

## Preface

Since I am the author's first American friend and since I knew his wife, Phyllis Ling-cho, for thirty-one years, I consider it a privilege to introduce Dr. Siao-yu to the English-speaking world and to relate the circumstances which have brought to public view this unusual book, a volume which will delight the reader at the same time that it will prove a significant historical revelation.

Miss Phyllis Ling-cho spent four years in the Teacher's College of Syracuse University from which she was graduated in 1930. Because her basic love was the art of painting, she also took instruction in the College of Fine Arts and studied my courses in aesthetics and philosophy. When she returned to China, she was appointed a Teacher of Pedagogy in the National Central University of Nanking.

In 1932, during a world tour to study living religions, I enjoyed the delightful experience of an unhurried sojourn in Peking. I was entertained in the spacious and peaceful home of my former student and friend, and became acquainted with her father, a great scholar, poet, economist and statesman. It was at this time also that I met her fiancé, Mr. Siao-yu, who with Phyllis became my almost daily guide and companion on excursions to view the wonders of this most beautiful of cities. On these happy, leisurely trips to visit palaces and temples our mutual fondness grew and our friendship was cemented, a friendship which has been continued through correspondence over the years.

When I first became acquainted with Mr. Siao, he had just completed three years of service as Vice Minister of Agriculture and Mines and was then filling three important positions: Dean of the National University in Peking, President of the University of Hwa Pei, and Director of the National Museum of Natural History. At this time also he was an active

member of a commission devoted to preserving the art treasures and decaying structures of the newly opened palaces of the Forbidden City.

In June 1933 Phyllis Ling-cho and Siao-yu were married at Shanghai and in August they sailed for Europe. During the next twenty years, in Paris and elsewhere in France, Mrs. Siao devoted her life to painting, while she continued to share creative inspiration and counsel with her husband. She never returned to China. Three thousand paintings and drawings, as well as extensive poetry and prose, are left as a memorial of her artistic genius. But what is more, she was the rare and authentic aristocrat who both charms and blesses by her beauty, as well as by her wisdom, human sympathy, and geniality. Lin Yutang said of her: "She cultivated the poet's soul and the painter's eye for seeing the unseen."

During our happy association in Peking I came to realize that Mr. Siao's quiet reserve, unlimited kindness, and goodwill concealed sound executive ability and immense knowledge, aided by a truly astounding power of memory. I have complete trust in his sincerity and in his devotion at all times to the welfare of his fellow countrymen.

Although I knew that Siao-yu had withdrawn from political life, I did not know of his early association with Mao Tse-tung. It was a great surprise to me therefore when I heard in a letter from Mrs. Siao in 1956 that she was busily engaged in translating from French and Chinese into English her husband's recollections of his student days with Mao, the Chinese Communist leader. These recollections had been set down as early as 1950 at the repeated urging of Siao-yu's friend, Lin Yutang. It was the hope of the author and his wife that such a book, published in this country, might provide the Western World with a better understanding of the problems of modern China. Although Phyllis Siao became ill during the work of translation, she succeeded by strength of will in completing it before she passed away in May 1957.

The reader will be startled as I was, when I first read the manuscript, by the fundamental opposition which exists between the minds of Mao Tse-tung and Siao-yu and which is vividly apparent in their conversations, especially during the period when they meandered as beggars among the farmers and villagers of Hunan Province.

The youthful personalities in *Mao Tse-tung and I Were Beggars* may at first seem strange to us in the West. We are amazed by the intensity and earnestness of their student arguments, by the nightlong, sometimes tearful, verbal contests between good friends, by a vacation spent in search of truth while begging their rice in the lush green valleys of inner China.

These young men are determined to win at any cost clear and workable ideas for improving the fortunes of their countrymen. Their objective is the total future welfare of China. There is no hint of academic play. They are not arguing for the sake of argument, although frequently they may be

aware of the artistic qualities of their words and sometimes express an idea in poetry because for them a fine poem has superior expressive power. They are deadly serious about making right decisions concerning the philosophy by which they will live and by which their country may grow.

If such intensity seems strange to us, this strangeness gives way to a sense of familiarity when we recognize that these youths are struggling with problems which are basic to all of us. It is a positive and satisfying achievement for an Occidental to come to understand the sort of moralist and idealist which Siao-yu is. But Mao and Siao are not simple characters to grasp, because they epitomize the complications of our present-day life. Finally we ourselves also may come to the crucial forking of the ways when we must choose, whether on a small or on a larger scale, the Mao way or the Siao way. Either way is full of risk, struggle, and hard work. But the alternative is a drift toward nonentity or eventual slavery. In short, for every reader this book will be a serious but exceedingly stimulating experience.

It is stimulating also to discover that Siao possesses the fear-destroying faith and spiritual strength which spring from realizing the kind of moral harmony with the cosmos which Confucius taught. This prophetic insight made Siao the first Chinese to oppose Communism, even before the birth of the Chinese Communist Party. He has been true to his principles, his will is firm, and his courage admirable. Not only did he have to give up his intimate friend Mao, but he renounced his own brother who is a prominent Communist. If you ask Siao-yu about Emi Siao, he says simply, "He is my ex-brother. I have not known him for more than forty years."

In 1957, five months before her death, Mrs. Siao, in writing to me of the book, said: "Siao and Mao have two different ideas, two entirely different characters. We may say that if a person wants to be a Mao, the way is not easy. We ought to say that if one wants to be a Siao, that is more difficult. The things which Mao likes most: power, politics, quick success, they are what Siao dislikes most. Yet the same region produced these two entirely different persons."

How two good friends evolved into such antithetical people is the captivating story of this book. By recording their student years of mental growth and spiritual struggle Siao-yu has contributed greatly to the Western understanding of Chinese character and to the hard history of modern China. We are grateful to him for preserving these seemingly casual country-side conversations which underlie a movement that has shaken the world.

Robert C. North's illuminating Historical Commentary and Notes furnish fascinating corroboration of the importance of Siao-yu's story. Dr. North, Associate Professor of Political Science at Stanford University, is a known authority on the history of the Chinese Communist movement.

He has interviewed several leading Chinese ex-Communists, has made a study of the large collection of documents on Chinese Communism in the Hoover Library, and has written many books and articles on the subject, among which are *Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Elites*, *Moscow and Chinese Communists* (the first full-length story of the Communist conquest of China), the Introduction to *Red Dust* by Nym Wales, and *Soviet Russia and the East, 1920-1927*, of which he is a co-author.

As substitutes for precious early photographs which his enemies confiscated, Siao-yu, with exquisite artistry of brush and ink, has depicted many scenes of places and people in the story.

A limited Chronology at the back of the book is intended solely as a brief review of the major events in the narrative and in Mr. Siao's later life. It is regretted that a complete record could not be given here: an adequate account of Mr. Siao's accomplishments would require another volume.

In this book I discern two revelations of immense significance: first, the basic character and dangerous philosophy of Mao, the peasant-poet tyrant of Communist China; and, second, the story of the astounding power that students may come to exercise in shaping the destiny of a nation, indeed of the world.

RAYMOND F. PIPER  
*Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus*  
*Syracuse University*  
*August, 1959*