



RENT COLLECTION COURTYARD

- Sculptures of Oppression and Revolt

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THE ruthless economic exploitation and political oppression of the peasants by the landlord class forced them into numerous uprisings against its rule. . . . It was the class struggles of the peasants, the peasant uprisings and peasant wars that constituted the real motive force of historical development in Chinese feudal society.

MAO TSE-TUNG: "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party" (December 1939)

Foreword

This grand exhibition of life-size clay figures takes its setting from the former rent collection courtyard of Liu Wen-tsai, a tyrannical landlord of Tayi County, Szechuan Province in southwestern China. It recreates a profound, vivid and truthful picture of the raging class struggle in old China's countryside.

Before liberation the people of Tayi suffered untold misery through the brutalities of the local despots and the oppressive taxes levied by the Kuomintang reactionary government. Only three or four per cent of the local population were landlords, yet they occupied almost four-fifths of the arable land, mercilessly exploiting and oppressing the peasants and driving them to a life worse than that of beasts of burden. The Tayi of pre-liberation times was typical of the rest of semi-colonial and semi-feudal old China.

Under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party headed by the great leader Chairman Mao Tse-tung, the Chinese people in 1949 completely threw off the rule of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism and established the People's Republic of China. Since then the people of Tayi, like those in other parts of China, have been liberated, they have set out on the socialist road and have

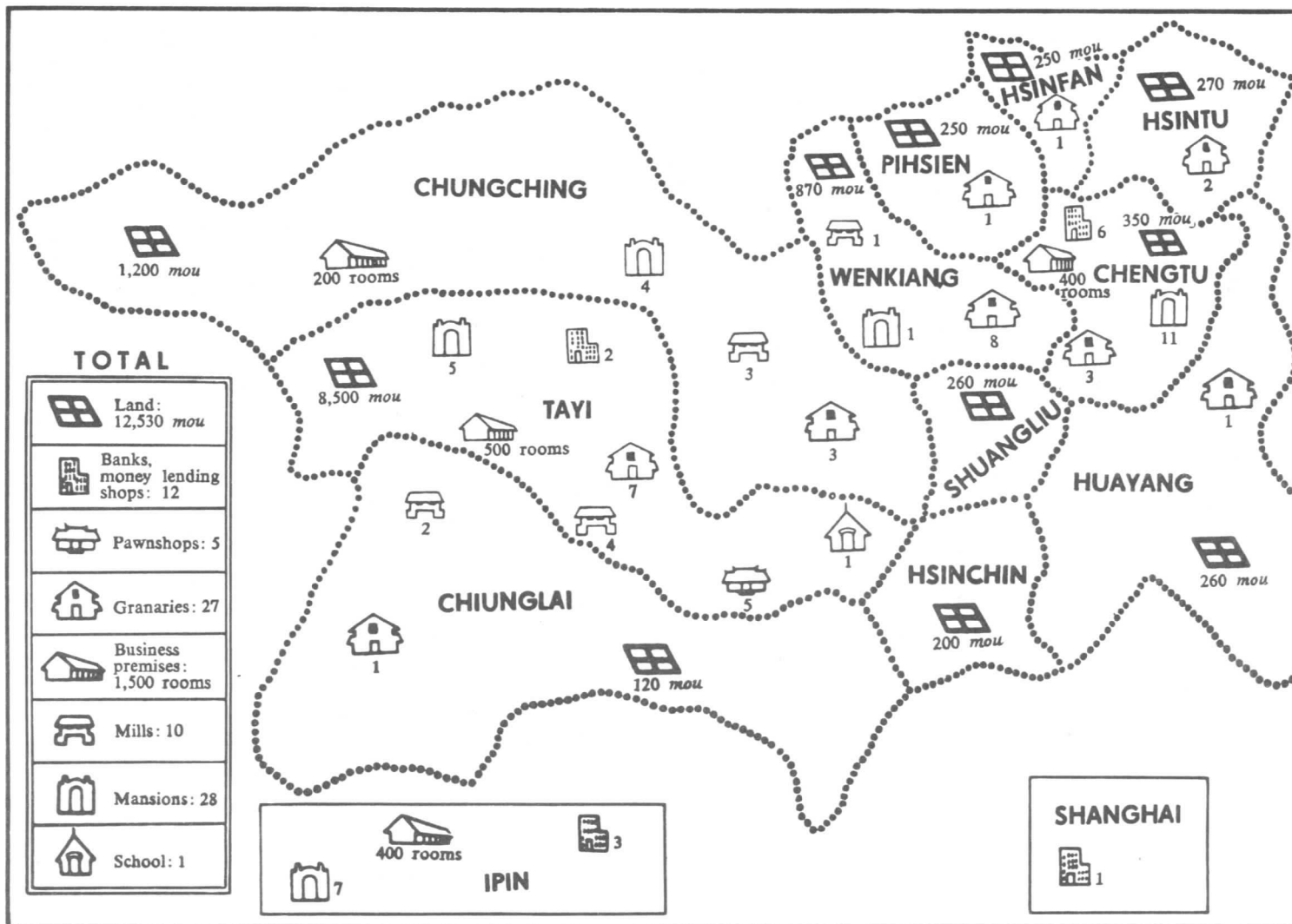
marched bravely forward in the socialist revolution and in socialist construction.

The more than a hundred sculptured figures portraying the story of rent collection are the work of a group of revolutionary Chinese art workers who, following a path lit by the invincible thought of Mao Tse-tung, creatively studied and applied Chairman Mao's works, completely immersed themselves in the lives of the workers, peasants and soldiers, and gave full play to their collective efforts.

The sculptures — arranged in six scenes — angrily condemn the feudal landlord class in old China for its heinous crimes in ruthlessly exploiting and oppressing the peasants; they deeply reflect the fierce class struggle, waged by hundreds of millions of Chinese peasants under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party headed by the great leader Chairman Mao Tse-tung, to overthrow the merciless rule of the feudal landlord class and to capture power for the people.

Rent Collection Courtyard offers a striking example of how sculpture can serve the workers, peasants and soldiers as well as socialism. It is a brilliant achievement of the great proletarian cultural revolution and a victory for the great thought of Mao Tse-tung.

Liu Wen-tsai's Private Kingdom

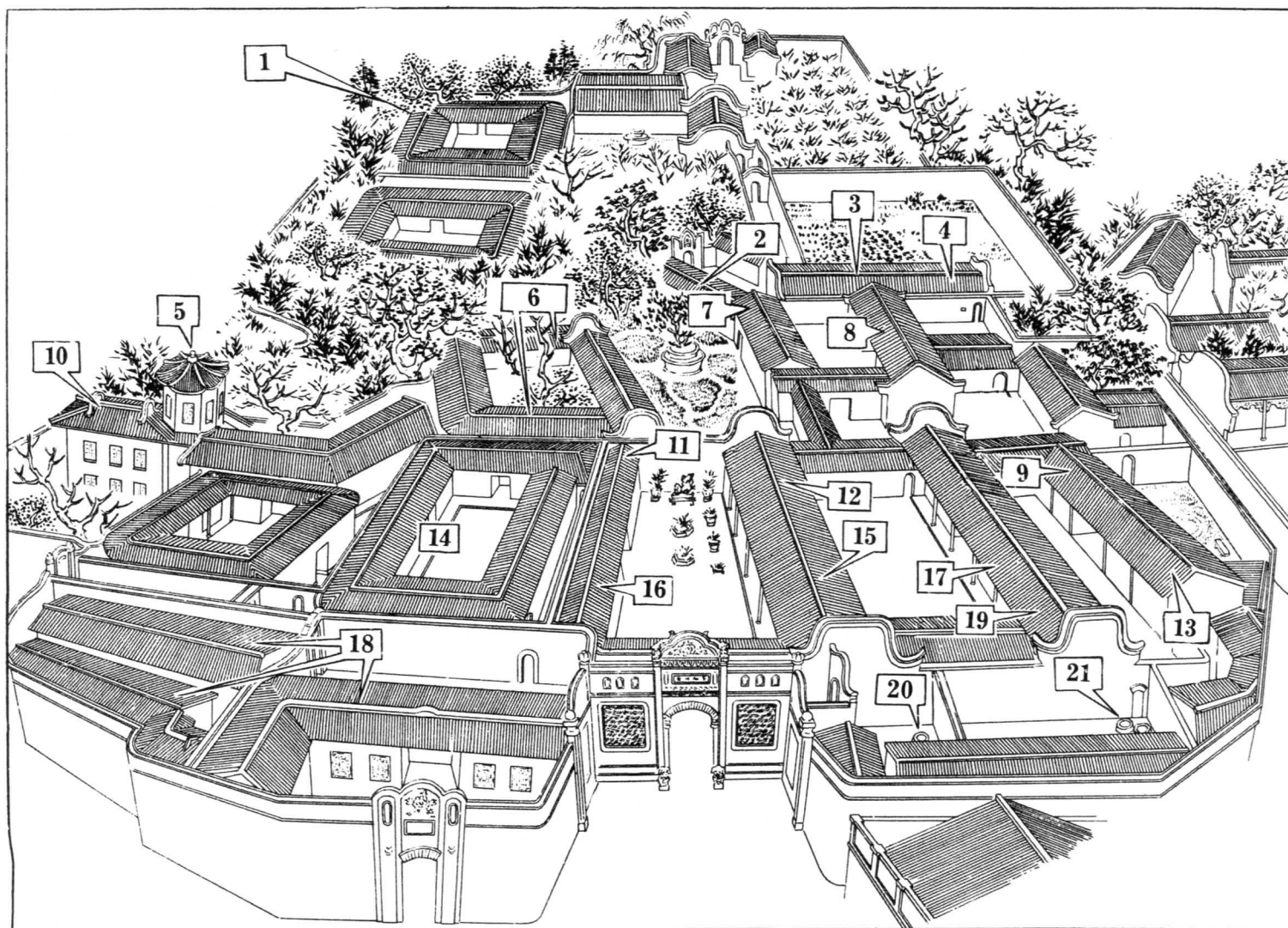


The tentacles of landlord Liu Wen-tsai of Tayi in Szechuan Province stretched out to more than a dozen counties and towns. But Liu was more than just a despotic landlord. He was also a Kuomintang warlord, a government official and a chieftain of a secret society. Altogether his clan seized more than 200,000 *mou*¹ of land. His family alone occupied over 12,000 *mou*, extorting an annual rent of 5,600,000 catties² of grain. Wielding his tyrannical power he engaged in blackmail, corruption, bribery, smuggling and in the traffic of drugs. Landlord Liu bled the people white.

¹ One *mou* is about one-sixth of an acre.

² One catty equals approximately 1.1 pounds.

The Manor-House of Crime



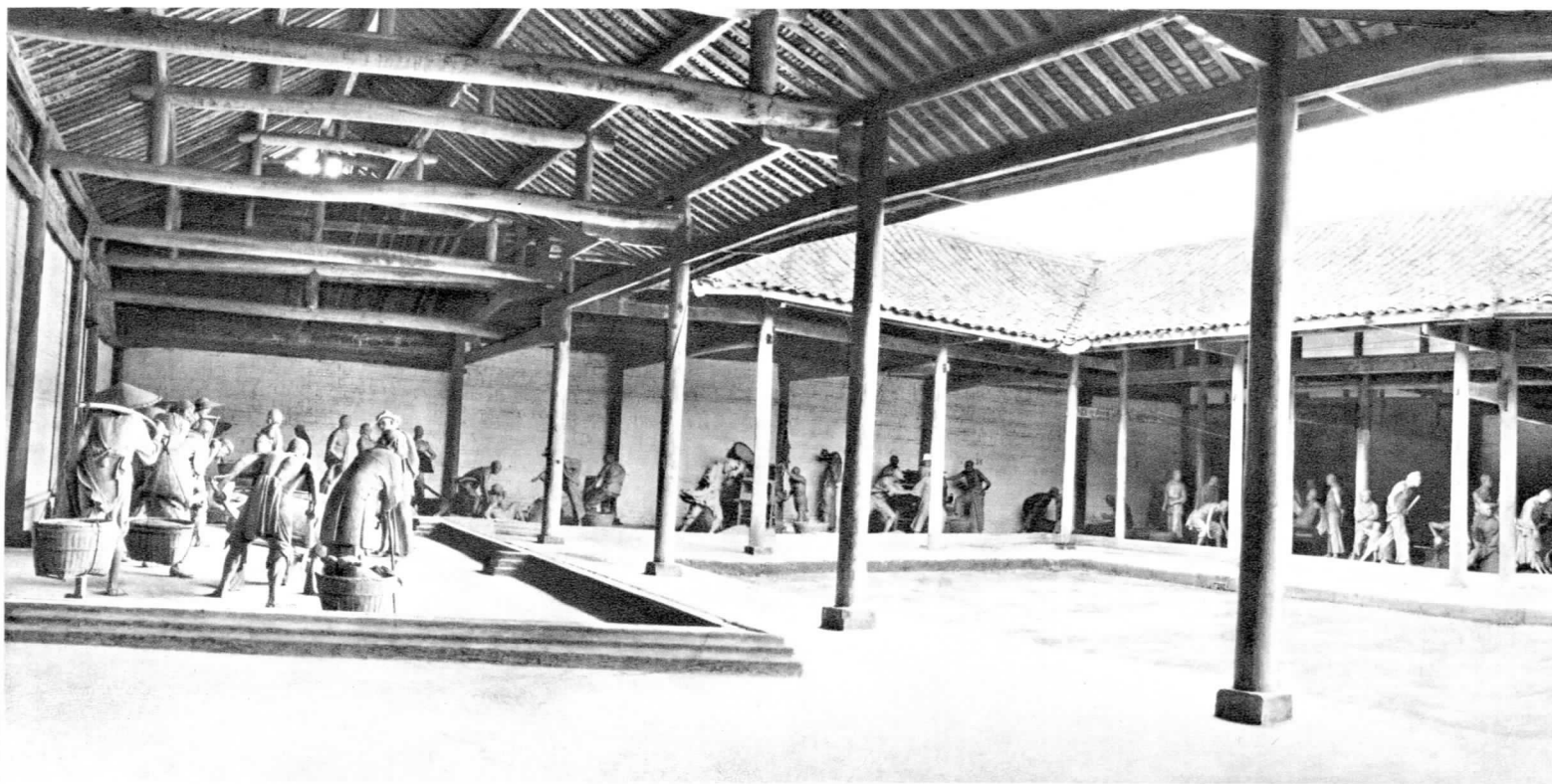
Two of Liu Wen-tsai's twenty-eight manor-houses stood in the town of Anjen, Taii, covering an area of sixty-odd *mou* of land. Their bricks were ingrained with the sweat and tears of the peasants, for Liu built them by seizing the land and houses of more than ten peasant families. One of these manor-houses has been turned into a museum since liberation. Using it as a grim reminder of the past, the Chinese people visit it so that they should never — from one generation to the next — forget class struggle. It is here that the clay figures are displayed in the rent collection courtyard in the northwest corner of the manor-house.

1. Rent Collection Courtyard
2. Summer opium-smoking room
3. Granaries
4. Water dungeon
5. Tower of Joy
6. Storage-rooms
7. Hall of Pleasure

8. Buddhist prayer room
9. Third opium-smoking room
10. Boudoir
11. Counting house
12. Sitting-room (Chinese style)
13. Guest rooms for ladies
14. Servants' quarters

15. Sitting-room (Western style)
16. Reception room for sworn brothers of secret societies
17. Liu Wen-tsai's bed-room
18. Granaries
19. Second opium-smoking room
20. Servants' well
21. Master's well

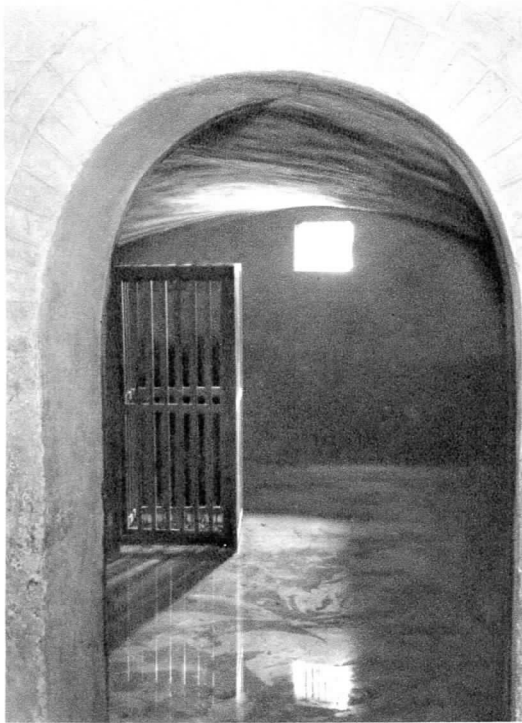
The Rent Collection Courtyard



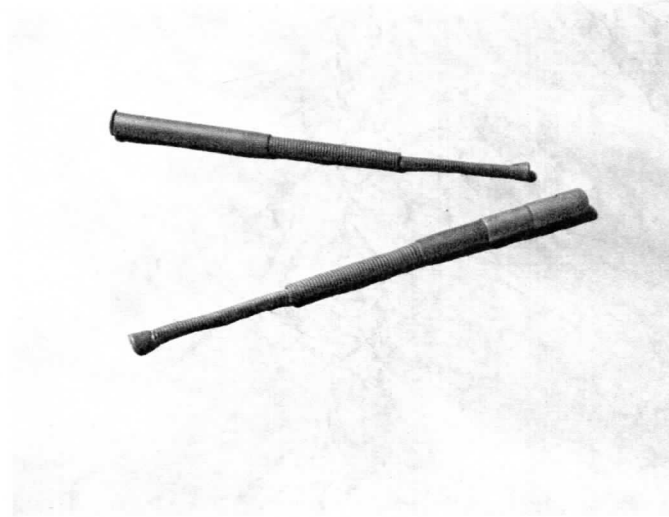
This courtyard, built especially for the collection of rent, is surrounded by a hundred-metre long corridor in which stand the clay figures. Hunger-stricken peasants had to use the back door to pay rent.



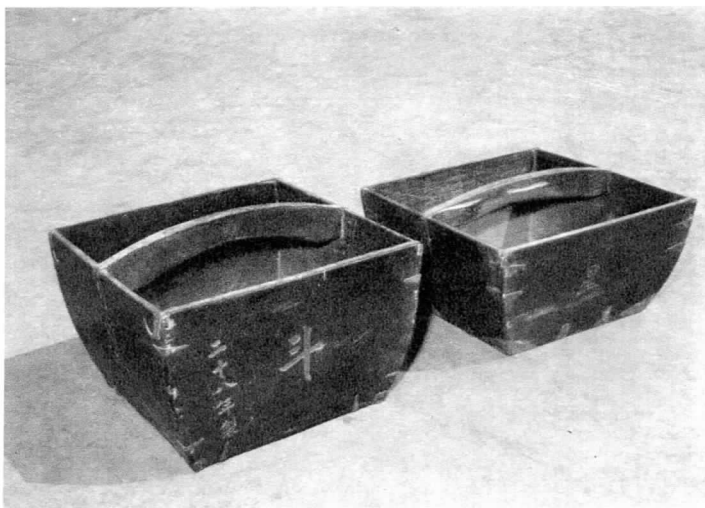
Instruments of Exploitation and Torture



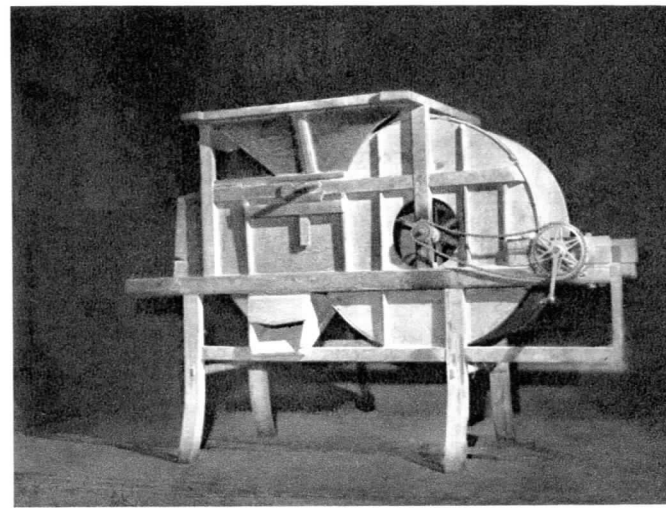
Water dungeon.



Steel spring whips.



Measuring pecks.



The "trick" winnower.

Liu Wen-tsai used various criminal means to seize land from the peasants and force them to pay rent and debts. The peasants were subject to many excruciating tortures. They were locked in water dungeons, flogged by steel spring whips and buried alive. Above are some of the means used to exploit and oppress the peasants.

Part One

Tenants Pay Rent —Their Harvest of Bitterness

The basic form of the landlord's exploitation is rent collection.

Because of his widespread ownership of land Liu Wen-tsai always placed a notice in the newspapers every year at the time of rent collection, announcing the date for the payment of rent. No peasant was allowed to break the deadline, even if a death occurred in the family. Shortly after the autumn harvest, thousands of tenants would come to Liu's house to pay rent, bringing with them the overwhelming part of their crops for which they had toiled throughout the year.





Under the cold gaze of the landlord's stoic
the poverty-stricken peasants trudge into
courtyard carrying the grain they have slaved
bitterly for.



With no family to help her, the broken-hearted old widow could not fully meet her debts. So she sold her last possession — a heron — to make up the difference.



An old man wheels in the grain he has reaped with his own blood and sweat.





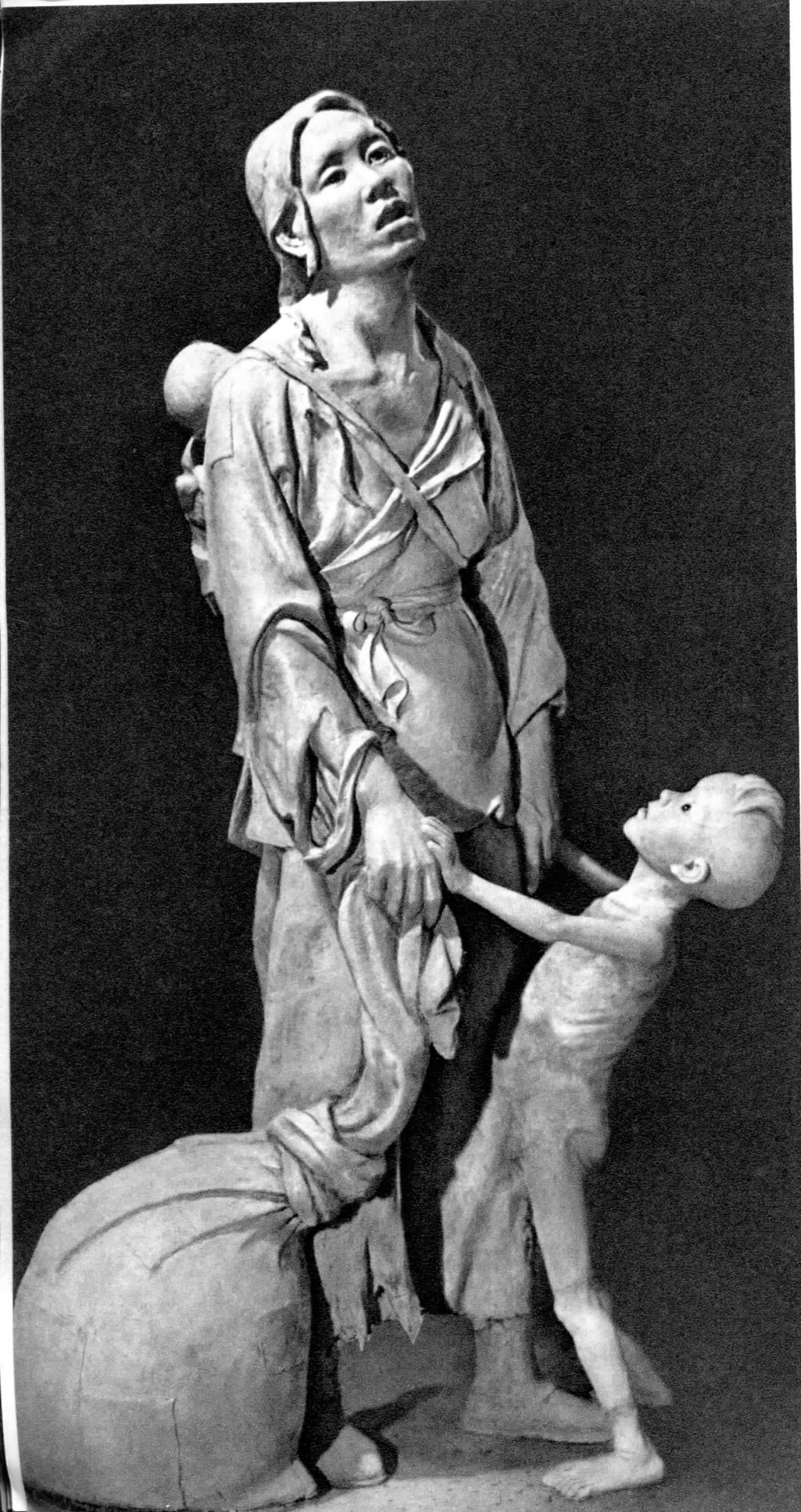
A family with their heavy load of rent.



The crushing load of rent symbolizes the man-eating feudal system of exploitation.



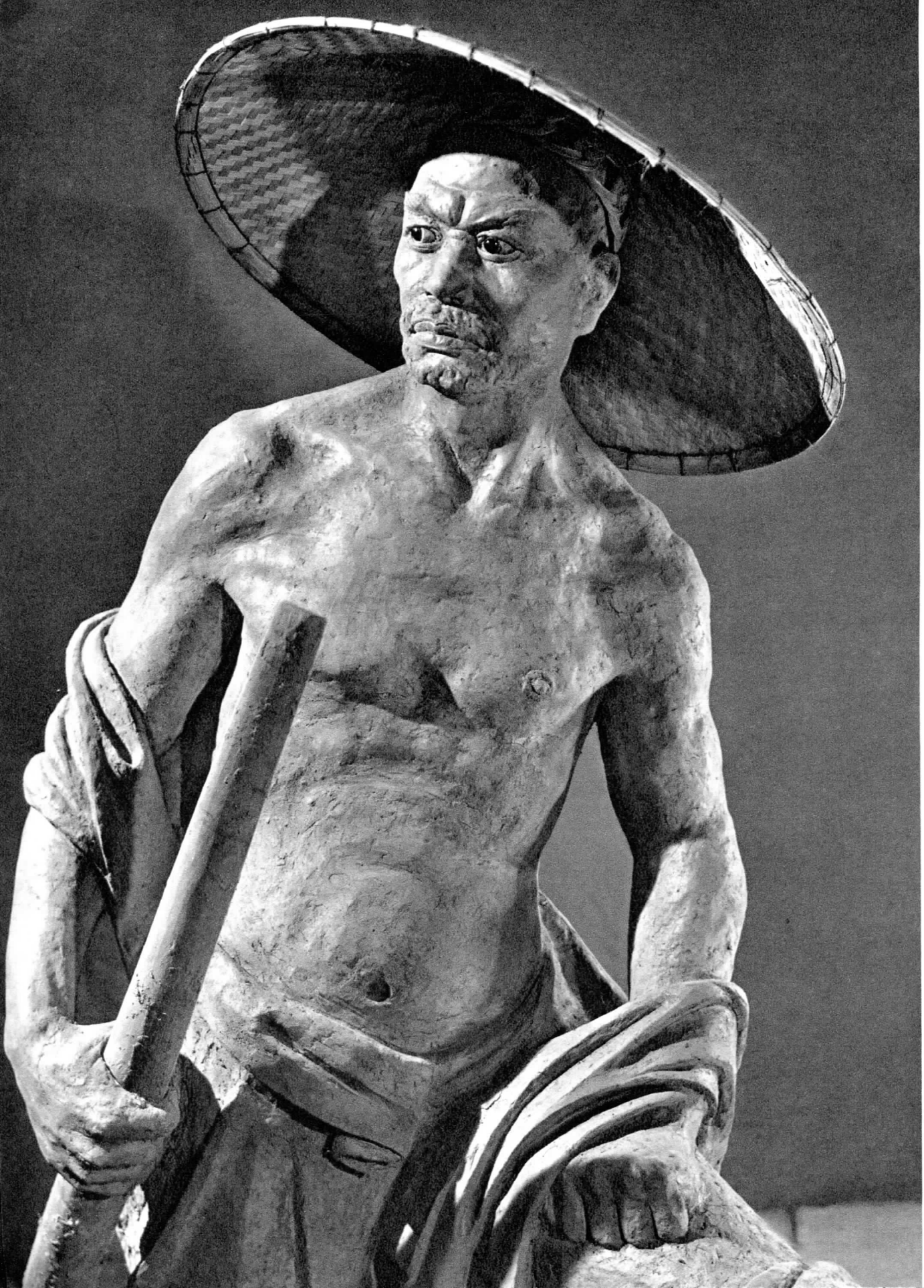
Even a tottering, sick man has to drag in his rent on time.



Her strength is gone, her spirit is weary, her
emaciated boy cries out for food . . . yet all of
this widow's grain must go in rent.



The old starving couple give their last bit of grain as rent.



We'll settle accounts
with you one day, not
how vicious you

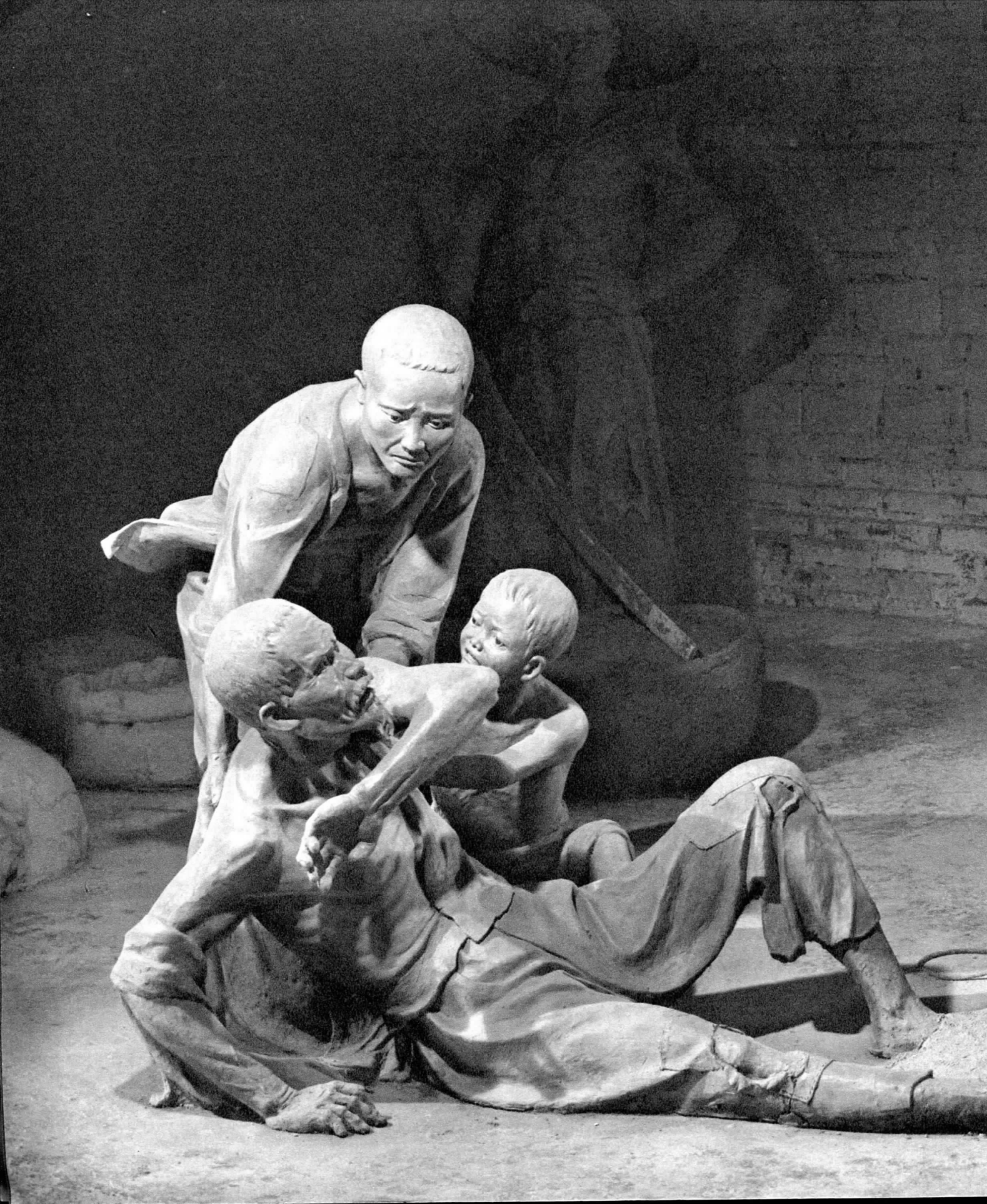
Part Two

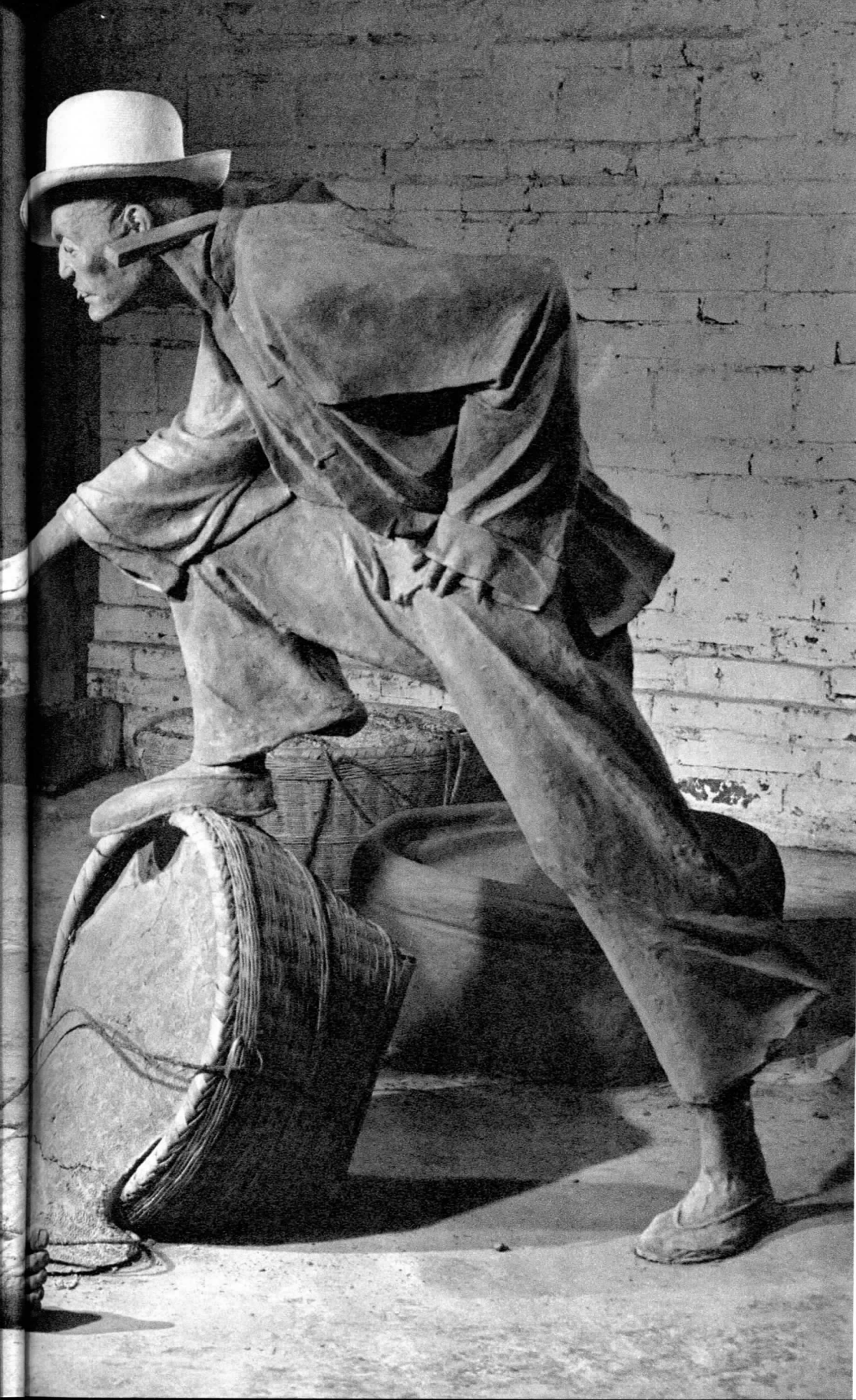
Liu's Strong-arm Men Check the Grain

Liu Wen-tsai exploited the peasants in many criminal ways. His exploitation was particularly glaring during the payment of rent.

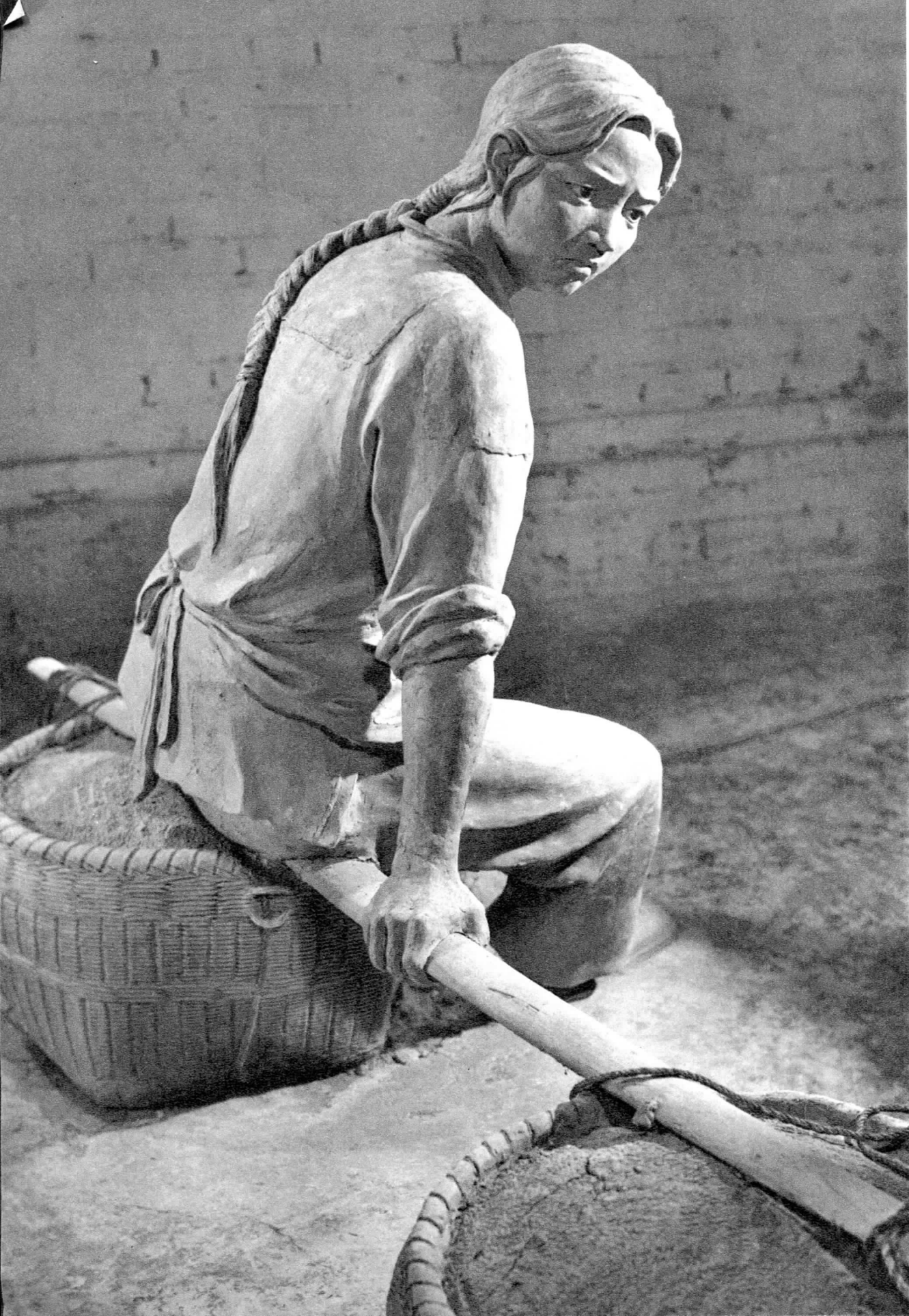
Liu's strong-arm men were always very exacting when they were checking the rent. If a thug did not like a single grain, he would say the whole lot was not up to standard and then curse and whip the peasant.

After the peasants' grain had been sifted, it would be put into a "trick" winnower where nearly one-third of the first grade grain would be blown away by a powerful fan and then collected by the landlord's men. As a result, many tenants were unable to pay their rent in full. Here the extortions of the landlord were nakedly revealed.





The thug's harsh demands cannot
so he kicks the old man to the ground,
knocking his basket of grain



...She stiffens with
anger at the sight of
the thug's cruelty



This old peasant is frantic with worry. He knows the same fate awaits him. How long can one stand by without doing something about it?





It is the peasants' blood and sweat
that is thrown in and blown off



This little girl has to
on tiptoe to load the
into the devouring
nower.

Because of the "trick" winnower, there is not enough grain to meet the rent. What can she do?



The winnower groans and thuds and fear runs through the tenants.... Meanwhile, the little boy is whipped because he wants to take home some of the grain that has been blown out. And lashed too is the old man as he argues with the thug.







"This *is* good grain!" cries the old peasant.

Part Three

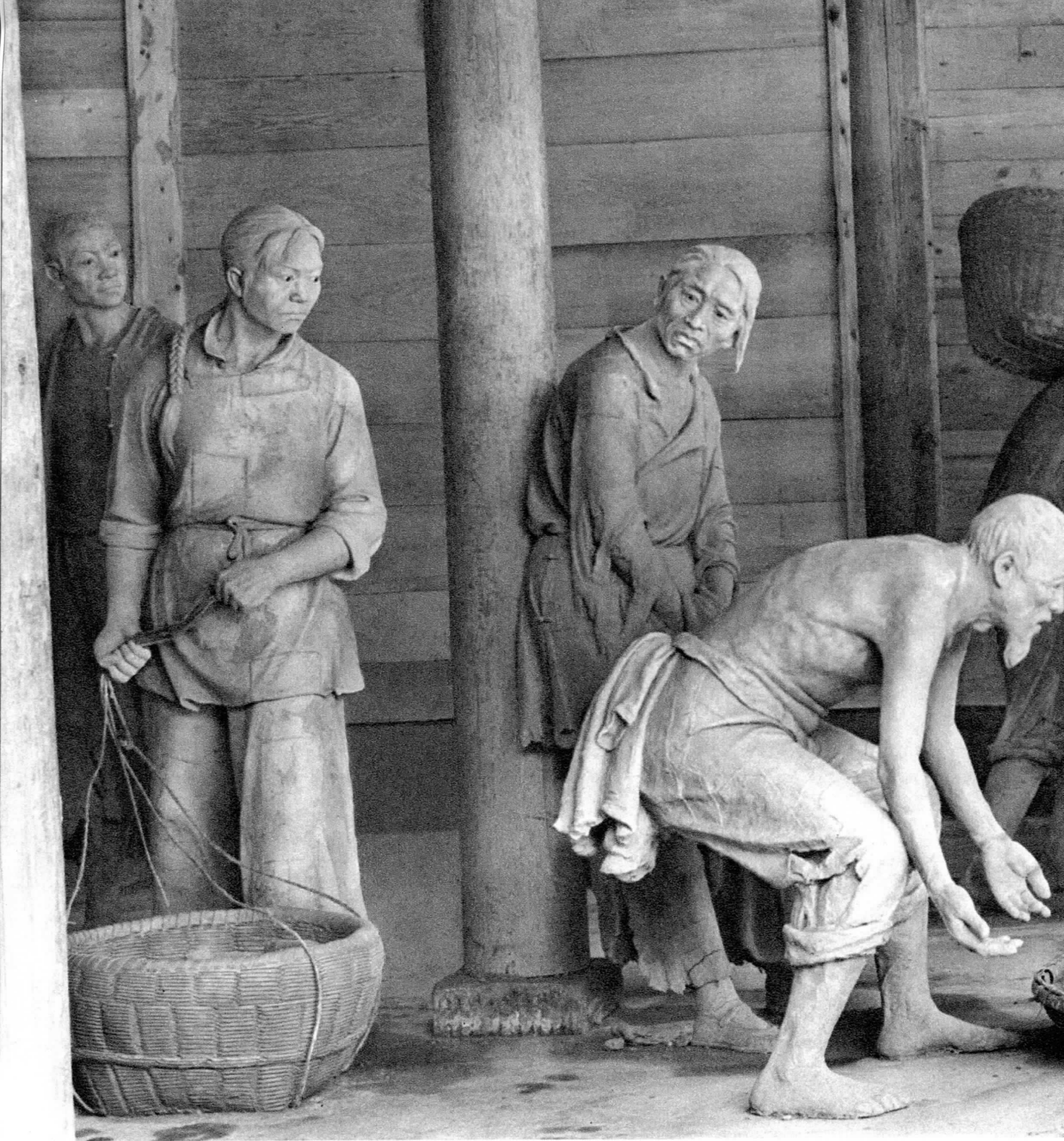
The “Bloody Mouth” of the Peck Measure

The peck measure Liu Wen-tsai used for measuring rent was bigger than the one used for grain to be lent to the peasants, the difference being about one-third of a peck. Every year the landlord extorted over 10,000 extra catties of grain through the use of the larger peck measure. “It makes us tremble to see the peck measure,” said the peasants. “It looks like a big bloody mouth, devouring our flesh and blood.”

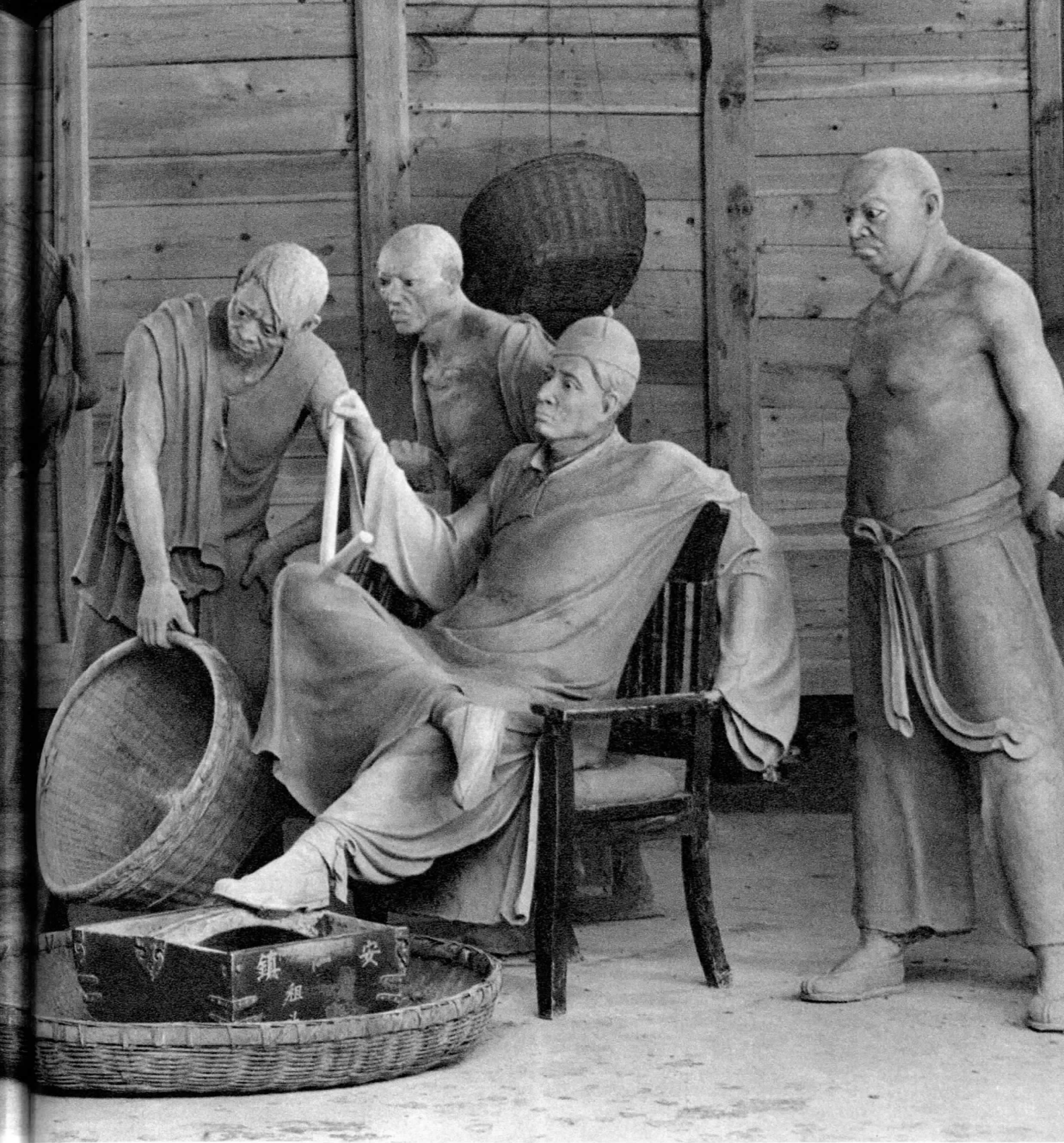


After going through the "trick" winnowing two full baskets of grain are reduced to one. With leaden hearts mother and daughter bring it to be measured.



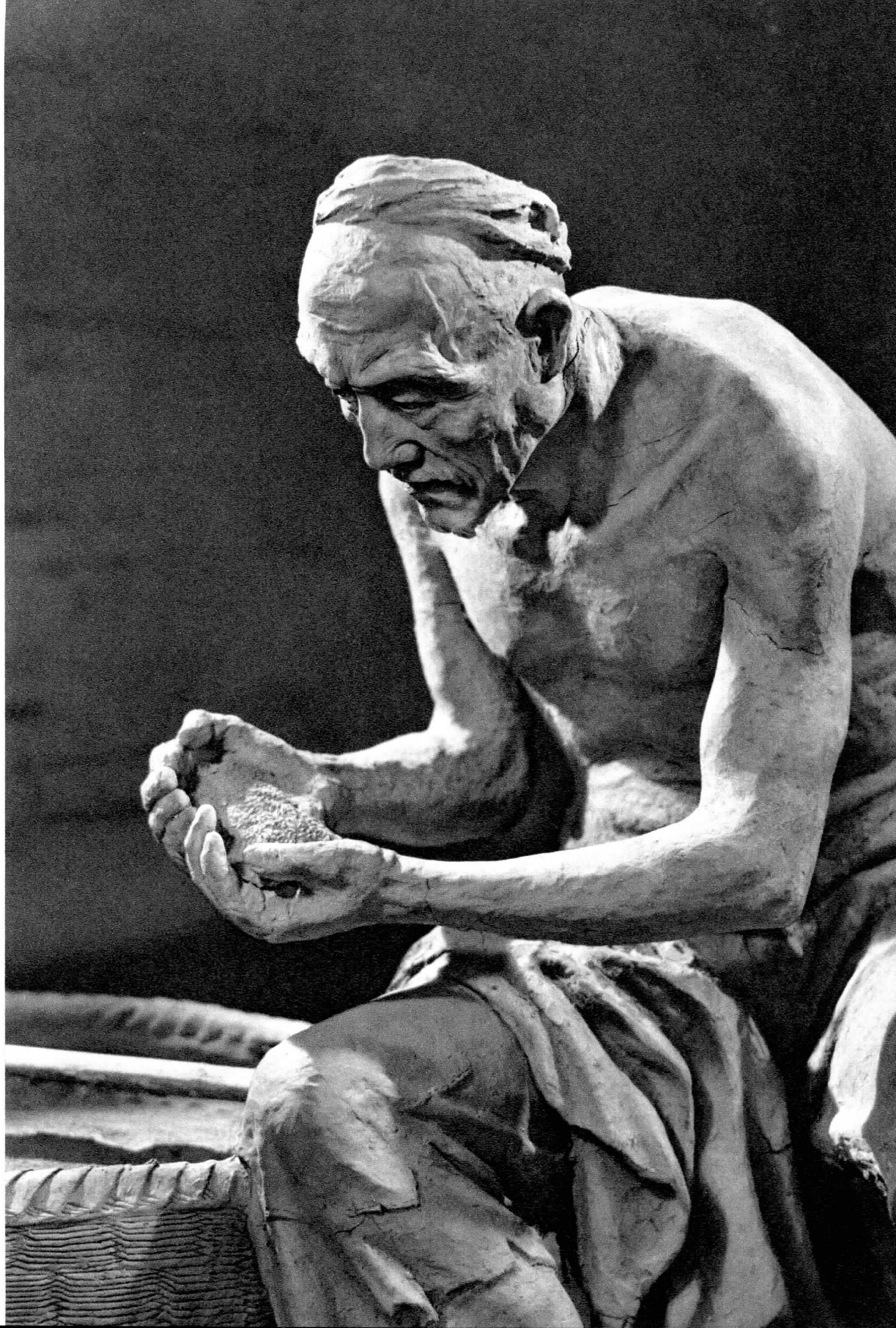


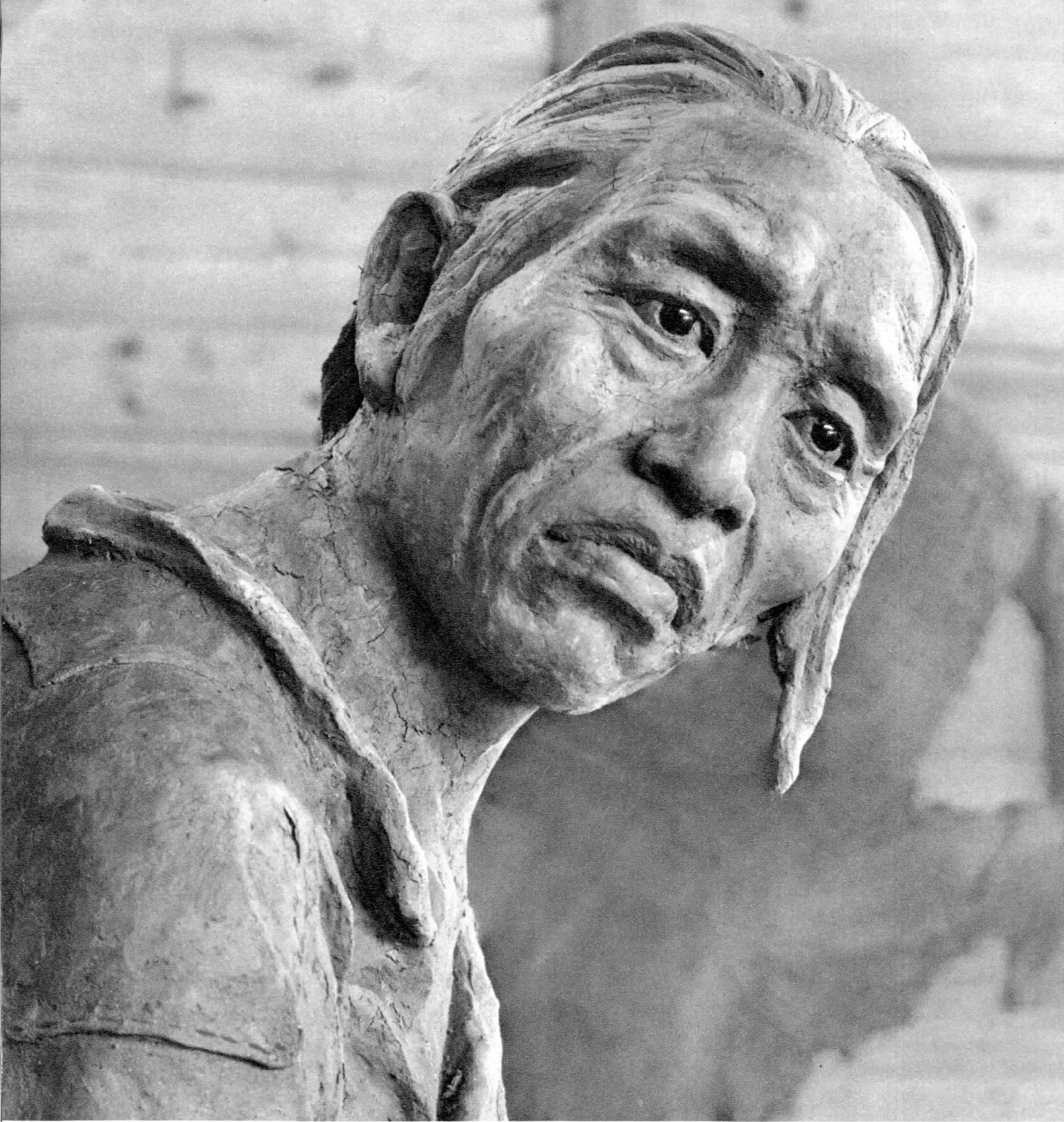
The old peasant stares blankly at the peck measure under the thug's foot, wondering what he will say if the amount of grain is too small. Will he be flogged if he says that's all he's got? If he promises to make up the difference, where will he get the grain?





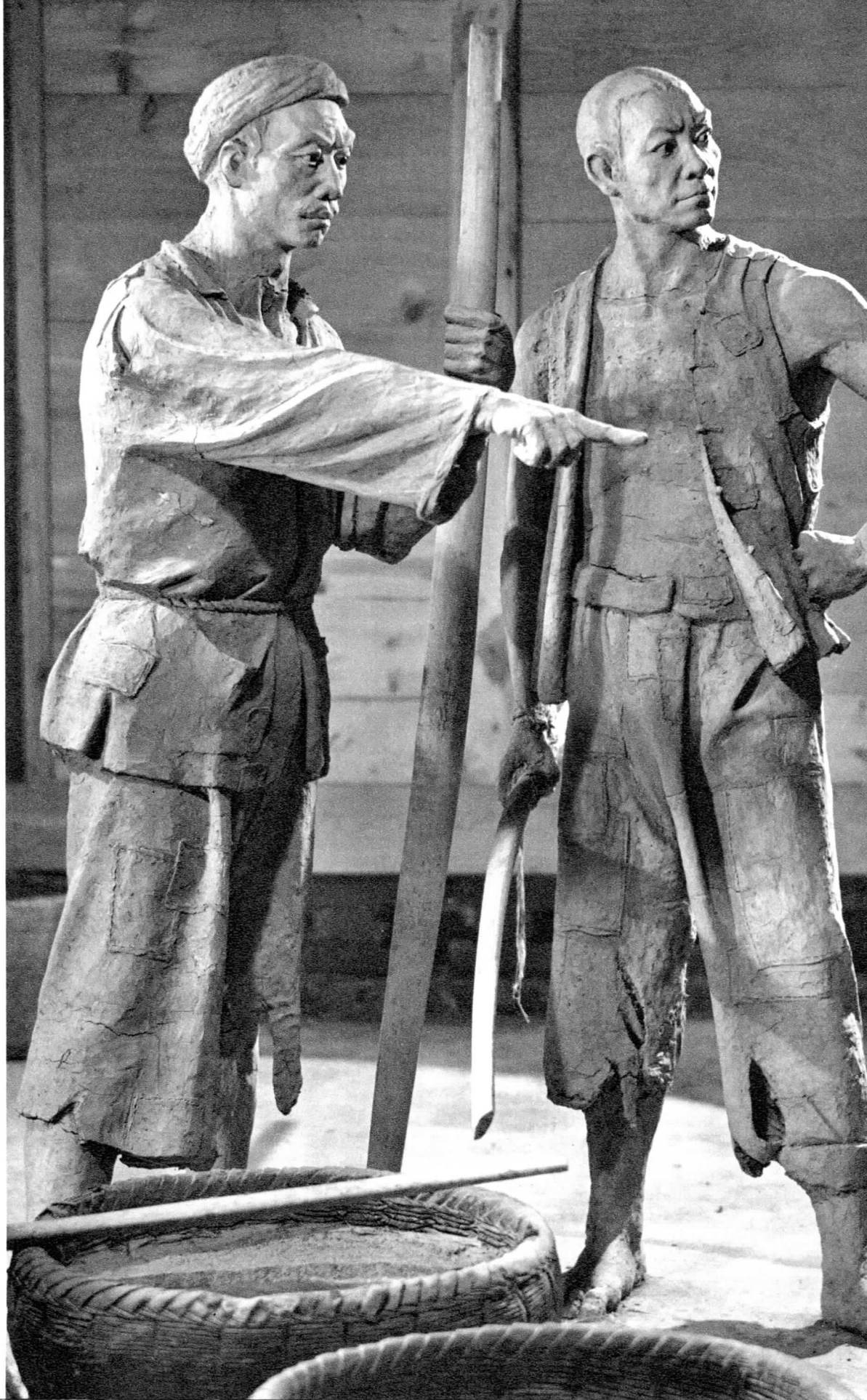
Will their grain fill up the peck measu





What kind of a world is this?

How black-hearted
the landlord is!





With his grain paid
peasant carefully counts
tally sticks. But one do
torments him: will he c
be able to pay off his d
to the landlord?

Part Four

The Abacus That Leads to Bankruptcy

Liu Wen-tsai's exorbitant rent ran as high as eighteen pecks for one *mou* of land. No deductions were ever allowed for floods, droughts or personal misfortunes.

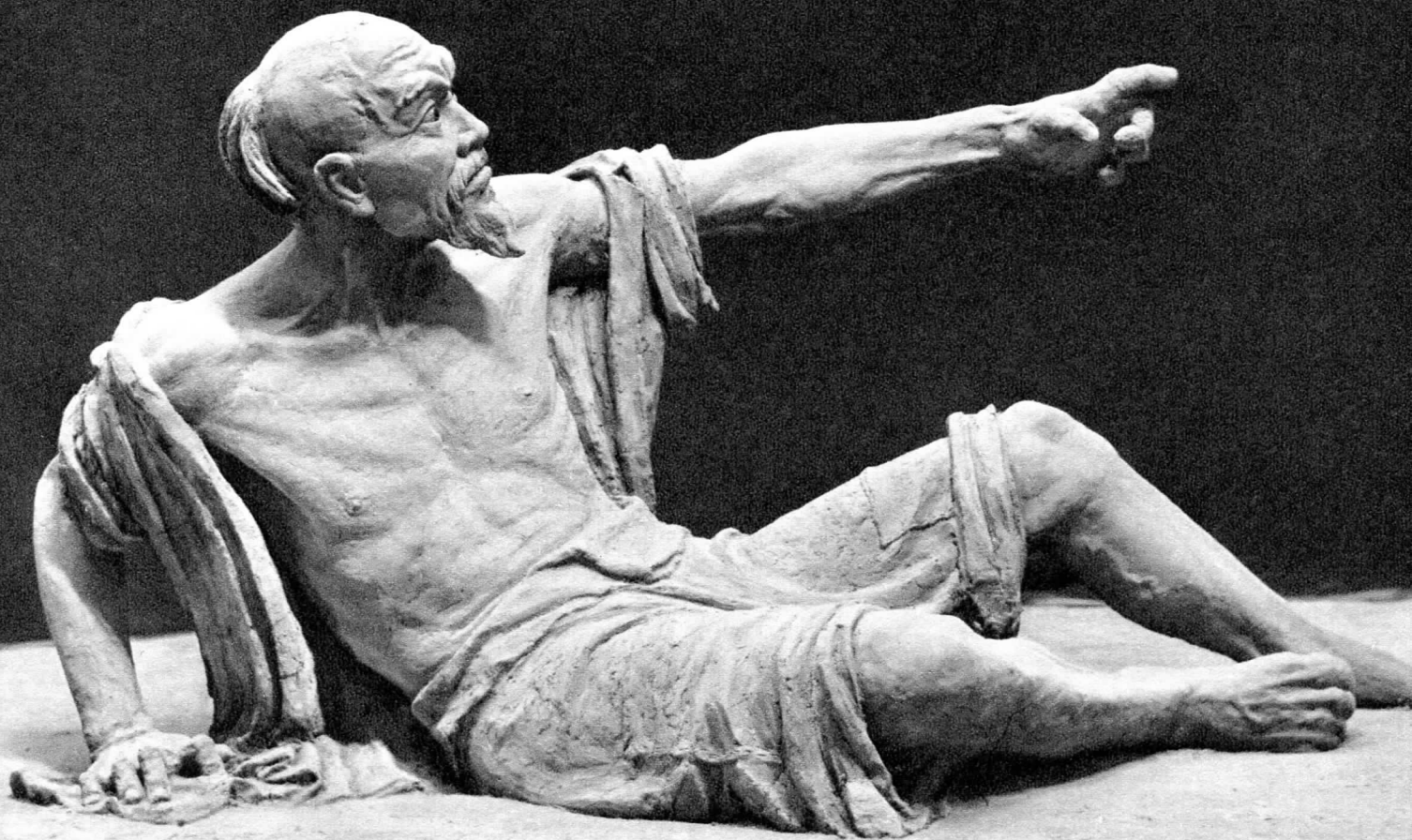
The tenants became bankrupt under Liu's ruthless exploitation while the cold-blooded Liu spent a debauched and extravagant life. Why did the peasants toil all the year round and still suffer from hunger and cold? Why were the landlords able to lead such a life of luxury without doing a solitary day's work? How unjust is the society where the law of the jungle rules!



Fleeced by the "trick" winnower and then brutally knocked down. That is the fate of this old peasant. His "crime"? He refused to put his finger-print on a piece of paper certifying the sale of his son as a conscript in the army.



"You're a man-eating beast!" the peasant cries out.



Liu's hand tells beads but his heart remains as venomous as a viper. How many peasants have become bankrupt as his steward calculates on the abacus?

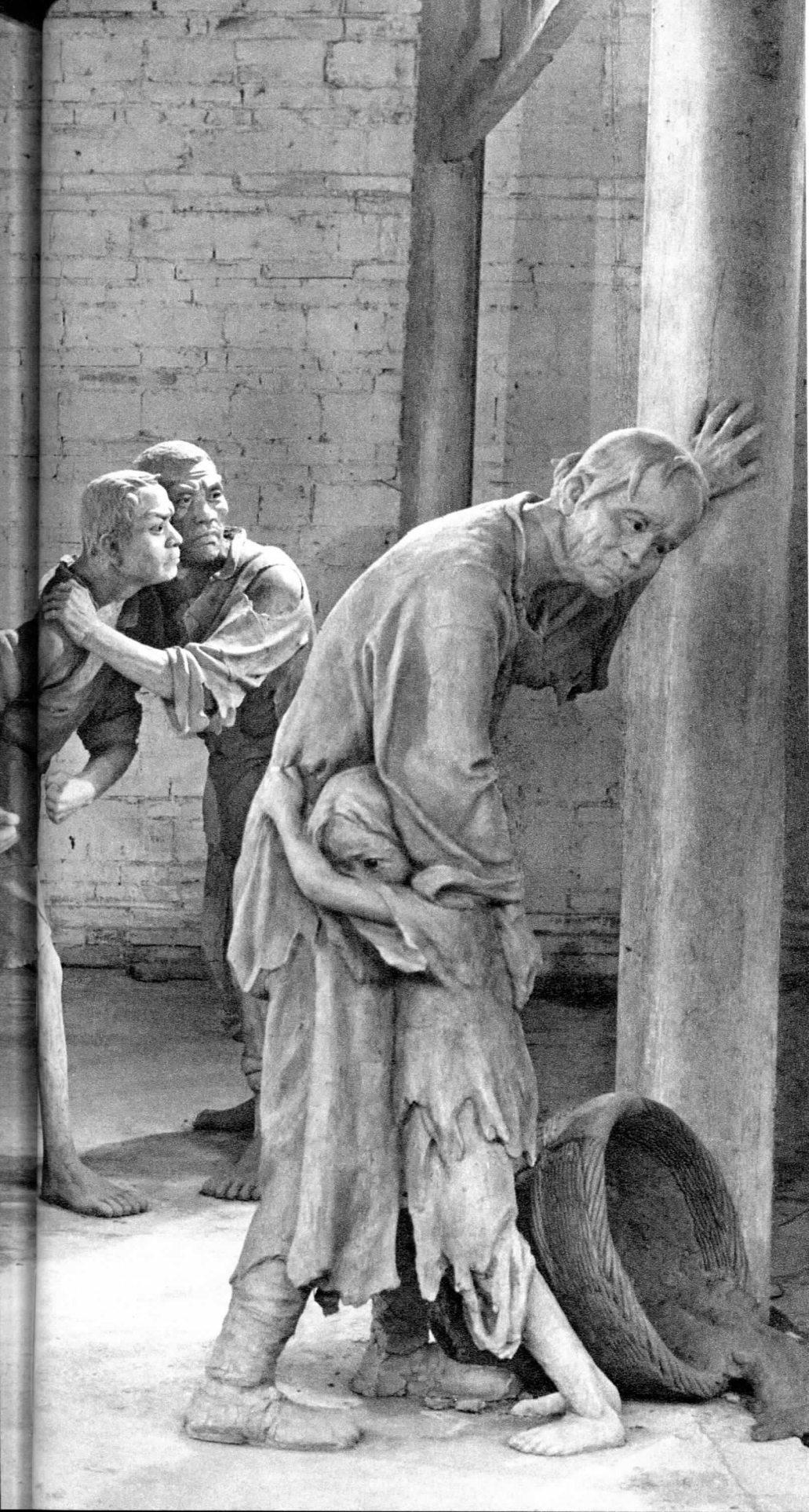




The old peasant's son is held back by a Kuomintang soldier and a secret society henchman as he rushes up to argue with landlord Liu.







The peasants burn with anger at the sight of the thugs' violence.



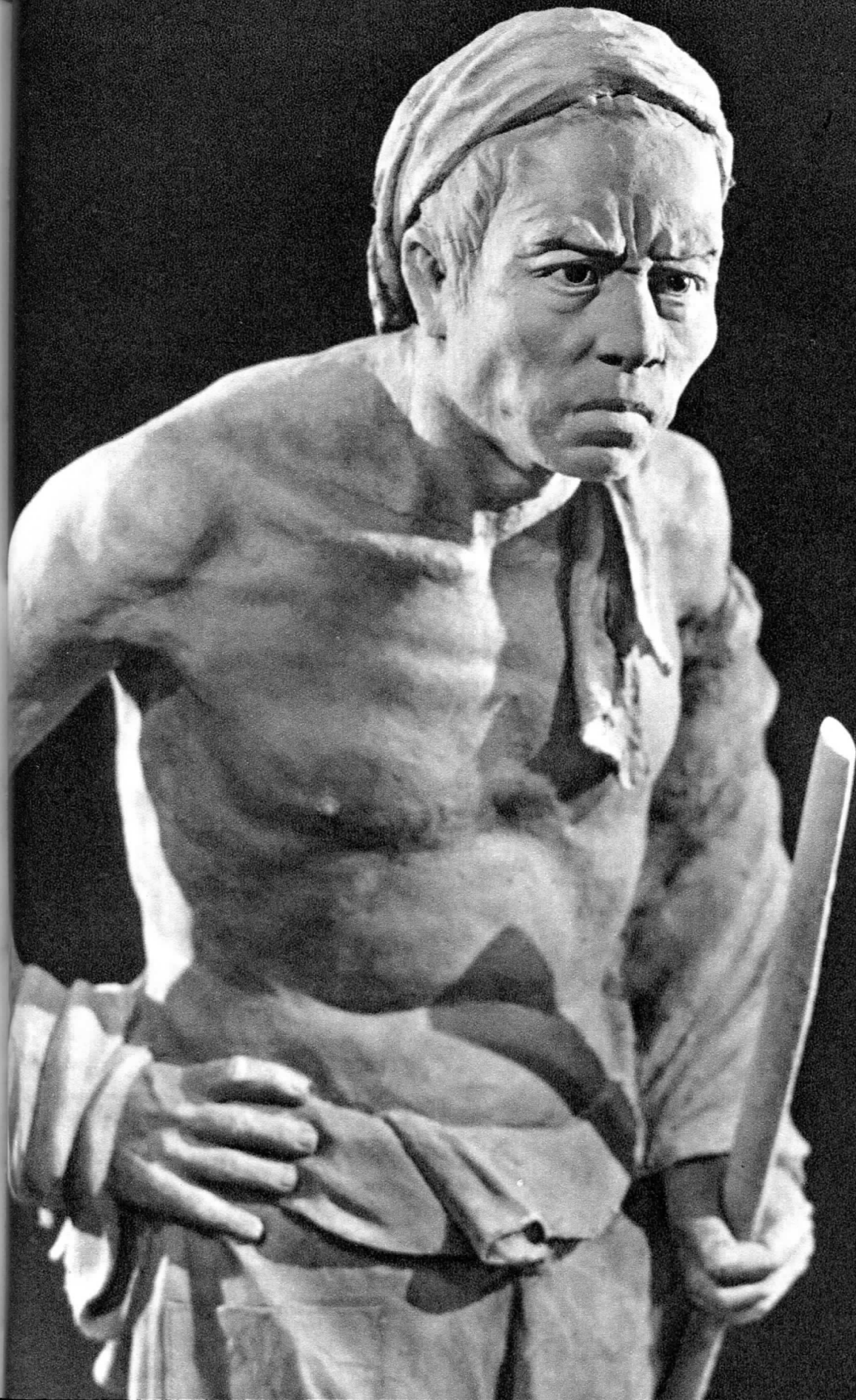
Her husband worked all his life like an animal for the landlord. Now he is dead. Yet she has not enough grain to clear off his debt . . . no money to pay for his coffin . . . no comfort to give her fatherless child.



His hatred swells up, for the landlord not only extorts rent but also pressgangs young men into the army.



The frightened child clings frantically to her angry grandmother.



His eyes are filled
with the fury of revenge



Class brothers, unite to settle the blood debts with the landlords!

Part Five

The Law of the Jungle

Besides ruthlessly exploiting the peasants, the landlords also oppressed them politically with the aid of their puppets: the Kuomintang village chiefs and policemen. The landlords used every cruel means to extort rent from the peasants. Those who failed to pay their rent in full were faced with inhuman torture and forced to sell their children.

In a society of exploitation and oppression there are many cases of barbarity and brutality like those perpetrated by Liu Wen-tsai. The following reflect the wrongs done to the peasants from generation to generation by the landlord class, the hatred they cherished and the tears and blood they shed.



A mother is torn away from her baby so that Liu can indulge his special delight — fresh human milk.

A bad drought spells aching grief for this young woman and her mother-in-law. Because of it they cannot pay all their debts. Now, the landlord has stripped them off their land and taken away the hard-earned deposit they put on it. Must it always be like this?

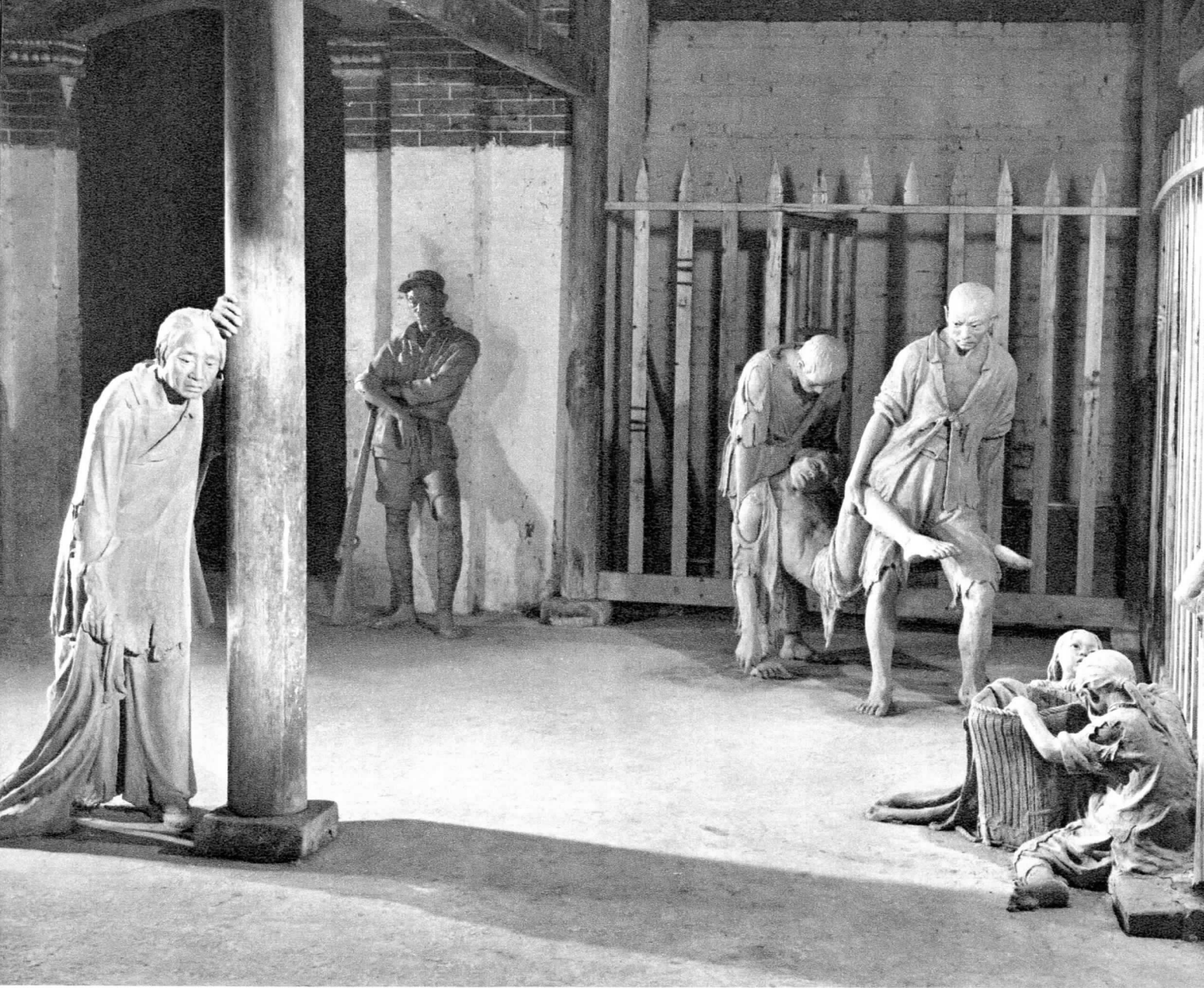




A blind man is forced to sell his granddaughter as a bride to Liu in payment of the rent he cannot meet in full. His left hand holds a piece of paper, a receipt for the girl he depends so much on.

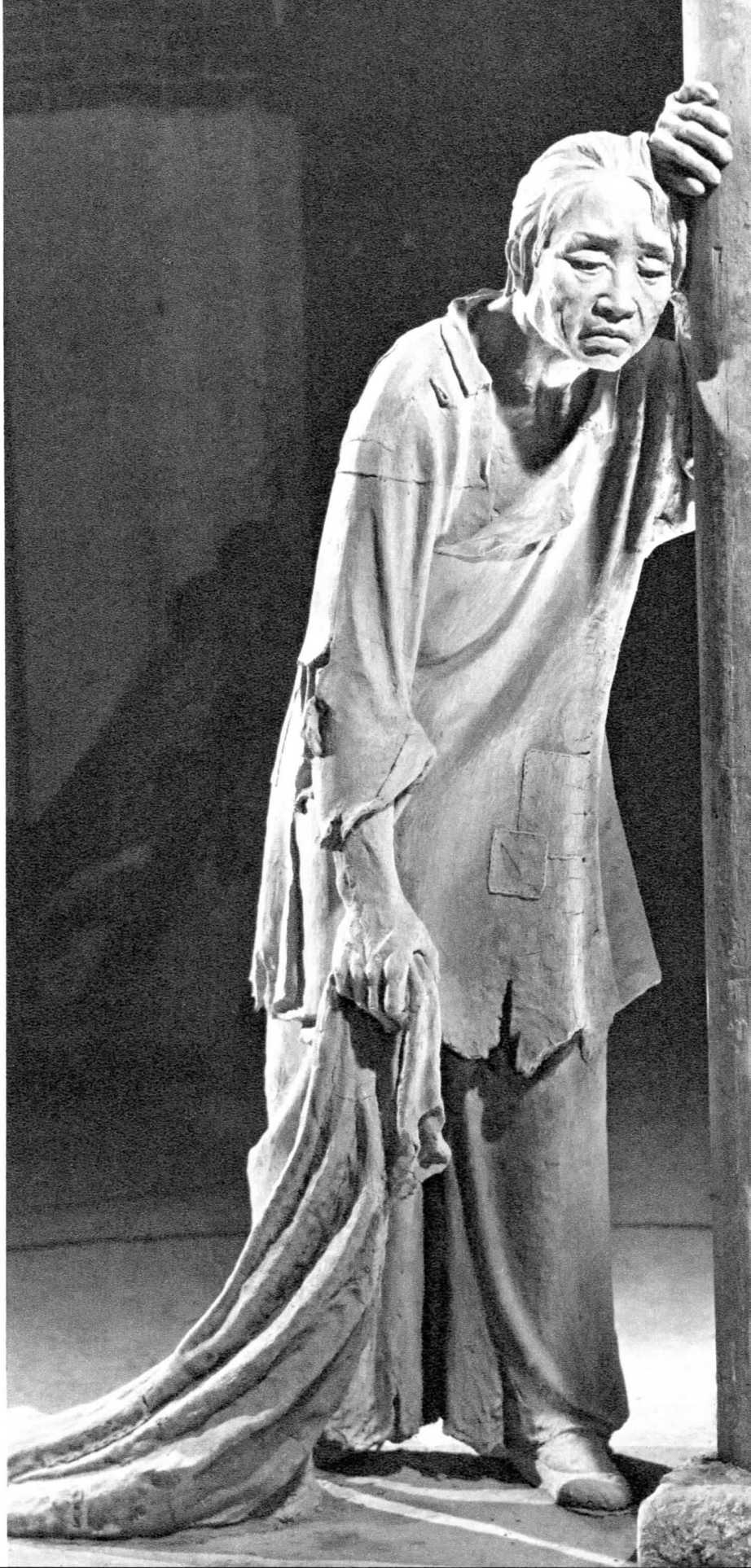
There seems no end to the
bitterness of his life.





The rent collection courtyard is like a hell on earth as peasants who cannot pay their rent are locked away in underground or water dungeons. Here the body of one of the victims is being taken away.

Her sack is empty, her rent is paid
but how can she keep body and
soul together without a single grain
of rice left at home?





Hate grips this mother
behind bars as her
helpless children cry.



Liu orders the village chief and policeman to ransack the homes of peasants and pressgang them if they cannot pay their debts. Another family is broken up as the husband is dragged away and his wife is knocked to the ground.



Part Six

Seizure of Power

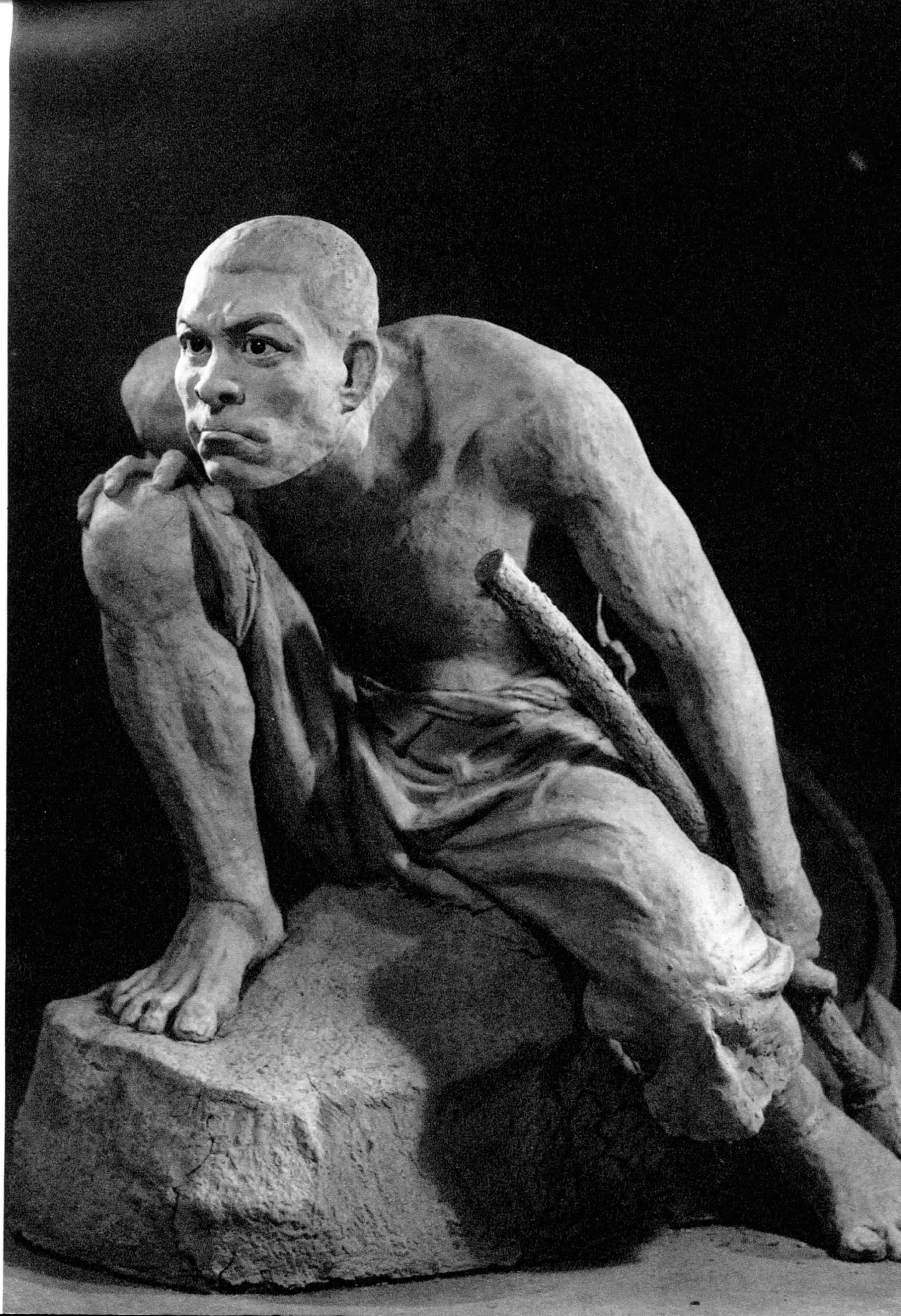
Under the cruel exploitation and oppression of the landlords, the peasants seething with bitter class hatred rose in revolt. They got organized under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and carried on an unyielding armed struggle against the landlord class.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army liberated Szechuan in 1949 and, with the co-operation of the revolutionary masses, captured Liu Wen-tsai, thoroughly smashed the rule of the reactionary classes and established the new political power of the people. Under the wise leadership of the Chinese Communist Party headed by the great leader Chairman Mao Tse-tung, the emancipated peasants holding high the great red banner of Mao Tse-tung's thought are determined to carry the proletarian revolution through to the end.



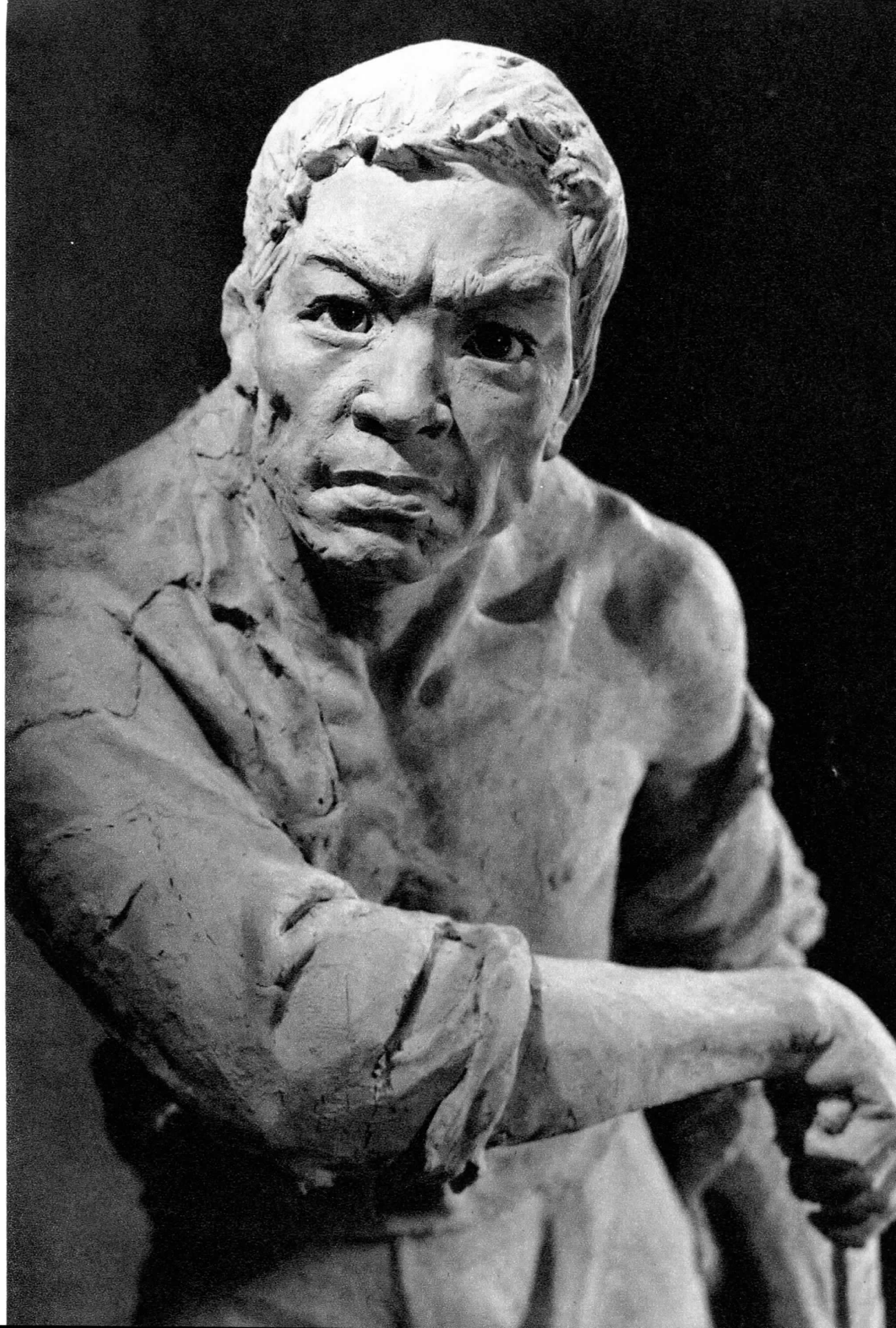
The landlord's pitiful
reign of exploitation and
oppression has aroused
a sense of deep ven-
geance and revolt in the
peasant.

Determined to
destroy the land-
lord's den with
his axe.





With carrying-pole
hand they will see
the old system
smithereens.





Only by thoroughly demolishing the man-eating system
can the working people be emancipated.

We will arm ourselves with weapons seized from the thugs





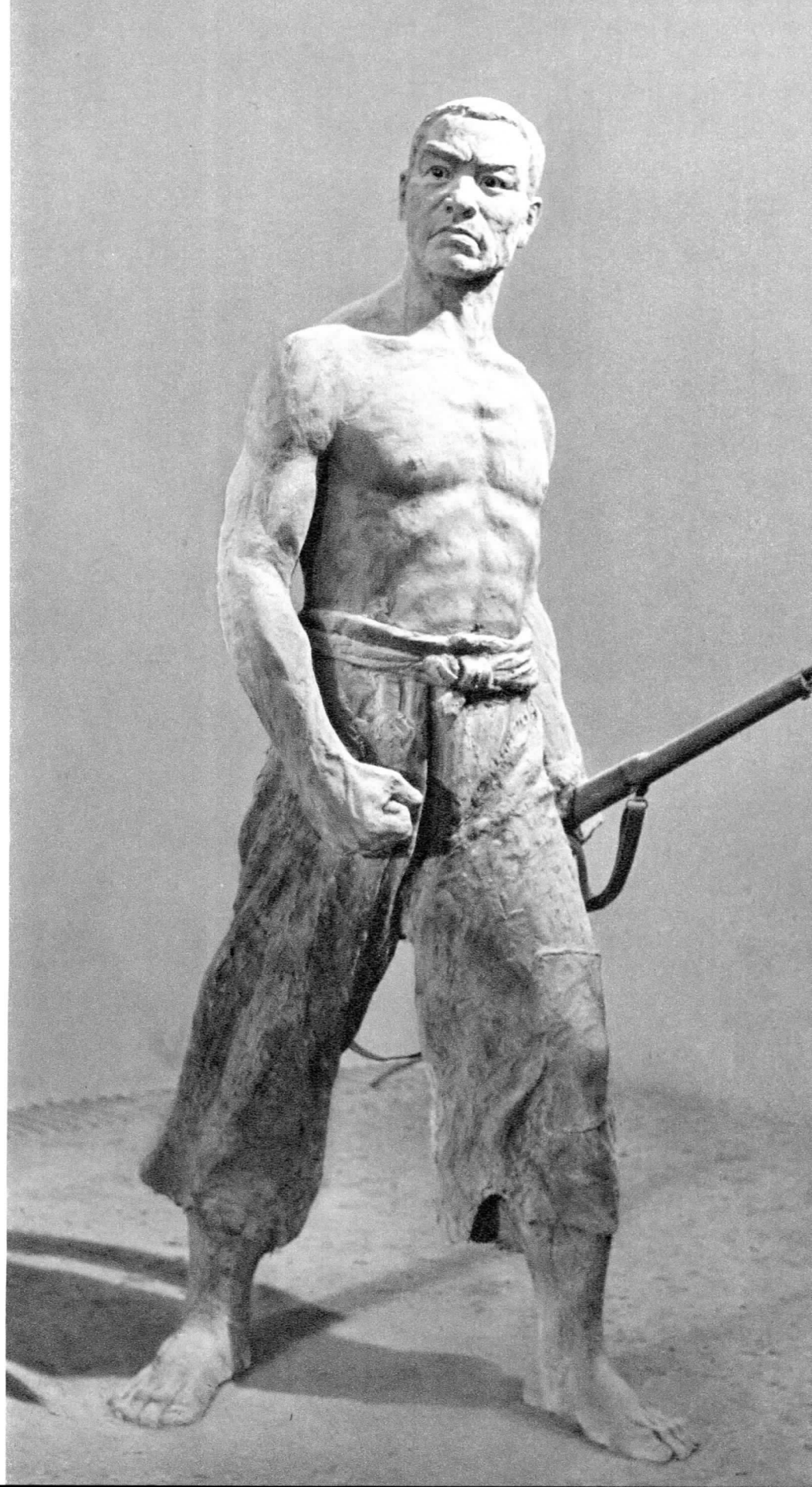
The peasants — led by the Communist Party — march off to the mountains to wage an armed struggle and shatter the murderous system.





Only armed revolution will completely tear down all the vicious "rent collection courtyards" in the world.

Let's join the guerrillas
in the mountains!

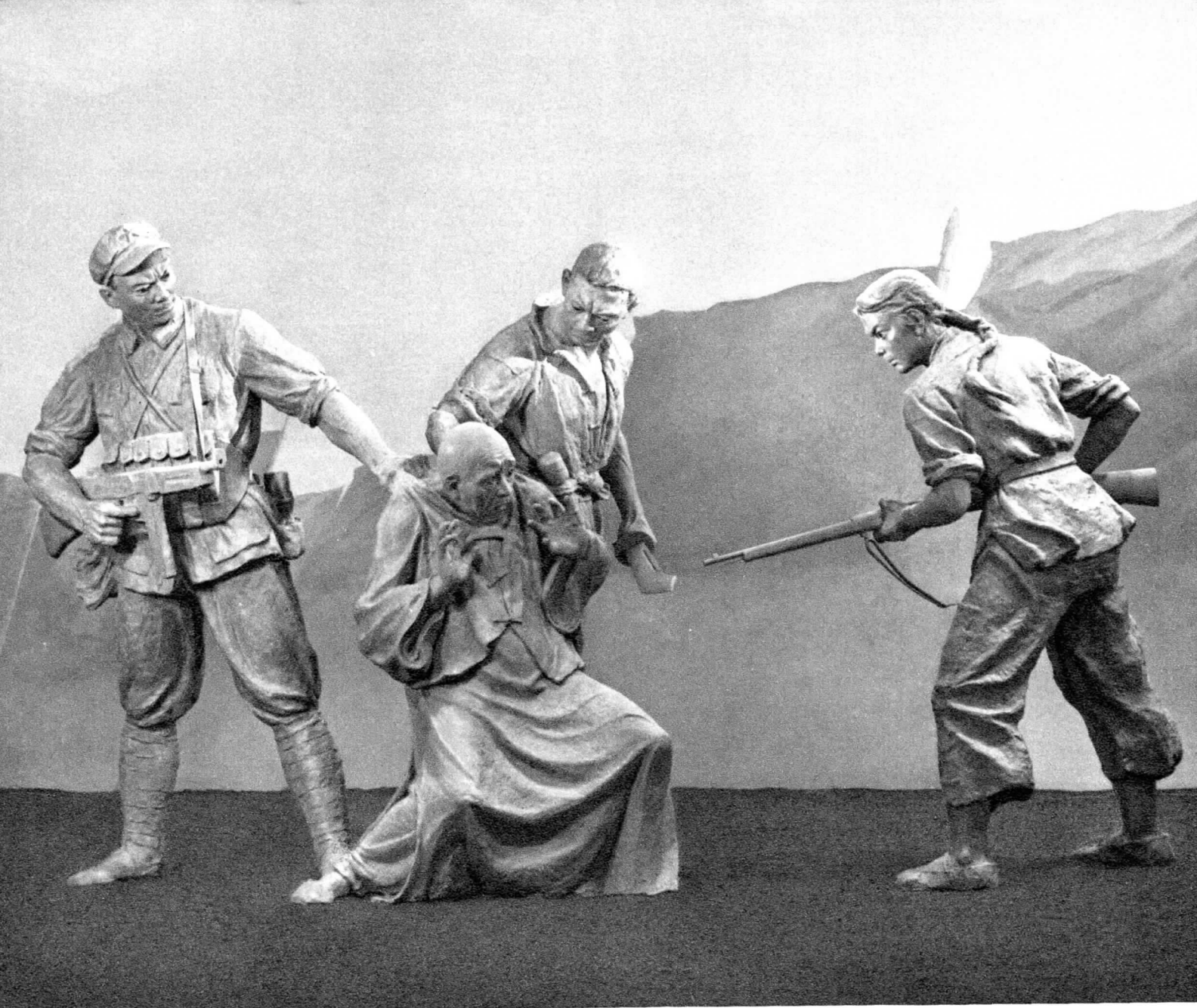




Follow forever
the Communist
Party and raise
high the red flag
of revolution.



United as one the army and the people are invincible.



The landlord Liu Wen-tsai is captured by the soldiers and the rebelling peasants.



"Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." Red political power will be handed down from generation to generation.



Sailing the seas of
depends on the helm
man, making revolu
tion depends on M
Tse-tung's thought

收租院泥塑群象

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