hand, seemed quite appealing in grassroots mobilizations. Although Mao did not clearly point to "folk form" when he first proposed "national form," he soon began to attach importance to it. He was not concerned about the extent to which "folk forms" was part of the national tradition, or whether there was an ideological conflict between "folk forms" and Marxism. He instead focused on how "folk forms" would bring together and create a "People's China" that was not only different from the West, but also different from the Soviet bloc. Therefore, we should not regard "folk forms" as merely literary and art styles, and treat all "folk forms" as "national forms." Rather, "folk forms" should be understood as a political movement in the people's name, a performative and constitutive act. Only in the symbolic, aesthetic, and affective sense, the conglomeration of "ninety per cent of the people," namely the peasantry, could "folk forms" become the "national form."

In Mao's vocabulary, "folk" refers to a special distinction. To transcend the West/East dichotomy brought about by industrialization, Mao had a strong interest in the inland areas of China that were not affected by industrialization. He Guimei mentions that the primary areas for the practice of the "national form" were in Northwest, North, Southwest, and Central China, less exposed to colonial and semi-colonial incursions of the Western powers from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. He Guimei therefore distinguishes between inland and coastal areas as a rubric of the CCP's modernization project. Moreover, in addition to the coastal/inland, there was also an urban/rural divide. With his critique of "colonial China," Mao was wary of how Chinese culture might be affected by colonialism. For him, China's "national form" mainly referred to the folk cultural forms of the rural hinterland. When Zhou Yang, the CCP's propaganda chief in Yan'an, referred to "folk forms" as "old forms" and referred to "rural areas" as "old China," Mao rebuked him outright. Mao insisted that "the so-called democracy in China is basically the peasant rebellion." Therefore, he said, "At present, New China is essentially left in rural areas" ("To Zhou" 259-60). Mao in effect reversed the urban "new China" and rural "old China" distinction, taking the rural area as the center of the "new China," calling the rural China "our China."

Viewing Mao's urban/rural reversal from outside Yan'an, Hu Feng once again expressed his concern about the "national form" moving closer to "peasant culture" and his worries about the revival of populism ("On National" 262). However, Hu's understanding of the "national form" was rather rigid, though righteous on its own terms, in that his position was to steadfastly uphold the enlightenment legacy of the May Fourth Movement. In the end, with little understanding of Mao's politics of peasant rebellion, Hu was incapable of fully grasping Mao's true intent of advocating the rural folk forms. Mao's interests in the "peasants' tastes" was premised on their pure anti-colonial resistance. His purpose in the "emotional mobilization" was to rally the peasants around an abstract national subjectivity, rather than helping them achieve their individual interests and demands. Mao's strategy of appropriating rural "folk form" into his "national form" was aimed at uniting the peasants, who had little if any "class consciousness" on their own, to accomplish the political task of fighting against "the colonial China," that is, urban, coastal, industrializing areas. In short, the peasants were

to become a force that was "represented," rather than a force representing itself, under Mao's revolutionary scheme.

In the Eighteenth Brumaire, Marx talked about the relationship of the French peasantry and the monarchy: "They (peasants) cannot represent themselves; they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlimited governmental power that protects them against the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above" (187-88). The master and authority who "sends them rain and sunshine from above" is as much a political figure as a symbiotic figure of trope, in terms of its affective, ideological, and, indeed, aesthetic efficacy. In this respect, Marx's political/semiotic analysis of the French "master" and "authority" makes perfect sense in understanding Mao's scheme of "national form." Moreover, Mao's tactic of mobilizing the peasants was similar to Gramsci's idea of hegemony, which postulates that a modern Machiavellian "Prince," namely the Italian Communist Party, would be able to rally a "popular-national" front amidst the Italian subalterns, or peasants and other underdogs, toward the goal of revolutionary insurgency. The Althusser-Machiavelli-Gramsci-Mao lineage is interrogated by Yan Fang at some length in this special issue.

Mao, likewise, devised the national form, which would metaphorically and symbolically give meaning to peasants and represent them at the same time. Moreover, the peasants in the rural-based New China were not simply represented. They were to be reproduced and reinvented as a new class with a collective will under the CCP's leadership (or Gramscian hegemony). It is the emotionally mobilized and reproduced "new peasantry" and the "new countryside," which was imagined, and symbolically produced by the folk forms, that constitute the "People's China." In the context of creating a historical will, the "folk forms" is the spatialization of historical time in a Bakhtinian sense. When discussing Goethe's novels, Bakhtin offers the conception of "a creative humanization of this locality," which transforms a portion of terrestrial space into a place of historical life for people, into a corner of the historical world (34). The folk form transforms the specific place into a humanized locality, i.e., a part of historical life. Space and history are integrated into an indivisible whole, and create a new reality.

As Liu Kang puts it, "For Mao this is precisely a question of language, an aesthetic as well as ideological issue of form—transformation and re-formation of a universal, albeit foreign, language into an indigenous and national one" ("Chinese Exceptionalism"). Perhaps this is what Chinese Marxism or Sinicization of Marxism is about: it transforms Marxism into a "National Movement" and reinvents national tradition for itself. In short, it reproduces time, space and subject. Mao's "national form" is isolated from both the Westernized China imagined by intellectuals in the New Culture Movement and the imagination of the continuous cultural China of the 1930s. At the same time, it rejects Soviet Russia's assumption that China would become a locality for the regional practice of the socialist movement.

Meanwhile, the China in Mao's mind should not be construed as the particularity that challenges totality in an Althusserian sense. Mao stressed that "the special and the general are inseparable from each other, and that division is divorced from the objective truth" ("Dialectical" 270). A China, exploited, yet not fully conquered by imperialism-colonialism, or a semi-colonial and semi-feudalistic China, could instead become the site of strongest resistance to and transcendence over colonialism. Therefore, Mao took China's problem as the world's problem, and the solution of China's problem is not a regional and singular event, but one with universal value. Mao prophesied that "the free and liberated new China must appear in East Asia and become a very important part of the bright world in the future. Such a China will benefit not only 450 million Chinese, but also all humankind" ("On New"167). Hence to regard China's modernity as exceptional erases its underlying universalist impulse.

In his rebuttal of Pollock's view of Japanese modernity, Naoki Sakai contends that exceptionality is not the Other, or divorced from universality, but an integral part of universality. Exceptionality is the realization of universality (157). Chinese exceptionalism pits "China" against "the world" (the West) under the dichotomous rubrics of exceptionality/universality, and consequently restricts the richness and divergence of the theory that "China" may develop. Liu Kang also suggests that Chinese exceptionalism conjures up an imaginary condition of existence in which China is parallel to the world, and is at the same time separate from the world in terms of its origin and history. It imagines itself as a lofty tree standing alone and above the world of trees. After all, it is nothing more than an embodiment of "modern metaphysics," or a deterministic, teleological, and dichotomous mode of thinking that has shaped much of modernity's conceptual framework (Liu, "China"). Moreover, Chinese exceptionalism ignores and suppresses the real Otherness within and without, turning a blind eye to the symbiotic, paradoxical, and complicated condition of existence.

In conclusion, the China reinvented by Mao's "national form" is not simply a product or concoction of Marxism and Chinese nationalism. It redefines nationalism under the circumstances of global capitalism. It reinvents both a new class of Chinese peasants and a space of rural-based New China, under the banner of Marxism. It is a performative discourse of affective and aesthetic politics with an enduring impact, reverberating in populist-nationalist sentiments that seem to prevail in China today. However, this Chinese national form is not an indigenous discourse stemming from China's tradition. Quite on the contrary, it showcases the inseparability and integration of China in the world, or as Liu Kang puts it, China of the world (China being an integral part of the world), instead of China and the world (China and the world being separate, parallel entities). The complex and labyrinthian entanglement of China in the world can be better understood, as Liu suggests, as a Deleuzian rhizome, decentralized with multiple dimensions, capable of qualitative variation and irreducible to any dualisms or structural oppositions. The conception of "China of the world" helps to "dismantle the totalizing myth by recuperating it as a diverse body of paradoxical and heterogeneous experience and conditions of possibility" (Liu, *Aesthetics* 7).

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**Author's profile:** Wei Li teaches modern and contemporary Chinese literature at Nanjing Normal University. Her interests in scholarship include modern and contemporary Chinese literature, comparative literature and culture studies. Her publications include "Gramsci and Qu Qiubai in the International Communism Movement" (2019), "Mao's critique on Lu Xun" (2015), and others. Email: <03368@njnu.edu.cn>.